Learning Democracy by Doing:
Alternative Practices in Citizenship Education and Participatory Democracy

Transformative Learning Centre, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

July 2009

Transformative Learning Centre, OISE/UT
252 Bloor Street West,
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V6
Tel: (416)923-6641 est. 2595
Fax: (416) 926-4749
Email: tlcentre@oise.utoronto.ca
Website: http://tlc.oise.utoronto.ca

This project was made possible by a contribution from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).
Table of Contents

Introduction......................................................................................................................................................... i

Section 1: Citizenship Learning and Participatory Democracy: Debates, Concepts and Issues.............................................................................................................................................................................. 1

‘Active Learning for Active Citizenship’, Community Based Learning and Democratic Citizenship...................................................................................................................................................................................... 1
John Annette

Learning for Democracy: Resuscitating the Argument............................................................................................. 11
Jim Crowther, Ian Martin & Mae Shaw

Participatory Democracy and the Renewal of Radical Politics.................................................................................. 22
Stephen D’Arcy

Participación, Prácticas en Salud y Procesos de Aprendizajes: Investigaciones en Psicología y Democracia................................................................................................................................................................................ 30
Leticia Grippo, Carolina Scavino & Cristina Chardon

Learning Direct Democracy by Participating and Voting: The Relationship between Political Culture and Direct Democracy.................................................................................................................................................. 39
Rolf Rauschenbach

Citizenship Participation and Participatory Democracy: Limits and Possibilities...................................................... 50
Daniel Schugurensky

Discourses of Community and Paradoxes of Participation: Challenges for Citizenship Education.............................................................................................................................................................................. 64
Griet Verschelden, Greet De Brauwere, Luc De Droogh & Sven De Visscher

Advancing Democracy and Happiness: The Leadership Development Frameworks of Different Types of Charismatic Political Leadership.......................................................................................................................... 73
Johnny Welch
**Section 2: Learning Democracy in Schools** ................................................................. 85

A Historical Review of Citizenship Education in BC’s Social Studies Guides .................................................. 85
*Catherine Broom*

Teaching Citizenship Education in Ontario: A Handbook for Teachers of Elementary School Aged Children ................................................................................................................................. 98
*Elham Farah*

Deliberative Methodology and its Role in Democratic Learning in the Project Citizen Initiative ........................................................................................................................................ 104
*Gabriel Murillo Castaño & Nathalia Castañeda Aponte*

On Becoming an Active and Participatory Citizen: A Study on Education and Political Socialization in Hong Kong ........................................................................................................................................ 118
*Shun Wing Ng*

Educational Policy and Children’s Participation: A Voice to Consider .................................................. 130
*Carola Arrúe, Nora E. Elichiry & Carolina Savino*

From Authoritarian Schools to Democratic Schools: The Red Latinoamericana de Convivencia Escolar ................................................................................................................................. 139
*Patricia Carbajal Padilla*

Students, Bricks, and Mortar: Examining the Inter-relationships ........................................................................ 148
*Megan Conway*

The Quality of Education in Public Schools and the Jeopardizing of Citizenship: Implications for Brazilian Democracy ........................................................................................................................................ 157
*Ranlice Guimaraes-Iosif*

Student Councils at Elementary Schools in Iran: One Step towards Citizenship Education ........................................................................................................................................ 166
*Samad Izadi & Zahra Gooya*

Building Democracy: Implementing Restorative Circles in Brazilian Schools as a Non-violent Conflict Resolution Strategy ........................................................................................................................................ 173
*Patrícia Krieger Grossi, Beatriz Gerhenson Aguinsky & Mário Lima Grossi*
The Transfer of Historical-Critical Skills from Social Studies Class to Political and Community Practice ................................................................. 185
*David Lefrançois & Marc-André Éthier*

La Tecnología Social de Mediación como Estrategia para Promover la Participación Ciudadana Desde la Comunidad y la Escuela ................................................................. 200
*Marcela Magro, María Isabel Ramírez & María E. Fernández de C.*

Construir Ciudadanía desde el Nivel Inicial .................................................................................................................. 216
*Adriana B. Murriello*

Learning and Practicing Democracy: Analysis of Classroom Practices and Discourse in Pakistani Secondary Schools ................................................................. 225
*Karim Panah*

Learning to Participate: Considerations for Promoting Collective Action during School Activity ................................................................. 241
*Carolina Scavino, Nora E. Elichiry, Cristina Chardon & Carola Arrúe*

The Role of UNICEF in Fostering Democratic Values and Ideas through Education: A Case-Study of Sokoto State in Nigeria
*Vaffi F. Sheriff*........................................................................................................................................ 249

Education, Democracy and Social Justice: The Australian Experience – Doing Thick Democracy in the Classroom .................................................................................. 259
*David Zyngier*

**Section 3: Learning Democracy in Higher Education** ................................................................. 275

*Felix Bivens & Peter Taylor*

The Critical Pedagogy of Understanding how Future Educators Relate to Democracy ...... 285
*Paul R. Carr & Gina Thésée*

Now What? Getting Politically Active Within and Beyond the Classroom ................................................................. 296
*Lisa Child, Alyson Daly, Michelle Herbert, Krista Hunt & Geneiee Ritchie*
Educación Ciudadana Universitaria Democrática: Ambito para la Reflexión-Acción-Transformación desde la Cultura de Paz................................................................. 304
Olga Carolina Molano Lucena

Democracy and Campus Life: A University of the West Indies Experiment to Include Commuting Students.............................................................................................................................................................................. 314
Joseph Pereira

La Democratización Pedagógica: Una Experiencia en Educación Superior .............. 323
Silvia Ribot de Flores, Carmen Varguillas & Ernestina Báez

Meaningful Relationships in Post-Secondary Educational Practices: Indigenous Standpoint Pedagogy ........................................................................................................................................................................ 331
Suzanne L. Stewart

Section 4: Learning Democracy in Non-Formal Education........................................ 341

Political Learning through Women’s Experiences in Local Governments: The Case of Central American Path to Learning........................................................................................................................................................................ 341
Martha Barriga

“I Can See the Change”: The Community Training Plan at Toronto Community Housing.. 352
Carmen Downes, Marcia Wilson, Marion Thomson, Tracey Seaward & Katherine Jeffery

Non-Formal Citizenship Education in Cape Town: Struggling to Learn or Learning to Struggle? ........................................................................................................................................................................ 363
Kristin Endresen

Giving Space to Participate and Reflect: Adult Literacy Workers Doing Research-in-Practice ........................................................................................................................................................................ 373
Guy Ewing & Sheila Stewart

Enabling Active Citizenship through an Adult Leadership Development Program........ 382
Sharon Zivkovic

Formación Democrática para la Viabilidad de los Consejos Comunales: Una Experiencia Venezolana........................................................................................................................................................................ 394
Carment Varguillas, Silvia Ribot de Flores & Ernestina Báez
If I Were President: Using Popular Education as a Tool for Building a Democratic Society.................................................................................................................................................. 402
Rebecca Janzen

Formación de Competencias para la Consolidación de Cooperativas como Vía para el Aprendizaje Democrático en el Lugar de Trabajo: El Caso de Venezuela......................................... 409
Ernestina Báez, Carment Varguillas & Silvia Ribot de Flores

Section 5: Learning Democracy in Social Movements and Political Parties.................................................................................................................................................................................. 420

Las Políticas Participativas desde el Punto de Vista de las Organizaciones Sociales.......... 420
Martín Carné, Alberto Ford, Cintia Pinillos, Valeria Sassaroli & Valeria Venticinque

Learning Civic Environmentalism by Doing: Reflections from Activists’ Experiences in Rural Ontario........................................................................................................................................................................ 427
Suzanne L. Cook

The Roots of Engaged Citizenship Learning: Confrontations with Murderous Injustice, with Reference to Argentina and Colombia................................................................. 439
Dieter Misgeld

Participatory Democracy and Ecojustice: Framing a View of Healthy Learning Organizations through Complexity Science .................................................................................................................. 451
Darren Stanley & Kelly Young

Programa de Capacitación y Formación en Cultura Escolar para la Paz.......................... 460
Belkis Mendoza de Gómez & Daniela Donadi

The Struggle of NGOs in Pakistan for Pro-People Legislation........................................... 470
Mirza Abdul Shakoor

How and Why do Women's/Feminist Movements in Ecuador Use the Internet? ............. 475
Maria Svenning

Democracy in Social Movements: Learning through Protest ............................................ 483
L. Deborah Sword
Political Parties as Voluntary Social Service Organisations: Alternative Processes of Recruitment for Quality Participation in Political Parties in India ........................................ 492
*Vinay Sahasrabuddhe*

**Section 6: Learning Democracy in Local Communities** ........................................ 503

Praxis and Place in FedUp: Windsor’s Local Food Activism ........................................ 503
*Jamey Essex & Maya Ruggles*

Workplace Democracy and Solidarity Development: An Empirical Study of Venezuelan Cooperatives ............................................................... 510
*Camila Piñero Harnecker*

Learning Democratic Citizenship: Neighbourhoods as Key Places for Practicing Participatory Democracy ............................................................... 525
*Lake Sagaris*

Learning Intercultural Understanding in Public Places ........................................ 543
*Linda Dale Bloomberg, Christina Cataldo, Maria Cseh, Bridget O’onnor, Victoria Marsick, Peter Neaman, Ruud van der Veen, Marie Volpe, Janet W. Youngblood*

Mobilizing for Democracy through Nurturing Democratic Intelligence .................. 551
*Kathleen Kevany*

Grupo Arte Nuevo de Paraguay: Reserva de Prácticas Democráticas en un Contexto Autoritario ............................................................... 561
*Ángel Mariano Jara Oviedo*

Citizen Engagement and Elections in Nigeria: Learning Democracy through Transformative Theatre and Soccer ........................................ 567
*Tor Iorapuu*

Opening Spaces for Alternative Citizenship: Bringing Invisible Bodies to the Public through Art ............................................................... 580
*Mabel Llevat*
Aprendiendo a Transgredir Normas Democráticas: Un Estudio sobre la Socialización Primaria en Argentina .......................................................... 589

Ana Vernengo Villa Elisa

Democratic Practices and Transitional Spaces in a Public Art Project........................................ 597

Astrid von Kotze

Section 7: Learning Democracy through Governance ........................................ 607

From Objects to Subjects to Participants: Women and Gendered Governance in Kerala’s Participatory Democracy .................................................. 607

Manjula Bharathi

The Variable Geometry of Participatory Budgeting: Which Lessons from the new Portuguese Explosion? ........................................................................ 623

Nelson Dias & Giovanni Allegretti

Variations and Effects of Experimental Democracy: Neighbourhood Assemblies and Participatory Budgeting in Rosario .................................................. 638

Alberto Ford

Participatory Democracy and Political Learning: Lessons from the Brazilian Experience .................................................................................. 650

Lígia Helena Hahn Lüchmann

Civic Learning in State-Sponsored Institutions: Accounting for Variation in the British Columbia and Ontario Citizens’ Assemblies on Electoral Reform .............................................. 663

Amy Lang

Democracy, Participation and Learning: The Case of Venezuela .......................................................... 677

Manuel Larrabure


Josh Lerner

Construcción de Ciudadanía Democrática y Proyectos Educativos Urbanos: La Experiencia de las Ciudades Educadoras .................................................. 694

Pablo Montero Souto
Civic Learning and Political Engagement through Participatory Budgeting: The Case of Guelph, Canada ................................................................. 706
Elizabeth Pinnington & Daniel Schugurensky

Schools of Democracy: How Ordinary Citizens become Competent in Participatory Budgeting Institutions in Europe................................................................. 721
Julien Talpin

Participative Democracy in Municipal Governance................................................................. 735
Donald W. de Guerre & Andrew S. Trull

Section 8: Learning Democracy in Global Context ................................................................. 746

Citizenship, Globalization and Migration: Implications for Global Citizenship Education. 746
Katherine Daly

North-South City-to-City Cooperation in the field of Sustainable Development and Local Agenda 21: Transformative Citizenship Learning through International Partnerships ..... 757
Ulrike Devers-Kanoglu

The Globalisation of Citizenship: Exploring the Relevance of ‘Citizenship’ for Young People ................................................................. 767
Samantha Ratnam

Between Citizen Paralysis and Praxis: Toward a Critical Pedagogy for Confronting Global Violence................................................................. 777
Adam Davidson-Harden

Democratic Accountability in Education for Development Canadian INGOs and Claims of Participatory Legitimacy ................................................................. 795
Gary W. J. Pluim
Introduction

Practices and understandings of democracy, citizenship, and citizenship education are in transition. On the one hand, lower voter turnouts, declining citizen confidence in the political establishment, and criticisms about the ability of representative democracy to ensure social inclusion and equality of opportunity for all have sparked vigorous debates about ways to address the so-called “democratic deficit.” In the field of education, there have been paralleled growing concerns about the limitations of traditional civic education models that focus on the memorization of facts to nurture a critical, caring and engaged citizenry.

On the other hand, in the last two decades, innovative experiments in participatory democracy and citizenship education have proliferated in schools, universities, civil society organizations, social movements, co-operatives, workplaces, local and regional government, and many other spaces. Likewise, there has been an increasing awareness of the potential that opportunities for collective learning in democratic spaces have to advance the common good, to promote human development, and to complement the institutions of representative democracy with the insights of associative intelligence.

Despite the surge in the practice of the rapidly expanding fields of participatory democracy and citizenship learning, this remains a largely under-researched field, where networks for knowledge-sharing and collaboration remain nascent. To address these issues and provide a forum for these incipient networks, the Transformative Learning Centre (TLC) has organized two international conferences on citizenship learning and participatory democracy, both held at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto. The first conference, titled “Lifelong citizenship learning, participatory democracy and social change: local and global perspectives”, took place in October 2003, and its proceedings are available online, on the conference website (http://tlc.oise.utoronto.ca/conference2003/intro.html). The second international conference was held in October of 2008, on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the TLC, and was entitled “Learning Democracy by Doing: Alternative Practices in Citizenship Education and Participatory Democracy”. The reference to ‘learning by doing’ pays tribute to educators like John Dewey, who proposed that democracy is a community process and that through the experience of participating in democratic decision-making processes citizens could truly learn the value of democracy and acquire the capacities to for fully and meaningful participation.

The “Learning Democracy by Doing” conference brought together researchers and practitioners interested in the theoretical and practical aspects of citizenship education and participatory democracy, and committed to the project of nurturing an enlightened and active citizenship, on the one hand, and the project of deepening democracy, on the other. The conference attracted over 250 participants from all over the world. Because work in these fields is being carried out across many disciplines, the conference drew participation
from different sectors, including academic researchers, teachers in all levels of the education system, adult educators, community development workers, urban planners, community organizers, and a variety of governmental and non-governmental organizations invested in improving local democracy as well as capacity building for local democracy. We were very happy to welcome many participants from the Global South.

This publication includes many of the presentations made by the conference participants. The collection of 75 papers reflects the thinking of academics and practitioners from around the world about the current innovations in democratic practices. With a few exceptions, the papers are published in the original language in which they were written. The publication arises out of the rich experience of the conference participants who gathered to share their insights into the theoretical and practical implications of innovative thinking about democracy, participation and citizenship. Furthermore, the papers bring these issues into an international focus by presenting experiments from diverse arenas around the world. Whether discussing student councils in Iran, participatory approaches to worker training in Toronto, the promotion of women’s leadership in Central America or non-formal citizenship education in South Africa, the common theme remains a preoccupation with a pressing question: How can democracy, participation and citizenship be re-formulated and practiced to promote a better world?

This collection is organized into eight sections that reflect the broad themes discussed at the “Learning Democracy by Doing” Conference. They are as follows:

1. Learning Democracy: Conceptual Discussions, Debates and Issues
2. Learning Democracy in Schools
3. Learning Democracy in Higher Education
4. Learning Democracy in Non-Formal Education
5. Learning Democracy in Social Movements and Political Parties
6. Learning Democracy in Local Communities
7. Learning Democracy in Local and Provincial Governance
8. Learning Democracy in Global Context

The papers of the first section discuss issues related to democracy, citizenship, participatory democracy and citizenship education. Some authors assess how current practices can be re-directed to emphasize the development of more critical, caring and globally-minded citizens. These authors draw insights from different theoretical perspectives to inform the practice of teaching and learning for democratic citizenship, and the meaning of democracy itself. The second section explores diverse experiments with participatory democratic practices in schools settings (K-12) and the effects that these experiences are having on the citizenship of children and youth. The third section focuses on similar experiences in the context of higher education (including university academic programs and teacher training), whereas the fourth section deals with non-formal education initiatives.

The fifth section discusses the democratic and political learning that occurs through participation in social movements and political parties. These articles make a modest contribution to the incipient literature on a field known as “social movement learning”. The
sixth section explores the political and civic learning that takes place in local communities, be they cooperative workplaces, community groups, neighbourhood associations, and a variety of public spaces and civil society organizations. The papers of the seventh section deal with citizenship learning through experiments in local governance and state-sponsored initiatives, including participatory budgeting experiments in Latin America, Europe and Canada, citizen’s assemblies (“randomocracy”), and the Kerala model of local governance in India. The eight and last section includes papers that explore citizenship learning and democracy in global context, including issues of migration, international exchanges, international development, and global education.

We hope that these works will contribute to the growing research and interest in innovations in participatory democracy and citizenship education around the world. In the spirit of the conference, our goal in sharing this work is to inspire practitioners and theorists to continue grappling with the complexities of social change through reflecting on the theories and the practices of democracy.

Daniel Schugurensky, Katherine Daly and Krista Lopes, editors
Transformative Learning Centre, OISE/UT
Toronto, June 2009
‘Active Learning for Active Citizenship’, Community Based Learning and Democratic Citizenship

John Annette
University of London

Citizenship Education and the Concept of Citizenship, Everyday Politics and Civic Engagement

It could be argued that the conception of citizenship underlying UK lifelong learning for citizenship should be a civic republican one which emphasises democratic political participation. This reflects the influence of Bernard Crick and the ex-Minister David Blunkett. One of the key challenges facing the introduction of citizenship education in the UK is the question about whether and in what respects citizenship is ‘British’. Elizabeth Frazer has written about the 'British exceptionalism' towards discussing citizenship (Frazer 1999a). David Miller (2000) writes that

Citizenship-except in the formal passport-holding sense-is not a widely understood idea in Britain. People do not have a clear idea of what it means to be a citizen...Citizenship is not a concept that has played a central role in our political tradition. (p.26)

The question concerning to what extent British people are familiar or comfortable with the concept of citizenship raises questions about the extent to which the political language of citizenship and civic republicanism can increasingly be seen as a tradition of ‘British’ political thought which can provide the basis for a transformation of the more dominant liberal individualist political traditions.

In the UK the current ‘New Labour’ government has espoused a programme of civil renewal that links the public, private and voluntary and community sectors to work for the common good. This initiative is informed by a set of beliefs and values involving faith
tradiotions, ethical socialism, communitarianism and more recently civic republicanism. According to David Blunkett (2003), during his tenure as Home Secretary,

> The ‘civic republican’ tradition of democratic thought has always been an important influence for me...This tradition offers us a substantive account of the importance of community, in which duty and civic virtues play a strong and formative role. As such, it is a tradition of thinking which rejects unfettered individualism and criticises the elevation of individual entitlements above the common values needed to sustain worthwhile and purposeful lives. We do not enter life unencumbered by any community commitments, and we cannot live in isolation from others.” (Blunkett 2003, 19)

It is this civic republican conception of politics, which I would argue animates key aspects of New Labour’s policies from citizenship education to its strategy towards revitalising local communities.

Richard Dagger, in his influential study of civic education, argues that a civic republican conception of citizenship can reconcile both liberal individuality and the cultivation of civic virtue and responsibility:

> There is too much of value in the idea of rights-an idea rooted in firm and widespread convictions about human dignity and equality-to forsake it. The task, instead, is to find a way of strengthening the appeal of duty, community and related concepts while preserving the appeal of rights. (Dagger, 1997, p.58 and cf. Maynor 2003)

The creation of a shared political identity underlying citizenship should also allow for multiple political identities based on gender, race, ethnicity, social exclusion, for example. It may be that the civic republican politics of contestability, as recently argued for by Philip Pettit (1997), may provide a more pluralist basis for citizenship in contemporary Britain than traditional republican politics. Equally, recent theorists of liberal democracy like Eamonn Callan (1997) also argue that an education for citizenship must hold fast to a constitutive ideal of liberal democracy while allowing for religious and cultural pluralism. This more differentiated but universal concept of citizenship (Lister 1997 and 1998), encourages civic virtue and participation, while maintaining individual liberty and allowing for cultural difference, will create a way of understanding citizenship that is appropriate for an education for citizenship and democracy.

It could be argued that the recent establishment of an education for citizenship in England may be based more on a communitarian concern for moral and political socialisation than promoting civic engagement. Following Elizabeth Frazer’s distinction between a ‘philosophical communitarianism’ and a ‘political communitarianism’ (Frazer 1999b; cf. Tam 1998 and 2001), Adrian Little (2002) raises some important questions about the apolitical conception of community in communitarianism. He writes that

> As such, the sphere of community is one of contestation and conflict as much as it is one of agreement. Thus, essentially, it is deeply political. Where orthodox communitarians see politics as something to be overcome to the greatest possible extent, radicals argue that the downward devolution of power will entail more politics rather than less. (Little, 2002, p. 154)
In their studies of the political communitarianism, both Little and Frazer consider the revival of civic republicanism as emerging from the debate between liberal and communitarian conceptions of the politics of community. In civic republicanism (cf. Oldfield 1990 and Maynor 2003) freedom consists of active self-government and liberty rests not simply in negative liberty but in active participation in a political community.

In the USA this debate is also reflected in the writings of Benjamin Barber (1984, 1998a, 1998b), Michael Sandel (1996) and William Galston (2001), which have been promoting a civic republican conception of citizenship. According to Barber (1992) a fundamental challenge of contemporary societies is to provide citizens with the literacy required to live in a civil society, the competence to participate in democratic communities, the ability to think critically and act deliberately in a pluralist world, and the empathy that permits us to hear and thus accommodate others. All this involves skills that must be acquired.

Joseph Kahne and Joel Westheimer (2003) recommend a model of citizenship education based on the principles of social justice and Harry Boyte’s (2004) model based on the concept of ‘public work’ This debate about what is an appropriate model of ‘citizenship’ for citizenship education raises questions about the need for students to move beyond individualistic and consumer conceptions of citizenship toward developing a model of ‘civic republican’ and democratic citizenship education

This reconsideration of the concept of citizenship and citizenship education should also be informed by the recent work on the ‘politics of everyday life’ which can broaden our understanding what ‘the political’ could mean in the lives of all citizens. (Crick 2005; Bentley 2005; Boyte 2004; Ginsbourg 2005; Stoker 2006) We need more research about how people understand the ‘political’ as it relates to their everyday concerns in their communities, compared with the more formal political sphere of voting, political parties and holding public office. This broader conception of the political reflects a decline of formal political participation and lack of trust in formal politics at a time when there is evidence of continuing forms of civic engagement which may escape the radar of Robert Putnam’s research into social capital (cf. Putnam 2000; Sirianni and Friedland 2004 and 2005; Power Inquiry 2006) This also reflects the important distinction that should be made between volunteering leading to active citizenship and a more deliberately political forms of civic engagement in community which can lead to democratic citizenship.

In the USA and now beginning in the UK, academics are viewing service learning or community based learning as an important part of an education for active citizenship, which I would argue can be based either on a more ‘communitarian conception’ of citizenship (volunteering or community service) or a more ‘political or civic republican’ conception of citizenship (civic engagement and non-formal political participation).

‘Politics’ and Community Involvement
In his short book on democratic theory, Bernard Crick (2002) expressed a concern that

The interpretation of “community involvement” that underpins the Citizenship curriculum will involve a conception of the community that sees it simply as a place or neighbourhood where students are merely ‘active’: doing good rather than political good (ie informed, effective citizens. That is, the new curriculum will result in forms of volunteering that will fail to challenge the students to think and act ‘politically’ (p.115).

In contemporary political thinking, the concept of community has become both philosophically and ‘politically’ significant. Community has also become increasingly the focus of government policy in the UK and the USA. From the ‘Third-Way’ communitarianism of New Labour or the New Democrats, to the emergence of communitarian-based ‘Compassionate Conservatism’, the idea of community is now seen as a key to rethinking the relationship between civil society and the state. Government social policy concerning neighbourhood renewal and urban renaissance stresses the role of citizens in inner city areas in designing and rebuilding their communities (Sirianni and Friedland 2004; Taylor 2003).

Linked to this challenge is the perceived sense of the loss of community in contemporary British society. This lost sense of community also underlies the idea of social capital, which has recently been popularised by Robert Putnam in his study of the decline of civic engagement and social capital in the USA (Putnam 2000). The concept of social capital has provided a theoretical basis for understanding the importance of community, which, according to the neo-Tocquevillian analysis of Robert Putnam and his colleagues, has important consequences for citizenship and political participation. While Putnam and others have analysed the decline of traditional volunteering in the USA it is interesting to note that in the UK there has been a much smaller decline (Hall 2002 and Putnam 2002).

In contemporary political and sociological theory there has been a renewed interest in the idea of community (Bauman 2001; Delanty 2003). The concept of community is an elastic concept, which allows for an enormous range of meanings. From virtual communities to imaginary communities there are conceptual understandings of community to be found in a wide range of traditions of thought and academic disciplines. I would argue that there are at least four main ways of conceptualising community. (There are a number of contemporary writers who offer alternative ways of representing the varying understandings of the meaning of community (cf. Delanty 2003; Nash 2002; Taylor 2003.) The first is to consider community descriptively as a place or neighbourhood. The second is to talk of community as a normative ideal linked to respect, solidarity and inclusion, which can be found in the now well-established debate between liberalism and its communitarian critics. (Mulhall and Swift 1996) The third way of understanding community is based on the construction of cultural identities and can be found in communities of ‘interest.’ This conception is based on a politics of identity and recognition of difference. The fourth way is to consider community as a political ideal, which is linked to participation, involvement and citizenship, especially on the level of the community.
It is the case, of course, that these conceptual understandings of community are often elided and combined to produce hybrid conceptualisations of contemporary community. Thus a political understanding of community may be based in a specific neighbourhood where there are ‘public places’ and may include a variety of communities of identity or interest. It is also the case that political communitarianism can be understood through the analysis of the politics of community in terms of liberalism, communitarianism or civic republicanism. Advocates of both communitarianism and civic republicanism have recently begun to revive the idea of a civic service linked to the ideal of service to the local community. In Britain, a number of authors have argued for a national voluntary Citizen’s Service initiative. More recently, in the USA, there has been a renewed interest in establishing a form of national service, which would build on the success of the Americorps programme of the Corporation for National Service (Dionne, Jr., et.al. 2003 and Blunkett 2008). Susan Stroud, based on her previous work for the Ford Foundation, has also been exploring this theme internationally (cf. www.icip.org).

**Civil/Civic Renewal and Active Citizenship**

David Blunkett, in his Edith Kalm Memorial Lecture and various publications and speeches, has called for a new civic renewal, or civic engagement, which emphasizes new forms and levels of community involvement in local and regional governance. This work has been carried on by Hazel Blears, Minister for the Department for Communities and Local Government, as part of its community empowerment strategy. This new democratic politics, which would include referendums, consultative activities, and deliberative participation, has found support from organizations as diverse as the Local Government Association and the prominent think tank Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR 2004). One outcome of this shift in thinking, which might be termed a switch from government to governance, is the obligation upon local authorities to establish Local Strategic Partnerships, a duty arising from the Local Government Act of 2000. These partnerships seek to involve local communities in the development of community strategies. Previously, the Home Office established a Civil Renewal Unit, which has begun piloting an ‘Active Learning for Active Citizenship’ programme through which it is intended that adult learners will develop the capacity to engage in deliberative democracy at a local level. This unit is now the Community Empowerment Unit in the Department for Communities and Local Government and the ‘Together We Can’ cross-departmental strategy is being supported by the new ‘Community Empowerment Strategy’. (cf. Brannan, et.al. 2007)

In the USA, this civic renewal movement has led commentators to challenge the assumption of Robert Putnam and others that there has been a fundamental decline in social capital and civic participation. Carmen Sirianni and Lewis Friedland have mapped out the different dimensions of this movement and while recognizing the decline of more traditional forms of civic engagement and political participation, like membership of formal organizations, voting and membership of political parties. They call for more creative forms of civic engagement, arguing that there new and changing forms of civic renewal are constantly developing (Sirianni and Friedland, 2004 and 2005; cf. Skocpol, Theda and M.Fiorina 1999). Internationally, there is evidence of new global networks emerging,
which promote these new forms of civic engagement and deliberative democracy (Fung and Wright 2003; Gastil and Levine 2005).

This recent work on civic renewal also points out the limitations of social capital theory by recognizing the need to go beyond both bridging and bonding social capital to enable political action through linking social capital. Without vertical political networking, for example, poor communities do not necessarily gain access to new forms of political influence (Edwards, Foley and Diani 2001; Woolcock 2001; Field 2003).

‘Lifelong Learning for Active Citizenship’ and Community Involvement

In the UK there are increasing numbers of capacity building programmes for people in the voluntary and community sectors who participate in partnership work in Single Regeneration Budget Programmes and New Deal for Communities Programmes. There are also the ‘Local Strategic Partnerships’ (LSP’s) for the development of local authority ‘community strategies’, which in key areas of deprivation are linked to Neighbourhood Renewal Programme. These LSP’s, funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme, now have Community Empowerment Networks and funding for community learning. These capacity building programmes and the experiential learning involved in participating in regeneration activities offer an important opportunity for structuring non-formal lifelong learning for active citizenship (Henderson and Mayo 1998; Anastascio, et.al. 2000; Thompson 2001; Mayo 2002). The learning theory and practice of service learning, with its emphasis on ‘reflective practice’ and the development of active citizenship through experiential learning can be adapted to provide a way of learning that best meets the needs of adult learners who are actively involved in their communities. In many of these cases the interest in lifelong learning for active citizenship may lay more in building social capital (cf. Putnam 2000) than with capacity building for democratic political participation (Annette 2003; Edwards, et al. 2001). While recent research by Charles Pattie, Patrick Seyd and Paul Whitely (Pattie, et al. 2004) provide a framework for examining attitudes in the UK towards citizenship, there is growing research on the nature and forms of political participation (Parry, et al. 1992; Schlozman, et al. 1994; Seyd and Whiteley 1996), much more research is needed to fully understand the complex political attitudes of people in order to establish more effective forms of political participation. Research in this area also needs to go beyond the limited conception of politics that can be found in the literature of political socialisation.

There is an increasing amount of research into the relationship between volunteering and adult learning. This includes both the formal learning required for the professionalisation of volunteer management and the non-formal and informal learning outcomes of the experience of volunteering on adults (Elsey 1993; Elsdon 1995 and 2000). There is evidence that volunteers are increasingly looking to gain knowledge and skills for employability through volunteering (Elsey 1993). The types of learning that occur in volunteer settings cross the range of adult learning. At the core of this development is the recognition of reflective learning, which is based on the principles of experiential learning. Elsdon (1995) has found that many volunteer activities produce learning outcomes that involve personal growth, self-confidence and a range of key skills and capabilities. While this research represents an important beginning it does not match the extensive research
into the learning outcomes of service learning in the USA (cf. Eyler and Giles 1999). In particular, it does not address the question of whether volunteer activity promotes not only bonding and bridging social capital but also democratic citizenship (Annette 2003; Kahane 2000).

‘Active Learning for Active Citizenship’

In 2004 the Civil Renewal Unit of the Home Office, which was established under the influence of the Home Secretary at the time, David Blunkett, enabled the development of the ‘Active Learning for Active Citizenship’ (ALAC) programme for adult learning in the community for citizenship. In a scoping report by Val Woodward entitled, “Active Learning for Active Citizenship” a participatory and community based pedagogy was proposed (Woodward 2004). Woodward’s learning framework is analogous to one proposed by Pam Coare and Rennie Johnston, which they argue should be inclusive, pluralistic, reflexive and promote active citizenship (Coare and Johnston 2003). They emphasise the need to listen to community voices in determining what forms of learning meet the needs of different communities. In the action research-based evaluation by Mayo and Rooke (2006) they recognise that the ALAC programme did not result in a formal national curriculum but instead provides a learning framework which is participatory and community based, which recognises difference while enabling a shared political identity of citizenship, as well as an understanding of global interdependence.

An important feature of participatory politics, which has recently been emphasised, is the need to enable the capacity to participate in deliberative democratic engagement. From citizens’ juries to community visioning, the deliberative engagement of citizens has become an increasing feature of the new localism and also public service delivery (Lowndes 1998; Fung and Wright 2003; Barnes, et al. 2007; Brannan, et al. 2007). More recently there has been growing international interest in participatory budgeting from the more famous example of Porto Alegre in Brazil to developments in the UK, such as the experiment in Lewisham in London. The work of the Power Commission (2006) and think tanks like the IPPR (2004), the New Economics Foundation, Involve, now promote a more participatory and deliberative form of citizen engagement (cf. Leighninger 2008; Rosenberg 2008). What has been lacking has been an analysis of what form of capacity building is necessary for citizens to participate in these activities and in what ways participation in deliberative democratic engagement provide a form of education for democratic citizenship (Eslin, et al. 2001; Gastil and Levine 2005; Van der Veen, et al. 2008). This involves a consideration of how deliberative democratic theory, like the emphasis on inclusion and voice in the work of Iris Marion Young, can influence educational practice. It also means that the analysis of the institutional practice of deliberative democratic engagement must develop an understanding of experiential learning and the means to analyse its learning outcomes. We need to know more about how citizens can develop the civic skills necessary for deliberative democratic engagement (Kirlin 2003). A particularly necessary skill is ‘civic listening’ in addition to ‘civic speaking’. This would include both levels of emotional literacies and intercultural understanding.

In conclusion, I would like to note how the New Labour Government’s programme for the modernisation of local government and its community empowerment strategies
provide the opportunity for local people to get involved in local government and regeneration partnership boards. This is part of a shift from local government to local governance and such activities provide rich opportunities for non-formal lifelong learning for active citizenship (Newman 2001 and 2005). This non-formal experiential learning would benefit from being informed by the theory and practice of community based learning as developed in the USA and now growing internationally (Annette 2001).

Research into the working of the community leadership involved in Single Regeneration Budget partnerships, New Deal for Communities elected boards, ‘Local Strategic Partnerships’ and now regional empowerment networks in England has highlighted the need for capacity building programmes for active citizenship and community leadership. This research also recognises the importance of the political context within which these activities take place (Purdue, et al. 2002; Taylor 2003; Annette 2003; Annette and Mayo forthcoming). The opportunity for a lifelong learning for active citizenship through participation in local governance and regeneration partnership work provides for the possible development of a civic republican or participatory democratic conception of citizenship. What is needed is the provision of a lifelong learning for active citizenship that involves participatory experiential learning and an innovative form of ‘political’ learning.

References


Annette, John., and M. Mayo. forthcoming. Active Learning for Active Citizenship. NIACE.


Barber, Benjamin. 1998a A Passion for Democracy, Princeton University Press.


Coare, Pam and Rennie Johnston. 2003. Adult Learning, citizenship and community voices. Leicester :NIACE.


Galston, William. 2001 Political Knowledge, Political Engagement and Civic Education. Annual Review of Political Science, 4


Kirklin, Mary. 2003. The role of civic skills in fostering civic engagement, CIRCLE Research Paper


Seyd, P. and Whiteley, P. 1996. Rationality and party-activism: Encompassing tests of alternative models of political participation, European journal of Political Research, 29(2)


Learning for Democracy: Resuscitating the Argument

Jim Crowther, Ian Martin & Mae Shaw
University of Edinburgh

Introduction

In the last two decades political reform in the UK has resulted in the systematic devolution of political power to a relatively autonomous national parliament in Scotland and devolved national assemblies in both Wales and Northern Ireland. It could be argued that these changes are a tangible response to increasing demands for local autonomy and more accountable political structures closer to where people live and work. In this sense, the process of devolution is essentially a democratic one. At the same time, however, democratic politics have been systematically subjected to the rigours of the managerial state, where politics is reduced to a debate between competing technocratic systems rather than conflicting ideological visions. One of the outcomes of these contradictory trends has been a move away from deliberative democratic processes to imposed managerial procedures. This has particular consequences for the role of community educators whose work, historically, is premised on democratic participation. The result has been a sense of demoralization amongst a significant number of practitioners (see Tett et al 2007).

The Community Education Service was created in Scotland in 1975 by the amalgamation of youth work specialists, community development workers and adult educators who were mainly employed by local government and had a remit to work with ‘communities of interest’ as well as geographically based communities. Community education as a social and political practice has a longer history and is essentially concerned with the idea of developing the curriculum of study out of people’s life experiences, aspirations and concerns. However, the new managerialism and the general undermining of the public sector have seriously undermined this negotiated process of engagement with communities. It was in this context that we sought actively to reassert the vital connection between community based education and democratic life and to contribute towards this process.

On 30 November 2006, we organised a meeting in a room made available to us in the Scottish Parliament building in Edinburgh. The choice of venue was symbolically significant, demonstrating to the new democratic institution that conflict and dissent
remain central ingredients of a vigorous democracy. This meeting was the outcome of an unexpectedly enthusiastic response to an open letter we had previously distributed to interested academics and practitioners across Scotland. The text of the open letter read as follows:

**Whatever Happened to Learning for Democracy?**

We see our work in community-based education as part of a broader democratic process. This is about enabling people to demand social justice and equality for themselves and others. There is now an historic opportunity to renew democracy in Scotland, and yet we are beginning to feel a profound sense of disappointment about the way in which both our own work and the lives of people in communities are being managed, regulated and controlled.

Community learning is being tied into state policy rather than policy being informed by democratic learning. Despite much good practice on the ground, there is a systematic and debilitating reductionism at work in the policy agenda: lifelong learning is largely reduced to instrumental and economic terms, to learning for a living rather than learning for life; community development is largely reduced to delivering the community to policy through pseudo-democratic forms of participation and partnership; working with young people is largely reduced to surveillance and preparation for employment. There can be no vision of a different kind of Scotland in this systematic reduction of democratic purpose to managerial procedure.

This is not the way to activate citizens for democratic renewal or enthuse them about the possibilities of democratic life. Moreover, there is a real danger of a new kind of democratic deficit developing. The real threat to Scotland’s new democracy comes not from apathy but from cynicism.

What is required, in the first instance, is a much more open, democratic and imaginative dialogue and debate about what kind of society we want to live in, and how we can begin to build it in Scotland today. Education and learning in communities can contribute to making this vision a reality, and they are a rich resource for tackling significant problems in society. Ordinary people need the opportunity to have their say, to be listened to and to talk back to the state. This is essentially a democratic process. It cannot simply be managed and measured; it has to be nurtured and cultivated in communities. It requires faith and trust in the people, and a valuing of genuinely democratic dialogue and debate.

As it turned out, we seemed to have tapped into and maybe helped to articulate a real sense of frustration, disappointment and anger at what democratic renewal in the new Scotland appeared to mean in and for our work. What this response suggests is that there is a shared perception that something has gone wrong with community-based education and development work; that far from empowering communities and creating change, practitioners may actually be disempowering communities by delivering them up to top-down policy change. Whilst the context of this development is specifically Scottish, we are confident it will resonate with developments elsewhere where similar processes of neoliberal change are taking place.
A major report published by the Rowntree Foundation in the UK in 2006 (Rowntree 2006), expresses one important dimension of the problem - Community Participation: Who Benefits? What researchers found was what many of us already knew from our own experience: very few people get involved, and those that do tend to be involved in everything, sometimes to the exclusion of others. More significantly, what they also found was the ironic truth that such a consultative elite was in fact created and reinforced by those very structures and processes established to encourage democratic participation and implemented by various kinds of community-based workers. They summed up this approach as ‘quick fix, consultative elite, imposed agenda’. It was this kind of context that provoked us to take stock of what we were doing – and, equally important, not doing.

**Learning for Democracy**

Learning for democracy is intended to suggest that learning for a truly democracy society can only be achieved and sustained through the common commitment of citizens to learn, argue, debate and, if necessary, to differ and disagree. This is about building a deliberative democratic culture.

Scotland has just witnessed a unique historical conjuncture, establishing its own hard-won parliament and its own politics. Yet we seem to be expected to talk about our work as if the historical moment did not exist, or did not matter. There is nothing that betrays even the remotest sense of history in the slick and glossy documents churned out by the Scottish Government in the bright new dawn of 'lifelong learning'. We now seem to be profoundly at odds with the historical traditions of social purpose and political engagement, which should inform our work. By way of illustration, the “vision statement” of the Scottish Government on lifelong learning can be compared with two statements from earlier times. The consultation paper *Lifelong Learning – Building on Success* (Scottish Executive 2006) begins:

Our vision for lifelong learning in Scotland is to provide the best possible match between the learning opportunities open to people and the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that will strengthen Scotland’s economy and society.

In contrast, here is a very different kind of statement from another historical moment, a book by Harold Shearman called significantly *Adult Education for Democracy*, which was published by the Workers’ Educational Association in 1944. This was the year before the end of the Second World War but it is, of course, thinking ahead to the post-war era. It says much about the process of learning for democracy:

Democracy implies the formation of social judgement on the basis of informed discussion. It requires that men and women shall decide on particular issues, not as a result of passing moods or casual opinions, but in the light of a philosophy of life. Such a philosophy, if it is to be anything more than the repetition of slogans, must be formed as the result of much reflection on the problems of social organisation in general and on the aims and purposes of society. Knowledge is essential; but it must be mixed with experience; and the pooling and comparison of experience in the light of new knowledge, in a group of people with common interests but bringing varied contributions to be drawn from daily life, is the essence of democratic Adult Education. (Shearman 1944, 77)
And, just for good measure, the 1975 Alexander Report *Adult Education: The Challenge of Change*, which promoted the creation of local authority community education services in Scotland, says the following:

Society is now less certain about the values it should uphold and tolerates a wide range. Individual freedom to question the value of established practices and institutions and to propose new forms is part of our democratic heritage. To maintain this freedom, resources should not be put at the disposal only of those who conform but ought reasonably to be made available to all for explicit educational purposes. The motives of those who provide education need not necessarily be identified with the motives of those for whom it is provided. (Scottish Education Department 1975, 25)

This loss of historical consciousness and political engagement is probably familiar to colleagues in many different parts of the world.

**Policy and Politics**

It is increasingly necessary to make a critical distinction between policy and politics. By *policy* we mean the top-down imperatives of the state, and the invited spaces they offer for various kinds of managed consultation and partnership. By *politics* we mean the bottom-up aspirations of people in communities, and the necessity for democratic spaces in which to develop, articulate and pursue them. Let us take a current example of how (and why) politics must interrogate policy in the interests of democracy. We hear a great deal these days about ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’. These are often, of course, convenient ways of not talking about nasty things like poverty and inequality. Scotland has sometimes patted itself on the back for embracing the supposedly positive notion of ‘inclusion’ whilst social policy in England tends to be associated with the negative notion of ‘exclusion’. In reality, however, both are part of a policy rhetoric that needs to be problematised and deconstructed.

Feminist scholar, Ruth Lister (2001), has this to say about the idea of ‘exclusion’:

What is at issue is not just the exclusion from the bonds of common citizenship of those at the bottom, but also the way in which those at the top can exclude themselves from these bonds and therefore fail to acknowledge the equal worth of their fellow citizens (438).

On the other hand, Paulo Freire reminds us that ‘inclusion’ can also be a difficult business:

... the oppressed are not marginals ... living ‘outside’ society. They have always been inside – inside the structure which made them ‘beings for others’. The solution is not to ‘integrate’ them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they become beings for themselves (Freire 1972, 48.)

Freire’s point serves to emphasise the importance of language – both its diversionary and focusing potential. The words we use matter because they tell us how to think and what to do. For example:
• *Individual ‘choices’* are not the same thing as *collective ‘Choice’*. Processes of individuation and marketization reduce the notion of the citizen to a self-interested consumer or agent making choices irrespective of the common good and what it may mean for the society we collectively ‘Choose’ to live in.

• *Social capital* is not the same thing as *social justice*. Social capital locates social and economic problems (and their solutions) within the quality and texture of social relationships and civil society. Social justice suggests that inequalities need to be located within unequal structures of power.

• *Inclusion* is not the same thing as *redistribution*. Current policy interest in inclusion while maintaining the status quo—which is assumed to be unproblematic-systematically draws attention away from inequality and the need for material redistribution by focussing on individual deficits and unresponsive institutions.

• *Cohesion* is not the same thing as *solidarity*. Cohesion is about integrating people into the dominant order, while solidarity is about developing collective goals to further the interests of exploited and marginalised groups and, where necessary, to radically transform society.

In trying to recover some element of ‘learning for democracy’ in our work, we need to: a) get back some sense of history and our distinctive role in the present historical moment, b) understand more clearly what the contradictions between policy and politics mean for our work, and c) be both more careful and critically aware about the language we use.

**Reclaiming Social Purpose Education**

The Scottish-born philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre has characterised institutions and, by extension, vocations and professions as ‘embodied arguments’:

> Every institution is ... the embodiment of a historical argument and the expression of a set of values. Institutions survive by a continuous adaptation of their argumentative base, a continuing fulfilment of their original argument in a new context. ... At some point, of course, an argument may become redundant or irrelevant, and the institution founded on it will itself become redundant or will have to reorganise itself around a different and more relevant position (Craig 2003,177).

We argue that the idea of social purpose remains an important part of the ‘embodied argument’ of community-based educational work, and why we choose to do it. What we are talking about is, essentially, a way of making a particular kind of politics pedagogical. Social purpose education has always stood for purposeful intervention in the interests of social and political change: change towards more justice, more equality and more democracy. Traditions of this kind exist in most popular histories and cultures - in the rich world and the poor world, North and South. Briefly, social purpose education can be characterised in the following terms:

1. Participants/learners are treated as citizens and social actors
2. Curriculum reflects shared social and political interests
3. Knowledge is actively and purposefully constructed to advance these collective interests
4. Pedagogy is based on dialogue rather than transmission
5. Critical understanding is linked to social action and political engagement
6. Education is always a key resource in the broader struggle for social change.

In the Scottish context and tradition, the notion of social purpose has been closely linked to democratic process. In fact, the Scottish version of community education was rooted in a distinctively social democratic way of thinking (SED 1975; Martin 1996; Tett 2006). We seem to have strayed a long way from this. Part of the embodied argument of our work, which we are now in danger of losing, lies precisely in nurturing a democratic impulse harnessed to a social justice agenda. This is our distinctive vocation, using ‘vocation’ in the sense of finding a meaning for life in the work we do. Perhaps what we now really need is to rediscover our vocation.

In his book *Power and Prospects*, Noam Chomsky makes the useful distinction between ‘visions’ and ‘goals’:

By visions, I mean the conception of a future society that animates what we actually do, a society in which a decent human being might want to live. By goals, I mean the choices and tasks that are within reach, that we will pursue one way or another guided by a vision that may be distant and hazy (1996, 70).

He goes on to encourage us to reassess our vocation in these terms:

An animating vision must rest on some conception of human nature, of what's good for people, of their needs and rights, of the aspects of their nature that should be nurtured, encouraged and permitted to flourish. ...This much, at least, is true of people who regard themselves as moral agents, not monsters – who care about the effects of what they do or fail to do (Chomsky 1996, 70).

Maintaining such an “animating vision” for our work as “moral agents” means thinking as consistently as we can against the grain of the neo-liberal common sense of our times. This brings to mind the compelling title of Mike Newman’s book, *Teaching Defiance* (2006). If, as the global pro-democracy movement proclaims, “Another world is possible”, then the dispositions of this world, the world in which we now live, must, indeed, be defied and resisted. So, if we wish to think of our work in terms of the democratic impulse harnessed to a social justice agenda, the question is this: *What is the vision of a future society that animates what we actually do, and how do we begin the messy business of making the choices and undertaking the tasks this implies?* The meeting in the Scottish Parliament was an attempt to kickstart this process by generating the following critical questions appropriate to various levels of educational intervention and political engagement.

1. **Community/local:** Can we be more proactive? Do we engage in acts of self-surveillance without testing the boundaries of the possible? If so, what blocks need to be overcome? If we are engaged in learning for democracy, how might it be extended? What type of support will assist this?
2. **Professional:** As adult and community education becomes more central to policy, it seems to have become more respectable, and therefore, in danger of losing its critical analysis. How can this process be resisted? How can we make this resistance and its consequences visible within the profession? The purpose of “delivering people to policy” and “managing them” needs to be challenged. Naming how this is happening is a good starting point. Where are the opportunities for this naming?

3. **Agency/organisational:** Since the late 1970s there has been a dramatic process of restructuring and diminution of Community Education Services, coupled with the growth of short-term project funding and incorporation of the voluntary sector into government policy by funding mechanisms. We are also witnessing the growth of the private sector in a range of consultation activities that, in the past, would probably have been part of a community development process. These trends are aspects of a wider ideological attack on the public sector and the elevation of the private sector. Where are the opportunities in agencies and organisations to challenge these trends? What has been done to respond or propose alternatives? What can be done to respond or propose alternatives?

4. **National:** Parliamentary elections are periods in the political cycle when politicians actively seek out constituencies to speak to and be visible in. How can we make the most of these opportunities by lobbying, participating in hustings, and where possible, acting through political parties? What resources are needed in order to do this?

**Conclusion: New Beginnings?**

One of the outcomes of the Open Letter was the formation of a group of academics, practitioners and student activists who met over a period of a year to look at ways of presenting our ideas to a wider audience. The end result of extensive discussion and debate was an eye-catching laminated wall chart, which presented ten propositions and ten proposals about learning for democracy. The wall chart expressed commitment but was not prescriptive; it was accessible and provoked discussion; it articulated an alternative rather than simply responding in terms which were already too loaded; it stressed the political nature of a very depoliticised professional discourse. In summary, it went completely against the grain of the current hegemony, which we propose is its unique value. The purpose of the chart is not only to articulate an alternative vision, but to change the discourse, to reclaim the kind of language which has been suppressed by the managerial turn. The wall chart reads as follows:

**Ten propositions - Democracy is about**

1. **Freedom**
   Human flourishing is achieved through freedom to act individually and collectively, only constrained by due consideration for others.

2. **Equality**
All people are of the same moral worth and are obliged to mind the equality of others.

3. **Justice**
   Justice and democracy are interdependent. An unjust society is an undemocratic society and an undemocratic society breeds injustice.

4. **Solidarity**
   Shared aims and values arise from the pursuit of common purposes and mutually supportive ways of living.

5. **Diversity**
   Dialogue between different cultures and identities can enrich society and help to build a common culture.

6. **Accountability**
   The state is accountable to its citizens for providing the policy framework within which judgements about common good are made and contested. Those who hold power are answerable to the people.

7. **Dialogue**
   Democracy requires dialogue and the possibility of dissent. This means learning to argue, articulate beliefs, deliberate and come to collective decisions concerning what constitutes the good society.

8. **Responsibility**
   Consistency and coherence between private and public behaviour are essential to the quality of democratic life.

9. **Participation**
   Democracy is something to be negotiated from below rather than handed down from above. Citizens require the opportunity to talk back to the state.

10. **Sustainability**
    A commitment to the environment and to future generations requires determined opposition to those forces which are wasteful and destructive.

**Ten proposals - Learning for democracy means**

1. **Taking sides**
   Educational workers are not merely enablers or facilitators. The claim to neutrality can reinforce and legitimise existing power relations. Practitioners need to be clear about what they stand for—and against.

2. **Acting in solidarity**
   Practitioners should proactively seek opportunities to engage in a critical and committed way with communities and social movements for progressive social change.
3. **Taking risks**
   Critical and creative learning is necessarily unpredictable and open-ended. Exploring official problem definitions and challenging taken-for-granted ways of thinking can be a liberating process.

4. **Developing political literacy**
   Politics needs to be made more educational and education made more political. Learning to analyse, argue, co-operate, and take action on issues that matter requires a systematic educational process.

5. **Working at the grassroots**
   Democracy lives through ordinary people’s actions; it does not depend on state sanction. Practitioners should be in everyday contact with people on their own ground and on their own terms.

6. **Listening to dissenting voices**
   Activating democracy is a process of creating spaces in which different interests are expressed and voices heard. Dissent should be valued rather than suppressed.

7. **Cultivating awkwardness**
   Democracy is not necessarily best served by the conformist citizen. This means that the educational task is to create situations in which people can confront their circumstances, reflect critically on their experience and take action.

8. **Educating for social change**
   Collective action can bring about progressive change. Learning for democracy can contribute to this process by linking personal experience with wider political explanations and processes.

9. **Exploring alternatives**
   Learning for democracy can provide people with the opportunity to see that the status quo is not inevitable – that “another world is possible.”

10. **Exposing the power of language**
    The words used to describe the world influence how people think and act. Learning for democracy involves exploring how language frames attitudes, beliefs and values.

   This wall chart has been widely distributed, in and beyond the UK, and has proved very popular as a statement of intent and as a tool to critically engage with issues, which seem to be missing in so many forms of education. We have not yet attempted to systematically evaluate how it is being used, and what response it has generated, but we are aware of a variety of different groups that have used it in different educational settings and in different countries.
Pedagogically, the succinct nature of the propositions and proposals make it ideally suited for work with community groups as a stimulus for changing the discourse about how we think about public services. We are aware of community groups who use it because the language is ‘user friendly’ and this helps educators to stimulate discussion as well as to legitimate collective dissent. In a very different institutional setting, staff at Northern College in the UK have, in the context of their partnership work at the University of Villabh Vidyanagah, India, used it as part of their educational work on climate change because it quickly generates discussion and is a simple way of highlighting the political nature of education. Students of Human Ecology at the University of Strathclyde have also debated the wall chart as an example of popular education in Scotland. Of course different contexts crucially shape the experience of democracy and the issues that need to be discussed and acted on. The wall chart’s propositions and proposals may not be the best or most appropriate ones in some contexts. Students at the Ontario Institute for the Study of Education, in Canada, have critiqued the wall chart for its ‘developed world’ centredness and that the thorny issue of the relationship between democracy and capitalism is not explicitly discussed, amongst other things. We welcome such critique as examples of what democracy and democratic learning should entail. Our intention was not to create a rigid formula for thinking about learning for democracy but to deploy the propositions and proposals as a starting point for analysis and discussion – not its end point.

In our University we have begun a series of ‘learning lunches for democracy’ where students are invited to come along, eat their lunch and discuss ideas such as freedom, equality, social justice and so on and to identify the many explicit and nuanced ways we experience these in our everyday lives. There are no lectures or inputs to these sessions but questions posed as a starting point for discussion. eg. Why are we interested in equality? What do we mean by it? Where do we experience equality in our lives? Where do we experience inequality? What do we understand are the causes of these experiences? Is inequality ever justifiable? Apart from generating some critical discussions and insight the learning lunches have created, unintentionally, an opportunity for undergraduate students from different year groups, as well as postgraduates, to debate these issues together—an interesting democratic experience itself.

In addition to the above, the wall chart has been cited at academic conferences, professional policy contexts and practice settings. It has been explicitly used to address issues of professional identity through *The Edinburgh Papers* (2008), which is a compilation of articles written by university staff involved in the provision of community education training programmes and it has been widely circulated as a resource for reinvigorating discussion of professional culture and values. In Aberdeen in the north of Scotland the wall chart has been used as part of in-service training on community development work. The importance of building a curriculum of engagement from the ‘bottom up’, rather than the ‘top down’, is reinforced through discussion of the proposition and proposals. As part of this process Strathclyde University is organising a symposium in 2009 on *Devolution: Ten Years On*, which aims to reassess the relationship between the state, communities and community education. But not all uses of it need to be grand. As one community educator told us, he has the wall chart hanging beside his computer as a reminder of what he should be doing!
The wall chart is now in its second print run and has had a high demand. We believe that the value of this kind of initiative is that it is a very modest but public act of resistance, which provides a distinctive resource for the difficult business of learning for democracy.

**Acknowledgements**

We wish to acknowledge the contribution of many other colleagues and comrades to this work.

**References**


Participatory Democracy and the Renewal of Radical Politics

Stephen D'Arcy
Huron University College

Introduction

In the past two decades, the project of radically transforming capitalist societies in order to create communities that are in some sense ‘socialist’ has undergone a profound crisis. This crisis has sometimes looked like a complete collapse of the radical Left, especially in Canada and the United States, where the socialist Left has always been comparatively weak. But the two most striking features of this crisis – the discrediting of the statist central planning model of socialism and the systematic adaptation by social democratic parties to neo-liberalism – have produced not only dangers for the Left, but also opportunities. In this paper, I want to make the case for a cautiously optimistic assessment of the prospects for a self-reinvention by the North American radical Left, on the basis of grassroots organizing for a non-statist, egalitarian and participatory-democratic alternative to capitalism.¹

The paper has three parts. In Part One, I offer a way of thinking about the crisis of radical politics which acknowledges the widespread rejection of the de facto political initiatives that were long seen as central to the project of the radical Left, such as a planned economy and an expansive public sector. Contrary to conventional wisdom, however, I interpret this rejection as a function of the concessions of the Left to core elements of modern capitalism, notably, bureaucratic governance, alienated labour, and the separation of workers from the levers of economic decision-making. In Part Two, I draw attention to some of the most promising and dynamic political initiatives of the contemporary radical Left in North America, and highlight what differentiates these initiatives from those of earlier generations of radicals, notably the centrality of participatory-democratic processes.

¹ Two terminological notes: First, this paper concerns the radical Left in Canada and the United States. Whenever, for the sake of brevity, I use the expression ‘North American Left,’ I mean to refer to the Canadian and American Left, in contrast to the Central or the South American Left. Second, when I discuss ‘social democracy,’ I have in mind what we might call ‘radical’ social democracy, i.e., those who pursue a ‘parliamentary road to socialism,’ as distinct from pro-capitalist varieties of social democracy.
to both the way they define their aims and the methods by which they organize themselves in the here and now. And finally, in Part Three, based on these considerations, I offer an anticipatory sketch of a possible future for the radical Left, grounded in contemporary trends, but also counting on the as-yet unrealized prospect of a fusion of today’s marginal radical initiatives with a hoped-for resurgence of anti-systemic social movements, on a scale large enough to put fundamental social change back on the agenda of contemporary history.

**Part One: The Crisis of the Radical Left**

It is no secret that the radical Left is in crisis. Nancy Fraser (1997), one of today’s most important radical intellectuals, has defined our time as a ‘post-socialist’ age, by which she means a time in which the project of radically transforming society by replacing capitalism with socialism has been, for the time being at least, taken off the table as a viable scenario. No doubt, this assessment is correct, as far as it goes. But there remains an open question: how plausible is it to anticipate a resurgence of the socialist project, a renewal of the realistic hope for the construction of a radically egalitarian and radically democratic economic and political alternative to capitalism?

Let us set aside at once the debate over the word, ‘socialism.’ Nothing important hinges on this word. What radicals insist upon is the desirability of a post-capitalist society, founded upon political and economic democracy, and social and environmental justice. The standard name is ‘socialism.’ But there are others. In this paper, for instance, I will note the popularity of the proposal for a post-capitalist egalitarian and democratic economy that goes by the name, ‘participatory economics.’ We can call it what we like.

Indeed, we can go further. It is arguable, I would suggest, that a narrow fixation on the external markings of the radical project – words like ‘socialist’ or ‘marxist,’ symbols like red flags or raised fists – has been a source of great confusion and political disorientation. Too often, radicals have thought that their role was to defend institutions that referred to themselves as ‘socialist’ or governments that brandished red flags. Many of the most tragic wrong turns in the history of 20th century radicalism could have been mitigated, if not avoided outright, by a more disciplined focus on the extent to which institutions, claiming to be part of the Left, were organized to remain consistent with the values, goals and principles which the Left defined and whether these institutions stood opposed to capitalism. This would mean evaluating institutions by their insistence on grassroots democracy, rigorous egalitarianism, demand for self-management in the workplace, opposition to hierarchy and domination, and so on. The renewal of the Left should begin, however paradoxical it may sound, by returning to an early insight of Karl Marx: “every shopkeeper,” he wrote, “is well able to distinguish between what somebody professes to be and what he really is.” We on the Left, I would add, should demand no less a capacity from ourselves.

Whatever one thinks about the retention of this baggage-laden word, ‘socialism,’ it is clear that the problems facing radicals run far deeper than terminological confusion. Call it what we like, the project for a radical, post-capitalist, revolutionary transformation of society, along egalitarian lines, has few defenders in today’s ‘post-socialist’ political context.
What interests me, in this inquiry, is the question as to why socialism, once so powerful in its mass appeal, in every corner of the globe, has now fallen into a state of near-total disrepute and popular repudiation.

There are those, above all those on the political right, who regard this turn of events as symptomatic of socialism’s sheer impossibility. According to this view, the inability of socialist, or more broadly, non-capitalist economic institutions to solve the problems confronting any modern society has been exposed, for all to see. But how plausible is that? After all, viewed in world-historical terms, the 20th century Left was by no means without its successes. The Soviet Union, for instance, was able to achieve growth rates which, in comparison to other so-called ‘underdeveloped’ countries, were actually relatively impressive, setting the stage for its emergence, for better or for worse, as a global superpower. And the social-democratic parties of Europe could claim important accomplishments, too, notably in spearheading the construction of the great Welfare States of mid-century Europe, which spread prosperity and economic security more widely than laissez-faire capitalism had ever managed to do. Though these projects have had their problems it is not plausible to suggest that their failures, in strictly economic terms, were as stark as those of capitalism during the Great Depression. And capitalism, too, has racked up its share of problems. In our own time, for instance, capitalism has come to be widely acknowledged as the leading cause of potentially catastrophic climate change and, according to a recent World Health Organization report, “social injustice is killing people on a grand scale” in the world capitalist system (CSDH 2008, 26).

But if the failures of these real-world projects cannot be explained strictly in terms of economic failures, how can we explain them? I suggest that, far from the socialist project straying too far from capitalism, to the point of unworkability, the problem has been nearly the opposite of that: socialism, I suggest, embraced too many of capitalism’s core elements, including many of its most pernicious, destructive, and unattractive aspects. Socialism, in most of its real-world variants, embraced capitalism’s bureaucratic model of governance, its technocratic approach to designing and implementing public policy, its hierarchical and autocratic forms of workplace organization, its Realpolitik norms of international relations, its glorification of production and accumulation as ends in themselves, and its elitist understanding of who is best able to exercise political power and spearhead social change. And it is precisely here – not in the distance that separates socialism from capitalism but in the proximity that makes them too difficult to distinguish from one another – that the roots of the Left’s crisis are to be found.

‘Actually existing’ or real-world variants of socialism, above all statist social planning and parliamentary-reformist social democracy, have been rejected as alternatives to capitalism because they tend systematically to replicate the least attractive elements of the social order they purport to reject. The result is a kind of paradox of anti-capitalism: the very considerations that generate distaste for capitalism – hostility to its elitism, authoritarianism, hierarchy, and alienation – generate at the same time a suspicion of many real-world socialist initiatives. And this suspicion reflects an insight into the Left’s very real concessions to capitalism, not a failure on the part of the masses to grasp their true interests, or to see capitalism for what it really is.
Part Two: Signs of a Possible Resurgence

And yet, there are stirrings of something new, early glimpses, perhaps, of a re-emergence of the radical Left, even here in North America where the Left is weaker than almost any other place on earth.

But the signs of a possible resurgence do nothing to encourage a faith in the prospects for a reassertion of the declining variants of the former Left – the small Leninist organizations, the anarchist Black Blocs, or the reform-minded social-democratic electoral machines. Rather, they suggest new sources of vitality, arising in unfamiliar democratic forms from unexpected locations.

A number of recent (and admittedly still-marginal) grassroots initiatives have been launched by North American radicals hoping to re-invent the radical Left under the banner of ‘participatory democracy’. To be sure, it is an old term, embraced by some North American radicals at least since the early 1960s (Isserman 1987, 210; Pateman 1970). But it has acquired today a new, apparently unprecedented practical significance. The key difference between the conception of ‘participatory democracy’ that circulated in the 1960s and that of today lies in the fact that, whereas in the past, ‘participatory democracy’ figured mainly as a proposed alternative to the alienation and cynicism of the elite-dominated system of representative democracy typical of advanced capitalist societies (SDS 1962), in today's emerging radical Left, the ideal of ‘participatory democracy’ has much more of a double function: to specify a critical standard of socially just outcomes to be fought for, on the one hand, and to articulate a moral and political standard for assessing the conduct and processes of the Left in the here and now, on the other hand. In short, participatory democracy has gone from being simply a label used to articulate the outlines of a ‘project’, to being at the same time a formula used to delineate the constraints on admissible ‘processes’ deployed in pursuit of such a project. It is about ‘means’ as much as it is about ‘ends’, methods as much as goals.

The Left that is beginning to emerge from under this banner is one that eschews both the bureaucratic conception of socialism typified by the East European model, and the uncritical stance of many social democrats toward the political and economic institutions of capitalism, notably ‘representative’ democracy and the market economy. The emerging participatory Left wants to embody, ‘in practice’ and ‘right now’, the characteristics that the Left has always claimed to regard as worth wanting in a post-capitalist future. It wants, in short, to be egalitarian, anti-elitist, non-statist, and participatory.

In this paper I want to highlight three manifestations of this emerging participatory Left. Each of these initiatives takes the notion of ‘participatory democracy’ as the touchstone of its political vision, and its political practice.

Consider, first, the re-founding (in January of 2006) of the campus-based Students for a Democratic Society. The ‘New SDS’ bears a familiar name, at least to those well-versed in 1960s radicalism in the U.S.A. but in many ways it has departed sharply from its namesake. Today's SDS has over 120 chapters on campuses across the United States (Kelly 2008). Its name has perhaps attracted a degree of news media attention that a radical
Participatory Democracy and the Renewal of Radical Politics

D’Arcy

A direct action student group would normally not be accorded (Phelps 2007). But what makes it important, in the present context, is not its size or its relatively high profile. Rather, what is so striking about SDS is its ‘aspiration’ to make a qualitative break with earlier models of organizing. Although SDS has struggled to develop a coherent organizational structure, and has arguably been held back by its indecisiveness about questions of organization and structure (Kelly 2008), these weaknesses are in part symptomatic of a crucial secret to its success. SDS has not seen such matters as strictly issues of efficacy or efficiency, but has treated them as inextricably bound up with the question of what it means to organize in the present for a radically democratic society in the future. SDS members have refused to disengage questions of ‘process’ from questions of ‘project.’ From its inception, “many SDS organizers took the challenge of integrating liberatory practices into every level of the organization very seriously,” as two prominent SDS activists put it in a recent article (Kelly 2008). That has meant, in part, that the New SDS’ embrace of the ideal of ‘participatory democracy’ has served as a way of “defining our vision for society as well as our internal structure” (Kelly 2008). To be sure, the SDS experience has been uneven, and the organization has only very recently begun to develop a coherent national structure (Hegemonik 2008). It would be absurd to suggest that SDS has stumbled on all the answers about how to develop new-model Left organizations. But, in its insistence on merging the question of how to organize with the question of what to organize for, it typifies what is best in the emerging participatory Left. Whatever its mis-steps or internal squabbles, SDS has taken a firm stance in favor of, as SDS activists Brian Kelly and Joshua Kahn Russell put it, establishing “an internal culture that prefigures the participatory democracy we want to achieve” (Kelly 2008).

A similar insistence on process/project consistency has animated a distinct, but parallel radical initiative: the project for a participatory society, which emerged out of the popular ZNet website, associated with Z magazine. First, some background. In recent years, the vision for an egalitarian post-capitalist economy proposed by Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel (2005), known as ‘participatory economics,’ has become increasingly influential on the North American far Left. Hahnel and Albert (2005) took the longstanding socialist claim that a radically democratic economy was possible, and backed it up with detailed institutional proposals for replacing market economics with a process they call ‘participatory planning.’ This process would be based on deliberative councils of workers in the workplace and consumers in neighbourhoods and regions, coordinated by a process of iterative negotiation, using ‘indicative prices,’ but substituting participatory and deliberative procedures for the blind rule of market forces.

As these economic proposals grew in influence, a group of like-minded writers and activists began to join in with Hahnel and Albert (2005) in elaborating a broader, more expansive vision of a post-capitalist participatory society. Political scientist Stephen Shalom began to articulate a conception of a post-capitalist ‘participatory polity’ (Shalom 2005). Radical journalist and academic Justin Podur proposed a vision of a ‘participatory culture’ (Podur 2006). Feminist activist and writer Cynthia Peters explored the possibility of a transformation of gender roles and kinship structures within a participatory democratic society (Peters 2006). Most recently, Matt Halling (2008) has tried to develop a conception of a participatory-democratic legal system. As this notion of a participatory
society began to take shape, advocates of the new project began to get organized, first with a conference on strategies and visions for a participatory-democratic movement (in June of 2006), and then with the formation of the International Network for a Participatory Society (IPPS), later that year.

The IPPS was intended to serve as a centre for advocacy and collaboration among activists and intellectuals committed to the ideal of a participatory society. But, just as important, the appearance of the IPPS quickly led to the formation of a series of locally rooted ‘anti-capitalist NGOs’, such as the Austin Project for a Participatory Society, in Texas, the London PPS in Ontario, the Hellenic PPS in Greece, the PPS Down Under in Australia, the African Project for a Participatory Society, and several other local PPS groups, in at least five countries. Arguably, this may prove to be one of the most enduring achievements of the larger ‘participatory society’ project: the formation of locally rooted, grassroots anti-capitalist NGOs, engaged in a wide array of broadly political, but wholly non-statist activities, including public advocacy, popular mobilization, and prefigurative institution-building. What is striking in all of this is the emergence of a new idea of what a radical organization can be: not a political party, but an NGO; not seeking to conquer power through the state, but seeking to subvert capitalism from a position within civil society; not a coalition focusing on a single issue or theme, but a broad-based project to work for the displacement of capitalist civilization by a new, post-capitalist participatory society.

This brings me to my third example of the emerging participatory Left. Obviously, the whole thrust of what I’ve been saying so far is that the participatory Left does not believe in putting off until tomorrow what it can do today. And so it is that the participatory economics movement has found practical expression in a series of real-world experiments in post-capitalist economic institution-building. As Robin Hahnel (2005, 368) points out in his book, Economic Justice and Democracy: From Competition to Cooperation:

[T]here are a handful of collectives in the United States and Canada that are not only owned and managed entirely by their members, but organized self-consciously according to the principles of participatory economics. These collectives...promote participatory economic goals, seek to relate to other progressive organizations on a cooperative rather than commercial basis, and explicitly agitate for replacing capitalism with a participatory economy.”

Hahnel (2005) offers some details, and these details are available elsewhere as well.2 I cannot go into detail in this context, due to time limitations. However, I will mention that examples of such participatory workplaces include two publishing firms, South End Press and Arbeiter Ring publishers, a bookstore and café called the Mondragon Bookstore, a bicycle repair shop called Natural Cycle, a now-defunct online newspaper called the New Standard, and a number of others as well. As part of the larger solidarity economy, but also as a living expression of the aims and principles of the participatory society project, these institutions are a key part of the emerging participatory Left.

---

2 (cf. the web site of the Vancouver Parecon Collective at http://vanparecon.resist.ca)
Part Three: What the Next Left Might Look Like

We can see, then, that what is new about today’s emerging new forms of radical politics is the way in which today’s radicals have begun to relate their processes to their project. They treat processes, not simply as ‘means to an end’, to be assessed in terms of their efficacy and efficiency, but as objects of ongoing political assessment, susceptible to the same kind of critical scrutiny to which the processes and practices of capitalism are subjected. If such ‘project/process consistency’ is at the heart of the most hopeful initiatives of the emerging participatory-democratic radicalism, what might we expect the next Left to look like, in the years to come?

Here, of course, one has no choice but to speculate. But my speculations are at least grounded in the observation of real tendencies, like those noted in Part Two, above.

If, as I claim, the participatory Left can be expected to displace the declining social-democratic strategy for radical change, and the largely exhausted vanguardist revolutionary strategy, the next Left can be expected to exhibit the following distinctive characteristics.

First, it will be a Left whose most visible manifestation will be the pervasive role of ‘prefigurative pilot projects’: that is, anticipatory institutions and practices that embody participatory-democratic principles, and that stand opposed to the core principles and leading characteristics of capitalism. The obvious example is participatory workplaces and enterprises, like those mentioned above. But other examples include local participatory budgeting initiatives and all manner of experiments with participatory-democratic decision-making.

Second, the emerging Left will be a form of radicalism in which the classical organizational model of the political party, aspiring to exercise state power, will have been displaced by the new model of the ‘anti-capitalist NGO’, aspiring to subvert capitalism, and to promote alternatives to it, from outside the state, within a combatively oppositional civil society. Such NGOs will view the market and the state, not as vehicles for advancing progressive aims, but as an adversary that needs to be discredited and displaced, as far as possible.

Third, it will be a Left in which political action and economic institution-building will co-evolve with a reciprocally supporting series of what I want to call ‘counter-capitalist’ cultural practices. That is to say, the political activism of the next Left will be rooted in lifestyles and value systems founded upon a repudiation of the cultural bases of pro-capitalist behaviors and aspirations. This follows from the principle that how we live today should be consistent with the kind of society we aspire to create.

All three of these characteristics – post-capitalist pilot projects, anti-capitalist NGOs, and counter-capitalist cultural practices – are rooted in the primacy of the principle of project/process consistency. There is, however, a gaping absence in this vision of a renewed radical participatory Left. I have painted a picture of a ‘participatory’ Left with
only a handful of actual ‘participants.’ But a participatory Left without mass participation is obviously bound to remain on the sidelines of social change and contemporary history.

In the face of this sobering thought, we must acknowledge that the prospects for re-inventing the radical Left, on the basis of a thoroughgoing commitment to participatory democracy, depend largely on the capacity of today’s grassroots participatory democratic organizations to merge with larger processes of political mobilization in revitalized social movements organizing for social and environmental justice, and for political and economic democracy. True, these mass mobilizations have yet to occur, on anything like the scale that is needed. But nothing less than such a broad-based resurgence of community-based ‘movement’ activism can lay the groundwork for a re-emergence of the radical Left as a vital political force.

Conclusion

My aim in this paper has been two-fold. I have attempted, first, to distinguish between the widespread popular repudiation of the genuinely flawed real-world variants of the socialist project, and the enduring attractiveness of the core values and principles of the Left’s critique of capitalism and vision of a post-capitalist future. And I have also attempted, secondly, to discern in some of today’s radical organizing efforts, signs of a new approach, which – far from discarding the values and principles of the classical Left – clings to those values and principles with an unprecedented attentiveness to the importance of consistency between the project one aspires to realize, and the processes by means of which one pursues that project. Participatory democracy serves as a crucial bridge, for the emerging new radicalism, between how we struggle and what we struggle for.

References


Participación, Prácticas en Salud y Procesos de Aprendizajes: Investigaciones en Psicología y Democracia

Leticia Grippo
Universidad de Buenos Aires

Carolina Scavino
Universidad de Buenos Aires

Ma. Cristina Chardon
Universidad Nacional de Quilmes
Universidad de Buenos Aires

Presentación

En la actualidad se registran transformación sobre el modo de pensar al hombre, desde mediados del Siglo XX hasta hoy puede observarse un proceso de reconceptualización que fue de la noción de individuo a la de sujeto y subjetividad en el campo de las Cs. Sociales (Scavino, D. 2007; Gonzalez Rey 2000).

Sin embargo, estas discusiones no podrían aislarse de los cambios sociales en que ellas se enmarcan. Las transformaciones que durante el transcurso del siglo XX se registraron en materia de tecnología y desarrollos económicos, dieron lugar a la emergencia de nuevos problemas sociales (Ziccardi 2004; Scavino, C. 2007; Hareven 1982). Podríamos observar por ejemplo, cómo la ‘pobreza’ en tanto problema social fue transformándose en el tiempo: si a principios del siglo XX era el ‘obrero’ objeto de intervención en política social, a mediados de siglo aparece un nuevo actor el ‘marginal’ y a fines del mismo período el ‘desempleado’ o ‘supernumerario’ en términos de Castel (1997). Estos cambios, fueron acompañados de replanteos en materia política, ya que la emergencia de estos nuevos actores sociales promovieron también nuevas formas de reclamo y por ende de gestión y participación.

Riechman y Buey Fernández (1993) observan que si en las décadas de los 60’ y 70’ en América Latina se caracterizaron por el predominio de la ideología revolucionaria en oposición a las tendencias dictatoriales de la región, luego de los 80’ con el reanudamiento
de los procesos democráticos, frente a las nuevas realidades sociales, surgen nuevos movimientos sociales (cacerolazos, piqueteros, etc) que buscan a través de su manifestación el establecimiento y/o lucha de intereses particulares, es decir que ya no se representan con una idea de clase.

Son grupos que se caracterizan por lo que Saltalamacchia (1997) denomina como ‘prácticas de refugio’, es decir prácticas sociales de subsistencia en medios sumamente hostiles, al servicio de una defensa común y con tendencia al aislamiento ante la ruptura de lazos que en otras épocas aseguraron la pertenencia a sectores de la comunidad global y dice el autor:

El incremento de las condiciones de marginalidad ha creado abismos sociales muy difícilmente superables. De hecho (...) es aún menos realista que en los sesenta esperar que se desarrolle una cultura en que la participación política cobre rasgos positivos de integración, aunque sea por la vía del conflicto (Saltalamacchia 1997,6)

Pareciera que en contraposición a esta tendencia al aislamiento y exclusión de ciertos grupos sociales, en la arena política aparecen tendencia de organización social orientadas para promover la inclusión social en la toma de decisiones políticas.

En otras palabras, mientras se generan más condiciones de participación y promoción en la toma de decisiones; las comunidades se presentan cada vez más fragmentadas en el tejido social. No hay que olvidar, que hasta mediados de la década del 80’, subsistió en Argentina un estado de bienestar que se caracterizaba por la ejecución de políticas sociales universalistas pero que a partir de la segunda mitad de la década, comienzan a implementarse políticas neoliberales que llevaron a la crisis del estado benefactor. Esta situación se acentuó en los 90 con las políticas de descentralización. Las consecuencias de dichas políticas pueden verse en la actualidad, especialmente en el sector de salud, donde ya existía una debilidad política y una profunda fragmentación institucional. A finales de los ochenta, la evaluación del sistema de salud mostraba que el sector público atendía fundamentalmente a los ciudadanos más pobres. El sistema era profundamente inequitativo, producto de la estratificación en el acceso a la atención, estratificación basada en nivel socioeconómico de la población (Irigoyen 1989).

En la década del 90’, en lugar de implementarse medidas tendientes a la inclusión de las mayorías, se profundizaron las medidas de ajuste que redujeron el estado y en consecuencia se produjo un achicamiento del sector. Como resultados de estos cambios, el sistema de salud argentino continuó atendiendo a los sectores más desfavorecidos de la población, pero con recursos aún más escasos y políticas compensatorias.

En este contexto aparece en nuestro país la noción de ‘participación en salud’, que si bien no es un concepto nuevo en el campo de la salud, fue tomando, por lo menos a nivel discursivo, mayor relevancia a nivel de estrategias de implantación en salud para dar respuesta a la situación social arriba descripta. Sin embargo, también es cierto que de las experiencias implementadas han sido pocas las operativas y tanto su funcionamiento como su sustentabilidad, dependía en la mayoría de los casos de la buena voluntad de las autoridades de los establecimientos sanitarios (Cardarelli 1998).
Esta situación nos lleva a considerar en términos de la promoción de la participación en salud desde el sistema público de salud argentino, es mayor el camino que queda por recorrer que el efectivamente realizado.

En este contexto se desarrollaron las investigaciones que presentaremos a continuación, ambas indagaron sobre los sentidos que adquiere la participación en salud en comunidades pobres de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires de Argentina.

Uno de los estudios se centró en los alcances y límites de las formas de participación respecto a un tipo de consulta pediátrica orientada al control, seguimiento y promoción del desarrollo infantil entre 0 y 6 años –Consulta de Control de Niño Sano (CNS)-, y los aprendizaje respecto a la crianza realizadas por las mujeres del lugar; mientras la otra buscó conocer las representaciones sobre la participación en el campo de la salud de los/las usuarios/as adolescentes. Tanto una como la otra, consideran que la participación puede ser analizada en dos niveles: desde el plano de los discursos y desde el de las prácticas, a la vez que puede estudiarse los aprendizajes que la misma promueve (Chardon 2005).

Los resultados hasta ahora obtenidos, permiten comprender la manera en que la promoción de la participación es recepcionada en el discurrir de la vida cotidiana por la población que vive en contextos de pobreza así como los procesos de participación que llevan adelante los/las usuarios/as del sistema de salud.

### La Participación en Salud

Participar tiene múltiples sentidos, ya en 1978 la OMS y UNICEF, con la Declaración de Alma-Ata, promueven a través de la estrategia de Atención Primaria de la Salud, un sentido diferente en materia de sistemas y servicios en salud orientados a responder a nuevos problemas sanitarios en la población.

De una perspectiva técnico-normativa respecto de la salud, se pasa a una concepción participativa integral basada en la promoción y prevención de la salud (Stolkiner 1987), donde elevar las condiciones de vida de la población marginal era un tema central. Participar en esta coyuntura era trabajar con referentes comunitarios, por ejemplo, promotoras de salud, acortar la distancia entre el saber médico y el popular en materia de atención de la salud.

Pero en la actualidad, participar excede estos postulados e implica también la garantía del derecho a la salud, considerando que todo ser humano debe poder acceder a servicios de salud de calidad (Stolkiner 1997). La participación se orienta entonces hacia la accesibilidad y la atención en los servicios de salud de los/as usuarios/as y su relación con dichas instituciones en términos de derechos y responsabilidades (Stolkiner 2001-2003; Stolkiner 2004-2007).

En otras palabras consideramos que la participación actualmente está principalmente vinculada con la noción de derecho. La participación en salud puede definirse:
como un proceso de intervención de los actores de la sociedad civil en la formulación de las políticas, planes y programas y en la gestión de los servicios de salud, en forma continua, a través de canales e instancias estructurales en los niveles institucionales y locales, ya sea para proponer líneas de acción, influir en las decisiones, llevar a cabo actividades, ratificar/respaldar las acciones que se consideren positivas o bien para influir en las correcciones o reencauzamientos de las que se consideren mejorables o negativas (Nirenberg 2003, 7).

A continuación haremos una sucinta presentación de los resultados obtenidos en ambas investigaciones, para finalmente hacer una reflexión sobre las contribuciones de la psicología a estos procesos de transformaciones democráticas.

La Participación en la Consulta de Control de Niño Sano y los Aprendizajes sobre la Crianza

Metodología y objetivo de la investigación

Se realizó un estudio de caso desde una perspectiva etnográfica (Bourdieu 1995) en una comunidad de la zona sur de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires.

Durante el transcurso del mismo se trabajo a través del cuaderno de campo, la realización de un Taller de Crecimiento y Desarrollo de un año de duración, 15 observaciones de consultas pediátricas, 100 cuestionario a madres sobre crecimiento y desarrollo y 23 entrevistas semi-estructuradas (10 a madres, 10 a pediatras y 3 a informantes claves).

El objetivo del mismo consistió en identificar los sentidos de las familias respecto de la asistencia a la consulta de control de niño sano y establecer las contribuciones que dicha actividad realizaba sobre las prácticas de crianza que desarrollan las familias en la comunidad.

Resultados

Al considerar que toda práctica es un fenómeno complejo (García 1986) se estudió a la misma en diferentes planos (Rogoff 1997), se analizó la determinación de la comunidad en comparación con los otros barrio de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires y su particularidad respecto a las relaciones establecidas con el Centro de Salud del mismo.

Se analizó el escenario socio-cultural de las prácticas de crianza en el barrio, es decir las características que adquiere la crianza en este contexto y finalmente se analizó la consulta de control de niño sano, como intervención en salud para la comunidad, buscando identificar los sentidos que adquiere la misma respecto de la crianza en la comunidad.

Del trabajo realizado se pudo concluir por un lado, que la asistencia de las madres a la consulta de control de niño sano, es decir su participación, no pasaba tanto por la búsqueda de un referente o consejero sobre los valores de cómo criar al hijo, aspecto sobre el que tienen en cuenta a los vecinos o familiares más cercanos, sino más bien en relación a conseguir información sobre el cuidado de la salud del niño, y la obtención de algunos recursos para su subsistencia.
En la interacción pediatra-madre se puedo observar que dicho espacio no se constituía en un ámbito de diálogo sino más bien de prescripción. El médico le decía a la madre lo que tiene que hacer y la otra acepta o silencia sobre lo dicho. El pediatra por su parte, actuaba centrado principalmente a través de una idea de salud en términos de evitar la muerte o la patología, lo cual no permitía ampliar el campo de diálogo entre los actores participantes de la consulta.

A pesar de estas diferencias, el “común denominador” entre el pediatra y la madre consistía en no dan lugar justamente a las tensiones que podían producirse en el espacios de la consulta por los intercambios establecidos.

Se considera que esta observación es central para el análisis de los procesos de participación, ya que la ausencia de cuestionamiento, haría que el modo de participación establecido siga reproduciendo condiciones sociales de existencia de los grupos, evitándose así a través de la tensión, una apertura de sentido que permitan reconfigurar las prácticas (Bourdieu 2004)

**Representaciones de Participación en el Campo de la Salud de Adolescentes Usuarios/as del Sistema Público de Salud de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires**

**Metodología y objetivos de la investigación**

Nos propusimos estudiar las representaciones de participación en el campo de la salud de la población adolescente usuaria del sistema público de salud de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires en los niveles personal, familiar, institucional y comunitario del campo de la salud.

El diseño de la investigación es cualitativo de carácter descriptivo y exploratorio. Se emplearon como instrumentos de recolección de datos entrevistas en profundidad, observación simple y participante y grupos focales. El análisis de los datos se realizó desde la perspectiva de la teoría emergente empleando el software de análisis de datos cualitativos Atlas Ti.

**Resultados**

En relación con la muestra, tuvimos acceso a 29 adolescentes usuarios/as del sistema público de salud de entre 12 y 19 años, de los cuales el 34,8% son varones y el 65,2% son mujeres. Esta mayoría de mujeres en la muestra, coincide con los resultados de otras investigaciones que plantean la feminización en el uso del sistema público de salud (Kornblit 2005; Zaldúa 2006).

El 44,8% de los adolescentes vive en familias monoparentales y el 55,2% vive con ambos padres. La situación socio-económica de estas familias es precaria, ya que muchas de las madres de las familias monoparentales está sin empleo o trabaja en servicio doméstico o en peluquerías. En las familias con ambos padres, las madres son amas de casa y los padres se dedican a la construcción, hacen changas o están desocupados. Los/las adolescentes de la muestra recurren al sistema público de salud de la ciudad ya que debido a la precariedad de los trabajos de sus progenitores no poseen obra social.
Comencemos por describir la participación en el nivel personal del campo de la salud. La tendencia o la reticencia a participar de las personas es producto de la compleja interrelación entre sus representaciones de salud y enfermedad y sus necesidades sentidas en salud. Las/los usuarios/os adolescentes conciben la salud como un estado biofisiológico exclusivamente relacionado con aspectos orgánicos y sin relación con aspectos psicosociológicos y/o culturales. Podemos afirmar que en el nivel personal de participación en el campo de la salud aparece un primer obstáculo para la participación a nivel representacional, ya que al concebirse la salud y la enfermedad como problemas físicos e individuales, se dificulta que la salud sea considerada como un problema colectivo susceptible de modificación por los actores sociales.

En relación con la participación en el nivel familiar, indagamos acerca de las formas familiares de cuidado de la salud, sobre los referentes y sobre los temas que consultan con padres, madres y hermanos/as. Cuando se preguntó a los/las usuarios/as adolescentes sobre las estrategias que implementaban cuando tenían problemas de salud, las respuestas indicaron que lo primero que hacen es “no hacer nada y aguantar”, pero si el problema no puede solucionarse en forma individual, recurren a sus madres. Por lo general, los problemas de salud se intentan resolver en el interior de la familia y sólo en los casos en que el problema no puede ser resuelto a nivel doméstico y es grave, los/as adolescentes se acercan al sistema público de salud.

Los datos indican que son las madres las que acompañan a los/las adolescentes a los hospitales y centros de salud y también puede inferirse que el cuidado de la salud a nivel familiar es entendido en términos fisiológicos.

Continuamos con la caracterización de la participación en el nivel institucional. Los registros indican que si bien la ley de salud establece un modo de organización común para todo el sistema de salud que pauta el modo de atención de los efectores y que incluye la participación como política del sistema, existen diferencias profundas en el modo que los efectores (hospitales y centros de salud) y en definitiva los profesionales sanitarios, se apropien del marco general establecido por la ley de salud.

Podemos categorizar los servicios de adolescencia en dos grupos según se trate de servicios hospitalarios o servicios de centros de salud. El servicio de adolescencia del CESAC concibe al adolescente como un sujeto de derechos y, en tanto tal, con derecho a la información y a la participación. Estos servicios cubren las paredes de la sala de espera con carteles sobre temas diversos producto de campañas realizadas por el gobierno de la ciudad específicamente dirigidas a adolescentes y por carteles confeccionados por los profesionales de los servicios de adolescencia, ya que son manuscritos y contienen información sobre las actividades que se realizan en el efecto e invitan a los/las usuarios/as adolescentes a participar.

Mientras que los servicios de adolescencia hospitalarios tienen las paredes vacías o con algún cartel de alguna campaña vieja del gobierno de la ciudad pero en todas las salas de espera hay instalados televisores encendidos, con lo cual estos servicios parecen tener como objetivo entretener a los/las adolescentes en lugar de informarlos. En el nivel comunitario del campo de la salud, la mayoría de estas actividades son de contenido
recreativo y tiene como finalidad la cohesión social y la contención de los/las adolescentes (Sánchez Vidal 1991). Son espacios gestionados por la comunidad en base a los intereses de los/las adolescentes y buscan que estos vayan desarrollando un sentimiento de pertenencia tanto a nivel territorial como afectivo con otros miembros de la comunidad de su misma edad y también con los mayores que funcionan como guías en el proceso participativo. Las actividades propuestas por la comunidad son variadas: programas de radios comunitarias, talleres de panadería y cursos de oficios (electricidad, mecánica, etc). La participación que los/las adolescentes desarrollan en la comunidad o en el barrio puede categorizarse como “guiada” porque los adultos de la comunidad aportan el significado de la actividad a los/las adolescentes, quienes se apropien del mismo en forma participativa (Rogoff 1993; Rogoff 1997; Lacasa 1997).

**A Modo de Cierre**

**La participación en salud y los procesos democráticos: ¿en qué puede contribuir la Psicología?**

Los resultados de ambas investigaciones indican que la participación en salud tanto de las madres como de los/las usuarios/as adolescentes aún se da en términos del modelo tradicional de interacción usuario-profesional de la salud, el cual es producto de la historia de las prácticas en el campo de la salud.

La interacción dentro del modelo hegemónico de salud centrada en el profesional médico, deja a los/las usuarios/as en una posición pasiva frente a la figura del profesional vedando la posibilidad del diálogo. El sistema de actividades referido al campo de la salud conlleva situaciones de comunicación donde está en juego quién/es tiene el poder de expresarse y quién/es no, lo cual está íntimamente relacionado con la “tensión en la ubicación del conocimiento”. El que tiene el conocimiento decide lo que se dice y lo que se oculta, quiénes hablan o callan, lo permitido y lo prohibido, quiénes interrogan o son interrogados (Chardon 2005).

Entonces, si el objetivo de la política social es la participación ciudadana en cuestiones de salud, el estado deberá poner en marcha acciones de fortalecimiento de las capacidades de los usuarios reales de los servicios para la participación.

Por otro lado, en base a otras experiencias, sabemos que para lograr la construcción de espacios participativos en el campo de la salud no alcanza con el trabajo con los usuarios, se requiere:

1. Realizar en paralelo actividades orientadas a promover los cambios de actitudes requeridos en los actores institucionales para que adhieran a esos procesos, facilitando la apertura de espacios en las instituciones de modo de incidir en mejoramientos de la prestación de los servicios, así como facilitando la sustentabilidad de los procesos participativos (Nirenberg 2003, 10).

Los resultados de ambas investigaciones muestran que la participación no “brota” por generación espontánea de la población sino que es una necesidad y un derecho que requiere de procesos de aprendizaje social para hacerse realidad (Sirvent 1998).
Creemos que por medio de la participación se logra que actores sociales históricamente privados de voz dejen de ser receptores pasivos de las políticas públicas para pasar a influir en la planificación y decisión sobre los aspectos de la vida pública que les conciernen (Montero 2003). Es por esto que consideramos que para sustentar estas acciones en el marco de la transformación político-social que permite la participación como herramienta fundamental de la democracia, es necesario que la psicología pueda generar instrumentos e intervenciones que permitan a estos actores apropiarse de su voz y cuestionar los mecanismos de reproducción social.

Referencias Bibliográficas


Learning Direct Democracy by Participating and Voting: The Relationship between Political Culture and Direct Democracy

Rolf Rauschenbach
University St. Gallen

Introduction

Processes of direct democracy are powerful methods for creating postconventional political culture. In the theory of deliberative democracy, political culture is an important element. It is described as a phenomenon which cannot be enforced by the state, but which is crucial for spontaneous initiations of deliberations. Due to its precarious status, political culture remains a rather vague concept in the literature of deliberative democracy and no hints are provided as to how it could be fostered.

The first line of thought in this paper is that political culture can be better understood when it is seen in the light of Kohlberg’s thinking on moral psychology. I argue that moral culture is the core element of political culture, besides ethical-political and pragmatic/empirical aspects and the culture of balancing interests. Revisiting Kohlberg’s scholarship leads to an expansion of his four collective stages of moral culture by adding two additional stages. This allows us to differentiate between two preconventional, two conventional and two postconventional political cultures. It will become clear that adequate deliberations of issues in a complex society can take place only with postconventional moral cultures.

The second line of thought is that processes of direct democracy are a powerful method to create postconventional political cultures. Processes of direct democracy can be derived from Kohlberg’s pedagogical methods of dilemma discussion and just community. From this point of view, processes of direct democracy no longer appear as a mere complement or substitute for parliamentary decision-making processes, but as a

---

1 I would like to thank Mehr Demokratie e.V. Berlin, Germany, for sponsoring my participation in the international conference “Learning by doing: Alternative practices in citizenship learning and participatory democracy” in Toronto, Canada.
unique means of political socialization and collective learning and therefore as generators of postconventional moral cultures.

This paper is based on my ongoing Ph.D. research project. Due to space restrictions, I am not able to give an outline of the full theoretical background of my argumentation. I focus on psychological issues and integrate them into the notion of political culture. I shall present my work as follows: I will give a brief overview of Kohlberg’s concept of individual stages of moral reasoning, and the pedagogical methods he has suggested to facilitate the development of higher stage moral thinking. Based on that, I will outline his concept of moral culture and expand it into Habermas’ notion of political culture. Then, I will show how processes of direct democracy help to create postconventional political culture. In the conclusion, I summarize my arguments and highlight my contributions to the debates of political culture and processes of direct democracy.

**Individual Stages of Moral Reasoning**

According to Kohlberg, *moral behavior* is the result of *affective* and *cognitive processes*; it is however the cognitive reasoning which gives behavior a moral quality. Cognitive processes create the moral consciousness, which enables a person to interact with others along explicit moral choices. In that sense, moral reasoning is a cognitive capability, which allows a person to assume different perspectives in a moral dilemma and to reflect on the conflicting views in order to derive a just solution. However, this capability needs to be *learned*. Kohlberg describes this learning process in six stages.

In general, cognitive stages have the following characteristics: while different cognitive stages serve the same basic function of moral reasoning, they imply a qualitative difference in structures. This means that *different modes of thinking* can be observed in different stages. Stages form an *invariant sequence*, meaning that an individual has to go through one stage at the time; none can be skipped. A number of factors may speed up the progress along this sequence or slow it down or even stop it, but they do not change the sequence. Each of these different and sequential modes of thought form a *structural whole*. A given stage response on a task does not simply represent a specific response determined by knowledge and familiarity with that task or tasks similar to it; rather, it represents the organization of an underlying thought. Stages are *hierarchical integrations* and form an order of increasingly differentiated and integrated structures for fulfilling a common function. Therefore, higher stages integrate the structures found at lower stages.

While Kohlberg’s theory has an explicit *normative basis* – he favors the postconventional moral reasoning of the highest stage, with reference to, among others, the discourse ethics by Habermas – it would be wrong to conclude that a person who is assigned to a lower stage is not equally worth morally. The assignment to a lower stage means that a person’s cognitive capabilities to reflect on a moral dilemma are limited; however, it is assumed that this person uses his (limited) skills in the best and most just way. At the same time, this implies that in a complex moral dilemma, a person with a low stage moral reasoning will most likely not be able to make an *adequate judgment*. 
Kohlberg provides extensive descriptions of the six stages of moral reasoning of which I provide some excerpts:

**Stage 1 – Heteronomous morality**

The perspective at stage 1 is that of naive moral realism. That is, the moral significance of an action, its goodness or badness, is seen as a real, inherent, and unchanging quality of the act, just as color and mass are seen as inherent qualities of objects. This realism is reflected by an assumption that moral judgments are self-evident, requiring little or no justification beyond assigning labels or citing rules. Punishment is seen as important in that it is identified with a bad action rather than because the actor is attempting pragmatically to avoid negative consequences to him or herself. Likewise, there is an absence of mediating concepts, such as deservingness or intentionality, through which the particular circumstances of the case alter its moral significance. The perspective of moral realism represents a failure to differentiate multiple perspectives on dilemmas. Morality at stage 1 is heteronomous; that is, what makes something wrong is defined by the authority.

**Stage 2 – Individualistic, instrumental morality**

Stage 2 is characterized by a concrete individualistic perspective. There is an awareness that each person has his or her own interests to pursue and that these may conflict. A moral relativity develops out of the understanding that different persons can have different, yet equally valid, justifications for their claims to justice. The morally right is relative to the particular situation and to the actor’s perspective on the situation. Since each person’s primary aim is to pursue his or her own interests, the perspective at stage 2 is pragmatic – to maximize satisfaction of one’s needs and desires while minimizing negative consequences to the self. The assumption that the other is also operating from this premise leads to an emphasis on instrumental exchange as a mechanism through which individuals can coordinate their actions for mutual benefit.

**Stage 3 – Interpersonally normative morality**

At stage 3 the separate perspectives of individuals are coordinated into a third person perspective, that of mutually trusting relationships among people, which is embodied in a set of shared moral norms according to which people are expected to live. These moral norms and expectations transcend or are generalized across particular persons and situations. The primacy of shared norms at stage 3 entails an emphasis on being a good, altruistic, or prosocial role occupant and on good or bad motives as indicative of general personal morality. As a result of the socially shared perspective, the individual at stage 3 is particularly concerned with maintaining interpersonal trust and social approval. The justice operations of Stage 3 are most clearly represented in golden rule role-taking – Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. Logically, this involves the coordination of the inverse and reciprocal operations.

**Stage 4 - Social system morality**

At stage 4 the individual takes the perspective of a generalized member of society. This perspective is based on a conception of the social system as a consistent set of codes and procedures that apply impartially to all members. The pursuit of individual interests is considered legitimate only when it is consistent with the maintenance of the sociomoral system as a whole. There is an awareness that there can be conflicts even between good
role occupants. This realization makes it necessary to maintain a system of rules for resolving such conflicts. The perspective taken is generally that of a societal, legal, or religious system which has been codified into institutionalized laws and practices.

**Stage 5 – Human rights and social welfare morality**

The stage 5 prior-to-society perspective is that of a rational moral agent aware of universalizable values and rights that anyone would choose to build into a moral society. The validity of actual laws and social systems can be evaluated in terms of the degree to which they preserve and protect these fundamental human rights and values. The social system is seen ideally as a contract freely entered into by each individual in order to preserve the rights and promote the welfare of all members. This is a 'society-creating' rather than a 'society-maintaining' perspective. Society is conceived of as based on social cooperation and agreement. Within the stage 5 perspective, the primary focus may be either on rights or on social welfare. The former orientation emphasizes the point that some rights must be considered inviolable by the society. These rights cannot be abridged even through freely chosen contracts. Each person has an obligation to make moral choices that uphold these rights, even when they conflict with society’s laws or codes.

**Stage 6 - Morality of universalizable, reversible, and prescriptive general ethical principles**

The sociomoral perspective of stage 6 is that of “the moral point of view,” a point of view which ideally all human beings should take toward one another as free and equal autonomous persons. This means equal consideration of the claim or points of view of each person affected by the moral decision to be made. This prescriptive role-taking is governed by procedures designed to ensure fairness, impartiality, or reversibility in role-taking.

The empirical existence of preconventional (stages 1 and 2) and conventional stages (stages 3 and 4) has been observed in studies around the globe. Postconventional stages (stages 5 and 6) could be found only in modern and complex societies, and even there, they are not widespread.

**Dilemma Discussions and Just Community**

Kohlberg’s intention was not only to provide a descriptive and normative framework for the development of moral reasoning, but also to suggest ways by which the development of moral behavior can be enhanced. Since an important part of the moral development of a person takes place during infancy and youth, his pedagogical methods – dilemma discussions and just community – are designed for school settings.

In dilemma discussions, students are confronted with a hypothetical moral dilemma and are asked to express their views on how the dilemma could be solved in a just way. Since groups normally consist of individuals who have developed to different stages, the students’ experience in dilemma discussions the strengths and weaknesses of their own moral reasoning and learn to take different perspectives. According to Kohlberg, an individual starts to develop into a higher stage once he or she has become aware that his or her current moral reasoning is not fully adequate. In dilemma discussions the focus is on issues and their underlying values and principles, not on persons. This does not mean that
emotions are to be ignored, but they should be attached to moral values rather than to individual persons. The effectiveness of dilemma discussions in enhancing the development of moral reasoning has been empirically shown. However, its main weakness lies in the nature of the method: discussions are limited to verbal interaction and are mostly based on fictional examples. The crucial and demanding transfer from words to actions is not envisioned.

The objective of the second method – just community – is to allow the practical application of actual moral choices. Students debate real problems derived from their school life and participate directly in the decision regarding how controversial issues are to be handled. Kohlberg suggests a set of institutions and procedures which establishes a just community as a small-scale democracy within a school. The main elements are as follows:

- **A preparatory committee**, consisting of students and teachers, which prepares the community meetings; dilemma discussions are held in class to prepare the community meetings as well

- Regular **community meetings**, which are attended by all students, teachers and administrators and in which controversial issues are debated and decided on according to the principle of one man, one vote

- **A discipline committee**, which enforces the established rules and supervises the overall process of the just community; it consists of students, teachers and administrators

For obvious reasons, a just community is a challenging undertaking. First, because issues which in traditional schools remain in the hidden curriculum are now debated openly; this may lead to escalations. Second, just communities do not happen within a vacuum; values and expectations of the outside world (e.g. parents, politicians, media) may have an influence on the moral reasoning and behavior of the members of the just community, which is beyond their reach. The measurement of the effectiveness of just community is not an easy task either, in particular, since it would be interesting to know how it affects the moral behavior of students outside of the school. Empirical examples show that with considerable efforts, positive effects both on moral reasoning and behavior can be attained.

**Moral and Political Culture**

Initially, Kohlberg's focus was purely individualistic – considering the individual stages of moral reasoning. However, with the implementation of just communities, it became clear that the cognitive capabilities for moral reasoning are quite distinct from other cognitive skills. For example, mathematical problem solving is a solely individual task, whereas moral reasoning is always a social endeavour and requires some interaction with others. That is why the **quality of these relationships** became a pivotal matter for the understanding of moral development. It was found that a person may have developed to a high individual stage, but due to a certain quality of the relationship with others, this person was not able to perform on his or her high stage; subsequently, others on a lower
stage had no incentive to aspire to a higher stage either. To substantiate the quality of these relationships, Kohlberg introduced the concept of collective stages of moral culture.

The nature of collective stages differs from individual stages. Collective stages do not follow an invariant sequence. The moral culture of a group may start at any stage; this depends on the individual stages of the group members and on other circumstances. Regress to lower collective stages occurs more easily than in the case of individual development. Collective stages are not structural wholes; individual stages describe only the cognitive aspect of moral reasoning where some consistency can be expected. Collective stages of moral culture do not refer to a “group mind,” even though it is maintained that individuals interacting in groups construct common norms, which in turn influence their thinking in the group. Furthermore, we need to take into account that most groups consist of individuals who have developed to different individual stages. Below, I provide an idealized description of the preconventional and conventional collective stages:

Collective Stage 1 – Moral culture of authority

Kohlberg does not provide a description for stage 1, and one might rightly argue that on this stage, there is no moral culture to be observed. Behavior is oriented towards the dominant authority; all relationships between group members are a product of (physical) coercion and vanish into thin air as soon as the authority loses ground.

Collective Stage 2 – Moral culture of exchange relationships

Stage 2 consists of a market culture – one enters into a relationship to conduct exchanges. Needs of others are a concern as far as their fulfillment gives right to satisfy one’s own desires. They are processed in an ends-justifies-the-means-logic. Moral culture at stage 2 is not able to capture the complexity of an individual as an end in itself. Community is valued as far as it allows one to satisfy one’s own needs, but it has no merit in itself. Democracy is limited to the point that everybody has a right to make claims. Claims are considered individually and handled bilaterally. Collective needs are not present or are not perceived as such.

Collective stage 3 – Moral culture of being in good hands

It is only from this conventional stage on that substantive moral culture is generated. On stage 3, community is experienced through a network of strong relationships with other members. Closeness, friendship and considerateness help to forge intimate links. The community is viewed as a vehicle to pursue common goals and values, something which would not be possible on a stand-alone basis. Democracy gives the right to speak out as well as to be heard. There is a sense for collective objectives; they are derived by majority vote and respected even to the detriment of one’s own interests.

Collective stage 4 – Moral culture of stabilization and identification

On stage 4, community is more than the sum of the personal relationships – it is a value in itself. Being a member of a community implies rights and duties. Relationships with other members can now be stabilized, as they are no longer a product of affective bonds but of the rules of the community. At the same time, identities are more and more disengaged from personal relationships and based on ideas, values and pertinent institutions. As a consequence, communities serve as a pole of identification.
Learning Direct Democracy by Participating and Voting

Rauschenbach

Processes at stage 4 aim at the expression, perception and consideration of everybody’s concerns so that the majority represents the general will. The benefit for the community is decisive.

Kohlberg’s description of moral culture ends on stage 4. Why is that so? There are two explanations: First, he focused his observations of moral cultures to school settings. As it is a common fact that individual postconventional moral reasoning (stages 5 and 6) occurs normally only beyond adolescence (if at all), and as the collective stage never exceeds the individual stages represented in the group, it is a logical consequence that postconventional levels of moral culture cannot be identified among pupils. However, there is a second and even more fundamental reason: Kohlberg exclusively regarded just communities. In communities, all members know each other, at least superficially. Due to their small size and simple structure, communities lack the complexity which is required to engender the necessity for postconventional moral reasoning. In other words, (just) communities do not require and therefore do not allow for the development of postconventional moral reasoning. Hence, there is no postconventional moral culture in (just) communities.

It is at the juncture between communities and societies where theories of deliberative democracy come into play. They provide a framework of democracy in the context of complex societies. To advance the reflection on collective stages of moral culture in the realm of complex societies, I rely on the theory of deliberative democracy by Habermas. Habermas and Kohlberg are guided by the same normative thinking. Habermas’ deliberative democracy is the result of the integration of his discourse ethics into his theory of communicative action. Kohlberg views Habermas’ discourse ethics as the most adequate philosophy to support his psychological theory; Habermas reckons the same the other way around: discourse ethics require postconventional moral reasoning.

What I would like to suggest in this paper is that we can link Kohlberg’s moral culture to Habermas’ political culture. According to Habermas, political culture is a netting of mentalities and convictions, which is silently present in the hearts and heads of the citizens. It forms the basis for spontaneous associations of unorganized political actors in order to initiate deliberations of issues so far neglected by the institutionalized political arena. However, due to political culture, the initiation of new deliberations is not only motivated by self-interest, but also by the keenness of the public use of reason and the readiness for solidarity. The exercise of political culture requires the ability for perspective-taking, abstraction and reflection. Political culture cannot be the result of state coercion, but must be learned cognitively by the citizens. It is the result of political socialization and familiarization with freedom and the knowledge of its limits and duties. In itself, political culture is not a fixed or even specific programme, but a procedure, which allows one to shift horizons hermeneutically as citizens interpret their constitution and their lifeworld.

While Habermas’ description of political culture contains a number of elements with a Kohlbergian touch (Habermas even suggests that political culture can be understood in the sense of postconventional morale [Sittlichkeit]), he does not make any explicit reference to Kohlberg and the notion of moral culture, represented in collective stages.
However, incorporating the latter into the notion of political culture leads to a more tangible conceptualization of political culture and it allows us to differentiate political cultures as well as to show the disparity between the real life phenomena and normative exigencies of the theory of deliberative democracy. Below, I propose brief descriptions of the collective stages 5 and 6.

**Collective stage 5 – Moral culture of national constitutional state, human versus civil rights**

Moral culture at the first postconventional stage embraces the fact that individuals are members of a complex society. However, society is not a given, but the product of innumerable contributions of all members. The main contributions are respect for and the exercise of fundamental rights; the rule of law and the constitutional state operate as a facilitator. Minorities are paid special attention, although they are perceived as minorities. This differentiating perspective is even more clearly expressed in the distinction between human rights (benefitting all members of a society, potentially humankind) and civil rights (benefitting only the citizens of a society).

**Collective stage 6 – Moral culture of universalization of cosmopolitan rights [Weltbürgerrecht]**

Moral culture on stage 6 is universalizing cosmopolitan rights. From a moral point of view, no difference is made between a citizen and a non-citizen of a given society, or between members of different societies. In a moral culture at stage 6, individuals are conscious about the fact that such distinctions undermine the core of their moral principles and subvert them to ideology. Moral culture at stage 6 is not defining a certain type of good life but rather the form of an egalitarian and communicative coexistence of multiple ideas of good life. The communitarian concept of the good life in politics is definitely abandoned, yet the participation in democratic processes always aims at the co-existence of diverging ideas of good life. Society is as complex as it is fragmented; this fragmentation is also reflected in the fragmented identities of the individuals. However, fragmentation is cultivated, as on stage 6, individuals are aware of the existence of unresolvable differences. They cope with them peacefully and for that reason, they are able to enjoy diversity.

Moral culture is not synonymous with political culture. From a cognitive point of view, moral culture is the core element of political culture. It implies the cognitive patterns, which also apply in ethical-political, pragmatic/empirical and balancing interests' considerations, the other elements of political culture. Pragmatic/empirical issues refer to socioeconomical fundamentals, which may or may not produce an environment of equality and allow development; ethical-political issues refer to the concept of good life and identity. The aspect of balancing interests comes into play when no unanimous agreement can be reached. It goes without saying that the different aspects of the political culture are interrelated in a complex manner, their distinction is analytical.

**Processes of Direct Democracy**

One of the basic assumptions of Kohlberg’s theory is that development to a higher stage is the result of a learning process. Learning depends on individual factors and on the presence of external stimulations. By evaluating dilemma discussions and just communities
as ways of providing external **stimulations** for moral development, we have seen that dilemma discussions help to develop moral reasoning on a higher stage, but they do not imply a transfer from thinking to doing. The just community approach overcomes this weakness by allowing debates on real life issues and everybody’s participation in the decision process. Since this approach operates only on a community level, it is not able to provide complex stimulations that are required for the development of postconventional stages. From these insights, we can draw the conclusion that an instrument is needed which goes beyond the level of community to the level of complex society.

But how can we achieve the transition from the community level to the level of complex societies? Above, just communities were characterized as small-scale democracies. Evidently, we cannot simply inflate this model to societal magnitude; the sheer number of citizens of a complex society does not allow the physical meeting of all people. Nevertheless, the basic idea of including everybody in the deliberative process shall be maintained, as we assume that postconventional moral culture develops only when an important part of the population has reached postconventional stages individually. When looking for solutions to this problem, it becomes clear that only **processes of direct democracy** meet these requirements. From a point of view of developmental psychology, they include the following features:

- Processes of direct democracy are the result of and the basis for **discussions**. These debates take place on all possible levels: in informal settings, in the general public and in formal political institutions. While the impact of the different debates may vary, their formal importance is the same as the only decisive moment is the ballot, in which each citizen has one vote.

- Processes of direct democracy are the adequate framework for debating and deciding on issues engendered by **complex societies**: matters of fundamental rights can be ruled legitimately only under the condition that everybody has a say.

- As all citizens have the right to vote, all debates definitely lose their hypothetical nature. Processes of direct democracy are not simulations. This **realness** is an additional motivation for participating in deliberative processes.

- Actual participation in political action, deliberation and conflict make citizens aware of their more remote and indirect connections with others, the long-range and large scale significance of what they want and are doing. In that sense, processes of direct democracy provoke **perspective taking on a societal level**.

One might critically argue that processes of direct democracy are similar to dilemma discussions, as debating and voting have no direct influence on moral behavior. This is a limited view, *as in ballots, moral attitudes of the majority become enforceable law*: it is to be expected that those who vote for a certain rule will behave accordingly or are willing to bear the juridical consequences. Dilemma discussions lack the vital enforcing mechanism.
When processes of direct democracy are applied to facilitate the creation and reproduction of postconventional political culture and not to produce political decisions only, the following points may be considered:

- Dilemma discussions and the just community approach show positive effects on the moral development only if they are implemented in a regular fashion. The same applies to processes of direct democracy. Once-in-a-lifetime ballots may be spectacular but their impact on the political culture is negligible.

- The impact of different processes of direct democracy varies. Petitions, in which citizens are allowed to express their claims without any obligation of the political offices to react, as well as consultative ballots, which are not binding for the legislator or government, perpetuate a hierarchical relationship; these instruments operate below postconventional stages. When citizens are allowed to initiate or stop political decisions, postconventional political culture is able to develop.

- Obviously, postconventional political cultures are not fruits of processes of direct democracy alone. Besides individual factors, ethical-political and pragmatic/empirical issues play a role. Nevertheless, it is to be expected that processes of direct democracy help to clarify ethical-political questions and that they lead in the long run to more pragmatic/empirical settings, in particular higher socioeconomical equality, which in return enable more citizens to develop to postconventional political cultures.

### Conclusion

In this paper, I argue that the concept of political culture can be meaningfully differentiated by incorporating Kohlberg’s collective stages of moral culture. This leads to the insight that when issues of a complex society are to be addressed in a deliberative process, postconventional political culture is required. Revisiting Kohlberg’s pedagogical methods of dilemma discussion and just community leads us to processes of direct democracy as a powerful means to generate postconventional political culture.

My contributions to the debates of political culture and of processes of direct democracy are therefore the following:

- Differentiation of political culture along the collective stages of moral culture and introduction of postconventional collective stages of moral culture, and

- Demonstration of the importance of processes of direct democracy from a point of view of developmental psychology.

With these contributions, I have radicalized Habermas’ theory of deliberative democracy twofold: the first radicalization lies in pushing democracy to its extreme by suggesting processes of direct democracy as important means of deliberation. The second radicalization lies in giving the psychological roots of deliberative democracy visibility.
References

Habermas, J. Between facts and norms: Contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy. Cambridge, 1996.


Citizenship Participation and Participatory Democracy: Limits and Possibilities

Daniel Schugurensky
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Introduction

In many countries, low voting turnouts and dissatisfaction with the institutions of representative democracy are seen as worrisome expressions of a democratic deficit. A survey conducted by BBC-Gallup (2005) with 50,000 people in 68 countries revealed that two thirds of people worldwide feel unrepresented by their governments, less than half feel that elections in their country are free and fair, and only 13% trust politicians (making them the least trusted group, below military, religious and business leaders). Likewise, in some countries concerns have been raised about decreases in civic engagement and community cooperation (Putnam 2007).

In this context, increased citizen participation in local communities is sometimes perceived as a sign of healthier and vibrant democracies. However, the practice of citizen participation at the local level comes in different shapes and forms, and hence its meaning is elusive and open to different interpretations. Indeed, the different meanings attached to citizen participation are related to the different purposes, practices and organizational structures guiding such participation. Whether citizen participation contributes to nurturing a more democratic society or not depends on the particular characteristics of that participation and the specific context in which it takes place. In this chapter I argue that some expressions of local citizen participation are more likely to nurture democratic communities and institutions than others, explore the limits and possibilities of participatory democracy, and outline some of the contributions of participatory budgeting to the quality of local democracy and to the quality of citizen participation in local democracy.

Citizen Participation and its Discontents

Increases in citizen participation are often seen with optimism because they suggest a revitalization of community life, an expansion of social capital (in Putnam’s sense of trust and reciprocity networks and civic engagement), a more vibrant society, and a
strengthening of participatory democracy. However, the contribution of citizen participation to societal democratization cannot be taken for granted. Participatory democracy (understood as inclusive processes of deliberation and decision-making) requires citizen participation, but citizen participation can occur without participatory democracy. Indeed, citizen participation can take multiple forms. On one side of the spectrum is collective action (often expressed through oppositional social movements), and on the other is formal engagement with institutions of representative democracy (e.g. elections). While collective action contributes to the ‘widening democracy’ project by challenging social injustices and struggling for a more egalitarian society through protests, boycotts and the like, it is not self-evident that it always contributes to the ‘deepening democracy’ project by nurturing internal democracy and by engaging with democratic institutions. Likewise, whereas electoral participation is important, the sporadic and elitist nature of low-intensity representative democracies seldom nurtures an active citizenship and a participatory political culture, and often does not even delivers the goods (Pearce 2004).

Between those extremes, many expressions of citizen participation abound, but to what extent do they contribute to the ‘deepening democracy’ project is an open question. In some communities it is possible to observe high levels of citizen participation, but such participation does not necessarily translate in improving the quality of democracy. Sometimes, citizen participation becomes an end in itself (“aerobics of participation”) or, as discussed below, as a mechanism implemented by governments to placate community demands (“illusion of participation”). For this reason, citizen participation, as an ambiguous concept, should not be uncritically celebrated or excessively romanticized. Citizen participation, per se, is not necessarily a sign of a healthy participatory democracy: it is pertinent to ask who participates, who makes decisions, how those decisions are made, and what is the impact of those decisions in the quality of people’s lives and in the quality of democracy. Broad and intense citizen participation constitutes an expression of a lively community, but its potential to democratize democracy can be undermined by several factors. Here I will briefly describe five of them: citizen participation downloading, assambleism, tokenism, parochialism, and majority rule.

**Downloading** refers to the process by which the state transfers certain tasks to community groups without a transfer of meaningful decision-making power. The ascendance of neoliberal economics has come together with the retrenchment of the welfare state, the privatization of public services and budget cutbacks, putting the onus on individuals and community groups to fill the gaps (Gordon 1991, Paley 2001, Schild 1998). The neoliberal state asks people to participate in order to do tasks formerly undertook by the welfare state. In a parallel movement, the community is welcomed as the state exits. In these contexts, particularly in developing countries, when citizens and communities are invited to ‘participate’ in local affairs, it often means to participate in tasks like the construction and maintenance of public infrastructure, or the provision of services previously delivered by the state. In these cases poor people, many of them underemployed, work for free painting schools, cleaning hospitals and streets, or cooking and distributing food, caring for the elderly or organizing recreational activities with children, and fundraising for local institutions like schools or community centers. Under downloading,
civic participation is not about setting agendas about issues that matter, but only about redistributing responsibilities. Community organizations are not empowered with decision-making capacities but become mere delivery agents. In sum, under downloading 'civic participation' is a code word for free or cheap labor.

**Assambleism** represents a different expression of citizen participation, and it is also related—in a different way—to low state responsiveness in addressing community problems. Assambleism is different from democratic self-management, which may occur in cooperatives and other other organizations. Assambleism occurs, for instance, when neighbors meet to deliberate and make decisions without any connection with the state apparatus. Because this missing link with the policy process, decisions seldom become implemented unless citizens engage in oppositional politics, organize, mobilize and put pressure on the government. A recent (and short-lived) case of assambleism took place in Argentina during the first semester of 2002. At that time, after a deep economic, social and political crisis created by a decade of neoliberalism, Argentina witnessed a sudden proliferation of neighborhood assemblies, which were especially active in middle class areas of large urban centers. Citizens rejected elected politicians (perceived as corrupt and/or incompetent), and took the streets not only to protest but also to deliberate and propose alternatives. People were meeting in street corners, in public parks, in parking lots, anywhere where they could find a space. At some point a federation of assemblies was created, holding regular meetings and posting messages on the internet. This was a fantastic exercise of citizen engagement. However, a key problem of the assemblies was the absence of a transmission belt between this effervescent grassroots associational life and the government apparatus, be it at the municipal, provincial or federal level. Citizens deliberated in public parks and in the street, whereas elected representatives made decisions in the official (and delegitimized) spaces of formal democracy. With very few exceptions, the two circles did not intersect.

At that historical moment, citizens’ distrust of professional politicians was at its peak, and most professional politicians (even if elected by popular vote) would not dare to make a presence at a neighborhood assembly. Hence, the proposals made by these local bodies (as different from Boal’s legislative theatre initiative) seldom had the opportunity to be considered by elected representatives. Despite a multiplication of deliberative democratic spaces and an unprecedented increase in civic participation (with considerable positive side effects, as noted by Alberto Ford in his chapter), the neighborhood assemblies lacked any power or any mechanism to translate such participation into government policies and programs that could make a difference in those communities. Increase in grassroots participation did not translate in more democratic institutions or more democratic political decisions, and the end result of this process was that neighborhood assemblies slowly declined after a few months, and eventually vanished. This was not the only reason for the dissolution of the assemblies (for instance, misunderstandings between party activists and ordinary neighbors sometimes played a role), but it is not surprising that people became frustrated when they invested considerable time and energy in participation that didn’t go anywhere.

**Tokenism** constitutes a different expression of the problem. Unlike in assambleism, in this situation politicians and citizens meet and deliberate together, but like in
assambleism such deliberation does not necessarily translate in democratic policies and programs. In the model of eight grades of citizen participation discussed by Sheryl Arnstein (1969) in her classic article, tokenism is located at the bottom of the ladder. The opposite of tokenism is citizen control, which is placed at the top of the ladder, and implies that people govern the program or institution, make policy and managerial decisions, and negotiate the conditions under which ‘outsiders’ may exert control. In participatory democracy theory, participation without decision-making is pseudo participation: ‘political equality’ refers to equality of political power in determining the outcome of decisions, and ‘power’ as participation in the making of decisions (Pateman 1970:69; Laswell and Kaplan, 1950, p.75).

Typical cases of tokenism are public consultations that are used to legitimize decisions already made in advance. In these consultations, government experts and professional politicians control the agendas and the information, use a paternalistic tone and a jargon-charged language, and manipulate participants to gain the illusion of meaningful participation. Under tokenism, civic participation means ‘people talk, and government listens’, but this process does not necessarily imply a real input of citizens in decision-making or a government commitment to follow up on the decisions made. In this case ‘listening’ is a mere symbolic exercise for governments, and a therapeutic outlet for community participants. Sometimes tokenism takes the form of co-optation, in the sense that the community agenda is subsumed (through a variety of subtle strategies, including clientelism) under the government agenda. Another problematic case of tokenism occurs when citizens are allowed (and even invited) to make input into a decision, then a decision is made, but never implemented. Needless to say, when this occurs citizens feel (and justifiable so) cheated by politicians. Like in assambleism, the end result of the disconnection between the deliberative process and the policy implementation process is frustration, cynicism and less eagerness to participate again in the future.

Parochialism is a case of citizen participation that is characterized by a narrow understanding of the issues at stake, and by a process in which self-interest, competition and short-term vision primes over mutual understanding, cooperation and the pursuit of the common good. Parochialism can be present both in terms of the issues considered, and in terms of the policy outcomes. Participatory processes characterized by parochialism do not tend to produce good and fair policy for the community as a whole, but decisions that tend to favor those groups that are better organized to advance their agendas. In parochialism, citizen participation may be vibrant and frequent, but does not necessarily translate in a more democratic environment or in a healthier community. Parochially-driven civic engagement is more likely to occur in collective decision-making processes that do not provide opportunities for learning about each other’s situations, for making broader connections, and for understanding the complexity of the issues being addressed.

First, in processes where opportunities for mutual understanding are not provided, participants are unable to put themselves in other participants’ shoes, and hence are unable both to listen what others are trying to say during the deliberations, and to empathize with their concerns at the time of decision-making. Second, parochialism is more likely to succeed when participants are less able to understand the connections between private problems and public issues, between neighborhood particularities and equitable city-wide
policies and programs, between symptoms and causes, and between short-term and long-term solutions. Thirdly, and related to the previous two, parochialism is more difficult to overcome when participants only see the problem from one particular angle, only have one set of information, and are only based on one set of assumptions.

Majority rule is often a necessary aspect of citizen participation, but by itself does not automatically ensure a healthier and more democratic society. Even if citizens actively and frequently engage in collective processes of deliberation and decision-making, this does not necessarily mean that the deliberations are meaningful and that the decisions are going to promote more justice in that particular community. In other words, we should not assume that a collective process in which the only criterion for decision-making is majority rule is automatically going to increase social justice, enhance the common good and protect minority rights. Indeed, citizens could meet and deliberate in a participatory, democratic and open forum, and yet make decisions that are detrimental to ethnic and religious minorities, immigrants, women, the poor, homosexuals, children, etc. For instance, it is possible to imagine a scenario in which a majority of participants at a public forum decides to segregate schoolchildren according to racial characteristics. Such scenario is not impossible to imagine in the 1930s in Germany or in Southern USA. Without inclusive processes of participation and legal protections, unrestricted majority rule may become democratic despotism. Hence, in any discussion of citizen participation it is important to distinguish between democratic processes and democratic decisions. A democratic process may lead to undemocratic public policies, and in this case one may wonder the net benefit of such a process. Conversely, an undemocratic process could generate democratic policies (in the sense of redistributive policies promoting inclusion and social justice). Obviously, the best-case scenario has both democratic processes and results in democratic public policies, and this is more likely to be achieved through the establishment of guiding principles that are based on equity criteria and respect minority rights. In Bolivian indigenous communities, for instance, participatory democracy is based on principles of solidarity, reciprocity, community, and consensus.

Summarizing, citizen participation – even one characterized by large numbers, frequency and vibrancy, is not an unequivocal sign of a healthy local democracy. Citizen participation can lead – and often does – to a more democratic city, but not always does. Put in a different way, citizen participation is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a healthier, just and democratic city. A model of citizen participation that makes a contribution to the development of high-intensity democracies (Sousa 2005) is participatory democracy.

Participatory Democracy and its Discontents

Citizen participation is more likely to nurture a healthier local democracy when it is organized through a system of participatory democracy. In participatory democracy, citizens deliberate and make decisions on issues that matter to them, according to clear and agreed upon procedural norms. The government participates by providing relevant information and guidance, and by implementing the policies, programs or works decided by citizen councils. Participatory democracy, despite its many contributions since the Athenian Agora and the Six Nations Confederacy, is not a perfect system. Most of the critiques
advanced by its detractors can be grouped into three main categories, which we can call the 'expertise' argument, the 'inequality' argument and the 'utopian' argument.

Regarding the issue of expertise, critics of participatory democracy claim that government functions are better served by experts (e.g. professional politicians and bureaucrats) because they have greater knowledge, skills and experience than ordinary citizens. They claim that no common good emerges after public deliberation because the public interest will always be defined differently by competing groups in society, and that the best space for this competition to take place is the electoral process. This (the electoral process) is the most appropriate arena for political participation of ordinary citizens; in between elections, administrative policymaking should be based on expertise and research. Excessive participation, the argument goes, excessively delays the process and does not necessarily improve the quality of decisions, because ‘amateur politicians’ can easily be manipulated by demagogues or by ideological factions. Likewise, critics claim that amateur politicians are less likely to make compromises over issues or accept defeat than professional politicians, who are more flexible and willing to negotiate. Finally, critics point out that ordinary citizens are demand-oriented and ignore the realities of budgetary constraints, which means that they want more services and infrastructure while paying less taxes. This situation put excessive demands on governments, which are unable to respond, which in turn leads to cynicism and eventually to a crisis of governance.

A second line of critiques against participatory democracy could be grouped as the ‘inequality argument’, because they tend to underline the inherent inequalities that are present in this system. For instance, it is argued that in participatory democracy there is a bias against the poor, who may confront more obstacles to participate, such as time to attend or resources to cover childcare and transportation. Moreover, the mass meetings of participatory democracy usually lack rules of order (present in representative institutions) that protect all parties joining the debate and influencing the final decision. Even if rules and regulations for meetings and processes are developed, they tend to favor those who have more years of formal schooling and are more familiar with bureaucratic procedures. Furthermore, when different options are presented in a discussion, decisions tend to favor those motions presented by educated professionals, who have more refined oratory skills, have more access to information, and can convey an aura of ‘rigor’, ‘rationality’ and ‘objectivity’ in their discourse. Likewise, it is argued, proposals that are supported by business and government representatives are also more likely to be considered, because these groups are more effective in justifying their excuses to the public than the public is in bringing their complaints to the attention of powerful groups.

A third line of criticisms against participatory democracy, which could be labeled as the ‘utopian argument’, contends that many advocates of participatory democracy tend to portray it as a viable alternative to representative democracy, which shows an idealistic and romantic view of social reality. These critics claim that participatory theorists can set utopian criteria because nobody takes them seriously. They refer, for instance, to the notion of participatory democracy as a broad-scale, intense and frequent participation by all types of citizens who do not mind spending their evenings and weekends in town hall meetings deciding all affairs (small and big) of the polis. They also argue that it is utopian to think that participatory democracy will occur in an environment characterized by mutual respect,
tolerance, rational deliberation and the pursuit of the common good. Among the most influential writings raising this argument are Lippman’s ‘Public Opinion’ (1922) and ‘The Phantom Public’ (1925). Lippmann saw advocates of participatory democracy as romantic and nostalgic individuals who idealized the role of the public to address public affairs and proposed an unrealistic model for the emerging mass society, which should rely on political representation and technical expertise.

**Responding to the Critiques**

The critiques made in these three sets of arguments reveal some of the weak spots of participatory democracy, and provide a helpful warning for those who support participatory democracy models and are committed to contribute to their constant improvement overtime. The counter-arguments to these critiques have been discussed extensively in the literature on the topic (Dewey 1927, Kaufman 1969, Pateman 1970, Barber 1984, Berry et al. 1993, Gaventa and Valderrama 1999, Abers 2000, Avritzer 2002, Benello 2003, Burt 2002, Carrel 2001, Fung and Wright 2003, Gret and Sintomer 2004, Mansbridge 1997, Santos 1998, 2002 and 2007, Smith 2005, Streck et al. 2005). While this is not the space to repeat them in detail, it is worth noting that this body of conceptual works and empirical studies suggests that these problematic issues can be significantly reduced in practice, and that participatory democracy provides institutional arrangements through which citizen participation can nurture healthier local democracies.

Appropriate institutional arrangements are indeed crucial. Citizen participation and good democratic processes cannot occur in a vacuum. They require enabling structures that promote particular types of exchanges and values. In this sense, participatory democracy contributes to the deepening of democracy precisely by facilitating the presence of enabling structures for positive citizen engagement. Among the principles and dynamics that characterize these enabling structures are inclusiveness and dialogue, an environment of openness, tolerance, diversity of viewpoints and broad analysis, an availability of accurate and transparent information, equitable criteria, clear links between deliberation, decision-making and implementation, and justice-oriented public policies. After their analysis of four experiments of participatory democracy, Fung and Wright (2003:21-24) identified three key principles, three design properties, and one primary background condition. The three principles are a practical orientation (addressing a specific area of public concern), a bottom-up participation (empowered involvement of ordinary citizens and officials) and deliberative solution generation (an orientation towards solving problems).

The three features of institutional design are devolution, coordination and state centrality. Devolution implies transferring decision-making and implementation power to local action units. Coordination means that local units are not autonomous but linked to each other and to different government levels in order to allocate resources, solve common and cross-border problems, and transfer innovations and learning. State centrality refers to the democratization of the administrative bureaucracies charged with solving those problems. The background enabling condition is a rough equality of power among participants for the purpose of deliberative decision. These procedural features allowed the four participatory democracy experiments under examination to achieve three important outcomes. First, they were very effective in solving pressing social problems. Second, those
solutions generated more fairness and equity in the four communities. Third, beyond achieving effective and fair public outcomes, the experiments produced broad, deep and meaningful civic participation (Fung and Wright 2003:27).

The principles, institutional arrangements, basic conditions and outcomes that characterized these four experiments (one in Brazil, one in India, two in the USA) and many other similar experiments provide a powerful response to the three criticisms described above. Starting with the last one (the claim of utopianism), participatory democracy is not a mere theoretical construct based on lofty and utopian ideals. Participatory democracy experiments constitute, as Fung and Wright poignantly note, ‘real utopias’, a combination of dreams and practice, of utopian destinations and pragmatic institutional designs. Participatory democracy is not a utopian dream anymore, but a process being constructed every day in real communities. Moreover, and this is particularly important, it is a process that can be sustained and improved over time. This does not mean that participatory democracy has been able to engage the great majority of citizens in a given community.

For many reasons, in every large community there are always people who are not inclined to participate in collective processes of deliberation and decision-making, and this was as true at the time of the Athenian Agora as is today. However, an examination of empirical studies conducted by Berry et al. (1993) concluded that despite the fact that participatory democracy does not increase the number of participants in community activities when compared with control groups, the type of activities in which residents engage in are typically more political than social. This means that although the type and number of people who engage in community affairs may not change substantially, they find structures to channel their energies into activities that are more communal and cooperative than isolating, and that are linked to decision-making processes.

In relation to the second set of critiques (the inequality argument), it is undeniable that citizens come to participatory democracy deliberations with different amounts of resources, expertise, status, education, and numerical support. However, an institutional design that promotes equity and fairness in decision-making significantly addresses this power differential, and helps to equalize both the process and the outcomes. Evidence from my own research on participatory budgeting also suggests that these processes nurture significant increases in the political efficacy, self-confidence and political skills among disadvantaged participants. Moreover, I also found that these processes contribute to generate solidarity from better off groups to those that have greater needs.

Finally, regarding the first set of critiques (the ‘expertise’ argument), the evidence suggests that ordinary citizens, government bureaucrats, elected politicians and technical experts can engage in meaningful discussions, listen to each other and take sensible decisions. As Dewey (1927) noted in his response to Lippman’s call for ‘democratic realism’, the cure for the ailments of democracy is more, not less, democracy. Dewey admitted that social inquiry and policy design could be done by exclusively by experts, but all the relevant facts and potential implications of such inquiry and proposed policies should remain a public trust not be manipulated by private interests. In his words, (p. 365) "it is not necessary that the many should have the knowledge and skill to carry on the needed investigations; what is required is that they have the ability to judge of the bearing of the
knowledge supplied by others upon common concerns." Dewey highlighted the importance of public deliberation in political decision-making, but was not an advocate of any type of deliberation. He contended that just letting discussion go, without eliciting facts of any kind, and without appealing to common meanings, was fruitless and counterproductive.

For Dewey, once the relevant facts are made public, the role of discussion is to determine the exact nature of the common good in that particular situation. Dewey recognized that intervention by the public is not possible without a better organized and educated public. Hence, participatory democracy requires from citizens not only engagement and organization, but also good information and critical analysis. Dewey argued that his position was not about idealizing people's knowledge, skills and attitudes, or their capacity for self-government, but about nurturing democratic institutions in which people would gradually educate themselves into the processes of deliberation and decision-making. This is a key point, because it calls our attention to the reciprocal relation between citizenship learning and participatory democracy. In a virtuous circle, participatory democracy nurtures civic learning, and in turn this learning improves the quality of participatory democracy. This means that learning is both an input and an outcome of participatory democracy, and in this process individuals and collectives acquire a new set of expertise and dispositions. As Carole Pateman pointed out, the major function of participation in the theory of participatory democracy is an educative one, and educative in the very widest sense, including both the psychological dimension and the gaining of practice in democratic skills and procedures:

Thus there is no special problem about the stability of a participatory system; it is self-sustaining through the educative impact of the participatory process. Participation develops and fosters the very qualities necessary for it; the more individuals participate the better able they become to do so. Subsidiary hypotheses about participation are that it has an integrative effect and that it aids the acceptance of collective decisions (Pateman 1988 [1970], 42-43).

Indeed, in their above mentioned meta-study, Berry et al. (1993) concluded that when participatory democracy provide opportunities for meaningful involvement in politics where ordinary citizens make decisions about the allocation of goods and services in their neighborhoods, they become more knowledgeable, more tolerant, more efficacious, and more confident in government. Our own studies on participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Montevideo, Rosario, and Guelph confirm those findings.

**Participatory Democracy and Citizenship Learning: The Contributions of Participatory Budgeting**

In those studies, we found that participants experienced significant civic and political learning in four areas (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, and practices), and that changes were greater among people with low income and limited prior civic and political involvement. In participatory budget experiments, the quantity, quality and diversity of learning reported by participants are indeed significant.

Participatory participatory budgeting can make a modest contribution to the quality of citizen participation in local governance by providing both appropriate institutional
arrangements and an informal civic education to participants. Participatory budgeting is a process for allocations of local budgets that is being implemented in over 1,000 cities around the world. While I recognize that participatory budgeting is not the magic wand to solve all problems of democracy, and that when it is poorly implemented can cause more harm than good, I argue that contribution participatory budgeting can contribute to the deepening of democracy. Such contribution is particularly visible in six areas: 1) equity, 2) state democratization, 3) solidarity and concern for the common good, 4) co-governance, 5) community mobilization, and 6) citizenship learning.

1) PB helps to ensure equity in the allocation of municipal resources

PB rules specify that those who need more receive more. For instance, concerning the lack of services or infrastructure, the greater the need, the higher the grade it is assigned in the overall ranking. Because of this equity principle, the PB has played a key role in redistributing resources and improving the living conditions of many people in poor neighborhoods (Marquetti 2009). Moreover, unlike many other experiments of participatory democracy, in many PB processes there is high proportion of low income of participants. In a modest way, the PB makes a connection between political democracy and economic democracy.

2) PB helps to democratize the state, making it more transparent, accountable, efficient and effective in serving local communities

PB has become a partnership between government and civil society, a type of co-governance. It is more transparent because ordinary citizens have a clear grasp of the budget revenues and expenses, and hence there is less room for inflated budgets and other corruption practices. In fact, in Porto Alegre corruption levels have decreased drastically. It is more accountable because people are invested and empowered to follow up on the decisions made in the budget process, making sure that the quantity and quality of the infrastructure and services delivered are the ones agreed upon. Indeed, the follow up generates a new culture of accountability in government and civil society. It is more efficient and effective because decisions are not made on the basis of what authorities think is good for the people, but on the basis of the real needs and dreams of organized communities.

3) PB promotes solidarity and concern for the common good

As a public, non-state sphere, PB provides a space of encounter for diverse populations who otherwise would be unlikely to meet. Its pluralist nature can also nurture compassion and solidarity among groups, reinforce social ties, and promote the collective pursuit of the common good. The PB experience demonstrates that it is possible to construct a general popular interest that is grounded in the local but not limited to an aggregation of particular local interests. Indeed, at Hatcher (2003) notes, the PB doesn’t aim simply at each district determining its own needs: it forces each entity to place its demands in relation to others to achieve an agreed budgetary program for the whole city or state. A particularly interesting pedagogical strategy to make the shift from an exclusive focus on self-interest to a spirit of solidarity is a bus city tour that takes place at the
beginning of each cycle. This trip allows participants to directly experience the situation of other neighborhoods, which in turn allows them to better understand other perspectives at the time of deliberation, and to be more compassionate at the time of decision-making.

PB can also help to diminish the problems of parochialism discussed above. Indeed, if participants have opportunities to see the problem from different perspectives (e.g. technical, legal, social, economic, environmental, etc), they would be better equipped to grasp a more complex understanding of the situation and to make more enlightened decisions. Such capacity can be further enhanced if they have an opportunity to access relevant and updated information, and to examine critically different assumptions and arguments.

4) PB helps to create a collaborative model of governance in which municipal governments and civil society can work together

Traditional models of governance are characterized by nonparticipation, confrontation and co-optation. Citizens’ roles are reduced to receive things from above or demand things from below. Sometimes they are heard; most often they are placated through consultations, co-opted through favors and patronage, or repressed. The government role is to diagnose what is best for each community, set priorities, design and implement corresponding actions and allocate the necessary resources, usually in exchange for votes. In this model, citizens complain that the government doesn’t do enough for them, that public monies are wasted in inefficiencies and corruption, that their voices are not heard, that the government priorities are incomprehensible, and that all decisions are guided by electoral politics. On the other side, government officials complain that citizens demand more services and more infrastructure while at the same time demand lower taxes, which shows not only ignorance of basic budgeting principles but also irrationality. They claim that citizens don’t understand that resources are limited, and that they are unable to set priorities. PB reduces those problems, and can help us to transit to a new political culture. Indeed, PB sets the basis for a more productive relationship between the municipal government and civil society, one based on codetermination, mutual understanding, partnerships and cooperation – a framework that in Latin America is known as ‘social co-responsibility’.

5) PB promotes the mobilization of entire communities by engaging local groups on issues that matter to them

PB mobilizes existing groups and individual neighbors. Early in the process individual neighbors realize that in order to enhance their participation they also need to organize in a collective, which leads to the formation of new groups. As communities are activated, the social realm is revitalized, a new generation of leaders arises, and organized groups realize their power to change social reality. This new impetus produces an expansive effect, because once communities are able to achieve something, and gain confidence in their capacity to influence decisions (political efficacy), they are eager to tackle more ambitious and complex challenges. Many neighbors become civically active as a result of the PB, and then begin to mobilize around other issues and in other venues. The PB also enhanced the mobilizing capacity of many neighborhoods and communities (Baiocchi 2005).
6) PB is a school of citizenship

Last but not least, PB is a place where citizens learn democracy by doing, where they acquire a great variety of political skills, knowledge, attitudes and values, and where they become more democratic, tolerant and caring. It is also a place where citizens increase their self-esteem and political efficacy. The PB helps to challenge the assumption that citizenship learning only takes place in schools, and that this learning stops for most people after school is finished.

As a school of citizenship, the PB can contribute to the redistribution of political capital, which can be understood as the capacity to influence political decisions. The PB redistributes political capital from the haves to the have-nots, and from the elites to the poor. Internally, to ensure that this new political capital is democratically distributed and not concentrated in a few leaders, PB representatives have to rotate constantly, giving room for grooming new generations of community leaders (Institute of Development Studies 2006). Here, I suggest, lies the greatest potential of the PB: its modest (but not insignificant) contribution to the development of new political subjects and in the nurturing of a new political culture.

PB as a school of citizenship also helps to make the political game more democratic. This began with the demystification of the budget, which before 1989 was perceived as something obscure, highly technical in nature, which should be done only by a selected group of experts. At that time, ordinary citizens were not considered capable of understanding a budget, let alone doing one. As communities gain political efficacy, they stop seeing budgets, laws and policies as immanent goods ordered from above, and start believing in their own capacity to propose changes when they see something wrong. Likewise, because the PB as a school of citizenship makes citizens become more alert, critical and aware, and because it makes resource allocations more transparent, it helps to break with the traditional clientelistic relationship in which politicians and community leaders exchange favours for votes. It also helps to disrupt the double discourse of politicians, who become less able to say one thing and do another. The PB also promotes new values and attitudes, including the preservation of public property, and a reduction in vandalism.

Final Remarks

The critiques to citizen participation and to participatory democracy advanced in this paper do not aim at making a case against civic participation or against participatory democracy. They only intend to argue that civic participation, per se, does not equate a healthier democracy. Civic participation by itself is not bad, but a great deal of participation with little tangible outcomes often leads to frustration and cynicism. In short, participation is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a healthy democracy.

An effective participatory democracy system requires at least two conditions. First, a critical mass of citizens who are willing and well equipped to participate effectively. Second, an inclusive organizational structure that allows and nurtures participation, and ensures that such participation is meaningful and relevant. In other words, a healthy democracy
needs both inclusive institutional arrangements for deliberation and decision-making that are guided by democratic principles and processes, and participants who are informed, critical, tolerant and concerned for the common good. Moreover, and this is particularly relevant among low-income groups, the decisions should have a direct impact on the wellbeing of participants. Indeed, a recent study by the UNDP (2005) reported that more than half of all Latin Americans-54.7%- say they would opt for an "authoritarian" regime over democratic government if authoritarianism could "resolve" their economic problems. This suggests that one of the challenges of the 21st century is to connect the ‘widening democracy’ project (economic and social democracy) and the ‘deepening democracy’ project (political democracy). Participatory budgeting, through its redistributive function, can play a modest role in this regard, at least at the municipal level.

It is true that participatory budgeting is still a new experiment in the history of participatory democracy and has a long ways to go. It is also true that it may be manipulated by municipal administrations “in a mix of philanthropic glamour and cold political calculation” (Baierle 2008:3). However, its potential for the deepening democracy movement should not be underestimated. PB can nurture a virtuous circle between citizenship learning and participatory democracy: the more people participate in democracy, the more competent and democratic they become, and the more competent and democratic they become, the more equipped they are to improve the quality of the democratic process and more inclined to open new democratic spaces.

References

Discourses of Community and Paradoxes of Participation: Challenges for Citizenship Education

Griet Verschelden, Greet De Brauwere, Luc De Droogh & Sven DeVisscher
University College of Ghent

In this paper we present the preliminary stages of an empirical study on community practices and participation. Our research is situated in Ledeberg, a socio-cultural diverse neighbourhood in the city of Ghent (Flanders, Belgium). In this research we want to analyse community practices (Banks 2003; Butcher 2007). Do they mean something for processes of community and participation in the neighbourhood? Do they improve the opportunities of living together in the neighbourhood and in the city? What can non-formal educators (adult, youth and community workers) do in these community practices to support processes of living together?

In our research we want to reconnect community to wider realities, but at the same time critically analyse these realities in terms of injustices and disempowering relations. Although all conceptions of community are based on some normative account of ‘the good life’, these accounts are rarely made explicit. This normative account of what community ought to be risks obscuring the social reality of communities, situated in its wider socio-cultural and economic context (Shaw 2008, 27-28). It is vital to recognise the way in which structural circumstances influence community relationships.

Community, for us, is a relational construct, which implies both similarities and differences. It is an inclusive and relational practice, based on different kinds of interactions and dialogues between people, constructed in the private realm, in civil society and in the public realm (Kusenbach 2006). It is an active process, which refers also to boundaries: meaningful boundaries are set up in these interactions and dialogues and in the development of social identities. So inclusion and exclusion are very much related in the concept of community.

In our research we take different forms of participation into account. We bring participation out of the formal and institutional context: it is about engagement and struggles inside and outside institutions and structures. Engagement in communities and neighbourhoods can be in formal participatory initiatives, forms of oppositional activism, or
in informal initiatives in which inhabitants interact with each other. Who is participating, in what, at whose request and for whose benefit? What do these involvements and engagements mean? What do people learn? Are everybody’s interest represented?

Sarah Banks (2003) pointed out that the term community practice differs from the terms community development and community work because the term is much broader: “It includes work with a community focus undertaken by people other than community workers, and embraces the development and implementation of community policies” (Banks 2003, 12-13).

- Our research is about practices and policies with a community focus. These practices and policies include;
  - ‘neighbourhood renewal policies’ that are set up by community workers or public servants;
  - ‘community development strategies’ which local governments adopt and policymakers implement;
  - ‘non-formal education’ in a variety of setting such as, sport clubs, church groups, etc.;
  - Self-motivated ‘residents’ initiatives’ and;
  - Informal practices or forms of participation

An example of an informal practice would be the annual Ledeberg Carnival celebration. Once a year there is a parade and the people involved work throughout the year to build and decorate their float. This movement has also an organizational committee, which makes the preparations of the event is a social occasion. There are different gatherings which all have their fixed meeting place and typical café. There are no non-formal educators professionally involved in this movement, but this seems to be a relevant community practice in the neighbourhood, which paradoxically also excludes people (it seems to be a very closed community, with high expectations of active residents involvement). Community practices are always related to non-formal education and processes of informal learning, which can be but not necessarily initiated or supported by professionals.

The questions in our research relate to the meaning of community practices for inhabitants and non-formal educators, referring to the interconnected practices at the neighbourhood level (micro-level processes), at the organization level (mid-level processes) and at the societal level (macro-level processes, such as new forms of socio-cultural and urban policy). This relates to questions of inclusion and exclusion, empowerment and power relations.

**Community: From Myth to Reality?**

There is a lot of discussion on the various meanings of community and the contested nature of the concept. Butcher (1993) identifies three meanings for the term community: descriptive (community as a fact), evaluative (community as a value) and active meaning.

A ‘descriptive meaning’ of community consists of features of the world that describe what a community is. For example, a community is a group or network of people who share something in common, which involves social interaction with the group or network, a sense
of attachment, identification or belonging. There is also a distinction made between territorial communities and communities of interest or identity. In territorial communities people have their geographical location (a neighbourhood or city) in common and community is limited to a geographical area. Communities of interest or identity are based on characteristics other than physical proximity, such as ethnicity, occupation, or common interests. Therefore there is a difference between the neighbourhood and community because shared locality does not necessarily mean a common interest or identity.

An ‘evaluative meaning’ of the term community, refers to a value connotation that is attached to the term. For example, community has positive connotations, calling up images of stability, warmth, friendship, caring neighbourhoods, good life, etc. Butcher (1993) identifies three community values: solidarity, participation and coherence. Solidarity is about the relationships that sustain community members at an emotional level. It inspires affection, even loyalty, of an individual member towards the groups. Participation is about activities with others, through which individuals are involved in realizing common goals and playing a part in the collective life and aspirations of the group. Coherence is the embracing by individuals of a framework of meanings and values that provide some overall sense of their world. An 'active definition' of community, refers to collective action by members of the community that embraces the communal values of solidarity, participation and coherence.

We find the first approach of community as a geographical area too ‘cold’. In our view, while the common interest and identity definition, the evaluative and the active definitions are also too oppressive, idealistic and mythical. Working from the idea that there is a lack of community and solidarity (also called the 'democratic deficit’), theorists create community as an ideal to strive for in policies and practices, through promoting active participation and sustainable social relations.

In this approach community development is mythologized because it assumes a homogeneity of values and standards, and a shared and common sense of identity in which singularity of identity is reinforced and interactions are pre-arranged. This notion of community is problematic and has the potential for disempowerment, because it leads to and even legitimates certain kinds of exclusion. Community can reinforce and create social polarization and potential conflict (Shaw 2008). This approach denies the most significant feature of living together in community: learning to negotiate pluralism, diversity conflict and dissent, all issues that are inevitable in a democracy (Mouffe 2000).

Paradoxes of Participation

In actual discourses participation is connected with individuals and community groups, which are able to take an active part in determining needs, and in developing policies and services (Taylor 2007). Participation seems to be a solution to the problems of marginalization. It seems to improve decision-making and services, and it means individual freedom and choice (Meagher 2006). It is assumed that participation is a good thing because participation of residents leads to healthier, stronger and more pleasant communities and neighbourhoods.
As Foucault points out, discourse about participation has degenerated to one which moralizes or controls citizens especially so called non-participants (cited in Masschelein 2005 and Taylor 2007). In this context, participation is not liberating or empowering, but becomes a ‘new tyranny’ because it preserves the interests of powerful groups or individuals and it reproduces the power of dominant individuals or structures (Cooke 2002; Hickey 2005).

Hartman (1998, 12) refers to a participation-paradox. By providing more opportunities to participate there is a paradoxical widening of the power gap between people who use these opportunities and people who cannot access them. By analysing the formal participatory practices in Antwerp, Belgium, Loopmans (2006 and 2007) argues that techniques to stimulate civic action also provoke confrontation and tensions between ‘active’ and ‘passive’ residents and neighbours. While the first group complains about the lack of engagement of the latter, the so-called passive group is dissatisfied with the special status that active residents receive in public space.

The participation ideology becomes a consensus ideology (Hartman 1998; Hartman 2004; Quaghebeur 2004), which is paradoxically inclined to generate anti-democratic tendencies under the guise of democratization because it depoliticizes social and structural problems. In this ideology, ‘citizen’ and ‘politics’ are considered opposite and analyses of power inequalities, conflicts and interests are ignored. Participation is not neutral. It has ideological implications and requires a shift in power relations if it is to be anything more than just tokenism (Meagher 2006).

**Setting the Scene: The Ledeberg Neighbourhood**

Ledeberg is one of the 19th century industrial quarters around the historical centre of the city of Ghent. To situate Ledeberg today, we can refer to the Strategic Plan, which describes Ledeberg as a vivid neighbourhood with a very active social life (Cel Gebiedsgerichte Werking 2006). Ledeberg is very densely populated on its 1.5 km2 – with 5,641 residents per km2 in contrast to the 1.465 inhabitants per km2 for the whole of Ghent. The 8214 residents of Ledeberg are also more ethnically diverse compared to the population of Ghent in general. Almost 12% of people in Ledeberg do not have Belgian nationality compared to 7% in the whole of Ghent). Ledeberg also has more unemployed people than Ghent (11.8% in Ledeberg compared to 9.4% in Ghent, 2004). But Ledeberg also has a lot of public green spaces – almost 10%, but the inhabitants do not use a lot of it.

Ledeberg is involved in a process of urban renewal, initiated by the city of Ghent, and supported by the Administrative Body for Territorial Development of the city (Cel Gebiedsgerichte Werking 2006). This institution aims to achieve an acceptable balance between the city’s priorities and those of the residents through the active participation of residents in several neighbourhoods in Ghent. For Ledeberg, the project of urban renewal contains two disproportionate parts. First, the large-scale approach to provide ‘gateways’ to the neighbourhood mostly by reorienting traffic and economical activities at the borders of the neighbourhood. Second, the small-scale approach of providing ‘oxygen’ to the neighbourhood by upgrading and renewing public space in this densely inhabited area. But
will these spatial interventions find answers to the social and economical problems of the neighbourhood?

From the very beginning of the process of urban renewal in Ledeberg there was a group installed that operated as a ‘sounding board’ that consisted of 40-50 individuals and representatives of institutions. The preparatory sketches about possible urban renewal programs that the Town Planning council developed where discussed in six sessions with the residents. Afterwards people where given information about the purpose of the process and invited to participate in the planning process. At the very beginning people where invited to give their comments about the strengths and weaknesses of Ledeberg. Some groups of residents to walked around with a camera and took pictures of good and bad areas. Other groups were invited to write a story about Ledeberg’s marketplace. The results where first discussed in the neighbourhood and the conclusions of this discussion were given to architectural firms to concretize. Several firms were then invited to present and discuss their plans with the residents. Residents responded by asking for more attention to some of the difficulties in Ledeberg. These included the position of pedestrians, parking problems and enhancing the quality of the existing public green parks and gardens. At this time, the city organized an exhibition and a guided walk through the neighbourhood in which the plans and actions of the urban renewal project are presented and discussed (Lambert 2007; De Droogh 2007).

Research Design

The research has three phases.

1. Understanding the socio-cultural context historically by making cartographies
2. Analysing narratives in the neighbourhood
3. Conducting focus group conversations with non-formal educators

Understanding the Socio-cultural Context Historically

In order to better understand the current socio-cultural context in Ledeberg, we gathered knowledge on the historical impact of spatial interventions and demographic developments in community life, and on the impact of institutional interventions on social and human relationships. We used cartography (map making) to analyse socio, cultural, educational and economic actors and infrastructure, and their roles in community life (Ruitenberg 2007). Where are these actors and infrastructures situated in the neighbourhood? How are they acting in the neighbourhood? Can we see evolutions in their place, role or acts?

Narratives in the Neighbourhood: Walking, Mapping, Interviewing and Observing

In this phase we will leave behind the organizational and institutional levels and start from the perspective of the inhabitants themselves.
We use the ‘walking-method’ to understand community from the perspective of the people themselves. We map the local and regional daily activities and interactions of inhabitants, visitors and key figures in the neighbourhood and in the city. We do that by walking on several occasions (Vandevyvere 2006, 84-85).

Walking with people results in maps with trajectories and meanings (Blondeel 1999; Blondeel 2005). Mapping as a research method comes from social geography. It is in origin about graphical reproduction of research material (trajectories, activities, interactions) by putting them above each other and making comparisons. In our research, we will also add meaning-making research material (De Visscher 2008). Mapping is a good visual method to get insight into and to analyse the complex realities, and to generate complementary research data.

The mapping will be complemented with face-to-face interviews and street observations, to gather and analyse people’s meaning-making in relation to their community. These methods are also used to discuss the value and appreciation people give to the actors and infrastructure in the neighbourhood. The street observations are seen as ‘situated sense-making’, which is a method to analyse the meaning making of daily activities and interactions (Vandevyvere 2006)

**Focus Groups Conversations with Non-formal Educators**

These conversations go back to the role and the position of non-formal educators in community practices and processes. The results from the cartography, walking, interviewing and observations are discussed with non-formal educators in the neighbourhood. In which themes and groups do they intervene? In which ones do they remain silent? What are their arguments to design, enable, and facilitate community practices and processes? Are these professional practices seen as supported by the people themselves? Who determines these practices? Who is included in or excluded from the discussion? In these focus groups, we analyse the role of non-formal educators in community practices. In our study we analyse community practices as professional practices and as political practices (Shaw 2008).

Our study aims at insights in how non-formal educators themselves make meaning of community practices as a professional practice, and how inhabitants experience these professional practices. We focus on the way professional practices affect how people think about and act in community. Often non-formal educators are seen as architects (Duvyendak 2005), designers or contrivers of community practices. Non-formal educators seem to have a specific commitment in promoting equality and social justice, and in creating equal and supportive community practices. The problem is that approach reinforces and pre-arranges social interactions and relationships, and sees individual and community identities as fixed and unchangeable. Our research is not about creating more or better communities, but addresses the question is how non-formal educators can support and analyse already existing community processes. In our view the non-formal educator takes on a role as enabler or facilitator of community practices and processes. Their focus is on the analysis of human interactions and relationships in society and their ability to deal with diversity. They
analyse meaning-making in encounters between people and start from these different perspectives to set up their activities.

Our study aims at insight in how inhabitants and non-formal educators make meaning of community practices as a political practice (Shaw 2008). How do they create a place and space in which they can encounter to share and discuss experiences and aspirations? For which groups, and which groups are excluded? This draws our attention to issues of power and the struggle of social justice, equality and recognition. What is power? How do non-formal educators and inhabitants engage with power dynamics and conflicts?

The Relationship between Community Practices, Citizenship and Democracy

Community practices can be seen as acts of citizenship, and these acts are relational: with and towards others. Referring to the work of Jeanette Pols (2004) the focus in our study is on enacting citizenship and democracy. ‘Enacting’ refers to studying phenomena ‘in action’, which leads to different stories that ‘talk about’ these phenomena (Pols 2004, 24). So we want to outline the different ways in which citizenship and democracy is enacted, especially the different ways of ‘doing citizenship and democracy in practice’.

We see citizenship as an inclusive, relational and educational practice (Lawy 2006). Pols (2004) calls this ‘relational citizenship’. Relational citizenship defines citizenship as a quality of society rather than as a quality of individuals within society. Relational citizenship is realized through the human social relations and interactions between people in society (Winance 2007).

Acts of citizenship and enacting citizenship are not always democratic. Democracy is a contested concept with a range of meanings, incorporating sometimes competing and conflicting models. Democracy is not simply about a set of managed institutions or organizations, but about an open dialogue and debate about what kind of society we want to live in, and how we can begin to build it.

Discussion and Conclusion: Challenges for Citizenship Education

Citizenship education from our point of view is about co-constructing public space. It is a forum where people can express their concerns and can learn to negotiate their claims. This assumption implies that when studying community practices we do not look for interventions and programs that contrive or enhance community, but rather that we look at how community, relations and encounters are enacted and ‘performed’. In that case we value citizenship education as relational, and concern ourselves with the ethics of the encounter as an attempt not to ‘grasp’ the ‘other’ by making him/her into the same. We are also interested in translation of the philosophy of relational citizenship into pedagogy of the encounter (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005).

The meaning of citizenship and participation that we embrace does not focus on the active involvement of people, but questions whether the perspective of people is considered, even if these people are not actively involved in decision-making. We seek to
understand whether the view of the people themselves comes to the fore, and whether they recognize themselves as involved in the intervention.

To conclude, citizenship education is a political process. It is about enriching and sometimes changing people’s lives, but also about changing conceptions of community and participation in society. This means that experiences and concerns of people are crucial, but even more vital is the question of why people are concerned with certain themes in society, why they define situations in their community as difficult or problematic, and why interventions work or don’t work from their perspective and in their context. Precisely these why-questions reveal the connection of the community to the broader society and its underlying discourses that serve to define what a problem is.

References


Dahlberg, G., & Moss, P. Ethics and politics in early childhood education. London: Routledge, 2005


Advancing Democracy and Happiness: The Leadership Development Frameworks of Different Types of Charismatic Political Leadership

Johnny Welch
Columbia University

The unvarnished truth is that on a number of critical levels, American democracy is under assault. Moreover, the United States is simultaneously experiencing, in both business and government, a crisis in leadership. This paper endeavors to begin to confront these critical issues by drawing attention to and offering a framework for better understanding what is believed to be one of the grave, root causes of both of these problems: a lack of transformational leadership and the concurrent, often unchallenged or submissive, acceptance of authoritarian leadership. This core problem is particularly problematic in the area of charismatic political leadership, where it is often more difficult to distinguish between the two types, particularly when we are dealing with less extreme or mixed forms.

Connecting these practical problems to the gaps in the research literature, this paper will also briefly highlight the lack of research in this area—that is, the failure to adequately address not only the role that certain types of leaders play in the development of others, particularly in regard to their leadership potential; but whether, how and why leaders engage in this critically important, democratic responsibility. Although far from a comprehensive solution, a better understanding of the leadership development frameworks of specific types of leadership, as well as the possible connections these frameworks have with the health and welfare of democracy may be a significant first step toward safeguarding, preserving and further strengthening all free, open and democratic societies.

With the overall hope and ambition of taking steps toward renewing the commitment to democracy, freedom and the pursuit of happiness, the major aim of this paper is to build a case and offer a conceptual model for improving our understanding of the leadership development frameworks of different types of charismatic political leadership—transformational and authoritarian—and the perceived impact these divergent frameworks have on people’s subjective well-being. Toward that end, this paper will conclude by offering a conceptual skeleton for exploring the different leadership
development frameworks of transformational-charismatic and authoritarian-charismatic leaders.

The Central Practical Problem

Although the argument continues to gain attention and momentum as well as evidence and support, to proclaim that democracy in America is under attack is to invite criticism and controversy. There will always be those with a vested interest in the way things are and the way things are going. Therefore, what follows is an attempt to lay out a clear, evidence-based and non-partisan account of what is perceived to be one of the root problems we are facing as citizens in what is purported to be a free and democratic society.

The central practical problem this study seeks to address is the lack of transformational leadership in the United States and the concurrent, often acquiescent, acceptance of authoritarian leadership. This problem most clearly manifests in the unparalleled and highly problematic lack of leaders, throughout America, which can be further deconstructed and examined in two of the critically important, interdependent practical problems we face as a nation: the unfulfilled leadership imperative inherent in our endangered American democracy and the continuous, pressing demand for leaders in corporate America.

The Leadership Imperative of Our Endangered American Democracy

“The creation and survival of democracy requires leadership of a high order.”
(Donald Kagan, Yale historian)

Grounded in the fundamental ethical principles of freedom and equality, (Dahl 1998) one could make a powerful moral argument for democratic practices or forms of government as ends in themselves. Nonetheless, for our purposes here, let us temporarily put aside the argument about whether or not, in America at least, some form of legitimate democratic governance (including representative democracy) is desirable. Let us assume that goes without question.

Let us also adopt the definition of democracy found in the Random House Unabridged Dictionary: “a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system” (Random House Unabridged Dictionary 2006, n/p). Furthermore, let us agree that when we contend that democracy is under “assault” or “attack” that what we mean is, whether intentionally by organized groups or governing bodies or unintentionally as a consequence of the current state of our political and economic systems, that there is a negative or deleterious impact on one or more of Robert Dahl’s five “ideal” criteria for democracy: (Dahl 1998) Effective Participation, 2) Voting Equality, 3) Enlightened Understanding, 4) Control of the Agenda, and 5) Inclusion of Adults. Based on Dahl’s criteria, we can more readily identify a number of different areas in which democracy is on the decline.

Although many leading thinkers, including Plato and Machiavelli, would take issue with this position, this research is grounded in the contention that there is a critically
important connection between leadership and democracy (Wren 2007). And though some leadership scholars (Burns 2003) have sought to draw clear distinctions which differentiate leadership and the clearly undemocratic rule of an Adolf Hitler or a Joseph Stalin, categorizing them instead as tyrants or dictators, a select few have suggested that leadership is or ought to be democratic in nature (Denhardt 2006) (an idea we will return to later). In fact, it might behoove us, as a democratic people, to consider the proposition put forth by Thomas Wren (2007) that leadership and democracy possess a vital “symbiotic relationship” and that, without one another, they cannot long exist.

An important part of the practical problem that this study seeks to address is coming to grips with the intimate connection between leadership and democracy. This is an important issue that needs greater attention. In the words of John W. Gardner, “We have really never thought clearly about leadership in a free society” (Gardner 1961, 123). This includes the recognition that democracy, even in a healthy and thriving state, requires leadership “of a high order” and, consequently, a democracy that is at risk or under “assault” requires leadership of an even greater depth and magnitude. In an attempt to corroborate these claims as well as to further substantiate the practical problem this research seeks to address, the following are offered as seven specific dimensions of American democracy which call for leadership and, in some cases, given the current state, demand immediate action:

**Leadership by Definition**

Understanding the demand for leadership in America begins by recognizing how we as a people think about and even define democracy. Perhaps our most important and cherished definition of democracy can be found in Lincoln’s Gettysburg address: “Government of the people, by the people, for the people.” From Lincoln’s speech, which America’s teachers proudly share with our youth, we can start to see, from the very beginning, how the role of leadership is practically embedded in the American consciousness, almost by definition.

**Cultural Roots and Identity**

Equally important to comprehending the demand for leadership in America is some familiarity with America’s birth as a nation. We see, for example, in the Declaration of Independence, as James MacGregor Burns writes, a “radical summons to leadership” (Burns 2003, 76). And when we understand that, for America’s founders, this was not only a break away from monarchy to a new way of organizing government, but, far more importantly, this was a radical departure from the age-old, well-accepted and deeply embedded idea that society is made up of gentle folk and commoners and that some men were born to lead and others were meant to follow. Thomas Wren writes: “we will never appreciate the radicalism of the eighteenth century revolutionary idea that all men were created equal unless we see it within this age-old tradition of difference” (Wren 2007, 105). From this too we might reflect on how, from the very beginning, America established itself as a nation of leaders.

**Disinterested and Disengaged**

Although democracy may require leadership and there may be a heightened sense of calling to leadership inherent in America’s cultural roots, an ailing democracy or a
Advancing Democracy and Happiness

Welch

disengaged citizenry only serves to deepen the demand. And in the U.S., unfortunately, an alarming number of citizens are disinterested and disengaged and, in many cases, feel disillusioned (Gore 2007) and even disenfranchised from our political system. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there has been a steady decline in voter turnout since 1964 (Dershowitz 2007). Although the reasons given for the decline vary widely and are hotly debated, experts almost universally agree that low voter turnout is undesirable and detrimental to democracy (Wilentz 2006). Moreover, Robert Putnam, Harvard professor and author of Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital, writes: “There is striking evidence...that the vibrancy of American civil society has notably declined over the past several decades” (Putnam 1995, 65). Both the lack of an engaged citizenry and a declining civil society further intensify the need for action and leadership (Heifetz 1994).

Thwarting the Expansion of Executive Power, the Slide toward Tyranny

As critical as leadership is to the health and maintenance of democracy, there is little that intensifies the demand for leadership more than a direct assault on freedom and democracy itself. Al Gore, in his most recent book, Assault on Reason—citing a wealth of evidence regarding government secrecy and deception, unchecked corporate power, a lack of free and open debate, and the monopolization of mass media—unflinchingly testifies: “The truth is that American democracy is now in danger” (Gore 2007, 2-3). Moreover, in a recent speech on domestic surveillance and illegal wiretapping Gore asserted: “An executive who arrogates to himself the power to ignore the legitimate legislative directives of the Congress or to act free of the check of the judiciary becomes the central threat that the Founders sought to nullify in the Constitution—an all-powerful executive too reminiscent of the King from whom they had broken free. In the words of James Madison, "the accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny" (Wikipedia n.d.). Where does leadership factor in to address this problem? To begin, we need leadership to stand up for the law, for democracy itself, and, for the people—all three of which are essential to resisting tyranny.

Rejecting American Imperialism

Perhaps the most menacing threat (West 2004) to American democracy and, therefore, the factor which places the greatest demand on the need for leadership, an active and engaged citizenry and a renewed commitment to our core democratic principles and practices is America’s increasing movement toward imperialism (West 2004). Although the current administration and its supporters may deny or dismiss accusations of America’s slide toward tyranny or a dictatorial executive, there are much more overt arguments put forth—most notably from the neoconservatives (Hadar 2003) and the administration itself (Tyler 1992) (albeit not most noticeably)—which acknowledge, and even “celebrate,” (Hadar 2003, 75) America’s standing as an empire and go on to highlight the alleged advantages, “virtues,” (Hadar 2003, 75) and, in some cases, the “obligations” of American imperialism. Their message seems to be that America has “become the global hegemonic power and might as well make the best of it” (Hadar 2003, 75). The problems with an American Empire, of course, are legion. First, imperialism is inherently (if not explicitly) authoritarian and, therefore, contradictory to our democratic nation. Other vitaly
important arguments against American imperialism often cited in the literature include the following: Americans do not support it, it perpetuates the threat of retaliation (blowback), it incites fear and hate, it is hostile to stability, it requires interminable resources, it undermines diplomatic and cooperative efforts abroad, and it encourages similar practices and policies at home (including authoritarian types of leadership throughout our own institutions and organizations). And all of this, of course, is to say nothing of the harm done to those who happen to be on the other end of America’s “benevolent” imperialism. We see here, yet again, the leadership imperative of democracy. Princeton Professor, Cornell West writes: “We must remember that the basis of democratic leadership is ordinary citizens’ desire to take their country back from the hands of corrupted plutocratic and imperial elites” (West 2004, 23).

**America’s Hegemonic Propaganda Machine**

The menace to democracy of which most people are probably the least aware is America’s hegemonic propaganda machine. Although we can expect that most reasonable Americans would agree that propaganda (defined here as the surreptitious manipulation and control of the public mind) is anti-democratic, it should go without saying that monopolistic propaganda (e.g. propaganda at the hand of the state or a critically limited number of corporations) is a grave threat to democracy. Even on the dubious claim that propaganda is a form of expression, Jacques Ellul writes: “...it must be remembered that the freedom of expression of one or two powerful companies that do not express the thoughts of the individual or small groups, but of capitalist interests...does not exactly correspond to what was called freedom of expression a century ago” (Ellul 1965, 245). It has been argued, moreover, that the use of propaganda itself is a threat to democracy as “the objects of propaganda tend to become totalitarian because propaganda itself is totalitarian” (Ellul 1965, 245). Although it may be idealistic if not impossible for any society to be completely devoid of propaganda, it is essential that we recognize that it is incongruent with a free, open and democratic society. As President Kennedy said in a speech to the American Newspaper Publishers Association: “The very word "secrecy" is repugnant in a free and open society...” (Horton 2007, 1). For democracy to function effectively, we must continuously strive for the free flow of accurate, current and relevant information from a great many free, independent, and diverse sources. Here, yet again, we need leadership to build awareness, encourage involvement, and foster dialogue; in short, we need it to organize, empower and fight to preserve a free, open and democratic society.

**America’s Declining Happiness**

Finally, if the pressing and vital case for leadership by the people on behalf of American democracy has not yet been persuasively stated or the evidence still not suitably supported, we can examine the data on the loss of happiness in America and the strong correlation not simply with our loss of democratic freedoms but with the rise and strengthening of capitalism as a final rationale. Happiness is widely supported as a supreme good as well as a core organizing principle of government by some of the world’s most preeminent philosophers; including Aristotle, Epicurus, John Stuart Mill, and Jeremy Bentham, to mention a few (Lane 2000). James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, furthermore, set the “pursuit of happiness” as the very purpose and agenda for American democracy (Lane 2000). Nonetheless, despite our declaration; the thoughtful, theoretical
and philosophical support; and, on the whole (a vital distinction), a reasonable material prosperity; (Lane 2000) America’s level of happiness (often referred to in the research literature as subjective well-being) is on the decline. “In 1946 the United States was the happiest country among four advanced economies; in the late 1970s it ranked eighth among eleven advanced countries; in the 1980s it ranked tenth among twenty-three nations, including many third world countries” (Lane 2000, 10). According to the New Economics Foundation (NEF), a think-tank based in the UK, the United States is currently ranked 150 out of 178 on the Happy Planet Index (the Global HPI is an index of human well-being and environmental impact that incorporates three separate indicators: ecological footprint, life-satisfaction and life expectancy) (See http://www.happyplanetindex.org/calculated.htm). Regardless of how we measure the happiness or subjective well-being of Americans, it is clear by a number of leading measures that America is on the decline. And although it is difficult if not impossible to show a causal connection, much of this research also reveals a strong correlation between America’s loss of happiness and the decline in community, (Lane 2000) civil society, citizen participation, and, closely connected and critical to this research, the democratic principles and processes (Lane 2000) that can only be renewed and reinvigorated by active involvement and leadership by the great masses of people.

Although it is essential to appreciate the fact that this assault on democracy may take the form of a number of perceived threats—citizen apathy, a declining civil society, expanding executive power, an imperialistic foreign policy, a burgeoning military industrial complex, ubiquitous and hegemonic corporate and government propaganda, and even a declining sense of subjective well-being amongst the citizenry—ultimately, coming to terms with the current state of American democracy means coming to terms with the shocking sum of supporting evidence which suggests that a rampant and unchecked corporate capitalism may be intimately connected with the central culprit behind this assault and a great number of these perceived threats.

**Capitalism, Corporations and the Need for Leaders**

There is also an equally problematic leadership deficiency in business and, importantly, a lack of a specific type of leadership which must be addressed for the health and welfare of both democracy and our free-market economy. There are at least three reasons why this particular leadership crisis (i.e., the lack of transformational leadership and the continued unchallenged acceptance of authoritarian leadership) in the corporate world must also be addressed. First, for our political-economy to remain strong, our businesses must remain globally competitive and, therefore, we must meet the need for leadership in corporate America head on. Second, our political and economic systems are deeply and inseparably intertwined and, therefore, the type of leadership exercised in one system will necessarily, for better or worse, impact the other system. And, third, authoritarian workplaces with command-and-control managers are failing to attract the best talent, particularly with the younger generations and, therefore, frequently face crippling challenges in today’s fiercely competitive economy.

To the extent to which we hope to preserve both democracy and capitalism, it is essential to recognize both of these systems as full-fledged political-economic ideologies—
complete with ideas, beliefs, values, practices, and, importantly, loyal promoters. It is equally important to understand and stay open to the idea that the solutions may come in many forms and that, as responsible citizens, we must also look to ourselves. As Alexis de Tocqueville declared, “The health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens.” What America needs from its citizens now, perhaps more than ever, is leadership—leadership by the people. We are, in effect, in the midst of a leadership crisis and the contention here is that what we need now is not more authoritarian, tyrannical or totalitarian leaders who often inhibit the development or stunt the growth of others. What we need now is transformational leadership—a type of leadership which is oriented toward the growth and development of others, particularly as leaders.

Yet, if we are to begin to confront and dismantle authoritarian leadership and, at the same time, seek to strive to emulate, cultivate, recruit and encourage in ourselves and in those around us a transformational type of leadership, then we must come to understand far more intimately the differences not simply between the two types, but we must improve our understanding of the leadership development frameworks—that is, the paradigms, principles, practices and language patterns of the two types—which, although powerful, are often far more subtle differences.

**The Theoretical Problems**

Theory and research in the field of leadership and the scientific study of subjective well-being (i.e. happiness) can play an important role in understanding the practical problem this study seeks to address—the lack of transformational leadership in the United States and the concurrent, often acquiescent, acceptance of authoritarian leadership. Let me be explicit about two critical underlying assumptions I am making here. First, there is an intimate symbiotic relationship between leadership and democracy. And second, a greater theoretical yet pragmatic understanding of these two very distinct types of leadership—transformational and authoritarian—will serve as an important step toward unraveling the existing assault on democracy as well as the concurrent crisis in leadership.

This section will briefly describe the theoretical problems this study aims to tackle. Taken as a whole, the following four, closely related, theoretical problems or gaps in the literature essentially boil down to one central theoretical problem: the lack of an adequate understanding of the different types and perceived psychological impact of charismatic political leadership:

1. The first part of the research problem this study seeks to address is the lack of understanding of the discrepancies between different types of charismatic leadership (Howell 1992). As a widely researched political phenomenon, a surprising degree of confusion and disagreement (Conger 1988) continues to exist regarding the different types of charismatic leadership as well as how they might be further differentiated (Lang 1991). Some theorists explicitly minimize the differences or even mistakenly regard the different types as equivalent (Yukl 1999).
2. The second part of the research problem this study seeks to address is the lack of research that examines whether and how different types of charismatic political leaders develop others. Currently, there is very little research that looks at how charismatic leaders actually go about developing followers into leaders. Research that examines the leadership development practices of different types of charismatic leadership, with vital few exceptions, is virtually non-existent. However, at least one researcher has suggested this as an important area of future study (Yukl 1999). And Howell and Avolio have very briefly discussed development or lack of development as a component of what distinguishes different types of charismatic leaders (which they refer to as ethical versus unethical charismatics) (Howell 1992).

3. The third part of the research problem this study seeks to address is the lack of research that focuses on what the leaders themselves do to develop leaders. Not only is there a lack of research that looks specifically at the leader’s role in the development of followers into leaders, (Conger 1988) the actual practice of leaders developing leaders, with some notable exceptions, (Tichy 1997) is still largely seen as an emerging phenomenon, gaining greater currency as today’s organizations struggle to break free from leadership paradigms embedded in the industrial era (Komvies 2005). Even within organizations that do involve senior leaders in leadership development, it is more often in the role of an advisor or in the form of a “guest appearance” by an “organizational celebrity.” (Cacioppe 1998) This research seeks to more thoroughly explore the leadership development frameworks of leaders—that is, the leader’s overall orientation toward the development of followers into leaders.

4. The fourth part of the research problem this study seeks to address is the lack of understanding of the perceived impact that the leadership development frameworks of different types of charismatic political leaders have on the subjective well being of the people. Although there is a fair amount of research which examines negative and positive leadership, there has been limited research focused on the connection between different types of leadership and the subjective well-being of followers (Sivanathan 2004). These potential connections are even more noticeably uncharted in the area of charismatic political leadership (House 1997)—and are completely non-existent in regards to the leadership development frameworks of different types of charismatic political leadership. As recent as 2005, the authors of an article entitled “Positive Psychology at Work” write: “Although few academics or business practitioners would argue with the notion that effective leadership contributes to the positive health of an organization, precious little research has focused on the extent to which leadership might make a difference for individual well-being. This is shortsighted, in our estimation, and it has resulted in a limited appreciation of the real value of positive leadership within the context of organizations. More important, we extend this general argument and suggest that transformational leadership in particular has the potential to contribute considerably to individual well-being” (Turner 2005, 721). It would be worthwhile to explore the possibility of further extending this argument to include the positive health and well-being of nations and the strength and welfare of democracy.
Purpose of Study

Tackling this theoretical problem, the purpose of this study is to improve our understanding of the leadership development frameworks of different types of charismatic political leadership—transformational and authoritarian—and the perceived impact these divergent frameworks have on the people’s subjective well-being. Embedded in this overall purpose are the following four objectives:

1. Further delineate the much-needed distinction between different types of charismatic political leadership;

2. Gain greater insight and a more nuanced and practical understanding into whether and how different types of charismatic political leaders actually develop the leadership potential of the people in their sphere of influence;

3. Magnify and elucidate our understanding of the actual leadership development frameworks (defined as the paradigms, principles, practices and language patterns of the leader) of these two different types of charismatic political leadership;

4. Increase our understanding of the perceived impact the different leadership development frameworks of these two distinct leadership types have on the subjective well-being (i.e. happiness) of the people.

Conceptual Framework

Central to the purpose of this study is the idea of a leadership development framework, which is defined here as the paradigms, principles, practices and language patterns of the leader; which, taken as a whole, are believed to generally incline toward either encumbering or encouraging the development of followers into leaders. In essence, the idea is to use this framework as a way of better understanding the leader’s way of seeing, believing, behaving and communicating in relation to followers.

In a typical overview or history of leadership, we find a number of different categories or theories of leadership which frequently include the following: trait theories, behavioral theories, contingency or contextual theories, and theories of attribution. More recently, authors have begun to add what have been referred to as theories of excellence, wholistic (or integrated or integral) theories and developmental theories. All of these perspectives have value and have made important contributions to the field. However, with the exception of some developmental approaches and perhaps some theories or approaches of which I am not yet aware, few of these theories seek to closely examine the mindset of the leader. Furthermore, although more recently there has been some increased attention to the role and importance of followers, I am not aware of any theories or research that specifically examines the leader’s general developmental orientation toward followers. This research seeks to address these two gaps.

In a nutshell, this study seeks to investigate the leadership development frameworks of charismatic political leaders through case studies, which, in addition to focus groups and document analysis, will primarily rely on interviewing political leaders who have been
identified as charismatic (by followers and various media reports) as well as a minimum of two direct reports for each leader.

Grounded in the assumptions outlined above, the conceptual framework below (Figure 1) essentially seeks to uncover how the leadership development framework of transformational-charismatic leaders differs from that of authoritarian-charismatic leaders. The central focus of investigation here is the leadership development frameworks of the leaders. The secondary focus of investigation is determining whether the leaders’ leadership development framework has a distinguishable and measurable impact on the subjective well-being of the people in the leader’s immediate circle of influence. Connections these different leadership development frameworks may have with conditions favorable or detrimental to democracy is the third focus of investigation in the overall conceptual framework.

![Conceptual Framework](image-url)

The leadership development frameworks, as the central focus of investigation, should be further explained. As mentioned above, there is a great deal of research in the leadership literature that examines the practices or behaviors of leaders. What is unique here is that this is looking not at the generic leader behaviors or practices, but the practices specifically related to how the leader is or is not developing followers into leaders. More importantly, this research will investigate the paradigms and principles from which these practices may be emanating. And, finally, the words or language the leaders are employing when communicating their thoughts beliefs and behaviors. To further explain, it may be helpful to share the guiding definitions of the four components, which I suggest are the basis of a leader’s leadership development framework.
**Principles:** a basic truth or law that guides or influences thought or action

Often used as a basis for reasoning or conduct. Justice and mercy are both examples of principles. A good symbol or metaphor for a principle is a compass. What do you believe?

**Paradigms:** models, structures or ways of thinking about something similar to a worldview, or a habit of mind; a set of thoughts or expectations about how something is or ought to be. Analogous to Jack Mezirow’s frames of reference or meaning structures—“the structure of assumptions, beliefs and expectations through which we see the world and make sense of our experience; consists of two dimensions: a habit of mind and a point of view.” A good symbol or metaphor for a paradigm is a map. What do you see?

**Practices:** specific, observable activities or actions; behaviors, or manner of interacting with others or the environment. A good symbol or metaphor for practices is a steering wheel. What do you do?

**Language Patterns:** words, phrases and language habitually chosen to convey ideas, attitudes and points of view. A good symbol or metaphor for language patterns is a microphone. What do you say?

**Conclusion**

To summarize, it seems clear that a number of various measures indicate both a decline in the quality and strength of democracy as well as a crisis of leadership the United States. A number of leading authors, theorists and researchers also suggest an important connection between leadership and democracy. As a preliminary step toward further exploring this connection, this study seeks to further differentiate between two different types of charismatic political leadership, which are hypothesized to have very divergent overall, long-term consequences for democracy in America. The lack of an adequate understanding of the different types and perceived impact of charismatic political leadership is also a critical gap in the research literature. One way of improving our understanding of these different types is by further investigating whether and how different types of charismatic political leaders develop others and the possible resultant perceived impact on their subjective well-being. The conceptual framework above is offered as a way of furthering this investigation. The overall long-term hope is to begin to explore how different leadership types may be impacting the health and welfare of American democracy.
References

A Historical Review of Citizenship Education in BC’s Social Studies Guides

Catherine Broom
Mount Saint Vincent University

Abstract

This paper summarizes how good citizens were conceptualized and how they were to be educated in BC’s Social Studies guides released over the twentieth century. It begins with a literature review that describes various definitions of good citizens and their associated educational programs, drawing on Sears and Hughes (1996), Osborne (1996), and Evans (2004). After which, the findings of the study are presented, along with possible ‘conceptualizing factors’ which may help to explain why changes occurred.

Introduction

Social Studies was established in the United States in the early 20th Century when mass public schooling developed. The foundational 1916 National Education Association Report’s main aim was the creation of ‘good citizens’.

From the nature of their content, the Social Studies afford peculiar opportunities for the training of the individual as a member of society...More specifically, the Social Studies of the American high school should have for their conscious and constant purpose the cultivation of good citizenship. (Nelson 1994, 17)

The aim of creating good citizens has remained a key objective of Social Studies throughout the 20th Century. Following a review of recent BC curricula in Social Studies,
Sears and Hughes (1996, 4) state that “...the curriculum documents are structured so as to give very explicit and significant attention to the notion of citizenship.”

The Study

This research study investigated the conceptualizations of citizenship, and educational programs for citizenship, in the Ministry of Education’s Social Studies curricula released over the 20th Century. Each revision was compared to Osborne’s (1996), Sears and Hughes’ (1996), and Evans’ (2004) general frameworks. First, the BC’s Ministry of Education curricula were scrutinized. Next, the two most significant shifts in citizenship education programs found in Ministry curricula guides were analysed. Royal Commission reports, government documents, journals, normal school and university teaching materials, and published books in academia were studied with the aim of exploring why these major shifts may have occurred.¹

Literature Review

Sears and Hughes (1996) describe four conceptualizations of good citizens and citizenship education programs.

Table 1. Conceptions of Good Citizens and Associated Educational Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conception of Citizenship</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship education (A)</td>
<td>The attempt to teach students ‘knowledge’, ‘values’ and ‘attitudes’ about the nation in which they are living and to encourage certain types of ‘behaviour’, particularly those deemed necessary for democratic living.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship education (B)</td>
<td>A ‘passive’ form of citizenship education in which students study a common account of the nation’s history and government through a nation-building narrative based in political and military history that presents society as continually developing over time. Students learn about governmental procedures in a sequential manner and are tested on factual content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship education (C)</td>
<td>A more active approach to teaching citizenship in a liberal democracy. Students learn necessary knowledge of and possible solutions to current issues. Liberal democracy is presented as ideal in theory but not so perfect in practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship education (D)</td>
<td>Aims to create national and global citizens. Students learn about various countries and problems of worldwide concern with the aim of developing open-mindedness and respect. Values include environmental and cultural awareness, tolerance, and understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ The curriculum-as-taught is different to the curriculum-as-designed. This study focuses on describing Ministry curriculum guides and not the curriculum as created by and lived by students in classrooms. It fully acknowledges that these can be quite different.
of the connections between actions and results.

| Conception of citizenship | Aims to create citizens who question and attempt to transform their society. Encourages critical questioning of the inherent unfairness of all social structures. Curricula aim at removing biases and unfair treatment of certain groups in society. |

Osborne (1996) divides citizenship education in Canada into four periods. From the 1890s to the 1920s when compulsory schooling legislation was enacted, civic education aimed to assimilate individuals to white British middle class values and to develop nationalism. From the 1920s to the 1950s, citizenship education changed—due to the influence of progressivism—to focus on socialization. Education was to prepare individuals for ‘democratic living’ through developing their characters, personal values, and desires to serve their communities. Nationalism and the attempt to create consensus and a ‘spirit of unity’ remained, but a direct focus on participation in politics declined.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, citizenship education was linked to multiculturalism and to new Canadian Studies, as a result of the Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the 1960s and Hodgett’s (1968) study that harshly criticised Social Studies education. In the 1970s and 1980s, citizenship became increasingly international in outlook, centred on global citizenship, the environment, and active participation in society through community service and the study of human rights and law education. Finally, from the 1990s, Osborne argues that citizenship has focused on economic competitiveness and preparing individuals to be successful in the global economy, as illustrated in movements such as back to basics, vocationalism, and a focus on individualism and competition.

Further, conceptualizations of citizens can be divided into two types (Sears and Hughes 1996). Citizenship programs early in the 20th Century aimed to develop ‘passive’ citizens, individuals who accepted government structures and worked to maintain these structures through fulfilling their duties, such as voting and paying taxes. This view can be contrasted with that of the ‘active’ citizen in which individuals are seen as free and equal to government officials, and are encouraged to work ‘actively’ to ameliorate social issues.

Sears and Hughes’ (1996) and Osborne’s (1996) general frameworks were used as a basis for comparison with BC’s Ministry of Education curricula. My study highlighted which of these changing conceptions were found in BC documents and to what degree. Additionally, Evans’ work (2004) in the United States appears to contradict Osborne’s (1996) and Sears’ and Hughes’ (1996) work. Evans’ description of the early social meliorists and the reconstructionists (explained below) seem to be formulations of ‘active citizenship.’ Yet, these two views of citizenship occurred early in the 20th Century. Further, Evans’ (2004) would characterize today’s government-formulated citizenship education as ‘passive,’ for it aims to use standardized testing and history to create citizens supportive of the United States.
Evans’ (2004) review of American Social Studies history throughout the 20th Century is framed from the perspective of four major ‘camps.’ The ‘meliorist’ camp was the first movement to arise during the 1920s. It was a progressive-based movement. Its advocates believed students should analyze society’s problems and issues with the aim of improving society. They aimed at making students into better citizens, defined as individuals who were aware of society’s injustices and actively worked to ameliorate them (Sears’ and Hughes’ Conception B, 1996). A more extreme version of the meliorist group was the ‘reconstructionist’ group (Sears’ and Hughes’ Conception D, 1996). This group aimed to shape citizens who believed in the equality of all groups and supported some state planning.

During the 1940s, as a result of World War 2 and in response to the meliorist and reconstructionist visions, traditionalists (Sears’ and Hughes’ Conception A), supporters of a history-based course, argued that meliorists aimed to indoctrinate students to scorn American institutions and that history teaching required greater emphasis. Largely influenced by Nevin’s writings, this group argued for history to be taught as a positive nation-building narrative. In this view, good citizens were nationalistic supporters of current institutions and structures. Their criticism continued during the 1950s with the writings of Bestor, and was fuelled by rise of anticommunism due to the Cold War and the launch of Sputnik in 1957. The latter resulted in the National Defence Education Act, which allocated federal funds to discipline-based studies, seen as necessary for developing students’ intellects and as a defence against communism.

The New Social Studies was the focus of the 1960s. Advocated by social scientists, it argued for an intellectual, discipline-focused, and discovery-learning curriculum. The New Social Studies was opposed by the ‘newer Social Studies,’ a progressively-based ‘reconstructionist’ approach which argued for a focus on: race, class, and gender issues; values clarification; and social activism. It aimed to create citizens involved in improving and transforming society.

Rising conservative influences, such as the ‘new right’ and ‘new conservatives,’ during the 1970s resulted in a traditional backlash. Reforms and textbooks were criticized and back to basics movements developed. Conservatives exerted pressure for economic growth, the preservation of society as is, and increased economic competitiveness through concentrating on academic excellence, to be achieved with standards and testing. Citizens, here, were those loyal to current structures. This trend continued during the 1980s, with the re-emergence of a strong discipline-focused history movement, popularized by the writings of Bloom and Hertsch. This history-based movement led to the Bradley Commission and the issuing of standards for history.

Today, Evans (2004) writes that a plethora of perspectives with regard to both Social Studies and citizenship education exist. These include supporters of critical pedagogy—social ‘reconstructionists’ who want to transform society—as well as supporters of new technology, of moral or character education, of global education, of issues-centred approaches, and of social justice. All of these groups have more active and, in some cases, transformative views of citizenship. These are opposed by some academics who draw on...
history, such as the Greek inheritance and the American founding fathers, to support a more traditional approach based on ‘transmitting’ culture and shaping a united citizenry (Watson 2005). In the next section, the findings of this study are summarized and compared with the three authors just reviewed.

**Summary of Findings: The First Three Revisions**

The first three revisions made to Social Studies guides by BC’s Department of Education since the foundation of Social Studies in high schools in 1930 are summarized in Table 2. The first major revision occurred throughout the 1930s, during the Great Depression and both before and after Weir was appointed Minister of Education (Department of Education 1930, 1936, 1937). This revision illustrates the arrival of progressive philosophy in BC, although its content does not match its articulated philosophy, hence it is named the ‘Phoney Progressive Revision’. The second revision occurred during the 1950s, and after World War 2 (Department of Education 1960). As it focuses on the creation of good democratic citizens, it is labelled ‘Democracy Rules’. The third revision was released in 1968 (Department of Education 1968). It is a classic example of the New Social Studies, illustrating the influence of what Evans (2004) has called the mandarins, or the Social Scientists, and is thus labelled ‘Academic Disciplines’.

**Table 2. Summary of the Key Findings, 1930-1968**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Name/Date</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Conceptual Frames</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BC Curriculum Guides, 1930s: ‘Phoney Progressivism’</strong></td>
<td>The first Social Studies guide established Social Studies in BC. Two main stages: the 1930 version established the course and 1936/7 revisions expanded progressive-based philosophy, but the philosophy does not match the content.</td>
<td>Sears’ and Hughes’ Conception A (conservative) in the 1930 document and Conception B (liberal) in the 1936/7 document. Both documents reflect Osborne’s first category (assimilation/nationalism) and second category (social living/character). Evans’ traditional category in the 1930 document and social meliorist in the 1936/7 document.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

3 All curriculum guides were studied, as found in the references of this paper. The curriculum guides illustrating changes are referenced in the text. As curriculum revisions took time to be implemented, the final version of the curriculum guide was used.
All three frameworks reviewed above were useful and found to varying degrees in the guides. Evans’ (2004) social meliorist perspective most closely matches the philosophy and program of the 1930s revision (Department of Education 1936; Department of Education 1937). The 1950s guide (Department of Education 1960) is a little more ‘traditional’ and is focused on nationalism and content (especially history) as in the United States; and the 1968 revision (Department of Education 1968) is an excellent example of Evans’ ‘mandarin’ or ‘social scientist’ approach. Yet, at the same time, Sears’ and Hughes’ (1996) four articulations of good citizens and citizenship education are also of use, with the category found in these BC guides being primarily that of Conception B (liberal).

Osborne’s (1996) categories are valuable as well, because we see a focus on assimilation and nation building in BC’s early 20th Century curricula. However, his argument for a progressive program that de-emphasizes political citizenship is not borne out. The largest revisions in philosophy and curriculum presentation are found in a comparison of the 1930s revision with the 1968 revision.

**Summary of Findings: The Last Three Revisions**

The fourth major revision was implemented in 1985 (Ministry of Education 1985). This guide, while maintaining similar content and philosophy, shifts away from describing content to be learned, to ‘learning outcomes’ and skills to be acquired, indicating that it represents a ‘Building Skills’ approach. The 1997 revision continues the trend away from content to skills and attitudes, also called ‘learning objectives’ (Ministry of Education 1997). Its rationalized approach to curriculum presentation makes it ‘Curricular Science’ and illustrates it to be a ‘measured curriculum’ (Klein 1987, 303). The latest revision in 2005 continues the trend to rationalization and control, while also attempting—in a seeming contradiction—to provide for a more inclusive and equitable program of studies (Ministry of Education 2005a, 2005b, 2005c). It is called ‘Controlled Citizens’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Name/Date</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Conceptual Frames</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BC Curriculum Guide, 1985: ‘Building Skills’</strong></td>
<td>Includes more content than the 1968 guide and arranges content around social science themes. Strong focus on skill building. Includes cross-cultural awareness and human rights, but integrated with many of the same elements of earlier citizenship programs.</td>
<td>Sears’ and Hughes’ Conception B (liberal) with some of A (conservative) and C (global). Osborne’s first and fourth categories (global citizenship, Multiculturalism human rights). A few elements of Evans’ right wing approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BC Curriculum Guide, 1997: ‘Curricular Science’</strong></td>
<td>Decreases focus on content and increases emphasis on themes/objectives. New rationalized approach and some inclusion of critical pedagogy (e.g., Equity). Content remains similar.</td>
<td>Sears’ and Hughes’ Conception B with some of C, A and D (critical). Osborne’s first and fourth categories.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some transformation has occurred in curriculum guides released over the century particularly focused on how ‘curricula’ are conceptualized and presented. However, much continuity is also found in terms of content taught (History, focused on European and Canadian History; Geography), and the conceptualizations of good citizens and how these are to be educated. The latter are primarily under Sears’ and Hughes’ (1996) Conception B (liberal) throughout the 20th Century, with a little bit of emphasis on Conception A (conservative) earlier on, and Conception C (global) later on, the century. The last guide contains a few elements of Conception D (critical theory). In all guides, the citizenship program aims at maintaining the current governmental structure, with student behaviours ranging from passivity, to active engagement in the maintenance of the current system.

Thus, Sears’ and Hughes’ (1996) framework is useful, although each conception was not found exclusively in each guide or revision. Most guides seemed to blend some elements of different categories together, which is perhaps the result of layering or grafting new changes onto older guides. Osborne’s (1996) model is also of use and found in guides to some degree. We can see some of his generalized changes, including a move from assimilationist to more inclusive curricula, an emphasis on concerns with human rights and an exploration of multiculturalism in BC. However, not all of his descriptions are present. For example, the aim of creating good citizens has remained a consistent element in BC’s curriculum guides. Evans’ (2004) categories were particularly helpful, especially for generally understanding the earlier curriculum revisions and for providing insights into the forces shaping curriculum revisions later in the century. For instance, the new Civics 11 in the last curriculum revision (Ministry of Education 2005c) is almost identical to the social meliorist program of the 1930s (Department of Education 1936; Department of Education 1937).

**Consistent Themes in Citizenship and Citizenship Education**

As illustrated in Table 4, there is a remarkable consistency in conceptualizations of good citizens in curriculum guides released over the century. It seems to support Wertsch’s (2002) idea of ‘schematic narrative templates’ meaning the continuity of certain fundamental cultural ideas over time.
Table 4. Features of Good Citizens in Curricula 1930s-2005

**Characteristics of Good Citizens**

**Knowledge**
- Of the story of the development of democratic principles in Europe (British parliament, rise of nationalism, revolutions)
- Of the story of the development of Canada (exploration, rivalries between the British and the French, Responsible Government, Confederation, development of the West). Note that there has been a shift from an optimistic account to a more negative one
- Of government types (ie. Democracy vs. Dictatorship)
- Of Canada’s 3 levels of government and their roles and services
- Of the electoral system
- Of political parties
- Of Canada’s Constitution
- Of citizens’ duties, rights and responsibilities
- Of the features of democracy
- Of the legal system
- Of current problems and issues in society
- Of Canada’s international role

**Values & Attitudes**
- Nationalism: love of Canada [love of the British Empire has been removed]
- Local and global citizens
- Tolerant and respectful of different opinions
- Peace loving
- Supportive of democracy
- Value government as good and for the people (meaning it provides services for all)
- Abides by the rule of law
- Cooperation [‘Community Civics’ has been removed]-national & international
- Uses conflict resolution
- Agrees to and submits to ‘majority rule’
- Values justice
- Are industrious and have a good work ethic
- Are responsible
- Human Rights, Inclusion, and Multiculturalism (A new value added in 1985)

**Skills**
- Critical thinking
- Problem solving
- Researching and communicating information
- Being aware of ‘propaganda’ (bias)

**Behaviours**
- Informed voting
- Informed decision making and problem solving that improve society
- Participation in government and society
- Collaboration with others
The understanding of good citizens conceptualized here, primarily under Sears and Hughes’ (1996) conception B (liberal), appears to have been implemented early in the twentieth century, with the establishment of the second stage of the progressivist program in the 1936 and 1937 guides (Department of Education 1936, 1937), itself part of the first curriculum revision that implemented the course of Social Studies in BC. Forming good citizens for a democracy was, and has continued to be, a key feature of progressivism. This approach appears to have integrated within itself a number of the features of earlier citizenship programs, while developing a more egalitarian conceptualization of good citizens. Earlier features were mostly content-based and included the continuity of a number of nation-building stories and facts on governmental structures and laws (‘the machinery of government’).

History in the nineteenth century (Collingwood 1956) was used to create particular identities and beliefs (Figure 1). For example, the ‘stories’ of the challenging but heroic development of the British parliament, democracy and Canada were told with the aim of creating ‘good citizens’ who appreciated them. The ‘story’ of the development of national identities and of nation states was told to help students conceive of their own. Finally, the story of industrialization was linked to the emergence of the middle class and the values of liberty (e.g. Adam Smith). These five stories remained in guides throughout the twentieth century.

Figure 1. Historical ‘Narratives’ were Carefully Chosen to Achieve an Aim.

Two major changes, with regard to what good citizens were to value, occurred over the course of the last century. The first, the change from British pan-nationalistic sentiment to Canadian sentiment, is straightforward: the focus solely on Canadian nationalism (but with a global outlook) was the product of Canada gaining autonomy from Britain after World War II. The second change to a more inclusive and multicultural perspective was the result of a new concern for equality and human rights that emerged after the horrors of World War II (Troper 2002; Russell 2002), from reports such as McDiarmid and Pratt’s study (1971), and the policies of Trudeau, who instituted the Canadian Charter of Rights and
 Freedoms. If all citizens are seen to be equal then everyone must be valued and given a place and voice in society (Fleury 2005; Kornfeld 2005; Walter and Heilman 2005).

 Evans’ (2004) view of early, ‘active’ citizenship programs is found in BC. The programs for ‘active’ citizenship, particularly those of the 1930s and of 2005, are similar. Active citizens appreciate democracy and work to improve it through respecting the law, voting, participating in the community, researching information, critical thinking, and problem solving. The 2005 BC curriculum guide (Ministry of Education 2005), like the 1930s guides, aims to create ‘active’ citizens who see ‘democracy’ as the best possible form of government and work to improve it.

 In short, the conceptualization of a good citizen did not change very much over the century. Two major changes that did occur in curriculum guides over the twentieth century are related to how citizenship education occurs: first citizenship education was through the child centred philosophy of the 1930s and, then through the ‘academic disciplines’ starting in 1968. ‘Contextualising factors’ that help to explain why these transformations occurred are discussed next.

 Changes in Guides: Philosophy of Education

 Major transformations in BC’s educational philosophy appear to have been implemented because of the following:

• The international circulation of new ideas through conferences, journals, articles and graduate study
• The adoption of ideas by Ministry officials with the political power to enact changes
• A social environment favourable to education and reform
• The support of the BC Teachers’ Federation
• An inclusive and attractive philosophy of education which captured the imaginations of educators and leaders who were attempting to find ways of managing increasing numbers of students from different backgrounds attending school.
• Support by supposedly scientific, research work in the field of psychology

 Conclusion

 BC Ministry of Education curriculum guides released over the century include a collection of concepts layered onto one another, illustrating an approach of grafting new ideas or approaches to existing documents. Yet, curriculum guides do change: they reflect some of the major trends of their times, such as progressivism in 1930s and the New Social Studies in 1968. Reasons for changes include philosophies that are attractive to individuals with the power to implement them and events in society. At the same time, the curriculum guides contain continuity, particularly in their conceptualizations of good citizens. They generally closely match Sears and Hughes conception B (liberal), with some features of A (conservative) earlier in the century and C (global) later in the century. This continuity seems to support Wertsch’s (2002) concept of ‘schematic narrative templates,’ or cultural understandings that are embedded in structures and not obviously apparent. An aim in all curriculum guides is the shaping of particular citizens who are supportive of the state. They
are to be ‘active’ in the sense of learning how to solve its problems and voting. Perhaps, in present curriculum reform initiatives, greater awareness is needed of the continuity of embedded elements in concepts such as citizenship, as well as a greater appreciation of the power of philosophy and of individuals with political power, when embedded in enabling social and economic conditions, to change curriculum documents.

References

B.C. Teacher. Vancouver, Canada: BC Teachers’ Federation, June, 1927-May, 1937.
Department of Education, British Columbia. Programme of Studies for High Schools of BC. Victoria, Canada: King’s Printer, 1930.
Department of Education, British Columbia. Programme of Studies for the Elementary School of BC. Victoria, Canada: King’s Printer, 1933.
Department of Education, British Columbia. Programme of Studies for the Junior High Schools of BC. Victoria, Canada: King’s Printer, 1936.
Department of Education, British Columbia. Programme of Studies for the Senior High Schools of BC: Bulletin 1 and VII. Victoria, Canada: King’s Printer, 1937.
Department of Education, British Columbia. Programme of Studies for the Junior High Schools of BC. Victoria, Canada: King’s Printer, 1939.
Department of Education, British Columbia. Programme of Studies for the Junior High Schools of BC. Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: King’s Printer, 1948.
Department of Education, British Columbia. Programme of Social Studies for the Junior and Senior High Schools of BC. Victoria, Canada: King’s Printer, 1949.


Fleury, S. “Social Studies for an Empire: Thoughts on Where did Social Studies go Wrong.” *Social Studies*, 96(4), 163-169.


Teaching Citizenship Education in Ontario: A Handbook for Teachers of Elementary School Aged Children

Elham Farah
Brock University
Hamilton Wentworth District School Board

Abstract

The citizenship handbook project was developed from editorial comments through a survey of 12 teachers. The 12 teachers were asked to report and reflect on their experiences in teaching Citizenship Education. The citizenship handbook represents an exemplar of what a teacher might consider in his/her school to teach Citizenship Education in Ontario elementary schools. The test sites were provided by a school board in southern Ontario. The outlines of the project plan of the citizenship handbook flow from a basic question: What are the five issues that teachers would like to discuss in a citizenship handbook? The editorial comments and suggestions from teachers provided information to form the Citizenship Education handbook. An active approach to the survey was used later to evaluate the citizenship handbook by the same 12 teachers.

There were two main points that this citizenship handbook project explored. This document outlines first the purpose of the study, which was to provide information leading to creating a framework for the formation of a citizenship handbook. Second is “an examination of the question of whether Citizenship Education is best addressed as a question of teaching another subject or whether teaching social responsibilities and values is part of the teaching/learning process” (McGettrick 2006)?

Introduction

Citizenship Education is essential for participatory democracy. Recent elections in Canada and the United States serve as an opportunity to reflect on how economic and cultural integration are part of our democratic system. The Canadian mosaic has been transforming as a result of changes in immigration laws and policy. Our Canadian identity, with our ability to preserve democracy in North America, brings Canadian uniqueness to a
host of issues such as health protection, immigration, terrorism, and defence. Lloyd Axworthy (2000), former Minister of the Department of Foreign Affairs, warned that support for continental defence might come at the expense of other Canadian foreign objectives. He remarked that foreign policy decisions lead to an erosion of sovereignty and ultimately our identity, despite the fact that Canada has a clear and well articulated vision for governance of its border and running institutions. For Lloyd Axworthy (2000), the time is ripe for Canada to redefine its perception of what North America is and what it can be.

The present old style of politics has no place in this 21st century vision, which results in people coping with the changes that are caused by social, political, cultural, and economic factors. Axworthy (2000) suggested the new way to test the resourcefulness of Canadians and develop policies that require examinations from the entire policy researchers. Democracy is for knowledge sharing and networking to make decisions about what values we are practicing in our lives.

Canadian identity is shaped by our common experiences. One of the most significant is our “cultural duality” and our dual citizenship. The question is how this cultural duality fits with our sovereignty in the age of globalization. Citizenship Education is still under-researched in Ontario. My project aims to fill this gap by bringing together teachers’ experiences as educators for social inclusion. Citizenship Education in our schools is a valuable initiative that promotes positive nationalism because it sets a framework for Canadian values. Practicing and understanding democracy requires teaching and learning Citizenship Education, which is different from the traditional model of civic education. Citizenship has always been a factor in education, whether implicitly or explicitly. In the past, Citizenship Education was implicit and was assumed to be part of the learning process. Today schools require explicit instruction articulating the specific behaviours and attitudes expected in society. This new model of learning focuses on values, knowledge, and skills. Students are introduced to theories and practical applications which are facilitated by the teacher’s leadership.

The handbook was developed from editorial comments through a survey of 12 teachers and the literature review of teaching/learning Citizenship Education. The teachers were asked to report and reflect on their experiences in teaching Citizenship Education. The Handbook of Teaching Citizenship has three main sections: general principles, school ethos, and classroom practices. The categories were selected from the survey of 12 teachers. The project was supervised by Dr. John Novak, Brock University, and was reviewed by Prof. Bart McGettrick, Dean of Education of Liverpool-Hope University, Liverpool, UK, and leading researcher on Citizenship Education.

Educators consider that Citizenship Education is a serious attempt by the education system to give young people some ideas and values that were once thought to come from relationships in the home. As families become more disparate and diffuse, these values must be developed in other ways. Ultimately this will happen through the relationships that are created in the lives of young people. Some of those relationships will centre on schools, and it is here that the greatest work on citizenship can be undertaken. The design of the Citizenship handbook is based on data reported by teachers. The data collected consist of describing information and developing themes. Eleven teachers identified a need
for a structure of the Citizenship handbook and the time which the teachers need to teach Citizenship Education. Teachers requested a plan and a program, and also they mentioned additional areas which make the program more effective. That is why schools have to be conscious of how they teach rather than only what they teach (MGettrick 2006).

**Approaches to Citizenship Education: Old and New**

Over the past 6 decades the education system in Ontario has evolved. Canada has had at least two major thrusts: accommodating diversity and advancing equality, and this has impacted Canada’s national citizenship (Garcea 2003). An overview of the history of Citizenship Education is useful for a model of the citizenship handbook, because Canadians and newcomers must have good understanding of Canada’s institutions and systems.

In the 1950s, citizenship in Canada was related to a need to build the nation, largely through immigration. Citizenship was based on the idea that rights were necessary for basic individual freedom. The political rights included the right to participate in political activity, and social rights related to standards of economic welfare and security. This knowledge helps Canadians to understand the implications of true changes in citizenship, to engage in constructive analysis of the positive and problematic features of different kinds of citizenship; the values and principles that govern the Canadian model of citizenship (Garcea 2003).

A new approach to citizenship should create acceptance of differences and bring co-operation among all people, regardless of gender, race, religion, and ethnicity. For students, there is a need to integrate theory and practice in the classroom (Senge 1990). Schools must build their organizational capacity to redefine the learning as a space where people continually expand their capacity for self-improvement and change. There is also a need to develop a common language to create a system of thought that is based on values that produce equitable outcomes for all students and respect for self and others. This new approach will help to enhance co-operation among teachers in both teaching and learning citizenship. The new system of thought is built on the contributions of educators to fulfill the needs of a changing society.

Learning involves communication. Learning must also be connected to the real world (Novak 1994). The structure of the new citizenship approach is integrated studies, which address legitimate educational needs demonstrated by the survey of 12 teachers, supported by the literature, and teachers’ professional judgment through evaluations (Duke 2004). The handbook suggests a model which would address the social and economic needs of all students (Ministry of Education 2006). A shift to the new approach to Citizenship Education in Ontario schools would require explicit instruction articulating specific behaviours and attitudes expected in society. This study developed examples of things that a teacher might consider in his or her school in terms of teaching Citizenship Education. The purpose of the study was to provide information leading to the creation of the citizenship handbook and to examine the question of whether Citizenship Education would be best suited as a separate subject or as part of the whole school plan and ethos.
Through qualitative research one seeks to represent and understand experiences through living and telling (Creswell 2005). Editorial comments were collected from the 12 teachers’ surveys. Teachers in this survey revisited their life experiences through the process of reflection on their teaching and learning experiences. They used narrative to convey their ideas about citizenship. Narrative is a form that permits one to think about life experiences and to understand the purposes of education holistically (Connelly 1998, 88). Education and life experiences are interwoven and connected with people through sharing one’s experiences.

**Definitions of Citizenship Education**

- Development in education as in “Character builds”
- Peace and security education
- Human rights education
- National and global education
- Environmental education
- Education about technology
- Co-operation between students, educators, and the community
- Informing students about world issues and developing international perspectives
- Increasing young people’s understanding of global interdependence
- Building awareness of the skills necessary to think critically
- Teaching students to see deeper than the surface of an issue and learn to distinguish between viewpoint and established fact
- Creating a non-partisan forum for discussing issues and understanding the importance of such a forum
- Developing approaches to world issues that increase young people’s awareness of the interconnected nature of events
- Illustrating the importance of diversity in backgrounds and viewpoints and the multicultural dimension of global issues
- Producing the basis for choices that lead to informed decisions and positive steps to deal with issues of global concern

**Ways to Implement Citizenship Education**

- Start an international and global awareness program such as Education for Peace
- Develop the momentum to sustain the program
- Involve community resources and resource people in your program, for example, guest speakers
- Select and develop discussion topics covering the most important issues
- Get participants to produce publications, and involve the media and school newspapers
- Train leaders to facilitate small group discussions
- Organize conferences
- Play simulation games that address real world problems
- Hold seminars, workshops, and debates showing the many sides of an issue
- Share the responsibility for the program
Achieve maximum participation and effectiveness by running workshops to train leaders.

The goal of Citizenship Education is to nourish humanity. Education is to enhance the well-being of children (DeLors 1996; Hart 2001; McGee 2006). In today’s modern world, a state such as Canada needs to design an integrated plan to support teachers and create an environment for children to learn democratic skills. This multidisciplinary approach, "Cross-Curricular Language" (Ministry of Education, 2006), requires teachers to move from the “factory model” (Novak 1994, 1) to a more democratic way of teaching and learning. With a strong democratic commitment, teachers need the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for developing a sustainable model of education. Teachers need to connect with democratic projects in school and society. In Democracy and Education, John Dewey saw a vital link between democracy and education (Novak 1994). Citizenship requires members of the civil society to learn about their rights, duties, participation, and identity (Delanty 2000). Civil society emerged with the modern nation and was the basis of citizenship. Citizenship includes political and economic space in which personal autonomy is guaranteed by the rule of the law.

Democracy is about bringing together researchers and practitioners who are interested in the theoretical and practical intersections between learning and participatory democracy. In democracy we have choices, to advance the common good, to promote human development, to create win-win situations. Learning involves acquiring information. Communication is the common way in democracy. Democracy is an ethical and ideal call for men and women to build communities in which they find resources to achieve their individual potential (Novak 1994). There is need to integrate theory with practice. Democracy is a commitment to learning from experience.

The design of the citizenship handbook was based on data reported by teachers. Teachers’ concerns from the survey are included in five sections under three categories: (a) general principles of the school plan, (b) practices related to the classroom, and (c) school ethos. The model of the handbook is to support an environment for teachers to teach Citizenship Education as part of classroom practices. The plan’s outlines flow by basic fundamental points.

- How the subject is defined and organized after the survey from 12 teachers,
- Why is this subject worthwhile to learn as part of classroom practices and school’s plan,
- What does the curriculum guide say about this subject, and
- What instructional methods and strategies relate to teaching, and suggestions for the teacher to evaluate practices in the classroom

One definition of Citizenship Education is offered by Sears and Herbert (2002). Citizenship Education refers to the examination of the relationship between the individual and the State. The purpose of Citizenship Education is the preparation of the individual to participate as an active and responsible citizen in a democratic society. The citizenship handbook presents methods to help teachers to establish a system of partnership between
Teaching Citizenship Education in Ontario

Farah

schools and other community organizations to enhance students’ participation in the community. A school can create a more distinct profile of itself as a social and democratic community (Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development 2006) by promoting sensible and active participation of the students in extracurricular activities in the local communities. It is about students learning in different environments, by doing and by being active and involved.

The conclusion of this research as to whether Citizenship Education is a subject in the curriculum or a broader area of educational experience suggests that it is both. There may not be alternatives. This study shows that the general school plan and teaching/learning principles are integrated in Citizenship Education. Citizens are formed through this discipline of the method of teaching, and influencing the wider ethos of the school.

References

Axworthy, L. "The New America: Is Three a Crowd?" Horizons (Policy Research Initative) 6, no. 3 (December 1 2000).
Faulkner, T. "I Don't Buy That...: The Values We Live by Today." Canadian Diversity/Diversite Canadienne 2, no. 1 (2003): 118-120.
Deliberative Methodology and its Role in Democratic Learning in the Project Citizen Initiative

Gabriel Murillo Castaño & Nathalia Castañeda Aponte
University of Los Andes

Abstract

After some realistic considerations about the growing imbalance between the magnitude and perverse effect of antidemocratic practices and low rates of citizen involvement and participation in politics, this paper is divided into three components. First we present some key arguments related to the urgent need to close this gap and to promote and intensify projects, training programs and public policy on citizen construction in order to generate awareness of the need to reduce the deficit of responsible, committed and empowered citizens involved in the search for civic and realistic solutions to problems of public concern.

The second component will review, analyze and contrast the main concepts and theoretical foundations of the method of deliberation promoted by the Kettering Foundation and the practice of Project Citizen, according to the frame created and implemented by its creator, the Center for Civic Education. As a result of this revision, it will offer some feasible considerations and propositions about the convenience or inconvenience of creating a new and complementary model that combines these two forms of work on citizen construction. Finally, the third component presents an operational scheme that articulates the scientific (concepts and theories) and procedural (steps and stages) elements that can conform the basis for the implementation of a pilot project to train community leaders, educators and other civic practitioners at the local level. The paper concludes with some strategic considerations related to the application of a thorough evaluation of this methodological experiment, in order to achieve realistic elements to consider the massive implementation of these practices. This allows the trainees to generate a scattered effect as multipliers of an improved and more comprehensive approach for democratic learning and acting.
The General Context

The beginning of the so-called democratic revolution on the eve of the 1990s indicated that the consolidation of democracy was going to be a secure and irreversible process. Nevertheless, there is solid evidence showing how this view was simply an expression of what is known as wishful thinking. After almost three decades of the prevalence of democratic regimes throughout the world, many countries – mainly the low income ones – have been suffering from countless contradictions and shortcomings pertaining to their possibilities for achieving the democratic ideal. The gap between the rhetorical intentions to consolidate this form of government and the accumulation of obstacles and antidemocratic patterns of behavior from the part of the formal political actors and institutions (and also from the governed) became very deep. As a result, the focus of many decision makers, social scientists and political analysts is increasingly moving toward the creation of new knowledge to understand the nature and reasons of this fiasco in order to generate new strategies to counteract the growth of antidemocratic forces. This growing concern, among other things, gave way to the birth of the quality of democracy as a field of study. The evidence that resulted from the complaints and sufferings of large numbers of deprived and dispossessed merged into the creation of many indicators that became the measurement references to corroborate the erosion of democratic performance in the world.

However, a vast majority of the studies and investigations developed to measure the reduction and loss of credibility and legitimacy from the actors and institutions of democracy were state-centered. This emphasis on the formal state apparatus, with all its complexity and ever-growing components, implied that the crisis of democracy was merely the result of the failures of the State, or even worse, that the crisis of democratic politics was the result of malfunctioning only within the State sphere. During many years, this was the dominant trend and only since the beginning of the new millennium, analysts and experts started to realize that this incremental process of political and institutional democratic deterioration was also a result of the exclusion and lack of attention to the citizen modes of participation in political matters. This first decade of the 21st century has been crucial for the recognition of the civil society sphere as the other core ground of political action. Increasingly, credit to the importance of the activities of the large population outside of government is valued as a determinant factor of the strengthening and/or weakening of democratic politics. Many scholars today agree that the understanding of the problems and shortcomings of democratic consolidation are not only found in the State. To develop this argument they also include the observation and analysis of the political expressions, actions and behaviors of the governed. Even more, they have identified different indicators to gather information from the citizens’ side and in general from the civil society spectrum, as the container of this very complex and changing dynamics.

Measurements of the Quality of Democracy

According to Diamond and Morlino (2004), the main elements that have to be publicly known to better understand democratic performance are as follows. The first element is the procedure followed by political institutions and actors to achieve horizontal
and vertical accountability. This is understood as the search for balance among the three main branches of power (executive, legislative and judicial), and the accumulation of the different forms of citizen political control, utilized in order to monitor transparency in the use and exercise of formal political power. Second element is the content, related to the effective existence of political freedom and equity for citizens, their associations and the community overall, and the third element is the results based on the observation of the degrees of citizen satisfaction with the decision-making processes and their results.

In their comparative study of the quality of democracy in Latin America, Levine and Molina (2007) identified five operational categories of questions that the body public needs to understand and answer to truly be able to analyze and understand political performance. The first is the citizens’ electoral decision and its surrounding environment. Are there sufficient guarantees to honor freedom of choice? Are all the political alternatives running for public office competing under equal conditions? The second is participation. Aside from electoral involvement, what are the existing alternative forms of citizen participation (plebiscite, referendum, legislative initiatives, impeachment, town meetings…) that are constitutionally valid? Do they receive all the legal guarantees? Are they utilized by the citizens? Is it easy to use them? The third is responsibility. Do citizens act being aware that they have rights and obligations in order to get involved in politics? Do they know about the existence of different forms of political involvement? Do they limit their political concern to demand and to criticize government for its inability to deliver? Or rather, do they get involved in collective actions to find solutions to their problems and scarcities? How well informed and involved are they about the existence of mechanisms for the application of political control? Do they know the difference between the importance to secure a symmetric check and balance system, and an open possibility to join the different forms of monitoring political actors and institutions? The fourth is responsiveness. This category of the quality of democracy is equivalent to what Diamond and Morlino call satisfaction with formal political performance. It can be related to learning about the meaning of citizens’ opinion about the political regime and the way it is perceived by the governed in general. Are satisfaction with elected officials and the way they run the corresponding institutions the result of subjective sympathies? Or is this opinion based on a rational and objective form of judgment? Is the acceptance of political credibility and legitimacy an act supported in a real capacity to recognize and/or reject behaviors and actions attuned with the codes of ethics and legality? Sovereignty is the fifth and last category. It has to do with the unavoidable impact of globalization and the interdependence that dominates the logic of the world system. Is it related to the ways in which citizens perceive the capacity to govern? Is it based on clear standards of self determination and autonomy from the intervention of external forces of any type? Is it also related with the recognition of the government’s ability to implement its own initiatives once they have been validated through the use of legal mechanisms for public consultation?

Along the same lines, a third approach to measure the quality of democracy from the citizens’ perspective was presented by Altman and Pérez (2002). This comparative approach was implemented in 18 countries and is based on two elements of public political behavior. Competence is the first element, and is related to the skills, knowledge and citizens’ abilities to act politically, and also to the performance of politicians while in office.
The second element is participation and, as in the case of Diamond and Morlino’s approach, is related to the identification and exploration of the different forms of citizens’ political involvement.

More recently, there are important studies based on research on citizen political action that discuss citizen-centered rather than state-centered democracy in the Americas. For the United States, one of them was done for the Case Foundation in Washington D.C. by Cynthia Gibson from the Kettering Foundation, and is called “Citizens at the Center”. Gibson (2006) makes a significant effort to emphasize the importance of citizen participation in the search for solutions to public problems. Another one has been written by Carmen Sirianni and Lew Friedland’s (2005). This work, “The Civic Renewal Movement”, was published by Kettering Foundation in 2005 and accounts for a significant amount of citizen actions in public affairs. Finally, the Brazilian political scientist Bernardo Sorj (2007) has also claimed that the Latin American Democracies should be paying more attention to what the citizens are doing in the political realm.

According to Fabio Velásquez (2008), Latin American democracies are full of paradoxes. On one hand, there has been significant improvement in the recognition to the state of law, in respect to political rights, and there are more and more institutions that give precedence to citizen involvement in public matters. But on the other hand, poverty, exclusion and social inequalities are still growing, along with the contradictions that result from the implementation of neoliberal policies in many countries in the region. Lack of trust is dominant, and it is very difficult to reach consensus on public matters. There is also mistrust in political parties and legislative bodies which generates a strong sense of apathy toward politics in general. Nevertheless, it is possible to register the existence of a growing number of projects, policies and institutions involved in the promotion of citizen participation and political control, but there is still a lack of enough resources to counteract this worrisome trend. There is also a significant amount of public and private programs devoted to the promotion of civic education and citizen construction. Unfortunately, these efforts by themselves cannot build a solid foundation to support the existence of a critical mass of individuals and organizations that could be seen as individual and collective agents of change that are aware of their political rights and civic obligations within society. Even more, the aggregation of all this energy still does not reflect the presence of a group of youngsters that can be seen as a promising resource to generate future democratic change.

Two Promoters of Citizen Construction and Civic Education

Within these countless efforts, there are two organizations that have been devoted to the promotion of citizen construction through civic education and the implementation of the deliberative methodology to reach consensus on the solutions to problems of public concern. The first of these institutions is the Center for Civic Education (CIVICED), in Calabasas, California. This organization has emphasized work on civic education through different programs that have been implemented both in the United States and in many other countries. Project Citizen, a line of work that will be seen in more detail below, is one of its most important projects. The second organization is the Kettering Foundation (KF), with its headquarters in Dayton, Ohio. This organization has been promoting public deliberation and the creation of academic resources to implement this approach nationally.
and internationally. For over two decades, both of these organizations have had rich experiences in the execution of countless training projects and programs respectively on civic education and in the realization of deliberative forums.

**The Center for Civic Education (CIVICED)**

As already mentioned, the CIVICED promotes the implementation of the *Project Citizen* initiative. This approach represents a curricular program oriented to youngsters of middle, secondary and post-secondary levels and also adults, in order to teach them how to monitor and influence public policy. This line of work is guided by teachers and volunteers who develop structured cooperative-learning activities focused on the promotion of competent and responsible citizen participation in public affairs at the local level, and the recognition of the official governmental instances responsible for the solution to the problems that are affecting the community (Project Citizen Initiative n.d.).

In general terms, this initiative implements a five stage process. According to the *Project Citizen Student and Teacher’s Guide*, the first stage is the identification of public policy problems that are important for the community. Here the idea is that the practitioners of *Project Citizen* within the school identify and list different problems that are significant in the various aspects of their daily life: neighborhoods, schools, environment, youth, etc. The second stage is the selection of the problem to be studied, which is defined by a voting procedure. This takes place after the students have researched the different problems initially listed and once they have collectively defined and agreed as the most meaningful. The third stage gravitates around the data and information gathering process and includes a gamut of different instruments for collecting and processing information: surveys, interviews, visits (to libraries, public offices, newspapers, media, etc.). The main purpose here is to guide the group toward the achievement of the best possible knowledge related to the problem of study. The fourth stage is related to the preparation of what the CIVICED calls the ‘Portfolio’. This includes the results stemming from the work of four small groups of students divided according to the following scheme: the first is responsible for diagnosing the problem of study, its main characteristics, magnitude and scope; the second is in charge of the revision of the existing alternative public policies related to the problem, including a systematic presentation of the corresponding strengths and weaknesses of each alternative policy approach; the third small group deals with the process of deciding among three optional possibilities: a) If the collective public policy proposal is to be based on a previously identified policy, b) If it will be based in the addition of new elements to a previously existing one, and c) If it will be based on the creation of an entirely new policy; the fourth small group works on the formulation of an action plan to indicate the different tasks and assignments to be developed in the search for a solution to the problem, with regard to the previously selected policy.

The fifth and final stage is related to the presentation of the Portfolio to an audience consisting of members of the community, the schools, representatives of the public institutions and other stakeholders that, according to the students, may be affected by the different impacts of the problem of study. In this presentation, the group of students should

---

1 For those interested in learning about the Center for Civic Education in general, see www.civiced.org.
reflect their understanding of the problem and its importance, their knowledge about its implications, their familiarity with the institutional setting, and their perceptions about the set of resources that can be used to reach a solution to it.

The implementation of this five stage process is being followed by the different projects that are applying this initiative in 50 states of the U.S. and in approximately 56 counties internationally. Nevertheless, there may be slight variations to the application of this logic that are determined by the specific circumstances and conditions of each particular site in which it takes place\(^2\).

**The Kettering Foundation (KF)**

The KF\(^3\) is devoted to offering answers to what is happening with democracy throughout the world, which involve the most important changes to this form of political regime and which include the best possible ways to improve democracy. Based on the promotion of research, the main purpose of this organization is to help people learn how to be proactive in the search of social change, responsible in political and civic action and committed to the exploration of solutions to the public problems of daily life. Within this ideal, it also offers different programs that involve the community, public educators, private institutions and governments that nationally and internationally express their interest in developing actions toward the achievement of public choice in a free and democratic manner. The KF promotes a particular form of collective work based on deliberative decision making, assuming that individuals and organizations are willing to get involved in this democratic and civic form of social interaction in order to generate incidence to impact social change.

Public deliberation among citizens is encouraged in order to stimulate collective action towards the solution of public problems that affect heterogeneous and complex social groups. This is based on the conviction that citizen involvement in politics under equal conditions is fundamental for democratic strengthening. According to the Foundation, public deliberation becomes useful when discrepancy between what happens in reality and what should ideally take place becomes evident; also, when citizens do not agree on a specific course of action to change a particular and troublesome situation. Thus, instead of limiting the final decision to a single actor, no matter how powerful or knowledgeable he or she may be, it provides an alternative possibility based on the inclusion of the different views of all of the stakeholders concerned with the public problem. This happens in such a way that they can weigh different options or alternative solutions according to their knowledge, perceptions, personal experiences and ideas, until consensus is reached.

---

\(^2\) For those interested in learning more about Project Citizen in a didactical way, see: CENTER FOR CIVIC EDUCATION. *Project Citizen*. Levels 1 and 2. Calabasas: CIVICED, 2008. For an adaptation of this material in Spanish, see: FUNDACIÓN PRESENCIA. *Proyecto Ciudadano. Hacia la construcción de una cultura ciudadana*. Bogotá: Fundación Presencia, 2004. There are also many other adaptations of the CIVICED materials translated into many languages in which this approach is being developed. This material includes a detailed treatment of all the main components of this methodological approach.

\(^3\) For those interested in learning about the Kettering Foundation in general, see www.kettering.org
According to David Mathews (1994), etymologically speaking, deliberation comes from the Latin root *delibra* that means weighting, finding balance between extremes. For this reason, the deliberative method does not use words like debating or voting. Rather, it emphasizes the search for consensus based on the word deliberation, understood as the process through which a group defines a shared solution to a common problem. In order to be effective, the practice of deliberation should fulfill some basic requisites or “minimums”. Among these, mutual recognition between stakeholders, trust, sense of belonging, involvement, rationality, “*alteridad*” or “otherness” (understood as the recognition of a different other), homogeneity of information, absence of any form of violence or coercion, and shared meaning of public interest and search for common good, are particularly relevant and can be taken as some of the most important pre-conditions that should be present within a deliberative scenario (Murillo and Pizano 2003).

The deliberative methodology promoted by the KF signals the importance of having two facilitators with a central role in the achievement of success within this group dynamics. They are the moderator and the rapporteur. The first guides the conversation and makes sure that it moves along the central issues related to the problem, formulates motivating and pertinent questions, and guarantees that all participants can express their ideas under equal conditions in short periods of time. The second assists the moderator by registering the different interventions in a visible sheet of paper that will serve to review the different participants’ ideas to identify what has been said in order to avoid duplications and also to facilitate access to shared conclusions. Once the group has chosen the moderator and the rapporteur, the naming of the problem becomes necessary to be sure that everyone agrees on the same worrisome matter. This is important because it may happen that the participants’ end talking about different situations and therefore not being able to identify and work around a common issue or problem. Afterwards, the group moves into an orderly conversation around the various approaches that are being considered to find a solution. They analyze the strengths (pros) and weaknesses (cons) of each alternative possibility until they agree on a common course of action to be pursued. This may be either a shared understanding of what has to be done to reach a solution or, even better, of the creation of a proposed agenda indicating points that have to be considered and accounted for in the achievement of the common goal. Finally, in any case, the desired key outcome implies a clear commitment from the part of each and all the members of the deliberative group, plus the possibility to engage other citizens in a collective project to transform the social order and to improve the quality of life (Gastil and Levine 2005)(4).

**Toward the Combined Optimization of Citizen Construction**

After this brief description of the two methodological approaches for citizen construction, it is possible to generate some useful arguments to validate the pertinence of combining them in order to optimize valuable resources and finally confront such an urgent need. These two lines of work have provided their success and capacity to help in the

---

4 For those interested in learning more about deliberation and deliberative democracy in a didactical way, see: KETTERING FOUNDATION. *Deliberative Democracy. Workshops I & II.* Dayton: KF, 2008. This is a manual that includes a thorough treatment of all the main components of this methodological approach. This descriptive work includes a very rich and helpful set of background readings and practical tools on deliberation.
strengthening of the citizen construction ideal. More than two decades of implementation of each of them under an ever growing scope of application are clear indications of the importance of these two forms of democratic action. It is because of this recognition and respect for both of them that we believe in the convenience of integrating elements from these initiatives of civic promotion. In other words, our intention is not to limit this reflection just to praise or to criticize them. Rather, the idea is to offer our point of view regarding the possibility of reaching a good combination based on the selection of those useful elements from each form of citizen construction to obtain the best possible result.

As it was clearly shown in the previous description, Project Citizen allows the selection of the problem to be studied by the students to be the result of a voting process. This means that the expression of individual preferences is limited to a mechanic aggregation procedure aiming to see which alternative possibility wins. As a result, it can be probable that those participants that voted for the losing options will not be satisfied with this final decision. Additionally, in those cases in which the final result of the voting process is represented by a majority that cannot be understood as a universal preference, the subsequent steps of this approach may not be backed with equal enthusiasm and commitment by the entire group.

Jon Elster (2001) presents and discusses three different procedures to reach a collective decision: discussion, negotiation and voting. For him, the first two are forms of communicating. In other words, ways of talking, which voting is not. Hence we believe that after a group conversation in which all the participants are free to express their particular points of view and willingness to listen to what the others have to say, the act of voting appears to be a very democratic form to reach consensus and also to assume that the rest of the elements of a collective action project can be finalized with the general commitment from all the members of the group and therefore end successfully. This becomes significant when considering another trio of motivational notions: reason, interest and passion. According to Elster, only reason is impartial, uninterested and passion free. This implies that communicating or exchanging information through dialogue in an orderly conversation, a group of different persons has all the guarantees to explain and/or justify the particular predilections, while with voting, as the only way of aggregating preferences, this possibility is nonexistent.

Our intention is not to eliminate voting as such. Rather, what we believe in the convenience of proposing the creation of a previous process of interpersonal exchange of ideas and communication under the patterns of deliberation. In this way, the members of the class in a public school will have the opportunity not only to present their personal points of view, but also to know about those from their peers. If this exchange is done with a rigorous inclusion of the main requisites (minimums) of the deliberative process, the final decision based on voting will provide strong possibilities to assure that the rest of the implementation of the Project Citizen approach will be characterized by a cohesive work. Through it, we believe, all the members of this collective practice may achieve consistent and optimum results. Therefore, according to the structure of the Joint Project Proposal that we have prepared, the final part of stage two of Project Citizen will be the first precise space to implement deliberation in this plan to open new ways of developing citizen construction.
This form of group interaction, in “elsterian” terms, represents a true form of communication that, based on an organized discussion of the different alternative problems, will be presented by the members of the class followed by a methodic consideration of the pros and cons of each alternative, can render positive results. What is important is to be sure that the weighting of pros and cons is clearly related to considerations about the nature of each alternative problem that may be proposed in the group, its harming impact in the community, and finally a good understanding of the need to follow a collective course of action to solve or confront it. Jon Elster’s (2001, 18) statement becomes useful here: “the transformation of preferences through rational deliberation is the manifest objective of a discussion”.

As the dynamics of Project Citizen implementation move ahead, another opportunity appears to present more operational considerations related to achieving better understanding and obtaining good results from the use of deliberation. Once the classroom members are working together in the preparation of the so called Portfolio and arrive at the step in which three options appear as possible courses of action to agree on a policy proposal to solve the problem they have selected, this new space for the use of deliberation becomes pertinent. This particular point in the process of Project Citizen opens a situation through which the group has to decide between three options to identify the action plan to be followed: a previously identified policy, the addition of new elements to a previously existing one, or the creation of one entirely new. Considering that after the problem has been decided by voting, Project Citizen subdivides the group into the above mentioned four tasks (see page 8), we believe that it is advisable to assure that after their work in subgroups, all the members of the class are present in a space properly organized to consider the pros and cons of each of these three alternatives to formalize agreement on the already mentioned action plan. Again, as presented with regard to the ideas expressed under a deliberative logic and presented before voting, this is a second possibility to implement this form of discussion with rational deliberation. This proposition may well help in maintaining the group cohesion needed within the entire implementation of Project Citizen, and therefore provide the most favorable possibilities to obtain a winner solution to the problem for the benefit of the total community.

Summarizing what has been suggested in the previous lines, according to our understanding, Project Citizen offers two separate momentums in which the deliberative approach can serve as an added value to this priceless form of civic education and citizen construction. The first is in stage two, right before finalizing the problem selection, and the second is in stage four, at the moment when the group is ready to select one of the three possible options to formulate the policy proposal to then be followed as the action plan.

The advantage of inserting deliberation within Project Citizen also has to be understood from the point of view of how this new approach can become a very convenient possibility to offer deliberation an unprecedented opportunity to be useful. There have been countless circumstances in which the deliberative methodology has been applied in the classroom. But without having to say if they have been successful or not, we can assert that Project Citizen represents one of the best possible contexts to optimize the benefits of deliberation. When all the students of a classroom in any public school are sharing an exercise of this kind under a gradual procedure that started with a clear presentation of the
goals to be collectively accomplished, the initial implementation of a deliberative practice will not only be important but also difficult to be matched by another possibility to reach agreement. A group of peers involved in a project to solve a common problem that has been identified through a methodic deliberation exercise will have strong opportunities to implement an action plan to assure the best possible results.

The way to combine Project Citizen with the deliberative methodology will be presented in a document that we have prepared and that will be submitted as a joint venture to a third party capable of funding a project of this magnitude. After they reach agreement on the proposal, the CIVICED and the KF will recommend the sponsoring of this initiative formed by two parts. The first just will be the testing of a deliberative practice with public school seventh grade students and teachers. The aim with this test is to prepare and/or adapt one of the Issue Books related to the juvenile world (i.e. street violence, drug consumption, alcohol consumption, prostitution...) and a Moderator’s Guide from what the KF and the National Issue Forums Institute (NIFI) have produced. This, in order to generate elements for a later decision about the final structure and format to be given to the Working Manual, is to be applied in the second part of this proposed Project as a Pilot Training Practice. The test will be implemented during a period of six months and will be carried out in two public schools in the Caribbean Colombian city of Cartagena de Indias. The first school will be one in which Project Citizen has been already applied, and the second will be another that lacks preceding exposure to this approach, but that has had a deliberative practice before.

The two schools will apply the same test in two steps: voting and deliberation. The class will receive the chosen problem in an Issue book that will include four alternative solutions, and also a brief and didactical explanation of the main differences between each form of collective decision making (voting and deliberation). The first step will start with a background presentation of the nature of this problem. Then, the class will be divided into four subgroups. Each of the groups will be asked to work around one of the alternative solutions in order to prepare a convincing and clear justification of their arguments to have it ready when the entire group gathers in a plenary session and prepares to vote. After the presentation of the persons selected to represent each subgroup (speakers), the plenary will have the necessary information and elements to make their final decision through the act of voting. The reader may note that the final decision resulting from this process is based on the accumulation of information that basically reflects what the members of each group consider useful to convince the others and be sure that what they believe and want is shared by the rest of their group in order to win the contest.

Alternatively, the second step of this test offers a different form of conversation in which each subgroup will not only work to identify and underline the positive aspects of their respective alternative in order to formulate the most convincing presentation in a plenary, but rather an exchange of information in which they make sure to include also the negative aspects of that same alternative. To assure this possibility, each subgroup will have previously been assigned a moderator, who will be responsible to guide each conversation, and a rapporteur, who will take note of what is being said according to the above mentioned formal procedure (see page 11). In this way, once the subgroups have finished their exchange of opinions and conversation, during the plenary session all of the groups will
have had the opportunity to learn about the positive and negative, the strengths and weaknesses of all and each of the four alternative solutions to the assigned problem. Additionally, this plenary session will also have a moderator and a rapporteur that will act accordingly to what was done within each subgroup. The benefit of being able to contrast the pros and cons of each alternative permits that each participant can express his or her personal point of view after rationally weighting his or her position and considering the other positions that will increase the scope to capture the complexity of a social problem that may well be more difficult to solve than what initially appeared.

Summarizing, the participants in this test (students and teachers of the two public schools and the promoters and other stakeholders of the Project) will have an invaluable opportunity to differentiate what results from a conventional voting process and a deliberative practice. In the first, the participants decide after receiving positive arguments about the different solutions to a problem in order to establish which of them should win. In the second all the alternatives have been presented weighting the pros and cons to offer plenty elements to reach consensus. The result of this contrasted observation by the participants in this test is twofold: one, it will provide objective elements to establish the convenience of including deliberation in those two stages of the process of implementing *Project Citizen* in which the decision making is reached through voting; and two, it will generate new elements to define the inclusion and the content of the *Issue Book* and the *Moderator’s Guide* in the set of materials that will integrate the Working Manual for the second part of the Project. This part is formed by five different stages: gathering of materials for the Pilot Training Practice; Pilot Training Practice; replica implementation\(^5\); an evaluation Workshop with trainers and trainees; and a final strategic meeting to reach a decision about the future of the combination of *Project Citizen* and deliberation.

After collecting and integrating the set of materials, the Pilot Training Practice will be implemented during two weeks with the participation of a group of trainers and trainees with different professional skills, practical experiences and from different countries. The group of trainers will be composed of a staff of practitioners, some with previous knowledge of *Project Citizen*, and others of the deliberative methodology. They belong to the different organizations that will be involved in the implementation to this Project (stakeholders)\(^6\). Initially, they will perform as members of the training staff in charge of teaching different components of the two-week program that will be implemented. Later

\(^5\) We are aware that the word *replica* is not proper in English. Nevertheless, since the word *replicate* is valid in this language, we decided to use it as a capricious noun to designate the process through which the trainees benefited with the Pilot Training Practice adapt and apply this training and repeat it after returning to their respective places of origin.

\(^6\) On the side of *Project Citizen*, beyond the CIVICED that initiated and promoted this approach worldwide, Fundación Presencia of Colombia will participate in this group given its vast experience and familiarity with it and also due to the fact of its location in this country. On the side of the deliberation, the KF as the leading organization in the implementation of this form of citizen construction will be accompanied with the NIFI, given its role as the main outreach organization that is presently implementing it within the United States. In addition, the Dora Rothlisberger Program for Civic Action, DR-PCA, of the Technological University of Bolivar in Cartagena de Indias where one of its staff members has also been trained in the implementation and promotion of deliberation will participate. Finally, the two members of the Project Coordination also have ample experience and knowledge of the KF’s approach and thus will be part of this group.
on, they will perform as monitors responsible of helping and advising the trainees in the replica implementation stage of this second part of the Project. On the other hand, aside from having a clear capability of being multipliers of multipliers, the trainees selected to participate in this pilot initiative will come from four countries involved in one of the international alliances that the CIVICED has exchange experiences in the implementation of Project Citizen. This particular alliance is formed by the United States (Idaho), Ireland, Jordan and Colombia. In these four countries, the KF has also worked with civic organizations interested in the promotion of deliberation. Thus, a total of 16 practitioners will be the recipients of this training practice, 8 with previous exposure to Project Citizen and the other 8 familiar with deliberation. The selection of this group will be based on the best practices of these two lines of work and will be defined once all of them have fulfilled all the requisites posed by the project organization. All of them must have previously formalized their commitment to replicate this training with a new group of trainees upon return to their respective countries.

After the replica implementation (stage three), all the trainees will gather again in an Evaluation Workshop (stage four) in which they will present a report with the results of the respective replica experience to the group of trainers. These reports will be prepared following some previously assigned guidelines with the assistance of the respective monitors, and will help to meet the challenge of reproducing, expanding and reaching sustainability in citizen construction at their home country. The results of this Evaluation Workshop will generate new elements to allow the institutional members in this joint venture to reach a final decision about the feasibility of repeating and sustaining this form of training and also their commitment with the expansion of this Project (stage five).

**Concluding remarks**

The need to offer new forms to promote citizen construction to confront the contradictions and limitations of democratic consolidation in the eve of the new millennium is evident. For the above reason, we believe that the efforts to be creative in the construction of better forms of civic education not only require the search for entirely new possibilities to reach this goal, but also include the chance to revise the already existing approaches. This is in order to extract the most positive elements from those options that have proven to be efficient until it will be feasible to get the most of combining Project Citizen and the deliberative method. The idea of integrating resources from two different approaches, that with great success have been sharing a common goal, can be understood as the urgency to create a new and select way to promote citizen construction.

Concretely, public schools are the ideal site to implement this new form of citizen construction. This should be clear, not only because formal educational organizations are the natural gathering places of children and youngsters, but also because they are the ideal merging points of plural and diverse societies at the local level. They are recognized as impartial gathering places and good platforms to launch new initiatives to have incidence on the transformation of societies that can be replicated in other sites where citizens can work in public problem solving (unions, public libraries, town meetings, universities, working places in general, etc). On the other hand, it should be accepted that public schools must receive all the best possibilities to offer and provide the best possible civic education.
Within this purpose, it is also necessary to be sure that the programs related to this target can become institutionalized, sustainable and efficient in terms of facilitating forms of guaranteeing that the results of collective decision making for public problem solving can have a tangible impact for the benefit of the entire community.

When we talk about institutionalization, we are referring to the generation of all the conditions required to secure that the opportunities to implement Project Citizen with deliberation in the school will not be an isolated practical task, but rather, a permanent and obligatory curricular component to be undertaken by all seventh grade classes. The accumulation and subsequent evaluation of these practices in each school should generate continuous elements to identify possibilities, not only to improve the provision of civic education, but also to receive recognition of being a source of citizen construction for the benefit of democracy in general. The word sustainability is used to signal the achievement of a stable and permanent process of citizen formation within the school system without being limited by the fact that there is a different and new group of students every year. Finally, the gradual achievement of institutionalization and sustainability of this practice has to be complemented with the supply of the best methodological and operational resources to be sure that the results of this line of civic education in the form of actions plans and/or proposed agendas for public problem solving will have incidence in the government sphere, complemented by a good and efficient policy response.

In sum, this new possibility of citizen construction – combining Project Citizen with deliberation, with the purpose of learning democracy by doing in the classroom, needs to be complemented with the interrelationship of institutionalization and sustainability. But this also requires access to a local decision making sphere capable of responding with proper resource allocation and acknowledging the importance and value of the work of responsible citizens, involved in the formulation of solutions to public problems and in the achievement of human and sustainable development.

References


CIVICED. Project Citizen: A Portfolio-based Civic Education Program. Center for Civic Education and National Conference of State Legislators.


Deliberative Methodology

Murillo Castaño & Castañeda Aponte


On Becoming an Active and Participatory Citizen: A Study on Education and Political Socialization in Hong Kong

Shun Wing Ng
Hong Kong Institute of Education

Introduction and Aims of the Study

In many countries, the curriculum of social studies and civic education have been criticized for their limited contribution to the development of informed, critical and engaged citizens. It also argued that often these courses do not contribute to nurture democratic attitudes, values and practices among adolescents. This is partly due to textbooks’ avoidance of public issues and social problems, inattention to skills of critical thinking and inquiry, and unrealistic portrayal of political and civic life whereas teachers seemed to discourage critical inquiry about political behaviours. (Patrick 1967, 2002).

Education is inseparable from and shaped by its social and political context. Hong Kong is of no exception. In the era of colonial rule, citizenship education in Hong Kong was characterized by depoliticisation. The British government did not allow teachers to do any form of political teaching in schools, and there was a lack of any democratic values and critical thinking skills in the content of civic education or social studies curriculum (Lee 1996, Leung and Ng 2004, Yuen and Byram 2007). Tse (1998) argues that the governmental policy of depoliticisation led to the poverty of political education, which bred a politically alienated younger generation in the colonial times. Similar to the colonial government, the re-depoliticising of citizenship education is of paramount importance in the post-1997 Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), which has rendered relatively strong civil and social rights, but weak political rights to the Hong Kong people (Fairbrother 2005). In contemporary civic education in Hong Kong, the intention of developing students with the ideology of participatory democracy and active citizenship has been minimised, and since the 2001 curriculum reform patriotic and national education has been placed as a top priority (Leung and Ng 2004). Though the 1997 Civic Education Guidelines are embedded with many political elements such as democratic values, civic participation, and political rights and responsibilities in its contents, Ng’s (2000) study indicated that many teachers selected cultural dimensions but avoided teaching political dimensions in the civic education curriculum. Likewise, Lee (2003) reported that political content was not well
addressed and there was little formal teaching about democracy in the classroom. As a result, Hong Kong students have been trained to be politically apathetic.

Interestingly, a few secondary students took initiatives to participate in the mass demonstrations that rocked Hong Kong on 1st July in 2003 and 2004. Their active participation appeared to take many people by surprise. Since then, there have been many secondary and tertiary students participating in demonstration on 1st July and in the candle night of remembering the victims in the Tiananmen Square Incident on 4th June every year. Some youth organizations such as Democratic Tutorial Group and Youth Round Table have been established to play a political role in the Hong Kong society. Although these students are a minority among Hong Kong youngsters, they, in fact, are particular samples of active and participatory citizens who are already well equipped with the quality of democratic citizenship.

In this regard, it is natural that many questions arise. For instance, how do these groups of young people become active participants in political events? In what way do they construct the conception of active and participatory citizenship? Which socializing agents play a significant part in the process of transforming them to become socially and politically active? What are the characteristics of formation of the attitudes towards civic responsibility and identity in the socialization process?

The aim of this study was precisely to find out how young people become active and participatory citizens in an apolitical educational context like one of Hong Kong. To contextualize the above-mentioned questions and the significance of education for democracy in Hong Kong, there is a need to refer to literature and previous research findings on participatory citizenship, and to the characteristics of the political socialization process, the essence of which is interwoven with the research findings and discussions.

**Research Method**

In this study, I employed a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin 1996) where the theoretical propositions follow, instead of preceding and predetermining, data analysis. Eighteen students from two secondary schools, as well as two civic education teachers were invited to three focus group interviews and individual in-depth interviews respectively in 2006 according to the procedures of purposive sampling suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985, 201). The two teachers, Lai King from Kowloon School and Ping Man from Triangle School, who were devoted to promoting civic education in their schools, were referred by a non-government organization (NGO). The names of both the schools and the teachers are pseudonyms. The secondary student informants were identified because they were recommended by their civic education teachers and were actively participating in social or political activities inside and outside the school. Both teachers and students were interviewed to ensure triangulation.

Each focus group interview was composed of six students. The first focus group consisted of six Forms 2 and 3 students in Kowloon School. The samples of the second focus group were Form 4 students of the same school. The third focus group was composed of two Form 6 students, two studying in Form 5 and two from Form 7 of Triangle School. The
Findings and Discussion

1) The personal beliefs of the civic education teachers

As socialization agents, teachers are in a privileged position to promote education for democratic citizenship. They can encourage students to select the community issues to investigate, and when this happens students are more likely to achieve a higher level of civic development. Good education is democratic. Indeed, political and civic knowledge, intellectual skills, participation skills and political attitudes are core components of political socialization in responsible citizenship and a democratic society (Terren 2002; Patrick 2002).

To understand how the students in this study became active participants in social events and developed a sense of social concern and civic-mindedness, it is important to know more about the personal philosophy and background of the two teachers. Generally speaking, Lai King and Ping Man had a similar background where they were appointed as responsible for implementing civic education in the school. They were both Christians and had studied Sociology at the university. Lai King had a deep belief in social justice and promised herself to do her utmost to help those who are exploited and under-privileged.

Ping Man graduated with Chinese as his major and a Sociology minor 12 years ago. He reports that his greatest influence was the experience he gained when he was committed to the editorial work of the University Student News Group, recognised as an organization caring for those being socially deprived and suppressed. He believed that being critical was the basic skill to protect oneself in the society. Ping Man said:

The under-privileged should be critical, particularly towards those in power in the society in order to secure their benefits and welfare from being deprived. (Teacher informant, Triangle School)

With the consent of their headmasters, they organized seminars and exhibitions on the issue of the Tiananmen Incident each year for students and teachers to explore the meaning of citizenship and patriotism. Lai King alluded to the mission that civic education teachers have to pursue for social justice through developing a personalized sense of social concern. She said:

To build up a sense of social justice, we have to experience what the real situation of the society is and to avoid just listening to what the mass media has described. (Teacher informant, Kowloon School)

To strengthen the capacity of social awareness of her students, Lai King had established a student body entitling ‘Street Group’ under the regime of the Civic Education Society in her school. She had brought her students to observe the election activities for the Legislative Council, to interview a candidate for the office of Legislative council, and to learn the meaning of poverty by touring the poor district. Lai King expected their students to
have chances for social exposure so as to enhance their civic commitment and social consciousness.

As a citizen embedded with social consciousness, the student should not just receive but need to try to organize what they see and learn and promote them with the civic courage. (Teacher informant, Kowloon School)

As for the conception of citizenship, both, especially Ping Man, found that the notion of citizenship should be participatory in action and supranational in nature. Ping Man explained in this way:

The occurrence of the Tiananmen Incident reminds me that the value beyond patriotism towards global citizenship is of paramount importance (Teacher informant, Triangle School)

Both Lai King and Ping Man were critical teachers. This finding is corresponding to that of the study of Yuen and Byram (2007) in which civic educators in Hong Kong favored citizenship education of a cosmopolitan and global nature and teachers of Government and Public Administration behaved critically in the teaching of national identity in schools. In addition, their religion seemed to render them a certain type of spiritual support for realizing the mission of teaching and participating for social justice.

I am nurtured in the spirit of Jesus Christ who leads us to look at things with a global horizon. (Teacher informant, Triangle School)

Definitely, Christianity encourages creativity and critical thinking among mankind. (Teacher informant, Kowloon School)

Improving the educational environment through curriculum and teaching pedagogy is of paramount importance for the transformation process. Through participating in social service, students can explore social issues and develop themselves with a social role and identity (Flanagan and Gallay 1995, Hatcher and Bringle 1997, Yates and Youniss 1998). Lai King was keen on designing programmes of experiential learning for the members. Indeed, She had a plan for nurturing students’ civic development:

There are follow-up activities after street-going. The students are required to do a presentation of what they have observed and felt after the activities. (Teacher informant, Kowloon School)

Kurth-Schai and Green (2003) and Carpenter (2006) point out that democratic education requires continuing collaborative participation in processes of teaching and learning in citizenship education. In this regard, issue-based learning was one of the key teaching methods adopted by both Lai King and Ping Man. Ping Man expressed:

We talk about the story behind World Disneyland; we talk about human rights in Hong Kong. Civic education as a subject provides me with opportunities to enhance students’ discussion. (Teacher informant, Triangle School)

Hahn (1998) and Ross (1996) encourage teachers to employ issue-based teaching methods, through which students can consequently develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills.
2) Student constructions of active and participatory citizenship

Kennedy (2007) argues that there is no agreement about the meaning of active citizenship. Definitions of citizenship are very context-dependent (Benn 2000). As echoed by Kerr, Nelson, and Ireland (2006), many challenges remain in terms of what ‘active citizenship’ means and its implications for policy and practice. In fact, student informants demonstrated diverse views on the conception of active citizenship but the majority thought that having a sense of social concern was of vital importance. One of the students commented:

As active citizens, we need to know more about our society by watching news. We have to voice out when there is injustice. We can write letters to complain. Or we can even express ourselves through petition, demonstrations and rallies. (Student informant 11, Form 7, Triangle School)

In fact, students at both lower and senior secondary levels had a more passive view on the notion of active citizenship.

We are passive citizens not because we are lazy but because we have no power under the age of 18. Are we too young to make decision and to vote? (Student informant, Form 2, Kowloon School)

However, a Form 4 student having participated in many social activities such as interviewing Korean farmers when the meeting of World Trade Organisation (WTO) was held in Hong Kong had defined citizenship in a substantive manner:

Regardless of whether it is political or not and anti-government or pro-government, I, as a citizen, will understand a social incident by exploration. I will exercise my rights to voice out. This is what I should do and what I choose to do. (Student informant 8, Form 4, Kowloon School)

DeJaeghere (2003) argues that active citizens should be involved in activities in various types of communities, from local school and community service groups to national political parties and organizations. This substantive conception of active and participatory citizenship was exemplified by two Form 7 students who had participated in demonstrations three times on 1st July. These students behaved with the quality of justice-oriented citizens or maximal citizens:

I am caring about what has happened every day in Hong Kong. As a citizen, I will do in accordance with my role in the society. (Student informant 14, Form 7, Triangle)

On the other hand, critical patriotism seems to be one of the requirements of an active citizen.

When we love our country, it is natural that we want to know more about our country. The more we love, the more we demand our country. (Student informant 5, Form 4, Kowloon School)

For one Form 3 student and two mature Form 7 students, they extended the conception of active citizenship to the perspective that it should be of global concern. Kiwan (2005) has identified that cosmopolitan citizenship is of importance in civic education. Two of the students expressed:
I participated as a volunteer in the WTO demonstration because I think the Korean farmers are being exploited. I need to care for those powerless in the world. (Student informant 15, Form 7, Triangle School)

To prevent the world from being polluted, we must do something in every part of the world. What we have to do should be globally-oriented. (Student informant 11, Form 5, Triangle School)

In summary, the student informants were of different perceptions on the notion of active and participatory citizenship. Similar to the finding of the Civic Education Study across 28 countries sponsored by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (better known as IEA), some of the student informants confined active citizens as being committed to obligations rather than exercising their political rights (Kennedy 2007, Kennedy, Hahn and Lee 2008, Torney-Purta 2004). However, there were a significant number of students interpreting active citizenship as struggling for social justice for the powerless through participating in protest activities.

3) The emergence of civic awareness and responsibility in the process

Transformation is a dynamic political socialization process by which young people learn the prevailing social norms and behaviour patterns of their culture as mediated through various social agencies (Hyman 1959, Patrick 2002, Sapiro 2004). Civic engagement of youth facilitates their civic development in which negotiating and interacting with socializing agents will help construct and reconstruct their political identity in specific cultural and social contexts. In fact, student informants recognised that they were growing up and gradually developed within themselves a sense of civic awareness. Two students echoed:

After going to the candle night, participating in the Poverty Camp and learning more about the WTO, I feel I have changed a lot. At least I have become more sensitive to social and political issues. (Student informant 16, Form 7, Triangle School)

In the past, I did not care what was happening around me. Now, in the Street Group, I have changed in terms of attitudes and knowledge acquiring. (Student informant 2, Form 2, Kowloon School)

Civic consciousness enhances political understandings. As the students know more by participation, a sense of civic mission will emerge. Many of the student informants said they became mature and confident. One of the students commented:

In the past, I didn’t know what the news was about. Now when I watch TV, I am more concerned with a certain extent of sensitivity. I have become confident in asking questions. (Student informant 9, Form 4, Kowloon School)

In fact, Lai King was satisfied that members of the Street Group became socially minded. However, some student informants were trapped in a dilemma of what they could do for the social justice as they were still studying in schools.

It seems that students at our age should not be involved in political activities. In fact, we can tell between right and wrong through participation. (Student informant 11, Form 4, Kowloon School)
On Becoming an Active and Participatory Citizen

Wing Ng

Though the government does not pay attention to our views, we as students, will not get away from justice. (Student informant 15, Form 7, Triangle School)

In sum, political socialization is a dynamic process through which the youth interact with and respond to socializing factors and construct, refine and reconstruct the conception of citizenship in specific cultural, social and political contexts (Franagan and Gallay 1995). In this study, student informants constructed their social and political relationship with the context in which they engaged themselves (Yates and Youniss 1998).

4) The socializing agencies: Facilitating or restraining the transformation process

As far as agencies for political socialization are concerned, Torney-Purta, Schwille, and Amadeo (1999) argue that the political value formation of individual students is influenced by five types of socializing agents: a) formal community such as political leaders, b) informal community such as workplaces and youth organizations, c) family, d) school factors such as teachers, intended curriculum, and participation opportunities, and e) peer groups in and out of class.

With reference to the data collected from informants, school, family, peer and church were the key agencies contributing to the process of political socialization of these students. School is indeed serving as a key socializing agency. Needless to say, the commitment of both Lai King and Ping Man demonstrated that teachers were of significant influence on the students’ transformation process. One student said:

It is our teacher, Lai King, who has tried every of her effort to send us emails regularly so that we know the story behind WTO. She is actually our leader.  
(Student informant 7, Form 4, Kowloon School)

On the other hand, the student informants of Triangle School also found that their teacher, Ping Man, provided them with opportunities to know and explore more about social issues by organizing various types of civic education activities and employing permeation approach in conducting civic education and using issue-based learning activities in the classroom.

After entering this school and being taught in Ping Man’s lesson, I have been inspired and have become a member of the youth group of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Moment of China. (Student informant, Form 6, Triangle School)

However, the agents sometimes serve as a restraining force in the transformation process. In the study, it was discerned that some teachers would not be involved in organizing participatory activities due to heavy workload. Some even disliked the way that Lai King organized her students to go outside the classroom for experiential learning.

Some teachers do not support what we are doing now. They think that we are naughty. (Student informant 6, Form 3, Kowloon School)

Family is another socializing agency for students’ political development. Recent research reveals that youth-parent political discussion has a strong and broad influence on a range of youth civic outcomes (McIntosh, Hart and Youniss 2007). Lai King expressed that some parents did not allow their children to take part in non-academic activities. On the
other hand, discussion on everyday social and political incidents between members of the family might account for youth civic development (Torney-Purta and Richardson 2004). One of the student responded in the following way:

It is my sister who is now studying in the university encourages me to pay attention to everyday happenings. She likes to talk with me about the performance of the Chief Executive. (Student informant 3, Form 3, Kowloon School)

Nevertheless, parents may also cause some restraining effects on the transformation process. Two of the interviewees expressed that they had never had any discussion on social and political events with their parents either because they were politically apathetic or because they were educational incompetence.

My father never talks with me any political matters. He thinks that it is none of our business. He would rather let me stay home to do house chores than let me participate in a demonstration. (Student informant 17, Form 7, Triangle School)

Peer influence is another facilitating factor in the transformation process as highlighted by Flanagan and Gallay (1995). Cho, Gimpel, and Dyck (2006) argue that neighbourhood context has a socializing influence on participatory behaviours. This was especially prevalent in the dialogue among interviewees in the first focus group.

It is because of Sing, who has joined the Street Group. He told me there was much to learn in the group. Then I joined. (Student informant, Form 2, Kowloon School)

The influence of NGOs in the political socialisation process cannot be neglected. According to Lai King, the NGO of Alliance for Civic Organizations aiming at promoting civic education in secondary schools had helped her design civic education curriculum and organize the simulation of election of Legislative Councilors.

As mentioned earlier, religion provided the two teachers with a certain extent of spiritual support in implementing political education. Nevertheless, the church might be a restraining force for political socialization. Two students concurred with each other that their church persuaded members not to participate in the 1st July Rally and not to be involved in the issue of homosexuality.

It is very strange. Some members of my Church do not agree to take part in the rally. They also assert that anything concerning homosexuality should be avoided, but I don’t care. (Student informant 8, Form 4, Kowloon School)

Undoubtedly, teachers in the school, parents in the family, classmates and friends in the peers are all key socializing agents in transforming youth to become active and participatory citizens. In addition, the influence of NGOs and church is of primary importance as well. All of these can be facilitating and impeding factors affecting the effectiveness of the transformation process.

Conclusions and Implications

Civic and citizenship education in Hong Kong has long been criticised by educators and researchers (e.g. Lee 1996, Tse 1998) as depoliticisation before and after the return of
its sovereignty to China. This criticism is due to teachers' avoidance of political aspects of the curriculum, as well as a lack of critical thinking and service learning skills in the curriculum (Ng 2000, Leung and Ng 2004).

This study has shown there are secondary school teachers who believe that studying civics should be done in a critical and analytical way. As exemplified in this study, the two civic education teachers are significant agents who have contributed to the socializing process of transforming their students to be active and participatory citizens. They have been devoted to implementing civic and citizenship education through providing students with opportunities for critical thinking and issue-based learning through service actions inside and outside the classroom. According to their discussion in this study, their religious beliefs, their sociological training at university, their working experience with the NGO and their global citizenship orientation are the hidden factors that contribute to their critical mindsets and deep beliefs in pursuing social justice through educating their students. These are seemingly necessary qualities of an effective socializing agent and catalyst to facilitate the transformation process (Torney-Purta, Schwille and Amadeo 1999).

An important theoretical contribution of this study is the socialization process where the notion of civic identity emerges within students themselves through civic engagement. Students unintentionally construct and reconstruct their civic identity by means of social actions such as visiting the poor, observing in the street and participating in demonstrations or political events. With the assistance of their teachers, students are probed to discuss, reflect, discuss and reflect. Through this process students gradually develop the passion of civic consciousness and civic responsibility. The notion of civic consciousness and civic identity is believed to be a key essence in transforming a person to be an active and participatory citizen.

However, it should be noted from this study that effective transformation requires effective socializing agents. The samples, including both teachers and students, reported here were purposively chosen for interviews in order to explore and illuminate the process of how students are being socialized to actively participate in social and political activities. In fact, as discussed previously, not many teachers are consciously committed to designing issue-based learning activities in the classroom and experiential learning outside the classroom, either because of lack of space in the school time-table or because they are socially and politically conservative. As indicated in the interviews, some teachers did not support what Lai King had done in the Street Group. Many school principals do not allow their teachers to arrange participatory activities during school because the orientation toward examination is still dominant in the education system of Hong Kong. Therefore, agents in the school might become a restraining force in the process of participatory socialization.

Similar to the findings of McIntosh, Hart, and Youniss (2007), as pointed out in the interviews, families with members who always discuss social and political events with students will facilitate the student in acquiring political knowledge. It should be worth noting from this study that church and peer groups can also play either supportive or impeding roles in students' political development. Religion can render support to teachers’
devotion to educating students about social justice, but conservative members of the church may prevent students from becoming socially and politically active.

The exploratory study reported here has yielded significant information about how students are socialized to become active and participatory citizens. There is no simple explanation for young people’s political socialization. There is something of a discourse in the literature about the differing effects of teacher, peer, parent and other community influences on the socialization process (Torney-Purta, Schwille and Amadeo 1999, Torney-Purta 2002, Biesta 2007). The theoretical assumption of Pettersson (2003) has demonstrated the complexity of political socialization in youth civic development.

We can conclude that civic education teachers play an important role in helping students become active citizens. Their personal beliefs and their devotion to implementing citizenship and democratic education are two significant characteristics that seem to contribute to youth civic development. Students will gradually and unintentionally develop civic awareness and consciousness in the learning process facilitated by the teachers. Most importantly, in addition to teachers, school principals, family members, peers and community stakeholders are also playing a supplementary but important role to help young people in constructing the notion of active citizenship in a more political way.

The study reported here is part of a larger research project that also includes in-depth interviews with NGO staff and members of the political youth bodies. The themes and data presented here are therefore part of a larger database and have been chosen insofar as they are related to specific issues of political socialization of secondary students. The fact that the sample was purposefully selected is a limitation. However, the findings of this study can help illuminate how a particular group of students become politically socialized in their process of personal development.

The findings reported here also have significant implications for the development of civic and citizenship education in Hong Kong. Education policy makers need to decide the purpose and focus of the civic education curriculum. In the near future, Hong Kong is going to witness very interesting and intense political debates as people decide when and how universal suffrage should be implemented according to the Basic Law, an important document signed between the Chinese and British governments in 1997, the year when Hong Kong returned to China. There may be a need, therefore, to train as many civic education teachers as possible who can help transform students to be socially and politically active members of the society in preparation for this and other debates about the future of Hong Kong society.

References


Educational Policy and Children’s Participation: A Voice to Consider

Carola Arrúe, Nora E. Elichiry & Carolina Savino
Universidad de Buenos Aires

Introduction

This work considers the contributions of children’s perspective to educational policy’s design. Considering real participation\(^1\) an indispensable practice for the construction of educational (and social) equity and inclusion, we propose a two-fold approach to discuss the issue:

On the one hand, we study the case of the 2006 Argentinian ‘Debate for the Educational National Law’. We explore the ideas and opinions expressed in that occasion by school-aged children about ‘inclusion’ (one of the issues proposed by the Law Project); and the kind of structure these opinions suggest to educational policy designers.

On the other hand, we compare those ideas and opinions with the offer of participation practices observed at the school institution, and we explore the possibilities of the said practices to be supported by educational policy. We interrogate the structural frame that educational policy has (or should have) to enable the construction of citizenship from a rights’ perspective.

Understanding learning as situated in specific practice contexts, we argue that the construction of citizenship is directly related to the participation practices proposed to children and young people in the institutions that receive them. Taking school as a specific context, we discuss its complexity and the potential it has to favour the development of subjectivities capable of real participation.

In order to fully develop such potential, we consider the conditions of an educational policy capable of structurally support it. Also, in the institutional level, a planning including

\(^{1}\) We use the term ‘real participation’ as opposed to different formats of interaction that, albeit being called ‘participation’, are not really it (e.g.: the individuals express their opinions but they are not allowed to decide on the issue being discussed)
everybody’s voice (children’s, young people’s and adults’), and the implementation of interaction formats that enable those voices to be heard, considering the different ages of the subjects, the specific forms of participation that correspond to them; and the contexts in which their practice is situated.

One of the boys chose a photograph and said:

“This boy doesn’t go to school”.

“Why not?”, I asked.

“Because he doesn’t have any shoes”, the child answered.

A girl intervened: “Well, his Dad should buy him a pair of shoes”.

Another boy said: “What if he is poor?”

The girl answered: “He has to go to work to buy shoes and school stuff for him”.

“What kind of work could he do?”, I asked.

A third boy said: “He can gather cardboard or empty bottles…”

Excerpt from a consultation with children aged 6 to 8 years old about school inclusion.

**A Glimpse of Argentina’s Educational Situation**

When we consider any issue of discussion, particularly in social sciences, there are at least two ways of doing it. One of them is considering it in an abstract way, as a purely theoretical matter. The second one, that we prefer, is contextualizing it in the net of determinants that constitute it. This second way helps us to be aware both of the complexity and multi-determined nature of social issues (García 2006). Also, as it compels us to revise the historical processes that configure any social object of study, it brings to the surface its political nature. Therefore, it visualizes as well the political nature of our own interventions, especially when we intervene in educational activities (even if the only thing we think we are doing is researching and describing the object in question)(Elichiry 2005).

As we prepare to discuss the issue of children’s voices and educational policy in Argentina, we think it important to offer a brief glimpse of our country’s educational situation. This way, we step aside from the mere academic discussion and situate our work in a very different one: the task of examining ways to, as Agamben (1993) would say, “not merely change the world, but change the time”.

In our times, Argentina offers an alarming panorama. According to the Argentinean paediatrics’ society and UNICEF (2006), the survey of urban homes for 2005 shows that 56.9% of the population under 18 live under the poverty line, and 23.3% are indigents. María Teresa Sirvent (2006) notes that 67% of the population over 15 has not finished school, and are therefore under what she calls ‘Level of educational risk’, as they are excluded of the work market (among other social nets) due to lack of enough qualifications. These ciphers increase considerably if we analyse the breach between the richest and
poorest areas of the country. The people under the level of educational risk in the poorest provinces ascend to 78% of the population over 15. That means that only 2 out of 10 children who started school could finish his or her formal education (Sirvent 2006).

This brief glimpse of quantitative data on Argentina’s educational panorama can help us to outline the rough reality of poverty and exclusion lived by the majority of the population and that, unless political decision chooses to tackle it, has little chance to improve. In the light of it, when we focus our work on educational policy it is important to note, as Filmus (2008) clearly states, that the Argentinean educational system won’t fulfill the task of contributing to build democracy proposed by the new Educational National Law (promulgated in 2006) if this law is not accompanied by economic and social policies that go in the same line.

**Children's Opinions on Educational Inclusion**

During the year 2006, Argentina’s government launched a consultation to the public over a document that focused on different issues related to the design and contents of the New Law of Education. The educational authorities established times and dates for teachers, parents, and education professionals to read and discuss the ‘consultation document’, and to elevate their conclusions and proposals. But no time or date was set so that the main addressees of educational policy were consulted: school aged children and youngsters. This is not surprising, considering that the educational system, and particularly school, are historically constructed as social institutions with the mission of educating a person conceived as ‘infant’. Etymologically, ‘Infancy’ means ‘lack of language’ (Iturralde 2008, 68). This example poses once again the problem of children’s participation in educational institutions. And it brings to our attention two undeniable facts:

- Participation is a Child’s right (art. 12 of Children’s Rights Convention).
- This right is granted only if there are adults that enable it, lodge it, allow it...

How can we make this possible in schools? Here it becomes important to note that Infancy can be interpreted in a different way, which is the opposite of the above mentioned of lacking language, and therefore the capacity to express an opinion. It can be interpreted as ‘full of potential’ (Iturralde 2008). In that sense, schools are institutions with the huge possibility of helping that potential to come to its best and most high possibilities. It is there that the ethical and political aspects of education are put on the table, particularly, as we are considering this example, in a social context such as Argentina’s.

We are now going to present an experience carried ahead in the frame of the above mentioned debate by a children’s rights NGO called El Arca, in one of the poorest areas of Buenos Aires province. El Arca has a project called ‘School for all’ that links up with 11

---

2 Even if we are not going to discuss it here, we consider it important to state that this consultation was not conducted in a way that could impact the new Educational National Law's design or contents.

3 El Arca is a children's rights NGO that develops different projects aimed to grant children's exercise of citizenship in Moreno, one of the poorest areas of Buenos Aires province. For more information visit: www.elarca.org.ar or send an e-mail to: elarca@elarca.org.ar
different educational institutions of a very poor 'barrio' called 'Cuartel V'. All together, these educational institutions receive around 2600 children aged 2 to 14 every day. The 'School for all' project works in the area since the year 2003, and its objective is to build and promote the exercise of children’s citizenship. This exercise is understood in four levels:

- On the juridical level, the key words are exigency of children’s rights
- On the social level, the key word is inclusion
- On the cultural level, the key word is expression
- On the political level, the key word is participation

Among the institutions the project links up with, there are 3 Public Primary Schools that receive about 750 students each. On the occasion of the ‘Public Debate on the New Educational National Law’, the project’s team organized a consultation to around 750 children that went to first to third grade of two of these schools. It was about one of the issues proposed for discussion: educational inclusion. These children teachers were invited to co-coordinate the consultation with the NGO’s team and volunteers. All of them did it and were delighted with the activity, which permitted them to see their students in a different light. The children were 6 to 8 years old, and they were consulted through group activities especially designed for them to express their opinions on two matters:

1. Which children they considered that could or couldn’t go to school and why (for this they were presented with a selection of different children’s photos and they had to decide whether each one of them went to school and justify their opinions)

2. How should a school be so that all children could go to it (for this they were asked to draw, in groups of 5 or 6, ‘a school for all the children to go to’, or ‘the ideal school’)

**Opinions about the Possibility of Going to School**

**Social conditions**

The first thing that arose from the consultation is that children possess a lot of information about the social issues that affect educational inclusion. They think that poverty determined conditions such as lack of work and lack of means to buy clothing or school materials are the main obstacles for them to go to school and / or finish it. It is interesting that they do not see the State, but parents, as responsible for granting them the possibility of going to school (a possibility that we could define as their right to receive an education). They say that parents should get a work to buy them the things they need to go to school. In many cases, work is conceived by them as the informal activity of rummaging through trash to find items such as cardboard, which can be sold for a few coins. These poor children know about the life of the paupers. What they don’t seem to know about is the State’s obligation to grant them their rights. It is also interesting that they do not suggest any form of collective action to exact them.

Other aspects linked to social conditions that are present in children’s opinions are child labor and sickness, two facts that prevent them from going to school. These children
believe work is for adults, and that their obligation is to go to school and otherwise, they are meant to play.

School rules
The possibility of abiding by school rules also appears in children’s opinions as enabling them or not to assist and remain included. School rules appear as monolithic, unmovable, and they condition the possibility of assistance to school. In the children’s point of view, rules appear to be an important determinant of inclusion or exclusion. If you don’t do your homework, if you don’t behave or if you repeat a school year, you will probably end up dropping out of school.

Dependency
Children see themselves as dependent on the adults when it comes to go to school. If parents don’t take them to school, then they cannot assist. This is strongly linked to the quotidian problems of life, such as parent’s possibilities of providing for them, but also home distance from school, accessibility and parental presence in the house.

Opinions about the Ideal School

Individual/collective drawing
The task proposed to the children was to draw, in groups of six, ‘a school to which all children can go’. Each group received a big sheet of paper and markers. Nevertheless, a significant amount of children drew individually, taking a corner of the collective sheet. In a minority of cases the six children of the group managed to agree on a collective drawing.

School infrastructure
Most of the drawings concentrated in school’s infrastructure: the children drew their actual school, represented by its building. Some of them added characteristics different to those of their school: gardens with plants and animals, spaces for practicing sports (these children have their gym classes in a corner of the school patio), libraries, a museum...

Relationships
When they talk about their drawings, children mention a lot that harmonious relationships should prevail. The relations they refer to are mainly between teachers and students and among students. The relationships between school actors and the community (e.g. parents) almost don’t appear in their verbalizations. All the relationships they mention are mostly centered on schoolwork, and the product of this work seems to acquire more relevance that the relationships in themselves.

A Voice to Be Considered
The NGO’s team systematized these opinions and elaborated a document that was included through a government’s ad-hoc website in the ‘debate’ for the New National Educational Law. Even if that document wasn’t really considered, these children’s opinions had a lot to say to educational policy makers. The NGO’s team and the school directors that decided to do this consultation wanted to grant children’s constitutional right to participation, that states that “children’s opinion must be consulted and taken into consideration in all issues that affect them” (International Convention on Children’s Rights
1989, Art. 12 and 13). But by doing so they also found out that what children thought about inclusion gave an amazingly good clue of what was needed from educational policies and from school practices in order to grant it. When adults are convinced that Children have the right to participate, they stop thinking ‘for’ them and discover the marvellous advantages of thinking ‘with’ them. This is far more ‘educational’ than repeating lessons, particularly on the subject of citizenship... both for children and for adults!

When we give a close look to these children’s opinions, firstly we must think that they correspond to their social representations on what we could generally talk about as school inclusion, and therefore they express a conception of the matter constructed in their quotidian interactions around the school-going business. Even if these are only but few of Argentinean children, we could do the exercise of deriving some conclusions from their opinions as regards educational policy, educational system and school functioning. We are aware that we are stretching them, but we believe this exercise of thought is very enriching for our discussion here, especially because it forces us to consider children’s opinions in a field of which it is normally thought that they don’t know anything about.

The fact that these children consider lack of clothing or school materials a major impediment to go to school, and that they think these must be provided exclusively by their parents, brings to our attention that the assistance programmes developed by Argentina’s Government are not making a real impact on poor children’s possibilities of being included. These children’s opinions pose a challenge to social and educational policy makers: is there a more creative way of granting children all the materials they need to work at school so that they won’t suffer it as an exclusion factor? Typical assistance programmes only reproduce their poverty situation, leaving them in the role of incapable and dependant subjects.

But there is still another interesting thing to notice here: these children are attributing all responsibility to the individual efforts of their parents. The lack of conceptions of collective action in their opinions (as well as the fact of their difficulties to do a collective drawing) makes us wonder about the possibilities of school to help them learn collective thinking and action simply by proposing them to participate of it. Can educational policy help to break school’s tendency to individual practices? As we mentioned above, here the ethical and political aspects of educational practices are brought to our attention. In a world governed by the market logic, the citizen is no longer the model of subject: he/she has been replaced by the consumer (Lewkowicz 2004). As a consumer, each person only gets what he or she is capable of demanding (Tedesco, 2008). Fragmentation is an illness of our times, and one of the roots of exclusion. If we go back to the crude ciphers mentioned at the beginning, and we remember Agamben’s (1993) proposal to ‘change our time’,

---

4 In Argentina, we can mention Castorina and Kaplan (2003) and Scavino (2004) as examples of works that focus on the issue of social representations constructed through participation in educational activities.

5 Properly provided for school class-rooms, with plenty of materials ‘to share’, and teachers who dispose of team-working paid hours to reflect on how to administer it is one of the possible answers we could think about...

6 We could interpret that this can be attributed to their young age in the first grade, but what about the third grade students?
children's opinions on inclusion give us a few interesting clues to invent a subject other than the consumer (and closer to a citizen capable of collective action). In relation to this, their concern for harmonious interpersonal relationships is an important issue. Allowing time and space for play and team work in school's buildings and programmes is a brilliant way to grant both school learning and the learning of 'doing with others'. Play is, according to psychological development theories, one of the most genuine and effective ways of learning that children have. May be it's time for it to be incorporated as a powerful means of promoting learning in school. Could educational policy take these ideas on board and grant that they are made effective?

Also, the individual will of poor families cannot be made responsible for their children's lack of opportunities. The State must grant these. Do all the children, and particularly poor children, have decent roads to arrive to school, free transport if they need it, and teachers who receive the necessary training to offer them transformative educational situations? And can the State, through educational policy, devise ways in which parents are collectively included in school materials management?

And about school rules... Why do children consider them an exclusion factor? Educational policy makers could ask this to themselves, and also if rules can be turned into a matter that is collectively constructed and re-constructed, in order to help everybody live in harmony, take care of each other and thrive...

All of these questions would not be as meaningful if they didn't arise of the consideration of children's opinions on inclusion. Children's voice, certainly, is strong and distinct. They tell us important things about real every-day problems. Not only because of this, but also because it is their right, their voice must be taken as all important voices should: seriously.

Conclusion

In 2004, we listened to the anthropologist Elsie Rockwell give a brilliant conference on ethnographic research (Rockwell 2004). She used an example that enlightens us a lot on the issue of children’s participation in educational institutions:

She told us there was this English researcher reconstructing the history of a little town’s school. And he found about a long draining post that used to be against a wall in this school yard. He had interviewed present and ancient students of the school. From the present 5 year old first years to the older ex-student, who was 80, they all related a game they played around that post. But curiously, no present or ex-teacher knew anything about that game. Elsie Rockwell illustrated with this story how there is a communicative way amongst children that has to do with their possibility of assuming a bit of power at school, in the crevices left by the adults. Nevertheless, she continued, we must not be naive: years after this research they had to add a new classroom to the school, and they built it in such a way that the draining post was enfolded by it, and so it ceased to be part of the school yard’s geography. Just like that, the children’s game and their bit of power was shattered by unaware adults.

Rockwell's (2004) example is very graphic to illustrate children’s possibilities of participation in school, understood not only as the possibility of expressing their opinions,
but also as the fact that these opinions are taken into account and children are invited in some way to the process of decision-making. Just like the students of the English school, children constantly seek the crevices of the system to acquire a bit of power (and what is decision making but assuming power?). That is a way to learn participation and citizenship: in the crevices. As the story’s conclusion shows, it is a feeble, unstable way. The key to children’s real participation is when it is enabled and sustained by the adults that share their daily life. It is when adults stop thinking for them and start thinking with them that children’s real participation flourish.

If we assume, with contextual psychologists (Cole 1996; Chaiklin 1996) that learning is constructed not so much by the work with formal ‘contents’ but by taking part in educational practices, then we can assert that citizen participation can be learned only by those who take part in participative practices. Can school offer participative practices, such as the consultation related above, but on a regular basis? We believe it can, but only if this is sustained on political decision.

Above, we have outlined some of the conclusions we can derive of children’s opinions to create some of these practices in schools. We continue to believe school has an enormous potential to offer children practices that can open logics, possibilities and opportunities of learning and building democracy; and that this cannot be overlooked in our fragmented times. Educational policy can and should grant the conditions for this to become possible: team work paid hours for teachers (nobody can teach what they have not learned themselves), a more active inclusion of parents and community in school’s affairs, rules that are not monolithic but collectively created to help everybody live together in an harmonious way, and play as a key way in which children actually learn.

The construction of a collective actor capable of exacting human rights from those who have the responsibility to grant them is an urgent need of our times. It cannot be left in the crevices of the system. Only if the accent of educational and social policies is put in granting collective participation practices, both for adults and for children, this can be made possible and maybe our times can be changed.

References


From Authoritarian Schools to Democratic Schools: The Red Latinoamericana de Convivencia Escolar

Patricia Carbajal Padilla
Universidad Iberoamericana Leon

The struggle for constructing more inclusive and democratic societies has been a constant concern in the modern history of Latin America. Although the vicissitudes of this struggle can only be understood within a comprehensive analysis of world history, democracy continues to be more an ideal than a reality for most Latin American countries. In this context, the demands and expectations of the role schools have in this construction have increased in the last decades. It is expected that formal education will fulfill its civic commitment by educating responsible citizens, who will contribute to the development of more fair and democratic relationships, not only in their own communities, but in relation to other nations as well.

In this sense, elementary and secondary schools in Latin America share similar problematic situations, which become severe obstacles for learning democracy and constructing citizenship, such as authoritarianism, mistreatment, inequality, school abandonment and low academic achievement, among others. It is obvious, then, that an enormous challenge appears on scene: transforming authoritarian and unequal schools into democratic and inclusive schools in the Latin American context.

In the following paragraphs I will present the experience of four universities, from three different countries, Mexico, Chile and Costa Rica, which decided to unite their efforts in a network called the Red Latinoamericana de Convivencia Escolar. The main purpose of this network is to work for the development of fair, supportive, inclusive and democratic school practices by taking the concept of convivencia as the platform to achieve this goal. I will start by briefly addressing the meaning and significance of the term convivencia in the school context, then I will present the purpose and structure of the network, and finally, I will concentrate on the results of two activities promoted by this network: an on-line course directed to Latin American school teachers, school administrators and advisors, and a comparative study sponsored by UNESCO in which seven schools from the three previously mentioned countries participated.
**Convivencia Escolar: Meaning and Significance**

There is no direct translation in English for the Spanish word *convivencia*. An approximate term seems to be “coexistence,” but I am not quite satisfied with that word either, so until I am able to find a more adequate translation, I will use the term in Spanish.

The word *convivencia* literally means “living with others,” but beyond the fact of simply “coexisting” with other people, it implies the possibility of fulfilling some of the most basic human needs. According to Villoro (1998), human beings have three basic necessities: surviving, living together with others, and finding a purpose in life. By living together with other human beings, a person increases not only his/her opportunities to survive, but satisfies his/her need for security and sense of belonging. Nevertheless, the concept of *convivencia* also involves the generous act of sharing: sharing food, sharing stories, and most significantly, sharing oneself with others. It is by sharing our lives and communicating with other people that we become human, that we discover our own identity, and that we learn to find our own purpose in life (Villoro 1998).

In the school setting, students and teachers tend to “coexist,” but they hardly share their lives. Hirmas & Eroles (2008) consider that learning to communicate and to construct positive relationships with others is practically overlooked in most schools. The mechanisms through which the interactions are woven day by day have become invisible, naturalized and taken for granted. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a critical perspective of these mechanisms in order to make them visible and be able to analyze the kind of *convivencia* that is being cultivated in the educational process (Kincheloe 2008).

Specifically, the concept of *convivencia* in the school context refers mainly to two deeply intertwined issues: the quality of the human relationships that take place in the institutions and the quality of the learning process. These two elements are profoundly interrelated since one is a necessary condition for the other (Ianni 2003). The pedagogical methods, the everyday interactions, the disciplinary policies, the levels of participation in different aspects of school life, all have a direct effect on students’ academic achievement (Gladden 2002; Trianes 2000; Ianni 2003). In this sense, the studies about school violence have given interesting evidence that shows how violence tends to increase in schools that promote or reproduce inequality, whether consciously or unwittingly, by encouraging high levels of competition among students, by producing profound disparities between high-achieving and low-achieving pupils, and by applying disciplinary methods in an inconsistent and unfair way (Akiba, et. al 2002; PREAL 2003; PREAL 2005; Ruiz 2007).

The concept of *convivencia*, therefore, makes reference to the quality of education in a broad sense. This is a major issue for Latin American countries, which are characterized by profound inequalities, since according to Muñoz Izquierdo (2007) constructing democratic societies becomes a difficult goal to accomplish when a high percentage of the population has unequal access to the educational system, receives a deficient education, or faces continuous obstacles to remain in school. Hirmas and Eroles (2008, 18) agree with this perspective; they declare that: “It is not possible to construct a democratic and peaceful culture if there is failure and exclusion of those students who do not fit in the academic and behavioral frames established by the school system. Neither it is possible to teach respect
and fraternity if the school dynamics do not favor the manifestation of these principles in the everyday life."

Consequently, when we talk about *convivencia* in the school setting, we refer to the construction of school practices based on the principles of equality, solidarity, co-responsibility and democracy. It is expected that these practices will create the necessary conditions to facilitate the development of the cognitive and socio-moral abilities needed to construct more inclusive and democratic societies, such as: self regulation, empathy, dialogue, critical thinking, decision-making, and participation (Buzzelli 1997; Buzzelli 2002; Fierro 2003; Ianni 2003; Kohlberg 1992; Latapí, 1999; Nucci 2001; Yurén 2007). In other words, taking the concept of *convivencia* as the focus of school change implies the transformation of schools into learning communities, in the profound sense of the word, where students can fulfill their basic needs of security, identity, sense of belonging, and self realization, and where they can learn how to become better citizens and better human beings.

**The Red Latinoamericana de Convivencia Escolar**

An approximate translation of the network's name in English would be: “The Latin American Network for the Education of Coexistence,” but for practical reasons I will refer to it as the *Convivencia* Network.

The *Convivencia* Network was founded in 2007 by four Latin American universities: The *Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile* (PUC), the *Universidad de Costa Rica* (UCR), the *Universidad Iberoamericana León in Mexico* (UIA León), and the *Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Guadalajara* (ITESO), also located in Mexico.

The story of this network begins several years ago, when researchers from these four universities began to share experiences in conferences and seminars about their academic interests: moral education, peace and human rights education, discipline, and teaching practice, among other things. These encounters made evident that despite their diverse approaches, they all shared a common goal: working to improve the quality of education in their own countries by improving *convivencia* in schools. Creating a Latin American network would mean having the opportunity to unite efforts to overcome the isolated nature of the initiatives that each institution was fostering in their own nations.

Consequently, the purpose of the network is to create a collaborative space for analysis, critical reflection and dialogue in order to address the challenges that prevent the development of a better school atmosphere of *convivencia*; an atmosphere that could contribute, not only to the improvement of academic standards, but also to the construction of a basis for citizenship and democratic attitudes in Latin American students.

In order to fulfill this purpose, the *Convivencia* Network promotes diverse activities organized in four spheres called nodes. The first node refers to education, the second to research, the third offers didactic resources, and the fourth an on-line exchange of conversations and experiences about this topic.
The education node

The *Universidad Iberocamericana León* in Mexico coordinates the first node. It offers educational programs directed to teachers, school administrators, and school advisors. The purpose of these programs is to contribute to the educational process of different school agents in issues related to the topic of *convivencia* in the school setting. It offers spaces for critical reflection in a continuous and collaborative dialogue among participants, which would lead to the improvement of the quality of education in Latin American schools. These programs consist of face-to-face courses, and an on-line certificate.

The research node

The Educational Research Institute of the *Universidad de Costa Rica* coordinates the second node. The purpose of this node is to offer a space for inquiry, dialogue and construction of knowledge in relation to *convivencia* in the Latin American context. Researchers can participate in different ways: a) by collaborating in a research project organized by the network, b) by referring a research project to the network (including undergraduate and graduate theses), or c) by publishing articles in the electronic journals sponsored by the four universities that are part of the ‘Convivencia Network’.

The on-line conversation node

The third node is coordinated by the ITESO in Mexico. The purpose of this space is to establish interactive communication with academics and educators interested in sharing inquiries, concerns, or experiences around the topic of *convivencia* in the Latin American context. It is designed to have two discussion forums. The first will host researchers or academics interested in discussing specific topics in a more profound way. The second is called ‘Sharing your experience’ and it offers teachers or educators the opportunity to interchange their anecdotes, experiences or reflections in relation to this matter.

The didactic resources node

The *Universidad Católica de Chile* coordinates this fourth node. It offers useful didactic tools for teachers and educators interested in implementing *convivencia* projects in their classrooms or institutions. These resources will be subject to constant assessment in order to determine their relevance to Latin American educational needs and realities.

Two Experiences in the *Red Latinoamericana de Convivencia Escolar*

The following section will briefly present two experiences of the Education node and the Research node. I will look specifically at an on-line course directed at Latin American educators, and a comparative research project sponsored by the UNESCO.

An on-line course on *convivencia*: promoting dialogue among Latin American educators

This experience refers to one course given in an on-line certificate offered by the *Convivencia Network*, called *Diplomado en Convivencia Escolar*.1

---

1 An approximate translation would be “Certificate in ‘convivencia’ in the school setting.” This certificate consists of three on-line courses of 40 hours each. The first course is called “Pillars and challenges of the convivencia in the school setting,” the second is “Conflict resolution and convivencia in the school setting,” and
The on-line course is called ‘Teaching Practice and convivencia in the School Setting.’ It consisted of forty hours divided into eight weeks, and it was held from the month of March to the month of May 2008. Thirty-four people, from five different countries (Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Colombia, Chile and Mexico) participated in this course. Twenty participants were teachers and fourteen were school principals or administrators. Twenty-two participants were women and twelve were men with an average age of forty-three years old.

The course was designed to promote participants’ critical reflection of the teaching practices that facilitate or hinder a positive convivencia in the school setting, as Freire (1998, 44) declares: “Thinking critically about practice, of today or yesterday, makes possible the improvement of tomorrow’s practice.”

The methodology was planned to favor the construction of collective knowledge through a constant analysis of participants’ previous knowledge and experiences, and the literature offered perspectives on convivencia in the school context. The dialogue among different Latin American educators was a central issue in this process. For this purpose each session was planned to have three different moments: 1) A case was presented to the participants based on ethnographic observations in Mexican schools (Fierro 2003). These cases, together with two readings related to the subject, were used as a springboard for discussion and analysis. 2) Participants were invited to share and reflect upon their own experiences in the Knowledge Forum. At this moment, a constant feedback was established between students and tutors. 3) As a final activity, participants were requested to write a brief text of 500 to 700 hundred words, synthesizing what they had learned in that session.

Our concerns and results

As tutors and designers of this on-line course, we had three main concerns in mind: Could the Mexican cases be applied to other Latin American countries? Would the selected readings be pertinent to all contexts? Would an on-line course in the topic of convivencia be significant and viable for teachers who do not have experience in on-line courses?

Concerning the first two questions, the analysis of the information obtained from this course shows that all of the cases presented, as well as the readings, were relevant to all contexts. Participants’ opinions coincide in that they all identified similar situations in their own schools and they found the readings pertinent to their own situations.

the third is “Teaching practice and convivencia in the school setting.”

2 The number of participants organized by countries is the following: Mexico: 16, Costa Rica: 6, Chile: 6, Colombia: 3, and Nicaragua: 3.

3 Additional readings were offered in each session in case someone wanted to study that particular issue in more depth.

4 Nearly 70% of the participants did not have this previous experience with on-line courses.

5 Participants were invited to complete an assessment of the course. They were also asked for their authorization to analyze and publish their interventions in the Forum as well as their responses to the course assessment. All of them agreed. Pseudonyms will be used to protect their privacy.
In relation to the third question, it became evident that the lack of technological skills or deficient infrastructure, such as inadequate computers or the availability of internet in their homes became important obstacles for some participants who decided to quit the course. Nevertheless, 74% of the group remained, showing their interest in the topic and overcoming the limitations the on-line platform presented to the inexperienced participants. It was noticeable that once they developed the basic skills, the virtual environment became an important gathering point for these Latin American educators, in which the Knowledge Forum became the most salient feature of the course. All participants recognized that this Forum became a powerful space for reflection by offering the possibility of communicating with other Latin American educators about common concerns. Sharing experiences and reflections gave them an opportunity to expand not only their notions about the topic of “convivencia”, but also their social, moral and political perspectives.

In this sense, it was remarkable to observe that one of the most important similarities the participants identified was the high levels of authoritarianism in Latin American schools, and the consequences this situation might have for developing democratic attitudes in students. I will present some fragments of an interesting virtual conversation these educators had in the Knowledge Forum in relation to this issue:

> It is impressive to see that the authoritarianism enacted by some teachers in Mexican classrooms can also be found in schools throughout my country. Teachers of our generation unfortunately were raised under the ideas of authoritarianism and blind obedience, but now that we have realized how it is rooted in the convivencia escolar in direct and subtle ways, it is our responsibility to make a change in the new generations that we educate (Mayra, school teacher from Colombia).

> Dear Mayra, I am glad to see that we have synchronized our ideas. The texts are revealing and we have to recognize that education in Latin America is highly authoritarian, and this has severe consequences in the kind of citizens our students will be. We definitely face a great challenge (Ramiro, teacher from Mexico).

> Dear Mayra and Ramiro, I wonder why teachers from distant countries, such as ours, repeat the same patterns of behavior in their classrooms. Is it a result from our colonial history? Is it the way teachers are educated? We keep on repeating these patterns unconsciously, that is why it is so important to reflect upon these matters in courses like this (Samuel, school advisor from Costa Rica).

> Dear friends: Throughout this course we have had the opportunity to reflect upon authoritarian school practices with a Latin American perspective. I wish that each of us could share these ideas with our colleagues in our own countries. We have to open spaces for students’ participation and dialogue if we want to build more democratic societies (Rosario, school principal from Chile).

An initial step in the process of learning and constructing democracy in schools is becoming aware of how authoritarian practices are rooted and reproduced through the kind of convivencia that is generated in the everyday interactions. A further and more

---

6 Nine participants out of thirty-four left the course. Four participants declared they could not continue because of technological issues, and the other five gave other reasons or no reasons at all.
complex step is implementing changes in order to overcome these obstacles. The following experience presents a brief analysis of a comparative study based on successful innovations in the field of *convivencia*, where several years ago, some educators reflected on these issues and decided to make changes in their own schools.

**A comparative study: seven schools in three Latin American nations**

The following experience presents some relevant aspects of a comparative study held by researchers of the Convivencia Network, in which seven schools from three Latin American countries participated: four schools from Mexico, two from Chile and one from Costa Rica. This study was sponsored by the Red Innovemos of the UNESCO. The purpose of this research project was to describe and analyze successful school experiences in the Latin American context related to *convivencia*.7

One of the most significant findings of this study was the identification of participatory and democratic practices as a key element in the implementation of innovations in the field of school “*convivencia.*” The constant involvement of the different educational agents in dialogical deliberations and decision-making processes in everyday school life and promotion of high levels of participation that are not just isolated actions can be considered as institutionalized participatory practices (Fierro 2008). Different instances of participation were recognized as being common to the seven schools: a) Participation in the establishment of common rules, b) Participation in the solution of conflicts, c) Parents’ participation, and d) Students’ participation (Bazdresch 2008).

**Participation in the establishment of common rules**

The study found that different school agents participated actively in the definition of the classroom and school rules. This implies the identification of the ethical principles that underlie expected behavior and involving the whole community in the fulfillment of the regulations. The emphasis is on the process of constructing consensus rather than in the content of the norms produced. Different levels of participation were identified in the seven schools, depending on the process they used.

**Participation in conflict resolution**

All the schools implement conflict resolution procedures that are applied systematically. This includes identification of a conflict and discussion of alternatives to solve or manage the problem. Each alternative and the consequences they imply are carefully discussed within the school community.

**Parents’ participation**

In these institutions, parents are encouraged to take part in the construction of the school project. This creates a sense of belonging, since they are expected to participate in different activities that have as a goal the well being of the school community. Parents also participate in the elaboration of the school regulations. In this way, the rules established in the school setting transcend its boundaries giving students coherence between the

---

7 This study was published by the UNESCO, therefore the information presented here is taken from the book Hirmas, C. & Eroles, D. (eds) *Convivencia democrática, inclusión y cultura de paz. Lecciones desdelapráctica educativa innovadora en América Latina*. Chile: Oficina Regional de Educación de la UNESCO para América Latina y el Caribe OREALC/UNESCO.
expected behaviors at home and at school. This process also offers students the opportunity to understand the purpose of the norms in different contexts.

**Students’ participation**

Although students participate actively, especially in the rule making process and in conflict resolution practices, Bazdresch (2008) highlights the self-regulation abilities these practices encourage since the students become responsible for the fulfillment of the norms they contributed to establishing, as well as the conflict resolution procedures.\(^8\)

Bazdresch (2008) concludes that in order to maintain these participatory practices, these schools have implemented four strategies: 1) a permanent communication among the different educational actors, 2) a continuous analysis of the everyday school life events, 3) a constant training and actualization process in teachers and 4) the “re-invention” of school interactions by explicitly and implicitly incorporating ethical principles in relationships.

The empirical evidence of this comparative study supports the idea that any significant transformation in the field of *convivencia escolar* necessitates the implementation of participatory and democratic practices in which all educational agents are involved. It is also evident that important social and moral abilities are needed to develop more democratic societies. These include self-regulation, empathy, dialogue, critical thinking, decision-making, and participation and they must be constantly exercised through these democratic practices. Through the development of these abilities, schools do not only offer students opportunities to ‘learn democracy by doing,’ but they also contribute to improving students’ learning environment. It is relevant to note that the students that have graduated from these schools are recognized by other institutions for having developed a better sense of responsibility and critical thinking.

The results of the UNESCO study promoted by the Research Node of the *Convivencia* Network will certainly feed the other three nodes: the Education Node, the On-line Conversation Node and the Didactic Resources Node. The study will contribute to their common goal: the improvement of the quality of *convivencia* in Latin American schools.

**Final reflections**

In this paper I have shared two experiences promoted by the Red Latinoamericana de *Convivencia Escolar*, one refers to an on-line course offered to Latin American educators and the other to a comparative study in which seven schools from Mexico, Chile and Costa Rica participated. I have highlighted how participants of the on-line course could establish points of common interest among the different countries. They identified authoritarian practices as a common feature in Latin American schools and reflected upon the necessity to transform them into more inclusive and democratic practices. I have also presented some of the results of a comparative study in which participatory and democratic practices became an essential factor in the implementation of innovations in the field of *convivencia*.

---

\(^8\) No evidence was found in relation to students’ participation in the definition or modification of the academic curriculum. This is thought to be one of the last steps in the innovation process in the ‘*convivencia*’ field. It is also important to mention that the research project did not include the assessment of students’ academic achievement due to the scarce time researchers had for submitting the results, so further research needs to be done in relation to this matter.
escolar. In both cases the *Convivencia* Network shows great potential for bringing together Latin American educators and researchers interested in improving the quality of *convivencia* not only in the school setting, but in constructing a more democratic kind of *convivencia* in Latin American countries.

**References**


Students, Bricks, and Mortar: Examining the Inter-relationships

*Megan Conway*
*University of Waterloo*

A school building and its grounds are more than a practical site for instruction and learning. They are also a hub for wider community activity. Ultimately, a school’s condition reflects the state of commitment of one generation to the advancement of the next. (Kennedy 2004, 1)

**Introduction: Identifying Scope & Underlying Assumptions**

In the following critical analysis I will explore two divergent literatures in an effort to identify possible overlaps and also gaps in the field. Specifically, I will examine the literature surrounding youth citizenship, social capital and school facilities to evaluate and contest some dominant assumptions about the role of schools in communities.

Schools conjure images of classrooms, desks, books, hallways with bulletin boards, an office, a staff room, possibly a portable or two, chalkboards, a computer lab, bells and washrooms. These artifacts symbolize the dominant elements of the built environment of a contemporary school. Implicit in each of these artifacts are a series of assumptions and preconceived beliefs about the role of the student in relation to that object. They dictate the conditions of learning and also norms of behaviour in these spaces. But more importantly, these objects also connect the student to an intrinsic web of hierarchical relationships and roles that link student to teacher, student to peer group and student to society.

These cultural artifacts, the physical markers of the school and the ways in which they are organized dictate and transmit a tremendous amount of real, but also symbolic, information about the culture of the school, but also about the community in which that school and student exists.

This analysis begins from the assumption that these cultural artifacts and their traditional organizational patterns constituting the school environment demand further investigation and critique. Students in these spaces can no longer be perceived of as the passive recipients of learning in out-dated buildings: such environments rely predominantly on Fordist design principles encouraging the production of students who will play conformist roles in society. With the shift in broader socio-cultural contexts
toward a knowledge-based economy that privileges creativity, entrepreneurship and collaboration, the spaces for learning must also shift and respond. British democratic theorists Perri 6, Rachel Jupp, Ciara Fairly and Tom Bentley (1) support this view when they argue that, “Education needs to draw on the wider resources of communities, so that schools become hubs of far-reaching networks.” This statement is true not only of a community’s cultural and human resources, but also of the physical resources that constitute schools.

Furthermore, this analysis is being written at a critical juncture in the history of the province of Ontario. While the exact cost of new builds, repairs and re-designs is not accurately known, what is apparent is that the need to repair and re-fit new facilities has never been so great. I assert that greater clarity and prominence must be sought for the role of the student in this process. Theorist Jane McGregor (2004a, 1) supports this assertion by identifying the academic relevance of exploring the inter-relationship between people and school environments in her argument that there remains a paucity of evidence on the interaction of people and the built environment of schools. In the following, I will establish the current dominant framework for school facilities planning and will begin to identify an emergent theoretical framework—that of the spatiality of youth—which holds the possibility of contributing, both academically, but as I hope, also empirically and methodologically, to creating more socially cohesive, and equitable communities.

**Identifying Terms**

It is critical to acknowledge the contested nature of terms like student, teacher, community, classroom and school. Each of these terms signifies a broad range of meanings that are often contradictory or oppositional depending on the context in which they are used. Consider the role of school as space for play, learning, growth, development, social interaction, but also as space for fear, intimidation, bullying, punishment, gossip, isolation and abandonment. It is impossible to assume that what a school represents holds universal or even common value.

As such, this analysis will instead evaluate the role of school facilities and the interaction of people in them—that is the physical built environment that constitutes public schools. In a recent article about the benefits of teaching the built environment to high-school students, Ginny Graves (1997) clearly defines the built environment by acknowledging it to be the material creations of humans. In relation to school facilities, other terms such as school buildings and educational environments have been used in the literature to signify the physical structure of the school buildings.

While it will not be possible in the scope of this essay to explore in greater detail the diversity of uses for school facilities, it is important to note that they can, through legislation on the community use of schools in the Province of Ontario, be accessed and used by a variety of different populations, both during school hours and also afterwards. However, for the present purposes, I will restrict my analysis to an examination of the literature on public school facilities and learning during formal school hours.
**Relevant Concepts: Spatiality, Citizenship and Power**

At the core of my argument is the emergent concept of spatiality. I will be using the definition of spatiality that Jane McGregor identifies (2004a, 3):

“Spatiality is the production of space through the interaction of the physical and the social. This recognizes that, while much of our world is constructed through social relationships, these are materially and technologically embedded. Thus, a relationship understanding is developed where outcomes are not determined, but open to change.”

More importantly, the concept of spatiality when applied to an educational context provides a framework to understand better how individuals and groups exert dominance.

If schools are to genuinely address questions of equity and citizenship, then greater attention must be played to understanding the roles, limitations and capacities of the youth who operate in these spaces. As Matthew Horne (2004, 6), a researcher at the British think tank Demos, contends, schools need to question and challenge the hierarchies of power that the school walls impose. He helpfully articulates that,

“Turning schools into fortresses is to deny ourselves the opportunity to influence our wider environment...Developing a sense of connectedness of commonality, of shared values and beliefs is crucial to creating healthy local communities, but so too is ensuring that those communities are tolerant, welcoming diversity, open and dynamic is an enormous challenge for institutions like schools.”

Unlike the traditional emphasis in planning and educational literatures which perceive of school facilities from a strictly adult-centred perspective, this research aims to explore how students can be perceived more actively as citizens—as active and capable co-creators of the world in which they live.

More fundamentally, this paper aims to build upon other contributions to the discussion about concepts of citizenship and social capital. It will do so by examining more concretely the possibilities implicit in the school environment for more active and equitable participation in the design and creation of that space from both students and teachers alike.

**Exploring Literature: School Facilities**

In the following, I will explore some of the current academic literature devoted to the planning of school facilities. In particular, I will identify trends as well as gaps in research. It is important to note that the United States clearly dominates discussions about many of these issues. Exploring some of the rationale for why this is the case could indeed serve as the subject matter for an entirely other analytic exploration. While debatable, I contend that America’s highly privatized system of education supports greater disparities in the quality of educational facilities. Similarly, in the UK context, the market also plays a much greater role in school choice and while the debate and public attention is certainly more prevalent in Britain than compared to Canada, the United States clearly leads the group in terms of scholarly, but also public, attention paid to this subject.
Outcomes: Spaces for Social, Behavioural and Academic 'Development'

The majority of literature (Abramson 1999; Frazier 1993; Hansen 1992; Kozol 1991) on school facilities is written to demonstrate a causal relationship between the organizing principles of the facilities and certain academic and non-academic outcomes for learners. I shall characterize this theme as an outcome. The Educational Facility Planner, the professional journal of the Council of Educational Facilities Planners (CEFPI) includes a number of articles that explore the relationship between school facility design and achievement-related, behavioural and social outcomes. Theorists like Carol S. Cash (1993) and Franklin Hill (1994) believe that there is a direct relationship between the environment in which a student learns and the outcomes that student demonstrates in terms of achievement and success as measured through a series of normative and external measures.

A report by Mark Schneider (2002) and published by the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, an information clearinghouse funded by a grant from the U.S Department of Education under the guidance of the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, identifies a series of factors that have an impact on student outcomes. His comprehensive review examines research findings from the mid 1970’s to 2002 and provides a helpful overview of the impact certain characteristics have on student outcomes. Interesting to note, Schneider suggests that the age of the building has little impact on student and teacher performance.

Similarly, Gary T. Moore and Jeffrey A. Lackney (1993) conducted an extensive evaluation of the literature and explore a series of elements of school design and their relationship to academic and non-academic achievement for elementary school students in the United States. Specifically, they identify issues such as school size, class density, secluded study space and urge planners and architects to consider more seriously the range of environmental factors and their influence on a child’s learning.

Sheridan Bartlett (1993), through an interview with Lelia Gandini, the author of *The Hundred Languages of Children*, explores how the physical space of schools in Reggio Emilia in Italy supports and encourages social development and learning. According to Gandini (Bartlett 1993, 26), “the space is planned and set up to facilitate encounters and exchanges between children; also between children and adults- and among adults.” Incorporating several photographs and floor-plans, Bartlett examines the development of interpersonal relationships within the school, but also the interactions between the school and community. Referring specifically to the role of teachers, Gandini (Bartlett 1993, 38) asserts, “Vygotsky’s thoughts about the zone of proximinal development and the teacher’s scaffolding of the child’s exploration are very familiar to the educators in Reggio Emilia.” Although relating specifically to young children, Bartlett through his interview with Gandini draws some helpful conclusions about the role of physical space for supporting and facilitating beneficial social development and learning for all students.

---

1 By academic outcomes I mean test scores and levels of achievement. By non-academic outcomes I mean social interaction, abiding by behavioural norms, etc.
David C. Thompson (1989) goes so far as to suggest that there could be legal ramifications if planners and school board administrators don’t heed the warnings that school facilities have an impact on learning.

Within this broad trend focusing on the connection between school facilities to the outcomes, significant, often privatized advocacy and lobbying has been conducted to support or prevent certain types of design models in both elementary and secondary school facilities. Specifically, the small school movement that began in the United States is an important spinoff from some of these initial academic findings about the role of school spaces and the corresponding impacts on the outcomes of the learners.

The small schools movement is also known as the small schools initiative or the small schools project. At its core, supporters believe that American high schools remain too large for effective learning and that smaller schools represent a more viable alternative for creating positive relationships but also improving learning outcomes. Lobby groups in specific states have emerged, such as the Oregon Small Schools Initiative as well as others to support and advocate for further funding for small schools. While the movement is not a philosophically cohesive one, it is important to also note the corresponding pedagogical shifts, towards project-based learning and real world learning implicit in organizations such as the Coalition for Essential Schools which act as an umbrella group for many smaller organizations, but also advocate for the creation of more equitable, personalized small schools as the norm for American public education. While Ontario educational policy and the associated funding formula made small schools untenable, the learning from the movement in the United States remain relevant.

Safety

Another theme in the literature involves the necessity to design and plan for school facilities that are safe and healthy. Literature in this field identifies the necessity to eradicate a series of environmental factors that threaten the safety and health of students including everything from bad lighting, air quality, ventilation, temperature and humidity, noise levels and sight lines in hallways. Certain states like Florida have gone so far as to establish guidelines for and strategies for enhancing safety and security.

In a recent article by Jeff Lackney (Lackney 2006) the author supports the use of environmental design principles to create safe school environments. He encourages school leaders to employ unobtrusive environmental design strategies, such as natural surveillance, natural access controls and territoriality to support safe communities. In another recent article by Sherry Everett Jones, Nancy D. Brener and Tim McManus (2003), the authors analyzed data from the American School Healthy Policies and Programs Study of 2000 and found that about one half of schools included in the survey had at least one unsatisfactory environmental conditions including poor air quality, the lack of heating or cooling, poor water, and the existence of mould. Similarly, at a recent conference on school facilities, planners Dieter Breithecke and James Dyck (2007) explore the role of ergonomics on maximizing learning.

Within this broad theme of safety there are two interrelated and often ambiguous currents that must be identified. One important theme to acknowledge is that of public
health. Issues of public health relate to safety in the sense of ensuring that classrooms aren’t crowded, schools are properly ventilated and heated or cooled.

Another element of safety relates to the concept of public safety—that is safety and protection from others—specifically protection from attack or violence. In this instance, schools are being equipped to address issues of personal safety and some schools and jurisdictions have gone so far as to suggest that students in schools should be considered predominantly as threats from which the school environment should be protected. Consider for a moment the increase of fear that has ensued after the series of school shootings and attacks on classroom teachers and other students. Schools increasingly have metal detectors in place, guards on duty and cameras spread throughout the school. Similarly, some schools have gone so far as to implement policies prohibiting certain everyday objects like jackets or cellphones from being brought into the school property.

While I do not intend to engage deeply in the outcome or safety dimension to the literature on school facilities, it does help to contextualize the dominant framework which privileges an adult-centred perspective of these facilities in which students become constructed as dangerous threats. I will now explore literature on participation and citizenship and will begin to articulate a nascent theoretical framework.

**Participation and Citizenship**

What is predominantly absent from the current literature is an analysis of how to plan more participatory school facilities. In particular, the dominant trend in the literature, assumes that adults know best and should be the ones trusted to evaluate and identify the elements of school facilities to be created and developed in an optimal manner. Increasingly, although in a minimal capacity, theorists are beginning to acknowledge students’ roles as citizens and their capacity in shaping and creating school spaces that respond more fully.

In a recent article by Dympna Devine (2002), the concept of children’s citizenship is explored through an analysis of their capacity to structure their space and time in the school setting. Devine conducted a case study of students’ experiences of school from three socio-economically different primary schools in the UK. In her analysis, Devine relies heavily on Foucault’s conceptualization of power and Giddens’ analysis of the structuration of social systems through social interaction: particularly helpful is the analysis of students’ perceptions of control held over how time is structured and how space is used. Specifically, Devine (2002, 309) articulates,

“Applied to the school, timetables establish boundaries on the nature and extent of children’s activity, classifying such activity into work time and playtime. The division of time is mirrored by the division of children’s space into regions. This interrelation between time and space was evident in each of the classrooms studied, with specific times allocated to work in class and play in the yard, setting boundaries to children’s activities both in time and space.”

Devine (2002) concludes by suggesting that students’ identities and their understanding of social interactions is dictated from a young age by their understanding of the hierarchical time/space structure of the school. Discipline or praise, punishment or
promotion hinges on a student’s capacity to operate within a set of spatial as well as temporal norms. This subsequently determines a child’s sense of identity both within a social group but also as subordinate to the adult teacher.

Similarly, Catherine Burke (2007), conducted research throughout England asking 15,000 students about how they felt and perceived of their school environment. Focusing on the way a student feels and understands in his/her environment represents a much more child/youth-centered approach which privileges the capacity of the child to make meaning, communicate and relate experiences within that environment to others.

This emergent trend focusing on participation and engagement should be situated within a broader pattern, which challenges hierarchical roles of youth as being not adults and not citizens. In this respect, theorists like Karen Malone (1999) critique writings of youth that conceptualize them as empty vessels to be filled—beings who need sense and order made for them as opposed to being capable meaning-makers. Emblematic of this type of thinking are writers like George Castka (1951) who, in his analysis of democratic schooling, suggests that students should be given formal training and experience, in a highly regimented fashion, in leadership, governance, and volunteerism through specific courses and practical opportunities. These experiences would include student councils, a homeroom congress, a service squad, a student court and a leadership class. Specifically, Castka (1951, 105) optimistically suggests, “Can you see a future in which our high-school graduates will become active, intelligent citizens, aware of their government as belonging to them and not, as now, thought of as being directed by politicians with all the negative connotations that that word brings to mind?”

Unfortunately, implicit in Castka’s (1951) analysis is his assumption that a citizen is something, which one becomes through training and learning. Citizenship as a process of ‘becoming’, and not of ‘being’, limits and confines young people to inequality and subordination as compared to adults/citizens.

Although Henry Sanoff (1993; 64) begins his analysis in Designing a Responsive School Environment in an overly prescriptive manner by outlining the qualities and elements of a classroom that serve as beneficial for adolescent learning, he does helpfully articulate that, “Decisions about schooling are more often made on the basis of budgets and buses rather than on an understanding of the physical, intellectual, psychological and social needs of adolescents.” He addresses school design from a uniquely client-centred approach and as such, this article focuses extensively on mechanisms for generating participation in the school design process. Emphasizing consensus as a decision making tool and a staged approach to generating discussion and responses about design and school environments, Sanoff (1993) provides a helpful possible procedure for how to design and address issues surrounding school facility improvements collectively.

What Next?

From a cursory analysis of the literature, one pattern that emerges is a tendency to write about educational facilities from the perspective of normative assumptions about
what students should be doing/learning while inside the school facility. The trends of ‘outcomes’ and safety that emerged in a review of the literature are written from a very adult-centered perspective. Only recently is more writing beginning to pay attention to the role of students as citizens who should have a voice and choice in how their learning spaces are created and designed. School facilities need to be critically examined as social ‘institutions’ created for domination. Just like the fortress or the prison—as planner Jeffrey Lackner (2006) suggests, a school is an impersonal institution devoid of real communities or personal elements.

**Conclusion**

Many questions still remain from this brief analysis of literatures on school facilities, citizenship and participation. The literature on school facilities planning is diverse and plentiful. The material on lighting and ergonomics speaks to a discursive trend towards the adult/parent/planner knowing best. Most policies and school plans are written without input from students and this represents a critical flaw. Similarly, there is a scarcity of research exploring these questions in a Canadian context. Empirical research is needed to acknowledge students as being knowledgeable socio-spatial actors in the school environment. Such research should see students as actors with authority and prominence of social place. Lastly, if we are placing greater curricular attention on developing active citizens, then that process should begin with the roles students are expected to play in the school environment. What can be expected if students exist in structured, rigorous and unimaginative environments that assume certain standard outcomes for behaviour and academic achievement and if these environments continue to be unhealthy, of substandard quality, and lacking genuine involvement from students and communities? If this situation remains the norm how can schools expect to have anything less than disengaged, and apathetic youth?

**References**


Graves, G. Box City: An Interdisciplinary Experience in Community Planning. Center for Understanding the Built Environment, Prairie Village, 1997.
The Quality of Education in Public Schools and the Jeopardizing of Citizenship: Implications for Brazilian Democracy*

Ranilce Guimaraes-Iosif
University of Alberta

Introduction

Strong and lasting democracy cannot be attained when the great majority of people receive woeful education. To create a more equitable society and fight poverty a nation needs to make quality education its top priority. If all individuals, regardless of their origin, receive an education that will empower them to think and act critically, social justice, human rights and democracy is more likely to be protected and thrive. Public school is a strategic environment that fosters liberation if its curriculum is designed to educate global emancipated citizens.

Recent statistics published by the Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD 2007) show that despite the fact that access to education has improved drastically, the quality of public education in Brazil is abysmal. This situation has affected disadvantaged people the most and has undoubtedly proven that there is a strong link between educational and social inequalities. Education in Brazil was born in the shape of a technocratic and restrictive one, having as objective to form two distinct groups of citizens: a very small and wealthy elite who govern, generally white and from the South, and the masses, who are governed, in majority Afro-descendant or native and from the North. This educational goal interfered directly with the quality of Brazil’s democratic institutions. It gained an iron grip on Brazilian society and even today, the majority of the population receives poor quality education.

The goal of this article is to examine to what degree the low quality of basic education in Brazilian public schools jeopardizes the citizenship of disadvantaged individuals and contributes to the worsening of the situation of poverty and inequality in

* This article synthesizes the results of my PhD thesis (2007), under the title: “The Quality of Education in Public Schools and the Jeopardizing of Global Emancipated Citizenship: Implications to the Situation of Poverty and Inequality in Brazil”. The research was sponsored by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES), Brazil.
the country. This study also investigates if teachers are aware of the role of public school in ensuring quality education and educate for citizenship and democracy. It also probes if the ideas of education as a political act and global emancipated citizenship were present in their discourse and practiced in the classroom.

The study launches from two central questions: 1) to what degree the low quality of education in Brazilian basic education public schools jeopardizes the citizenship of disadvantaged individuals and is contrary to the laws of the country and the democratic, global and emancipatory qualities of education; and 2) what are the contradictions present in the school context, specifically related to the challenge of the teacher to deal with learning and citizenship – his and that of the student – and the limitations of his workplace that interfere the most with the quality of education in public schools.

We start from the assumption that from the multitude of factors that are involved in the difficulty of public schools to offer quality education to all segments of the Brazilian population, work conditions and the way teachers deal with learning contribute in a most dramatic way to the jeopardizing of the students’ citizenship and the worsening of the situation of poverty and inequality in Brazil. These factors constitute obstacles in the process of educating a global emancipated citizen, once the capacity to learn how to be, how to learn, how to understand, how to think critically, how to organize and how to change is denied to them. Those essential aptitudes are the most promising way to attain global emancipated citizenship.

The article is divided in five sections. The first part is about the materials that form the theoretical basis of this research. The second part shows the methodological pathways that were employed. The third part presents the principal results that were obtained and the fourth part discusses these results in light of the hypothesis of this paper. The fifth and last part provides our principal conclusions and recommendations.

**Theoretical Framework**

The discussions outlined here are situated in the multidisciplinary space between educational and social policies with emancipatory character. Our challenge and goal is global emancipated citizenship and the shortest way to attain it is through quality education for all. The concept of quality education includes formal, human and political dimensions. The central theoretical arguments of this study are founded, principally, on Paulo Freire and Pedro Demo’s line of thought. They investigate the relationship between education, politics, poverty and inequality in the Brazilian reality quite in depth. Above all, they both show and hold education as a profound agent of emancipatory power.

The idea that we have to educate a global citizen has gained momentum on the international stage, many desiring to combat poverty and social inequalities by empowering our society to put democracy and social justice at the forefront. We argue that the struggle for global citizenship requires more than responsible citizens with good intentions. Our global citizens are emancipated and also have the ability to respect cultural identity and diversity, think critically, take a stance and mobilize collectively to fight poverty and social injustice domestically and abroad. They question national and
international policies, agreements and organizations that influence their way of understanding and living in multicultural democratic societies. They also ensure these initiatives are effective in protecting human rights and fighting social inequalities in the world. They have hope, not fear, are creative, open and flexible to change, learning and dialogue. They respect the differences between the sexes, ethnic minorities, races, religions, political and sexual orientations (Guimaraes-losif 2007).


Freire’s work on critical pedagogy (1970; 1973; 1976; 1985; 2006) contribute in a pivotal way to this concept, principally because we think education can help develop a citizen with human and political qualities. Vieira (2001) highlights the fact that global citizenship is important because it is based on the principle of sustainability, with roots in solidarity, diversity, democracy and human rights on a planetary level. It is about a citizen who maintains local roots, but who has a global emancipated conscience. He must have the capacity to make a difference toward a better and more equitable world for all social groups, not just for a privileged few.

Pike & Selby’s (1998) concept of global education shows we must understand that the education process cannot ignore the interdependency between the social, political, economic and environmental aspects of our present world. We need an education that can help our students acquire a global conscience so they can think beyond the barriers of the classroom, community and their country. Global education helps to strengthen peace and justice in the world, human rights, a sustainable environment and democratic development.

Global emancipatory quality education for all and global emancipated citizenship are two complementary aspects of the same issue. They are interdependent and strategic in the fight against material, political, human, social and educational poverty. They are the key ingredients in the struggle for a more equitable and democratic Brazil and world, where the underprivileged, the racialized, indigenous peoples and all minorities have access to a better life and all their citizenship rights.

Research Design

This study used a dialectical qualitative research methodology that unites both quantitative and qualitative data. Two elementary education public schools located in Paranoá, a shantytown at the outskirts of Brasília, the capital of Brazil, were investigated. These two schools were chosen due to their high rate of academic failure and great disparity between the students’ age and their grades in the 2005 Education Survey (INEP 2005). The data was collected using three hundred and twenty hours of participant
observation, one-on-one interviews with sixteen focus-groups composed of teachers, sixty-nine detailed questionnaires and four meetings with the teaching staff.

The use of critical hermeneutics in analyzing the data permitted us to interpret more accurately the ideology present in the discourse and structured context of the subjective reality we investigated (Thompson 1990). The data analysis was achieved by using three methods: socio-historic analysis, formal or discursive analysis and interpretation or reinterpretation.

Findings

Even if we were to consider only the formal aspect of education, ignoring its political, human and global emancipatory dimensions, we would not be satisfied at all with what was uncovered at the two public schools we investigated. The majority of teachers assert that the public schools where they work are jeopardizing the students’ learning and citizenship. They also admitted they would never allow their children to attend public school and, in fact, are sending them to private institutions. They have a very unclear vision of the school’s role and the concepts of global emancipatory education and citizenship are not found in their discourse or practice.

The teachers do not see their schools as environments that foster awareness about the implementation of educational policies, student learning difficulties, the necessity of constant and permanent evaluation of school performance and local and global issues. On the contrary, the teaching methodologies employed are based on rote, which is a form of learning imposed by an authoritarian transmission of knowledge. Teachers avoid discussing social and political issues in the classroom, even though they agree these issues encourage more participation and debate among students. The school does not succeed in transforming community, national and global problems into motivating lessons that could make learning more meaningful. Hence, the school does not fulfill its social, political, global and democratic role. It is chained to traditionalist values that jeopardize the students’ chances to one day become emancipated citizens.

The work conditions and the ways public school teachers in disadvantaged areas deal with their own learning and that of their students represent a great obstacle in the path to a global emancipated citizen. The major contradiction identified in these two schools is that while teachers are entrusted with the learning and citizenship of their students, their own citizenship and life-long learning is severely impaired. Teachers do not produce new knowledge, study, research and read. A great majority do not like the school where they work. They do not live there nor do they identify with that community. Teachers affirmed they cannot teach global emancipated citizens when working in abysmal conditions, receiving insignificant salaries and feeling abandoned by peers, community and government.

The research revealed other factors that contribute negatively to the quality of education in Brazilian public schools and threaten citizenship. They are as follows: a) asymmetric power relationships and b) inadequate education policy evaluation criteria and social policies tied to education.
A strict hierarchical power structure based on fear was observed in both public schools we investigated, a reality that is contrary to a global, emancipating and democratic school. This pedagogy of fear will never guarantee the right to quality education for all. This inflexible structure interferes directly with the teachers’ work and the way they approach their learning and that of their students. It compromises their global emancipated citizenship and promotes poverty and inequality. The students and their parents occupy an even lower position than that of the teachers in relation to the school principals and are rarely heard in the school context. The difficulty is that these groups are not aware of this situation of domination, a fact that was revealed in the condition of the teachers who were interviewed. Freire (2006) emphasizes that individuals living in oppressive situations cannot fight for freedom until they realize that they are oppressed, they commit to a cause as individuals and as a class and they battle against their subjugation.

The teachers who were interviewed do not think public school will succeed to offer quality education and emancipated citizenship until profound changes to social policies linked to education occur. These populist policies completely changed the parents and students’ view of education, transferring the focus from learning to learning for social benefits. In the teachers’ opinion, the students only become slaves to these programs. They go to school simply to be marked as present and thus to guarantee receiving a meager allowance at the end of the month. The teachers feel pressured by the majority of students and their parents, who do not care anymore if their child is inspired to learn something, but only if they are recorded as present in class. In spite of recognizing the importance of social programs against poverty, the teachers think that if no urgent changes are made, these programs will simply accentuate the social and educational inequalities affecting the Brazilian society even more.

The teachers want radical change in the way the Federal District School Board evaluates academic performance. The current academic evaluation policy denies teachers their autonomy and allows students to pass grades without actually acquiring the required academic knowledge. Another aggravating factor is the failure of standardized national and international evaluations that, according to the teachers who were interviewed, are only concerned with recording the failures of our education system without creating opportunities for them to discuss the results and find viable solutions to this problem.

Discussion

In light of these findings, it is clear that the education model being used in the schools we investigated has to be changed. It is necessary to look for new ways to truly empower education to create a global emancipated citizen. This is a challenge to be faced by everybody together, be they teachers, students, parents, communities, or social and governmental organizations.

1 Bolsa Escola (Federal) and Renda Minha (Federal District), social programs that require class attendance to be eligible for monthly social benefits.
This study is in favor of a global emancipatory education based on ‘learning how to be’, ‘learning how to learn’, ‘learning how to understand’ Delors (1996), ‘learning how to think critically’, ‘learning how to organize’ and ‘learning how to change’. The first concept, ‘learning how to be’, is related to the building of our identity as human beings, as people possessing a unique individuality and culture that has to be discovered, respected and valued. It is also about the idea of belonging to a certain social group such as a member of a family, a community, a nation and a planet.

The second concept, ‘learning how to learn’, is about the idea that learning is part of human nature. We need to embrace life-long learning. People are able to learn because it is second nature for human beings (Maturana 1987). It is also linked to the formal quality of learning, where it is important that people learn how to write, interpret and develop logical, mathematical, three dimensional, chronological and aesthetic reasoning.

The third concept, ‘learning how to understand’, is about people’s need to learn to understand themselves and others and the world around them. People need to learn how to understand and deal wisely with conflict and adversity. They need to learn the ethics and complexity of human behavior as defined by Morin (1999). This would allow the person to learn the text and context, the being and its environment, the local, global and multidimensional aspect of being human.

The fourth concept is about ‘learning how to think critically’. It is closely related to the political aspect of education and it was conceived from Freire and Demo’s arguments. It is a great challenge because in basic education schools there is a tendency to avoid or even suppress politicized debates. This political aspect is something intrinsic to human relationships and consequently, education. For Freire (2006), there is no neutrality in education; thus, educators who announce themselves as apolitical do not perceive they are in fact political in respect to this affirmation. Research is important in this fourth concept because it helps educate a person who has critical thinking abilities, who looks for answers to problems and questions the status quo.

The fifth concept is ‘learning how to organize’ and it is very closely related to strengthening civil society. We argue that school has a fundamental role in teaching independence and emancipating group organization. Depending on the way the school addresses this concept, it can help kids learn how to organize themselves right from the start of their academic life. This skill would remain with them all their life. By not adopting a position of pedagogic neutrality, the school would empower our youth and teach them that a strong and organized civil society is essential for the strengthening of democracy in Brazil and the construction of a better world for all. Oxhorn (2005) accentuates the ability of marginalized populations within a society to organize themselves independently from other groups as a crucial instrument for well-developed civil societies to be able to sustain democratic systems.

The sixth aspect of global emancipatory education, despite being very closely related to the first five, strives to go a little further and refers more specifically to the need to learn about the complexity of present day reality, planet Earth and our problems. We must pledge to change that which causes discrimination, injustice, exclusion and pain for
ourselves and others. ‘Learning how to change’, is an ability founded on the relationship between humankind, a sustainable environment and democratic social justice. Once we understand that people, the entire planet and the universe are connected and in constant flux, we acknowledge that humanity must be in tune with this complex and permanent process of transformation and interaction. There are no absolute certainties in our world. Therefore, we must take a permanent position of questioning, life-long learning, participation, mobilization, taking action and change.

All six concepts are complementary and of equal importance and not one of them can be ignored or downplayed during the education process. We need an education that is in favor of its students and their community and not against them (Freire 1985). We need an education that is in favor of strengthening democracy and humanity. We need pedagogy that fights the material, political and educational poverty of the most disadvantaged citizens of our planet, because only this kind of pedagogy takes into consideration all dimensions of humanity. We need pedagogy that empowers us to build our own history.

Despite all the hindrances revealed by our study, we trust it is possible. Public school is an important environment where the education of global emancipated citizens can become reality. Nonetheless, we cannot be naïve and hope this change will happen overnight and by itself. It will require rethinking the role of the State, society, universities, schools, teachers and communities.

We must listen to and understand teachers working in public schools in the poor outskirts of large urban areas. They have a lot to say about the challenges they face working in marginalized communities such as Paranoá. The school should listen to its students more and provide them with opportunities to organize and express themselves without fear. They can provide solutions that will help schools educate global emancipated citizens who can fight poverty and inequality locally and globally.

Conclusion

The study has shown that at the two schools we investigated, the students and teachers’ education and citizenship is profoundly compromised. Public school is failing at performing its political, social and pedagogical functions. Accordingly, it puts at great risk the quality of education students receive, and does not have the ability to strengthen democracy in the country.

A public school system that offers poor quality education is against global emancipated citizenship by not empowering Brazil’s historically destitute citizens to learn the necessary mechanisms to exercise their citizenship and defend democratic institutions. The result is a submissive, lethargic, indifferent and divided people with little power of resistance and initiative. Such people form a weak civil society because they have not learned to fight against injustice, imposed poverty and inequality. The fight against such troubles in Brazil requires all to unite and demand from the representatives they elected that they carry out their legal and moral obligations. They have to offer quality education to all Brazilians and make it the country’s main concern. The State has to answer with more
relevant and decisive public policies that will effectively reduce inequality and improve quality of life for all its citizens.

A quality public school that is able to educate global emancipated citizens is one of the most determining factors in the kind of democracy a nation is building. A nation that does not invest in the quality of its education jeopardizes the citizenship of its people and compromises social, political, economic and democratic development worldwide.

References


Student Councils at Elementary Schools in Iran: One Step towards Citizenship Education

Samad Izadi
University of Mazandaran

Zahra Gooya
Shahid Beheshti University

Introduction

In every society, different organizations and institutions are established to help people to become responsible and productive citizens. Among them, schools have historically played a major role in educating members of the society to become citizens and lifelong learners. Currently, schools are faced the crucial and difficult mission of educating students to become democratic citizens in societies that are more diverse and complex than ever.

Since the beginning of the last century, one of the most controversial issues in education has been the management of schools that respects students as citizens of their small society by allowing them to take responsibilities and practice democratic living within their schools. As Knight (2000) has pointed out, that John Dewey aimed to increase awareness about social difficulties in his ‘experimental school’, because he believed that exchange of ideas and dialogue among people were the main ingredients for citizenship education.

Throughout the rise and fall of the progressive movement in the West, teaching for democracy and citizenship education has been one of the major concerns of school administrators and educators. They have tried to promote democratic learning by providing opportunities for students to learn citizenship through practical activities. Various models have been developed to facilitate citizenship education, including the ‘school-based management’ approach.
The School-based Management Approach

Riley (2002) explains that the School-based Management Approach provides students the opportunities to cooperate with school administrators in decision making, sharing responsibilities, ensuring the civil rights of all students, and training to become democratic citizens in the future. As a useful strategy for this approach, Riley (2002) indicates that students, who hold membership in different organizations at their schools, are presented with wonderful opportunities for them to experience and practice democracy. Riley (2002) emphasizes students cooperation in all aspects of schooling, including hygiene, discipline, needs assessments and school improvements. Knight (2000) also indicates that after home, school is best place to educate students to respect laws and learn justice. Harris (1999) believes that the more democratic a school’s management is, the more effective it will be for educating future democratic citizens.

Students’ participation in different organizations at schools are effective vehicles for them to learn democracy and to practice citizenship. The UNICEF report, The State of the World’s Children 2003 emphasizes the importance of adults creating space for children to learn and practice democracy:

Listening for and to the views of children is one of the challenges that our generation is faced with, and recommended that adults should take the responsibility of listening to children and find out about their opinions and take them seriously and helping them develop their competencies for authentic and meaningful participation in the world (UNICEF 2003, 2).

Student Councils

In order to enhance children’s participation in Iran, an organization called Student Council was established in 1999. Among the missions of the Council, found in its constitution, is to prepare pupils for living in the society and becoming productive, creative, and responsible citizens. The constitution explicitly express that students need to become aware of the role that they could play in their society. Students need to learn to cooperate with others, work in a team, have respect for other members of their society and learn that everybody is allowed to express his or her own attitudes about different issues (The Constitution of Student Council 1999).

Student Council is a semi-formal legal body at elementary schools throughout Iran. According to its constitution (The Constitution of Student Council 1999), students are encouraged to have miniature elections to choose representatives. It is emphasized that these activities help children to:

- Learn about the importance of cooperation;
- Enhance their insights about their own capabilities;
- Gain more self-confidence;
- Accept responsibilities regarding the executive activities in school;
- Internalize the culture of participation;
- Participate in the process of decision-making in school;
• Exchange ideas and interact with others;
• Have respect for others;
• Be tolerant and flexible;
• Have better communication with school administrators;
• Be patient;
• Gain democratic experiences by participating the elections.

The Study

To investigate the ways in which Student Councils have formed in elementary schools, we conducted a study during the 2006-07 school year. In this study, six urban schools, including public and private schools as well as boys and girls (in Iran, all schools are segregated) were observed during their elections for choosing the members of Student Councils. After the elections, the elected members were interviewed and interviews were recorded both audio-visually and in written field notes. In this paper, the preliminary findings of this study are presented.

Nominees for the Students’ Councils were observed during their campaigns. Later, six groups of students who were elected as representatives to the Students’ Council of their schools were interviewed in focus groups. All the elected members were students from grades 3, 4 and 5, with ages ranging from 9 to 11. Interview questions were posed one at a time and everybody was welcome to respond.

For the analysis of the data, we used Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) suggestion to look for emerging themes. By watching the recorded interviews several times and comparing them with the field notes and observations, specific themes emerged. In the following section, we discuss some of the general issues and then, we present the major themes that emerged from this analysis.

Findings

Observing the elections showed that students who ran in the elections came up with interesting and creative campaigns. For instance, in some schools, candidates advertised their campaign promises widely. They promised to be responsible and fulfill their promises if they were elected. For example, one of the candidates who was a grade 4 student, had made big posters that promised, “If you vote for me, I will change the school soccer balls from small and plastic ones to the standard soccer ball!”

A year after the elections, the elected members who participated in this study were interviewed about their expectations, their plans, the progress they had made, their communications with school administrators and many other issues related to the stated responsibilities and missions of the School Councils. During the interviews, we observed that boys were more confident and more outspoken than girls. Many times during the interviews, the interviewer had to push girls to speak up and express their opinions about the questions, while boys could hardly wait for their turn. Another interesting observation was the way in which, the students hold the school administrators responsible for the failure of their programs. Overall, the students were frank, determined and clear about
what they said and what they wanted, which is quite different from our experiences with adult interviewees in different research projects.

These students were not conservative. They criticized the school authorities without reservations, while being fair in appreciating them when they helped the Council to make progress with its activities. The students expressed their determination continue working on their goals in many ways. For instance, one student said,

We needed financial support for extracurricular activities and we didn’t get it! So, we appealed to students in school and with their cooperation, we collected money and did what we had planned for!

When the interviewer asked them if they felt satisfied with the progress they had made in fulfilling their promises, the responses varied from full satisfaction to disappointment. For instance, some of them expressed their feelings by saying, “We want to be useful for a society that is called school”, and “We have to listen to those who voted for us”. However, others expressed their disappointment and said that the school administrators do not cooperate with them. One student complained that,

We gave advice to school administrators, and they did not listen. We told them instead of taking us to sport fields outside of our schools, it is better to spend a bit of time and money and develop our own fields. In this case, we don’t waste our time.

When the interviewer asked them if they had any assigned responsibilities, they explained that each group agreed on a plan and then completed them. A group planned to publish an entertainment magazine with comics, but they could only publish two issues. The other one tried to publish a “wall magazine” with the emphasis on “flying ideas” to help the students to become familiar with their daily lives. One group decided to have “morning rituals” that are similar to the ritual recitation of the “Pledge of Allegiance” in the United States. An interesting thing happened. One group explained that,

The school’s neighbors complained that too much noises caused by these rituals interfered with their ordinary lives. So, we decided to modify our morning rituals and in this regard, we prepared little pamphlets about issues like hygiene that are important for most of the students and every morning, the students took turns choosing an issue, preparing an essay based on those pamphlets and giving a short lecture in the morning rituals.

In general, the data analysis indicated that the nomination and election activities provided wonderful opportunities for students to become active citizens by becoming more aware about their social responsibilities and better understanding the social reality and its limitation. The following themes emerged from a closer analysis of the data.

**Nature of Communication**

One of the themes that emerged from the data was the nature of communication between the members of the Student Councils and schools administrators. It varied from regular meetings twice a month with school authorities, to team work with administrators with assigned responsibilities for student on the Council. It was typical for a student
councilor to say that; “we share the work. I am responsible for cultural and artistic matters.” However, one team protested against their school’s principal because he appointed one of the members “president” of the Council.

We do not agree with his decision. The principal chose him based on his academic achievement and his discipline. It is not fair! We elected our president and the principal didn’t respect our decision.

When we asked them about their reasons for choosing that person as president, they said, “we trusted him and we believed him because he fulfilled all his promises.” This shows that students expected that they would be taken seriously and that their decisions would be respected. When this did not happen, although they were disappointed but were not passive since the members of this team indicated, “They need to work hard to develop a democratic culture in their school.”

This lack of communication was expressed in different ways. One student complained that, “we nominated a person to be responsible for order and discipline in school. But the school doesn’t respect that and has given this responsibility to someone else.” Students were working hard to improve the communication between them and the school administrators and they were confident that with their determination and active participation, they could achieve this. At the end of this discussion, one student suggested that: “we should do more cultural work until the students understand our purposes and then, support us.”

Students’ Needs

Another interesting theme that emerged was the Councils’ sensitivity towards students’ needs. The major needs participants named were “sport facilities and hygiene”. The Councils had thoughtful plans to develop sport facilities in schools. They talked about sport fields, equipments, coaches and everything related to sport. One of them said; “We are human! Why should we play soccer with plastic or non-standard ball? We need sport and we have tried very hard to get what we want, but unfortunately, we haven’t got it yet.” However, they were trying to adapt different strategies to help them to get what they requested.

In addition, one major concern of students was school hygiene. One of the Councils suggested having a special block time for serving lunch at school (something that public schools usually do not have) and another one promised to have inspection for the quality of the food that is sold or served in schools. They made special pamphlets and prepared short speeches to improve the schools’ hygiene and increase student awareness. Many of them also emphasized the need to “keep the school and classrooms clean and consider them as our own homes”. This issue is very similar to problems that adults face in the wider society and dealing with hygiene helps students to become more responsible citizens.

Big Responsibilities

Students appeared eager to take on very large responsibilities. The students frequently referred to field trips as a major component of citizenship education, saying that,
“we are ready to offer our help and assistance to the school administrators.” We speculate that since fieldtrips happen outside of school, the students could practice citizenship by learning about becoming more patient and tolerant of others, observing the rights of other people, taking responsibility for their actions, learning school things in groups, and learning in an informal context.

In addition, students felt responsible for improving the physical environments of their schools. They talked about their plans to “repair desks and other furniture”, to “buy gifts for students who do outstanding work in different scientific and artistic areas”, and to “paint the walls”. They offered to spend their time and energy to improve their schools’ environments and to make it a place that everybody would enjoy. These sincere expressions indicate that students were ready to take on big responsibilities and be accountable for them. They were also frequently outspoken about what they expected in terms of power relationships once elected.

The students and the school administers should accept us and take us seriously and have respect for our plans and decisions. Because we were elected by the students and the school supported us to have a council with a real election.

**Concluding Remarks**

This is a preliminary report on an ongoing study regarding the roles that Student Council could and should play in enhancing citizenship education in Iran. The Councils started from elementary schools and some schools took them very seriously. These Councils were well received in schools. We meet occasionally with some of the members of these Councils in our universities and we see the difference between them and other students in terms of their social involvement and personal determination to take responsibilities and solve problems. We realize that they have learned some of the important attributes of the active citizens thanks to the Student Council that gave them opportunities to learn these by participating in democratic processes. Practicing skills for democracy in informal, friendly, challenging, and serious settings, such as these Councils was obviously an important factor.

Nevertheless, it is important to realize that over the last two to three years, many of the responsibilities and missions of “School Councils” have changed and become less important for many school administrators. While Councils have approved a constitution, different authorities have varying interpretations of the documents. However, one thing that remains unchanged is the fact that school children of the new millennium have different expectations and they are determined to get what they want. Their courage and assertiveness keeps us optimistic for a better future that will be built by these children.

We would like to conclude with UNICEF (2003) assertion:

Child participation entails the act of encouraging and enabling children to make their views known on the issues that affect them. Put into practice, participation involves adults listening to children — to all their multiple and varied ways of communicating, ensuring their freedom to express themselves and taking their views into account when coming to decisions that affect them. (The State of the World’s Children 2003)
References


Building Democracy: Implementing Restorative Circles in Brazilian Schools as a Non-violent Conflict Resolution Strategy

Patrícia Krieger Grossi, Beatriz Gerhenson Aguinsky & Márcio Lima Grossi
Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul

Introduction

This chapter discusses a pilot project for the promotion of a culture of peace and restorative practices carried out in selected schools of the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil, as part of a larger initiative called Justice Project for the 21st Century. With sparse initiatives for the introduction of practices of the restorative justice in schools, the Justice Project was started in 2007, with the objective of evaluating the possibilities of acceptance of restorative practices in the promotion of peace culture in the school environment through the implementation of restorative circles in schools. Based on a diagnosis of participant schools, the unique realities of each were identified, including the expressions of violence which were displayed in their daily lives and the way of responding to problems. The research also followed efforts to sensitize the school community about the implementation of restorative practices in the non-violent resolution of school conflicts as well as the promotion of a peace culture (Galtung 1978; Hicks 1999; Guimarães 2005). Working from an action research approach, the researchers supported the self-organization of the schools involved in the pilot project for the development of internal conditions for the initiation, development and continuing evaluation of restorative circles.

Restorative Circles as a Democratic Process in Brazil and Worldwide: A Brief Review

When democracy is defined exclusively as majority rule, the interests of minority groups may not be addressed. Their rights may be protected, but their interests may be completely ignored. Restorative justice provides an avenue to redress this power imbalance by bringing more people to the decision-making process. For those whose position has the larger numbers there is little incentive to seek common ground or ways to ensure that the interests of all are served. Restorative justice practitioners believe that in order to have strong, cohesive communities, it is important for all legitimate interests to be understood and addressed in a voluntary, collaborative process rather than through adversarial,
legalistic processes. To gain commitment for the hard work of designing and implementing solutions to difficult problems everyone must feel included, respected and served by the process and the solution. Someone whose interests were not addressed in the solution will feel no obligation to make the solution work. In this project, school bullying was identified as a problem that generated opportunities to understand and practice democracy in the schools community in new ways. It has become clear that creating safe communities requires active citizen involvement. It calls for a re-engagement of all citizens in the process of determining shared norms, holding one another accountable to those norms and determining how best to resolve breaches of the norms in a way which does not increase risk in the community.

Pranis (2002) points out that several processes used in First Nations communities work toward consensual models and allow all interested parties to have a voice. Two core characteristics in these models push our concept of democracy beyond “majority rule”: 1) inclusion of all parties who claim a stake in the outcome and 2) consensus based decision-making. Achieving consensus requires the group to pay attention to the interests of those who are normally powerless. Decisions must ultimately represent everyone involved or consensus will not be achieved. Consensus processes hold the potential for more fundamentally democratic results because all interests must be taken into account.

The peacemaking circle process, developed in Yukon, Canada, and adopted with local variations in several communities in Minnesota, USA, provides the clearest example of the potential of an innovative version of democracy for community problem solving. The peacemaking circle process is used to support victims, to encourage offenders to make amends and change behavior and to determine how to best address the underlying problems (individual and community) associated with the crime or wrongdoing. Circles in which decisions are made are open to all interested parties. Anyone may attend and anyone who attends will be able to speak and is expected to participate in decision-making. Opportunity to be heard and responsibility to contribute to a realistic, workable solution go hand in hand. Because decisions in the circle process are based on consensus, everyone in the process has an equal voice (Pranis 2002).

In the restorative circles carried out in Brazilian schools, this means that the teachers, the principal, the family, the student or any participant of the community who attends will be part of the group without a “professional label.” Decisions must be acceptable to everyone. Therefore, they must address the interests of everyone to some degree. Decisions or plans addressing the interests of all participants have a far greater likelihood of success because every participant has something to gain by successful completion of the agreement. Consequently, every participant has a stake in success. This democratic process of decision-making contributes to the high rate of satisfaction (around 80%) among participants of restorative circles in Brazilian schools located at Porto Alegre, RS.

In our study, students noted that schools lack spaces of dialogue. Restorative circles can provide such space through the creation of democratic processes for problem solving without sending students to juvenile courts. In addition to the use of consensus, several aspects of the circle process resemble the democratic ideal of equal voice and equal
responsibility. For instance, participants are seated in a circle, which structurally conveys a message of equality. Likewise, titles are not used in the circle process, minimizing positional authority as a relevant element of decision-making.

Restorative circles, healing circles or peace circles are often used as synonyms in the literature, depending on the cultural context. Although in the last decades of the twentieth century, a significant number of studies in restorative justice have been done in North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe, evaluation studies of restorative practices are quite recent. The dearth of evaluative studies in this area is a challenge for us as researchers who are working in this field. We are conscious of the great diversity of the nature of restorative justice programs, the different social, cultural and economic conditions in which these practices take place, and the possibilities and limits in changing a punitive culture into a more restorative one. In its most idealized form, there are four “Rs” in restorative justice programs: repair, restore, reconcile, and reintegrate the offenders and the victims to each other and to their shared community (Menkel-Meadow 2007).

The basic assumption of restorative justice is that providing a structured environment in which offenders and victims met and explained their injuries and hurts to each other, offenders could acknowledge and explain their wrongful acts, apologize and make some sort of restitution to the victim who could forgive and feel safe again (Aguinsky and Brancher 2005). The participation of teachers, family and all community members who were affected directly or indirectly by the conflict creates the possibility of public accountability as well as an inquiry into the root causes of the wrongful act (not always a criminal one), and suggestions for solutions based on dialogue in order to meet the needs of both offenders and victims. Thus, restorative justice implies the recognition of diversity (Konzen 2007).

As a social movement, restorative justice was linked to community organizing, to criminal justice and civil alternative dispute resolutions as well as to the peace movement, seeking more humane outcomes (Menkel-Meadow 2007). In its early definition, restorative justice is defined as a “process that brings together all the parties affected by an incident of wrongdoing to collectively decide how to deal with the aftermath of the incident and its implication for the future” (Marshall 1998). The restorative circle is a safe and protected space that is guided by a coordinator where people who were involved in a violent or conflict situations, their families, friends and community meet together to find solutions for the problem.

In addition to restorative circles, there are many studies showing that peer mediation programs worked as a non-violent conflict resolution strategy. Bickmore’s study (2000) focused on the Center for Conflict Resolution. The elementary conflict management program showed positive results on the Student Attitudes About Conflict (SAAC) survey after one year of implementation in Cleveland schools. She found that student’s understanding and inclination towards non-violent conflict resolution increased significantly (+ 0.10), as did students assessment of their own capacity to handle conflicts in interactions with peers (+ 0.08). This indicates that, on average, the understanding and feelings of efficacy to handle conflict increased in the grade 3-5 student populations of CCR project schools.
In the United States, there are now thousands of school-based conflict resolution programs in rural as well as inner-city schools. Through these programs students, from kindergarten through High School, are able to learn a new way of solving their conflicts by listening to the other person’s viewpoints and discussing their differences until a compromise can be worked out. According to Inger (1991), three-fourths of San Francisco’s public schools have student conflict managers. In addition, in New York City, more than 100 schools with about 80,000 students have some kind of program. In Chicago, all students take a dispute resolution course in ninth or tenth grade. In New Mexico, a statewide mediation program involves 30,000 students. In Ann Arbor, a conflict management curriculum reaches all of the city’s students.

In Brazil, peer mediation programs are not part of the school curriculum. Some NGOs have projects for implementing peace culture programs in schools, such as EDUCAPAZ (Educators for Peace), and work in partnership with State Secretary of Education. In the Brazilian reality, the introduction of restorative practices in the judicial system started in 2005 through support of the Ministry of Justice and PNUD (United Nations Program for Development) in order to qualify the services offered by this system. Restorative circles are carried out in several spaces such as institutions for adolescents deprived of freedom (law offenders), schools, NGOs, shelters and the community. In the three years of the implementation of the project called Justice for the 21st Century, 2583 people have participated in restorative procedures carried out by the Restorative Central Practices of the Childhood and Youth Justice System in Porto Alegre (Curtinaz and Silva 2008). The experience with restorative practices is also taking place in two other cities: Brasília and São Caetano.

We will focus on the restorative circles in the schools environments as a non-violent conflict resolution strategy based on values such as respect, dialogue, commitment, democracy, solidarity and empathy. This procedure is aimed to reduce the criminalization of the so called adolescents’ inappropriate behaviors, such as yelling at the teacher, name-calling, pushing and others which are often dealt with by referring students to psychological services or to the judicial system.

The practice of restorative justice in schools has the capacity to build social and human capital through challenging students in the context of social and emotional learning. While restorative justice was originally introduced to schools to address serious incidents of misconduct and harmful behavior, the potential this philosophy offers is much greater. The conviction is that the key challenge for schools is addressing the culture change required to make the shift from traditional discipline, driven by punitive (or rewards based) external motivators, to restorative discipline, driven by relational motivators that seeks to empower individuals and their communities (Morrison 2007).

School History – Inclusion Criteria in the Pilot Project

All schools in Porto Alegre were invited to participate in the pilot project following the democratic principle of transparency and participation. The inclusion criteria that made institutions eligible to participate were: a) high index of legal conflicts (cases referred to the 3rd Regional Court of Youth and Childhood); b) diverse nature; c) interest in developing
peace circles in the school and be the hub of restorative practices; d) availability of time in the professor’s time schedule for the capacitating and execution of restorative circles; e) absence of previous experience in restorative practices; f) high school teaching; g) daily shift; and h) participation in the first seminar on Restorative Justice 2007, which took place in March at Porto Alegre.

In mid-April of 2007, 10 school representatives, (8 state schools, 1 city school, and 1 private school) met in the AJURIS (Judges Association of the State of Rio Grande do Sul) headquarters – Porto Alegre. All schools were invited by the provincial and the municipal secretaries of education and by the Private Schools’s Union (SINEPE). The schools demonstrated interest in the project and participated in a survey carried out on site, which asked for the reasons that led them to participate in the Justice Project for the 21st Century. Some of the reasons mentioned by the participating schools were the following:

1. “Complexity of problems related to the behavior and relationship among students, parents and school. Search for perspectives towards the resolution of conflicts”;
2. “The school has worked in a culture for Peace Proposal – Open School for Citizenship. It is the search for a peace culture proposal, where practical activities that deal with the different forms of violence in the school environment are achieved.”
3. “To re-discuss the school environment, and to strengthen and create values with the objective to re-establish a healthy and pleasant school environment”;
4. “To search for help in the resolution of conflicts. The expectations are positive and hopeful towards the resolution and improvement of conflicts”;
5. “Avoid conflicts and implement the peaceful living culture”; 
6. “To try to solve the problems of the school through the democracy means of dialogue. Our expectative is to belong to this group”;
7. “The expectations are that the school will be included in this culture of peace project and combine it with other existing projects in the school”;
8. “We believe that a new vision and new way to deal with existing conflicts is necessary.

Schools recognized peace culture as an important alternative strategy for conflict resolution. Four schools (one private, one municipal and two provincial) were selected to participate in the 10-month pilot project.

**The Process of Implementation of Restorative Circles in Schools**

In the next step, each school selected five individuals to do training about the restorative justice circle process. This group also would be part of larger liason group, together with the remaining schools as well as to the *Justice Project for the 21st Century*. These liasons who should participate in initial three-day hands-on qualification course with Dominic Barter, the official project instructor, and monthly supervisions between April and November 2007. In total, 21 representatives from the four schools selected were capacitated. There was a request from one school for the inclusion of one extra professor. A promoting meeting for the project in each school, including teachers, staff, students, parents
and members of the community was offered. In one of the schools, this meeting was restricted to only professors, but was publicized to the parents and students by means of the school newsletter.

The research, characterized as action-research, involved mechanisms to support the creative, autonomous and responsible initiatives from each school by means of systematic planning, evaluation and self-assessment meetings with its reference groups. In the initial stage, a situational diagnosis (SD) was carried out. The SD provided the information in relation to the initial moment where the schools were at, identifying the highest tension areas, and possible conflict areas. In addition, the SD was used to uncover and describe the different ways to face the difficulties. This demonstrated, many times, a punitive logic of exclusion for the perpetrator (identified as the expression of violence and conflict) and all others involved in the conflict, which reinforced the practice of violence in the school context.

**The Research-action and Co-responsibility in the Awareness of the School Community**

Giving the priority of the awareness of the community on permanent bases, 242 teachers underwent the research project. They participated by filling a standard questionnaire, answered individually by the teachers without any individual identification. We were unable to reach 100% response rate among teachers. During the period when the questionnaires were being delivered, problems emerged such as the strike among municipal employees in Porto Alegre, as well as lack of school teachers in schools and refusal to participate in the study.

Teachers’ participation was not restricted to the questionnaire; we also included data from daily verbal interaction with the research team and behaviors observed in school. Conflict and assaults in the school system emerged as a major concern among the school teachers in Porto Alegre. More than 95% of teachers expressed that conflict was an important or very important issue in the school communities. One factor that justifies this concern, as well as demonstrates the situation of educational institutions in relation to discipline, is the estimate of time attributed by educators for responding to discipline and resolution of conflicts (see Table 1).

---

1 Our gratitude to the research assistants of NEPEVI, Andreia Mendes dos Santos, Simone Barros de Oliveira, Fabricio Tavares, Luciane Bueira Loureiro, Lizene Aita and Camila da Silva Fabis in data collection and follow-up of the four pilot-schools.

| Approximate percentage of school time invested in issues related to discipline and conflicts (N= 242) |  |
|---|---|---|
| Less than 20% | 74 | 30 |
| Between 21 e 40% | 83 | 24,2 |
| Between 41% e 60% | 48 | 19,8 |
| More than 60% | 29 | 11,9 |
| Do not have problems with discipline | 08 | 3,3 |

According to teachers, 100% of aggressions involve some form of verbal attack, that is, insults, threats and name calling. In 86.3% of cases, these offenses also trigger physical aggressions. Other forms of aggressions, such as isolation, rejection and psychological pressure (mockery, gags, teasing) accounted for 77,7%; thefts and destruction of property, 20,6%; and approximately 5,3% did not identify aggressions in school. In relation to the sites where violence and intimidations among students (multiple responses allowed) happens with greatest frequency, the 205 teachers provided the following answers: a) school yard during break (86,3%); b) entrance/leave hours (47,3%); c) hallways during class breaks with 43,9%; and d) 40% happen during classes in the classroom. Approximately 18% of teachers did not identify specific sites for incidents. A small number (4,8%) evaluated that the conflicts take place in the specialized services of the school such as the supervisor’s office.

Three schools of the pilot project participated in the evaluation of the opinion of elementary school students. A population was sampled from 4th and 7th grade elementary students, with 113 total participants. More than 25% of these children reported having moments when they do not feel comfortable in school. Almost 10% reported to feeling very uncomfortable in school. It must be stressed out that the main cause of fear for students is other classmates (12,8%). More than 10% of students admit to feeling afraid to go to school; 8,9% point the teacher as the source of their fear; and 5% define the classroom task as the major difficulty. The major forms of offenses that take place among students of the elementary school are presented in Figure 1.
In the majority of cases, the boys (N=42) are the aggressors. Among the girls, the numbers are also significant (N=30). There is also aggression involving both genders (N=13). The classroom has been the location of most offenses, outnumbering the school yard, washrooms, and entrance/exit areas. This indicates that the presence of the teacher does not reduce the threat of violence by the aggressor.

When asked who they would talk to about aggressions in school, some students indicated that the teacher was their last choice (N=12). The majority of the students do not see problems in their relation with the teacher. In fact, the data indicate that for most students, the figure of the educator has represented a support for the resolution and/or deterrence of conflicts. According to the information provided, the teachers usually solve the conflicts in the classrooms in the following manners:

Table 2: Ways that the school teachers solve conflicts in the classroom, according to the elementary school students. Project Justice for the 21st Century.
Of the students interviewed, 60 out of 113 admit that they participated in the provocations and are reinforced by other students in 16.6% of cases. On 75% of occasions, there is no interference from classmates, while in 8.4%, the classmates disapprove and set apart the aggressor. Thus, violence is being treated as a common event on the part of the students. There were only 15 students who stated that they felt uncomfortable when a classmate was being victimized. The students over the age of nine perceive and have consciousness of the aggressive environment and the acts of violence that take place in school. Regarding the use of drugs, all age groups studied indicate that they aware of its use on the schools premises.

Follow-up and Evaluation: Success Outcome Factors in the Development of the Pilot Project by Schools

The schools had freedom to structure, to implement the restorative practices, and to strengthen the promotion of the peace culture, as part of the pilot project. The creation of study groups with the participation of professors, who integrated the hands-on courses, has shown to be essential for the success in the development of school policies. Each institution organized its own practices, taking into consideration the available time, the professor’s work shift, and the availability to accomplish the tasks. Actions promoted to implement the policies are seen to individualize conditions for the development of a peace culture in each school, as well as promote the non-violent resolution of conflicts and the introduction of restorative practices. These actions are:

Capacity to mobilize the school community beyond the teachers and students

This capacity was supported in two specific ways. First, ideas about restorative justice were shared through the lecture: “Non-Violent Communication and Peace Culture.” In one of the schools, this initiative reached 3,000 families in the school community. In doing so, the school created a space for reflection between the institution and families regarding the culture of peace, and the need to implement the restorative practice as a way to solve these conflicts. The second, similar event, was the distribution of a newsletter by one school, with 3,000 copies, with information about the research project and notes on peace culture and non-violent communication.

Opening for the permanent self-questioning and commitment to the process

The opening of the institutions for the PUCRS Faculty of Social Work researchers, who followed the activities developed by the schools, as well as in the promotions of systematic evaluation meetings, was also an important process. In one of the institutions, there was some resistance from other school teachers concerning the implementation of the project. In one of the meetings, the project representatives were able to express their difficulties in the organization such as the lack of confidence to carry out a restorative circle as a facilitator, the lack of empathy of their colleagues, and the fear of the consequences of carrying out an unsuccessful circle. They decided to study texts on peace culture and mediation (Guimarães 2005; Milani 2003; Ortega and Del Rey 2002) and do some role-playing focusing on conflict situations before implementing restorative circles with real cases. In addition, they invited their colleagues to take part in the process. The outcomes
were positive because more teachers decided to have the training in order to be able to facilitate a circle.

**Creative strategies of self-supervision**

Among those are the simulation of restorative circles, named “Restorative Practices Hands-On Courses”, which contributed for the promotion, clarification, discussion and implementation of restorative practices in schools.

**Institutional and Secretary of Education Support (SEDEC)**

In one of the schools, there was a more active participation of SEDUC by means of the institutional representative of project. Two hands-on courses about values and non-violent communication were offered for all teachers.

**Self-organization increasing communication between school staff and administrators**

The schools identified organizational strategies in relation to the needs and deficiencies they had self-defined in the research process. More as a consequence rather than the objective, teachers involved in the restorative justice circles got closer to the corresponding administrative departments in their schools. Through this increased interaction, staff and administrators identified and worked on solutions to issues that caused conflicts between school leadership, such as: short-staffing due to health-leave absences, non-justified leaves, deficient infrastructure, as well as relationship problems between the teachers and employees, particularly due to low income.

**The diffusion of peace culture**

Because of the training in non-violent communication, teachers had skills to become more aware of the facts of incidents. Some teachers report re-evaluating their own values and judgements, once they understood that the “objective of the non violent communication was not to change people and their behavior in order to reach its objectives, but to establish its relationships based in honesty and empathy, which will fulfill the needs of all” (Rosenberg 2006, 127). In order to reach this objective, the peace circles were developed in schools on a weekly or bimonthly basis, in an attempt to create a favorable environment for the implementation of ongoing restorative practices. Spaces for debate, articulation of ideas and encouragement for transformation were created. In some schools, these spaces received different denominations, such as the “Study Group for Non-Violent Communication”, which was spread to teachers who had not originally been interested in the restorative justice proposal.

**Conclusions**

During the follow-up period in pilot schools, 9 pre-meetings, 7 meetings and 6 post-meetings were conducted. In one of the city schools a student who had been referred of the restorative circle who participated due to violent behavior, started to have a better school performance, which led to a reduction of aggression towards other classmates and in greater involvement with school tasks with greater family participation and with greater interaction with the school teacher.

In one of the state schools, a female, who participated in two restorative circles for physical aggression against classmates, stopped her aggression, and stopped being seen as a
“negative leader”. Her family also started to receive support from the community. In another circle, dealing with negative dialogue between two classmates from 6th grade, participants reflected on the root-causes of the conflict. Clarifying the problem facilitated a better relationship between the girls, including get-togethers outside the circle period.

These are some examples of the problem-solving skills developed in the restorative circle process, leading to change in the school environment. In addition, using the restorative justice circles also revealed that teachers were willing to listen to the students in conflict situations, and vice-versa. In this process, the teachers’ view is broadened; they start seeing the students as a people, with needs and desires simultaneous to holding responsibility to establish a common agreement that fulfills his/her needs.

Through follow-up and monitoring of the actions developed by the restorative justice pilot-schools we realized that the move towards a peace culture is long, demanding a collective effort for the transformation of a secular school culture. The traditional school culture has normalized and standardized childhood and youth, thereby failing to consider the cultural, social and economic context of students. To promote restorative justice is to choose a way, in which we move away from accusations, punishments and value judgments to allow for real dialogue. Each person involved in the conflict presents his/her point of view; those who listen translate what was said to the circle, so at the end all feel understood. This principle, which apparently, is so simple, implies a revolution in an environment, which—in general—does not allow much dialogue between participants.

The evaluation of restorative circles showed that more than 90% of people felt listened to and respected, which supports the wider implementation of these practices in the daily activities in school. One of the positive repercussions of the project was the reduction of referrals to the Educational Counseling Services, Dean’s Office, or Teenager and Children’s Special Police Station. The reference teachers started to utilize the key questions that guide the organization of meeting circles in daily school activities in diverse conflicts.

The implementation of restorative circles allowed an increase in dialogue, as well as in the capacity to listen and empathize. One of the problems found in the process is access to circles. In general, they are in low demand by students, who do not know that they constitute a legitimate process for conflict resolution in the school. The fear of the unknown associated to the strong culture of power relations in school is another factor that contributes to this low demand. Some teachers feel unsafe to participate in the circle meetings due to subsequent threats on the part of students. At the same time, the evaluation with the participants showed that the environment triggered feelings of lack of safety on the part of students.

For the schools that chose to be part of the “Justice for the 21st Century Project”, besides the hands-on courses, there is the need to incorporate the practices of restorative circles in the learning project of the school. In addition, the inclusion of hands-on courses about non-violent communication is also needed for teachers, in order for restorative justice circles expand in schools. There is the need for the rigorous selection of people who will be the circle coordinators. This selection should not be done only by political criteria or
by the Dean’s recommendation alone; the candidates must possess a good level of acceptance among students, good communication capacity and interpersonal relationship, availability for dialogue and humility.

The research also pointed out that there is the need for permanent supervision of the process and the proper use of the documents (restorative procedures guide), so that the difficulties and virtues, like the use of impartial and value-free language (e.g. inadequate conduct, condemnable attitude, moral aggression) can be assessed with the complete knowledge of the facts. The agreements must be clear, achievable, and with a timetable to be taken into effect, in such a way that the degree of satisfaction of those involved in the conflict and the capacity of restoration of relationships may be verified. Overall, even considering all the problems and challenges of these school experiences, it is clear that the seed has been placed in the soil and that while the promotion of change of a punitive culture into a more democratic one is a long journey, the first steps have been already taken.

References


The Transfer of Historical-Critical Skills from Social Studies Class to Political and Community Practice

David Lefrançois
Department of Education, Université du Québec en Outaouais

Marc-André Éthier
Faculty of Education, Department of Didactics, Université de Montréal, Centre de Recherche Interuniversitaire sur la Formation et la Profession Enseignante (CRIFPE)

Introduction

While questioning the possibilities curricula hold for educating citizens that are committed and objective, rigorous and free, we have sought to examine more closely the relationship of different teaching methods as applied in history classes in Quebec to the transfer of domain-specific skills in public and/or political spheres. In this paper our objective will be more modest. Our goal is to describe an exploratory research project that looks at some aspects of the acquisition and transfer of (meta-) skills by students in elementary and secondary school social studies classes to discussions of controversial public issues relevant to students.

Context and Postulates

Political thought is by its very nature tied to context: it is not learned in the abstract, in and of itself; rather it is developed through domain-specific problem solving methods. In fact, students learn to solve social problems when they use specific social inquiry strategies (multi-faceted and adapted to the issue), and when they exercise creative thought or critical judgment in regard to social issues through the manipulation of relevant historical information (facts, concepts or generalizations).

The research we have conducted in Quebec has allowed us to explore how pre-service social studies teachers and their students use history when solving problems of a socio-political nature. While they may draw on numerous cultural references associated with history, including many learned at school, our research suggests that subjects only occasionally solicit historical-critical skills in problem-solving situations (Éthier 2004). These results are discordant with the normative discourse, found in scientific and
professional literature, postulating the beneficial effects of learning historical-critical skills during the development of reflective political practice.

However, empirical research on the acquisition or transfer of historical-critical skills into political practice is still relatively hard to come by. We intend to focus more closely on this question within the framework of our research. The descriptive and exploratory research involves the joint study of processes (the manner in which reason functions), tools (concepts, factual information, methods, intellectual or technical skills) and products (ideologies, attitudes and behaviours) of political reasoning in vivo (when students discuss problems connected to public affairs, in order to seek solutions to these and to the implementation of their chosen solutions). We will call skills those processes, tools and products that we called competencies elsewhere. To study those skills, it is necessary to observe how students deliberate in regard to public issues that affect them: do they developed competencies in social studies class and apply them in problem-solving situations?

As this research project remains in its first stages, in this paper we will: (1) present how this program hopes to contribute to the advancement of knowledge pertaining to the transfer or reinvestment of historical-critical competencies to citizenship; (2) specify theoretical work used to construct the analytical grid for observations conducted in class and outside the school; (3) describe methodological issues related to the process of observation and data collection; (4) present a preliminary traditional content analysis revealing some tendencies common to both elementary and high school students who rely on school textbooks, films or other sources to explain social and political phenomena of the past.

Research Problem

It is widely held that promoting deliberation and autonomy in school has an indirect influence on the life choices of students, in both private and public domains. In history and social studies classes, according to Macedo (1990), students must acquire what he refers to as the virtue of “public reasonableness,” which can be asserted in contexts other than simply “political” discussions. In fact, since the consequences of a commitment to this public virtue may not be limited to a particular domain of life (for example, to the strictly political domain), they sweep and penetrate our lives. While they do not determine all of our choices, they limit them, and structure and condition our lives in a global way (Macedo 1990, 53). We subscribe to the idea that the development of social- and historical-critical skills are an integral part of more global citizenship development, and that this development inevitably affects many facets of our activities (as much political as private).

We remain ignorant as to when, under what conditions, and in what manner students mobilize and transfer the competencies they are supposed to have developed to this end in history and social studies class. Do they employ these, for example, in problem-solving in science and technology class, when they have to write a argumentative text in

---

1 This research program is financed by the FQRSC – Fonds québécois de recherche sur la société et la culture (David Lefrançois) and the CCL – Canadian Council on Learning (Marc-André Éthier).
English class, when they have to debate a moral issue in ethics class or when they have to come to an agreement on how the class should be managed?

**Research Objectives**

In order to provide partial answers to these questions, we seek to: (1) describe how students frame and solve problems concerning public issues; (2) identify aspects of historical-critical competencies mobilized to this end; (3) compare *in situ* manifestations of these aspects in history class and in other school or extracurricular contexts.

In order for this research project to take form, the first stage consists in developing and justifying the fundamental elements of the theoretical framework out of which it stems. This section presents the ideological underpinnings and the essential components of the theoretical framework of the study, which is inspired by authors in education and social psychology. Methodological issues regarding the student populations involved, and the contexts in which these are studied, are also addressed here.

This research focuses on tests of problem resolution and deliberations or discussions conducted among students aged 10 to 14 presented with learning situations in a classroom or extracurricular context, that relates, directly or indirectly, to the field of social studies, more precisely to history and citizenship education (Ministère de l’Éducation du Québec [MÉQ] 2001, 163-187; MÉQ 2004, 336-368).

**Theoretical Approach**

For almost two decades, numerous European and North American authors in the field of politics have been lauding what has by consensus come to be known as the model of deliberative democracy, a model that insists that decisions regarding the political community of citizens may claim legitimacy (and legality) when these are founded on democratic deliberation by all its members (Bohman and Rehg 1997). The educational consequences of this community are significant and need to be made clear. In fact, from a more general perspective, let us first say, following Habermas (1998, 155), that the recommended mode for citizens’ social integration rests on a communicative educational context, the effects of which are felt by and are integrated into political socialization. In effect, this educational context is concerned with the qualification of (future) citizens:

> at the level of information to which they have access, their capacity to reflect and take into account the consequences to which their decisions lead as these have political scope, their willingness to formulate their own interests taking into account [...] the interests of their fellow citizens [...] ; in a word, [it] is concerned with their ‘communicative competence’ [...] (Preuss, 1990, 125; Habermas, 1997, 445).

**An idealized conception of**

Deliberative democracy underscores the importance of publicly supported education that develops the capacity to deliberate among all children as future free and equal citizens. The most justifiable way of making mutually binding decisions in a representative democracy [...] is by deliberative decision making, where the decision makers are accountable to the people who are most affected by their
Deliberative decision making and accountability presuppose a citizenry whose education prepares them to deliberate, and to evaluate the results of the deliberations of their representatives. A primary aim of publicly mandated schooling is therefore to cultivate the skills and virtues of deliberation (Gutmann, 1999, xii-xiii).

Thus, the objectives of historical and civic education do not merely depend upon cultivating a sense of justice, of solicitude and of reciprocity, a virtue of civility (including respect for others during deliberation), a profound political commitment or even a common identity (that might be anthropological, universal in essence, rather than parochial), but also upon a new duty of reciprocal reasoning that citizens must assume — that of deliberating together with the goal of justifying their collective decisions to the greatest degree possible.

Habermas (1987) has strongly emphasized the idea that mastery and exercise of language function as much as instruments of mutual understanding and as media of transmission of cultural know-how, as they do as motors of a socialization process and of social integration. The process of constructing the subjective and social world may begin only when subjects have attained the level of interaction mediated by language — a medium across which one recognizes oneself in the Other without objectifying him or her. “Consequently, the individual’s subjective organization of her own action will necessarily incorporate both the substance and the organization of the regularities of social exchange.” (Rosenberg 2002, 39) At the same time, this recognition remains a question of accepting that socio-political realities or their meanings are actively constructed and not passively assimilated by individuals (37).

This said, a number of researchers in history instruction and education have pointed out that students’ social representations concerning the manner in which society functions tend to be static (Berti, 1994; Delval, 1994; Chiodo, and Martin, 2005). This critique is probably due in part to the change in the passive relationship to knowledge that the socio-constructivist approach reforms in Québec, as in the United States and Europe, seek to create. The socio-constructivist approach recognizes that students construct their own understanding of social and historical realities. Under these conditions, cooperative inquiry among peers aims to enrich — indeed to accelerate — this cognitive development. This becomes a question of placing students within what has come to be termed a “community of inquiry” (Sharp 1990) wherein, from observable facts, students learn to employ the intellectual tools of the historian by means of a rigorous inductive approach, of relevant concepts and of expedient attitudes for resolving social conflicts together (skills and strategies also essential in order that students learn to participate in reflective ways in public debates).

The key historians’ tools are, according to Wineburg (2001): sourcing, contextualization and corroboration heuristics. Sourcing refers to the critical evaluation of sources. It consists, for example, of identifying the author, his ideological stance, his social position, the historical period and social context of production and distribution of the document, and may include hypotheses relating to the document’s authenticity and the author’s intention in producing the document. Contextualisation refers to efforts to describe a historical phenomenon, object, text or image in its temporal, geographical and
social context in order to describe, explain, or compare it to other phenomena, whether they be contemporary or not. Corroboration heuristics refers for its part to the comparison of a document to others to establish its reliability and the probability of its having meaning.

Daniel (2005) has demonstrated that work done in a community of inquiry changes the mode of deliberative participation for young people aged 10-12 years. These modes of participation are transposable to a community of inquiry in social studies class. We believe they also allow for an understanding of the development of historical-critical thinking, as we termed the modes of processing and reasoning needed to be able to situate oneself in time, represent past situations, pose current social problems and seek out their causes, as well as going to the source to establish the facts with sourcing, contextualization and corroboration heuristics (Wineburg 2001). By means of a transfer process, teaching deliberation contributes to citizenship education, as students learn to conduct inquiries, weigh arguments and discuss among themselves in a respectful and tolerant manner questions relevant to contemporary society (Éthier 2004). The question is whether, when measuring the progression and development of historical-critical thinking in students placed in a research community, there are identifiable graduated markers that render possible the monitoring of this development.

Inspired by Piagetian tradition, Rosenberg (2002) has attempted to rationally “reconstruct” the development of human competencies mobilized during resolution of problems of a social, historical or political in nature. From a social psychology viewpoint, he is interested in understanding the evolution of modes of processing and reasoning specific to socio-historical thinking, and in delineating this evolution by isolating three stages: “sequential” (e.g., reasoning is not of a causal type), “linear” (e.g., reasoning is of a causal type without consideration of several factors at the same time) and “systematic” (e.g., reasoning is of a causal type and relates factors to each other).

This development in three stages — which correspond to the different modes of processing and of problem solving to which the individual is confronted in social interactions — has been studied and rendered explicit by Rosenberg (Rosenberg 2002, 79-251). These modes of reasoning have far-reaching repercussions about how differently the concepts of person, of political conflict, of justice, of tolerance may be understood. This diversity was illustrated through interviews conducted with 48 adult subjects; these interviews served to distinguish the three stages mentioned above and to confirm the presence of these inter-individual distinctions. More precisely, the author has as a starting point the hypothesis that individuals think and reason according to various structures that are not of a contextual or contingent nature, that is, that the same person will reflect on distinct problems (chemistry, physics, politics, etc.) in a structurally pre-determined manner: his or her reasoning may be “sequential” (the subject identifies phenomena without really attempting to explain them in causal fashion), “linear,” (the subject thinks causally, but pays scant attention to links between the different factors involved) or “systematic” (the subject is capable of constructing complex relations and, thus, of envisaging a number of causal combinations). To test this hypothesis, Rosenberg and his collaborators (1988)
The Transfer of Historical-Critical Skills  

Lefrançois & Éthier  

[...] examined how each subject performed on two different cognitive tasks [...] and in the interview on American relations with Iran. The responses of twenty-six subjects were [...] coded in double-blind fashion. Identical scorings were made on seventy-one of the seventy-eight scores. The remaining seven scores were adjudicated. The results indicated that twenty-one of the twenty-six subjects performed at the same level on all three tasks. Four of the remaining subjects performed at the same level on two of the tasks and at an adjacent level on the third. In all four of these cases the odd performance was quite close to the level of the performance on the other two. None of the subjects performed at three levels or at two levels apart (i.e., one sequential score and one systematic score). In sum, the hypothesis that an adult performs a number of different tasks at the same structurally determined level is strongly supported by the data” (119-120).

A first group of subjects was composed of 16 individuals relatively disadvantaged from a socio-economic point of view; a second group was represented by 16 individuals from the “middle class”; a third group was composed of 16 individuals that made up part of a certain social “elite” (Rosenberg, 2002, 263).

The core of the individual interviews consisted in responding to three series of questions, such that the researcher could determine mode of understanding, assessment and reasoning of subjects: the first series of questions was of a personal nature, the second series centred on a moral-political reflection, the last series refers to international geopolitics (Rosenberg 263-264).

Rosenberg’s conclusions are, in a sense, an a priori — the reconstruction of which is an a posteriori knowing. From a Piagetian standpoint, the rational reconstruction of thinking skills rests on the idea that the aptitudes of socially integrated subjects may be studied from a universalistic perspective, as “invariant” anthropological structures common to the human species as a whole. Even if people may subjectively reconstruct and understand realities, individuals or events in somewhat different ways, similar skills are acquired through an irreversible progression of distinct and increasingly more complex phases that may be ordered and reconstructed in hierarchical fashion, as well as through a developmental logic. Such a learning process proceeds to a large degree from a balancing movement (including disequilibrium and increasing equilibrium) between the individual and his or her environment. This idea is derived largely from Piaget and implies a succession of stages, each among them considered formally as a more balanced, more comprehensive and more extensive structure than the preceding stage. This consequently bolsters the notion that each new stage is a new structure that includes elements of preceding structures, but that transform them in such a manner that they present a more stable and wider-based structural balance.

The fundamental hypothesis of this work is that the aptitude for participation in social interaction may, despite cultural differences, highlight generalizable skills common to the human species. But the originality Rosenberg’s contribution (2002) is that this hypothesis does not therefore mean that all people have the same capacities, learn in a similar manner, or employ an identical learning style and skills set for solving cognitive, social, or political problems.

What remains is an array of fragments, a set of coexisting but different layers of meaning and different modes of discourse and interactive engagement. In this
context, new theoretical questions must be addressed. What is the nature of the
social and psychological dynamic whereby these fragments are constructed,
sustained, and transformed? What is the nature of their coherence, even if it is only
a ‘loose’ coherence (29)?

These questions lead Rosenberg to emphasize that his starting point is, from a
sociological and psychological standpoint, nuanced and non-reductionist, that is, that if
individual and cultural particularities must be identified and explored, the researcher
nevertheless cannot limit his or her “theoretical efforts” to the separate study of purely
subjective factors or essentially social determinants when it comes to explaining how
people think and how this thinking develops. To accomplish this, one must first study and
understand the necessary intrinsic, conceptual link that exists between the individual and
the social. This constitutes one of the fundamental presuppositions we expect to establish
from student discourse about the manner in which subjective historical skills are
constructed socially.

In order to measure the development of reflective thinking in students observed in
history class and in extracurricular contexts, we partly call upon Rosenberg’s
developmental model (2002): the three phases of processing and reasoning in problem-
solving situations of a social, historical or political nature — sequential, linear, and
systematic. Concurrently, in addition to being interested in the learning and use of skills in
social studies class, the present research requires the study of the transfer of these skills, in
political and community practice, by the students.

**Methodological Approach**

This qualitative research was conducted with two student populations from the
French-speaking residents of Québec within two school contexts: students aged 10 to 12, in
three elementary schools (n=57), and students aged 12 to 14, in three secondary schools
(n=217).

The first stage of the research, with 10 to 12 year-old subjects, concerns teaching
methods that allow for optimizing the effects of problem-solving situations on the
development of historical-critical thinking. The hypothesis is that the gradual withdrawal of
directive intervention of teachers at the elementary level exercises a positive influence on
historical-critical thinking in the learners placed in research communities and in problem-
solving situations, but that the realization of community projects *in situ* designed so that
students must resolve issues of a public nature reveals itself to be more effective for
mobilizing aspects of the historical-critical method. The anticipated positive consequences
for this phase consist in being able to help teachers optimize their choice of learning
situations to promote the mastery of cognitive operations associated with the study of
history. We will insist here on this set of results.

The second stage, with 12 to 14 year-old subjects, concerns the principal objectives
of this empirical study, as outlined in the introduction, aiming at identifying those historical
resources students employ outside of history class when reflecting spontaneously on public
issues. In order to allow emergence of research avenues to this end, we observed students
at the secondary level in a classroom context.
First Stage: Research at the Elementary Level

We monitored the progression/development of complex historical-critical thinking and explored the differences or similarities between teams composed of four groups of students. Teams evolving in class according to three different types of interventions were observed: (1) the progressive reduction of teacher interventions over the course of the learning activities, (2) teacher interventions that are consistently directive or (3) student participation in practical projects in the local community. The subjects observed in classes (1) and (2) were confronted with “problem situations” (prepared in collaboration with the teachers) the resolution of which required explicit reference to history (Gérin-Grataloup, Solonel, and Tutiaux-Guillon 1994; Dalongeville 2001).

In class (3), we observed children preparing and performing community projects in the framework of the Action Research for Problem Resolution (French acronym: RA:RPC), a pedagogical model developed by a local teacher that provides young people at the elementary level with a learning process relative to Environmental Education (French acronym: ÉRE). Our research involved observations of an anthropological nature and individual interviews with students, as well as digital recordings of discussions among peers. Consequently, this part of the study focused on discussion among 10 to 12 year-old students (all from elementary schools, two in Montreal, and one in Greater Montréal), confronted with problem-solving learning situations specific to the domain of social studies.

More specifically, two 5th and 6th grade classes completed learning activities with written instructions that were withdrawn over time in a progressive fashion while another class of 6th graders carried out the same activities with instructions delivered by continuous direction. A third class at the same level was observed over the course of preparing and organizing community projects in the framework of the RA:RPC (in our suburban school). This was a pre-exploratory research study without any specific objective.

Participation in this study consisted, for the students, (a) in being observed (the researcher observed interactions within the teams of four students and not one individual in particular), and recorded digitally in class (recordings that will be transcribed); (b) in participating in class or in the local community in problem-solving activities that required explicit reference to history or citizenship education.

In general, three hours of deliberations were recorded per week, such that each class was observed for 15 hours in total over five weeks spread out over the course of the 2007-2008 school year, but each team itself was only recorded a maximum of seven hours and 30 minutes in total, according to the recommended sampling procedure (two teams per class chosen at random for 15 hours of recording).

Preliminary Results

While the transcription and analysis of the data from the perspective of Rosenberg’s (2002) linear, sequential and systematic stages, among others, is still on-going, a preliminary analysis of student’s exchanges in tasks involving small-group discussions appear to reveal some tendencies common to both elementary and high school students (which will be
discussed later) who rely on school textbooks to explain historical phenomena, their causes and consequences, as well as to establish continuity and change. Preliminary traditional content analysis shows that student discussions are centered on sharing the information found by each student; they settle with transcribing what they find in textbooks, at times putting it in their own words, as illustrated by the following.

Four sixth-grade students — working together to explore the changes occurring in Québec’s economic development between 1745 and 1905, particularly as they pertain to the transition from the fur trade to the wood industry as the main driving-force of commerce — going through the information accessible to them realize that only two pages of their textbook deal with the subject of commerce. They suddenly remember that their teacher had suggested they complete this information through an Internet search. They come to agree that all of them will need to search the Internet for more information, but are at a loss as to what kind of information they need to find. They also agree that they should go to the library to consult books on the subject, as “books are more truthful than the Internet”, claims one student. Since books and textbooks are deemed to be more reliable and the information found on the Internet is not submitted to validation or comparison with the information collected in the textbook, this information is simply added to what they have already gathered. In fact, the textbook remains the only tool used by students to validate information, as shown in this excerpt of an interview conducted by the researcher (R) with three students (A, B, C) halfway through their task:

(R) Have you found many causes to explain this change or just one cause of change?
(A) Two causes. (R) Are these the two causes presented in your textbook? (C) We think we might find more on the Internet. (R) You think you might find more on the Internet and then you will have many causes. Had you first thought on your own as to what the possible causes might be or did you take the ones form the textbook?
(B) We had some idea at first, but to check if they were good, we looked in the textbook, so we wouldn’t be answering just anything.

Students do not express themselves as to whether they consider this information important to learn, or as to what its historical significance might be. While they seem to understand what they read in the textbooks, they don’t really discuss it, which makes their historical understanding difficult to gage. To date in this preliminary analysis, students employ mostly linear reasoning, no matter what type of classroom organization is in place (directive or non-directive). They focus on presenting a sequence of facts, which leads them to talk about many events or phenomena one after the other, without establishing the relationship which links them within an explanatory system.

While students compared the information collected amongst themselves (“is this information necessary?”) all through the process and made a list of aspects to be explored in their discussion, their results and means of explaining historical change were limited to suggesting they build a timeline in order to know when events and phenomena took place. In these conditions, it becomes hard for the students observed to identify human and social change in time. In fact, the teachers seem aware of this situation, as revealed by one of them, who teaches fifth grade: “it’s a question of establishing relationships, but the relationships, they [the students] don’t even see them, they don’t see what connects two things: one which is in the past and one which is current”. The trouble with perceiving the
ability to explain social change in history in students is often underscored, especially when compared to the physical and geographical aspects related to the ability to situate oneself in space, which is more readily perceived in students.

When another group of fifth graders try to describe and explain immigrants’ living conditions in Canada around 1900 through period photographs, they have trouble adopting historical perspective. For example, when they come across the picture of a woman doing laundry, they associate her lack of a washing machine with poverty, not considering the fact that the use of washing machines was not widespread at the time. In this case, students’ reasoning as witnessed in their results is of a linear nature (the timeline being the tool most often used in their explanation of historical phenomena), at times even discontinuous or sequential.

**Second Stage: Research at the Secondary Level**

The exploratory investigation was conducted with a non-probabilistic sample of students from lower secondary, registered in the regular curriculum, in three French-language schools in Québec, during the second half of the 2007-2008 school year. Students from the lower levels of the secondary system were chosen because the course *Histoire et éducation à la citoyenneté* (History and Citizenship Education, *HCE*) has been mandatory since 2005. Researchers observed the students over four months, making up 78 hours of class-time from the *HCE* course. These periods represent a substantial share of course sessions (there are 75 hours in history per year in first and second year at the secondary level).

There were three problem-solving activities with the same students, pre-test, inter-test and post-test, that can be summarized as follows (see Table 1):
The Transfer of Historical-Critical Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n = 247</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school students (from 13 to 15 years old)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n = 205</td>
<td>n = 42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Pre-test
- Watching a 7 minute sequence from the film "The Da Vinci Code";
- Consulting documents: 2 short newspaper articles on the history of the Knights Templar and 2 extracts from a more-or-less contemporary historical study of events;
- Assessing statement (are they true or false?); justifying answers;
- Debriefing (n = 3): methods employed and/or implicit stakes and interests perceived.

### 1) Pre-test
- (individual, written) + Oral "debriefing" interviews

### 1) Pre-test
- (individual, written) + Oral "debriefing" interviews

### 2) Observations
- In situ
- In committees

### 2) Observations
- In situ
- In committees
- Other class: geography

### Team Task (4 people/team)
- Students chosen (n = 8);
- Contrived (v. authentic) debate;
- Case study:
  - Censorship: agree or disagree?
  - If disagree, what would you do?
  - Agree upon a course of action;
  - Concepts: democracy and rights;
  - Individual post hoc interviews: what did you do to find a solution (inquiry and inference) and convince others (argumentation)? What is convincing for you and/or others?

### 3) Assignment
- (collective, oral)

### 4) Post-test
- (individual, written) + Oral "debriefing" interviews

### 4) Post-test
- (individual, written) + Oral "debriefing" interviews

### Analysis
- Emerging mixed grid based on the Québec Education Program

The in-depth debriefing interviews permitted interaction with the interviewer and induced the subjects to reflect on the activity and be clear about their positions and
representations regarding the definition of the problem and the origin of cognitive resources mobilized.

The researchers also attended meetings of the school student council, to observe how the students deliberated regarding public issues affecting them. The research was analyzed using a mixed grid, based on the Québec Education Program description of the three domain-specific competencies for history and citizenship education, on the indicators of reflective political practice as derived from Rosenberg (2002), on Wineburg’s historical heuristics (2001), and on categories that emerged from a pre-analysis after the first month of observation.

**Preliminary Results**

Most students do not use any element of the historical-critical heuristics to put an interpretation in context: corroboration, contextualization and sourcing are virtually absent.

In fact, during the first and third activities, a limited number of students used sourcing, contextualization, or corroboration in their interpretation. Very few students had elaborated on their answer and only one case of sourcing — rather imposing coming from a secondary 1 (grade 7) student — was found:

Some elements allowed me to take position, such as the fact that the Da Vinci Code is a work of fiction, so it follows that it cannot all be true, and such as the Church’s publishing a new version of the Templar’s history. To reclaim its honour? Who knows? But I believe one cannot rely on an author who tries to make his novel interesting, so I would rely more on the Church’s account. The Swiss newspaper article seemed the most credible source, because all the others involve the Church. If only I had the chance to interview the authors of the documents you gave us. Where did they get their information? If only I could have more time to study religious writings which may be based on evidence [and] more historical documents on the Templars […].

In spite of the great flexibility with which we applied our criteria, the contextualisation code was attributed to very few participants’ answers. One of the cases in which it was applied referred to Hitler’s rise to power: “(...) in the thirties currency was collapsing, as was industry. Thousands of people were unemployed. Adolf Hitler used this situation to his advantage to take power. In 1926, Hitler was involved in the creation of the Nazi Party”. It is worth noting, however that the formulation of this answer closely resembles that of a document handed out to students.

Most students enumerated their main sources of information — documents, books, movies, previous knowledge, and personal logic — without questioning their soundness. They also explain that they validated their answers with the same sources of information. A very small number of students nonetheless tried to corroborate the information from texts or movies with another source. However, this does not in itself constitute a confrontation of sources in order to verify the validity of information, but is more in line with an *ad populum* reasoning, where the quantity of concordant versions insures the veracity of their assertions: “Templars were tortured without pity. Three texts say that this happened, even
though they were different texts." In other words, students trust the version of history that is shared by the largest amount of people; there is a majority rule.

Some students declared information as being valid because it had been presented in class, thus manifesting unconditional trust in their teacher. However, most students simply did not question the validity of their sources.

In sum, students seldom call upon historical skills to analyze problems, to question their own presuppositions or to weigh up arguments. There is by and large no questioning of sources. There is typically no probing of ideas or confrontation of sources.

Three other main sets of results are also already emerging. First, students consistently receive documents as texts from which relevant information must be identified and extracted—the “Truth” and the meaning are pre-existing.

Second, informational authority on historical “Truth” is seen as coming from film. Most students state that historical films give an accurate/true version of the facts about the historical context. During the first activity, 106 students stated they had used one or many texts to answer the questions, while 96 students stated they referred to the movie shown in class or to a movie they had previously seen. Finally, 42 students said that they relied on their common sense or their own personal judgment. In regards to activity 3, 101 students stated they had used one or many texts to answer questions, while 57 relied on the movie shown in class or on a movie they had previously seen. Finally, 52 students claimed to have relied on their common sense or their own personal judgment. In these circumstances, we can infer that they consider that fiction can be as valid as a textbook, an archive text, a professional historical interpretation or an informative newspaper article.

Third, as a rule, students seek "the" right answer to a sort of text-comprehension test (the film being the text, in this case).

**Educational Importance of the Study**

This research project intends to develop instruments for observing how students learn and transfer their abilities related to historical thinking, but we also aspire to the creation of more open and tangible pathways for developing teaching units for teacher education — recognizing that pre-service teachers need to be trained in this area.

Thus, for initial teacher training, our suggestions are to:

- Focus explicitly on the goal of developing the skills in question (by opposition to specific concepts or facts);
- Emphasize the use of the historical-critical method;
- Demonstrate the effectiveness of the historical-critical method (as well as its limitations) for formulating problems and resolving controversial social questions;
- Make use of a diversity of texts;
- Focus on meta-cognition and transfer.
Conclusion

This text is modestly intended to describe the initial results of our reflections on the methodology that we had planned to employ within an exploratory research program on the transfer, by students in elementary and secondary school, of skills developed in social studies class into political and community practice. We have thus here examined certain of our own postulates, but without spending inordinate amounts of time such as on theoretical aspects, so as to give priority to that which we have done and what we intend to do, if everything goes as planned. Already, however, even while writing the final touches of this text, the expected since the experimental conditions changed, and since the analysis of data collected forced us to reflect anew on our methodology, we have introduced new modifications to our research plan and instrumentation. And all of this will have to be further re-arranged once more when we go to the next stage of this exploratory study...

References


La Tecnología Social de Mediación como Estrategia para Promover la Participación Ciudadana Desde la Comunidad y la Escuela

Marcela Magro  
*Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador*

María Isabel Ramírez  
*Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador*

María E. Fernández de C.  
*Universidad Experimental Nacional Simón Rodríguez*

**Resumen**

Esta investigación tuvo como propósito promover la Tecnología Social de Mediación (TSM) como estrategia para propiciar la participación ciudadana desde la comunidad y la escuela. Sus autores la conciben como una estrategia flexible y abierta adaptable a las características de cada escuela y comunidad, destinada a promover cambios profundos en los componentes sustantivos de las culturas comunitarias-escolares. La misma surge como producto de una investigación interinstitucional: “La universidad va a la escuela.” Ésta es producto de un proceso colectivo de construcción, reconstrucción y validación que se realizó durante ocho años en 9 escuelas de Educación Básica, representativas de todos los sectores poblacionales, rural, urbanas e indígenas diseminadas en todo el territorio venezolano (10 estados). Actualmente se continua aplicando en otros contextos no educativos. Está estructurada en varias fases, siendo las nucleares: (a) El diagnóstico, (b) la formulación de una visión y misión comunitario-escolares y, (c) planes de acción. Estos estaban sujetos a un seguimiento y evaluación permanente. Como resultados se cuentan:  
(1) Se logró la transformación positiva en los actores socio-organizacionales. (2) La construcción de una red de espacio interinstitucional a favor de una interacción participativa, crítica, reflexiva, activa y permanente, entre la universidad, las escuelas y las comunidades. (3) Se construyó un diálogo profundo con los actores del quehacer educativo-comunitario, que permitió la construcción colectiva de una visión más realista y contextualizada del rol de las diferentes organizaciones educativas y comunitarias, sustentadas en los principios de: participación equitativa, respeto por los otros,
compromiso social, tolerancia activa. (4) Su aplicación en el aula favoreció la participación crítica-reflexiva y comprometida de los aprendices, padres y maestros en la toma de decisiones relacionadas con el quehacer de una escuela que forma ciudadanos como actores protagónicos que viven en democracia.

Introducción

En el contexto de las organizaciones sociales, las metodologías dialécticas que promueven la ubicación de los actores sociales frente a sus múltiples realidades, para cuestionarlas, reflexionarlas y, en atención a sus intenciones colectivas, formarlos para que, en consenso, construyan la realidad social que desean según sus imaginarios; interrelacionados en una mediación horizontal que advierte los cambios sin imponerlos, basados en sus necesidades como usuarios-actores sociales con realidades iversas y saberes implícitos que exigen ser cuestionados y sistematizados, para contribuir con ellos al mejoramiento de necesidades reconocidas como urgentes, en sus comunidades próximas. Esta expectativa “solo puede surgir de la interrelación dialógica entre individuos que son diferentes, lo que expresa mejor aún el movimiento y la fuerza de la relación” (Ciurana 2001,12).

Desde las consideraciones anteriores, un equipo de investigación se planteo el reto de construir una ruta, un camino, para promover el cambio reflexivo y crítico, desde la participación colectiva como práctica cotidiana.

En la construcción de este camino, se parte de la tesis de que la universidad, como organización productora de conocimiento y, en correspondencia con sus funciones y misión social, no ha retornado los beneficios de ese conocimiento a la solución de las necesidades del contexto donde actúa, generando con ese accionar una “deuda social” (Picón 2005, 37). A partir de esta consideración y parafraseando al poeta Antonio Machado, es importante destacar que, al inicio de la experiencia no existía una ruta totalmente acabada, existían ideas, posibilidades metodológicas que al ser aplicadas, sistematizadas y reflexionadas, devuelven nuevos acontecimientos, eventos, hechos, y explicaciones que iban incorporando nuevos elementos que, a su vez, indicaban la necesidad de nuevas observaciones, nuevos registros y nuevas interacciones que dan espacio a nuevas técnicas e instrumentos para indagar; así como, a la identificación de otros factores necesarios para comprender e interpretar la compleja y diversa realidad de la escuela básica venezolana, seleccionada como escenario de estudio; es decir el camino metodológico se fue construyendo a medida que se fue avanzando en el proceso investigativo.

Esta dinámica, fue conduciendo y reorientando la búsqueda desde algunos supuestos. Entre los cuales destacamos los siguientes:
• La universidad se percibe como una organización productora de conocimiento
• La sociedad postmoderna requiere de una universidad que en su hacer investigativo, abra espacios a la construcción de conocimiento a partir de la reflexión sobre su hacer cotidiano
• La crisis de confianza en el conocimiento de los profesionales universitarios es consecuencia de una crisis similar en la formación de dichos profesionales

Desde estos postulados, se destaca como intención de la investigación, promover cambios en la cultura de la escuela básica, bajo el entendido, de que la mejor vía para transformar la cultura escolar es la formación de los actores sociales, directivos, docentes, alumnos, padres, y líderes comunitarios con competencias para investigar críticamente su hacer, para sistematizar los cambios que introduce en su práctica cotidiana como consecuencia de su acción reflexionada; un actor social con competencias para socializar sus hallazgos, en su colectivo de pares y con la expectativa de mejorar progresivamente sus roles y la misión de la escuela de las cuales forman parte activa.

**Transito por lo Teórico-Metodológico**

Lo descrito permitió en primer lugar, reconocer la Investigación–Acción-Participante (IAP) como método pertinente, a los intereses e intenciones de los investigadores, porque permite promover la participación de los actores sociales involucrados en la acción educativa e igualmente, permite ir formándolos en atención a las necesidades de su realidad mediante procesos de mediación que garanticen el avance hacia la visión de futuro consensualmente acordada.

En segundo lugar, fundamentamos nuestra acción investigativo en el postulado central de una ‘teoría de la acción humana’ (Argyris 1978; Argyris 1989; Argyris 1999).

Este supuesto condujo a profundizar en el método, decisión que nos aproxima al pensamiento de Yuni y Urbano (2005) autores que asignan a la IAP los supuestos siguientes:

“Es un método de construcción de conocimiento científico basado en la reflexión; es decir, se investiga con y no a los actores” (Yuni 2005, 138-144).

“Pretende construir un conocimiento caracterizado como holístico, integrador, contextualizado, a través de un proceso de construcción colectiva de un saber sobre su propia realidad” (Yuni 2005, 138-144).

“Busca que la producción de conocimiento científico responda a los intereses y demandas consideradas relevantes por los propios sujetos de la investigación” (Yuni 2005, 138-144).

“Integra el conocimiento, la participación y la formación de los actores sociales comprometidos, en un solo proceso” (Yuni 2005, 138-144).
Los citados autores, igualmente, destacan que las comunidades que aprenden colectivamente, a través de un diálogo, en el cual cada actor participa desde la diversidad de su cultura, implica un acto de entendimiento, de elaboración colectiva de los disensos, las inquietudes, las necesidades y de los significados compartidos por dicho colectivo (Yuni 2005). Es decir, se construye una perspectiva diferente que permite comprender que una sociedad o comunidad creativa “es aquella donde interactúan sujetos-estrategas y no sujetos sujetados, normalizados”. (Ciurana 2001, 13)

Los planteamientos anteriores permiten ubicarnos en la necesidad, presente en la realidad estudiada en la escuela básica, la universidad, la familia, y la comunidad, desde algunos presupuestos empíricos relacionados con lo siguiente.

Relación sujeto-objeto
Este aspecto, permite visualizar la imposibilidad de transformar la cultura escolar, si sus actores no se involucran en una práctica participativa alternativa que permita probar la posibilidad de otras estrategias que orienten los procesos de aprendizaje, planificando un camino desde la comprensión del cambio como producto de la conciencia del colectivo y, que las realidades sociales se hacen y se deshacen, en el devenir de su historia.

En este momento reflexivo nos formulamos el objetivo que orientó nuestra intención investigativa como fue la de,

- generar una Tecnología Social de Mediación (TSM) orientada a desarrollar, a partir de la comprensión de la realidad concreta de las escuelas, una cultura organizacional que conduzca a una constante elevación de la calidad y autonomía de los procesos curriculares-instruccionales, organizacionales y de relaciones con la comunidad, así como de la efectividad y pertinencia social de dichos procesos (Picón 2005, 65-66).

Toma de conciencia
Este aspecto se refiere al valor formativo de la conciencia como producto de un proceso auto reflexivo inacabado, que constituye el núcleo de la IAP, el cual no conduce a un resultado final, pulido, perfeccionista sino que el producto es inacabado, se reconstruye en la práctica permanente. En consecuencia, responde a la secuencia cíclica de deconstrucción, construcción y reconstrucción permanente (Villasante 1993).

La participación
El ámbito de la IAP lo constituye la acción humana que, en forma de espiral, representa un continuo acción-reflexión-acción-metarreflexión sobre el conjunto de procesos que condicionan la realidad social de un colectivo determinado, en este caso, referimos a las organizaciones educativas. Sobre esta espiral dialógica, Freire (1970, 108), destaca que la misma se genera por cuanto, “el hombre dialógico sabe que el poder de hacer, crear, transformar, es un poder de los hombres, y si bien es cierto que este poder de hacer y transformar es negado, en ciertas circunstancias, también puede renacer en la lucha por su liberación”.

Aspectos metodológicos
En el contexto de la (IAP), el método científico, lineal no es válido para producir el conocimiento que ésta persigue; es decir, crítico, reflexivo, socializado, participado y
emancipador. Por cuanto la IAP no concluye con la producción del conocimiento sino que aspira trascender las realidades sociales para transformarlas desde el protagonismo generado por la corresponsabilidad social de los actores. En ella, lo más importante es la dialéctica que se genera entre dichos actores; en otras palabras, la interacción energizante y continua entre la acción-reflexión-acción-metarreflexión que conduce a la construcción de una visión futurante en forma consensuada que sirve de referente para orientar las múltiples direcciones que va asumiendo la transformación deseada, en atención a su devenir histórico.

Este construir permanente, producto de la interacción entre los diferentes actores da forma a un proceso espiral y cíclico a lo largo del cual, se reestructura, en forma permanente, la relación entre el conocer y el hacer. Esta modalidad interactiva conduce a la “creación de un contexto investigativo más abierto y procesual de modo que sus resultados se reintroducen en el proceso global, promoviendo la profundización de los mismos” (Villasante 1993, 25).

En síntesis, la IAP incorpora los presupuestos de la epistemología crítica, organiza el análisis y la mediación como una pedagogía constructiva para un cambio social con alcances indeterminables. Por otra parte, la búsqueda del conocimiento es colectiva, donde todos son aprendices, en un proceso en el que la objetivación de sí mismo es una fuente inagotable de la sociología del conocimiento y el actor social se convierte en testigo de la calidad emancipadora de su actuación hacia el cambio intencional.

Una experiencia de investigación desde esta visión metódica, genera transformaciones, en la cultura escolar, desde el diálogo intersubjetivo entre los investigadores y los actores de las escuelas investigadas. Cambio epistemológico que condujo la producción de conocimiento científico desde la reflexión a lo interno de cada actor y colectivo sobre la práctica cotidiana. Proceso que dio como resultado una Tecnología Social de Mediación. Este camino no siempre fue fácil, porque en toda transformación se hace necesario tener coraje para enfrentar lo nuevo; además, en algunos momentos, el cambio resultó doloroso para quienes se resistían a dejar lo conocido. Sin embargo, el descubrimiento de nuevas potencialidades y el crecimiento personal-profesional, unido a los cambios organizacionales observados, generó alegría y libertad para reconocer públicamente la necesidad e importancia de los cambios introducidos en la cultura escolar, por decisión consensuada.

Proceso de Construcción de una Tecnología Social de Mediación (TSM)

En relación con la universidad, contexto desde donde surge la intención de construir esta TSM, es necesario aclarar que por su propia estructura funcional conformada por facultades, escuelas o decanatos orientados a partir de las disciplinas, resulta fácil decir que no existen universidades transdisciplinarias, la pregunta que surge es ¿cómo lograrlo? Cambiar la estructura de la universidad en el corto plazo luce imposible. Pero aunque parezca absurdo, quienes pueden promover el cambio son los académicos e investigadores de la propia universidad. Se trata entonces, de crear un entorno, que siendo universitario logre una acción autónoma con ella.
En otras palabras, hay que fortalecer unidades o grupos de investigadores en cuyas teorías de acción se produzcan cambios profundos y, para ello, se requiere de una formación orientada de tal manera que les permita desarrollar las competencias para comprender de manera multidimensional y recursiva los diferentes niveles de la realidad logrando su construcción y reconstrucción desde distintos saberes.

Para narrar, el proceso de construcción de la TSM, es necesario definirla como una secuencia de acciones intencionadas, flexibles y abiertas, adaptadas a las características y circunstancias de cada realidad organizacional.

Desde la concepción anterior y para cumplir con el propósito de construir la TSM, el equipo de investigadores y estudiantes de postgrado, adscritos a la 'Línea de Investigación Aprendizaje Organizacional y Procesos Educativos', representativos de tres universidades venezolanas: Universidad Nacional Experimental 'Simón Rodríguez', Universidad Pedagógica Experimental 'Libertador' y Universidad del Zulia, continúan aplicando y revisando la TSM, en contextos educativos distintos a los iníciales y en comunidades campesinas e indígenas interesadas en procesos de participación autogestionarios que intentan mejorar las condiciones de vida, en las mismas. Esto revela que, la búsqueda se plantea desde una visión interinstitucional y multidisciplinar. Por ello, la planificación del Proyecto, se realizó a partir de un análisis de antecedentes y teorías que permitió construir el diseño inicial, considerando desde la verticalidad, los pasos para promover la participación de los actores de las escuelas.
En los primeros momentos de aplicación, los investigadores actuamos muy apegados a lo planeado. Esta forma vertical de presentar la propuesta, generó desconfianza y rechazo a las diversas actividades propuestas por cuanto fueron percibidas, por los docentes, como una sobrecarga a las ya abundantes tareas que están obligados a cumplir como consecuencia de los distintos programas y proyectos, en los cuales el suprasistema educativo involucra a la escuela y al maestro.

El desequilibrio que esta experiencia inicial generó en los docentes condujo a los investigadores a una reflexión sobre la misma y otras situaciones que permitieron una discusión crítica mediante la cual nos hicimos conscientes de que el primer paso para iniciar procesos de investigación dirigidas al cambio de cultura, lo constituye la exploración y conocimiento en profundidad de los intereses, necesidades y expectativas individuales, continuando con los grupales hasta conocer los organizacionales.
Esta experiencia inicial también nos permitió identificar nuestras propias limitaciones con una actitud crítica reconociendo la ausencia de algunas competencias que nos impulsó a desarrollarlas para continuar la búsqueda. Parafraseando a Lucesiii (1999), estábamos alcanzando la consciencia de nuestra propia ignorancia y limitación lo que nos permitió identificar nuestros aprendizajes y reflexionar sobre lo que teníamos que saber para avanzar en la construcción de la TSM, llegando al punto de que mientras avanzábamos, nos hacíamos más humildes para entender lo muchísimo que hay que saber, para promover y mediar cambios profundos con la participación democrática de los actores sociales involucrados en el proceso de cambio.

La vivencia antes reseñada nos demostró que el apoyo inicial que aspirábamos obtener para abordar una escuela, puede lograrse por medios menos formales. Razón por la cual, el mediador necesita mantenerse en actitud de explorador, a lo interno y externo de las organizaciones, identificando dónde se encuentran los líderes naturales que se transformarán, voluntariamente, en apoyo efectivo para la tarea que los investigadores se han propuesto concretar.

Importante, resulta destacar, que siguiendo el continuo de acción-reflexión-acción-metarreflexión se procedió a construir y reconstruir la TSM introduciendo cambios en el diseño inicial y, paralelamente, se incorporó al proceso de indagación, la formación de los investigadores-mediadores. Entre los talleres desarrollados se incluyeron aquellos que favorecían el fortalecimiento de competencias para el manejo de grupos, realizar entrevistas, guiar los procesos de mediación, entre otras. Se amplió el interés por conocer los valores, las creencias, los miedos, y las estrategias de acción que utilizaban los actores de las escuelas frente ciertos acontecimientos de su práctica educativa; así como conocer la forma de manejar las consecuencias de esas acciones y la incertidumbre que acompaña los procesos curriculares-instruccionales, gerenciales y de relaciones con su entorno social mediato e inmediato.

En otras palabras, comenzamos a explorar en contextos reales, el supuesto central de la ‘teoría de acción humana’ de Argyris y Schöhn (1999) asumida como ‘teoría de entrada’, para fundamentar las investigaciones inscritas a nuestra línea de investigación. Explorar la teoría en uso de los actores involucrados, nos permitió conocer, comprender e interpretar su comportamiento y el de las escuelas y las comunidades como un todo.

De las observaciones y entrevistas, así como, de las reflexiones colectivas fueron surgiendo nuevos cambios en la construcción de la TSM, el segundo de ellos, la ‘formulación de la visión compartida futurizante’ y consensuada para la escuela, como acción previa al desarrollo del diagnóstico. Para su construcción se considera el marco legal y normativo que predetermina la misión de la escuela y que a través del diagnóstico se reconocerá colectivamente cual es el nivel de respuesta que la escuela está dando a esa misión establecida por la sociedad y el Estado. A partir de esa reflexión se formula la visión, entendida como futuro deseado; lo que está por venir.

Para Miklos y Tello (2007, 14), “el futuro es un horizonte amplio y abierto en el que ciframos nuestros ideales y esperanzas, es un ámbito en el que podemos imaginar y crear”. Visión que exige de una revisión permanente para mantenerla actualizada frente a los
cambios y transformaciones que tanto el Estado como la sociedad le asigna a esta organización.

En esta construcción futurizante es necesario destacar la misión así como los valores que orientarán el comportamiento de los actores sociales comprometidos en la concreción de dicha visión, a su revisión y actualización como expresión de aprendizaje y transformación de su cultura ajustada a su contexto histórico-político.

En relación con el diagnóstico, éste se concibe como un elemento nuclear y permanente, en un proceso investigativo, que intenta promover cambios en la cultura organizacional; ello, porque la misma se construye y reconstruye permanentemente en atención a los acontecimientos históricos que envuelven a dichas organizaciones durante su permanencia. Más aún, en el caso de las escuelas que están sujetas al bombardeo que sobre ellas generan los continuos y permanentes cambios en las políticas educativas, formuladas sin consultar a sus beneficiarios directos: supervisores directivos, docentes, alumnos, padres y otros actores sociales comprometidos en el hacer educativo.

Lo anterior, explica la permanencia del diagnóstico desde el primer contacto con la organización estudiada hasta la culminación del proceso de mediación, profundizando en el proceso de indagación sobre elementos considerados fundamentales para conocer la realidad estudiada. Es decir, se trata de una acción longitudinal. Por ello, resulta importante lograr la participación del mayor número de los actores sociales y; a su vez, resulta más significativo si estos actores representan a los diferentes sectores organizacionales. En otras palabras, conformar una masa crítica que permitirá triangular las diferentes visiones desde las cuales perciben y ejecutan las acciones educativas en sus diversas dimensiones.

Con el proceso de diagnóstico se busca obtener información sobre la historia de la escuela, sus procesos instruccionales-curriculares, organizacionales, relaciones con el entorno, matrícula estudiantil, niveles de promoción, reformas curriculares, planta física, dotación, participación de la comunidad educativa y de otros entes del entorno inmediato.

Este hurgar, permanentemente, en el mundo empírico, de la práctica, nos reveló las diferencias emocionales que exhibían los actores cuando el discurso de los investigadores-mediadores destacaba las fortalezas tanto individuales como organizacionales. De allí, se recomienda iniciar el diagnóstico con la identificación de las fortalezas de las realidades investigadas. También, resultó de fundamental importancia, reconocer la estrategia de proyectos como el medio más apropiado más construir conocimiento desde la reflexión sobre la práctica y con una visión integradora que involucra los aportes de las diversas disciplinas para resolver los conflictos de aprendizaje o de convivencia como un todo para lograr el cambio que se aspira concretar. Lo anterior refleja la importancia de sistematizar las observaciones, entrevistas, decisiones o cualquier otro evento que se considere importante, a la luz del propósito de la investigación y que, resulte significativo para construir la memoria del proceso investigativo, la cual se convierte en uno de los insumos principales para construir conocimiento- teoría fundamentada.
A medida que se avanza en el proceso investigativo y se profundiza en la indagación también aumenta la necesidad de ir formando a los actores sociales participantes en los procesos de cambios. Necesidad que fue atendida a través del ‘taller permanente’, el cual se convirtió en una línea de acciones básicas, para la formación de los diversos actores y para ir dando respuesta a las múltiples preguntas que exigían igualmente, diversas respuestas relacionadas con los objetivos de la investigación.

El ‘taller permanente’ dio sentido a la organización de colectivos que constituyeron una red de actores, de carácter interactivo y dinámico donde entraban en contacto el sistema escolar, los docentes e investigadores, las diversas realidades y perspectivas del contexto escolar para avanzar la construcción de conocimiento a través de las acciones, reflexiones y metarreflexiones que los actores iban realizando desde el enfoque de la investigación educacional crítica que se realizó.

Este ‘taller permanente’ y sus respectivos encuentros presenciales, es decir los colectivos, se caracterizaron por la práctica dialógica en forma de bucle, en otras palabras, en un ir y venir de las ideas, formulaciones y reflexiones que facilitan la comunicación y el aprendizaje de cómo investigar para superar la cotidianidad de las aulas de clase y de la escuela.

Estos colectivos centrados en la práctica de ‘talleres permanentes’ también presentaron diferentes niveles de complejidad en atención a las diferentes tareas que necesita cumplir un actor social comprometido en procesos de cambio organizacional en otras palabras, empeñado en transformar la cultura de la organización, como era este caso. Pero la complejidad también estuvo dada por la diversidad de las visiones de los actores, en torno a los saberes que socializaban así como las diferentes formas que manejaban para construir el hacer docente. Esta diversidad en sus expresiones e intenciones tenía relación con su ubicación en la continua acción-reflexión-metarreflexión-construcción de tecnología y teorizaciones.

En la acción vivencial de los colectivos, los principios rectores del Modelo II de Argyris y Schön (1978, 1987) y Argyris (1999), resultó útil para promover la discusión abierta y transparente de los conflictos saberes e intenciones: tomar decisiones colectivas y consensuadas; propiciar la equidad en la participación; orientar las acciones emprendidas con justicia social y; compromiso para direccionar la rueda del cambio por el camino de conocer para afrontar, comprender para transformar la realidad intra y extra-escolar y generar una dinámica dialéctica y axiológica capaz de permear la cotidianidad de la escuela y el aula, con la participación consciente de los actores del acto educativo. En consecuencia, promover cambios profundos y necesarios en un proceso de aprender, desaprender, construir y reconstruir para trascender la realidad escolar desde una visión siempre proyectiva, futurizante.

En este momento resulta importante destacar que los diferentes estadios que se han venido señalando no son lineales sino que van conformando una espiral en la cual estos estadios se encuentran, se solapan y ese movimiento que marca lo excepcional, es precisamente lo que permite entender la complejidad del acto educativo y donde la investigación educacional crítica representa un camino largo. Indagación que demanda de
una continuidad progresiva hasta revelar lo desconocido de las teorías de acción de organizaciones educativas, siempre complejas por la forma particular que cada individuo tiene de percibir, asignar significados lo que percibe para llegar a comprender e interpretar las situaciones educativas investigadas desde la multicontextualidad representada, en este caso, por lo curricular-instruccional, lo organizacional y las relaciones con el entorno intra y supraescolar. Sólo avanzando en esta forma de investigarse a sí mismas, la Universidad y la Escuela, pueden ofrecer a la sociedad las respuestas que ella demanda para atender a sus cambiantes necesidades, intereses y expectativas, cada vez más diversas.

Realizado este inciso, se destaca que la formación de los colectivos fue determinando la organización de equipos interdisciplinarios que se abocaron a indagar sobre la historia de las escuelas involucradas en el proceso de investigación, los proyectos que estaban en desarrollo, los líderes de la escuela y la realidad social circundante, características físicas y de dotación de las instituciones escolares, nivel educativo de los padres-directivos – docentes, matrícula atendida, nivel de rendimiento de los alumnos por áreas del currículo, rasgos resaltantes de la cultura de cada escuela. Para la organización de los equipos un criterio importante fue considerar los intereses, competencias y necesidades de cada actor con la problemática a investigar. Como puede observarse, este procedimiento permitió conformar en la unidad de intereses la diversidad cultural que cada actor representa, siguiendo a Morin (2001) fue una forma de lograr la unidad en la diversidad.

La indagación fue entendida como ese proceso de sumergirse en las profundidades del comportamiento de los actores sociales comprometidos con el hacer educativo: directivos, docentes, padres, personal administrativo y de servicio, líderes de la comunidad e investigadores-mediadores - para dar respuesta a los problemas identificados como prioritarios en cada contexto escolar-social. En este proceso se dieron las condiciones ideales para formar, a los actores de las escuela, como investigadores de su propia práctica, cuyos resultados les permitían, progresivamente, comenzar a actuar con mayor libertad y autonomía, ejercitándose en la toma de decisiones discutidas y fundamentadas colectivamente y responsablemente asumirlas, en forma consensuada. La práctica reflexiva de estos comportamientos constituye una estrategia para avanzar hacia la construcción de una cultura escolar de mayor autonomía, en cuanto a los procesos que son propios.

Este involucramiento, formación-investigación de los actores con sus realidades y concepciones orientó el análisis de la información cuanti-cualitativa que se iba registrando y contrastando con la Visión de Futuro, acordada por consenso, por cuanto la misma sirvió de referente para orientar los planes de acción, que enmarcados en las políticas educativas y lineamientos legales que explicitan el tipo de ciudadano se aspira que contribuya a formar la escuela y el maestro en interacción con la familia y la comunidad como contexto espacio-tiempo del hacer educativo.

La ejecución de los planes de acción siempre se consideró como una acción planificada e intencionada para aproximarse a la Visión de Futuro; pero además apoyada en forma permanente en tres procesos básicos como fueron el seguimiento, la evaluación y la reflexión. Propiciada ésta última desde la misión, visión y valores formulados por el colectivo de cada escuela y comunidad.
La formación de los docentes investigadores para cumplir con el proceso de planificación se orientó desde un conjunto de preguntas directrices tales como: ¿Cuál es la necesidad o interés a resolver?, ¿Qué se hará?, ¿Por qué se hará?, ¿Para qué se hará? ¿Cómo?, ¿Para Cuándo?, ¿Quién (es) lo hará (n)?, ¿Cómo se evaluarán las acciones consideradas en el plan?, ¿Está el plan dirigido a resolver situaciones o a aportar soluciones dentro del área problemática definida?, ¿Las metas previstas conducirán a la Visión de Futuro, compartida por el colectivo?, ¿Se orienta el plan por los principios rectores (valores) incorporados en la Visión?. Estas preguntas buscaban promover y orientar las dinámicas ínter subjetivas y reflexivas en los actores participantes en el proceso de investigar sobre la práctica.

Una observación importante en relación al comportamiento de los docentes-investigadores, fue la tendencia del a sentirse abrumados, sobrecargados, por la magnitud trabajo que desde sus perspectivas, cargaban tanto el supragobierno escolar- supervisores como los directores. Tareas que, en la mayoría de los casos, se cumplían en forma automática. También, registramos a nivel de las universidades, que éstas conducen los procesos de formación de docentes, mediante la implementación de unos diseños curriculares cargados de cursos e informaciones que no despiertan el interés por aprender sino que alimentan el estrés, el aburrimiento y un hacer sin sueños, sin proyectos de vida que orienten el después del grado. De lo anterior surge la pregunta ¿Es posible que los docentes y estudiantes en formación consideren el currículo que orienta sus acciones como un espacio de interacción entre la teoría y la práctica, dejando abierta la posibilidad para la reflexión consciente sobre sus alcances a objeto de reconstruirla, mejorarla y hacerla más humana?

Centrados en el significado de las emociones en el comportamiento organizacional, consideramos que mientras mayor sea el tiempo que se otorgue al docente para reflexionar sobre su práctica, mayor libertad para mejorarlo, mayor tiempo y dedicación a las acciones de formación para superar las debilidades que va reconociendo en sus competencias y esquemas axiológicos. El equipo de investigación con la Tecnología Social de Mediación aspira ofrecer una ruta, un camino, la cual pueden enriquecer, aplicar para descubrir lo interesante que resulta reconocer nuestras fortalezas, siempre ocultas por un trabajo cuya magnitud, en algunos casos, resultó real y en otros, una acción encubridora del escaso compromiso para romper con la rutina, la ignorancia y la ceguera que impide a los actores sociales confrontar su práctica para transformar la cotidianidad.

El proceso de construcción de la TSM en la mayoría de las situaciones impregnó a los actores de la escuela de la necesidad de compartir con sus pares para cambiar su realidad a través de la investigación acción participante y resulto interesante el nivel de cohesión observado en el trabajo en colectivo.

En la construcción de la TSM, como conocimiento cooperativo, otro elemento importante de detallar está referido a la mediación. La cual constituyó el eje transversal de todo el proceso de construcción y reconstrucción del TSM. Mediación que se hace necesaria frente al propósito de construir conocimiento desde la reflexión sobre la práctica, con la participación colectiva, lo cual implica para los distintos y múltiples actores sociales el esfuerzo colaborativo, dirigido hacia el logro de objetivos comunes, integrando las diversas
perspectivas individuales a través del diálogo y la interacción social. Intención, que genera la necesidad de atender los conflictos que acompañan todo proceso de cambio, convirtiendo a los colectivos en un espacio para reflexionar sobre los diferentes factores que favorecen o inhiben los procesos de transformación de la cultura organizacional; así como, a la creación de conocimiento en forma compartida y cooperativa.

En los colectivos, se discuten abiertamente los conflictos y se acuerdan las acciones para proceder a superarlos mediante diversos tipos de mediación, distintos mediadores según la naturaleza del conflicto mediante acciones de negociación, acuerdos, intercambio conversacional, valoración de límites y alcances de los aprendizajes en mediación y los conocimientos que esta interacción inter subjetiva genera.

El proceso de construcción de la TSM, como conocimiento cooperativo, se fue logrando en un proceso recursivo; es decir en un ir y venir mediacional orientado a la construcción de conocimiento que contribuya a transformar la cultura de las escuelas y hacerlas más autónomas en la intención de elevar la calidad y autonomía de sus procesos curriculares-instruccionales-organizacionales y de relación con el entorno así como de la efectividad y pertinencia social de dichos procesos.

En este proceso constructivo se atiende tanto la construcción del saber cómo los diversos conflictos que acompañan al proceso educativo en las escuelas. En cuanto al conocimiento el proceso se inicia compartiendo y comparando las observaciones significativas u opiniones que tienen consenso entre los diferentes actores, la cual se logra con preguntas directrices, analizando las respuestas a dichas preguntas y aproximándose a definiciones aceptadas por el colectivo. Paralelamente, se descubren y exploran las disonancias cognitivas e inconsistencias, desacuerdos en las ideas, conceptos o enunciados. A la par se comienza a negociar los significados para producir co-construcción cooperativa del nuevo conocimiento.

Este conocimiento es sometido a prueba y a las modificaciones que su aplicación en situaciones reales, van reflejando. Finalmente, se media a partir de la aplicación un proceso de reflexiones meta cognitivas que muestran el entendimiento y la asunción del cambio registrado en las formas de pensamiento de los actores sociales en la producción de conocimiento como producto de la reflexión dinámica y permanente sobre el hacer del colectivo de las escuelas.

Este proceso de mediación, en las distintas dimensiones y perspectivas de la realidad escolar estudiada, permitió definir tanto al taller permanente como a los colectivos como escenarios de aprendizaje de reconocida riqueza y variedad que impactan los procesos cognitivos y meta cognitivos reflejados en la exhibición de nuevos valores en su comportamiento como investigadores de su propio hacer. Como valor agregado, los docentes-investigadores como los investigadores-mediadores reconocen la importancia de la construcción de una tecnología social pensada y orientada desde una perspectiva transdisciplinar que involucra lo psicológico, sociológico, pedagógico, biológico, axiológico, lo humano envuelto en su maraña de conflictos, la mediación que permite flexibilizar su construcción para dar paso a todos los factores significativos de los espacios educacionales.
que buscan mejorar o adecuar el hacer y el convivir, en la utopía, como el título del libro de Touraine (1997) *Vivir Juntos Iguales y Diferentes en una Sociedad Democrática*.

Lo complejo de la acción escolar-social permitió identificar, en el transitar de la construcción de la TSM, diversas y múltiples situaciones que demandaron de mediación, que revelaron las actitudes deseables en un mediador escolar, entre las que destacamos las siguientes: personalidad equilibrada, paciencia, compañerismo, prudencia, confianza en los otros, respeto a las diferencias y cuestionamiento crítico.

Del proceso de mediación se confirma la urgente necesidad de mirar al docente; en primer lugar, como una persona que demanda un tratamiento digno; en segundo lugar, como un profesional universitario cuya misión es la de formar a los ciudadanos para una sociedad democrática; y en tercer lugar, como un intelectual que maneja y construye un conocimiento especializado al servicio de la educación y de la sociedad como totalidad atendida.

En este momento se considera el hacer educativo como un fenómeno social complejo conformado por una diversidad de actores, variedad de elementos que dan lugar a una multiplicidad de relaciones, cuya evolución es impredecible. Por su parte, la TSM, en palabras de Miklos y Tello (2007, 150), está construida desde una” visión prospectiva donde se valora más lo procesual..., los aspectos cualitativos que propician actitudes, decisiones y acciones ubicándose en el ámbito de la relevancia y la trascendencia. La proyectiva da lugar a procesos integrados, integradores e integral”. Tal es el caso de los procesos educativos en los cuales hay que interpretar no sólo la imagen del futuro y de la realidad sino ampliar su alcance a la concreción de criterios de decisión para construir estrategias apropiadas a los cambios visualizables.

**El acompañamiento** implícito en todo proceso de mediación orientado al cambio intencionado resulta exitoso cuando el mediador o coordinador del proceso muestra una actitud abierta, a la imaginación, a aprender en los talleres permanentes y colectivos, espacios que promueven la reflexión. Sobre este comportamiento Meuler (1996) reconoce que sólo quien admite sus propias debilidades y las somete a una discusión abierta y transparente en su colectivo, puede desarrollar nuevos y profundos aprendizajes, apoyado en una mediación socializada de construcción y reconstrucción de la estrategia que orienta los procesos de cambio.

Finalmente, se destaca que el éxito de un equipo que investiga para promover cambios profundos y significativos en organizaciones sociales como la universidad, la escuela y la comunidad, depende; en primer lugar, del grado de compromiso de cada uno de los actores sociales participantes en el proceso; en la claridad de propósitos y en la disposición para compartir fortalezas y debilidades y; la disposición para estar atentos a su revisión permanente para reevaluar y superar los niveles y formas de aprendizaje. En segundo lugar, contar con un grupo o equipo interdisciplinario, integrado por docentes, padres, líderes comunales e investigadores de la universidad, dedicado exclusivamente a monitorear cada una de las acciones y resultados de las mismas. Un equipo que sea transparente en sus aspiraciones y con una disposición a compartir sus conocimientos y saberes, que crea en la gente y en su poder transformador, reconociendo las diferencias
presentes en cada uno de esos actores. En nuestro caso ese reconocimiento de nuestras diferencias nos ayudo a superar las crisis que surgen en toda interacción humana que intenta lograr, en el corto tiempo, transformaciones profundas en la cultura de sus organizaciones.

En el hacer entendimos que los cambios de cultura son lentos por cuanto el conflicto como generador de aprendizajes y cambios es un factor inherente a la condición humana A continuación se presentan la versión al final de TSM

**Gráfico 2: Versión al Final del Proyecto de Investigación** (Picón 2005,192)

Finalmente, se retoma la intención que promovió la acción investigativa del equipo de investigadores-docentes, docentes-mediadores, para destacar que la TSM, incorpora como principio rector, el reconocimiento de la diferencia humana. Convicción a partir de la cual se diseñan acciones que buscan involucrar, en el hacer a todos los actores de las organizaciones estudiadas para forjar una ciudadanía para la democracia a través de la participación plena y decidida para conservar la libertad, lo que implica el desarrollo de una actitud proactiva, colaborativa y respetuosa por el otro y el medio ecológico que comparten. Erradicando las distintas formas de discriminación, mediante la construcción de un diálogo intercultural que fortalezca los patrones de convivencialidad, comunidades de procesos flexibles, abiertos, en permanente construcción y reconstrucción de la participación real como forma de vida y garantía de la democracia.

**Conclusiones**

La construcción de una TSM no debe ser vista como una estrategia para uniformar la acción participativa en las escuelas, sino como una estrategia orientadora de los procesos
La TSM se concibe como un marco provisional para la acción participativa, siempre abierta y flexible, siempre en plan de ser contrastada como un modelo semi-estructurado con suficientes espacios para que los actores pueden tener una genuina participación y la cultura escolar pueda ser captada sin distorsiones y con todas sus fortalezas y debilidades.

La TSM tiene carácter contingencial lo cual implica que deja espacios para que sea ajustada a las circunstancias específicas de cada organización social y para la iniciativa y creatividad de los participantes, siempre abierta, siempre en construcción.

La forma como se ha venido construyendo la TSM, implica un esfuerzo por parte de todos los actores para contextualizar su acción abarcando lo local, lo nacional, lo mundial, persiguiendo un equilibrio en la atención que se le presta a las demandas provenientes de los diferentes entornos, con una visión de estrategia que se construye con todos, que es epocal y que privilegia lo humano, se construye ciudadanía y se forma ciudadanos para la democracia.

Referencias Bibliográficas

Construir Ciudadanía desde el Nivel Inicial

Adriana B. Murriello
Directora General, Colegio Ward

Reflexión Inicial Desde una Historia-Presente que nos Duele

No hay democracia sin ciudadanía. El ciudadano/a es el actor social indiscutible en una forma de vida democrática. De allí la importancia crucial de formar una ciudadanía crítica y responsable, capaz de involucrarse activamente en la vida cívica y política de su país.

Reflexionar sobre el aprendizaje de la democracia en un país latinoamericano, con una historia cívico-política como la de Argentina, interrumpida por múltiples golpes de Estado, con miles de desaparecidos en la última dictadura, y en un reinicio de vida democrática que cumple en este 2008 apenas 25 años de continuidad, representa no sólo un desafío sino una enorme necesidad.

Durante décadas en Argentina, la formación cívica no ha ido mucho más allá del conocimiento de algunos puntos de la Constitución Nacional. Para quienes conocen algo de nuestra historia, resulta bastante claro que esa propuesta de enseñanza no ha tenido una influencia significativa en las conciencias y actitudes ciudadanas, o en todo caso la contribución ha sido en términos de pasividad. Creemos que es imprescindible modificar este estado de cosas, para lo cual es necesario renovar dicha enseñanza, lo que implica, además, revisar qué entendemos hoy en día por ciudadanía y democracia, cómo vemos sus interrelaciones y los aportes desde la educación.

Entendemos que ciudadanía y democracia son conceptos dinámicos, sociohistóricamente construidos. Analizarlos en relación con nuestro contexto, requiere considerar además de las dificultades teóricas que muestran un campo temático hoy en tensión, las peculiaridades propias de nuestra historia, en términos de dificultades concretas para el ejercicio ciudadano (Fernández 2001).

Dicha revisión debe llevarnos no sólo a enriquecidos marcos teóricos que iluminen el análisis de las prácticas sociales y escolares, sino también a una renovación significativa de los enfoques y prácticas de enseñanza habituales. Creemos que la reflexión a partir de la
experiencia de nuestro Colegio puede ser de interés para otras organizaciones y un importante disparador para el avance en este campo en nuestro mismo Colegio.

**Un Presente con Historia**

Hacer este ejercicio de reflexión desde una institución educativa como el Colegio Ward\(^7\), resulta una aventura que se remonta a sus 95 años de vida. Fundado en 1913 por misioneros protestantes (metodistas; se suman los Discípulos de Cristo en 1917) que se instalaban en un país de fe mayoritariamente católica, el Colegio se dedicó a una misión cristiana inspirada por valores democráticos (Bonnano 1963) y con un notable énfasis ecuménico, rasgos identitarios que se mantienen en la actualidad.

Hoy en día el Colegio Ward reúne niveles educativos que van desde Nivel Inicial hasta el Superior, contando además con una Escuela Especial, un Instituto de Perfeccionamiento Docente, múltiples programas culturales y deportivos abiertos a la comunidad y hasta un centro para la tercera edad. Este diverso universo de experiencias formativas tiene una extensa trayectoria en esto de aprender democracia construyéndola a partir de esta base de heterogeneidad. Es bueno señalar también que pese a tratarse de una institución privada, con una población mayoritariamente de clase media profesional y comerciante, gracias a políticas de becas institucionales de larga data, la conformación social se amplía, incluyendo hijos del personal del Colegio, hijos de pastores de las iglesias fundadoras, alumnos de escuelas estatales de la zona becados en mérito a sus primeros años de estudios para continuar aquí el secundario. Por otra parte, hay sectores que presentan en sí mismos perfiles diferentes al de esa mayoría. Tal es el caso de la población de escuela especial, del bachillerato de adultos y del nivel terciario. Esta heterogeneidad en la composición social del alumnado representa desde la perspectiva del aprendizaje para la convivencia democrática un interesante desafío y una óptima oportunidad para aprender democracia desde la vida cotidiana misma.

Desde tiempos muy remotos, el Colegio Ward ha tenido estructuras participativas y democráticas de decisión. Surgido a consecuencia de la estrategia misionera metodista norteamericana de fines de siglo XIX y principios de siglo XX, de fuerte inspiración liberal, heredó características organizativas como la de una Junta Directiva, que surge de una Asamblea, cuyos miembros son elegidos democráticamente por las iglesias fundadoras. Se ha caracterizado por convocar a sus estudiantes secundarios (Bonnano 1963) a reuniones o asambleas para tratar temas diversos, y por estimular la conformación de grupos estudiantiles, como el propio Centro de Estudiantes y otros que han dado cabida a las posibilidades de expresión y organización de los adolescentes. En años más recientes, el Consejo de Convivencia del Nivel Secundario, representa otra instancia de decisión democrática. Es interesante la incorporación de la figura de representantes docentes, quienes son habitualmente convocados a reuniones de discusión académica para trabajar junto con coordinadores y directivos, ante situaciones de conflicto y otras. Por otra parte, nuestros alumnos desde preescolar hasta el fin de su formación, trabajan temas relativos a derechos del niño, derechos humanos, y eligen anualmente delegados/as de curso, reconocidos por la institución como referentes de los grupos.

\(^7\) Para referencias institucionales ver www.ward.edu.ar
El proceso de elección es en sí mismo un interesante aprendizaje democrático, que con los más chicos toma la forma del ritual electoral tal como se desarrolla en nuestro país para las elecciones presidenciales. Nos referimos a que se arma el cuarto oscuro, hay boletas, hay urnas; tienen autoridades de mesa, control de documento de identidad, etc. Es especialmente interesante ver dicha experiencia en Nivel Inicial, donde finalmente la votación define el nombre de un grupo o de una sala. Con los años, los más grandes llegan a conformar listas que compiten por ganar el Centro de Estudiantes Secundarios. Ello implica la necesidad de discutir ideas, tejer acuerdos, producir una plataforma de propuestas e ideas para llevar adelante; organizar una campaña de difusión de sus ideas. Luego, sólo resta la organización del acto electoral.

Otro rasgo interesante de resaltar es la notable capacidad asociativa de la comunidad wardense. Esto se manifiesta en grupos de padres que se nuclean espontáneamente en torno a temas de interés como la Comisión de Música, de Handball, el Grupo de Teatro, además de la octogenaria Sociedad de Ex Alumnos. Ante problemáticas específicas, sea de la propia institución o ante desafíos solidarios, es natural convocarlos y trabajar activamente con ellos. Lo mismo sucede con la ‘Casita de la Amistad’, el centro para la tercera edad que funciona en el predio. Creemos que este rasgo implica un enorme potencial, un verdadero ‘capital social’, que no siempre se logra aprovechar cabalmente.

Estos rasgos fundacionales e identitarios del Colegio Ward se han conservado a lo largo de los años, aunque con énfasis e impulsos diversos según las gestiones institucionales y las etapas históricas de nuestro país. Hoy en día estamos trabajando para resignificarlos y potenciarlos, no sólo por su importancia en términos de identidad sino también por su inescindible trascendencia en lo que hace a la formación de nuestros alumnos/as como ciudadanos que impactarán con sus futuras decisiones y acciones en nuestra vida social y política.

Aprender Democracia en la Escuela Exige que la Escuela Sea Democrática

Compartimos el sentir del filósofo argentino Carlos Cullen, cuando refiere a la escuela como “el tiempo de la esperanza” en la crisis de la utopía (Cullen 2004). También la maravillosa expresión de Pablo Gentili y Chico Alencar sobre los educadores como

---

8 Nos referimos a que se arma el cuarto oscuro, hay boletas, hay urnas; tienen autoridades de mesa, control de documento de identidad, etc. Es especialmente interesante ver dicha experiencia en Nivel Inicial, donde finalmente la votación define el nombre de un grupo o de una sala.


10 Un ejemplo relativamente reciente fue la colaboración conjunta para dar auxilio a personas de una de nuestras provincias que estaban sufriendo graves inundaciones: http://www.ward.edu.ar/agenda/Abril2007/Abril050.htm

11 Ver una referencia a la obra de Kliksberg sobre el tema en: www.ucla.edu/vera/investigacion/compendio8/capital.htm
“guardianes de la duda” y “militantes de la esperanza” (Gentili 2001, 23). Sin embargo, más allá de las paredes de un aula en la que grupo y docente trabajan y se vinculan, hay una organización escolar que alienta, desalienta, condiciona, inhibe o promueve este tipo de aprendizajes. Puede hacerlo desde el discurso expreso o a partir de las rutinas cotidianas, las normas regulatorias, las actitudes hacia los escolares, el personal o las familias.

Educar para la libertad exige espacio y ocasiones para la práctica de la autonomía; educar para la democracia requiere la vivencia de un clima democrático y participativo. Educar para la ciudadanía en el siglo XXI implica el conocimiento de los deberes y derechos, el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico, la capacidad de cuestionarse sobre la realidad, la sensibilidad y empatía con el otro diferente, la voluntad de transformar prácticas injustas o desiguales, la disponibilidad para el compromiso activo y una actitud de vida ‘militante’.

Algunos años atrás, Michael Apple (1995), refiriéndose al caso de los EEUU, definía las condiciones para la vida en democracia. Dichas condiciones constituyen una preocupación central para las ‘escuelas democráticas’. Pese a las diferencias de contexto, vale la pena recordar aquí esas condiciones dada la relación que es posible hacer entre tales características y algunos rasgos propios del Colegio Ward, al interpretar su función educativa a partir del marco dado por los principios teológicos y sociales de las iglesias fundadoras. Apple refería por ejemplo a la “apertura a corrientes de pensamiento que – sin importar su popularidad – permitan un alto grado de información; la fe en la capacidad individual y colectiva para encontrar soluciones a sus problemas; el uso de la reflexión crítica para analizar y evaluar ideas, problemas y políticas; la preocupación por el bienestar de otros y por el bien común; preocupación por la dignidad y derechos de las personas y de las minorías; una comprensión de que la democracia no es tanto un “ideal” a ser perseguido sino más bien un conjunto de valores “idealizados” que debemos vivir y deben guiar nuestra vida como pueblo; la organización de instituciones sociales para promover y extender un modo democrático de vida” (Apple 1995, 7).

Las escuelas democráticas deben ser espacios para el aprendizaje y el ejercicio de la democracia. Esta máxima deweyana debe, para Apple, verse plasmada en estructuras y procesos democráticos pero también en un currículum que lo sea. Agrega que no hay modo de asegurar una forma de vida democrática si no es aprendiendo en la práctica lo que ello significa. Coincidimos con el autor en que esto que puede parecer una afirmación casi obvia, evidencia no serlo cuando uno encuentra que para muchas personas la democracia no es más que una forma de gobierno, lejana a su realidad cotidiana. De hecho, en algún sentido es esta una de las dificultades con las que nos hemos encontrado al trabajar estos conceptos con nuestros alumnos del Nivel Superior, jóvenes que han transitado otras experiencias educativas, en instituciones diferentes a la nuestra. Al indagar acerca de lo que entienden por democracia y por ciudadanía, las respuestas no van más allá de definir la primera como una forma de gobierno en la que el ciudadano tiene el rol de hacerla posible mediante la emisión del voto, cuestión que hemos abordado en otro trabajo (Murriello 2005). En una realidad de país donde el escéptico gana rápidamente adeptos y cuando en reiteradas ocasiones la ciudadanía se ha visto decepcionada por prácticas seudo-

12 Para los principios sociales de la Iglesia Evangélica Metodista Argentina, ver pág. Web: www.iglesiametodista.org.ar
democráticas, la visión de la democracia como algo más que un mero mecanismo formal de renovación de autoridades y la de la ciudadanía entendida como práctica sociopolítica activa, constituye un tremendo e imprescindible desafío y necesidad.  

Por su parte Henry Giroux (1993) nos recuerda algunas de las muchas enseñanzas de John Dewey en este terreno, su apreciación del valor social de la educación, por lo que encontraba una fuerte conexión entre escuela y vida comunitaria. En palabras de Jesse Newton, “No se puede alzar ningún muro entre la escuela y la comunidad. Los niños y los jóvenes solamente pueden aprender a convertirse en miembros de la comunidad siendo miembros de ésta. Resulta obvio que no basta con el puro estudio de la democracia... de la misma manera que una sociedad democrática no se centra en el niño, ni tampoco en el adulto, una escuela para la democracia no puede centrarse en el niño, ni en el adulto, ni tampoco en la ‘escuela’” (Giroux 1993, 137).

El Colegio Ward, dada su historia fundacional ha tenido una fuerte impronta en este sentido. En el presente, se está aprovechando una situación de coyuntura que ofrece ricas oportunidades que no sólo facilitan el nexo con la democracia en un sentido más amplio, sino que además proporciona un ejemplo que muestra la posibilidad de construir ciudadanía y ganar elecciones innovando respecto de las posturas habituales que tanto escepticismo y decepción han generado en nuestro país. Nuestro Colegio se encuentra emplazado en Villa Sarmiento, al oeste del Gran Buenos Aires, formando parte del Municipio de Morón. Este municipio viene desarrollando una interesante estrategia de construcción de ciudadanía a partir de fuertes convicciones y del desarrollo de diversas prácticas de democracia participativa. Experiencias tales como la de presupuesto participativo, audiencias públicas, banca pública, consejos vecinales, elección del defensor del pueblo, entre muchas otras, van construyendo un importante camino de experiencias que podríamos llamar ‘alternativas’. Desde el Colegio tratamos de aprovechar las ricas oportunidades educativas que esto ofrece, tanto desde lo institucional general (participación en reuniones de vecinos convocadas por algunos de los temas mencionados, firma de un Acta Acuerdo de Instituciones de Villa Sarmiento) sino también de poner al alcance de nuestros estudiantes ocasiones significativas para tomar contacto con

13 Además de algunas tristes experiencias de seudo-participación sufridas en distintos momentos y circunstancias, la crisis del 2001 que instaló el slogan “Que se vayan todos”, aludiendo a los representantes y marcando altos niveles de desconfianza y descalificación del sistema de partidos, marcan la trascendencia de caminos alternativos que hagan posible una nueva esperanza en términos de reconstrucción del contrato social. Asimismo es deseable que sea posible transitar experiencias que renueven el sentido de la política, hoy en día tristemente igualada – para el ciudadano argentino medio – a conveniencia, amiguisimo, o corrupción.

14 Los misioneros fundadores venían fuertemente influenciados por las ideas de la Escuela Activa en EEUU.


16 Ver http://www.ward.edu.ar/agenda/Mayo2006/Mayo04.htm; www.ward.edu.ar/agenda/Noviembre2006/Noviembre090.htm

17 Ver http://www.ward.edu.ar/agenda/Agosto2007/Agosto030.htm
funcionarios, hacer llegar inquietudes o propuestas, participar en instancias en las que, según su edad, pueden hacerlo. Por otra parte, nuestros estudiantes mayores han tenido oportunidad de participar en asambleas y en elecciones de presupuesto participativo, en las que han hecho aportes y comentarios críticos de sumo interés, adoptando luego una mirada ‘vigilante’, rasgo necesario desde una perspectiva de ciudadanía activa y crítica, respecto de la ejecución de los proyectos votados. Como institución educativa preocupada con la actitud pasiva de la amplia mayoría de nuestra población, celebramos estos escenarios que dan la posibilidad concreta de desarrollar el marco necesario para que sea posible salir del individualismo y del escepticismo, para pasar a jugar un rol ciudadano activo, participativo y comprometido.

Giroux marca que un concepto emancipatorio de autoridad resulta una categoría central de análisis teórico para organizar a las escuelas como ámbitos democráticos, lo que nos anima en este camino de revisión que mencionamos anteriormente.

**Construcción de Ciudadanía, Bien Común y Solidaridad**

Seguramente podemos coincidir que en buena medida aquello que por el siglo XVIII los revolucionarios franceses llamaban ‘fraternidad’, tiene bastante que ver con lo que hoy en día denominamos ‘solidaridad’. En tiempos de aquella revolución “que sentó las bases para la constitución de los estados y las democracias modernas, el ciudadano, actor social significativo en el Nuevo Régimen, debía poder desarrollar este espíritu fraterno, esta conciencia solidaria de proximidad al otro (Murriello 2006). Este reconocimiento del otro como diferente a mí, pero igual a mí es posible básicamente a partir del amor y la identificación con el otro (Rousseau 2005). De allí que la cercanía teórica y práctica de conceptos como solidaridad y democracia, resulta bastante clara.

Cuando Rousseau (2005) refería a la ‘voluntad general’ o al ‘bien común’ no aludía a una mera suma de voluntades, en el primer caso, o de intereses en el segundo. Se refería en cambio a un orden superior, que trascendía las individualidades. Lúcidamente, el filósofo decía: “El hombre natural es todo para sí; él es la unidad numérica, el entero absoluto, que no tiene otra relación que consigo mismo o con su semejante; el hombre civil sólo es una unidad fraccionaria que posee un denominador y cuyo valor está en relación con el entero que es el cuerpo social. Las buenas instituciones sociales son las que mejor saben desnaturalizar al hombre, quitarle su existencia absoluta para darle una relativa y transportar el yo a la unidad común, de suerte que cada particular no se cree ya uno, sino parte de la unidad, y no es ya sensible sino en el conjunto” (Rousseau 2005, 12).

Esto está ciertamente quebrado hoy en día y se reitera la imagen del interés mezquino o corporativo elevado a la categoría de prioridad impostergable. Es necesario ubicar esto en un contexto de fuerte retirada del Estado de sus obligaciones acaecida durante los ’90, en pleno auge neoliberal, época en la que se hace aún más patética la ya existente ficción jurídica de la igualdad del ciudadano, al decir de Roberto Follari, a partir de mínimas condiciones que posibilitan tal representación (Follari 2003).

Carlos Cullen nos ayuda a continuar la reflexión en esta línea al afirmar: “No basta con presuponer que la sociedad es una relación cooperativa de los hombres. No lo es, debe
serlo, pero, para eso, la cooperación tiene que ser vista como un bien en sí mismo. Y esta es la dificultad de los planteos contractualistas ... La solidaridad ni es una propiedad ‘metafísica’ ni es una ‘ ficción metodológica’. Es básicamente una experiencia: la del nosotros y sino siempre estará lastra da de ‘competitividad’ o ‘rivalidad' salvaje” (Cullen 2004, 60).

Pero es necesario aún avanzar un poco más, retomando las primeras afirmaciones de este acápite para esclarecer un punto fundamental. Podría llegar a interpretarse que en lo que hace a acciones solidarias desde el Colegio creemos suficiente una expresión meramente caritativa o altruista. Peor aún, se podría entender que son formas de una ‘solidaridad lite’, tranquilizadora de las conciencias de la clase media acomodada. No es así como lo entendemos desde lo institucional. Si bien hay algunas acciones de carácter asistencialista, ello se da en un contexto de trabajo general en el que la experiencia de solidaridad está basada en una comprensión liberadora de la educación. Una visión develadora y reveladora de los mecanismos sociales que legitiman las desigualdades y promueven la exclusión, con miras a lograr sensibilidad y compromiso social. Desde una mirada ética, responde al imperativo del valor de la vida digna para todos y todas, donde la preocupación por el otro debe ser anterior al otro conocido; debiera ser la del otro ’sin rostro’ (Skliar 2005).

En este aspecto, también tiene la institución una larga trayectoria. Viajes solidarios, eventos comunitarios que ponen al Colegio en diálogo con otras organizaciones sociales o municipales (Murriello 2003), experiencias que llevan a una interacción con el otro, lo que implica un compromiso y la “incomodidad” que es consecuencia del abrir realmente los brazos en forma generosa y desinteresada han sido y continúan siendo formas concretas de encarnar en la vida cotidiana el ideario institucional.18 El Colegio Ward se ha caracterizado además por abrir sus puertas solidariamente a la comunidad educativa del ámbito estatal. Además de facilitar reiteradamente sus instalaciones para usos múltiples por parte de escuelas públicas de la zona, durante muchos años albergó una Escuela Primaria para Adultos. En la actualidad, a raíz de una situación de emergencia, está cobijando a un Jardín de Infantes público del barrio cuyo edificio no está habitable. En momentos muy difíciles de la vida de nuestro país, luego de la crisis del 2001, se organizó un ciclo, muy intencionalmente llamado: Para una ciudadanía solidaria, abierto a la comunidad en general, que buscaba promover el encuentro entre las personas del barrio o de la zona, además de los de la propia comunidad educativa, a través del abordaje de temas de interés social.19

Todo ello da muestras de una institución que ha hecho de la solidaridad, entendida en los términos antes mencionados, una oportunidad para involucrar a su comunidad, y

18 El Colegio Ward se ha caracterizado además por abrir sus puertas solidariamente a la comunidad educativa del ámbito estatal. Además de facilitar reiteradamente asus instalaciones para usos múltiples por parte de escuelas públicas de la zona, durante muchos años albergó una Escuela Primaria para Adultos. En la actualidad, a raíz de una situación de emergencia, está cobijando a un Jardín de Infantes público del barrio cuyo edificio no está habitable.

19 Ver www.ward.edu.ar/agenda/junio04/junio031.htm y www.ward.edu.ar/agenda/junio04/junio03.htm
muy especialmente a sus niños, adolescentes y jóvenes, en acciones concretas de práctica solidaria respetuosa.

**Aproximando Alguna Certeza “en un Océano de Incertidumbres”**  
(Morin 2002, 17)

La expresión de Edgar Morin: “Es necesario aprender a navegar en un océano de incertidumbres a través de archipiélagos de certeza” (Morin 2002, 17) es singularmente bella en lo metafórico y clara en lo descriptivo. Sintetiza además una sensación con la que frecuentemente nos encontramos quienes trabajamos hoy en día en educación. Más aún, cuando se trata de campos que, como el que nos ocupa, están en fuerte debate en la actualidad.

Como institución educativa que confiesa y practica una fe cristiana comprometida, tenemos una postura con la que intentamos ser coherentes y que procuramos se revele en nuestras prácticas cotidianas, en un clima institucional de libertad y cuidadora disciplina, en un enfoque liberador del tratamiento que damos a los contenidos curriculares, en una disposición a revisar nuestras ‘verdades’ institucionales y personales, en la preocupación por el otro u otra diferente, vulnerable, pertenezca o no a nuestra comunidad. También sabemos que no siempre cosechamos lo sembrado, no siempre logramos lo que queremos, no siempre las experiencias salen como deseáramos. Nuestros alumnos y familias desarrollan por lo general un muy intenso sentimiento de pertenencia. Así es que solemos hablar de las ‘familias wardenses’ o del ‘espíritu wardense’. Sin embargo, me gusta insistir en que el ser ‘wardense’ no es un mero ‘apellido’ que llevan nuestros egresados. Ni es la ‘marca’ de un ‘producto educativo’. Tampoco es el necesario gentilicio para definir la procedencia. Si así lo entienden nuestros alumnos y sólo esto se llevaran nuestros egresados, poco significativa sería nuestra tarea.

En realidad, trabajamos día a día, con los pies sobre esos pocos, “archipiélagos de certeza” (Morin 2002, 17), para construir una ética, una postura frente a la vida, un compromiso y sensibilidad que confiamos sea el rasgo distintivo de nuestros egresados/as. Eso que muchos ex-alumnos llaman el ‘espíritu del Colegio’ y que desde una mirada más técnica podríamos definir como el proyecto filosófico-pedagógico de la institución: fe, valores, actitudes, sueños, utopías y coraje ciudadano para llevarlos adelante.

Pese a cumplir los 95 años, y aunque es mucho lo transitado, sentimos que estamos en camino y que seguramente es mucho aún lo que nos falta. Sin embargo, reconocemos que es valioso el itinerario que venimos transitando, con sus luces y sus sombras. En lo personal, conducir una institución con estas características representa un serio y fuerte compromiso que desafía mis convicciones y mis prácticas, ahora en el campo de la gestión, en las que confío pueda vislumbrarse también esta apuesta a nuevas formas de organización y de conducción posible que lleven en lo institucional a experiencias de confianza, libertad y creatividad que siembran la esperanza en la posibilidad también de prácticas sociales más justas y democráticas.
Referencias Bibliográficas

Rousseau, J. J. "Emilio, o de la Educación." El Pensadero; Revista de Filosofía - Especularidad y espectacularidad: Algunas Consideraciones sobre la Relación entre Otredad y Subjetividad, Junio 2005.
Learning and Practicing Democracy: Analysis of Classroom Practices and Discourse in Pakistani Secondary Schools

Karim Panah
The Aga Khan University

Introduction

The existence and success of democracy is dependent on a number of factors, notably, complete state making, societal cohesion, a relatively equitable, although not equal, distribution of income and wealth (Ayoob 2005). In addition to these factors, in the context of emerging democracies, education, particularly at secondary school levels is seen as playing a crucial role in the promotion of democratic citizenship among young learners. This paper attempts to highlight some of the dominant patterns in classroom discourse and practices that either facilitate or hinder the promotion of democracy. The discussion of the paper is focused on categories of knowledge, skills and attitudes offered and emphasized in the classroom by secondary school teachers in the context of Pakistan.

The paper is divided into three sections. It begins with a description of the theoretical framework, research questions, and the research design. The second section presents the results of the data analysis followed by discussion, conclusions and implications of the study for the project of democratization through schooling in Pakistan.

Democratization and Education: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives

David Held (2006) argued that if democracy means 'rule by the people' (Adeyemi 2002; Heywood 2002; Alexander 1999), then there is a need to decide on who are to be considered as ‘the people’ and what kind of participation in governance is envisioned for them. Moreover, in order to ensure people’s participation, what conditions are required and what capacities should people have to act as active participants in the governance? Educators and researchers claim that schools produce individuals with an outlook that enhances one’s desire and capacity to participate in the political life (Gutmann 1999; Dewey 1916/2002; Dobozy 2007). In order to ensure that schooling promotes democratic participation, teachers would need to organize classroom experiences in a way that enables learners to enhance an understanding of the political conditions using critical skills.
Freire (2005) suggested that schools should promote “critical consciousness” among students by engaging them “in an active, dialogical, critical and criticism-stimulating method of teaching and learning” (p. 124). A new relationship between teachers and learners is sought, whereby everyone could participate in the decision-making process and share authority in terms of information, ideas and skills (Apple 2003 and 1979; Gutmann and Thompson 2004; Hess 2004; Dobozy 2007) that govern the discourse and practice.

The literature offers certain sets of knowledge, skill, attitudes, and types of classroom teaching strategies that are likely to facilitate students learning and practice of democracy (Sezer 2008; Negel 2008; Beane and Apple 2007; Frerie 2005; Habermas 1996; Gutmann 1999). It is suggested that knowledge should include understanding of the concept of ‘democracy’, meaning ‘freedom, equality, justice, participation’ along with knowledge about ‘local issues and conflicts’, ‘community related topics’, as well as ‘environmental issues’ that directly and indirectly affect the individual and collective life of citizens. Likewise, the major skills required to become democratic citizens includes ‘critical and high order thinking’, ‘decision-making and problem solving’, ‘choosing between alternatives and making informed judgments’ and ‘fair and effective communication’. Moreover, both teachers and students should demonstrate attitudes that express ‘self-esteem and social commitment’, ‘willingness to participate in politics’, ‘concern for dignity and rights of individuals and minorities’, and ‘faith in the individual and collective capacity to create possibility for solving problems’.

The teachers claimed that civic education has not been given due attention by government, department of education and even the parents. That is way civics is taught in government schools, as optional subject while none of the private schools that I visited taught this however, Pakistan studies is compulsory in all schools. Nevertheless, teachers also stated that Social Studies and Pakistan Studies as subject are given lesser time on the school timetable and also perceived as easy to teach, therefore, normally teachers with lesser qualifications and lesser competence are asked to teach this subject. My own analysis of national curriculum document as well as the civic education curriculum indicates that democracy and democratic citizenship is not highlighted as major aims of teaching and learning.

**Research Question and Design**

This paper presents part of a larger research project that aimed at exploring secondary school teachers’ conception about democracy and its enactment in the classroom. The paper is based on one of the subsidiary questions for the study; how is democracy projected, practiced, and promoted (in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and interactions) in the classroom?

The large research project used a “sequential transformativie” model of multi-methods design “giving voice to diverse perspective” (Creswell 2003, 216) of teachers on issues related to the conceptualization and practice of democracy. The design included two phases of data collection and analysis, starting with a survey method and then expanding to the critical ethnographic methods (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998) on the initial findings. For
the purpose of this paper I use data on the classroom discourse and practice collected through classroom observations.

The participants of this research were four teachers, (two from government and two from private sector secondary school) in Karachi, Pakistan. The participants taught Social Studies, Civics and Pakistan Studies in secondary classes (Grade 8, 9 or 10) and expressed their willingness to participate in the project. Similarly, the school heads and the teachers acted in *loco parentis* to approve students’ participation in the project.

I observed 32 lessons, 8 with each teacher during three months of fieldwork. Each teacher was approached once a week as per a mutually agreed schedule and each classroom observation took an average of 30 to 40 minutes. I used passive observation and priority observation methods wherein teacher was identified as the first priority and what he or she did and said was recorded in detail while students remained as second priority (Carspecken 1996). I produced detailed and lengthy narratives on each session with the help of running notes, which were recorded in both English and Urdu (the national language) in accordance with the language policy of the selected schools.

**Results of Analysis**

In this section I present an analysis of the classroom discourse and practices to highlight the categories of knowledge, skills and attitudes and patterns in teacher-students interaction.

**Content Offered in the Classroom**

The total 32 sessions that I observed dealt with a variety of topics and themes in three different subject areas: Civics, Pakistan Studies/Social Studies\(^1\). The common themes discussed included ‘political history’, ‘types of regimes’, ‘governance and law making’, ‘citizenship’, ‘economy’, ‘geography’, and ‘international issues’. As portrayed in Vignette 1, the content largely reflected the official content, approved by the state through the Ministry of Education, Textbook Board and Bureau of Curriculum, of political history. This official version argued that Pakistan was created as an Islamic state to function democratically. It is argued that the struggle for creation of Pakistan was inspired by the realization that Hindus and Muslims were two different nations. The account claims that in united India a Hindu majority imposed their culture on Muslims; therefore, Muslims needed an independent country of their own. This account of history ignores the Mughal rule over India, which began in the early 1500s, and ended in the mid-19th century, encompassing the entire subcontinent. The empire was one of the finest examples of multicultural and multi-religion societies in the world. Moreover, teachers’ accounts of the history of Pakistan also refute the role of non-Muslims in the struggle for Indian independence from Britain and the subsequent creation of the independent state of Pakistan.

---

\(^1\) Pakistan Studies and Social Studies included components of history, geography, and civics
Vignette 1: Reflecting Categories of Content Offered

Class: IX.

Subject: Pakistan Studies.

Topic: Objective Resolution.

SS: Good Morning Miss

Tr. Good Morning and Aslamualikum - sit down please [After few introductory remarks the teacher wrote on the chalk board] “Objective Resolution” - This is our topic for today's session.

Tr. This is on page 114. What do you mean by constitution?

[Students responded in Urdu]

S1. Taqreer [speech],

S2. Qanoon [law],

S3: Aain [constitution]

Tr. Good--- Aain is a collection of laws – constitutions [Teacher reads from the textbook and explains]

“New countries emerge on the map of the world on the basis of geographical boundaries. Generally because of political or social disputes a huge country disintegrates into smaller geographic entities to be recognized as independent countries. Pakistan is the only country that was created on the basis of religion. It was created so that Muslims of the sub-continent could live their lives according to Islam”. [Reads from the Textbook and then asks questions]

Tr. What were the major objectives of establishing Pakistan as country?

S. It was politics.

S1: There were many religions and Indian government was Hindu.

S2. Many Muslims adopted Hindu religion.

S3. Hindus were progressing.

Tr. Pakistan was established so that Muslims could act upon their religion freely... Hindustan was a Hindu majority country and the laws would have been made under Hindu religion and cultural influences, so for Muslims it would have been difficult to practice their religion. They wanted an independent country so that they could freely apply Islamic principals in their political, social, and cultural life.

[Students are asked to repeat what the teacher said. Teacher reads another paragraph from the textbooks and explains].

Tr. The second objective was to establish an Islamic state, which would create strong links with other Muslim countries and strengthen mutual cooperation and support. They would benefit from each other’s resources as taught by the concept of Islamic brotherhood. Pakistan would be an Islamic state with laws made under
the guidance of Quran and Sunnah. [Read from the textbook and explained with questions].

Tr. What is needed to run a country?

S. Qawaneen. (laws)

Tr. Yes, to run a country there must be laws and since ours is Muslims country so the laws are Islamic...After partition the most important task was to ‘develop a constitution’. Therefore, Quaid [Mr. Jinnah] established a Constituent Assembly in 1947 and it was assigned to draft a constitution.

Tr. What is an assembly?

S. Group of people.

Tr. In 1949 Objective Resolution was passed as the first attempt towards the making of Islamic laws. It was demanded that no laws be passed in contradiction with the teaching of Quran and Sunnah and ideology of Pakistan. [Reads from the book and explains].

Tr. The Objective Resolution clearly acknowledged the sovereignty of Almighty Allah and that people’s authority is the delegated authority from Allah. There is a great difference between Islamic Democracy and Western Democracy. In Islamic democracy ‘equality, freedom and justice’ are important principles and universally applicable under the authority of Allah and rulers of the country are servants of the public but accountable in front of Allah.

[The session continued. In rest of the time the teacher talks about history of constitution making in Pakistan and role of the media in current political scenario.]

Another interesting concept discussed in this vignette is the claimed difference between conventional democracy and the Islamic democracy. As illustrated in the vignette, the teacher claimed that Islamic democracy offered more “equality, freedom and justice”, compared to the Western democracy. It is argued that democracy would only be relevant in the context of Pakistan if Islam guides the constitution; however, they refuted all kind of dictatorships as constraining people’s participation. It was reinforced that legislation would be guided by the belief that human beings were authorized to act in line with the commandments of Allah as explained in the Quran (not included in the vignette). It is stated that the pledge was made by the political leadership of Pakistan through passing the ‘objective Resolution’ in 1949, which confirmed that the head of the state would always be a Muslim and that all laws would be reinterpreted according to the principles of Islam. It was also stressed that the initial attempts to make the constitution did not succeed because the drafts either contradicted the Islamic provisions or did not match the personal motives of the individuals in power.

Skills Emphasized in the Classroom

2 Resolution adopted on 12 March 1949 by the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan which combines features of both Western and Islamic democracy, is one of the most important documents in the constitutional history of Pakistan. At the time it was passed, Liaquat Ali Khan called it “the most important occasion in the life of this country, next in importance only to the achievement of independence”.

229
In the overall observation, ‘skill development’ emerged as the most neglected aspect of the classroom discourse and practice. In general, students were expected to read and memorize text, and recall from the teacher’s talk during and after the lessons. Students were seldom provided with opportunities and resources to enhance their skills in the classroom. Vignette 1 reflects that no opportunity was available for students to acquire and promote skills important to become independent learners, critical thinkers, and informed citizens. Some of the skills emphasized included reading, writing and memorization that did not show any specific relation to the promotion of democracy.

In one of the three selected schools, comparatively more progressive approaches to teaching and learning were observed where ‘communication’ and inquiry skills were verbally emphasized and practiced. The communication skills included making a presentation, making a speech, and writing and sharing poems and stories. Inquiry skills were emphasized through activities such as self-exploration, collecting and analyzing information, reading for comprehension, asking questions, and imaginative thinking. Students were encouraged to share their creative work in the classroom. Student work showed a strong potential for promotion of creative and imaginative thinking, and self-expression.

**Attitudes Emphasized in the Classroom**

Vignette 2 demonstrates that the classroom discourse emphasized characteristics of good human beings and good Muslims. Such habits encompassed fair conduct and morality as defined in the teachings of Islam. The Prophet of Islam was portrayed as a role model who never asked others to do what He Himself did not practice. Two aspects of the classroom discourse and practice were helpful in making inferences about the type of attitude emphasized. First, during the talk, teachers explained various traits as desirable to becoming a good human being. Students were advised to adopt such attitudes. Second, patterns in physical and verbal interaction between teachers and students in the classroom symbolized preferred attitudes. Together, the two sources indicate that students were largely expected to follow moral standards as set by the teachings of Islam and actualized by the Prophet of Islam through his words and acts. Hence, students were expected to show ‘respect for teachers’, ‘respect for family and elders’, ‘respect for professional authority’, ‘obedience’, ‘loyalty’, ‘cooperating with government’ and ‘respect for the law’.

**Vignette 2: Reflecting Emphasized Attitudes**

Class: This is a combined session of class 9 girls section and class 8 boys section. The girls of class 9 have completed their projects under the supervision of the teacher and now they are going to share the findings with the class 8 boys.

Topic: Good Human Being

Enrolment: 30 (all present)

[The session starts with students greeting the teachers on their entrance into the room and then they are directed to be seated. The teacher gives instructions about today’s work.]
Tr: Today students of class 9, section C (girls) were asked to share their presentations and the theme for the presentation was “Perfect Human Being”. In total there were three groups each group comprising of six members who had prepared handouts, posters and other materials. The presentations were organized under three themes: Good Habits, Self-responsibility, and Citizenship responsibility. Each group made a brief presentation and took questions and comments from the audience that comprised of the other students of the same class. [here I report only one presentation].

Group C: Citizen Responsibility

G_M1. We will talk about citizen responsibilities, it is about working in the community and that improves your service learning.....there are several important responsibilities but the most important ones are as follow;

1. Obey the rule and regulations of the country.
2. Care for your environment.
3. Pay taxes in the favor of government

G_M2: 1. Don’t interfere in other’s beliefs, 2. Don’t abuse others.
3. Work for social organizations

4. Encourage charity, 5. Mind your own business

G_M3: 1. Vote in the election
2. Cooperate with government
3. Have national ID card and passport

4. Do you love your country? [Students say Yes]... if you want to show that you love your country, obey the laws... in our country no one obeys the laws... societies will survive if they obey the laws... cooperate with government

S [From audience]: if government does not give people the rights how we would perform our responsibilities? .... [The group is silent]

Tr. Don’t blame others... look at your own work --- this is about self-responsibility

[Bell rang and the session is over].

Other expressions in this category included; ‘obedience, ‘being fair’, ‘respecting religious diversity’, ‘morality based on religious interpretation’, ‘freedom within boundaries’, ‘dominance of family and society’, ‘respect for rule of law’ ‘don’t tell lies’, and ‘don’t steal things from others’. Attitudes were presented as approved by Islam and examples from the life of the Prophet were cited to support the claim.

Analysis of the Forms of Classroom Interventions

The analysis of the ‘forms of intervention’ identified a range of teaching strategies used by the teachers. The dominant form was the ‘lecture’ method. As portrayed in Vignettes 1 and 3, lectures were extended teacher-talks based on textbook content.

Vignette 3: Depicting a Typical Classroom Lecture

Class: 9

Subject: Civics

Topic: Individual and the Society
[Teacher started the session by asking students to recall the title of their previous lesson]

S: ‘Civics: importance, benefits, and scope’.

Tr: An individual cannot isolate him/herself from society and therefore we need to understand our place in the society. [Detailed explanation on the importance of civics as school subject].

Tr: Today we are going to learn about ‘relationship between individuals and the society’.

Tr: Who is individual?

SS: [No response].

Tr: Unit of the family [draws a diagram on the chalk board showing how individual, family, and society are interlinked] every individual is an important member of a family and it is the family that shapes the personality of that individual. [The teacher then wrote on the chalk board “Responsibilities of the family”, took a book from one of the students, read and explained]

Tr: a) Reproduction and continuity of generations [afzaish-e-nasel], b) childcare, c) cultural transfer [siqafat ki muntaqli].

[Teacher used examples from everyday life and her own experiences ‘how families take care of the members in various stages of human life.’ Teacher invited the students to ask questions.]

Tr. You must ask questions in the class, if you don’t speak you won’t learn. [no response]

Tr. Ask about the history of civilization and socialization that you had discussed last time. [No response]

S: (from the front row) We remember the story of how human being changed themselves from cave men to a more civilized group.

Tr. Yes, people adopted different roles and occupations to form a society. We can criticize our society for wrong doings and misconduct but we cannot abandon...

Tr. What is the name of our country [this is class 9]. How many constitutions were formulated since independence?

SS: [no response – question had no relevance to the topic so teacher answered own questions...The lecture continued with teacher reading paragraphs from the book and then explaining the concepts for students.]

Tr. There are 12 points about the responsibilities of family given in your book so read the book and understand the concepts.... any more questions? Remember if you study hard you will be able to ask questions so be serious about your studies and keep your notebooks and reading books ready. [The session ended].

The usual format of the lecture included a recap of previous lesson, teachers reading and explaining text, students answering the teacher’s questions and a conclusion by the
teacher. Vignettes 1-3 demonstrate that teachers read from the textbook, rephrased the paragraphs, asked questions from students and then continued reading a new paragraph. Sometimes teachers brought in examples from the local context and personal experiences to enrich the explanations and make it relevant to the context of the students. During the ‘talk’ teachers occasionally used the chalk board to ‘draw diagrams’ or write difficult words and their meanings so that students could copy them in their notebooks. The lectures usually ended with a summary of the explanation and the teacher inviting students’ questions, by stating “Now you can ask questions if there are any”.

Vignette 3 illustrates that though the teacher expected students to participate in the ongoing talk, the overall classroom environment and the delivery of the lecture did not facilitate students’ participation. In general, the principle of ‘read-recall-recite’ guided the classroom discourse and practice, which did not require critical thinking. Rather the method encouraged students to swallow the textbook content in its entirety. An apparent focus was on the textbook content and the teacher advised students to read and memorize from the book. In some cases, the teacher would also ask students to mark or underline certain portions of the text as important to be memorized. Overall, strategies used by the teachers did not involve democratic processes of active participation that required skills of critical thinking and analysis.

Other less applied forms of intervention included ‘hands on individual task’, question-answer’, ‘group work’, ‘whole class sharing’, ‘creative writing and reflections’. Each strategy was tightly structured and executed mechanically so that everything in the syllabus was touched within the given timeframe. The ‘rigidly structured’ classroom discourse and practice lessened the intensity of teacher-student engagement, bringing it down to the superficial level of just completing the syllabus. This was confirmed by some of the participants who pointed out that they faced tremendous challenge in completing the officially prescribed syllabus.

Analysis of Patterns in Teacher-Student Interaction

The dominant communicative approach observed in the classroom (13 out of 32 sessions) was ‘authoritative and slightly interactive,’ wherein textbook content was transmitted by the teachers with minimum levels of students’ participation.

Vignette 4: Reflecting Authoritative-Slightly Interactive Approach

Class: 9 (co-ed)

Subject: Pakistan Studies

Topic: Quaid-E-Azam [Mr. Jinnah] as Governor General

[As usual on our arrival students greeted us by standing up and shouting ‘Good Morning’. The teacher comes wrote on the chalk board: ‘Discuss the main problems confronting Pakistan when Quide-e-Azam became governor general of Pakistan’]

Tr. This is our topic for today [Teacher reads from the book and explains in Urdu, the national language]. Being the founder of Pakistan Quaid [Mr. Jinnah] gave guidelines about the form of the government to be established which was main
problem. He appointed Liaqat Ali Khan as Prime Minister and this was an indication of establishing a parliamentary form of government. He used to attend cabinet meetings to guide government on issues of national interest. [Reads from textbook “Making Constitution was another problem...”]

Tr. what is the meaning of constitution

S: [no response]

Tr. what are the basic element of governance?

S: Qanoon [Urdu: law or constitution]

Tr. Constitution--- is needed to run a government, without it no government can exist... Quaid [Mr.Jinnah] wanted the constitution to be framed as soon as possible because at the time of partition British-made law was implemented in the subcontinent. Quaid also guided on the tenets of law and constitution...[Teacher reads from the textbook “Quide said that the basic principles of our constitution should be derived from Quran and ....”]

S: The guiding principle--- also Sunnah

Tr: Yes both Quran and Sunnah were referred to as sources of guidance for the constitution making of Pakistan.[Teacher read from the text: “Changing attitudes of government officials...”] Quaid wanted government official to be appointed on merit and their commitment to work so that officials do not serve self-interest using illegal means. He was against all sorts of corruption and emphasized the need to create an environment where women could work freely and use their full potential. [Teacher reads from the book and the session continues- Date: November 8, 2007]

As illustrated in Vignette 4, teachers in this approach normally read from the textbook and then paraphrased the text in their own words to make it easier for students to understand. Teachers did not encourage multiple perspectives or use reference material other than the textbooks to enrich the content. We therefore termed the approach ‘authoritative’.

At times the approach was more interactive because sometimes the teacher attempted to involve the students in the talk by asking questions. However, students were expected to base their answers on the information given in the textbook and their responses were in single sentences. Moreover, student-to-student interaction was absent and none of the comments made by students were further discussed, hence the discourse became ‘slightly interactive’.

The second dominant approach that the analysis illustrated (10 out of 32 classroom sessions) was ‘authoritative and non-interactive’ communication, illustrated in vignette 5.

**Vignette 5: Reflecting Authoritative-Non-interactive Approach**

Subject: Social Studies

Class: VIII

Topic: World Population
Tr. Walikum salam. Sit down [teacher goes to one of the students, picks up a book and asks another student about the topic, then writes on the chalkboard] ‘World Population’

“Today we are going to learn about population including ‘division of population’. Since ‘world population’ is our topic so we will look at population around the world. First of all ‘what is population?’ Population is the group of people who live together in a particular area for longer periods [answers own question without waiting for students]. So population could be seen at village level, at city level, at country and at the world levels. The second question is that ‘how do we divide the population?’ There are places densely populated and there are places where population is very thin. In our country…”

[The session continued for around 30 minutes and the teacher continued to read from the textbook and explain in her own words. No contribution from the students was observed.]

As represented in Vignette 5, the dominant communication approach was ‘authoritative and non-interactive.’ The teacher-talk was textbook oriented and did not involve any other reference to substantiate explanations. Moreover, students were passive recipients of the information; they were involved in individual assignments. In dealing with topics related to history, politics, and religion, such an approach is problematic because it ignores other possible perspectives. Vignette 5 illustrates one-way flow of ‘officially approved textual information’ and students were expected to memorize and reproduce the content. Students in this example were completely non-participative, they neither interacted with the teacher nor among themselves. The ‘authoritative and non-interactive’ communication approach hindered the promotion of democratic practices in the classroom.

As illustrated in vignette 6, analysis showed that the dominant (in 15 out of 28 lessons) ‘pattern of interaction’ was ‘Teacher Question-Student Response-Teacher Feedback’ (TQ-SR-TF), wherein the teacher asked questions, students responded and then the teacher commented on the response.

**Vignette 6: Reflecting sequence of dialogue**

Class: IX

Subject: Pakistan Studies

Topic: Objective Resolution

[The session involved a range of topics including constitution making in Pakistan, the fundamental rights and rights of minorities. Discussion in the classroom largely occurred in question-answer form.]

Tr. The country belongs to Muslims but all minorities are free to practice their religion, and culture…their fundamental rights are protected…do you know what fundamental rights are?

S: Freedom

S: Our rights
S: Bread, Clothing and Shelter

Tr. Don’t you think that education, health, employment and housing are your fundamental rights? These are called fundamental rights, and then ‘independent judiciary’ so that everyone would access and benefit from judiciary equally and freely. So it is important that no one would misuse judiciary.

S: Media should also be independent [currently government has banned some of the private TV channels in Pakistan]

S2. What type of a media?

S: Newspaper, news channels but not dramas

Tr. To what extent media should be independent is a tricky question—media should not propagate only against the government --- [Bell goes on and the session is closed].

The lesson took the form of a dialogue when the teacher reciprocated with quick feedback and explanation to what the students said. The dialogue was sometimes expanded, by involving other students to comment on the responses given by a student or the teacher.

**Discussion**

John Dewey (1916/2000) stated that the cause of democracy is a moral cause for the dignity and the worth of individual and that if people are to secure and maintain a democratic way of life, they must have opportunities to learn what that way of life means and how it might be led. I conducted this study with the firm belief that schools can provide young learners with the opportunity to learn and practice democracy.

Antal’s (2008) comparative analysis of religious nationalist ideology in government schools in India and Israel that projected fellow citizens of different faith as religious others and propagates dominance of the majority religion. Consequently democratization and democratic citizenship is not taken up seriously (Ahmed 2004; Nayyar 2004; Dean 2000; Saigol 1993). As a result, the content presented in the textbook does not connect to the communities and biographies of real people, but rather biographies of individuals disconnected from the realities of the “lifeworld” of the learners (Beane and Apple 2007). My own analysis of the textbook content (Grade 9 Civics and Pakistan Studies) reveals that a large volume of content on Islamic history deals with the life histories of Islamic Imperialist rulers and scholars who preached Islam. The political history of Pakistan as reported in the textbooks illustrates an incomplete account of the independence movement and propagates hostility of British rulers and Hindu majority towards Muslims. This interpretation encourages ‘exclusion’ by portraying religious ‘others’ as enemies of Muslims and that the independence movement was a purely Muslim struggle to create an Islamic country (Nayyar 2004). Similarly, a dual representation of the Islamic and conventional interpretations of democracy, citizenship, and legislation, are portrayed as opposing models rather than compatible.

It is interesting to note that despite being aware of the deficiency in the textbook content, the teachers do not attempt to fill the gap. They engage themselves in an exclusion
based on classroom discourse. The dual representation of democracy, in terms of ‘conventional model’ and ‘Islamic model’ reduces the chances for reconciliation between the two because the Islamic model is presented as superior than others. The discourse becomes complex when it lacks enough evidence to describe the Islamic model of democracy. For example, though the teachers refute all kinds of dictatorships in favor of democracy, they still advocate the authoritative version of Islamic jurisprudence and an exclusive interpretation of citizenship wherein the ‘religious other’ is denied equal status.

To discuss the ‘rights and responsibilities’ of citizens, the textbook as well as the teachers use neutral phrases such as “every citizen [Urdu: Her shehri]” but at the same time rights and responsibilities of non-Muslims are discussed under separate headings. Therefore, classroom discourses encourages authoritative trends not only in terms of interpretation but also because the teacher controls conversation, and alternate voices are not encouraged. Hence, the study demonstrates that the classroom discourse not only offered less for students to learn about democracy but also reduced the chances of practicing democracy in the classroom.

The study also demonstrates that in their perceptions of the teacher-student relationship, teachers prefer professional authority to the individual autonomy of students (Pace and Hemmings 2007). Despite the realization that students should actively participate and claim ownership for learning outcomes, teachers show a strong quest for control over classroom. The apparent preference for authoritative mode is inspired by traditional interpretation of discipline wherein the teacher is held responsible to ensure that students follow rules and regulations as set by the school. The important part of this perception is the claim that teacher is authorized to decide about ‘what is good and what is bad’ for the learners. This means that classroom decision-making is controlled by the teachers rather than shared by the students as beneficiaries of such decisions.

Prominent pedagogue Hooks, stated that a democratization project would not ‘seek simply to empower students,’ but rather a ‘holistic model of learning where teachers also grow and are empowered by the processes’ (cited in Lakes 1996). The prevailing patterns in teacher-student interaction in our study apparently do not facilitate empowerment of both teachers and students. Rather it reduces the learners’ role to a passive recipient. Hence, by invoking the traditional model of in loco parentis authority (Pace and Hemmings, 2007) the teachers expect students to obey the legitimized authority of the teacher who acts as a boss. The study shows that teacher-student interaction seldom turned into a ‘dialogue’ where ideas are challenged and theories are reconstructed. This finding confirms the claim that teachers hold ‘authority in terms of information, ideas and skills,’ and use this authority to maintain dominance in the classroom (Apple 2003 and 1979; Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Hess 2004). In fact, skill development emerges as the most serious weakness of the classroom discourse and practice wherein students are treated as passive-participants. The prevailing communicative approach offers lesser opportunities for students to participate in the deliberation effectively and therefore to enhance their learning. The study demonstrates that teachers lacked an awareness of the need to and the abilities to promote skills that involve collecting and analyzing information, interpreting and synthesizing results, making informed decisions, arguing with reason and thinking
critically. Consequently, fewer chances are available for students to develop skills that are regarded as highly important to promote young learners as democratic citizens.

With reference to attitude development, the study demonstrates that teachers emphasized on the characteristics of ‘good human being’, or ‘good Muslim’ which for them is also the characteristic of good citizens. The emphasized traits included loyalty, submission, obedience, and morality with particular reference to the traditionally understood interpretation of Islamic nationhood. In agreement with other researchers and political scientists (i.e. Saigol 2000), I argue that such construction of attitudes is likely to promote passive citizenry among students. However, it is important to note that this is not because Islam encourages passivity; rather it is due to the negligence of the emancipatory spirit of Islamic sources of knowledge and the historical events in making of the Muslim society. So, without capitalizing on Islamic values that inspired diversity, pluralism, and justice as principles for a fair human conduct (Nayyar 2004), teachers intentionally or unintentionally promote a culture of exclusion, which is divisive and works against the spirit of democracy (Engineer 2008; Antal 2004). The classroom discourse and practice did not demonstrate openness to attitudes that reflected individual and collective capacity to create possibility for solving problems, to struggle against inequalities.

**Conclusions and Implications**

Democracy cannot be learned through memorization of information. Democratic citizenship requires a real experience of a democratic practice. The execution of the vision for democratic citizenship can be difficult within the constraints of traditional instruction, and a crowded curriculum. In fact curriculum as translated into the textbook content carries a dual representation of democracy and related concepts apparently influenced by the prevailing ambiguous discourse on conventional democracy and Islamic democracy. The issue is that neither the textbook content nor the teachers’ interpretation offers a clear and practicable model of an Islamic democracy rather ambiguous language is used to argue for compatibility of the two models. It is evident from my own analysis of the textbooks (Civics for Class 9 and Social Studies for Class 8) and also from the teachers’ comments that textbooks contained a huge bulk of content that did not relate to the current socio-economic and religio-political conditions of the society. The textbooks offer much information on Muslim history and biographies of various religious scholars and preachers however, lacked update information and discussion on operational aspects of democracy (Islamic or otherwise), citizenship, human rights and other issues. These concepts need to be discussed in a wider context of global society with a specific reference to the immediate locale of the learners.

Overemphasis on textbook content and dominance of teacher-talk could further constraint learners’ active participation and the chances of bringing in multiple perspectives to be discussed. Hence, learners are likely to grow up with submission to unquestioned ‘truths’ and linear arguments. Less emphasis on skill acquisition and less opportunities for high order thinking and processing of information is likely to lead students to be self-interested as well as socially and politically insensitive adults. ‘High-order thinking’ is a cognitive process that requires learners to manipulate information and ideas in ways that transform their meaning and implications. This happens when students
Learning and Practicing Democracy

Panah

bring together facts and ideas in order to synthesize, generalize, explain, hypothesize or interpret.

Moreover, emphasizing on ‘submission to authority and morality’ may reduce the chances of flourishing ‘creativity, curiosity, and self‐respect’ in the learners. In order to address these issues teachers need to be provided with the knowledge and the environment that encourages challenging and questioning the held beliefs and personal theories. This could be done by employing more emancipatory approaches of teaching and learning (Antal 2008; Dobozy 2007; Beane and Apple 2007; Freire 2005) in teacher education programs in general, and civic education in particular. Teachers should be able to offer opportunity for dialogic and interactive classroom discourse and practices that would promote democratic dispositions in students.

This is important not only because it will provide learners with an environment to develop self‐esteem, confidence, and will enhance the understanding of their own socio‐political context. This is also important because the future of Pakistan as an emerging and promising democracy would depend on the commitment and capabilities of the citizens and the civil society organizations. However, classroom discourse and practices by the teachers would not yield positive results if contradicted by the larger context of school and society. There are varied tiers and types of education systems in Pakistan where issues of disparity in educational status, access, opportunity and participation by different social classes and gender have reduced the chances for schools becoming nurseries for promoting democratic conditions.

Further, the society in general is in the grip of growing religious extremism, lack of tolerance among different segments, and domination by non‐democratic actors with multiple identities such as ethnic, religious, linguistic, and others. The existing circumstances are likely to create an environment hostile to progressive, emancipatory and liberating pedagogies. Schools and teachers may consider themselves vulnerable and handcuffed individuals. Therefore, to enable teachers to play their role in promoting democracy and democratic values, the society as whole would need to go through a process of transformation.

References


239
Learning and Practicing Democracy


Learning to Participate: Considerations for Promoting Collective Action during School Activity

Carolina Scavino  
National Council of Scientific and Technical Research  
Quilmes National University and University of Buenos Aires

Nora E. Elichiry  
Director of the UBACYT P045 Project  
University of Buenos Aires

Ma. Cristina Chardon  
Quilmes National University  
University of Buenos Aires

Carola Arrúe  
Member of the UBACYT P045 Project  
University of Buenos Aires

Introduction

This work arises from the development of a PhD thesis project by one of the members of the P045 Research Project under the supervision of Professor Nora Elichiry. It also comes from the work conducted as part of a research program, led by professor Cristina Chardon, entitled, School and Family: a space for interaction and joint participation to promote development and learning in school age children.¹

This project is a case study carried out at a public elementary school located in one of the poorest areas of the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina (Dirección General de Estadística y Censo 2008).

¹ Prof. Ma. Cristina Chardón is the Director of the PhD thesis and Prof. Nora Elichiry is its Co-Director; PhD. Eduardo Gosende is the Tutor of Studies. This thesis can be carried out thanks to a Fellowship granted by Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET – National Council of Scientific and Technical Research) reporting to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Productive Innovation under the Argentine President.
This paper aims to consider the scopes and limitations of the implementation of certain actions by that school to promote “school community” participation and improve their practices.

This initiative started in March 2007 by the current school headmaster and his teaching team when they set Ethical and Citizenship Education as the focus for the school’s institutional project. To such end, they were trained and decided to work throughout the year on different activities aimed at promoting public education, citizenship, respect for cultural diversity, behaviour and codes of conduct, school discipline, care for school assets and property, and compliance with school rules, standards and timetables, etc.

Activity at this school is conducted in two shifts of four hours a day: a morning shift, from 8:00 am to 12:15 pm, and an afternoon shift, from 1:00 pm to 5:15 pm, with an estimated population of 400 students each.

The team consists of a headmaster, a deputy headmistress, two secretaries, the surveillance personnel and the cooking staff who all work 8-hour days. The teaching staff and the cleaning personnel are also involved in the project and work 4-hour rotating-shifts.

The school is located in a factory area and it mainly accepts students of both genders from the neighbouring shanty town. The school population is characterized, therefore, by low income children and by its cultural diversity. Many of the families living in the shanty town come from the interior of Argentina or from neighbouring countries such as Bolivia, Paraguay and, to a lesser extent, Peru.

Throughout 2007 this institutional project facilitated a variety of artwork that were posted by students relating to subjects such as living together and life in society. In the inner yard and in the classrooms there were a variety of pictures, posters, placards, drawings, song lyrics, and poems portraying the various topics that teachers and students had been working on under the Ethical and Citizenship Education framework. Some of these topics included companionship, solidarity, social and familial violence, and cultural and racial diversity. It was also within this context that the school director began to implement short daily meetings at the beginning of the school day when students would greet teachers and salute patriotic symbols. These ‘school meetings’ are intended to open alternative channels of communication among members of the school community.

These discussion spaces were not highly formal but rather spontaneous and required little planning or structure. They were mainly conducted by the headmaster but sometimes also by the deputy headmistress and, sometimes, by a secretary. Participation by teachers and students was also encouraged and, on some occasions, even parents who stayed at school to salute the flag and watch their children go into the classrooms were

---

2 The notion of “school community” comprises not only teachers and students but also parents, school supporting team, school and neighbourhood authorities, and the local in general.

3 The teaching staff includes grade teachers, librarians, support teachers and teachers under focalized programs such as those working in priority action zones (ZAP, in Spanish), remedial teachers and resource-room teachers [for students who, rather than doing the course again, must review contents of their last grade together with that of the coming grade].

242
invited to participate in the discussions. However, topics were mostly proposed and led by the authorities, particularly, the headmaster.

The topics discussed were varied. Some issues dealt with students’ lack of responsibility in taking care of the school property, lack of discipline and subsequent problems at recess, issues concerning students’ irresponsible or dangerous behaviour such as pushing one another when going downstairs, or playing with passing trucks before coming into the school. In other words, meetings were mainly used to discuss topics that teachers and school authorities considered important for the organization of school activities. Discussions about extracurricular activities or the use of free time were less frequent.

Less frequently, these meetings acted as a starting point for discussion about current events and their effects on the school. These topics included reflections on teachers’ salaries, managerial issues in the educational system, and the presidential elections run in Argentina at the end of 2007.

Meetings were held in the school yard or at the entrance hall. Students lined up next to their teachers, all of them looking in the direction of the person addressing them (a teacher or school authority). The person leading the meeting was holding a microphone most of the time, they gave the opening greeting, brought in the topic for discussion and anyone interested in expressing their thoughts would then take the floor. Lastly, the students greeted the teaching staff and walked to their classrooms.

Watching the dynamic of these meetings made us reflect on the scope and limitations of participatory action during school activity and rethink the purpose of learning to participate in such an experience.

**Citizen Participation as a School Experience**

Meetings were generally triggered by a topic or event which school authorities proposed to all the teachers and students, and the statements exchanged were few. While issues were raised spontaneously, participation was generally very structured. For instance, those who spoke often read a written text that was previously drafted in connection with that topic. The headmasters knew in advance which students and teachers were going to speak and what they were going to say.

Participation was spontaneous only on a few occasions. For example, the proposal to stop work as a way to protest against the repressive acts that occurred in the province of Neuquén, which had caused the death of a teacher, provoked spontaneous participation from students and teachers. On this occasion, a teacher with a trade union background took the floor without prior knowledge of the headmasters.

---

4 For instance, one of the topics discussed with the students was top authorities’ lack of support to fill management positions remaining vacant during 2007.

5 It refers to the death of a male teacher, surname Fuentealba, on April 5, 2007 caused by the police force in the Province of Neuquén, as a repressive measure adopted against a road cut organized at a teachers’
These meetings could also be held during the school day if an event or situation required it. One day, for instance, upon arriving at the school we found that the headmaster was talking to all the students sitting down in the yard. The scene was quite amazing. Thousands of children were grouped by age, all sitting quietly and listening to the headmaster who was asking them to vote on how they were going to behave during the next recess.

As we watched, we asked a teacher the reason for this meeting, and she said that students had misbehaved during the previous recess. We later spoke with the headmaster and commented on the scene we had viewed. He said that he felt disappointed that he had created the meetings because he was not receiving enough support from the teachers. The headmaster pointed to the teachers’ lack of cooperation and teamwork in his attempt to encourage the children to be more self-aware. Teachers had stayed in the teachers’ lounge instead of coming into the yard to help with the meeting. The headmaster commented frequently that he found it difficult to sustain and promote the dynamic of the meeting due to this lack of support.

This attitude became such an obstacle for the headmaster to successfully conduct the participatory activities that by the beginning of the 2008 school year he stated that meetings would continue only if the teaching staff would commit to them. To create this commitment, the headmaster delegated the responsibility of organizing the meetings to the teaching staff. As the headmaster explained, he had made this decision to involve the teachers who considered this type of activity a waste of time. This way of handling difficulties began to raise some questions with regards to the meaning and goals of participatory practices within schools.

The meetings were one action among several which attempted to promote community participation. Other examples include, ‘the suggestion box’, and the ‘time for inquiries’, which was implemented at parents’ meetings in order to collect ideas and proposals concerning the school.

These experiences have helped us identify several layers of analysis for the topic of participation. We consider participation as an issue requiring an interdisciplinary analysis in line with the complexity of the school context (Elichiry 1987; Elichiry 2000; Elichiry 2001; Elichiry 2004), and we acknowledge that participation is an activity that conforms to a certain “structure (Chardon 2005) but which also implies learning how to act in the world according to the interests of each social group (Scavino 2007). The question to be addressed at this stage is, why is it that “actors’ voices” are not heard loud enough when the school is requiring them to make themselves heard?

Participation means recognizing new ways of deliberating in civil society (Alvarez Leguizamon 2004). In other words, new ways of consultation and discussion, and likewise, a participatory democracy necessitates promoting citizenship education. However, what does ‘participatory democracy’ mean? Does it mean that it is necessary to educate citizens demonstration for better salaries.
or to think of new ways of educating? By rethinking education in terms of citizenship, are we exercising authority by acknowledging an exercisable right?

Arendt (1954) and Meirieu (1998) provide guidelines to think about these questions; they consider children’s education as mainly a question of authority. Raciere (2008) and de Greco (2005) draw a distinction between authority and knowledge, and works conducted by Milstein and Mendez (1999) allow us to understand the power of the school as a creator of subjectivity.

In other words, we can assert that education is an act of authority and, as such, we must ponder on the power held by schools. School is a place for exercising citizenship rather than a place to create citizens, because school is the site where students learn and risk their own belonging to a socio-cultural group.

School is an experience for a student to exercise citizenship and that student, upon adopting a hegemonic culture, may make decisions in the future (Elichiry 1990). In this sense, a teaching authority is central in guiding the children’s exercise of their citizenship. When seventh grade students were invited to take part in a poll in 2007 they were asked which of the seven years of schooling had been most significant to them and why. Some of them answered that the sixth and seventh grades were most significant because they felt that they had more authority over their younger classmates. These comments make us wonder about the meaning of their school experience.

Joan Font (2004) shows that mechanisms for promoting citizen participation may begin to a change governmental systems. We must ask, however, who should these citizen participation mechanisms be serving in the context of schools? What is the purpose of promoting the participation of young citizens? A possible answer may be to create spaces for rethinking the school experience as a living system made up of social relations between children.

When children start attending school, they go through significant social experiences, they face various social differences and behaviours, and they often wonder things like ‘Do I measure up?’ or ‘Should I behave like my schoolmates even though I don't like to?’.

Promoting citizenship participation is not achieved by applying techniques. Ziccardi (2004) states that the possibility to promote citizen participation depends on the type of democracy established and this also makes us think about the role of education in the democratic process. Likewise, Tenti Fanfani (2008) recognizes that the relationship between schools and society has changed. Schools must adjust to social claims and to students’ characteristics but not enforce the rules of the game unilaterally. In this situation, schools may well create a platform for dialogue, thus validating their existence in a democratic system founded on promoting citizenship value.

Citizen participation implies giving up control and becoming a responsible person with a democratic conscience (Poggiese 2001). Therefore, a re-formation of the purpose of education goes hand in hand with new styles of democracy.
School experience must be reviewed to make room for new practices. To provide a few examples, family participation does not only have to relate the maintenance of school infrastructure or children’s homework, penalty notebooks could be substituted by co-existence councils or school meetings, notice notebooks could be replaced with other ways of communicating with the family. Promoting these new rules would be viable if the goal of school activities is to create the conditions necessary to achieve these objectives (Engeström 1987; Rogoff 1993).

Participating means learning to respect rules, argue, listen, prioritize actions, give opinions with various actors, and manage social relations. Achieving a democratic collective action requires the promotion of learning competencies which are specifically for social participation. An initial change of the school experience through reflexivity, as Bourdieu (2003) suggests, may help to recognize and deal with the struggles for power and the subjectivities that hinder participatory action.

Conclusions: Schools in Contexts of Democratic Change

If we recognize that work at school requires reflexivity for the learning of new competencies to achieve collective action, then weaving collaborative work into the school experience may become a challenge. A network operates without hierarchies and acts as a complex system, dealing with several issues simultaneously thus facilitating a review of the traditional school practice (Poggiese 2000; Poggiese 2001).

Democracy as a governmental system has shown, that it is limited by its faith in ‘representation’ as a mode of civic organization. It is problematic that this system of governance assumes that ‘representation’ is ‘second nature’ and that rules and administrative control can guarantee democratic principles. To the contrary, one of the main consequences of this thinking is a “monopoly of political decisions” (Virno 2006).

Schools are not outside these processes and the subjectivities developed at school are a core subject of interest. As a form of social organization democracy advocates for an institutional framework and reciprocal relations among its members, which does not necessarily mean they are either harmonic or collaborative.

In this regard, Virno (2006) sees political struggle as a part of human nature and, therefore, tolerance and disagreement are competencies to be developed by the new democratic systems. Equality is not a point of arrival, or the result of a dialectic process arising from processes that reproduce inequality. Equality is a constant tension between normative regulation and possibilities for transformation. In other words, equality means preventing abuses and excesses of the human condition (Virno 2006).

The school experience is an environment where we are able to exercise our duty to promote democracy. The school experience is a meeting place between ourselves and others and our actions are deeply marked by this ‘betweenness’. There is no other way to overcome its implications (Hastrup 1992).

Change does not occur through individual behaviours but through exchanges with others and processes of social interaction (Rogoff 1997). In other words, it is necessary to
start implementing citizenship participation, focused on application, methodology and the process rather than focusing on the outcomes.

References


The Role of UNICEF in Fostering Democratic Values and Ideas through Education: A Case-Study of Sokoto State in Nigeria

Vaffi F. Sheriff
Usmanu Danfodiyo University

Introduction

Education is a process of acquisition by which an individual can be trained mentally and physically to be able to effectively live in society. Education can therefore be considered as a major national and international service, which should be directed to fulfilling human needs. According to Holborn (2004), education is an aspect of socialization, which includes the acquisition of knowledge and the learning of skills. With the current global concern on the need to fight illiteracy and socialize education for all men and women, especially in developing countries, this paper aims to respond to some ambiguities, realities and rhetoric about UNICEF’S attempt to contribute to the development of education in Sokoto state, Nigeria. In this respect, the paper has been divided into five parts. The first part of the paper introduces the background of the study, significance, scope and limitations. The second segment outlines the features of the educational system in Sokoto state, education as a development right for children and adults, the present situation of educational development in Sokoto focusing on pre-primary education, non-formal education, necessities of female education, and the contribution of UNICEF to education in community schools and Sokoto State. The third part introduces the instruments used in data collection, sampling and sampling techniques, validity and reliability, method of data analysis, and problems encountered in data collection and analysis. Part four examines the data presentation, analysis and discussions of the findings. The final part focuses on the future perspectives of the UNICEF Educational programme in Sokoto State. The paper will now commence by briefly looking at the geo-economic and historical background of Sokoto State in order to provide a context for the ensuing discussions.

Geo-Economic and Historical Background of Sokoto State

Sokoto State is located between longitude 11\(^\circ\) 30 to 13\(^\circ\) 50 East and latitude 4\(^\circ\) to 6\(^\circ\) 40 North. It shares borders with Niger Republic to the North, Zamfara State to the East and Kebbi State to the South and West. Sokoto State currently has a population of over...
2.6 million people based on the projection from the 1991 census figures. Out of these, women constitute 51% of the population, at 1,490,012. Most of the inhabitants of the state (74% or 2169,334) live in the rural areas while only 25.8% live in urban centers. (SSPA 2005 – 2007 p3). Sokoto State is made up of two main ethnic groups, Hausa and Fulani. Over eighty percent (80%) of the inhabitants of Sokoto State practice some form of agriculture.

Health is very crucial to the advancement of education, as only very healthy children can effectively participate in learning processes. The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) is one of the world’s best known organizations devoted to the health and welfare of children. UNICEF was established in 1946 and currently has over 200 offices in 115 developing countries. The current focus of the organization is on establishing long-term human development and providing emergency relief and rehabilitation assistance when needed. UNICEF is headquartered in New York, and works with children in 158 countries.

The programme plan of operations for Integrated Growth and Development shows that UNICEF has to contribute to the development of education in Nigeria. The objectives and goals of this programme are to contribute to at least a 20% improvement in net primary school enrolment, retention and educational attainment, and to a 20% improvement in access to, and use of, improved water and sanitation facilities in at least 111 Local Government Areas (LGAS) by 2007. This also includes a reduction in the number of out of school girls by 30% while improving their learning outcomes by 20 in the 111 + focus LGAS, and the promotion of mainstream child-friendly education. The basis of cooperation has identified female education as a crucial factor in the development of Nigeria.

The programme structure has been rationalized to ensure full integration of girls in formal and non-formal education activities, to ensure more adequate attention is paid to pre-scholars, to integrate health, hygiene and sanitation activities in education, and to integrate faculty initiatives more fully across sub projects. The revised programme structure is outlined below.

### Purpose of the Paper

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the contributions of UNICEF towards the development of education in Sokoto. Again, the research will also investigate the problems that primary education and adult learning programmes in Sokoto face, and what UNICEF’s contribution is doing to help alleviate the problems. The research aims to offer solutions to the above mentioned issues. It will also provide some suggestions for the improvement of the UNICEF humanitarian and educational mission in Sokoto. Furthermore, this project calls for the Nigerian government to double its efforts for effective outcomes for all children and adults in the state. This study is limited to Sokoto state. The (2002 – 2007) Federal

---


Government of Nigeria/UNICEF programme of cooperation focused on the rights-based approach to community development.

**Education in Sokoto State**

Western education came to Sokoto state later than it did to other parts of Nigeria. This late arrival, coupled with the people’s indifference towards and dilemma about adapting the “white man’s” knowledge and religion, made Nigerians in Sokoto state resistant to attempts to get their children to acquire a western education. This to a large extent explains their disadvantaged position educationally vis-à-vis sister states in the country. Development in Sokoto state focuses on the right of children to free and compulsory education, as enunciated in Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) Article 28.1a and Article 16-c, which supports unfettered access to relevant and alternative forms of secondary and vocational education that should also be made free. Article 29 emphasized the type of education that will aim at developing a child’s talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest. The rights of women to education are contained in Articles 5b, 10a-e and 14:26 of Convention for Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This seeks equal opportunity and quality in all facets of education including vocational training for women in both urban and rural settings.

Sokoto State, with its population of 2.6 million, 750,101 of which are school age children, and its 2,088 public schools, had a total gross enrolment ratio of 59.9% at the end of 2003, 40% of which are girls. This shows that as many as 45% of the school age children in the state were out of school in 2003. This data also shows a higher enrolment among school age boys (41.3%) than girls (18.6%). However, this is still lower than national average of 86% out of school boys and 75% out of school girls.

**Early child care / nursery (pre-primary education)**

The National policy on education (NPE, 1998 Revised) referred to pre-primary education as the education given in an educational institution to children aged 3 to 5 years, plus any education prior to their entering the primary school. The importance of giving young children the quality care, nutrition and stimulation needed for their healthy growth and development has increasingly been receiving recognition both internationally, and within Nigeria at large and Sokoto state in particular. Many eligible children are without access to the means to ensuring their right to education in this important first stage. This implies that many eligible children are denied their right to education. This is a clear violation of articles 28 and 29 of the CRC and the EFA declaration on the right to education and comprehensive early children care respectively.

Regarding the caliber of care-givers/teachers of pre-primary education facilities, it has been observed that the private pre-primary facilities are mostly staffed by Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (SSCE) or unprofessional care-givers/teachers that have no background on care giving or teaching. In addition to this, another problem is the death of unqualified teaching staff in the state schools. Except in the state capital, all other LGAS have the bulk of their teaching staff referred. Also, female participation in the teaching profession is very low with, most female teachers concentrated in the state capital schools.
Out of the 65,335 primary school teachers in the state only 8170 (13%) are females, while 57,165 (87%) are male.

The above presents a very alarming picture of the situation that women and children face in education. Low enrolments, high dropout rates, gender disparities, dilapidated infrastructure, and unqualified teaching staff in schools appear to be some of the areas of serious violation of the right to education in the state. The underlying causes of these problems are traceable to socio-cultural and economic factors in the state.

For the enhancement of the provision of basic education and to ensure access and equity to Qur’anic Islamiyya school children, the government schools have intensified efforts to organize various sensitization training workshops for malams (local Quranic teachers), parents and community leaders (SSPA 2005-2007 P58). But, what about female education in all of this analysis?

**The necessity of female education in Sokoto state, according to UNICEF**

In order for women’s education to be successfully implemented in Nigeria, some measures should be taken in account:

1. The establishment of special schools for girls
2. Lower cut off points for college entrance examinations
3. Efforts made to discourage the withdrawal of girls from schools

Also, material and cultural conditions of the home determine to a great extent the educational life chances of children.

The children of families with low socio-economic status suffer both material and cultural disadvantages, which influence not only their access to formal primary schooling, but also their performance in school work. Junaid (1993). Our aim here is to draw the attention of UNICEF staff to an important issue, that if anything is going to be effective in the educational programme in general, hard efforts should be concentrated on primary education before high education. In addition to this, government should also use media services for the enlightenment of parents about education. In this instance, UNICEF is cordially invited to contribute more to the government efforts in Sokoto.

**Main Causes of Poor Developmental Rights in Sokoto**

Regarding developmental rights in Sokoto, one can conclude that in this community very little progress has been made for the provision of facilities to meet children, youth and women’s development. Indeed, the primary school has now ceased to exist. Of the one pupil we met who found his way to secondary school, no support could be provided for him to continue his development, and he had to abandon his education on account of lack of

---

22 Some state governments have policies geared towards preventing the withdrawal of girls from school for marriage or for any other reasons. Of note is the Bauchi state withdrawal of girls from school for marriage (prohibition) Edict of 1985. Niger and Borno states also have legal provisions against the withdrawal of girls from school.
support. One major cause of this is the lack of continuity in service provision. For example, an adult literacy class was started in the 1980s but fizzled out before anybody could read or write. Thus, the state still has a sizeable illiterate population. Those who have had some period of Quranic study claim some reading knowledge of the ajemi script, but that is all that they know. Another basic reason for this lack of progress is the twin forces of poverty and ignorance, which set up a vicious circle of more poverty and greater ignorance. However, the tiny silver lining here is that the community is at last waking up to the fact that they have been left far behind on account of their lack of education. As people in the community noted, they have no representation in the local council or at the local government level.

Initially, the financial resources for education come from Federal, state and local governments, non-governmental providers such as religious groups, and individual households. It should be kept in mind that while basic education is supposed to be free in the public sector (in the sense that tuition fees are not charged for enrolment in federal and state schools), parents are responsible for many other direct and indirect costs, including textbooks, uniforms, and transportation. These costs, in a context of widespread poverty, have become one of the main causes of low school enrolment, particularly in the case of girls in parts of the North such as Sokoto state.

Although UNICEF is still working to develop educational infrastructure in Sokoto state, communities also participate in raising funds for education through the donation of land, building of schools, supplying of school furniture and equipment, and granting scholarships. Sometimes, Parent-Teacher Associations play an important role in mobilizing such contributions, which are noteworthy and should be encouraged (SAA 2001, p160). The following section of the paper will analyse aspects of the research data generated.

Data Collection and Analysis

The aim of this part of the paper is to analyse the obtained research data in order to be able to draw out the differences between rhetoric and reality in the information that has already been gathered relating to the contribution of UNICEF to the educational development of both males and females in Sokoto State.

Data Collection

In collecting the data, I used a descriptive survey, in which questionnaires were used to test the hypothesis on whether or not UNICEF’s contribution to the development of education in Sokoto State is real or imagined. The survey consisted of 39 questions related to the domain of the research. I used a combination of structured and unstructured questions. Through this method, it was possible to gather sufficient information about UNICEF operations in Sokoto. In addition to this, it was also possible to identify other relevant information from the questionnaires, as well as through verbal discussion with UNICEF staff and with the public in Sokoto.

A random sampling technique was used to obtain the sample. This technique was suitable for this research in terms of the time factor and cost of expenditure. It was not possible for me to visit all the schools and gather relevant information. Therefore, I selected
The Role of UNICEF in Fostering Democratic Values and Ideas through Education

Sheriff

five schools. From each school, four teachers were randomly selected from the staff list of each sampled schools. Through this process, I selected 5 headmasters and 20 teachers to participate in the study.

Validity and Reliability

I designed three types of questionnaires: one for local UNICEF staff residing in Sokoto, one for the teachers and headmasters, and one for the students. All the questionnaires were reviewed by my supervisor who made some corrections for validation. The questionnaires were administered to a sample of concerned persons to answer it, in order to collect the data obtained in the three samples which were relevant to this research finding.

In completing these questionnaires and interviews, I encountered some minor problems. Though many people readily filled in the questionnaires, some among these who were selected to participate in the study were very hesitant to do so.

Data Analysis

The collected data were presented in a table type using frequencies which are expressed in percentage besides, the analysis of the data concerned the explaining the implication of the computed percentages. Hypothesis and conclusion were also made according to the calculated percentage. Finally, a summary of the findings was underlined to show the result of analysis there in.

The data collected from these surveys will be used to examine the hypotheses underpinning the field work conducted in the course of the research. Analysis and a brief discussion of the findings will be done regarding the contribution of UNICEF to the development of education in Sokoto state, Nigeria.

Discussion and Summary of the Findings

The contribution of UNICEF to education in Sokoto has been investigated in this project to identify the differences between realities and rhetoric. In analyzing the data, it is apparent that a large number of people including staff, teachers and students agree that UNICEF has contributed and is still contributing to early child care (nursery schools), adult, and non-formal education.

The findings identified that the factors that determine access to education and the quality of education that children and adults receive in Sokoto are related to the internal and external factors associated with the education system itself. Internal factors include the inputs of education, such as school infrastructure, teacher equipment, and instructional materials. The external factors include government policy and the role of NGOs in supporting the delivery of education. When answering the research questionnaires, more than 60% of the respondents affirmed that UNICEF has contributed and still contributing to the development education in Sokoto state.

Moreover, within any job situation, qualification and experience are required in order to produce good outcomes. In regard to this, the staff demonstrated that experience partly determines the quality of output of the staff, which could influence administrative
effectiveness. Continuous assessment and training should be considered for staff, especially for new employees. Regarding funding contributed to education, it has now become clear to everybody that no organization could achieve its goals or success without basic resources interim of funding. For better educational attainment, the Education for All Declaration 2000, (EFA), signed in Dakar, Senegal provides the framework for action that should be taken into consideration. These include the following:

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for the most and disadvantaged children.

2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, with special emphasis on girl’s children in difficult circumstances and from ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

3. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015 with a focus on ensuring active enrolment of girls in all levels of education.

**The Future of the UNICEF Education Programme in Sokoto State**

In order for the UNICEF educational project to achieve significant goals in Sokoto, a clear understanding of the present situation in the schools and out of the schools will pave ways for success in terms of promoting increased educational levels in Sokoto state. According to the findings of this study, the prevailing evidence and realities demonstrate that UNICEF still has opportunities to continue its programme in future, but if any success is to be registered, more work needs to be done for the empowerment of education, especially women’s education. In particular, this still needs more funding, follow up, and evaluation.

As discussed above, a significant number of eligible primary school-age children were not in schools, and women’s participation in the teaching profession were very low in the Sokoto state capital schools. All these issues are challenges that face the people of Sokoto which UNICEF could contribute to more in future. Accessible education is a primary focus of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS). Nigeria is a signatory to these and many other national, regional and international conventions. National Assembly recently passed a bill on Universal Basic Education (UBE). In this context, what are some strategies that UNICEF has identified to support these trends? What programmes are going to be elaborated on in the future in order to enhance education in Sokoto?

**Strategies Identified**

For the successful implementation of UNICEF’s educational programme, a number of strategies have been proposed for possible adoption in Sokoto state to improve access to education for women and girl-children:

- The provision of basic education, vocational and life skills for out-of-school children and women through non-formal education in Sokoto
The Role of UNICEF in Fostering Democratic Values and Ideas through Education

Suggestions and Recommendations

1. Rural community participation in educational decisions and consultation should be supported and implemented throughout Sokoto state.

2. Participation of ‘Sokotists’ in the process of educational development in Sokoto should be encouraged.

3. Urgent attention should be given to the creation of a national UNICEF Documentation center, staffed by qualified statisticians and equipped with computers and internet connectivity to facilitate the storage and usage of education-related data.

4. UNICEF should cooperate with the Teachers Registration Council (TRC) to employ professional teachers in the UNICEF Humanitarian and Educational Programme.

5. Basic facilities such as furniture and books are highly needed and should be provided for the UNICEF Educational Programme in Sokoto.

6. UNICEF, with support from the state government, should double their efforts to make sure all children benefit from UNICEF programme, in order to accommodate for disparities in access to education among girls and boys.

Adeniran admitted that the threat to educational standard is easily perceptible, observable, visible and even tangible in our classrooms, and even in our empty and non-equipped laboratories etc.

According to Adeniran (2000), children are asking serious questions on serious issues of relevance to the future of education and to the survival of society. "They are saying, are we really getting education? They are saying, get us involved, we do have ideas on how things can be made to improve". According to UNICEF INPC 2000, the solutions to these problems should be found through agreement and willingness to involve every child in the educational system. However, governments have proven unwilling over the years to back policy frameworks with adequate budgetary allocations, making it difficult to provide sufficient school classrooms, train enough teachers or even pay them adequately and provide the other input necessary for the realization of the country’s educational goals. To date, no government has been able to meet the internationally, recommended minimum 26% (UNICEF, Vision, 2010) budgetary allocation for education. Whether any success can be recorded in this context will depend on how serious each tier of government is in deploying its own role properly. The government has legal and moral responsibilities to allocate special funding and manage primary education and Adult learning.

---

23 This can only be done with significant support from the government.

The Role of UNICEF in Fostering Democratic Values and Ideas through Education

Conclusion

There is no doubt that UNICEF contributes to the development of education in Sokoto. This paper also pointed out that UNICEF has played and is still playing an important role in the humanitarian arena, in fields such as education. This gives people in remote areas, towns and cities an opportunity for empowerment. It also shows that UNICEF’s contribution to education creates hope for rural communities and schools.

There is a need to hold a symposium in Sokoto to discuss the effective implementation of adult education. Through this symposium, the organizers will be able to identify the number of people who need adult education programmes and the kinds of programmes that are relevant to them. UNICEF can also collaborate with rural communities to organize symposiums by themselves.

Moreover, UNICEF should increase and reinforce adult education initiatives in Sokoto by financing or providing instructional material and books or building centers for adult education. UNICEF can also provide literacy classes for adults and utilize media as an educational tool, which has become vital for the expansion of knowledge among people.

The paper has proposed the participation of rural communities in the development of education in Sokoto because such participation can also enhance UNICEF educational programmes. The paper has also called for the reform of pre-primary and post primary education, and emphasized the great importance of adult education. Education is very pivotal to the development of both rural and urban communities in Sokoto. For any society to advance in today’s world, it must educate not only its male but also its female population. This is emphasized in Sokoto where about 51% of the female population lack access to education, which accounts for more than half of the potential labour force. If this percentage is left uneducated it will create numerous social and economic problems for Sokoto state. This is where the involvement of an international organization like UNICEF becomes not only desirable but highly necessary. UNICEF has both the resources and connections to make a difference in the educational development of Sokoto. To this end, its programmes should be need-based and targeted to reflect changes in the lives of the rural population, where in most cases, education is accorded less priority. Lastly, the role of UNICEF in fostering greater educational advancement in Sokoto is commendable. However, greater efforts may be needed to reach the remote confines of the state.

References


The Role of UNICEF in Fostering Democratic Values and Ideas through Education

Sheriff

Federal/Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Social Development (FMWA). 1995.
Education, Democracy and Social Justice: The Australian Experience – Doing Thick Democracy in the Classroom

David Zyngier
Monash University

Abstract

This paper begins with a brief examination of the Australian educational context in relation to the policy reforms of the previous governments (1996-2007) which have resulted in a flight of cultural capital and the creation of sink schools. The election of a new Labour government in November 2007 suggested an “education revolution”. The second part of the paper explores possibilities for transformative democratic educational policy beyond compensation—through the highlighting of programs like the ruMAD Project—and proposes a re-examination of the provision of education in disadvantaged communities, suggesting that in order to solve present problems we need to be linking curriculum, pedagogy, assessment to identity, politics, and social justice where teachers become “elegantly subversive” through a strong sense of collective effort that may be built on isolated individual projects.

Introduction

It has been suggested that the success of public (government or state run) schools in Western democracies may well be part of the reason that, at least in Australia, they are faced with many seemingly overwhelming difficulties (Bonner & Caro 2007). These schools, designed to create a ‘stable, educated and prosperous economy and society’ (Bonner & Caro 2007, 159) have been portrayed as the ‘zenith of democracy’. But can we remain a
functioning democracy without a strong public education system? A former Director of Education for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) concluded that the school system in Australia does little to address inherited inequality—instead reproducing existing social arrangements, ‘conferring privilege where it already exists and denying it where it does not’ (Bonner & Caro 2007, 164).

Educational inequity in the sense considered here involves a relatively strong relationship between educational outcomes and social background, with the implication that the education system is consistently conferring privilege on those who already have it and denying it to those who do not. (McGraw 2006, 18)

Australia has witnessed a growing trend towards mass secondary education in the past 50 years. In the 1940s only 1 in 10 students completed 12 years of school. In the 1970s this rose to 1 in 3 and then 3 of 4 in the 1990s. There has been a corresponding flow on into higher education, with 1 in 4 attending university in 2000s. While this could be seen as a harmonic view of education and economy, it however ‘represents a goal rather than an achievement’ (Teese 2007, 39). Comforting as these high rates might be, in the Australian context it rests not on higher aspirations conditioned on industrial change, but on a collapsing full-time labour market which effectively trapped people in schooling. The expanding education system has resulted in an increase in social inequalities and economic segregation rather than its narrowing (Teese 2007).

**Major Public Policy Reforms in 30 Years**

The three major economic reforms based on the so-called free-market ideology of Friedmanism, Thatcherism and Reagonomics pushed for a reduction in government responsibility including education. This continues today with calls for increased public-private partnerships and corporate support of public schooling. The effects on education (and elsewhere) are profound. Marketisation led to the reorganisation of schools around market principles (Whitty Power & Halpin 1998); privatisation has seen increasing levels of public funding shift to private providers—‘public funding of private effort’—the free market goal of ensuring diversity and choice (Nelson 2004); and rationalisation, resulted in the restructuring of schools through closures or amalgamations, particularly of smaller schools on grounds of efficiency of curriculum provision and depth, and a resultant redundancy of thousands of experienced teachers. During this same period comprehensive public schooling was increasingly blamed for a strident fall in teaching and learning standards (Leigh & Ryan 2006; 2008). The result of these interventions has seen an increase in economic and social divisions in and between schools in Australia.

The result of these three policies created a deregulated and heavily subsidised market of private schools, designed to in effect shift enrolments away from the public sector. Talking up the language of choice and competition, various ministers of education introduced “reforms” in response to what they described as deficiencies in the system. Many schools started to lose their middle-class families and ‘accumulate the deficits created by this loss’ (Bonner & Caro 2007, 41), further making it difficult to cater to all students. Schools in poorer areas have become residualised – *sink schools* denuded of numbers and cultural capital resources – repositories of failure.
The question everyone in the political class is tiptoeing around is this. At what point do most public schools simply become sinks of disadvantage, places where the residue of kids with average or below average IQs and more than their fair share of other problems confound everyone's efforts to teach them life's basic skills? You could reformulate the question by asking: at what stage does the abandonment of public-sector education by what used to be called the lower middle-classes reach its tipping point? (Pearson 2007)

While families with social power use education to ‘stake a claim’, families without such cultural and social capital rely on governments to assert those claims or receive compensation for ‘unenforceable claims’. The process of marginalisation is difficult to prevent. But to continue to ‘follow a path that has elements of despair, racism, cover up, official avoidance and a paralysis of public initiatives’ (Bonner & Caro 2007, 112). If competition drove school reform then the winners were schools serving wealthy suburbs. The reforms have led to low SES schools being drained of most capable students, resulting in higher concentrations of students from the most disadvantaged communities (Lamb 2007)

**An Education Revolution – Or is it Back to the Future?**

With the election of a new Labour government in Australia in November 2007 came a proposed “education revolution”. The newly elected Prime Minister

...cannot understand why public institutions such as schools should not be accountable to the community that funds their salaries and their running costs. Right now, we do not have accurate, comprehensive information to allow rigorous analysis of what schools and students are achieving.

This must change. That is why today I announce that we will be making agreement on individual school performance reporting a condition of the new national education agreement to come into effect from 1 January 2009 (Rudd 2008).

Once again the very people who are responsible for the excellent achievements of Australian students (in comparison to other OECD countries) are being blamed for their supposed failures! (Shake-up to hit bored teachers, The Age 7/4/2008). Yet Prime Minister Rudd and his Deputy and Minister for Education Gillard together with their counterparts in Labour Victoria, are now proposing to copy the much critiqued (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff 2006; Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin & Heilig 2005; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner 2002) New York model of “individual school performance reporting” and public comparison of “like schools” as determined by students’ entry scores and scores on standardised tests, parental income, ethnic composition and other data, as well as the educationally bankrupt policies of Teach for America (Decker, Mayer & Glazerman 2004).

And the solution proposed? Encourage so-called disengaged teachers to leave the profession (Pike 2008), give top education graduates and top teachers financial incentives to work in so-called “failing schools”, and publish league tables that would rank schools’ performance to make them more accountable (Dinham, Ingvarson & Kleinhenz 2008). But some schools are doing amazing things especially for children from Culturally, Linguistically and Economically Diverse (CLED) communities. Broadly speaking, the strategies fall into the following three areas: new pedagogies and curricula; social support and well being; and
community participation. It is the new pedagogies and curricula which I believe hold the greatest potential for what I have called the elegant subversion of the current dominant paradigm of division and disadvantage.

Key strategies adopted in programs emphasising new pedagogies and curricula are:

• Connectedness between subject areas, and between classroom activities and the ‘real’ world, and

• Intellectual challenge in key curriculum areas, valuing of diversity and building positive relationships and communication

The chosen strategies align well with the features of ‘engaging schools’ (Murray, Mitchell, Gale, Edwards & Zyngier 2004). Most of the programs described have been initiated, developed or modified in context specific ways, and in so doing reflect the important point that there is no single recipe for program development (Smith et al. 2001a; 2001b). Those programs, drawing on particular pedagogical frameworks, have done so in order to meet the specific needs of groups of students. The pedagogical frameworks are invariably modified to suit particular classes, curriculum requirements and curriculum content. In those cases in which there is systemic funding, the emphasis is on using funds to sponsor cluster and school-based initiatives that are responsive to the needs of schools, their students and teachers and the local community (Murray et al. 2004).

The rest of this paper briefly reviews a school program that is elegantly subversive in that it is achieving the required results by approaching school differently especially for children from CLED communities. In doing so, I highlight the achievements of one particular project (of many) that has had an enormous impact on the participants and their communities.

**ruMAD? (Are You Making a Difference)**

The ruMAD? program,¹ which began as a pilot project of The Education Foundation in 2001, currently has over 230 participating schools throughout Australia. It has the following aims:

• To active participation of young people in the community through action research projects

• To provide young people with opportunities for engaging, independent, student-centred learning

• To model engaging, student-centred learning for teachers

• To enable young people to make a difference in their school or community

• To support student leadership

¹ See http://www.rumad.org.au/
• To create the conditions for identifying core values
• To build social competencies such as self-esteem and confidence
• To build the skills and knowledge to solve real world problems

The ruMAD? program is an inquiry-based pedagogical framework that (a) accords with State and Federal policy emphasis on the incorporation of values education into school curricula; and (b) encourages, educates and empowers young people to “enact social change” and “make a difference” within their school and community, and facilitate social change within their schools and local communities. Predicated on the belief that everyone is able to improve and help change the communities in which they live, the program provides participants with opportunities for experiential civic engagement.

It has also been described as “a unique way of promoting … innovative learning …firmly based on the belief that we are all able to improve and make a difference within the communities in which we live and that everyone has the ability to work towards changing the circumstances of … people in the community”. Over 1000 Australian schools have participated in ruMAD? since its inception. In 2008 some 35,000 students in 2008 alone were spoken to about ruMAD? This however doesn’t reflect the actual number of students who then went on to participate in projects.

What Does a Typical MAD Project Look Like?

“Jessie’s Creek” School: Whitfield District Primary School
Whitfield is an agricultural township in the King River valley 170 km northeast of Melbourne. The primary school has around 20 students from Kindergarten to Grade 6. Jessie’s Creek runs through the town and behind the school and was cloaked in a blanket of weeds that had accumulated over the years aided by dumping of green waste (weeds, grass clippings, etc) as well as miscellaneous rubbish. Despite the creek being the town’s main water supply, there was also a lot of rubbish scattered about and creepers, ivy, blackberry, lucerne covered the creek so that it looked like a botanical garden, except nothing was indigenous., (National Resource Management 2008).

The adults in the town decided to have a meeting to clean up the creek, but after three hours no decision could be reached. The students at the Primary School took on a ruMAD? project to carry out a biodiversity study of the creek and to clean it up. From the outset the ruMAD students of Whitfield PS have been at the centre of the campaign to save Jessie’s Creek, mustering community support by producing brochures, conducting surveys and sending letters to government bodies linked with management of the creek.

After carrying out the biodiversity study, and after only one afternoon of attempting to clean up the creek, the students decided that there must be a better approach to making a difference. They looked at how they could influence other people and organisations to come

_____________________________
2 Ibid., p.5-6
on board and partner them in making a difference to Jessie's Creek. Thomas (Grade 6 boy, Whitfield District Primary) explains that “we quickly realised hand weeding wasn’t going to do the trick, so we used an excavator to remove the big weeds”. The students wrote to environmental organizations like the Wilderness Society, Greening Australia, and the Rural City of Wangaratta (the local shire) and shared their findings. They developed a survey for the local community, produced a brochure to publicise their ideas, and prepared presentations so they could speak to groups like Landcare, the North East Catchment Management Authority, and the school Principals of the Goulburn North East Region.

After the weeding and excavating, the locals could not believe the difference it made to the appearance of the entire town - they told me they had not seen the creek for 50 years!’(National Resource Management 2008). The students studied local native vegetation before planting hundreds of trees and shrubs along the creek together with a variety of grasses and hedges that were placed in flood-prone areas to prevent further erosion.
From their presentations and letters, the students attracted funding from the Commonwealth Environmental Fund, Australian Geographic. Along with support from the Victorian Government and in-kind contributions from the North East Catchment Management Authority, (CMA) they raised a total of more than $40,000.
“You have to believe in what you are doing and make a fuss to get things moving. People were surprised that kids could do this stuff” Grade 6 girl, Whitfield District Primary

Plantings with protective matting to minimise weed growth

*Photo: John Baker*

Tree plantings

*Photo: John Baker*
Students and teachers from surrounding areas also pitched in to help with weeding and planting. Many of these schools have now started their own ruMAD? projects. The focus is now on removing weed regrowth and planting more native trees and shrubs along the creek. Work will also begin on a section of neglected public land between the school and local pub. The longer term focus will be on tackling weeds in the State Forest and creating a wildlife habitat corridor to the State Forest in the west.

An evaluation of ruMAD (Bell and Shrimpton 2004) concluded as follows:

- Students developed organizational and leadership skills, greater community awareness and sense of responsibility, and self-confidence
- Schools developed partnerships with the local community
- The projects brought about real community change that students could see and feel part of

The evaluation noted that enabling factors associated with ‘implantation’ of ruMAD in a school include: a high degree of student ownership; congruence between school philosophy and ruMAD aims; broad-based participation by students and teachers; and key people in the school (teachers/leaders) being committed to the program. Future directions for the program include exploring ways in which ruMAD? projects can be integrated into the school curriculum. ruMAD has at its core the philosophy that students need to be involved in curriculum and pedagogy that:

- Come from the kids’ own ideas about what is possible, inspiring enthusiasm among all those involved
• Create real and lasting change by tackling the main causes of the problem
• Acknowledge and build on previous successes, big or small
• Get kids involved in the community to tackle issues of social justice, responsibility, tolerance and cultural diversity
• Create awareness and understanding of the needs of others through personal action
• Allow everyone involved in the project to take greater responsibility for their own lives
• Share the results with others, inspiring them to take further action
• Consider the effects on the environment, society and economy (both positive and negative)
• Help kids to express their views, become critical thinkers and learn how to put problem solving skills into action in order to create the world they wish to live in (David, Zyngier & Brunner 2002)

ruMAD? inspires young people to make real and lasting change in their world. It assumes that young people have the power and potential to make a difference by working and learning together and gives them the tools to shape their own destiny and take action on issues they care about, enabling students to lead change within their communities through becoming justice oriented citizens (Westheimer & Kahne 2004). ruMAD? is values-focused, student led and at the very core starts from student identified values and visions. The ruMAD? organisation provides schools with curriculum materials and resources that enable students to design, implement and evaluate action projects within their community that will ‘make a difference’. Examples of projects developed in primary schools include: building links between the school and a local nursing home; anti-bullying strategies; supports for homeless people; support for children with cancer; environmental degradation and restoration projects.

ruMAD? is underpinned by four main educational objectives:
• To engage young people in issues of social justice;
• To engage young people with a high level of authenticity;
• To promote student-led classrooms, thereby challenging teacher practice; and
• To create real community change (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

It presents the concept of facilitated learning through Roger Hart’s Ladder of Youth Participation⁴ and explains it as a fluid continuum. A number of elements of the ruMAD?

---

⁴ The Ladder of Youth Participation is a conceptual model created and developed by UNICEF sociologist Roger Hart. Based on a study of a youth involvement in a hundred international environmental organisations, the Ladder first featured in Hart’s Children’s Participation: from Tokenism to Citizenship (1992). It comprises
program and philosophy were identified as holding particular attraction and relevance for schools, i.e. for providing students and teachers with:

- Opportunities for real community engagement (both within and beyond school grounds)
- Opportunities for engagement with real issues
- Opportunities for transformative citizenship or thick democracy (going beyond responsible citizenship or thin democracy (Carr, 2008; Gandin & Apple, 2005) including "something new ... somebody new in the school")
- Opportunities for effecting and sustaining change ("so that the change perpetuates")
- Opportunities for Independent Learning
- Opportunities for changed teacher practice ("It works beautifully in regards to modelling for teachers ... [It's] being touted as a Best Practice model ... ruMAD? provides schools with a great opportunity ... it always comes back to the capacity of the teacher .... Some teachers [embrace it], some pull back ... We support as best we can"). (Stokes & Turnbull 2008)

Discussion: So What are the Possibilities for Doing Democracy through the Elegant Subversion of Educational Policy Beyond Compensation?

This paper has demonstrated that the re-examination of education provision in disadvantaged communities can foster the transformative engagement of students in empowering and collaborative experiences that link the three message systems of education, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment to identity politics, and social justice. Teachers and schools can become “elegantly subversive” through a strong sense of collective effort that may be built on isolated individual projects.

Programs like ruMAD? are based on both redistributive and significantly recognition of social justice (Gale and Densmore 2000). They are school focused, student centred and anti bureaucratic, giving prominence to teacher and student agency. Such discursive positioning of teachers and students together and reciprocally as “solution” makers not as “problems” highlights the importance of teacher and student agency (Hargreaves 1994; Schlechty 1997; Troman & Boyle 1997).

The success of the program described in this paper provide evidence that productive student outcomes for CLED children will be successful if NGOs, teachers and academics work together, deconstructing the binary of hands-on versus heads-on learning and

---

269
teaching. These programs have achieved this through the redress of the lack of attention to family and neighbourhood literacies and funds of knowledge (New London Group 1994) while reversing the debilitating and counter-educative practices of academic setting and subject choice underpinning the CAC and rewarding professional development for teachers that includes learning about change (Thompson 2007).

**Conclusion CORE Pedagogy through Pedagogical Reciprocity**

Important work is currently being undertaken in Australia (and elsewhere) on the kinds of pedagogies that improve outcomes for all students, (Lingard et al. 2001a; Lingard et al. 2001b) but in particular those variously labelled as “at-risk” of early school leaving, disadvantaged or from low socio-economic backgrounds. While many students do not believe their school experience has much bearing on their future and do not feel that they are accepted by their classmates and teachers (Zyngier 2007), they gradually feel disaffected and withdraw from school life. Some become disruptive and exert a negative influence on other students (Willms 2003). As one former student noted, ‘when you are standing outside the classroom all day, it is very difficult to learn’ (Brown and Holdsworth 2001, 105).

Exemplary programs like ruMAD? described in this paper are further evidence that an engaging pedagogy should ensure that what teachers and students do is based on what I have termed CORE Pedagogy. In order to create a more inclusive and empowering education system, one that engages with and responds to marginalised youth, we need to ensure that all students, not just the mainstream majority, feel that they belong and identify. In order to do this, schools:

... Need to tap into the cultural knowledge of parents, guardians and community workers - this means that we value the different perspectives and knowledges that all people from all places have and can bring into the school system. (Sefa Dei 2003, 250-51)

Research with disadvantaged (McFadden & Munns 2002) and marginalised (Slade & Trent 2000) middle-years students (Brown and Holdsworth 2001) suggest that it is the students themselves who will be able to tell us that they are engaged and who will say whether their education is working for them in a culturally sensitive and relevant way (Education Foundation 2002). It is the students who will say whether the offers that education purports to provide are real or illusionary. It is also at the messy point (McFadden & Munns 2000) of teachers and students responding to each other in pedagogical reciprocity in relation to classroom pedagogical practices where we are truly going to see whether or not students feel that school is ‘for them’ (Alexander 2000). Rogoff, Bartlett and Goodman use the term ‘community of learners’ to describe a pedagogy of ‘adults and children engage[ing] in learning activities together and collaboratively’ (Rogoff, Turkanis & Bartlett 2001). It is within this space that education can provide a chance that is not illusionary (McFadden & Munns 2000), and that can indeed be engaging and lead to purposeful, relevant and productive educational outcomes.
This pedagogical reciprocity:

Disconfirms unilateral authority [and] by accepting student discipline, a power-sharing teacher then becomes democratically (not institutionally) authorised to make higher demands on the students because students have been authorised to make higher demands on the teacher. (Shor 1996, 125)

My research (Zyngier 2005; 2007a; 2007b; 2008) has suggested that the complexity of issues relating to student engagement (and early school leaving) cannot be fitted neatly into decontextualized accounts of youth experience, school interaction and socio-environmental factors that in the first instance create student disempowerment and disengagement with school. A transformative student engagement was found to be an empowering one, developing a sense of entitlement, belonging and identification where teachers 'create pedagogical practices that engage students providing them with ways of knowing that enhance their capacity to live fully and deeply' (hooks, 1994).

Critically, if students are to successfully engage in doing thick democracy (Gandin & Apple 2005) in school and their knowledge systems, then these systems must connect to and engage with the students’ cultural knowledge while also ‘affirming the different strengths that knowledge forms bring to classroom pedagogy’ (Sefa Dei 2003). This pedagogical reciprocity is critical if those most at risk are to find themselves in schools, so that their knowledge, histories and experiences are validated and accounted for. Such student engagement is an empowering one, developing a sense of entitlement, belonging and identification. Otherwise students are doing time, not doing democracy (Sefa Dei 2003).

A critical perspective rejects an understanding that student engagement is something that is done to students by teachers. While ‘rapidly changing social, cultural, and technological conditions insist that [teachers] rethink’ (Latham et al. 2006, 1) themselves as teachers and learners, students too are subjectively different as a result of their relationship to new times (Green & Bigum 1993). I refer to this new relationship between teachers and students as pedagogical reciprocity.

Through pedagogical reciprocity, what the teachers and students do together as part of the ruMAD? projects involves:

- **Connecting** to and engaging with the students’ cultural knowledge

- **Ownership** by the students so that all students were able to see themselves as represented in the work as ‘ownership in their education reduces the conditions that produce their alienation’ (Shor 1992, 51)

- **Responding** to students' lived experiences and, actively and consciously, critically commenting on that experience; and finally

- **Empowering** students with a belief that what they do will make a difference to their lives and the opportunity to voice and discover their own authentic and authoritative life.
The teachers involved in the program described here, whose pedagogical practices were located in a socio-constructivist and transformative pedagogies, were able to authentically engage all their students moving from being personally responsible through participatory action to becoming justice oriented citizens (Westheimer & Kahne 2004) involved in “thick” democratic (Carr 2008; Gandin & Apple 2005) work. This was also the view of both their students and their teaching colleagues.

My research (Zyngier 2005; 2007a; 2007b; 2008) indicates that not all conceptions of engagement equally promote academic success for marginalised students. The instrumentalist and socio-constructivist conceptions of pedagogy portray engagement as ‘politically and educationally neutral’ (McMahon & Portelli 2004, 72). Where these conceptions dominate the field, they use it to their advantage in the competition for legitimacy and authority in the pedagogical field (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). Many programs designed to re-engage students, (un)wittingly reinforce the status quo, reproducing a pedagogy of poverty (Haberman 1991) within their classrooms, even when this is not their aim. Transformative engagement, as employed by the ruMAD? program, was not pedagogy for students or pedagogy to students, but pedagogy with the students, as an outcome of their pedagogical reciprocity. However, “participation is a means, not an end...for empowering education” (Shor 1992, 51). In the transformative classrooms, CORE pedagogical reciprocity made “students [feel] validated for the powers they possess, but have not been taught to use” (Shor 1987, 107). In this situation, the students exhibited a “sense of power and the clarity” (Shor 1987, 107) about themselves and show evidence of a restoration of self-confidence “eroded through years of depressant schooling” (Shor 1987, 107).

This research indicates that, for students who do not come from ‘mainstream’ culture (the ‘gold’ standard of school success), it is necessary (but not sufficient) to privilege student backgrounds in classroom pedagogy. Where this occurs under conditions of pedagogical reciprocity, the students have developed a strong sense of identity and begin to learn the ‘rules’ of the dominator culture (Hooks 1994; Sarra 2003), empowering the students actively to contend with and resist the claims of the dominant stance (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992).

It is possible, through pedagogical reciprocity, for teachers to reconceive student engagement “where difference is accorded respect and all voices are deemed worthy. [This] can make the classroom a place where students come out of shame...to experience their vulnerability among a community of learners who will dare to hold them up should they falter or fail” (Hooks 2003, 103).

By making strange the familiar concepts of at-risk, connectedness and engagement, this research highlights teachers’ pedagogical practices that affect the extent to which they practise pedagogical reciprocity and CORE pedagogy. The extraordinary disruption of familiar order empowers students and converts them from manipulated objects into active and critical subjects with critical agency (Shor 1987, 97). The role of teachers in this transformation is to become the “architect of the undoing and redoing” (Shor 1987, 97). It is then not surprising that this is “an inspiring and awesome situation for teachers, who so
often feel trapped in the slough of despond. So much gained or lost” (Shor 1987, 97). My research confirms Haberman’s (1991) hypothesis that:

The whole school faculty and school community - not the individual teacher - must be the unit of change: and there must be patience and persistence of application, since students can be expected to resist changes to a system they can predict and know how to control. (292)

A CORE pedagogy, founded on pedagogical reciprocity is an opportunity “for activating individual enhancement as well as social critique, community and social change; school-parent-community collaboration will strengthen adolescents’ commitment to schooling” (Fine 1995, 86).

In order to solve such problems we need to be linking curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment to identity, politics, and social justice, where teachers take a historical and sociological perspective beyond the classroom and the school – becoming ‘elegantly subversive’ through a strong sense of collective effort that may be built on what otherwise might be considered isolated individual projects. This research has highlighted the pedagogical possibilities for teachers to ‘make a difference’ for their students’ futures through CORE pedagogical reciprocity which conceives students’ engagement as being generatively connected to students’ lived experiences. Whether teachers will decide on the path of least resistance and change what they do, or continue to try to change their students, remains to be seen. Elegantly subversive programs like ruMAD? challenge the dominant hegemonic retributive and redistributive (Gale 2000) views that assert that since school works for middle-class students, working-class students “must deserve the blame” (Howe & Moses 1999, 39).

References


Felix Bivens and Peter Taylor
University of Sussex

Democracy begins in conversation.
—John Dewey

Introduction

Higher education is in a state of rapid change, indeed, even a state of crisis. Diminution of state support has created an environment in which many higher education institutions (HEIs) have adopted business structures and behaviours in order to be financially self-sustaining. This has led to some HEIs privileging certain forms of teaching and research that equate quality with profitability and efficiency over those with potential to contribute to positive social change and the deepening of democracy. These dynamics are placing HEIs in a vulnerable position, pushing them into collaboration with, and increasing dependency on, powerful corporate interests. The potential of HEIs to act as sites of democratic learning and development is becoming threatened.

As HEIs face uncertain futures, opportunities exist beyond the market sector. The increasing permeability of the university to outside influence can open pathways for welcoming local communities and civil society (CS) into the university's field of power. Teaching and research can reflect increased popular and community influence, rather than purely commercial agendas. Participatory and community-based action research provide a means for HEIs to work democratically with local interests to better understand and address people's most pressing needs, linking practitioner and community knowledge with academic knowledge, and ultimately linking locally grounded knowledge with global policy processes.
This chapter will draw on the authors’ own practice within HEI contexts, and their engagement in several international dialogues, which are contributing to a rich, diverse range of thinking and practical experience on these issues. It will examine briefly how three global dialogues between educators, community leaders and policymakers have suggested ways that HEIs can further contribute to the deepening of democracy by providing: public spaces, capabilities for sophisticated data analysis, and mechanisms for amplifying the voices of local communities through the co-production of research that can have an impact on policy-making at national and international levels. These dialogues have suggested ways in which democracy can be experienced and practiced in the daily processes of teaching and learning—and even how the activity of conversation itself around these issues can be part of a transformative process for those involved.

We argue that HEIs may champion the emergence of more democratic institutions, becoming co-creators of social change by working side-by-side with communities and CS organizations. With this purpose in mind, we suggest some structural, curricular and pedagogical features that enable HEIs to facilitate greater participation of faculty, researchers, students, practitioners and community members in processes of change and democratic learning.

**Democracy and Higher Education**

The discourses on democracy are vast. A brief chapter such as this cannot address them in detail. However, drawing on Gaventa (2006), discussions on democracy can be divided roughly into two discernable epistemologies: those that understand democracy as a set of institutions and those that understand democracy as a process. Institutional democracy is the more visible of the two discourses. When American leaders cite ‘building democracy in the Middle East’ as a pretext for the conflict in Iraq, the tacit assumptions underlying this logic are rooted in the institutional understanding of democracy: that a nation has become democratic once it has adopted the basic governmental structures and voting mechanisms of Western democracies. Carothers (1999) has labelled this framework the “democracy template” and has criticized democratization programs for an overly narrow understanding of democracy.

The understanding of democracy as a process is open ended, holding that democracy will evolve and function differently in different contexts and cultures. Those coming from a process standpoint are often interested in the variety of ways in which citizens interact with their governments, analyzing the quality of this interaction in terms of how it allows for full citizenship—analyses that consider not only political rights but also social rights. What do citizens gain when they participate? How are their voices heard and acted upon? There are several discourses within the process model, but they are generally grouped together under the rubric of “deepening democracy.”

This paper adopts the processual approach to understanding democracy. It will explore ways that HEIs can contribute to the deepening of democracy through various practices that aim to promote transformational learning. Embedding these practices into the culture of higher education will not come easily as, on the whole, HEIs have not traditionally been democratic institutions. For example HEIs are generally structured in
hierarchical ways and transmit knowledge in a unidirectional “banking” style of education (Freire 1970) that rarely seeks to bring the knowledge of students—or community—into the learning process. With few exceptions, they have historically dominated—or remained isolated from—the communities in which they were established rather than working on equal terms as neighbours.

**Crises in Higher Education**

The overall context in which HEIs operate has been shifting significantly over the past fifty years. In particular, the rise of neoliberal economic approaches in the early 1980s induced fundamental changes within HEIs and in the external structures that have traditionally supported them. Governments in the North scaled back public financing for universities, while in the South concomitant structural adjustment policies required governments to significantly reduce their support of education at all levels. While the overall picture for education is mixed, support of higher education continues to diminish, leading countries like the United Kingdom to implement increasingly high student tuition fees at universities. Because most national higher education systems are predominately populated by public HEIs, reductions in government support have resulted in drastic changes over the past three decades; changes that have placed HEIs in a state of ongoing financial instability, with institutions expected to behave more like market-oriented corporations by taking increasing responsibility for generating their own funding. This ‘marketization’ of higher education has had a tremendous impact both on institutional cultures within HEIs and on their educational goals, significantly reducing their ability to function as social critics and change actors (Altbach 2008), and as a result the relationship between HEIs and society is deteriorating (Olsen 2000).

Moreover, the homogenizing effects of international league tables and global ranking reports tend to focus institutional energy away from local issues and priorities (Taylor, Okail and Achy 2008; Ordorika 2008) where HEIs could have a more direct impact on social change. Particularly in research, northern, Western universities look for high-visibility, high-return projects that rarely arise at the local level.

While the capacity for HEIs to function as social change actors is strongly attenuated in the current environment, new opportunities do exist. Social theorist Gerard Delanty (2001), describing “the university as the site of reflexively constituted knowledge” (p. 155), argues that the university plays a pivotal role in generating cooperative cosmopolitanism because “of its ability to establish zones of interconnectivity between the opposing domains of technology and culture” (p. 157). Similarly, Wallerstein (1991) and Fuller (1999) see the university as a meeting place of the world’s cultures where the most silenced voices in society can be recognized and validated. More concretely, increasing numbers of HEIs are expanding their service-learning, science shop, and community engagement programs. Although these programs frequently operate at the margins, their existence suggests that a shift toward CS engagement by HEIs more generally is not out of the question. Moreover, Levin and Greenwood (2008) and Delanty (2001) have suggested that HEIs can revitalize their failing social contract by aligning themselves with the interests of CS rather than the market, thus visibly reasserting the function of higher education as a ‘public good.’
Dialogues toward the Democratic University

The current push to marketize the university appears to be sparking a counter-movement that aims to align HEIs more closely with civil society than with the private sector. Educators, community leaders and other actors in higher education policy have begun coming together to explore alternative directions for HEIs, as well as to suggest ways that educators and institutions can act to support the democratization of higher education institutionally. Three of these dialogues are described below:

Learning and teaching for transformation (LTT): The Institute for Development Studies (IDS)

The LTT dialogue is an ongoing initiative of the Power, Participation and Social Change Team at IDS. Its central aim is to create more participatory and democratically empowering forms of education. The dialogue itself functions primarily in the form of e-forums conducted through email exchanges, though there are occasional retreat sessions as well. LTT is global in its reach drawing on the insights of practitioners across the globe. The group has held conversations on a variety of topics over its several year history including: how to create empowered democratic learning spaces that facilitate inclusion and participation, working with students as active agents of social change, the importance of identity and context in facilitating change and democratic empowerment, how to transform HEIs into locations of empowerment and change, and in depth discussions of strategies for social change beginning in educational contexts. Many participants root their work in participatory methodologies, perceiving participation to have the potential to reduce poverty and social injustice by strengthening citizen rights and voice, influencing policy making, enhancing local governance, and improving the accountability and responsiveness of institutions.

Higher education and participatory development (HEPD): The University of British Columbia, UNESCO and the Institute of Development Studies

This dialogue began in 2006 at the International Forum on Universities and Participatory Development, where a group resolved to feed their collective experiences of HEPD into the global policy debates on HEIs. This dialogue aims at transforming HEIs at the institutional level to make them more democratic and engaged with communities. The group has articulated their view that engagement helps universities to improve the quality, relevance and effectiveness of their teaching and research missions. In a collective vision statement, they write, “We see universities embodying democratic values, making strong connections between head, heart and hands, and recognizing that their institutional goals go beyond the generation of wealth and the advancement of recognition” (Taylor, et al. 2007). They emphasize that the relationships between HEIs and their communities have often been unequal and thus universities must learn to be willing receivers of knowledge rather than solely producers. One of the most important goals established in this dialogue is one at the centre of this paper: helping universities to become spaces where critical analysis of social issues is fostered through the inclusion of the voices of all community members in democratic policy processes.
University education for community change (UECC): The community learning partnership

The UECC dialogue aims to address the lack of training and education programs available for community organizers and community change actors in different country contexts. Community organizers often play a catalytic role in deepening democracy by mobilizing citizens to participate in local policy initiatives. Despite their significant role in communities, very few formal opportunities exist for new or mid-career organizers to learn explicitly about their profession, to reflect and share experiences and to build upon their knowledge. The UECC dialogue gathered together the leaders of selected educational programs around the world that aim deliberately to foster the growth and development of change agents. Drawing from their combined work in Latin America, North America, Europe and Africa, these educators sought to answer the question of how to develop educational programmes that fill the learning needs of those who aspire, or who already are, community change agents. These educators, who have all created democratic learning initiatives, assembled clusters of knowledge around collective organizing skills, in depth issues knowledge, and practices for democratic, empowering pedagogy.

Pathways to Democratic Higher Education: Structure, Research and Pedagogy

The dialogues referred to above have explored higher education’s potential for deepening democracy from two perspectives. First, how HEIs can contribute to democratic processes in the communities in which they are located. Secondly, in recognizing that HEIs are often themselves undemocratic institutions, participants explored ways in which HEIs could change, particularly in teaching and learning. An underlying belief of this second tenet is that the best way to develop active citizens is to create learning environments that call upon them to participate and develop citizenship skills, such as: debate, decision-making, change-making, organising, power-awareness and leadership. Several of these ideas, and ways in which they have been implemented, are described below.

Structure: From outreach to inreach

Members of the HEPD dialogue questioned the traditional methods of university outreach. Often the aims of outreach programmes are laid out in advance by those within the university, and as such often end up as examples of instrumental participation where the local community has no power in creating the program or determining its ends. HEPD participants suggested an alternate process of “inreach” for relationship-building, which invites community into the space of the university in order to break down physical and psychological barriers that generally inhibit cooperation, suggesting a democratization of university space (see Figure 1). At one level this can mean the opening up of library, sports and entertainment facilities to public use; however, for the community to utilize the university as a place for deepening democracy and citizenship, a more significant commitment is required. Spaces should be opened up or created that are dedicated to the community and their use, a permanent place inside the university for the community.

By providing spaces within HEIs for communities to gather and to deliberate on important community issues, HEIs can provide one of the key elements necessary for citizens to mobilize and express their rights (Leach and Scoones 2007). Further, the
opportunity for dialogue between the community and the university increases, especially if HEIs support these dialogues by contributing relevant information and personnel upon request. These ties can deepen if HEIs are interested in not only knowledge transfer but also in knowledge exchange where ideas and learning are shared in both directions. Long-term participation within university spaces can build confidence, communication skills and other aspects of citizenship, particularly when community members become active in participatory action research (PAR), adjunct/guest lecturing and other activities that utilize and validate their knowledge about their communities and encourage them to take action there.

Fig. 1: The ‘Community Inreach’ Model: Demonstrating the Idea of Inreach

Examples of such practices can be found in various programs. The Rural Development Department at the Metropolitan Autonomous University in Mexico City has long included community practitioners as members of its teaching faculty so that students of the department are exposed to knowledge and perspectives originating from rural communities themselves—not just when in the field—in the classroom (Mott 2005). Community fellows working with University of Brighton sign contracts with the University that give them full access to the institution’s library and technology resources, and even provide a physical workspace on the campus. As Hart and Wolff write:

Becoming an honorary member of the university brings with it desk space, access to the library, to computer terminals and access to the virtual world of the university in the form of email, as well as to its tangible world (2006, 133).

Research: Democratizing knowledge production

Another highly significant way in which HEIs can align themselves with civil society is by democratizing their processes for knowledge production, working in conjunction with individuals and communities to ground new knowledge in local realities. The HEPD and UECC dialogues have been deeply engaged with this issue. Bringing together educational leaders with extensive histories in PAR, they have explored the ways that PAR can move

---

280
beyond the few disciplines that pioneered these methods so that it can be seen as a mainstream research approach across all disciplines. PAR increases the voice and visibility of local knowledge and can dramatically change how communities are perceived and understood by governments and policymakers. As Wadsworth (1998) points out, including disadvantaged groups in the research process itself transforms how knowledge is generated “since professional and academic research largely researches on and about and speaks for the disadvantaged, or groups with unmet needs the research is meant to benefit” (p. 12-13) She goes on to note how PAR, by sharpening the clarity of the research question, often leads to “improved relevance of the inquiry to those who share in the problem” and simultaneously to “enhanced relevance of the inquiry to those whose jobs are to do something about the problem.” Thus a focus on activities like PAR can facilitate an alliance of popular and academic knowledge that is relevant and effective.

Participatory approaches are not without critics, however. While proponents suggest that PAR surfaces and attenuates power asymmetries in the academic knowledge production process, others argue that these problems are simply reified through participatory research. For example, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) approaches have sometimes raised concerns about the quality of facilitation and of participation itself, as the approaches became mainstreamed and mandated by large donors, NGOs and governments. Brock and McGee (2002) observed that the rapid scaling up of Participatory Poverty Appraisal (PPA) methods within national policy processes, and the World Bank’s condition that borrowing governments consult civil society when formulating their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), caused alarm about the co-optation and dilution of participatory methods. Other writers have raised fundamental questions about participation as a means of transformation, even seeing it as a “new tyranny”, a term which Cooke and Kothari (2001) used in the title of their well-known book that presented a powerful critique of participation and participatory methodologies.

Nonetheless, supporters of PAR contend that research about social concerns that is grounded in the knowledge and experience of the community enables researchers to better create, validate or refute academic theories. The outputs of such projects are uniquely placed to transmit detailed, local experiences upward into national and international policy debates. These outputs need not be only research papers; participatory videos, blogs and collaborative documentaries are increasingly influential in social change processes and can have an impact on the rate at which knowledge is taken up by policymakers (Bivens 2009).

Programs like the Community University Partnership Programme (CUPP) at the University of Brighton, England, have managed to wholly democratize some research endeavours, by involving the local community directly with academics, in a form of researcher-practitioner engagement. Community members solicit the university about the research topic, with the university fielding the research to the most qualified faculty members who design the study’s methodology. Students then engage directly with the community to collect data, which is then analysed by the faculty researchers. The final results for publication are co-written by the researchers and the community members who suggested the need for the research at the start of the process (Hart, Maddison and Wolff 2007).
Pedagogy: The democratic classroom

The LTT dialogue coalesced around a group of educators seeking to support the use of participatory methodologies in teaching and learning in higher education. Drawing on theories such as Bourdieu’s (1980) idea of *habitus*,¹ LTT educators contend that current pedagogical practices rarely lend themselves to the active participation that is at the root of democratic citizenship. Classrooms that exhibit “banking” model education (Freire 1970) promote forms of education premised on the tacit assumption that students are empty vessels that need to be filled up with information. The flow of information is one way, from teacher to student. The teacher controls the educational experience, while the role of students is to receive knowledge passively. LTT members stress that this undemocratic process of learning stays with students long after their classroom days are over. Two effects are possible: that students become passive to authority and do not engage actively in issues of importance, be they personal or political, but simply accept things as they are. A second outcome is that students may come to imitate the role of the teacher and in all forms of leadership assume a top-down approach that does not seek active collaboration with others, but acts in a singular, authoritarian manner.

LTT dialogues have provided a forum for educators, and more recently community leaders and policy makers, to discuss how educational processes lead to empowerment or disempowerment. It is believed that empowering education requires the educator to balance power asymmetries in the classroom by recognizing the conflicting power relations that exist in the teaching space and by finding more equitable ways to realign these roles. Rather than lectures, there is space for active learning and collaboration in which curricular knowledge is intentionally tested against or combined with the lived knowledge and experience of the class. Rather than only receiving knowledge, students are continually mixing and reshaping it within the learning environment. They challenge the teacher and look for ways to interrogate the information when it does not match their experience. In some applications there is even participatory curriculum development in which students work continuously with the teacher to create the course that is most relevant to their needs and contexts. The aim is to empower students to take responsibility for their learning, to shape the environment to suit their needs and those of their classmates. In a sense, the classroom becomes a microcosm of ideal democratic practice.

The LTT dialogue has been particularly influential in shaping the Masters in Participation, Power and Social Change (MAP) programme offered by IDS. This program is designed for mid-career development professionals who want to support their community development and change work by improving their knowledge and practice of participatory methods. The programme is taught and operates through cooperative learning processes that are strongly influenced by the students themselves. Aiming to facilitate not only changes in the way the MAP students relate to their communities in the field, the MA also seeks to foster transformation in the students themselves. Participation and democratic process are not simply methodologies, therefore, but become a deep epistemological

¹ Bordieu theorizes that an individual’s experiences in periods of formation—such as in youth and during education—becomes deeply ingrained and is then subsequently repeated.
element of how the students view their role in development and the role of development in creating pathways for participation and citizenship.

**Conclusion**

The dialogues described in this paper demonstrate the interest of educators around the world in seeing HEIs become more connected with important social and developmental issues. HEIs can be a tremendous asset to their communities. Cumulatively they represent an unparalleled cache of intellectual and research capacity. Creating synergy between dialogues and conversations in different spaces is a challenge however, reflecting the immense diversity of the HEI sector around the globe, with unique regional histories, national approaches, social positionalities and institutional structures. Even so, the current concerns of marketisation and social disengagement are widely and increasingly felt. How then to respond? The recently-formed Global Alliance on Community-Engaged Research\(^2\) is one attempt to join together various voices from universities and communities from around the world, but this is only an initial step. What kind of strategy would be most effective in starting to tackle the structures and resistances that exist in various places?

The suggestion of this paper is in keeping with its theme and opening epigraph: *democracy being in conversation*. As the dialogues described in this chapter suggest, conversations about such pressing issues and shared concerns can lead to change and innovation. By beginning conversations about these issues within institutions and communities, we open up the possibility of discursive transformation. By widely questioning the way things are done and why they are done this way, the prevailing discourse—which is shaped by the power of one kind of knowledge—becomes challenged through the introduction of other kinds of knowledge produced in other ways. Equally, the transactions, negotiations and conversations within the classroom need to mirror the opening up of more democratic spaces at the institutional level, and vice versa. By challenging that discourse and the roles it constructs for HEIs, we participate democratically in the co-construction of a different discourse with a different set of aims, roles and processes. By opening our doors and approaching our co-workers and our communities to discuss the roles we wish to see HEIs play in a profoundly challenging world, we may hope to avoid a continuation of the situation where competition and efficiency, conflict and isolation are privileged over collaboration and discussion, between institutions, faculties and individuals.

**References**


---

\(^2\) See [http://web.uvic.ca/ocbr/assets/pdfs/Global%20Alliance.pdf](http://web.uvic.ca/ocbr/assets/pdfs/Global%20Alliance.pdf)


The Critical Pedagogy of Understanding how Future Educators Relate to Democracy

Paul R. Carr
Youngstown State University

Gina Thésée
Université du Québec à Montréal

Introduction

How education supports, cultivates and engages in/with democracy is the focus of this study. Building on research conducted with a sample of education students in the United States (Carr 2007a; Carr 2008), this study highlights how education students in Quebec, Canada, understand and define democracy, which includes reference to their educational experience. Attempting to determine the salience of a linkage between education and democracy is important as it may have implications for the conceptualization and delivery of teaching and learning in relation to democracy (Westheimer 2004). The context for each of these studies is informed by the need to critically interrogate and understand the perspectives, experiences and perceptions of education-students in relation to democracy in education (Carr 2007a; Carr 2008).

Part of the rationale for this study is to better understand, and then articulate a more effective response or framework in relation to, how democratic education takes place, and, significantly, should take place. To this end, comparative analysis can be an indispensable tool to deconstruct how a particular local context functions. Although this paper only starts to scratch the surface of the richer data-set that has been achieved through this research, the comparative framework is useful in contextualizing the following areas: 1) jurisdictional analysis: US-Canada; English-French; Quebec-Canada; 2) disciplinary analysis: education (curriculum, pedagogy, teaching and learning)/socio-political (context, impact and implications); and 3) educational policymaking (the particular approaches in diverse jurisdictions, the influence of these policies, and the relationship between policy and democratic education).
While both samples are formed of largely white individuals, there are also some obvious differences: the national cultures and education-systems differ; the Canadian sample is made up of French-speaking participants who form a linguistic minority in North America, there are more immigrants in the Canadian sample; and the US sample has unique features, such as the number of African-American participants as well as the socio-economic class of the majority of the students whereas the Montreal sample is more reflective of a large, cosmopolitan society. Therefore, while this paper focuses on the Canadian sample, there will be some comparative analysis in an attempt to elucidate common themes, trends and issues as well as differences. Ultimately, the paper seeks to underscore the importance of a more critical pedagogical approach to education as a means to enhancing democracy and social justice in education (Freire 1970; Kincheloe 2008).

Background

The starting-point for this research is a similar study undertaken by Carr (2007a; Carr 2008) with a sample of 114 College of Education students, who are largely White and working-class, at an American university in an economically-challenged region. As outlined in Lund and Carr (2008), the problematic of democratic education must involve a nuanced and critical analysis of political engagement and experience, and, further, speak to the importance of addressing democracy in a meaningful and multi-layered way throughout the educational process.

In Carr’s research (2008), he further elaborates on the connection between neoliberalism and the participants’ conceptualization of, and experience, with democracy. He focuses on critical pedagogy and emancipatory practices advanced by Freire (1970), McLaren (2007) and Kincheloe (2008), amongst others, which provide an analysis to better understand the political nature of the educational experience.

Context

The Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), a major French-language university in Quebec, has a unique mission connected to the social, economic and cultural development of society. With over 41,000 students, 8,000 of whom are at the graduate level, and over 175,000 graduates, the University is well known within Quebec society.¹ UQAM’s Faculty of Education is the largest in Quebec, enrolling 30% of the province’s education students, and some 70% for the city of Montreal, the largest city in the province. There are a range of educational programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. A particular focus is placed on l’enseignement en milieux défavorisés (teaching for marginalized sectors). With over 110 tenure-track professors and roughly 5,000 full- and part-time students, the Faculty of Education is engaged in a number of projects, programs and initiatives. Almost 80% of the

¹ To underscore its research capacity, UQAM has 15 institutional research centers, 28 Canada Research Chairs, 27 (Innovation) Research Chairs, and 6 institutes. For further information, see UQAM’s website: http://www.uqam.ca/apropos/
Faculty of Education students are female. The primary baccalaureate program in the Faculty of Education involves four years of study, including 3 practicum-phases.

With regard to the profile of the students, the University gathers data based on gender, status and area of study. It is, therefore, difficult to ascertain the exact proportion of immigrant, foreign, racial minority and other types of students, which is important to consider when examining democratic education. However, ethnocultural diversity has started to become a more visible and pressing concern, as evidenced by the recent Bouchard-Taylor Commission on Reasonable Accommodation. The debate over the place of immigrants has spurred on a number of programs, often under the label of interculturalism, and has proven to be a point of concern in education-circles. Further, Potvin, McAndrew and Kanoute (2006) completed a landmark study on anti-racism education in Quebecois schools, in 2006, which further highlighted the problematic of a racially and ethno-culturally diverse society. Increasingly, the issue of race and racialization, in addition to the ethnocultural and linguistic realm, has appeared, often addressed within the context of French-English relations (Carr 2006) but such a debate has been problematic at several levels, given the real and perceived minority status of French-speaking Québécois within Canada and North America. Potvin and Carr (2008) have also highlighted some of the unique features of interculturalism, especially in relation to multiculturalism and anti-racism, and have surmised that tangible progress on race and ethnic relations requires a sustained and comprehensive, critical engagement on the part of all sectors of society, and, importantly, must also consider the pivotal issue of inequitable power relations. In sum, the identity of present and future educators, as well as the students in schools, is extremely relevant, and peoples’ lived experiences must be factored into the equation in order to better understand their perspectives on democracy.

There is one published study of particular note that is informative for the present research. Building on the citizenship education research indicating that youth are increasingly becoming disengaged in formal democracy, Lebrun (2006) surveyed 110 teacher-education students at UQAM in relation to their representation of the notion of democracy. Employing a multi-layered approach to engage participants in discussion and reflection, Lebrun (2006, 645) distinguishes between “formal democracy,” “fundamental democracy” and “substantial democracy,” which demonstrate how youth are becoming less committed to state-driven interventions as the primary mobilizing force for democratic engagement. In general, the subject of how teacher-educators conceptualize, experience

---

2 See UQAM’s website: http://www.registrariat.uqam.ca/Pdf/Pop_etudiante/0506/population.pdf
3 Carr and Thésee (2006) have found that the data-collection based on racial origin in Quebec has traditionally been problematic and limited. This is not to suggest that race data are necessarily easily collected elsewhere in Canada but that there have been some programs in that direction, especially in Ontario (Potvin and Carr, 2008).
4 See the official website of the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences at http://www.accommodements.qc.ca/index-en.html. There was extensive media coverage of the Commission’s work during 2007 and 2008, and the debates that ensued created controversy and tension, juxtaposing diverse visions of Québécois society. The reality between the immigrant-rich region of Montreal and the regions was brought to light throughout the process.
and perceive democracy in education has not received a great deal of attention, either in Quebec or elsewhere in North America (Lund 2008).

### Methodology

The current study focuses on a sample of undergraduate Education students at UQAM, who were invited to participate in a detailed survey on democracy and citizenship in education. The participants are largely under 23 years of age, and are White, francophones born in Quebec (Figure 1). 261 students participated, on an anonymous basis, by completing hard-copy (n=50) or electronic format (n=211) questionnaires in late 2007. It is important to note that students overwhelmingly agreed that the detailed questionnaire was thought-provoking and interesting, and also emphasized that, for many, they had not reflected on the connection between democracy and education in a critical way before.

| Figure 1 - Demographic profile of participants (n=261) |
|---|---|
| **Gender** | # | % |
| M | 79 | 31% |
| F | 180 | 69% |
| **Age** | # | % |
| 1 (<22) | 138 | 53% |
| 2 (22-30) | 70 | 27% |
| 3 (31-40) | 29 | 11% |
| 4 (41-50) | 19 | 7% |
| 5 (51+) | 3 | 1% |
| **Place of education** | # | % |
| Q (Quebec) * | 235 | 91% |
| C (Canada) | 0 | 0% |
| Car (Carribean) | 0 | 0% |
| WE (West. Europe) | 7 | 3% |
| EE (Eastern Europe) | 5 | 2% |
| Naf (North Africa) | 10 | 4% |
| LA (Latin America) | 0 | 0% |
| AF (Africa) | 2 | 1% |
| **Visible minority** | # | % |
| Yes (VM) | 32 | 12% |
| No (W) | 227 | 88% |
| **Ethnic origin** | # | % |
| C (Canadian) | 196 | 76% |
| E (European) | 18 | 7% |
| AR (Arab) | 18 | 7% |
| LA (Lat. American) | 2 | 1% |
| AS (Asian) | 1 | 0% |
| Car (Carribean) | 2 | 1% |
| AF (African) | 8 | 3% |
| O (Other/Mixed) | 14 | 5% |

* Of this number, 11 participants also studied elsewhere, including 4 in Canada, and 7 abroad.
It is significant to point out that the detailed questionnaires provided almost 7,000 textual entries into a data-base (Sémato) that offers the possibility to undertake extensive discourse analysis. Sémato is an internet-based, analytical software program that is well-suited for analyzing interviews, speeches, documents, and surveys with open-ended questions. In sum, Sémato favors a “bottom-up” approach in order to develop themes and analysis.

The majority of questionnaires were filled in online, with participants spending 30-60 minutes to respond to the questions contained therein. For this paper, although the larger study includes some 30 open-ended questions, many of which include quantitative scores, this paper focuses uniquely on the question related to defining democracy. It is our contention that how future educators understand, experience and perceive democracy may have a significant effect on how they will teach for and about democracy. Further, ascertaining the comprehension of, and engagement with, democracy among education students may lead to insight and reforms in relation to teacher education, educational policymaking, student performance and experience, and teaching and learning at the classroom level.

In order to differentiate the various participants, as per the information contained in Figure 1, the following identity-markers have been formulated: a number (1-252) indicating the participant, the gender (male [M] or female [F]), the age range (1 = <22, 2 = 22-30, 3 = 31-40, 4 = 41-50, and 5 = 51+), place of birth, racial origin (W for White or non-visible minority, and VM for visible minority or non-White), and ethnic origin. For example, (51-F-2-Q-W-C) would translate to Participant 51, who is female, in the 22-30 age range, born in Quebec, White, and of Canadian ethnic origin. Although these indicators are more complex than a simple pseudonym, we feel that the additional information helps further characterize and nuance the narrative comments provided by participants.

Findings

This paper explores how participants define democracy, which is considered key in relation to the teaching and learning of democracy. While this paper is modest in its scope, further studies from this research will more directly and comprehensively link the definition of democracy with the educational experience of participants in relation to democracy as well as with their perceptions and perspectives concerning teaching about and for democracy. The themes generated through the following analysis are based on the occurrence, depth and salience of the narrative comments provided by participants in the study. Only a few narrative comments are provided for each theme for illustrative purposes.

---

5 In addition, Sémato can undertake coding and text mining, emphasizing qualitative analysis for networks of similitude, and also generates graphic representations of the data, themes and key concepts. The software can also conduct multiple cross-analyses between external variables, which characterize the textual elements as well as the contents found in an automatic or assisted way. The development of themes, proposed by Sémato, and, more importantly, by the researcher, facilitates the analysis of a range of concepts. Sémato is a software that surpasses simple dictionary and thesaurus-based language. It builds on concepts, meshing words and themes that have the same or similar meaning given the appropriate context, allowing for a more in-depth and salient analysis.
The Quebec sample identified many of the same themes as in the US study. However, the French-language participants differed in the detail they provided, owing to, we conjecture, their particular context, including the notions of solidarity and sovereignty, which were not mentioned by American participants. The unique linguistic minority experience clearly plays a role here. Interestingly, few participants in either study focused on education as a key determinant in democracy. The most predominant themes in defining democracy, including some illustrative narrative comments⁶, and are discussed below.

**Power of the people, with an emphasis on government**

Many participants formulated their understanding of democracy in relation to a political system that exercises decision-making power and, interestingly, “sovereignty”. For example, (216-F-1-Q-W-C) offers that “For me, democracy involves an organization where decision-making power (sovereignty) belongs to each person or the collective (of citizens, of a people, of a class...)”; similarly, (130-F-1-Q-W-C) maintains that “For me, democracy is a political regime in which the people exercise their sovereignty themselves, where they hold a certain power to make decisions”. This interpretation differs somewhat from the US sample in that symbols such as the Constitution were barely referenced by the Canadian group, and, moreover, the reference to sovereignty, which was not made in the American study, holds a special significance for the French-language participants. At this early stage, it could indicate some reference to the sovereignist movement in Quebec, where there have been two referenda in the last thirty years in an attempt to separate from Canada, or to a more collectivist notion of governance whereas the US sample was more replete with affirmations of individualism as a presumably logical counter-balance to government.

**Participation of people, especially through voting**

Participants reiterated the mainstream belief that “Democracy is one person=one vote. Each citizen has the right and the responsibility to vote” (24-F-1-Q-W-C), and that “Power is in the hands of the hands of the citizen who exercises his/her right to vote on the services, organizations, rules concerning the direction of his/her country”. (2-F-1-Q-W-C) Although voting was certainly a strong and relevant factor in defining democracy for the Canadian sample, it was not mentioned as frequently or with as much force as it was in the American study, where voting was often construed to equate, as in the comment above by participant 24, the totality of democracy. Whereas voting is a part of democracy, Lund and Carr (2008) argue, as illustrated earlier in this paper, that it is over-emphasized as a contributing force to democracy, and is also conflated to diminish the importance of critical engagement in relation to social justice. However, Cook and Westheimer (2006), in the Canadian context, and Patterson (2003), in the US context, have underscored the reality that youth involvement in elections is on the decline, and that their future participation is key to legitimating societal support for democracy.

**Voting for representatives represents democracy**

The Canadian sample, like the American one, emphasized that voting for representatives, who would then carry out the primary tasks of a democracy, was a key feature to democracy. (53-M-1-Q-W-C) believes that “Democracy is a political system in

---

⁶ Narrative comments have been translated by the authors from the original French to English.
which all individuals of age in a society, through voting, relegate freely the political power to a person or a group a specific mandate,”, and another participant echoed that “Democracy is the possibility to vote for candidates. These candidates should be able to speak on our behalf in the legislative assembly” (64-F-2-Q-W-C)

What is interesting in both samples is how many participants also hold negative views of these representatives (the term/word ‘politician’ is used in a pejorative sense in some circles). The reference to voting here is perhaps emblematic of the normative ways that democracy is portrayed in the mainstream media but it also raises questions about how education students learn about, and are engaged in, democracy throughout the educational experience. In the American sample, Carr (2007a; Carr 2008) found that participants, generally, did not have a robust democratic educational experience: most of the participants noted that learning about voting was the main component of their engagement with democracy, and, moreover, any substantive discussions about democracy were principally constrained to a single class on Government. It goes without saying that what participants do outside of their formal educational experience also contributes greatly to their understanding and involvement in democracy (McLaren, 2007).

Liberty, especially freedom of expression

A common refrain expressed in this study is the general notion that “democracy is about freedom of expression” (211-M-1-Q-W-C), and that “democracy is freedom of expression. It allows everyone to have an opinion on what is best for themselves and others.” (171-F-1-Q-W-C) This theme was equally highlighted by the US sample, and echoes a common sentiment enunciated by political elites. While noting that the principle of freedom of expression or other types of freedoms was integral, a critical assessment of how these freedoms are constituted or manifested themselves was not as evident. As Carr (2008) found in his research on the American sample, it is important to problematize such statements to determine their non-neutral and highly political connotations. For example, do all people have the same freedoms, the same access to power, the same ability to influence public debate, and the same interest in achieving social justice? Furthermore, it is critical to have present and future educators become engaged in the culture, ethos, philosophy and process of cultivating democracy, far surpassing the naming of rights. This is not to say that the participants in this study will not become effective teachers but, rather, this it is important to underscore that naming commonly-held beliefs about democracy must be accompanied by critical engagement, such as being able to resist patriotism and war as the only option to resolve problems (Westheimer 2006).

Majority rule is the key principle in democracy

The contention that majority rule constitutes democracy was also prevalent in both the Canadian and US surveys. As noted by the francophone participants, "(Democracy) is a political system that is based on majority rule" (56-M-4-Q CA-VM-Car), and "Democracy can be translated into the will of the majority population in relation to laws and political decisions" (102-M-1-Q-W-C). Although more prevalent in the US sample, it is interesting to note that majority rule is highlighted within the Canadian sample, especially given the obvious reality and sanctity of minority rights. This raises the question of who is the minority: is it the French-speaking Quebecois within the Canadian context, or ethnocultural and racial minorities within the Quebecois context? More importantly, how are minorities
protected if it is only up to the majority to decide what laws will be passed (for example, in relation to protection for gays and lesbians, against racism, for equal rights for persons with disabilities, etc.)? As and Lund and Carr (2008) have noted, it is problematic to discuss democracy without connecting it to social justice and political literacy.

**Democracy is a better system than what exists elsewhere**

In a limited number of cases in the Canadian sample participants noted that Canada was democratic because other countries were not, thus illustrating the comparative and normative value of democracy. For instance, (181-F-2-Q-W-C) commented that “We are lucky to be in a democratic country because some countries in the world are not,” and (36-F-1-Q-W-C) added that “Despite the shortcomings in our system, we are quite developed compared to totalitarian systems that some countries unfortunately have”. In the American study, it was found that participants had not, generally speaking, studied or experienced other systems, and, apart from enunciating that one system was preferable over another, little evidence could be provided to justify this statement. This raises the question of what students learn and should learn about diverse contexts, and also how some values have been relativized and rendered normative without critical assessment (Holm 2002). For example, one might argue that Canada and the United States are more democratic than some other countries but how do we substantiate this for those who have been marginalized in North America, including Aboriginal peoples?

**Critical perspectives on democracy**

A small number of participants underscored their critique and criticism of the way that democracy is portrayed, and these comments generate themes of particular interest that require further exploration. A few participants spoke of the “lack of participation” (48-F-2-Q-W-C), and the need for citizens to have access to “pertinent information in order to be able to take an enlightened position” (13-F-2-Q-W-C). Another area of concern is that the “democratic principle has disappeared for some time because of manipulation by elites” (35-F-1-Q-W-C), and, quite simply, “it’s anarchy... The present democracy is far from being the power of the people, by and for the people” (138-F-1-Q-W-C). Still, others questioned the existence of democracy because of economic inequities: “democracy reposes on human rights – an oppressed people, constrained, cannot have access to democracy” (187-F-1-Q-W-C); and “with the propulsion of globalization, (democracy) has disappeared. I imagine that the fundamental principles are ‘by and for the interest of the people’ and that (democracy) could be defined as a political entity favouring equity, sharing, justice but, like all good things, aberrations end up infiltrating the system” (23-F-2-Q-W-C). Lastly, a few participants argued that democracy is a utopian and abstract concept, characterised by: “democracy is a policy that seeks equality for all citizens but, in reality, it is a representative of an ideal model because the true democracy does not exist” (31-F-1-Q-VM-LA); and “the vision of democracy is abstract.... Our vision of democracy is that which one wishes to see, that of the West; a North-American democracy” (61-M-1-Q-W-C).

What is striking about these notes of dissention or, rather, the critical assessment of democracy by participants, is how few there are. These critical comments were even sparser in the American sample. Why are participants reluctant to critically deconstruct and assess the merits of democracy, or why do they more freely and seemingly instinctively conceptualize democracy in a more formal sense of electoral processes and formal
representation? What are the implications for education if participants interpret democracy in a “thin”, rather than a “thick”, way (Carr 2008; Gandin 2005)?

Discussion

The findings from this research speak to the need to further flesh out the salience of democracy in education at several levels: in schools, in general, in teacher education, in educational policymaking, and in the vigorous debates that take place in society in relation to the sense and orientation of contemporary public education. Cook and Westheimer (2006, 348) provide a broad scan of the state of democracy in Canada, and argue that “If people are not born democrats, then education surely has a significant role to play in ensuring that democrats are made.” The findings in this paper also reinforce the notion that democracy is not, nor should it be, a static, fixed objective. Rather, for democracy to exist, it must be continually messaged, questioned and, especially, experienced (Westheimer 2004). The emphasis that participants in this study, similar to the themes elucidated in the American study preceding it, placed on the commonly-held signposts of formal democracy, such as elections, freedoms and majority rule, may not be surprising but the lack of depth and critical assessment of the shortcomings in Canadian, and American, society is relevant to note. Moreover, the relatively weak appreciation for education as a key aspect to bringing about critical engagement and experience in democracy, combined with the pivotal feature of social justice, underscores the general sentiment that future educators may not be experiencing a strong, or “thick”, democratic educational experience throughout their formative schooling (Gandin 2005).

There are many factors to explore to further substantiate the foundation of democratic education but this study complements the findings from the American study, even though there are some nuances to each samples’ responses. The themes that flow from the research are similar in both contexts, yet the depth and resonance of the findings reflect certain values, histories and experiences of each locale. Several of the themes highlighted in this research were also brought to light in Lebrun’s (2006, 644) study, which involved in-depth discussions among teacher-education students, including: the choice of government through free elections; guaranteed fundamental rights; the obligation of the majority to respect the opposition; and the principle of majority rule. This indicates that these common themes are understood broadly in diverse contexts, yet it is unclear the degree to which the enunciated statements and values are translated into critical engagement, especially in relation political literacy and social justice.

In sum, the commonality of the North American experience can be explained, in part, by the prevalence of neoliberal policies and realities that have affected youth, students and educators on both sides of the border (Gandin 2005; McLaren 2007; Kincheloe 2008). Similarly, these findings support the introduction of a critical pedagogical approach in education that could not only better prepare future educators for the challenge of engaging students in the classroom but, also, importantly, framing their experiences so as to be able to confront diverse political realities themselves (Kincheloe 2008). In line with Freire’s work (1970), education is a political project, and avoiding embracing such a notion can only
diminish the educational and democratic experience for all students. In an increasingly multicultural society, as exists throughout North America, it is important to problematize the meaning of ethnocultural and racial pluralism within a context of democratic education. What are the implications for society, as argued throughout the paper, if critical, democratic engagement (a ‘thicker’ interpretation of democracy) is not the focus, or one of the pillars, of public education? Incorporating a vision, a curriculum, a pedagogy, a policy framework and an institutional culture conducive to cultivating political literacy and social justice in education (Lund and Carr, 2008) can assist in establishing a more accountable, democratic educational system and experience for all students (Carr 2007b).

Acknowledgements

The research for this study was supported by a Canadian Studies Research Award from the Canadian Embassy in Washington. We would also like to acknowledge two colleagues--Jules Duchastel and Maryse Potvin--who assisted in conceptualizing the research project.

References

Carr, P.R. "Educators and education for democracy: Moving beyond "thin" democracy." Inter-American Journal of Education and Democracy 1, no. 2 (2008): 147-165.


Now What? Getting Politically Active Within and Beyond the Classroom

Lisa Child, Alyson Daly, Michelle Herbert, Krista Hunt and Genevieve Ritchie
University of Toronto

In most politics/gender studies classrooms, participants are encouraged to learn about an issue (What?) and analyze it (So What?), but are very rarely expected or encouraged to talk about what can be done to address the issue (Now What?). As students and critical scholars we are asked to identify historical systems of oppression and explore the ways in which they are connected to other issues. Problematizing themes and bracketing issues as ‘problematic’ is often the last stage of the learning process, in part because students are rarely asked to consider what action they might take to promote political change. In other words, learning ends before action begins. And in some cases, it seems like we have become too good at critiquing, and the problems have become so big, that change seems impossible. As Genevieve Ritchie explains, “…my academic experience had neither empowered me to use my own voice nor cultivated the conceptual tools to view change as something that I could achieve.”¹ As such, discussions of oppression can leave students feeling overwhelmed and discouraged. Popular educators argue that ‘learning without action leads to guilt, apathy, and powerlessness’ (CWY 2005. Thus, courses must explore not only the ‘What?’ and the ‘So What?’, but also the ‘Now What?’ on any given issue if political education is to be empowering.

One way of addressing the ‘Now What’ is to include an action project assignment that can complement or replace the traditional research paper. Linda Briskin, a feminist pedagogue and activist developed an action project for her ‘Women Organizing’ course at York University. This assignment was adapted and used in our course, ‘Women and Issues of International Development’ in 2007/08, and can be used in any course addressing social and political issues. The following paper is the culmination of a number of discussions on our experience of participating in action projects as both educators and students. We draw from these experiences as a means to explore the ways in which education can empower and encourage individuals to be actively and politically engaged. Further, we attempt to

¹ This was a collaborative writing process that began with us all individually reflecting and writing about our experiences with action projects. The direct quotes from us as individuals are taken from these first drafts.
grapple with some of the challenges that already exist in the classroom as well as some of the possible challenges that may arise. The task and process of asking ‘Now What?’ has demonstrated to us that participatory learning can help individuals to realize both their own agency as well as their responsibility to the larger community.

**How are we Agents of Change? or Why Assign Action Projects?**

“I believe that everyone is an agent of change. Agency is a birthright and change is our duty.” (Lisa Child)

Participating in an action project provides the opportunity to experience the connection between academics and activism and as such creates space for students to envision change and explore the different roles they can fill as agents of change. The initial phase of an action project is to identify and problematize social and political issues that are important to you as a political actor and then devise an action either to create change around the issue or to engage with the issue in a new way. The formation and implementation of our action projects allowed us to experience our individual connection to social space and thus our right and responsibility to become involved with political change in our communities. Additionally, the action projects that we participated in allowed us to directly experience the ways in which we actually perpetuated social inequalities and reproduced systems of oppression. The final stage of reflecting upon our action projects highlighted the ways in which we had partitioned our roles as students and as social actors. In other words, we saw ourselves as agents of small or incremental change, but were largely unaware of the positive relationship between action and learning. The culminating effect of this project both deepened our critical thinking skills as well as placed our voices at the center of the analysis and as such this assignment demonstrated that each of us can be empowered to create a role for ourselves in shaping social-political spaces. Through direct experience, the action project not only allows students to begin to create change within their own lives and communities, it also allows students and teachers to learn about how activism occurs, what individuals need to do to keep social movements healthy, and how activism develops and changes in practice.

**What We Did**

As students we recognized that the types of discussions that take place in the classroom setting are unique discussions because we have many of the same resources and language with which to base our discussions and reflections. Often, these discussions never make it past the classroom door, and when they do they can play out differently than expected. We wanted to take an exploration of these political ideas out of the classroom and try to incite discussions with others, as well as integrate some of the issues we discussed in the classroom into our daily lives. We sought to create collective projects with the people that we were engaging with, either within groups of students or through interactions with the public. We wanted to avoid a colonial mentality of assuming that as project initiators we have all of the knowledge. In short, our action projects were an opportunity for us to put our theoretical knowledge into practice.
Our groups employed different actions that would take our critique to a new level and put into practice theory we had learned. Each group approached this in a different way. One group chose to accomplish this end by riding the subway and engaging in political discussions with fellow commuters. We choose the TTC because many different types of people ride the TTC and for many different reasons. By talking about a wide variety of topics, we wanted to highlight how they are linked and how we are all affected. We hoped to raise political and personal awareness, and to problematize general understandings of issues of women and international development, by talking about how these issues were important to us. We also wanted to create an environment where people could talk about politics in public settings. We wanted to take advantage of the wealth of knowledge that we all carry with us and create a space where that information could be shared in order to benefit us all.

Another group chose to create a community based on feminist economic principles of sharing. We attempted to make alterations to our day-to-day lives that would embody our perspectives on the environment, social hierarchies, privilege and oppression. We wanted to unpack some of the ways in which we often felt seduced and/or trapped by capitalism. As we attempted to engage in feminist inspired modes of economic exchange, we found that we also had to address our own positions of privilege (or oppression) and how this affected our positions within the group and our feelings around knowledge, asking for help, giving, taking and needing. This component of the action project proved to be very difficult as it involved making changes in our lives outside of the classroom, which, for some, involved acknowledging and giving up privilege and recognizing that privilege comes in relation to the oppression of others. Working through these issues within a group was at times very emotional and was always deeply personal, as the project itself sought to move away from abstraction towards a better understanding of our own positions in relation to each other. Additionally, by the end of our project most of us had gained a practical understanding of the challenges of creating social change with few economic resources.

**What Teachers and Students Can Learn**

One of the most important lessons for teachers to learn is that students want opportunities to make change, but need to be supported as they juggle work for university credit, paid employment, and under/unpaid work like childcare or community work. As one student suggested:

> Instead of handing in seminar papers, students could be graded by formulating some political action/activities related to gender. Although I want to get involved in these political activities, the fact is that I have to use my time for essay writing that would determine my grades. Therefore, it would be great if you could give us another option to be graded, not only by submitting papers, but by formulating some political activities’ (Anonymous student from York University, 2006).

From these projects, teachers also learn that students are willing to invest far more effort (quantitatively and qualitatively) into projects that they devise in response to issues that they care about.
Students and teachers experience and learn about change on multiple levels: within the people and institutions they target for change; within themselves as they learn, make mistakes, adapt, become creative, overcome obstacles, and reflect on what they have done; within our classroom, as we learn from each other, provide supportive, constructive and critical feedback, share our challenges, inspire each other, and become important allies. We also discovered that change is most effective and sustainable when it is done collectively.

Through the collaboration of students and teachers, we developed a relationship where we could learn from, and simultaneously teach each other. Working collectively with both other students and members of the community was one of the most important and valuable components of this project. Each member of the group (as well as individuals that we interacted with) contributed different skills, experiences and knowledge, which we all gained access to. In addition, these learning communities also demonstrated the importance of fostering solidarity and embracing differences. If as individuals we hope to create political change, we need interactions with others to highlight overlooked areas. Additionally, it is doubtful that we will create ‘perfect’ social structures, therefore networks are integral for identifying contentious areas and regulating the evolution of change. Hence, political change and learning continually feed back into each other, which can be greatly enhanced through a learning community.

While these specific assignments may or may not work in all classrooms and with all students, exploring ‘Now What?’ extends the scope and depth of analysis and places students at the center of their education. Participating in these projects required each of us to think beyond simply critiquing an issue and encouraged us to conceptualize ourselves as political actors. Further, formulating and implementing the project required each of us to be directly involved with the trajectory of our education and as such we experienced the connection between our roles as students and public actors. In other words, this project allowed us to experience the connections between education and activism, as well as the personal and the political. What both students and teachers can learn from this approach is that political change is never simple, that political change takes time, that we must be open to making mistakes and learning how to integrate those lessons into our continued political engagements, and that having supportive spaces to embark and reflect on political action is essential to making politics an activity and a life’s work, not just a subject we learn about in school. The more important lesson that should be taken from our experience is that students and teachers need to be creative and flexible in coming up with assignments that reflect specific needs of the students. More importantly, our assignments need to matter to us.

**Challenges**

This process is very challenging and emotional for many students, especially since it is a project that they have not been ‘disciplined’ for. They are expected to act on what they have learned, with little preparation; to take action on issues that are long-standing and stubbornly resistant to change; and to challenge the ways that they benefit from the status quo. It is not surprising that students report feeling unprepared for such assignments, and unsure of whether or not they are up to the challenge. However, students consistently do their best work on the action project assignment, find it one of the most valuable aspects of
the course, and choose this assignment in subsequent courses even though they know from experience that it entails much more work than the standard research paper.

It is important to recognize that teachers are in a very powerful position as they ask students to take the risks involved with political change. Academically, fourth year students have had years to practice and academic supports like writing centres to develop research and writing skills for standard research papers. Therefore, they take the risk of embarking on a major project with which most have little experience. Personally, they are asked to go beyond their heads and make sure that whatever issue they choose emerges from their lived experience. They are asked to make change in their community (however they define that), consider engaging in collective change (group work), locate themselves in the issues, reflect on the process of making change, and examine whether they think of themselves as change-makers. In other words, it is a highly personal and political process. This personal connection and the hopefulness it takes to even think about change ends up changing students. Politically, they begin to live lifelong questions about who they are, what they are going to do with their lives, will they have an impact, will the world become a better place, does anyone else care? Questions that raise more questions, which inspire actions that are ongoing, time-consuming, unpaid, undervalued, exhausting, and exhilarating. In asking our students to undertake this process, it is incumbent on teachers to model their own change-making by bringing their personal/political questions about the world and their activist experience to the table, to be honest about the struggles they are engaged in, to provide political space and support for their students, and to honour and respect the process of change-making that happens inside, as well as outside, the classroom.

While action as education can be an incredibly rewarding experience, it requires students to be active participants rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Although this may initially be an uncomfortable experience, it is ultimately very rewarding.

Prior to this assignment, political action had never been presented to me as a component of learning and subsequently I found that the university setting had not prepared me to engage with such a project. In fact this assignment confronted my academic sensibilities in such a way as to make me unsure of how I could even hope to devise or achieve any form of political change. In other words, I lacked the academic tools to conceptualize how I would take action. At an individual level, my challenge was to push beyond using established academics to legitimize my knowledge and to become comfortable projecting my own voice. Further, my involvement with this project gave me access to a diverse range of experiences and created the opportunity for me to situate myself within theoretical issues – an experience that my institutional education had not given me. (Genevieve Ritchie)

Once completed, action projects provide students and educators the opportunity to share their resources and/or new knowledge with one another. For instance, one of my former classmates created a workshop designed for women to explore solutions regarding domestic violence. When she presented her idea to the class, she gave us a copy of the pamphlets that were used within her workshop. The layout was simple yet creative and I have used it as a reference for a workshop that I am developing on a similar topic within my neighbourhood. (Michelle Herbert)

More broadly, action projects must be accompanied by critical discussions on the role and character of activism. Many forms of political action, such as volunteerism and
philanthropy, can be detrimental as they actually reproduce inequitable power relations that exist on a structural level. Further, while volunteering can be an introduction to political participation, a middle class, saviour dynamic often besmirches it (i.e. I worked hard to get where I am so now I may choose to give back). While it is important to give students the freedom to follow their instincts, volunteerism and philanthropy often happen on an individual level, and do nothing to address systematic inequalities. Further, the giver assumes a neutral position and as such does not have to critically examine their participation. Within any political action power structures will always be present and, as such, it is important to consider one’s social location and privilege. Hence, we found it most useful when educators encouraged and promoted an active discussion of all proposed projects.

Asking students to participate in a dialogue about the challenges of political action may cultivate a democratic milieu and, as such, may help to ameliorate the inequitable dynamics of power and authority that exist within a classroom. Universities are not neutral spaces and subsequently political actions within these spaces will be influenced by the historical norms of the institution. Action projects are a move away from abstract discussions of social and political problems and can create feelings of empowerment for students. However, a project of this type may not always produce these feelings. In order for the project to truly empower, it must also address the oppression that occurs within learning spaces themselves. Acknowledging differing levels of privilege and oppression experienced by both students and teachers within the classroom itself must be central to the project. As part of our action projects we created activities to investigate our own privilege. Through a number of exercises and discussion with other group members many of us began to consider the ways in which we were actually perpetuating systems of oppression. Thus, cultivating a critical dialogue about privilege, education and political action can be a springboard into understanding our individual and collective participation in systems of oppression. A critical discussion of topics such as these is not a panacea for oppression within the classroom, however, without such a discussion, learning continues to be undemocratic and through silence or omission will perpetuate inequitable power dynamics.

As a critical element of addressing oppression within educational spaces, educators should address any existing notions of what is often referred to as colourblindness in the classroom, prior and during the development of each project. Our experiences as students have taught us that most classrooms uphold the idea of colourblindness in subtle ways. For instance, few educators take the time to talk about the tensions that may arise when students from dominant and subordinate groups work together. We have also found that participants (namely White students and educators), tend to use language that strategically separates themselves from the course material, especially when discussing issues that are sensitive to those who may belong to marginalized communities. The levels of division between dominant and marginalized groups become apparent when White students and educators claim that they are unsure how to fight against oppression because they are not sure who the oppressors are. Racialized students know all too well what types of obstacles are staring them in the face on a daily bases.
I can name the educators who pulled me aside at a young age to tell me that rather than aim for a university education I should opt to develop a skill in a trade such as cooking or hairstyling. Clearly, the notion of colourblindness in the classroom (i.e. pretending we are all the same), solely benefits White students and educators because it either enables Whites to position themselves as allies in the struggle against oppression, or it allows Whites to avoid the topics of Whiteness/White supremacy and White privilege altogether. (Michelle Herbert)

On a similar note, we urge educators to discuss the idea of saving the Other in the classroom prior to introducing action projects. There is a trend among upper level students; that trend was premised on the idea of either 1) saving the Other from the Other (i.e. taking on the role of saviour or mediator in regions of the world that are recovering from colonialism and neo-colonialism), or 2) saving the Other from the big bad wolf (i.e. saving non-Whites from G.W. Bush’s administration and/or the nameless, faceless corporation). Of course no one referred to their ‘field work’ in that way. The idea of leaving Canada, to assist with ‘development’ projects in countries that are slowing recovering from tribal civil wars and/or years of imperial oppression is in fact a strategy for privileged students to save the Other and more importantly neutralize their privilege. Unfortunately, this idea made its way into a few action projects by students who also attended ‘Women and Issues of International Development’. This was surprising because interrogating the desire to perform ‘field work’ was a key component of the course. While we were inspired by the enthusiasm of these groups, it was clear that the politics of rescue lay at the foundation of their approach.

Finally, we ask that educators discuss any misguided assumptions about racial difference within the classroom. On the topic of collective organizing for instance, our experience has shown that White students and educators often believe that because racialized peoples are oppressed, we will be eager to organize with anyone who will listen to our concerns. We find this assumption highly insulting because as racialized women we need to build a certain level of trust with White people prior to discussing any form of activism. There should be space within the classroom to talk about how this level of trust can be established between students and educators. Moreover, educators must address the concept of the racialized umbrella (i.e. the idea that all racialized peoples experience oppression in the same way). While there are moments when racialized groups organize based on overlapping oppressions, at no point in time should we be viewed as a homogenous collective. Racialized peoples have distinct cultural practices and students/educators must become familiar with these differences to avoid making generalizations that are often based on stereotypes.

Conclusion

Assigning an action project is only the beginning. It is necessary to integrate ‘now what’ activities within every lesson/seminar so that political change does not become an isolated, one-off assignment. In other words, a week on political change is as insufficient and tokenistic as a week on ‘women’. We need to get to the now what during every class.

Action projects provide students with the opportunity to get politically active, which is essential for participatory democracy. In the classroom, participatory democracy has
meant engaging in a process of teaching and learning where dialogue is open, and where interlocking systems of power and privilege are examined and challenged. Action projects are significant because they create opportunities for students to share their concerns regarding the socio-economic and political issues that are close to their hearts and structure their lives. The use of action projects in the classroom helps to promote a wider definition of democracy within communities in general. In other words, students are encouraged to be directly involved in the shaping of a political issue, which cultivates an understanding of democratic participation beyond (or possibly in opposition to) the procedures of political institutions.

There are a number of challenges related to asking students to take political action, ranging from having the intellectual frameworks to explore the theoretical issues to being able to take care of the responsibilities in daily people’s lives. However, encouraging action projects can create space within the normal classroom environment to explore two types of dynamics: first, the ways in which a stimulus for change can be created, and second, the problematics of activism. At the most basic, personal and practical level, challenges arise from issues such as: time constraints, fear associated with the uncertainty of how to act, unrealistic expectations pertaining to the scope of change achievable, and discomfort with attaching individual grades to a group project. Additionally, instructors may find it challenging to move away from assigning grades for action projects because the measurement of social/political change is solely based on one’s perspective. While requiring students to participate with political action may initially be disorientating, many students find the experience rewarding as it connects theoretical knowledge with experience, as well as the classroom with the community.

Although some progressive classrooms have become sites to discuss oppression, they are rarely places to consider and engage in activism in order to celebrate difference and challenge privilege. As a result, students who occupy privileged positions may feel apt to regard oppression as occurring ‘outside’ of their lives and therefore something they are capable of ignoring or discussing ‘objectively’ (and safely) from within the academy. For students who themselves face oppression daily, having evidence of this violence continually presented without a discussion of action is demoralizing and frustrating. When students are not asked to examine how they can challenge oppression and privilege, learning becomes a process of domination. By focusing on the ‘Now What’, students and teachers challenge the privilege of the academy to be disconnected from activism, from the community, and from our lives beyond the ivory tower.

References

Canada World Youth, *Education Activities and Resources 2005-2006* (Compiled by the Central Canada Region Office of Canada World Youth), 73.
Educación Ciudadana Universitaria Democrática: Ambito para la Reflexión-Acción-Transformación desde la Cultura de Paz

Olga Carolina Molano Lucena
Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador

Resumen

Los cambios epocales requieren transformaciones que respondan a las demandas de la realidad social y colectiva. La democracia como filosofía se apoya en los valores de tolerancia, libertad, pluralidad, igualdad, equidad y paz, principios necesarios en la convivencia social. Basado en estos hechos, se planteó el estudio de la educación ciudadana, ámbito para la reflexión-acción-transformación desde la Cultura de Paz, como alternativa para el fortalecimiento del tejido social democrático. El propósito de este estudio fue crear espacios para la reflexión, el aprendizaje, la aprehensión del conocimiento que permita asumir las acciones y transformaciones en el marco de las diferentes manifestaciones de los miembros de las comunidades educativas y sociales. Para ello se fundamento ontológica, epistemológica y axiológicamente desde las diferentes representaciones comunitarias. Se utilizó la metodología cualitativa, desde el paradigma crítico apoyándose en una investigación de campo. Se centró en opiniones de las vivencias reales de docentes, estudiantes y demás miembros de comunidades universitarias. La información obtenida fue analizada, codificada, categorizada e interpretada. El resultado permitió elaborar un diagnóstico preliminar, que evidenció el requerimiento de una acción capaz de formar ciudadanos líderes para asumir la participación democrática protagónica. En este sentido se presentó el Proyecto Lineamientos Universales de Ciudadanía Educativa y Social (LUCES), como la forma de abordar la educación ciudadana de manera constructiva e innovadora desde la acción participativa como vía para generar transformaciones de las estructuras democráticas no funcionales, por otras formas de participación protagónica, basadas en un proceso de reflexión crítica, desde la construcción de una Cultura de Paz.
Constuyendo el Ámbito de Estudio

Reflexión preliminar

Las transformaciones del mundo, señalan la naturaleza del ser humano, y la misión del hombre, sobre el sentido de sus esfuerzos, personales y comunitarios, son temas de interés de las ciencias sociales, Wallerstein (2004, 83) señala como uno de los problemas que enfrenta “… es el de cómo superar las separaciones artificiales erigidas en el siglo XXI entre los reinos supuestamente autónomos, de lo político, lo económico y lo social…” Este señalamiento trae a la reflexión la forma como se ha abordado la educación desde un plano disciplinario que se desarrolla a partir de parcelas del conocimiento.

En Venezuela actualmente, se vive un momento de ruptura y cambio histórico que mueven los cimientos de la estructura democrática, debido a que se aduce a ésta los desequilibrios y desigualdades sociales y la inequidades propias de los sistemas capitalistas. Asimismo, el planteamiento de una nueva concepción política basada en el socialismo del siglo XXI, amenaza la postura filosófica y política del país.

En la actualidad, se debaten propuestas sociopolíticas que van desde la democrática tradicional, democrática social y la socialista democrática, todas representan un reto a las diferentes organizaciones de la estructura social venezolana. Una de las instituciones que requiere ser repensada a la luz de los anhelos de transformación del pueblo venezolano, son las universidades y el resto de las instituciones de educación superior, pensadas como un subsistema dentro de un sistema macro que es la educación.

Desde esta realidad, la discusión pretenden abordar puntos medulares como: la contextualización de los Saberes, la participación y el ejercicio democrático en la toma de decisiones. En este sentido, la autonomía, debe ser considerada para replantear un nuevo modelo de educación universitaria acorde con los requerimientos de la sociedad actual y la potenciación del capital humano, garantizando la inclusión y el doce de los derechos elementales y por ende, de su ciudadanía.

En este sentido, la ciudadanía, que además de ser un término que enmarca la condición del individuo como miembro de una comunidad política a la que está jurídicamente vinculado por el mero hecho de la pertenencia, debe ser entendido como la ampliación del reconocimiento de derechos absolutos de las personas ante el estado, así como la extensión de garantías para su realización plena en términos de bienestar.

Para enfocar el término bienestar es preciso señalar que enfoca la satisfacción de los aspectos biológicos, psicológicos y sociales de la vida de una persona que se desarrolla dentro de una relación y/o interrelación con el entorno físico y social. Los medios y recursos representa parte en este contexto y señala Montero y otros, citado por Montero (2006, 91) “Todo ser humano tiene siempre la capacidad y potencialidad y puede ejercer alguna forma de poder... que le permita transformar las relaciones y situaciones sociales... al identificar las necesidades de una comunidad.”

Este enfoque establece la relación entre los individuos y la sociedad con relación a la satisfacción de intereses y necesidades en todos los órdenes de la vida particular y comunitaria, desde la perspectiva del bienestar. Los cambios epocales requieren de
transformaciones que respondan a las demandas de la realidad social y colectiva actual. No puede haber democracia, si no se asumen los valores de tolerancia, libertad, pluralidad, igualdad y equidad, principios contenidos en la Cultura de Paz.

**Contextualización**

El conocimiento impartido en las universidades, tradicionalmente responden a la lógica de formar profesionales para el mercado de trabajo, desestimándose la pertinencia social y el compromiso con su entorno; la formación de un ciudadano democrático, se quedo en las premisas de una información básica, orientada sólo en los primeros años de escolaridad y el ejercicio democrático en el voto representativo.

En este sentido, el sistema democrático se ve debilitado en su esencia y requiere de mecanismos de apropiación del saber-hacer ciudadano, capaz de asumir los retos del presente y del futuro. Se hace necesaria la adaptación y creación del conocimiento pertinente a las necesidades, y a la concepción de un mundo más humano, igualitario y libre. Los modelos científicos, han resuelto en otros tiempos algunas situaciones colectivas, pero en la actualidad requieren de ajustes o cambios, que ayuden a resolver los problemas y no sólo que se queden en el aspecto del asunto descriptivo de los acontecimientos sociales. En este sentido, es necesario dominar la técnica, pero también de apropiarse del conocimiento, que permita junto con la visión política y social favorecer el crecimiento positivo del entorno social, político, cultural, económico, y educativo.

Desde esta perspectiva la participación va más allá de la elección y de la representatividad y requiere de formas más activas de proyección de la democracia. Implica además el compromiso para involucrarse y comprometerse en la toma de decisiones, en las acciones en la reflexión que conduzca a los cambios necesarios y a la transformación de las estructuras sociales no funcionales, pero sobre todo la búsqueda de la humanización de las relaciones en interacciones colectivas en términos de bienestar. En este sentido señala Núñez, (1994, 150):

La participación democrática no puede reducirse a delegar mandatos a comisiones y autoridades, sino que debe consagrarse un régimen de consulta oportuna a la comunidad de base y hacer de la presentación de cuentas de las autoridades superiores un modo regular de la vida democrática universitaria. La verdadera autonomía universitaria se consolida cuando toda la comunidad participe democráticamente de las decisiones fundamentales para la institución, mediante los más diversos mecanismos de consulta y discusión... Entonces, la democracia dejará de ser un concepto abstracto o una práctica electoral esporádica y se convertirá en la activa participación de todos en las complejas tareas de conducir y hacer avanzar la universidad

Es necesario para ello aprender democracia desde la democratización de los saberes y de las interacciones pertinentes a la proyección social o socialista, pero desde la participación pertinente y coherente a proporcionar una calidad de vida colectiva, desde la perspectiva de cada individualidad. El diálogo, respeto, libertad, tolerancia y pluralidad deben ser principios potenciados en la formación que de manera conjunta con los aspectos técnicos, contribuyan al desarrollo del perfil ciudadano requerido.
Propósitos

Esta dirigido a propiciar espacios de aprendizaje reflexivo, que amplíen los conocimientos relacionados con el ejercicio de una ciudadanía participativa y protagónica en la construcción de una Cultura de Paz; a través del desarrollo de las acciones, que permitan el cambio de estructuras democráticas no funcionales, por otras que permitan asumir las transformaciones en el marco de las diferentes manifestaciones de los miembros de las comunidades educativas y sociales.

Fundamentos del Estudio

Esta basado en los principios de una participación dentro de los valores democráticos de una Cultura de Paz, con una visión común de país; donde se fomente una moral y ética de servicio al bien común donde los derechos y los deberes se asuman con responsabilidad por parte de la ciudadanía del pueblo venezolano a través de una educación que transforme la realidad con esfuerzos positivos de los actores educativos, sociales y comunitarios.

Se justifica en el marco de la investigación como acción participativa que permite el diálogo de saberes, la indagación socio crítica de los actores educativos, sociales y comunitarios. Se encuentra enmarcada en un enfoque cualitativo, lo que significa que se queden en la exterioridad, es decir sólo se observa en la realidad que emerge más allá de un monólogo imperturbable de sujeto como indagador, para fundirse en el plano dialógico de la construcción o reconstrucción del conocimiento. Se basa en la relación de los actores sociales, quienes al involucrarse en las acciones, reflexionan y se comprometen con la transformación de sus propias realidades generando los cambios necesarios en pro del bienestar común.

Aproximaciones Ontoepistemológicas

El presente estudio se orientó en el aspecto ontológico, el cual se evidencia en la existencia de varias realidades socialmente construidas, no gobernadas por leyes naturales o causales, puesto que la educación debe dar sentido a las experiencias y conducir a una Educación ciudadana en un entorno de Cultura de Paz.

La perspectiva epistemológica asumida, esta basada en la comprensión de la ciudadanía desde la subjetividad y la cultura, nos conduce hacia un marco interpretativo que transita por caminos opuestos a los propuestos por la racionalidad instrumental. Pues, al centrarse en el sujeto y su capacidad constructora de mundos, posibles a partir de la interpretación de su propio presente, la acción individual y colectiva cobra una nueva trascendencia.

En esta perspectiva la subjetividad social, como referencia explicativa, se redimensiona politizándose. Como Lechner (2002, 8) indica, “se entiende por política ... la conflictiva y nunca acabada construcción del orden deseado, [es] la subjetividad social la que ofrece las motivaciones que alimentan dicho proceso de construcción.” Es decir, reafirma la política como una condición de la existencia colectiva creada por sujetos y
sociedades, que se opone a la concepción de una sociedad entendida como un orden 'natural' en el que los fenómenos que allí acontecen.

Asumo esta perspectiva porque me permite acceder a la subjetividad de los actores desde un proceso de construcción de significados, comprendiéndoles e interpretándoles en el escenario natural de la participación ciudadana y los componentes culturales, educativos, sociales, económicos y políticos de sus significados. Tal como señala Ibáñez (1996) las realidades se construyen en la interacción a través del lenguaje, la comunicación y otras prácticas sociales, de allí que los significados acerca de la misma compartidos por los actores sociales.

**La ciudadanía desde la óptica de la participación democrática**

Entendemos que el ejercicio de la ciudadanía en el entorno de los cambios epocales, conforman un conjunto complejo e interrelacionado de espacios, actores y acciones en actividad constante. Como ya se ha dicho anteriormente, uno de los principios básicos de la teoría de la participación transformadora es que la sociedad no puede existir sin esta interacción; pues, en sí misma, ella demanda la misma para su realización efectiva. En palabras de Reguillo (1997, 24),

... la participación ciudadana, no se reduce a la del ejercicio de la elección y la participación representativa, que se configura en los espacios públicos en relación con los entornos políticos, aunque unos y otros de estos elementos sean parte consustancial de todo estudio sobre la participación ciudadana para el análisis.

Dentro de estas reflexiones reconsidera a la ciudadanía como el conjunto de acciones y disposiciones para la participación democrática donde los hombres o miembros de una comunidad geográfica social se desarrollan las allá de los límites de la ciudad en interdependencia de tres subsistemas con lógicas de funcionamiento, reglas y dinámicas autónomas: un sistema de localización de la actividad; un sistema de comunicación física, y un sistema de comunicación social.

En palabra de Reguillo (1997, 24), esta consideración se resume en

...la observación de la presencia de instituciones, discursos y prácticas objetivas en las representaciones...entre lo objetivo y lo subjetivo, dimensiones básicas de la cultura y, por ende, de la identidad cultural, puede ser mirada y objetivada en las prácticas sociales...en una dimensión más simbólica, lo legítimo y lo ilegítimo.

Así entonces, la ciudadanía no se reduce a su dimensión espacial o campal objetiva, pero tampoco es sólo un conjunto de representaciones incorporadas por los sujetos. Es, como queda claro en la afirmación anterior, una compleja combinación entre ambas dimensiones.

En este sentido, la ciudadanía es una concepción que va desde lo individual hasta lo colectivo, en la expresión de sus significados; al respecto la Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela (República Bolivariana de Venezuela 1999, Art. 57) expone: “Toda persona tiene derecho a expresar libremente sus pensamientos, sus ideas y opiniones de viva voz, ...no se permite el anonimato, ni la propaganda de guerra, ni los mensajes
discriminatorios, ni los que promuevan la intolerancia ...”, se podría inferir que tampoco la intolerancia política ni cualquier otra forma de manifestación que promueva la violencia.

Al respecto, es conveniente señalar algunos principios básicos de la Cultura de Paz, que según la Schutz (1993), se basan en valores, actitudes, comportamientos y estilos de vida que refuerzan la no violencia y el respeto de los derechos y libertades fundamentales de cada persona. Ella depende de la observancia y aceptación del derecho de las personas a ser diferentes y de su derecho a una existencia pacífica y segura dentro de sus comunidades.

**La educación y la ciudadanía: una asociación imperiosa**

La educación es considerada uno de los pilares fundamentales del cualquier sistema social y político, pues es allí donde se desarrollan las bases de la personalidad y de los componentes de una sociedad. Las instituciones educativas en todos sus niveles son asumidas como los espacios para la propagación de los valores de formación para la ciudadanía y un lugar público o privado institucionalizado; en el que se debiera aprender a vivir y a convivir dentro de los enfoques filosóficos de la democracia. En este contexto se promueven como principios fundamentales: la libertad, el respeto, la pluralidad, la igualdad, la tolerancia, entre otros esquemas que se han vuelto temas claves de nuestra era actual.

Desde esta perspectiva, Martínez (2005) en su propuesta de Construir la Ciudadanía en la Escuela analiza con profundidad al centro escolar como un microcosmos de la realidad con la responsabilidad de volver a interpretar el nuevo orden social en el espacio civil, político y cultural que le compete a las instituciones educativas. También, señala la trascendencia de las relaciones entre familia, profesorado, aprendizaje y estudiantes.

**Aproximación Metodológica**

Desde la dimensión metodológica, el abordaje cualitativo, permite describir, comprender y caracterizar los criterios desde un carácter emergente que se construye en la medida que las interacciones de la investigación acción participativa se va desarrollando. Asume una tendencia flexible y abierta a los cambios como señala Lincoln y Guba (1985), a la relación dinámica del investigador con los investigados, constituyéndose en una interacción sujeto-objeto de indagación.

El aspecto metodológico se caracteriza por la crítica a la construcción teórica, puesto que, al conocimiento se llega por el cuestionamiento del conocimiento práctico, para construir el diálogo en la interacción dentro de un proceso participativo y democrático para potenciar una participación transformadora que sea capaz de asumir la prevención de la violencia y generar estructuras de intervención de la realidad en un liderazgo para la acción social y comunitaria. Una visión general de los aspectos metodológicos considerados en este estudio puede obtenerse a través del presente gráfico.
El gráfico anterior muestra el recorrido de una de las fases de la investigación como los es la diagnóstica. Esta propuesta esta fundamentada en los aportes de la hermenéutica, de la sociología fenomenológica, de la teoría crítica, de la orientación dialéctica, entre otros; dirigiendo su atención a lo expresado por Sandín (2003, 49),

Hacia el mundo de la intersubjetividad compartida, y la construcción social del significado y el conocimiento, hacia la generación colectiva del significado tal y como se perfilá por las convenciones del lenguaje y otros procesos sociales. El conocimiento es contingente a practicas humanas, se construyen a partir de la interacción entre los seres humanos y el mundo... que interpretan..., se desarrolla y es transmitido en contextos esencialmente sociales.

Desde esta perspectiva, interpreto que la realidad es socialmente construida, que el conocimiento surge de los saberes de la gente, de las experiencias compartidas dentro de un proceso socio-histórico de la realidad. Significa entonces, que no hay una visión única de la realidad, sino que existen versiones múltiples e interpretaciones diversas, dinámicas y relativista para la generación del conocimiento.

Al respecto Schutz (1993, 17) plantea que “el mundo social no es homogéneo sino que muestra una estructura multiforme, cada una de sus esferas o regiones es a la vez una manera de percibir y comprender las vivencias de otros.” Sobre esta base la participación transformadora debe ser vista como el producto del reconocimiento de las diferencia, en el consenso de los intereses e interpretaciones de las realidades y acontecimientos comunes, para la transformación de los diferentes contextos sociales y comunitarios.
Fases del Estudio

Para efectos de esta investigación se asumieron tres fases las cuales permitieron la estructuración de las acciones-reflexiones y acciones necesarias para el desarrollo de la misma y se describen a continuación:

Fase diagnóstica
Se establecieron las pautas entre investigadores e investigados quienes accedieron a participar en la propuesta a través de entrevistas y observaciones participantes. Para facilitar el proceso de interpretación de la información, se procedió a establecer las categorías, subcategorías, patrones y dilemas que emanaron de cada uno de los encuentros sostenidos con los actores sociales. Para asegurar que la interpretación de información recabada se correspondiera con la realidad, se utilizaron los siguientes procedimientos de validación a través de la transcripción de la información recabada fue presentada a los actores sociales universitarios con el propósito de que éstos la validaran. Se realizó la triangulación de fuentes, con el propósito de tener diferentes perspectivas de la situación que se estaba estudiando a fin de producir el diagnóstico preliminar para proponer las acciones participantes necesarias, como alternativa educativas de cambio de las estructuras democráticas no funcionales.

Fase de acción participativa
Para efectos de esta investigación se estructuró un conjunto de acciones formativas a través del LUCES, como la forma de abordar la educación ciudadana de manera constructiva e innovadora desde la acción participativa, como vía para generar transformaciones de las estructuras democráticas no funcionales, por otras formas de participación protagónica, basadas en un proceso de reflexión crítica, desde la construcción de una Cultura de Paz. Estas acciones se visualizan a continuación:

Cuadro 1: Estructura de la investigación (Molano 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estructura</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acción</td>
<td>La organización de los talleres y de la experiencia comunitaria se desarrolló tomando como base la promoción de la educación ciudadana, para fortalecer el ideal educativo, participativo, democrático y social del entorno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregunta Generadora</td>
<td>¿Cuál es la importancia de la educación ciudadana en un entorno de Cultura de Paz?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actores</td>
<td>Conformada por docentes y estudiantes (hombres y mujeres), que pertenecen al ámbito educativo de los institutos universitarios de Lara, y los facilitadores-mediadores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensiones</td>
<td>Educación ciudadana Estructuras sociales Cultura de Paz Formación y capacitación Ciudadanos, gobierno, estado, organizaciones civiles, comunidades. Conflictos (diferencias), No violencia y valores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atributos</td>
<td>Participación, conocimiento de la temática, experiencia, valores, disposición de replica formativa en sus comunidades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentación</td>
<td>La observación participante, cuestionarios abiertos, entrevistas colectivas y redes relacionales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aproximación Crítica</td>
<td>La transformación y la producción de aportes constructivos de ciudadanía.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fase de reflexión compartida

Una vez culminada la capacitación con la participación y el monitoreo por parte del equipo del ‘Proyecto Luces’ como parte de la investigación de campo. Los docentes, estudiantes y demás miembros participantes de la experiencia formativa, reflexionaron y se comprometieron a promover un liderazgo democrático participativo y protagónico en sus ámbitos educativos y comunitarios; también a documentar las experiencias y/o actividades asumidas; a registrar los cambios operados en sus contextos de acción, en el marco de la construcción de la Cultura de la Paz como alternativa de acción transformadora.

Acción-reflexión compartida

En el propósito de este estudio a partir del proceso de acción y reflexión compartida se llegaron a formular las siguientes conclusiones:

- Se reconoce la acción como una vía para generar transformaciones de las estructuras democráticas no funcionales, en otras formas de participación protagónica, basadas en un proceso de reflexión crítica, donde se promueva una Cultura de Paz en la formación de líderes, con una proyección social, comunitaria y educativa.

- La producción de aportes constructivos por parte de los participantes, representan una oportunidad en el ejercicio efectivo de una ciudadanía democrática.

- El aprendizaje como producto de la reflexión conjunta, genera compromiso individual y colectivo para asumir cambios en las estructuras agresivas y violentas, dando paso a otras formas de expresión de ideas. Es una oportunidad para el diálogo, la tolerancia y el respeto, aún cuando no se llegue a acuerdos.

- La Educación ciudadana universitaria en ámbitos de Cultura de Paz, representa una oportunidad de humanización de los componentes formativos ampliando la visión social de la acción de los futuros profesionales.

La Transformación

Vista desde la perspectiva del cambio, la transformación es un proceso que requiere aprender, desaprender y reaprender. La complejidad de las relaciones sociales y la incertidumbre del futuro inmediato, amerita en la actuación del ciudadano democrático, asumir otras estructuras diferentes a las tradicionales, capaces de responder a los requerimientos del siglo XXI. Si queremos una ciudadanía asertiva y funcional en el tejido social, que permita una convivencia armónica, debemos decididamente promover la educación ciudadana dentro de una Cultura de Paz. Puesto que la promoción de los valores éticos y morales democráticos, permitirá asumir un nuevo paradigma del conflicto sociopolítico en el contexto venezolano.

Referencias Bibliográficas

Democracy and Campus Life: A University of the West Indies Experiment to Include Commuting Students

Joseph Pereira
The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus

Abstract

Commuting students in universities tend to miss out on much of the affective co-curricular learning that is so important in enriching their personal development. Three years ago, the University of the West Indies embarked on an experiment that aimed to socialize commuting students into a richer university life and a networking of social contacts as a process for facilitating non-formal learning and enhancing social skills. This paper examines the experience over three cohorts and assesses its value as an alternative developmental model in addressing large commuting student populations.

Background

Many universities do not have the luxury of a fully residential, and in many cases even a partially residential, campus. How does such a University ensure that its students get the best educational exposure that comes not only from the academic programmes but from co-curricular activities? Can a University be expected to deliver to its commuting students an education equal to what residential students can enjoy, both in terms of time availability and provision of developmental programmes outside the classroom? Are commuting university students to resign themselves to an unequal and marginalized campus life and a partial educational experience based heavily on class-room academics? For the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, adopting the principle that commuting students need to be incorporated into the centre of university life, experiments were undertaken to find ways to achieve this and offer them some level of equity with the residential students, whose Halls of Residence offer a range of developmental programmes that foster democratic involvement and civic formation.
The Mona Campus, oldest of the campuses of the multi-national regional University of the West Indies, started sixty years ago as a fully residential campus, and remained so until the mid-1960s, when it had about one thousand students. The democratization of education in Jamaica through expansion of school places and the use of education as an enabling route in the developmental process meant that demand for university education increased significantly by the 1990s, while the UWI remained the only university in the English-speaking Caribbean. By the start of this century, even with other universities opening up, the demand for access to UWI had been such that the campus began to increase intake by an average of 10% per year over a six-year period, so that by 2006, registration had reached almost 8,000 full-time students and 4,000 part-time students in the face-to-face on-campus programmes at Mona. However, expansion of student residences on campus could not keep pace because of the capital outlay needed. From 1600 beds, housing expanded by 50% to 2,400 beds, but obviously this has been able to cater to just over 30% of full-time enrollment. The neighbourhoods surrounding the campus cannot absorb the demand for housing, so significant numbers of students live at long distances from the campus, with a daily commute that can range up to two hours in each direction.

**Commuting Students on the Margins**

While some commuting students have been able to take advantage of the varied co-curricular activities on campus over the years, the increases in intake have resulted in quite noticeable numbers of students disconnected from campus life, unaware of, or marginal to, developmental opportunities and even lacking in identification with the institution. In their lecture rooms, large classes have meant an impersonal experience not mitigated by the socializing available in Halls of Residence for many commuting students. The University has fairly healthy sports and cultural activities which can earn students co-curricular credits, offers programmes focused on developing leadership and team work, and encourages community outreach programmes among other organized activities aimed at affective learning and social responsibility. However, many of the participants are the residential students, who have more time at their disposal and are closer to the promotional energies of those programmes.

To exacerbate the situation, in the absence of sufficient wellness and socializing spaces on campus integrating students from the different secondary schools, a trend began to emerge whereby commuting students in search of a group identity started cliquing along lines of secondary school origin, limiting their developmental possibilities in a wider social environment. These are the friends they knew before entering university, so in the few free hours they may have on campus in their class schedules; these are the ones they associate with, resulting in an exclusivist outlook detrimental among other things to developing in them a larger UWI identity. Unfamiliar with the larger campus and its facilities, and left to their own devices, many of them stayed at the margins of a total university education. Unlike some universities in North America, the primary issue was not a high academic drop-out rate but rather an opt-out from a complete university education and hence the consequent marginalization of many commuting students.

---

1 All statistics used in this paper are from Mona 2008.
Creating Solutions

In the face of the rapid enrollment expansion and other challenges, the Mona Campus established a Strategic Repositioning Task Force in 2003, aimed at ensuring that it stayed the premier university and delivered a quality holistic education. One of the Working Groups focused on students, and recognizing the need to reach out to commuting students proposed a variant of the now fairly common First Year Experience, whose objective is to integrate these students into a full campus experience for their overall development as individuals.

The programme started as a modest pilot project in the 2005/06 academic year on a voluntary basis and with a cap of 150 participating commuting first year students (approx. 5% of intake). These were assigned to ten volunteer facilitators drawn from the academic and senior administrative staff of the campus. The intention was to provide these commuting students a forum small enough to encourage the participation of each member and draw out their capabilities and potential in a democratic way. It would also allow for their social interaction with new contacts from other backgrounds, orient them more fully to their University and foster in them a UWI identity, hone the skills they need for optimizing their campus experience, and involve them in community outreach activities to heighten their sense of civic responsibility towards the development of their society. Experiential learning and discursive learning underpinned the theoretical approaches.

Mechanism of Initiative

The mechanism was conceptualized as a weekly one-hour meeting of each group with their facilitators, in which there would be informal discussion around themes either pre-selected to help in the learning objectives or preferably arising from suggestions from the group for a more democratic attention to their interests. There would also be a few plenary sessions on general topics. These were to be enhanced by a number of social and educational outings, again free-ranging as determined by the group, and including activities such as group meals, attendance at plays or other cultural events, weekend retreats, beach or similar excursions and a community outreach project of the group’s determination. The emphasis was on creating an informal climate, facilitating democratic choice and responsibility, fostering democracy through discussion and reasoning, and developing each student’s potential in self-governance and team work. The teacher-student hierarchy was to be eliminated in a society too long accustomed to such stratification, and staff-student interaction would be promoted on a campus grown away from such traditions once it had ceased to be a residential campus with small course sizes. One formal expectation was that students would keep a journal for reflective recording of their experiences as the programme progressed, on the premise that it would encourage deeper learning and give feedback on the programme.

In the selection process, both in the pilot and subsequently, there was no restriction in terms of gender, age, academic programme or performance, or other limiting criteria apart from being a commuting first-year student volunteering to participate. In the assignment of students to facilitators, a similar openness was used, with largely random assignment, which meant that students were placed together from different Faculties and
Democracy and Campus Life

Pereira

Majors, varying ages (from 18 to 50), social backgrounds and varied gender ratios from one group to the next, facilitating an integrative spirit. As it turned out, the overall gender distribution has not been much different from the general campus profile: close to 75% are female. Similarly, the Faculty distribution has been fairly reflective of the campus profile, save that students in the MBBS medical programme tend not to volunteer, while those in Pure & Applied Sciences are slightly higher than the campus ratio, maybe because they are younger, more adventurous students on a campus where the average age is close to 24.

It may be argued that the type of student who would come forward and volunteer to participate in such a programme is already a more outgoing person willing to try new things, and that it is really those who do not volunteer who most need this type of experience. However, the groups have contained students who describe themselves as shy – at least at the start of the year. Ultimately, compulsion, even if it were affordable, cannot bring a positive attitude to participation. The success of the programme since its start has led to word-of-mouth recommendation of the First Year Experience (FYE) to new students by those who participated previously.

Resourcing and Funding

A programme such as this, despite the voluntary, unpaid nature of the staff facilitators, needs resource allocation. As it has expanded, teaching staff have been offered one hour weekly of teaching relief, but few have opted for that. As more facilitators are needed because of expanded numbers, however, it is becoming less easy to find sufficient suitable volunteers. Given the perceived value of the FYE to developing a more integrated and socially conscious person more in tune with the ideal graduate that the UWI seeks to produce, the campus re-allocated from elsewhere in its budget approximately US$200 per student (approx. 2% of the economic cost per student to run the campus) to cover general programme expenses, outings and some of the community outreach costs. Other costs for the community project were covered by the groups themselves seeking to raise some of the resources needed, enhancing their skills in project delivery. The campus has moved to establishing a Manager with responsibility solely for commuting students, including the administrative operations, and costs, for the FYE. The success of the first pilot year meant a doubling of the programme intake to 300 in the following year, then to 500 in the year 2007/08 and now to 750 in 2008/09, with the attendant increases in budget allocation justified by the successes of the programme each year in bringing into the mainstream of university life commuters who would have remained rather marginal to UWI, acquiring unequal benefits from the institution.

A significant resource requirement developed during the pilot year. Being a regional university with campuses in other countries, and within an English-speaking Caribbean intent on greater economic integration, regionalism has become an increasing concern of the UWI mission. A scheme had been developed in 2000 to encourage greater movement of students across the campuses of UWI, but with results less than expected, since students seemed unwilling to spend an entire semester or year at another campus. In the first year of its operation, the FYE conceptualized an educational tour to the other campuses in Barbados and Trinidad, as a sort of incentive and contributor to regional understanding, scheduled to take place after final exams in May. Travel abroad has long been recognized as
potentially a valuable student-centered learning mechanism. In the English-speaking Caribbean and UWI, it takes on the added dimension of strengthening the regional integration movement and exposing individuals to differences in cultural practice as part of the cultivation of a more tolerant and understanding citizen in a multi-cultural region and world. The campus administration therefore agreed to provide funding support for 25% of the participants in that pilot year to go on a group educational tour to Barbados and Trinidad, four days in each territory. In subsequent years, the percentage target for the trip has been reduced for funding and logistical reasons, but absolute numbers have increased to 65 commuters each year on a shared-costs basis.

**The Experience**

As to be expected, for the first few weeks each year, the students are somewhat hesitant and tentative in their participation in discussions and a bit erratic in attendance. The first semester sees drop-outs from the programme, varying from group to group, but averaging about 33%. Some find other activities at that time, a few find the programme not what they expected; one or two dropped out when they discovered that there were no course credits attached. However, those who stay to the end of the first semester usually stay right through the rest of the year and really develop their own momentum and a group bond as they gain the maximum from their experience. Events and outings consolidate their confidence in sharing views and experiences while at the same time having fun, and indeed have been the more successful component in solidifying group identity and informal democratic training. For many, some of these activities were first-time learning experiences. Groups that held weekend or overnight retreats experienced a far higher level of benefits because they became a micro living/learning community, in which experiential issues came to light and were thrashed out. For example, cases of male chauvinist behaviour in the living situation that led to conflictive tension airing, then resolution with consequent outlook and behaviour adjustment resulting from a more democratic perspective on gender.

The community project has also been a significant activity in the FYE that enhances appreciation of community. Students are exposed, many for the first time, to institutions e.g. homes for the aged or for abandoned children, to schools and to citizens who need support. Modest though each project may be in view of time and resource constraints, they lay the basis for a more activist graduate with civic responsibility to address social inequalities. It is not new to UWI, where this community intervention goes back decades, but it incorporates commuting students from their first year in a far more deliberate way than other outreach programmes that tend to more involve the residential students. The projects also strengthen team work and initiative in a fun way.

Indeed, humour and fun have been important features of the Experience, coming out of the students’ own personalities and in turn strengthening each of them and providing that relaxed environment that makes for richer learning. Students frequently become agents of support for their fellow group-members in both academic and non-academic matters, not only during sessions but also outside sessions and via e-mail and texting.
One of the weakest areas has been the maintaining of journals. We are a society far more given to the oral than the scribal, and few students maintain their journals, even if most may start one. It would be counter to the fostering of democracy to insist on a journal being kept. Rather, students have to be encouraged to see its value to their own development. Another challenge for some facilitators has been to keep their group together through the early period when drop-out is more likely. Occasionally, groups have had to amalgamate because of dwindling numbers. Again, the solution to this challenge has to be to find the ways to keep students sufficiently interested so that they get beyond this risk period. Once they get into the events and outings, their retention is more certain because of the resultant bonding and enjoyment. Self-motivation, not external compulsion, determines the success of the FYE and consolidates the democratic nature and value of the learning experience.

Assessment of Programme

From the first pilot year, the initiative has sought to get feedback to assess the impact of the programme on commuting students. The results have been very positive, and at times overwhelmingly so. In that first year, a questionnaire was administered at the beginning (pre-test) and the same one again at the end (post-test) of the academic year to students who participated and to a control group not participating in the FYE. The questions sought to assess Interpersonal Relations; Social Issues; Personal issues; Managing Student Life, and Academic Issues. The analysis yielded the following:

1. **Cooperativeness:** FYE students who regarded themselves as below average on cooperativeness fell from 7% to 0%.

2. **Participation in community action:** FYE students who saw this as essential increased from 20% to 31% over the year, while those who saw it as not important decreased from 10% to 4%. This compares with 6% and 1% increase in those respective categories in the control group.

3. **Attitude toward the justice system:** The pre-test showed that 28% of FYE students agreed strongly that there is too much concern for the rights of criminals, and 21% disagreed somewhat. At post-test, these percentages changed to 16% and 34% respectively. Also, those who agreed that the death penalty should be abolished rose from 12% to 23%. In both these areas, the control group showed scant change, of 1 to 2 percentage points,

4. **Religious matters:** Post-test results showed a decrease in hesitancy to discuss religious matters, and an increase in willingness to discuss political matters. For example, 16% of participants at the pre-test reported not ever discussing politics with their friends, which fell to 4% at the end. In the control group, the post-test showed a decreased willingness to discuss politics.

---

2 The data was presented in an internal report to the Academic Board, UWI Mona by Arlene Bailey and Camille Bell-Hutchinson, entitled “Preliminary Analysis of the Impact of the First Year Experience (FYE) Initiative (2005/6).”
5. **Personal aspirations:** At pre-test, only 15% felt that becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts was essential to them personally. By the end, 26% thought so. In the control group, there was actually a decline: from 26% to 11%. At pre-test, 27% FYE students thought that developing a meaningful philosophy of life was very important, rising to 47% at post-test. The control group increased far less: from 27% to 32%.

6. **Self-perception:** On emotional health, there was a 6% increase in FYE students who rated themselves in the highest category, while the control decreased by 6% in that aspect. Conversely, there was a decrease of 7% in FYE students who rated themselves as below average, while the control increased by 7%.

7. **Intellectual self-confidence:** FYE students rating themselves above average rose from 51% to 63% over the year, while the control fell from 66 to 60%.

8. **Social self-confidence:** Students who considered themselves in the highest 10% rose from 19% to 32% among FYE, but fell from 30% to 23% in the control. Conversely, those who rated themselves below average fell from 12% to 7% in the FYE and rose from 3% to 11% in the control.

This pattern of positive measurable impact in self-perception, social and intellectual confidence resulting from the FYE exposure has justified the continued support and expansion of the programme. Subsequent assessments have indicated high levels of student satisfaction with their experience. For some groups, their only complaint was that they wanted an increase in the time so that they could have even more activities, with a 40% excellent rating and a 40% good rating. Some participants speak to this being the best thing to happen to them at UWI, and one or two even speak of it being the best thing in their lives so far, mainly because it has given them a sense of inclusion and a strong bonding experience almost like an extended family.

**Beyond the First Year**

In fact, the success of this First Year programme has led to strong pressures from the participants for the programme to be available to them beyond their first year – a pressure that cannot yet be met given the resource demands. Some facilitators have been able, again on a voluntary basis, to maintain group links and activities albeit on a reduced scope, in the participants Second Year and even into their Third/Final Year. It is the students, having seen the benefits in their own holistic development and enjoyment, that want this and that drive this continuation, proving the self-motivating, democratic nature of the experience and its value in identity-formation, group bonding and the advancement of social capital. Some of the participants have put themselves up for elections in the Student Guild, and are now far more active in campus life beyond their First Year than many outside the programme.

There is no doubt that continuing the programme beyond the first year consolidates the value of the experience in a decidedly qualitative way. One group stands out in this: at the end of their first year, when FYE groups were to select students to participate in the tour to other campuses, the group took an “all or none” approach, and were able by their
determination to raise the funds necessary, with some university support, to have their own trip in which all went to the Cave Hill Campus in Barbados. This allowed a longer period of living together that facilitated resolution and tolerance of differences that otherwise would not have surfaced, strengthening the psycho-social value of the experience. All this was quite apart from the general educational value of touring Barbados – their first exposure to that society. The same group maintained its cohesion throughout their second year, meeting, going on outings and raising the funds to visit the Trinidad campus that year, again benefiting from the living/learning community. They are now in their Final year, and planning a cruise that would take in other territories that are member-countries of UWI, as well as other islands in the region. These fund-raising efforts have their own educational and social spin-offs. The group has developed its own independent and democratic self-directed learning experience. The participants are now a highly integrated “family”, helping each other and newer students, enriched as human beings even as they enrich their environment, in a way that would never had happened had the FYE not existed and they not participated.

Impact on Staff

An important part of the experiment is the impact on the facilitators, 80% of whom volunteer to continue. For most of them, academic and senior administrative staff, the experience is also transformative. In their year-end assessments, they speak to the greater understanding they now have of student perspectives, the greater empathy and willingness they have to assist students in their many challenges, the enjoyment they experience in the interactions and in the opportunity they have to contribute to the individual development of their group members. For the majority of the facilitators, the experience opens a new emphasis on how to reach students and help them in the learning process through informal and enjoyable interaction, which has influenced the classroom approaches of some of the academics. The main drawback for them is to find the time to be more involved. It is this integrated learning community that is an aspiration of the campus, where the lecturer is not only discipline-rooted but is involved in the holistic educational process, both for self and for students, both inside and outside the classroom. The democratization benefits have been not just for the students but for the faculty as well.

Conclusion

Entering its fourth year of existence, this FYE programme directed at bringing commuting students into the mainstream of university life and giving them a more equitable educational experience outside the classroom has been a success and has justified the investment of human effort and funds. The output has been positive in terms of the measurable as well as anecdotal evidence of the FYE enhancing the participants’ psycho-social development, their sense of well-being, and confidence, of identity, of team work and leadership as well as their civic responsibilities. It has also impacted positively on the staff facilitators. There is no doubt that it has built social capital and strengthened a democratic model of affective learning as it incorporates those hitherto often marginal.

The quadrupling of participants over four years indicates the receptivity of new commuting students to this forum. The pressures to extend not only the numbers of First
Year participants but also the continuation in a follow-up programme during the rest of the undergraduate years pose a logistical and resource challenge, but indicate to the UWI, Mona administration the way for the future.

References

La Democratización Pedagógica: Una Experiencia en Educación Superior

Silvia Ribot de Flores, Carmen Varguillas, Ernestina Báez
Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador

Resumen

El presente trabajo constituye una experiencia referida al proceso de interacción en el aula, con base en la conceptualización sobre democracia que tienen los estudiantes de postgrado. Democracia es una forma de organización de grupos humanos, cuya característica principal radica en que el ejercicio del poder es compartido por la totalidad de sus miembros. Partiendo de esta premisa, el aula debe ser un espacio donde la toma de decisiones debe responder a una actitud de voluntad general, en cuya relación prive la horizontalidad. Desde esta perspectiva, la democratización pedagógica es el ambiente en el que se desarrollan las acciones de enseñar y aprender, a partir de la construcción del propio orden democrático. El propósito de la investigación fue analizar el proceso de interacción de los participantes de la Maestría de Educación Superior, a la luz de su propio concepto sobre democracia. Se utilizó la etnografía como método de investigación y la observación participante y la entrevista como técnicas de recolección de información. Entre los principales hallazgos se destacan, que el concepto de democracia que la mayoría de los estudiantes posee, está referido solamente al contexto político, desvinculado de la posibilidad de considerar a la educación como base fundamental para formar ciudadanos democráticos, alejados de la idea de que tiene que ser enseñada y aprendida y mucho menos a interpretarla como una forma de ver la vida. Asimismo, se evidenciaron incongruencias entre su discurso teórico y su actuar en el aula, así como también entre su rol como estudiantes y el de profesores del nivel de educación superior. Se recomendó la creación de entornos que favorezcan la discusión de la práctica pedagógica a partir de actitudes democráticas. Reflexionar sobre la importancia de la apropiación del saber y hacer democrático, en función de su rol como docentes universitarios.
Aspectos Generales

El presente trabajo, tuvo como propósito analizar el proceso de interacción de los participantes de la Maestría de Educación Superior, a la luz de su propio concepto sobre democracia. Este trabajo surge del interés de las autoras, a partir de la forma de relacionarse con los estudiantes durante las sesiones de clase.

En ellas se observaba, la actitud de los discentes al sentirse intimidados, amenazados, valorados y/o reconocidos por sus compañeros, en función de sus intervenciones en el aula. Era interesante notar, las reacciones verbales y no verbales manifestadas por los miembros del grupo, en donde sus creencias, su sistema de valores, sus conceptualizaciones y, en fin, su propio episteme, queda de alguna manera revelado, mediante actitudes de poca solidaridad, impulsividad, competencia, individualismo y autoritarismo, entre otros.

Estas formas de interacción en el aula, no deben ser distintas a las que deben asumir estos participantes fuera de ella, o sea, en el contexto familiar, laboral o social, en virtud de que son producto de la estructura interna del individuo.

Ahora bien, este desempeño personal, pareciera estar vinculado con el concepto de democracia que cada uno posee. Es por ello, que en el marco del concepto de democracia, Fernández (2007), hace una distinción entre tres tipos: (a) La democracia política o formal, (b) la democracia distributiva o fundamental y (c) la democracia sustantiva.

Fernández (2007) indica, que la primera se refiere al contexto macro de los organismos del Estado y de la democracia entendida como la representación de los aspectos legales y el fortalecimiento de la Institucionalidad. La segunda, representa la garantía de acceder a los bienes y servicios de manera equitativa, es decir, caracterizada por la igualdad de oportunidades a toda la comunidad, teniendo un carácter prioritario las poblaciones más desasistidas. La tercera está referida a las maneras de interactuar o relacionarse con los otros, las formas de convivir, de comunicarse y de participar con equidad y horizontalidad en todos los escenarios de la pareja, la familia, la comunidad y el trabajo, entre otros.

Es en este último concepto, el de democracia sustantiva, en el que se sustenta esta experiencia, pues, a pesar de que la autora plantea la integración de los tres para el ejercicio óptimo, es la apropiación de la democracia sustantiva la que se produce en el aula de clases, a través de un proceso de interacción social que propicie la convivencia, la comunicación y la participación en un contexto pedagógico.

Estas formas de relación, permiten la apropiación de una práctica social que favorece la internalización de acciones que trascienden las barreras de lo escolar o lo educativo, al ser susceptibles de aplicabilidad en la cotidianidad de la vida, es decir en el mundo social donde se intercambia con otros miembros de una sociedad.
Desde esta perspectiva, se destaca el papel de la educación en la construcción del espíritu democrático de los seres humanos, espíritu que se transfiere en acciones demócratas concretas, cuyo impacto radica en el fortalecimiento de una sociedad propiamente dicha, y con una verdadera concientización de su desempeño en la construcción de una gran nación, con base en la integración sociedad-gobierno, donde cada quien sea responsable tanto del rol como de las funciones que le toca desempeñar.

Es importante señalar también, que el modelaje juega un papel determinante en la construcción de saberes. Al respecto, Bandura (citado por Ribot 2006), expresa que entre los modelos que sustentan las teorías del aprendizaje, se encuentra el sociocognitivo, en el cual se reconoce al aprendizaje que se logra mediante la imitación o la observación a otros como fuente elemental de la socialización, lo cual tiene consecuencias tanto en la conducta como en la cognición de las personas.

De esta manera, se destacan dos hechos significativamente potenciales en la construcción de una actitud democrática. Por una parte, las oportunidades, como se ha dicho, de convivencia, participación y comunicación en el aula y, por otra, el modelaje de las actitudes democráticas por parte de los docentes, en ese espacio académico, a propósito de los procesos de interacción didáctica. Esta situación está afirmada por Caamaño (1994, 1), cuando expresa que no podrá la escuela vigorizar las tareas de democratización, si los maestros no predicen con el ejemplo, agregando que:

- Y, lo más importante: predicar con el ejemplo cotidiano en el aula, dando espacio y hasta impulsando la libre expresión en un ambiente de respeto y tolerancia sin favoritismos, censuras o burlas; respetando opiniones en diferencia y enseñando el difícil camino de tal respeto; demostrar que se le reconoce al grupo escolar la capacidad de expresarse y organizarse de acuerdo a sus propios intereses o inclinaciones sin la imposición o tutelaje del maestro; evitar que las expresiones orales o corporales pongan de manifiesto actitudes segregacionistas, clasistas o racistas que ensalcen bienes materiales o ciertas apariencias físicas; y sobre todo, rehuir a la tentación de considerar la voz del maestro como indiscutible e infalible; la modestia y el realismo favorecerán la comunicación y el crecimiento de alumnos, pero también de docentes cuando se entienda que el maestro no es más que un facilitador que está muy por debajo del pedestal en que se quisiera situar.

Este hecho, refleja la importante necesidad de revalorizar la función educadora en la formación de los individuos de una sociedad, con competencias para ejercitar la democracia; en otras palabras, personas capaces de convivir y manejar los conflictos, de hacer valer sus derechos y, no sólo eso, sino saber optar por ellos y por el propio estado de derecho, con autoestima, seguros de sí mismos, con responsabilidad social, en búsqueda de la información y con autonomía para expresar sus sentimientos e ideas, incluyendo los valores como solidaridad, felicidad, justicia, tolerancia y, especialmente, como expresa Martínez (1998), el acceso equitativo al bienestar individual y colectivo.

Las nociones de democracia se inician en la familia y en la escuela se fortalecen. Es en este contexto que se construye y desarrolla una estructura conceptual que proporciona la base teórica de una educación democrática, apta para enfrentar los retos y desafíos de la contemporaneidad.
Estos desafíos como son la diversidad y el pluralismo, exigen al sistema de educación, responder a un modelo educativo que dé apertura a las diferencias y que propicie la concientización hacia la sensibilidad de las mismas.

De allí que, una democratización pedagógica no evade el conflicto entre diferentes estilos de vida, posturas epistemológicas, etc., sino que, por el contrario, intenta establecer no sólo las mejores condiciones, sino las más necesarias para que se pueda generar una querella bajo unos criterios de igualdad y equidad, que posibiliten el entendimiento entre las personas.

Ahora bien, comúnmente el término democracia es asumido desde una postura política, solamente referida a la forma de gobierno de una nación. Esa es la concepción del término en el contexto educativo, sin percatarse que las formas de ser y de actuar se vinculan con este término. Al respecto dice Herrera (s/f, 1):

...un estilo de vida democrático, en donde haya participación, respeto, diálogo, etc., no es compatible con un estilo de vida que glorifique el individualismo posesivo económico-social ni tampoco con un estilo de vida en donde la despersonalización de los miembros de los diferentes grupos o fuerzas que constituyen la sociedad se considere lo más conveniente. El "nosotros" deberá, por tanto, no sólo recuperar la intersubjetividad concreta, sino también recuperar un equilibrio entre la dimensión personal y comunitaria.

En el aula de clase, independientemente del nivel educativo, estas formas de ser impregnan el acto de enseñar y aprender, donde los estudiante adultos también manifiestan esas representaciones del ser en el intercambio académico con sus pares. Es decir, la estructura interna construida soporta su actuar en el aula. De allí, la importancia de la democratización pedagógica, en el marco de la apropiación de una cultura democrática, durante el proceso de formación en el nivel de educación superior.

Es por ello, que el estudio, tuvo lugar en la Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador, con un grupo de estudiantes de la Maestría de Educación Superior, cursantes de la asignatura ‘Teoría y práctica de los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje’. Es un grupo heterogéneo, de profesiones diversas entre las que se destacan: docentes, médicos, enfermeras, contadores públicos, abogados e ingenieros, entre otros. Sus edades oscilan entre 25 y 56 años. Provenientes laboralmente tanto del sector público como del privado. Todos con la meta de ejercer la docencia, a nivel de educación superior, de acuerdo con su área disciplinar.

Esta experiencia de democratización pedagógica, partió de la premisa sustentada en que la actitud manifiesta en el aula de clase frente al conocimiento, no tiene por qué ser distinta a las asumidas frente a la vida. Por lo tanto, las acciones y reacciones de los estudiantes frente a las diversas estrategias didácticas propuestas por la facilitadora del curso para socializar el conocimiento, serían reveladoras de sus formas de vida y de sus propias concepciones.
Aspectos Metodológicos

La presente indagatoria está circunscrita al ámbito de las ciencias sociales, por su vinculación con el estudio del comportamiento de los seres humanos en grupos y en sociedad. Esto se refiere a las diversas expresiones que se puedan observar en el hombre.

En consecuencia, el estudio se sustentó en el paradigma cualitativo, el cual, según la definición hecha por Ruiz e Izpizua (1989, 21), “cubre una serie de técnicas interpretativas que pretende describir, descodificar, traducir y sintetizar lo significativo, no la frecuencia de hechos que acaecen más o menos naturalmente en el mundo social”.

Ellos indican que no se apoya en procedimientos estadísticos con carácter muestral, otorgándole así especial importancia al conocimiento de la propia experiencia humana y a los elementos reales revelados por la misma gente.

Por otra parte, esta investigación se ubicó desde el punto de vista filosófico en el humanismo y la holística. Al respecto, Barrera (1999), expresa que el humanismo es la actitud científica y del conocimiento cuya esencia es el hombre. Esta postura filosófica, expresa el autor, ubica al ser humano como centro de sus intereses. Esta perspectiva determina la manera de ver e interpretar las cosas, lo cual privilegia tanto al estudio como la comprensión del sujeto.

En cuanto a la holística Barrera (1999, 81) considera que: “alude a la posición epistémica según la cual el conocimiento es variado y complejo por lo cual ha de apreciarse de manera amplia, interdisciplinaria y transdisciplinaria”.

Es así como, el evento puede ser visto de diferentes ángulos, de manera que pueda ser valorado o estimado, con variadas posibilidades de ser reinterpretado y reconocer el saber conocido y por conocer, lo cual tuvo una importante utilidad para el trabajo investigativo.

La etnografía fue el método de investigación implementado. Ella, permite aprender el modo de vida de una unidad social en particular, y que, según Martínez (1991, 28), tiene como objetivo “crear una imagen realista y fiel del grupo estudiado, pero su intención y mira más lejana es contribuir en la comprensión de grupos más amplios que tienen características similares”.

Autores como Bisquerra (1989) y Martínez (1991) conceptualizan con mucha similitud la acción del investigador etnográfico, pues, expresan que ellos describen el modo de vida de un individuo, una raza o un grupo.

Es importante destacar, lo señalado por (Martínez 1991, 27) al referir que:

Etimológicamente, el término etnografía significa la descripción (grafe) del estilo de vida de un grupo de personas habituadas a vivir juntas (ethnos). Por lo tanto, el ethnos podría ser cualquier grupo humano y cuyas relaciones estén reguladas por la costumbre...
De manera que la utilización del método etnográfico en la investigación pedagógica, posibilita la documentación de los procesos particulares que forman parte de la dinámica de lo escolar y lo cotidiano, es decir, de la interacción profesor-estudiante.

Para efectos de este trabajo se consideraron como técnicas de recolección de la información, la observación participante y la entrevista.

En cuanto a la observación participante Goetz y LeCompte (1988) expresa que es la descripción de grupos sociales y escenas culturales mediante la vivencia de las experiencias de las personas implicadas en un grupo o institución. Así, los eventos relevantes han de observarse durante la interacción social, en el propio escenario con los sujetos del estudio, unida, a entrevistas informales, registros sistemáticos, recogida de documentos y materiales, con un criterio de flexibilidad.

Asimismo, la observación participante permite describir la realidad social, las percepciones y vivencias de las personas implicadas y el significado de sus acciones, por lo que se consideró una técnica apropiada para la realización de este estudio.

Otra de las técnicas utilizadas fue la entrevista. Maldonado (2000, 53), la define como “el intercambio de información e impresiones, realizado en una variedad de estilos, incorporando elementos como ritmo, estilo y etapa de ese intercambio”, siendo su propósito esencial conocer la realidad subjetiva del otro.

Una de las características más relevantes de esta técnica es, según Rusque (1999), la actitud de simulación que se mantiene, donde el entrevistado y el entrevistador son iguales. En estudios cualitativos, es de vital importancia esta estrategia, porque permite observar y conversar al mismo tiempo.

Bleger citado por Maldonado (2000), sostiene que los informantes, mediante la comunicación no verbal, dejan ver situaciones que pueden ser contradicciones o coincidencias de lo expresado verbalmente por ellos. En este caso, fueron fundamentales los momentos de encuentro con la profesora y los estudiantes, a objeto de conocer lo que pensaban, confirmando o desconfirmando la información registrada y, además, profundizando en la información que no se haya podido observar directamente.

El tipo de entrevista aplicada fue la no estructurada o informal, la cual se apoya en una serie de interrogantes o temas previamente elaborados, que no tienen un orden preestablecido, ni un tiempo determinado y que se derivan de las necesidades de indagación. Las mismas se formulan en un ambiente de libertad y se caracterizan por la naturalidad de las preguntas sin que los informantes se percaten de que están siendo entrevistados.

En cuanto a los medios de recolección de información, constituyen la base fundamental para el registro de toda la información obtenida a través de las técnicas aplicadas en la investigación. En este sentido, las notas de campo fueron el medio utilizado para llevar el registro de la información recabada. Al respecto, expresa Pérez Serrano (1994), son una manera de relatar las fuentes de datos, referencias, expresiones, opiniones y todo cuanto sea objeto de estudio recogidas sobre el terreno, incluyendo las reflexiones,
con un estilo narrativo-descriptivo. Aún cuando “no todo lo que ocurre puede ser registrado, ni se podrán citar todos los detalles situacionales parcialmente relevantes” (Pérez Serrano 1994, 48), reflejan eventos de la conducta de los informantes intentando describirlos tal como han acontecido.

Fue un proceso dinámico y creativo, como afirma Taylor y Bogdan (1995), el cual permitió una comprensión más profunda de lo estudiado. Este proceso fue acompañado de la triangulación como técnica de análisis de los datos, la cual consistió, tal como lo indica Bisquerra (1989, 264), en “recoger y analizar datos desde distintos ángulos para compararlos y contrastarlos entre sí.”

**Aspectos Conclusivos**

Los acontecimientos ocurridos durante las sesiones de clase, fueron una muestra evidente de que la actitud democrática o antidemocrática que se pone de manifiesto en la relación humana, está vinculada con los preconceptos y conceptos que los seres humanos tienen frente a los objetos de conocimiento.

Los conceptos de democracia que poseen los participantes del estudio, están referidos en su totalidad a la estructura política, o mejor dicho, a las formas del gobierno de una nación. Para ellos no existía la posibilidad de una relación entre este constructo y el derivado de las estructuras internas del ser humano.

De igual forma, el concepto está desvinculado de la posibilidad de considerar a la educación como base fundamental para formar ciudadanos democráticos, alejados de la idea de que tiene que ser enseñada y aprendida y mucho menos a interpretarla como una forma de ver la vida.

Fueron evidentes las incongruencias entre el discurso teórico y su actuar en el aula, así como también entre su rol como estudiantes y el de profesores del nivel de educación superior, en virtud de las propias experiencias reportadas por ellos.

Las reacciones de los estudiantes en cuanto a su desempeño personal durante las diversas situaciones didácticas, carecían, en su mayoría, de actitudes de compañerismo, comunicación afectiva y efectiva, tolerancia, respeto por las ideas u opiniones de los otros. Fue a medida que transcurría el semestre, que se fueron percatando de la necesidad e importancia de interrelacionarse de cara a un trato más de camaradería, en armonía, sinceridad, con capacidad de expresar tanto los disentires o desacuerdos como el reconocimiento, en un ambiente de respeto y cordialidad.

La experiencia confirmó, que es una cuestión de oportunidades el aprendizaje de otros conocimientos y, por ende, de otras maneras de interacción social. Una de ellas, es a través de la Reprogramación Neurolingüística (RPNL), cuya principal característica es la necesidad que posee la persona de cambiar su pensamiento con la adopción de nuevas posturas, tal como lo indican Bandler y Grinder (1980).

Se recomendó la creación de entornos que favorezcan la discusión de la práctica pedagógica a partir de actitudes democráticas en la universidad. Reflexionar sobre la
importancia de la apropación del saber y hacer democrático, en función de su rol como docentes universitarios.

Referencias Bibliográficas

Rusque, A.M. *De la Diversidad a la Unidad en la Investigación Cualitativa*. FACES/UCV y Vadel Hermanos, 1999.
Meaningful Relationships in Post-Secondary Educational Practices: Indigenous Standpoint Pedagogy

Suzanne L. Stewart
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Abstract

This paper fits within the theme of learning democracy in higher education, and details an approach to post secondary teaching. Indigenous pedagogy places education in the context of culture, values, relationships, and historical realities. It is this understanding of teaching and learning that provide the foundation of “Indigenous Standpoint Pedagogy” (ISP), which is the “inherently political, reformative, relational, and deeply personal approach that is located in the chaos of colonial and cultural interfaces” (Philips, Whatman, Hart, & Winslett). ISP fundamentally identifies and embeds Indigenous community participation in the development and teaching of Indigenous perspectives, or standpoints, and is a multi-faceted process. This approach to teaching is mainly concerned with Indigenous perspectives in education not as an alternative to Western approaches but as a legitimate form of education in and of itself. The foundation to this teaching approach lies in relationship, which will be discussed as the centre of success for meaningful communication with students and colleagues. Employing an Indigenous pedagogy is part of the healing and community development currently underway in contemporary Canadian society, where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities must work together to challenge the colonial assumptions of Western cognitive imperialism that has dominated and damaged the success of post secondary learning institutions.

Introduction

Learning in North America has changed drastically since 1492. The arrival of shiploads of Western Europeans heralded a change not only in the resident populations’ ways of knowing and being but in an entire way of life for North America’s Indigenous groups. Presently, the cultural landscape of Canada is constantly evolving. This evolution is
a process in which we interact and change through features of human knowing and their implications for human change. Attaining postsecondary education is one way in which adults of all ages and cultures seek to change their lives through increasing capacity for knowledge, skills, and employment. Through individual, group, and class-size interventions, culturally responsive educators need to be trained and capable of meeting the learning needs of culturally diverse populations in the postsecondary school system; however, there is a realization that current education practices are not meeting the challenges of the broad range of Indigenous cultural identities represented in today’s colleges and universities (Hull 2000; Malatest & Associates 2002). Educators are becoming aware that the values in which the current systems of pedagogy are rooted in European-North American (i.e., Eurocentric) culture and those of culturally different students, such as students with Native ancestry, frequently comes into conflict in learning processes (Barnhardt 2002; Hampton 1993; Kirkness & Barnhardt 1991).

In a review of the current literature on Indigenous learning in post-secondary school contexts in Canada, this paper seeks to identify and describe some of the most important issues in university education for Indigenous students in terms of the theme of learning democracy. This paper focuses on both the development of an Indigenous pedagogy in the academy and future research into Native and non-Native students’ learning needs in the postsecondary system with the objective of learning democracy through shifting the dominant paradigm of teaching and learning. A definition of terms will set the context for discussion on how Indigenous pedagogy can contribute to new forms of learning and teaching through the notion of dismantling the cognitive imperialism of post secondary institutions. Following these will be a discussion of three themes important to the topic of Indigenous pedagogy in the context of learning democracy in post-secondary education: historical realities, cognitive imperialism, and Indigenous standpoint pedagogy.

**Definition of Terms**

**Democracy**

In western political philosophy, democracy is loosely considered a form of government in which the supreme power is held completely by the people under a free electoral system (Dahl, Shapiro & Cheibub 2003). More specifically, democracy has been described as a process of citizenship engagement and participation in the political and social processes of a society, particularly in a context where oppression and marginalization are salient issues for much of the population (Anderson & Dodd 2005). Learning about democracy through action denotes how ways of being can be influenced through ways of doing (see Dewey 1916). For example, introducing a non-western pedagogy within a western academy could be viewed as learning democracy by doing because education then becomes more accessible to students who engage in non-Western-thinking. This is also in keeping with Dewey’s (1916) seminal notions of democracy: “Education was shown to be a process of renewal of the meanings of experience through a process of transmission, partly incidental to the ordinary companionship or intercourse of adults and youth, partly deliberately instituted to effect social continuity” (p. 198). Thus, shifting the paradigm of education is in keeping with Western notions of democracy and education.
Indigenous

“Indigenous” is a general term used to describe members of three distinct Aboriginal cultural groups in Canada: First Nations, Métis peoples, and Inuit (Assembly of First Nations 2002; Health Canada 2003a). The term Indigenous will be used interchangeably with the terms Aboriginal and Native. First Nations, Indian, Métis, Inuit are also used as specific authors cited have utilized them.

Western Paradigm

Since the late 1960s, the term ‘paradigm’ has referred to a thought pattern in any scientific discipline or other epistemological context (Lamarche 1995). A dominant paradigm refers to the values, or system of thought, in a society that are most standard and widely held at a given time. ‘Western’ is a term used to refer to the cultures of the people of Western European origin and their descendants. In this definition, Western culture is the set of scientific, musical, literary, and philosophical principles which set it apart from other civilizations. Mussell et al. (2004) discuss the Western paradigm in the context of Indigenous peoples, “Western paradigms typically furnish a view of reality whereby logic, rationality, objectivity, individualism, truth, unity, and trust in scientific methods are privileged. For centuries, this view of the world assumed primacy and was often accepted as ‘the natural order of things’. This legitimized practices of social oppression and control, as well as destruction of the natural environment” (14). Thus the terms ‘Western’, or ‘Western paradigm’ in an education context, refer to the dominant cultural attitudes and beliefs that are based on Western European philosophies and practices that inform post secondary institutions in North America that are based on individual psychology (Lamarche 1995).

Historical Realities

In examining how Indigenous peoples learn and exist in a society dominated by a culture not their own, understanding socio-political historical realities is necessary. According to oral tradition, prior to first contact with Europeans in the 16th century, Indigenous peoples’ societies existed with successful methods of dealing with educational and health challenges. Prior to first contact, the incidence of health problems among Indigenous peoples in what is now called Canada was low (Waldram 2004). However, contact brought a dramatic increase in physical and mental illness to Aboriginals, as well as a disruption to traditional ways of knowing (Kirmayer et al. 2000). Over seven million Indigenous peoples are estimated to have inhabited North America prior to contact in 1492, with almost 90% of these people dying as a result of indirect and direct effects of European settlement by 1600. Infectious disease brought from Europe was the major killer, followed by a change in traditional diet to one of European foodstuffs (Young 1988). Today there continue to be health problems, such as diabetes and obesity, in Native communities related to diet and epidemiology (Kirmayer et al. 2000).

Implementation of federal government policy has also destroyed Native cultures through the creation of land reserves, residential schools, and bureaucratic control. Native settlements were chosen by non-Native governments, who forced Indigenous groups off of their traditional lands and onto other territories, often grouping bands together that had
previously no history of living together (Dickason 1997). These groupings were forced to make new social structures and sustainable ways of life. Native groups were also relegated to lands with little or no natural resources, i.e., lands not deemed habitable or desirable for European settlers (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1994). Referring to an example of this relocation, Kirmayer et al. (2000) observe: “The disastrous ‘experiment’ of relocating Inuit to the Far North to protect Canadian sovereignty—a late chapter in this process of forced culture change—revealed the government’s continuing lack of awareness of cultural and ecological realities” (609).

Through the colonization, bureaucratization, missionization, and education processes of the Canadian colonial governments, the control of education, healing, and other health practices were largely transferred from Aboriginal peoples to programs and institutions sponsored by the Canadian government (Malatest & Associates 2002). Historically, through colonial processes, traditional teachers and healers were ridiculed and persecuted by the dominant culture and by governmental legislation (Waldram 2004). Traditional teachers, often Elders or healers in community, were forced to practice their traditions such as Potlatch, Sundance, and shamanic healing in secret. Many Native people no longer availed themselves of the benefits of their skills and knowledge, either because they did not know how to access these services or because they had been taught to mistrust, fear, or condemn their own healing traditions through residential school teachings. Through this process of eliminating the practice of traditional healers, a great deal of very valuable cultural knowledge has been lost. Currently, such persecution takes the form of overt and subtle discrimination, which has been cited by Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) as the most serious challenge being experienced by Indigenous students in post-secondary institutions.

**Cognitive Imperialism**

Academic practices are based almost exclusively on Western worldviews and pedagogies that differ substantially from Native ways of being and doing. Further, some researchers have suggested that employing a Western paradigm with Indigenous peoples is a form of continued colonial oppression. Barnhardt (2002) explains that universities, through the maintenance of an “ivory tower” structure, remain inhospitable to Indigenous or other non-Western forms of knowledge (241).

Many Western educational practices, including those employed in postsecondary institutions, run almost anti-theoretical to Indigenous philosophies and conceptions of self (Battiste 2002; McCormick 1997). These differences create an atmosphere that fosters continued assimilation rather than healing (or democracy) in Native communities (Malatest & Associates 2002; McCormick 1997). For example, Barnhardt (2002) writes,

Native students trying to survive in the university environment (an institution that is a virtual embodiment of modern consciousness) must acquire and accept new forms of consciousness, an orientation that not only displaces but often devalues the worldviews they bring with them (241).

Postsecondary institutions employ Western research and educational methods in order to define the level of cognitive functions of individuals to reflect cognitive and
Meaningful Relationships in Post-Secondary Educaitonal Practices

Stewart

educational performance (Thomason 1999). Assessment tools and educational testing strategies, such as Western-based teaching and research methods, are biased in favour of non-Natives because peoples from Indigenous groups differ from norms on measures of self-efficiency, career maturity, and self-directed search (Juntunen et al. 2001; Malone 2000). The current discourse on such competing ways of knowing and the cognitive imperialism of Western education has been well articulated in the literature by researchers calling for a need to bring Indigenous knowledge into the academy (see Malatest & Associates 2002; Battiste 2002; Kwagley 1995).

Such articulations point to an implicit denial of Indigenous identity within postsecondary institutions, which does not reflect a democratic process of education. Very few educational or research-oriented tests based on the emic perspective exist, and there is often objection to this in the literature by researchers who suggest that within and between group differences with Indigenous peoples would make culturally-based educational testing inefficient, as each group might require a specific method of testing.

Specifically, there are several areas of bias in educational testing (such as cognitive or vocational assessments or classroom testing to measure course learning) of Indigenous students that have been identified in the literature. A test itself may not be designed to produce valid information when used with Natives, whose general conception of the self as a collective with family, extended family, and the community as the whole runs in opposition of Western ideals of individualism (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson 2000). Secondly, the vary idea of testing goes against traditional Native philosophy, in which a method of classifying people on quantitative scales is contrary to basic values such as equality, co-cooperativeness, and collectivity (McCormick 1997). An educator (or institution) may be biased or racist and may not be knowledgeable or sensitive to cultural practices of Indigenous people (Malatest & Associates 2002). Assessment and testing procedures can also be biased because they emphasize factors that conflict with basic Aboriginal values. For example, Native students who take timed tests may be penalized because Indigenous philosophy does not value the speed of task completion as a measure of competency. Martin & Farris (1994) identify speed of test completion as a cultural parameter that affects test performance.

Modern education theory and practice, including assessments, have largely destroyed or distorted Indigenous knowledge and heritage (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson 2000). Eurocentric public school systems practice cognitive imperialism through a perpetuation of romanticized myths about indigenous knowledge, languages, beliefs, and ways of life (Milloy 1999). Public education systems in Canada, for example, continue a quest to confine Native students’ thought to cognitive imperialism by: a) denying Indigenous peoples access to and participation in the formulation of educational policy, including curriculum and assessment tools; b) limiting education to a positivistic scientific worldview; and c) denying the use and development of Indigenous knowledge in schools (Minnick 1990; Battiste & Youngblood 2000). Ultimately, more questions than answers arise from this discussion.
Indigenous Standpoint Pedagogy

What is Indigenous knowledge and learning? Western epistemologies have posed questions regarding what Indigenous peoples know or how they think and learn (psychologies), but these inquiries have been steeped in biases, racism, and arrogance (Kenny et al. 2004). Presently it is challenging for Indigenous peoples to deconstruct Indigenous knowledge and learning because the dominant culture has created mysticism and romance around Indigenous knowledge and learning. A fact remains that in the literature debates concerning competing knowledge claims could continue indefinitely. Examining specific implementations of Indigenous ways of knowing could offer some insight.

In Indigenous policy research, for example, the research is holistic and balanced, and the diverse positions on knowledge claims must all be considered in the context of ethical research practice (Erasmus & Ensign 1998). Knowledge claims are scrutinized for how they can best represent an Indigenous worldview, Indigenous systems of knowledge, and balance in a holistic perspective on policy research. Thus it becomes critical to be aware that all sources of data derived from research in Native communities are ethically questionable if their methodology does not include appropriate attention to a Native cultural and social approach to contemporary research (Hudson & Taylor-Henley 2001).

Traditional knowledge has been described as hinging on respect for all life forms as literally conscious and intrinsically interdependent and valuable (Corsiglia & Snively 1997). Indigenous peoples’ lives are characterized by a lengthy history of relations between community members, nonhumans (wild animals, insects, trees, rivers, grass, etc.), and lands (Gadgil et al. 1993). Escobar (1998) writes that "Unlike modern constructions, with their strict separation between biophysical, human and supernatural worlds, local models in many non-Western contexts [like traditional ways of knowing] are often predicated on links of continuity between the three spheres and embedded in social relations that cannot be reduced to modern, capitalistic terms" (61).

Each culture throughout the world has a set of paradigms, which are a collective set of values and knowledge of the way to live and be in the world (Lee 1995). A distinction that may be made about Indigenous values is that they inform a body of knowledge about specific environments that span several thousands of years, in many cases since time immemorial (Alfred 1999). Chief Wavey (1993, 11–12) notes that "we spend a great deal of our time, through all seasons of the year, traveling over, drinking, eating, smelling and living with the ecological system, which surrounds us" (11). Indigenous peoples are characterized as having, for example, intimate knowledge of trap lines, waterways, and spiritual/traditional lands, as well as knowing their relationship to earth, which is expressed in cultural values such as sharing and caring (Escobar 1998).

Colonization has interrupted many traditional ways of living and knowing for Natives throughout the world (Mussell et al. 1993), as discussed earlier in this paper. However, many Native groups today are presently undergoing a profound spiritual renaissance to traditional ecological value renewal and Indigenous ways of knowing—two concepts that are intimately intertwined (Wenzel 1997). This paper reflects this return to
Meaningful Relationships in Post-Secondary Educational Practices

Stewart

traditional ways of knowing by its discussion of learning by democracy through Indigenous education in the context of an Indigenous paradigm.

**Importance of relationship**

Traditional Indigenous learning and teaching can be described as rooted in respect and co-operation that manifest in relationship among people. For example, Edwards and Restoule (1993) write that Aboriginal children in traditional cultural settings watch, listen, practice co-operatively, ask for feedback only after they have mastered a task, work in a hands-on manner, and are generally holistic (i.e. mind, body and spirit) learners within the context of relationships with mentors, or community members who demonstrate skills to them. In contrast, children from dominant culture tend to work and learn through a system that is based on individualism and competitiveness, logical-sequential learning, and linear and analytical thinking (Herring 1997). Battiste & Youngblood Henderson (2000) write that the process of cognitive transmission of Indigenous learning is intimate and oral in terms of inter- and intra-personal relationships; it is not distant or literate, and Native peoples view their languages as forms of spiritual identity. Native language can reflect philosophies of how to live as well as knowledge base and cognitive-spiritual power.

An important aspect to understanding how Native students learn in postsecondary school, for example, is grasping the oral nature of Native cultures. Aboriginal peoples come from an oral tradition (McCormick 1997), in which knowledge and learning is passed on through generations by the telling of stories, music, dancing, ceremonies, and rituals (Edwards & Restoule 1993). This type of cultural-based learning is integral to Indigenous identities and is based in the concept and practice of interpersonal relationship, and cannot be overlooked as a valuable tool and resource for Indigenous learning in working successfully with Native students (McCormick 1997). Further, this notion of relationship can be a valuable understanding for pedagogical practices in general.

Indigenous knowledge within group communication and learning is a more complex a process to discuss, particularly in the context of postsecondary education, which occurs mainly in the Western world. Indigenous knowledge is not a linear concept that remains stable across all Native peoples; it is a diverse knowledge that comprises many layers (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson 2000). According to some Native Elders, those who are in possession of such knowledge cannot categorize it in Eurocentric thinking, partly due to the fact that the processes of categorizations are not part of Indigenous thinking (Kawagley 1993). Further, Indigenous knowledge is very much a part of a specific community (i.e., language-based), band, or even family, and cannot be separated from the bearer of such knowledge to be codified into a definition (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson 2000). For example, those who posses such knowledge use it in everyday activity and existence and becomes part of identity within a personal or cultural context, and this is tied closely to relationship with others. Kawagley (1993) identifies these personal cognitive maps as manifesting in humility, humour, observation, tolerance, experience, listening to natural and spiritual worlds, and social interaction. Therefore I view this contextual and personal facet of Indigenous knowledge as a sensitive area of inquiry, and caution that discussing it out of context may be intrusive or disrespectful to Indigenous cultures.
One way that is respectful to conceive of Aboriginal knowledge and ways of being and doing is by removing one’s self from a cross-cultural or multi-cultural lens to a different way of thinking. Abandoning Indigenous education from a Western paradigm would mean enveloping a worldview that comes from within Indigenous cultures, such as what is termed in anthropology as ‘emic’ approach. One such worldview is described by contemporary Indigenous researchers as Indigenous Standpoint Pedagogy (ISP). This is described as being the “inherently political, reformative, relational, and deeply personal approach that is located in the chaos of colonial and cultural interfaces” (Philips, Whatman, Hart, & Winslett 2005, 7). ISP places education in the context of culture, values, relationship, and historical realities. ISP fundamentally identifies and embeds Indigenous community participation in the development and teaching of Indigenous perspectives, or standpoints, and is a multi-faceted process.

This sort of pedagogy is mainly concerned with Native perspectives in education not as an alternative to Western approaches but as a legitimate form of education in and of itself. For example, I bring this perspective to my work as an academic by virtue of my identity as a Yellowknife Dene woman and my desire to work from an Indigenous perspective in all aspects of my teaching methods and goals. What this means in practice is that I value multiple perspectives on learning and teaching in my interaction with students and co-workers, such as linear and non-linear thinking, differing time orientation, holistic approaches and dualism, and community-based and individual focussed connection. The foundation to this pedagogical approach lies in relationship, as this is the centre of success for meaningful communication with students and co-workers. “Yet only through communication can human life hold meaning” (Friere 1970/2003, 61).

Another important principal in an Indigenous philosophy of teaching is empowerment. Methodologically, this concept has its roots in Paolo Friere’s (2003) seminal work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Friere (1970/2003) states that the educator’s efforts “must be imbued with a profound trust in people and their creative power. To achieve this, they must be partners of the students in their relations with them...The teacher’s thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students’ thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication” (p.61). Thus, Indigenous postsecondary education is based on Friere’s notion of liberating, and that teaching is a practice of freedom, not domination. In practice, an instructor from an Indigenous paradigm must take responsibility and leadership in pragmatic ways that reflect notions of respect, incorporation of community, voice, trust, mutuality, authentic communication, and shared interest in learning. What this means in action for me has been inviting local and visiting Elders, consultants, and healers to be part of classroom discussions and presentations. A postsecondary pedagogy in Indigenous contexts must be, from my experiences, based on a newly founded relationship of trust with the academy because generations of Indigenous peoples have a relationship based on trauma and basic human rights violations due to residential school experiences, as discussed earlier in this paper. Additionally, university research relationships with Indigenous communities have been historically wrought with ethical violations, which now must be corrected through Indigenous protocols to research, community based research
initiatives, and the development and implementation indigenous research methodologies (Smith 1999).

Conclusion

Since colonization, Western paradigms have been forced on North American Natives in ways that invalidated and disregarded successful epistemological and healing methods that had previously been available to Indigenous groups. As a result, many Native communities today flounder in attempts to deal with their education problems by utilizing the only resource currently available to them through the public education system, which is dominated by Western models of education and psychology. Yet at the same time we must acknowledge the reality that Native peoples today exist in a both Indigenous and Western worlds where a pedagogical approach that reflects this reality and serves to offer up both paradigms in a complementary way, rather than as dominating or subordinating. This sharing of power is what learning democracy could look like in today’s educational contexts.

Western-thinking educators and researchers must make significant changes in order to address these needs that are not currently being well met. University academics could receive education about Indigenous peoples’ educational needs, including information about the historical experiences of Native peoples, the Indigenous paradigm, and form a comprehensive understanding of their own cultural sensitivities in the educational relationship with students and communities. Further, postsecondary institutions could build capacity for research in Indigenous communities by revising ethical protocols to incorporate Indigenous methodologies into research with Indigenous groups, and by recruiting Indigenous scholars through the acceptance of Indigenous paradigms within the academy. If non-Native institutions such as universities and settler governments are to support Native peoples in recovering from colonization, reexamining and modifying the paradigm of education to include an Indigenous pedagogy is one place to enact meaningful democratic change for students of all cultures.

References


Thomason, T.C. *Psychological and Vocational Assessment of Native Americans.* ERIC Document ED432428, Greensboro: ERIC Clearinghouse on Counselling and Student Services, 1999.


Young, T.K. *Health Care and Cultural Change: The Indian Experience in the Central Sub-Arctic.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988
Political Learning through Women’s Experiences in Local Governments: The Case of Central American Path to Learning

Martha Barriga
UN- INSTRAW

Abstract

Even though women in Latin America have a short history in decision-making positions in local governments, they have been able to accumulate valuable experience and knowledge in municipal management and implementation of public policies with a gender perspective. In light of this information, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN- INSTRAW) considers that disseminating women’s knowledge through training processes based on their own experiences is a very important matter. In the frame of the project Strengthening Governance from a Gender Perspective and Women’s Political Participation at the Local Level in Latin America, UN-INSTRAW (2006) chose a methodology called Paths to Learning as an ideal type of training to address women’s demands, expressed through research studies conducted during the first year of the project. This methodology was designed by PROCASUR Corporation and focuses on learning by establishing a direct contact with key actors of the process of implementing best practices, sharing experiences, and applying the acquired knowledge to participants’ contexts and jobs.

This presentation focuses on the lessons learned during the Central American Paths to Learning, which took place in Costa Rica and El Salvador and involved the participation of council women, city hall workers and representatives of women’s associations from Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and the two host countries. During the training, women participants visited municipalities that had made a significant effort to incorporate the gender perspective in city halls in regards to services, legislation and affirmative actions.
to achieve a greater participation of women. At the end of the Path to Learning participants presented proposals aimed to apply the knowledge learned during the training in their countries and municipalities. UN- INSTRAW and PROCASUR Corporation coordinated this initiative.

Background

In 2006 the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW) initiate the project Strengthening Governance from a Gender Perspective and Women’s Political Participation at the Local Level in Latin America. The three-year project includes 12 countries from the region (Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Mexico and Dominican Republic) and its main goal is the promotion of women’s rights, gender equality, participation and political leadership in local government planning and management. In particular, the project explores women’s access to electoral processes as well as challenges and achievements faced by mayor and local council women in local governments.

Recent studies show that even though women represent half of the population, only 7.4% of City Halls are led by women in Latin America (Llanos and Sample 2008). A UN-INSTRAW study indicates that there are many reasons for such low percentages: less time in power, less political experience, more pressures to fulfill the political and the family roles and difficulties to fit in a male-oriented political culture (Massolo 2007).

Available information about the number of elected mayors and city councilors dated from the 90s. During that decade democracy is restored in many Latin American countries and quota mechanisms for setting aside slots for women on candidates list for elected office are approved. This initiative accelerated the inclusion of women in positions of power (Llanos and Sample 2008). Even though the percentage of women in local governments is still very low, their presence in Latin American municipalities indicates that the process for achieving equality has begun.

Women have less accumulated political experience than men as their history in positions of power is very short. Political experience is gained through every day-work during a period of time and generates social and political learning about power relationships, strategies and alliances. Once women complete their time in elected office, they gain a broader perspective on municipal management (Massolo 2007). However, women’s time in elected office is not always a satisfactory experience as they have to deal with very conservative societies that generally prioritize the role of women at home. In an opinion poll conducted in 11 Latin American countries, 40% or more of the respondents

1 Approving quota law was necessary to increase women’s participation otherwise it would take many years to achieve a significant percentage in positions of power. At the Parliamentary level for instance, it has been calculated that without quotas, achieving parity could have taken more than 40 years. (www.ipu.org).
indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed with the idea that women should stay at home (Corporación Latinobarómetro 2004).

Women in politics have a heavy workload as they must demonstrate their ability as politicians and at the same time as mothers and wives (Bueno 2007). While some women end up finishing partner-relationships after a crisis of jealousy and professional rivalry, other decide to change their political career once their time in elected office has ended (Massolo 2007; Bueno 2007). This situation represents a significant loss of accumulated political experience by women in politics. However, conservative societies are slowly changing. Those women who can count on family-support point out that it facilitates their participation and permanence in positions of power (Barriga 2006; Barriga 2008; Massolo 2007).

Another aspect that makes it challenging for women to remain in positions of power is the existence of a patriarchal political culture that has been built by men and for men. In local politics there are traditions that women are not aware off because those traditions correspond to male ways to act and resolve conflicts (Massolo 2007). This male-oriented political culture also controls women’s access to electoral processes. Political parties are generally led by men who resist and obstruct the inclusion of women candidates in their lists or include them at the end of those lists where they have fewer chances to become elected. In some countries, elected women have been forced to resign (Bueno 2007; UN-INSTRAW, AECID and ACOBOL n.d.). This type of violence that might take the shape of physical violence, political harassment and sexist behaviors is called political violence against women. This phenomenon has been documented in Bolivia, Guatemala, Ecuador and Mexico. In Bolivia, women from local and national governments have been working for more than 6 years to have a law on political violence against women approved (UN-INSTRAW, AECID and ACOBOL n.d.).

Despite all of the above difficulties, women have been able to accumulate knowledge and experience in local governments. In Central America and the Dominican Republic outstanding cases are beginning to emerge in the local political arena. In 2006, Violeta Menjivar was the first woman elected as mayor of the capital of El Salvador, more than 460 years after the city’s foundation (Romero 2008). Further than that, voters are recognizing the quality of women’s performance in local governments. In the Dominican Republic, 7 out of 19 elected women mayors were re-elected in the last electoral process in 2006. This success has been associated with transparency in the use of resources, participatory budgets and accessibility to local communities (Salazar 2006). In Costa Rica, one woman got the highest voter turnout in the country in 2006 electoral process. Elvia Villalobos, mayor of the municipality of San Isidro de Heredia, was re-elected with 77% of voter turnout. Today her municipality occupies the 8th place in the human development index while before her mandate it was located in the 28th place (Ayales and Escalante 2008).2

2 UN INSTRAW and PROCASUR selected San Isidro de Heredia and San Salvador as outstanding municipalities to be included in the Central American Paths to Learning and developed six 10 minute videos about each of selected cases.
Beyond women’s performance at the local level, an aspect in favor of female political participation is the crises of political parties. According to an opinion poll conducted in 11 Latin American countries, only 20% of the region’s inhabitants trust political parties (Corporación Latinoamericana 2007). Voters are rejecting the system of political representation and choosing their leaders from outside the traditional political parties. In this context, women represent a different option (Massolo 2007).

Training in the Political Field

Training in the field of political participation has had a hands-on approach. United Nations agencies and government organizations as well as NGOs have developed handbooks and guides about how to include gender perspective in local governments and how to influence programs and public policies (Auradou 2007; UN-INSTRAW, AECID and INMUJERES 2007; Montaño 2007, Picado and Vargas 2007). Simultaneously, examples of best practices in local municipalities have been encouraged and disseminated through a variety of websites and materials in order to acknowledge women’s achievements (America Latina Genera 2006 and UN-INSTRAW 2007 and Llanos B. and Sample K. 2008).

In Central America, National Women Machineries, Municipal Women’s Associations and a few political parties have gained experience in developing courses and workshops tailored to women’s needs. The Women’s National Institute of Costa Rica (INAMU) supports Municipal Offices for Women in developing educational campaigns and gender training for city halls staff as well as local communities. Thought its work with women from local governments, the Women’s Association of El Salvador (ANDRYSAS) learned that first-time elected women needed to gain municipal management skills and knowledge and designed a training-course to prepare elected women for their time in office. In some Latin American countries such as Costa Rica and Panama, political parties have legal obligation to use a percentage of its budget in the training of women however little is known about political parties’ training activities (Llanos B. and Sample K. 2008).

During the last couple of years, the use of virtual tools is becoming a common place. Virtual forums and courses provide an effective and less expensive way to encourage dialogue between women from different nations and allow them to address key current issues in the field of women’s political participation (I Know Politics 2007 and UN-INSTRAW 2007). However, virtual training is not always the most appropriate way to train women from local governments because women from small municipalities do not necessarily have access to technology and the use of computers in everyday life is sometimes not a part of their culture. Many women spend most of their time working amongst constituents because their work requires permanent contact with communities.

In 2006 UN-INSTRAW conducted the study Needs Assessment: Training for Strengthening of the Political Participation of Women in Local Government aimed to identify training demands on gender, governability and political participation. The study included interviews with academics, journalists, members of political parties, elected representatives and staff from women’s organizations and local governments. Interview participants indicated that personal and work experiences learned by doing politics should be the breaking point of training (Bonder 2006). This demand was reinforced in 2008 when
Bolivian women stated that during their term in office they had gained the necessary experience to train women interested in participating in the political arena (Calla 2008).

In summary, a variety of trainings in the field of women’s political participation as well as didactic materials, best practices dissemination tools, debates and virtual forums have been carried out. However these trainings did not always respond to women’s demands, did not necessarily take into account their own experiences, and are generally offered by external experts who are not immersed in everyday political life.

Little is known about the impact of trainings on gender equality and women’s lives. Experts in this topic have indicated that to measure training impacts, it is necessary to observe changes over time and devote resources to develop evaluation processes (Hanson 2008). Do training participants change attitudes? Do they use what they have learned during the training? Do they have the support from their organizations to apply the knowledge gained during the training? All these questions only can be answered by keeping track of changes over a period of time. However, these initiatives have not been systematically evaluated over a period of time or beyond the training.

**Paths to Learning: A Methodology Adapted with Women from Local Governments**

With the intention to fulfill the expectations of the project target group\(^3\), UN-INSTRAW sought to offer a south-south training oriented course that validated Latin American women’s accumulated experience as a matter of study and that considered women politicians as trainers. It was important to include good practices and offer participants time to reflect on how those practices have been implemented. The more appropriated methodology to address all these needs was the so called Paths to Learning. A type of training that encourages a direct dialog with key actors in their work places and promotes the analysis of outstanding cases. In August 2008, PROCASUR and UN-INSTRAW\(^4\) carried out a Path to Learning about women’s political participation in local governments. The 8-day training course took place in Costa Rica and El Salvador and involved the participation of council women, city hall workers and representatives of women’s associations from Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and the two host countries.

PROCASUR has designed and implemented 50 Paths to Learning and has trained 400 people including peasants, social leaders and decision-makers from local governments. Although many of these Paths have been developed in Latin America, PROCASUR Corporation also has experience in Africa and Asia. UN-INSTRAW has published many research studies about women’s political participation in 11 countries in the region and has

---

\(^3\) The target group of the project *Strengthening Governance from a Gender Perspective and Women’s Political Participation at the Local Level in Latin America* includes elected women at the local level, representatives of National Women Machineries, Municipal Women’s Associations and other institutions related to local governments.

\(^4\) PROCASUR has designed and implemented 50 Paths to Learning and has trained 400 people including peasants, social leaders and decision-makers from local governments. UN-INSTRAW has published many research studies about women’s political participation in Latin America and has developed didactic tools and materials related to this theme.
developed didactic tools and materials related to this theme. As a result of the partnership between these two organizations, in August 2008, a Path to Learning was carried out for the first time that focused on the theme of women’s political participation in local governments. The 8-day training course took place in Costa Rica and El Salvador and involved the participation of council women, city hall workers and representatives of women’s associations from Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and the two host countries.

**What is a Path to Learning?**

In 2006 the International Fund for Agricultural Development (FIDA) approved the implementation of the Paths to Learning Program, designed by PROCASUR Corporation. A Path to Learning is a type of training that emphasizes the direct dialogue with people who have played a key role in the implementation of best practices (these people are also called local talents or training service providers). Training involves visits to institutions or organizations where such practices have been implemented as well as discussions, analysis and reflection. These particular characteristics of the Paths to Learning make this training a unique opportunity to learn from the field. During the course, participants present a proposal or innovative plan to implement what they have learned in their own contexts and jobs.

**What are the Steps of a Path to Learning?**

A Path to Learning follows 3 steps: preparation, training, and post training activities.

**Preparation**

During this stage, PROCASUR Corporation and UN INSTRAW formed the training team, identified training needs; designed training content, selected outstanding cases and identified 4 objectives:

1) Encourage individual and collective reflection on the strategies, obstacles and opportunities faced by local talents in the process of good practices implementation

2) Expand and strength alliances among participants, local talents and other potential actors in order to take concrete actions for promoting gender equality

3) Value associative work and generation of alliances as effective strategies for strengthening women’s political participation in local governments

4) Prepare individual plans as well as inter-institutional agreements to promote gender equality.

This stage also included the process of identifying outstanding cases in Costa Rica and El Salvador. Key informants from women’s associations, city halls and National Gender Machineries were contacted in order to ask them for successful municipal experiences in gender incorporation as well as country specific achievements in favor of women’s political participation. In addition to recommendations made by key informants, the knowledge of project consultants in the host countries was pivotal for the selection of outstanding cases.
Three outstanding cases were selected in Costa Rica:

1) Quota legislation
2) Municipal management and associative work in the municipality of San Isidro de Heredia
3) Incorporation of gender perspective in Belén

In the case of El Salvador, three different approaches to equity policies were selected:

1) Equity policy implementation in the capital city of San Salvador
2) Municipal approach to gender inclusion in Santa Tecla
3) Provincial strategy to equity policy in Cuscatlán

Local talents from the selected municipalities agreed to become training service providers, develop materials and shared their experiences through presentations and video
recorded interviews. These interviews were then presented in 10 minute videos that summarize what local talents have achieved as well as the main challenges and opportunities faced during the process of good practice implementation. These videos provide useful information to participants and allow local talents to acknowledge their achievements. The written and visual materials are the result of a process called case systematization. Through this process, the views of a variety of actors and experts is documented and presented. Finally, training consultants and local talents prepared training itinerary, program content and activities. Finally, training consultants and local talents prepared training itinerary, program and activities.

Simultaneously, project coordinators developed the process of outreaching and recruiting participants. Elected women in local governments, staff from city halls, members of women’s associations and representatives of Municipal Offices for Women were selected.

**Training**

During this second stage an introductory workshop was carried out. Participants learned about the social and political contexts of the visited countries as well as the advancement of women at the national and local levels. In this workshop participants got to know each other, talked about their expectations in regards to this training and received general information about the outstanding cases that they were going to visit during the trip. Then, participants were ready to initiate the field work, which included panels and good practices presentations as well as workshops to discuss the learning experience of everyday work and the plans that participants wanted to implement in their own work. Participants made valuable contributions to the protagonist of outstanding cases and interchanged information with them. Everyday participants analyzed a visited case and then discussed with the group their analysis of that case based on their observations. The group visited city halls, service provider centers for women and initiatives for economic development.

**After the Training**

Through the learning process that took place during the training, participants were able to transform their initial idea in a draft plan aimed to improve municipal governments and participants’ work. Many alliances and initiatives have occurred as a result of the training. However, it is too soon to have a complete evaluation of the Central American Path to Learning as this process might take between 6 to 12 months. The evaluation system proposed by the Paths to Learning includes post-Path visits to the places where innovative plans have been implemented in order to confirm the extent to which these plans have made a difference in municipalities. The initial results and materials prepared for this training are available on the UN-INSTRAW (www.un-unstraw.org) and PROCASUR (www.procasur.org) websites.

**Initial Results from the Central American Path to Learning**

The first objective of the Path was to facilitate participants’ reflections on the challenges and achievements faced by the protagonists of the outstanding cases presented during the training. Participants had the opportunity to know different experiences about similar topics and were able to compare cases and reflect individually and collectively.
about those cases. The Central American Path to Learning confirmed that there are common issues in regards to women’s political participation: a history of struggle for achieving representation, examples of municipalities with a gender perspective, the presence of women with accumulated political experience and women’s willingness to share their experience.

The second objective addressed the expansion of alliances. Initial results indicate that participants are building alliances as they have worked together in the implementation of different activities. One of the participants invited her classmate from Costa Rica to train staff from Guatemalan Municipal Offices for Women; an Ecuadorean training participant was selected as a presenter in the Congress of the Salvadoran Association of Municipal Women (ANDRYSAS) and, finally, a Costa Rican participant will visit Ecuador to learn from the experience of AJUPRE, a grassroots women’s association, whose president participated in the training. All these post-training activities reflect participants’ abilities to build alliances; train each other and promote their municipalities and associations at the national and international level. These alliances might generate more results over time.

The third objective focused on the importance of associative work. The initiatives mentioned above indicate that women are finding different ways to work together. Additionally, the presented innovative plans emphasized the value of associative work as they involve a larger number of municipalities rather than a sole municipality.

The fourth objective was proposing the plans mentioned above. UN-INSTRAW and PROCASUR will support 3 out of the 5 final plans that were presented by participants. The first plan seeks to incorporate the gender perspective in 4 municipalities of the Province of Heredia in Costa Rica. The participant who presented this proposal will adapt what she learned in her visit to Cuscatlán in El Salvador where local talents presented a unique approach to policy implementation that has brought together eight municipalities with different political views but a common interest: building gender sensitive municipalities (Estrategia Departamental 2008). The second plan seeks the incorporation of the gender perspective in the municipality of Talamanca, Costa Rica, and is based on participant learning experience during her visit to Belén, another Costa Rican municipality that has years of experience in this topic and will be able to guide the municipality of Talamanca (Caso del municipio de Belén 2008). Finally, the third plan aims to strengthen Guatemalan Municipal Women’s Association (ASMUGOM) as the need to have associations with clear objectives and democratic representation was evident during the Path.

Lessons Learned

The alliance between PROCASUR and UN-INSTRAW was appropriate for implementing an innovative training methodology in the field of women’s political participation. It responded effectively to women’s demands and produced results that go beyond the moment of training. PROCASUR acquired the necessary tools to include the gender perspective in its work and therefore, future Paths to Learning will benefit from this experience.
This methodology allowed local talents to actively participate in training preparation and development. Additionally, they acknowledged their achievements when women from many Latin American countries visited them and showed interest in learning and contributing to their processes of good practice implementation.

The Central American Path of Learning empowered participants as they have the opportunity to reflect about their work in the public sector, identify institutional connections to strengthen their organizations and carry out the necessary actions to improve municipal management.

Having a very busy schedule during the Path was very effective in providing a large number of experiences to learn from; however it made it difficult to spend more time discussing participants’ plans to be implemented in their countries of origin.

The training generated written and audio-visual materials that might be used in multiple ways. These uses could include research on gender and political participation, future trainings (the videos are being used in new trainings in different countries) and information materials for the media and institutions interested in women’s political participation in Latin America (all materials are available at UN-INSTRAW website.)

Through the development of the selected innovative plans it is estimated that the training will have a significant impact on encouraging a larger number of municipalities to implement Equity Policies. This in turn fits perfectly with the UN-INSTRAW project’s third year objective that focuses on promoting public policies at the local level of government.

Although examples of gender sensitive municipalities are starting to emerge in Latin America (observable in better public services, more opportunities for women and new spaces for gender sensitive trainings) there are few municipalities sensitive to women’s needs and contributions. A larger number of municipalities must include a gender perspective in their agendas and budgets. In order to have more gender oriented municipalities, it is necessary to replicate training experiences such as the Paths to Learning, build strategic alliances and find more economic recourses that support these initiatives.

References


Salazar, A. "Las Mujeres Pueden... ¡y mejor! Experiencias Exitosas en el Gobierno Local." Revista Quehaceres, no. 1 (March 2006).


"I Can See the Change": The Community Training Plan at Toronto Community Housing

Carmen Downes, Marcia Wilson, Marion Thomson, Tracey Seaward and Katherine Jeffery

Toronto Community Housing Corporation

Introduction

Workplace learning and training is often explicitly or implicitly planned to serve the interests of the organization. Furthermore, training planning and processes are generally determined by managers, instead of those who will be engaging in the learning. What happens to learning in the workplace when staff themselves determine its content and methods? As seen in the Community Training Plan (CTP), implemented at Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) in 2003, control over workplace training by frontline staff has resulted in profound changes in many facets of service provision, working life and community life. The CTP has created more inclusive forms of engagement and participation; new and more holistic learning foci; new spaces in the workplace built around people living and working in communities; and finally a sense of staff ownership over learning.

This paper, written by the Training Unit of TCHC in collaboration with a graduate student studying Learning, Work and Social Change, seeks to provide an overview of some of the key outcomes listed above, preceded by an outline of the organizational context and the basic structure of the Community Training Plan. We have attempted to preserve each contributor’s distinct writing styles in the sections to follow, with the editing done collectively in order to ensure the clarity and unity of what we are hoping to communicate.

Toronto Community Housing

Created on January 1, 2002 by the City of Toronto, Toronto Community Housing is the largest social housing provider in Canada and the second largest in North America. An amalgamation of 3 legacy organizations, TCHC is home to about 164,000 low and moderate-

1 All authors contributed equally to this paper.
income tenants in 58,500 households. These households include seniors, families and singles. According to the website, “[t]he mandate of Toronto Community Housing is to provide quality housing for low and moderate income households and to create community conditions that minimize risk and promote resiliency” (Toronto Community Housing Corporation 2008, 1).

The Staff

The majority of Toronto Community Housing’s approximately 1500 staff works in or supports the housing communities or ‘Operating Units’. The majority of TCHC staff are represented by CUPE Local 416 (maintenance staff), CUPE local 79 (community development, recreation and youth development staff, tenant support staff) and OPSEU Local 529 (community safety staff). There are also management and exempt staff who are not unionized. TCHC workforce is a diverse group.

The Community Management Plan

Toronto Community Housing’s organizational goals and directions are set out in its Community Management Plan (CMP). Designed as a rolling 3 year plan, the CMP highlights outcomes and achievements that the TCHC hopes to accomplish.

The CMP is developed in consultation with tenants, staff, community agencies and other stakeholders. How TCHC will accomplish its goals of healthy, sustainable communities and a financially sustainable organization is described in the Community Management Plan.

The various operating and business units throughout TCHC determine its own goals and objectives based on the Community Management Plan. These plans are more locally based and deal with local initiatives and challenges as well as those relating to the organization as a whole.

Much of the work of TCHC staff is determined by the initiatives that are outlined in the CMP and the various local plans. For frontline staff, this includes CMP initiatives that deal with maintaining buildings in a good state of repair, providing tenants with healthy places to live, and working towards stronger social inclusion for TCHC tenants. It also includes strategies for improving training for staff, which has lead to the development and growth of the Community Training Plan (CTP).

The Community Training Plan (CTP)

The Background

The idea of the CTP grew from an effort to base training in a participatory community model with staff, managers and unions as partners in the process. A training needs assessment was required, for the purpose of developing of a long term, locally developed training plan in keeping with the goals of the CMP. The Training and Development Unit was established within the Human Resources department in order to support the development of the model. The Community Training Plan has been a ‘model in the making’: growing from our practice and resulting in an array of accumulated learnings. The process itself shifts ideas about who creates knowledge; who possesses knowledge;
and what exactly is knowledge. More mainstream conceptions of workplace learning reinforce the notions of the expert passing on knowledge to staff learners in a one way, hierarchal, technocratic model, thereby minimizing knowledge already ‘owned’ from experience, memory and reflection among staff. Within the CTP staff deliberate and discuss their own ideas and ‘knowledges’ framing these using company and community concepts. In effect, staff members are making their own theories to explain their experience while integrating the company direction and business plan.

Skill is defined in a broader perspective: not only as the ‘hard skills’ needed to do repairs, work on computer programs and work on building systems, but also as those skills that situate work and workplace learning in their social contexts. The working environment demands a ‘bigger picture’ of why particular skill and learning is needed within the TCHC buildings and with our tenant communities. This discussion also takes place with perspectives from labour and management of what learning and skills are required by the front line staff. Throughout the process, the unions were there backing staff’s development opportunities by offering support and encouragement when and where it’s needed.

The Process

A needs analysis is conducted where staff are divided into job specific groups to deliberate what trainings would help staff do their jobs better. This is the skills portion of the trainings. A list is created from the different job groups through discussion, questioning and visual aids. Staff members then vote on which trainings would help them. This voting process is called ‘dotmocracy’, where people vote by physically placing dots on their choices. Once everyone has voted, the top 3 choices with the most votes are declared the winners.

The next process deals with the ‘All Staff’ category. Staff members are divided into mixed job groups. They brainstorm and question which training would benefit them as a staff team. This might include how to work better as a team and understand their communities/worksite better. Once again staff members sell their ideas to one another trying to influence the vote. The top 5 training choices are picked through dotmocracy. The process flows as follows:

- Staff members elect committee members from the different job groups to represent their training needs.
- The committee members roll out a training plan (involving selected trainings and rationales for them, budgets) and present their plan to the staff, unions, and managers for approval.
- Committee members meet bi-monthly to schedule training, plan the training logistics, meet the trainers, design curriculum and evaluate the programs.
- Committees monitor their training budget
- Committees work with managers, other training committees and the training unit to develop an annual training schedule
- Committees, together with the Training Unit, develop class lists and schedules
- Committees meet trainers and discuss curriculum with them
- Committees evaluate programs and recommend trainers. They also advise changes to curriculum that need to be made.
Committee members also undergo their own development program, developing leadership and personal development skills through a variety of workshops at the central committee meetings. They also learn invaluable civic skills informally through their role as learning leaders. They value committee time, to devote and volunteer themselves for the ‘greater good’ of their fellow staff, creating an opportunity to do something that would help not only the individual but their family, workplace and tenant TCHC community as a whole.

Recently a group of committee members, together with the Training and Development Unit conducted a participatory evaluation of the CTP. Strongly emphasized in the Evaluation is the centrality of staff views and experiences in their own words. The Evaluation was meant to explore the learning and community outcomes of the CTP from 2003-2007. Beginning in October 2007 and reaching completion in 2008, it was conducted by a team of frontline staff hired for a 6 month placement within the Training Unit. The approach used to guide the evaluation is outlined in the Evaluation Report as follows:

> We have relied on the advice and expertise of staff ways of knowing to grow an organic and unique workplace training program. In the evaluation we followed a similar process by hiring a team of front line staff to work with the Training Unit team. (Training and Development Unit 2008, 2)

The team of frontline staff were trained in participatory research methods, and they conducted over 100 interviews, 6 focus groups and 50 staff surveys in 8 working Community Housing Units’ (CHU) with 18 senior managers and 3 union executives. A training inventory, staff focus group and manager interview was also conducted in 4 dropped or never-participated CHU’s. Two Training Unit focus groups and 2 Training Committee focus groups were also carried out.

Overall, 80% manager sample and 85% staff sample gave positive responses (Training and Development Unit 2008, 2). Contained in the final evaluation report, a 13 page document, are a backgrounder on the evaluation and CTP, evaluation objectives, evaluation methodology, evaluation findings, a section on units that did not participate or stopped participating in the CTP, testimonials from ‘workplace learning experts’, recommendations and conclusions.

In the spring, following the gathering of the evaluation information, a series of roadshows were held where the evaluation team brought back the information from the evaluation to the staff for feedback and analysis, as well as promoted the CTP to people unfamiliar with the model. These road shows were fun and dynamic events, where activities were planned using the materials from the evaluation in order to encourage the staff to think about and engage with the ‘data’ by providing feedback and discussing. The Roadshow Handbook, as seen in the Materials section to follow, was developed to give participants the opportunity to read testimonials from the interviews as well as some synthesized summaries of the main findings. The handbook contained twenty pages, nine of which were of quotes or testimonials taken directly from the interviews. These quotes were selected based on how they reflected the predominant messages expressed throughout all the interviews. In addition to the quotes, there were sections summarizing the CTP, the evaluation methodology, keywords and common themes from the evaluation, the strengths and challenges of the CTP and ideas for the future.
The materials from the evaluation were used in the writing of this document, in support of the analysis developed through the authors’ direct experience. Out of the materials, four central outcomes were identified, and they are explained in the sections to follow.

**Engagement and Participation**

The Community Training Plan (CTP) model aims to support learning, staff engagement and participation in the culture of a healthy organization. These values are embedded in the process of the CTP and not only influence staff in the workplace at Toronto Community Housing, but also in their individual communities and society as a whole. With the CTP, staff become more engaged as they participate in every stage of training, from the needs assessment to the committees, curriculum development and training methodology.

In the needs assessment, everyone has the opportunity to make decisions on what they would like to learn. Before the CTP, sometimes people felt excluded from decision-making because of job status, not having the language skills, or due to society’s inequalities being reflected within the workplace setting. Discussion and deliberation of ideas made staff realize that they had some knowledge to contribute. Participating in democratic forums allowed staff to prioritize their ideas and vote on the training that they would like to have not only for themselves but for their colleagues in the whole Unit.

Participation and engagement continue when the training committees get together to develop a training plan based on the democratic prioritization of their training needs. The group works on the production of a document which outlines a training plan, budget and rationale for their Unit. Each person contributes ideas in why they want the training; what the benefits are to staff, tenants and the organization. Without a CTP plan and process, staff are less likely be a part of this step in the process. (Training and Development Unit 2008, 10) While some committee members may have found it harder to work together or with their managers, the groups also bonded with each other as a committee, participating in the logistics and planning of training, and developed as leaders in the workplace.

The regular meeting of the committees from the various housing units allows for further staff participation and learning. They learn how to negotiate, present their arguments tactfully, and respect each other’s opinions. This forum helps staff to understand the organization as a whole, and its role in the community. Such new areas of learning are discussed in greater detail in a subsequent section. However, the committees provide a forum where participating staff can be heard, and give and get feedback. In this way, the staff members feel empowered by this new committee model, because within it their experiences and knowledges can be validated.

When you engage staff to the level seen in the CTP, they will be more open to training and have a desire to learn. “Training gets people out of their shell. In the past, we did not participate: we sat back” (Training and Development Unit 2008, 12). There is always growth through participation in learning that is personal, while also contributing to the greater whole, community and organizational growth. Engagement and participation creates a learning environment that is open and develops competencies for staff to do their
jobs better, resulting in job satisfaction, and healthier relationships within the workplace and community.

The Community Training Plan’s participatory processes encourage independent thought which builds on common interests and inclusion. This model of choosing and implementing training creates an understanding of diversity of experiences, tolerance, respect of differing perspectives in the workplace arising from job positions, languages, cultures, race and sexual orientation. It also develops an understanding of social justice issues, which is important for people working in social housing.

The training methodology is participatory and experiential. Trainers acknowledge that the participants bring knowledge to the workshops and that trainers are not the only ‘experts’. The staff and Training Unit develop curriculum which provides staff with opportunities to share their knowledge by building on participants’ knowledge and expertise while adding new information and additional theory. This method of adult education gives staff the confidence to apply what they have learned through the training in the workplace, the organization and in their communities.

Because of their improved self-confidence gained through engagement and participation in the CTP model, people have volunteered in other initiatives in TCHC. Staff members have taken leadership roles in Healthy Organization initiatives, United Way, Diversity Committees within TCHC, as well as in other settings. They have the confidence to approach their manager with new ideas for the Unit. Some of the staff members have taken responsibility for their own continuous learning through after-hours classes organized by TCH’s Training Unit or evening courses at colleges. Staff members now have the courage and confidence to apply for new job opportunities within TCHC and there have been many successes. (Training and Development Unit 2008)

People want to learn new skills, but they want to be engaged and participate in their learning so that they can take pride in the outcome. It is questionable if traditional styles of workplace training are as useful for staff members who already have their own experience and knowledge bank to build on. The CTP has encouraged more participation and engagement of staff in training initiatives, and has fostered staff pursuits of continuous learning and preparation for new positions.

**Shifting the Learning Focus**

Staff members have been able to customize a wider debate of what ‘service’ means in a social housing context by initiating and continuing a debate and dialogue of placing their work in the wider social context. Staff members want to discuss and learn about the particular context of working with vulnerable populations and how this has changed over the past twenty years, in effect changing the nature of their work. The reality of Toronto and a restructuring of community and government benefits and services have a rippling effect on our tenant populations and our work. Staff members want to learn about this. Such learning situates TCHC staff, their work and their work places in the bigger social context of Toronto, and of communities past and present. Through the CTP, staff members have brought these new learning foci to the table in defining their learning needs. They
have also confronted their new reality through explorations of anti-racism, gender, poverty, sexuality, age and ableism. By working through these stereotypes, not only are they better able serve TCHC communities, but they are also better able to work as a team. By involving staff in these discussions of ‘learning needs’ we have bridged the gap between hard and soft skills training, while at the same time crossing boundaries of race, gender, sexuality, age and social class. In effect we have nurtured the growth of a human rights culture across communities of staff by applying a methodology that is democratic, respectful and inclusive. These methods and the practice of them have been the teachers as opposed to a more content based approach. Each facet of the model reinforces the centrality of equity. It is a new learner centred training model rooted in a people-centred ‘business’ focusing on tenant service among Toronto’s most vibrant communities. The CTP stretches human possibility and nurtures a compassionate, dedicated service to our tenant communities.

By focusing on naming and working with power differentials, the CTP has created an internal dynamic centred on acknowledging conflict and change in the workplace. Questions of power, whether personal organizational and social are interrogated in the process and in training content. Curricula imagine tenant communities not as a single, monolithic entity but as collectivities of human beings living interdependently with diverse needs and histories. This has humanized relationships in the workplace and concepts of customer service.

Meanwhile the training itself is relevant to the front line needs of staff in a planning process mapped for future growth and development. The ability of staff to collectively create a training plan nourishes a team and collective spirit in the workplace much needed in a stressful, changing, demanding and challenging workplace. The positive effect of participation has a ripple effect across other TCHC initiatives as staff feel the benefit of their own personal development. Increased confidence not only aids self esteem but leads to a more inclusive and engaged workforce - a healthier workplace, organization and a richer life at home. Learning foci are internalized and spread to personal and family life. One participant explains: “I can handle kids better at home. I have become a better team player at home and work.” (Training and Development Unit 2008, 8) Another described that they “… took the poverty issues home to [their] kids. When they see and hear about tenants – their eyes are open to the issues.” (Training and Development Unit 2008, 8)

New learning foci have not only emerged in formal curriculum content but also informally through the changing workplace relationships. Relationships are built through dialogue, discussion and the negotiation of perspectives between staff, managers, the training unit, tenants and labour. The building of tolerance, honesty, trust, respect and a need for finding common ground between all stakeholders is key to building and sustaining the model. The inclusion of difference from the varied stakeholders has not been an easy road. Varied perspectives on how to grow the model has caused the model’s own internal challenge. However, challenges often result in strengthening the model.

Learning how to work through the creation of a democratic learning model is a new kind of learning foci in workplace learning. The CTP starts from the experience of front line staff and builds on the perspectives of the varied stakeholders in the process. It is the starting point and the processes which make this ‘thing’ unique and open – all the
stakeholders learn and question how to work ‘with’ one another. The CTP encourage people to take risks: it takes courage to ‘let go’ of preconceived notions of workplace learning, expertise, and social relations of power. The end becomes an uncertain point as learning processes follows a circular motion. The model evolves into something else - beginning the ‘cycle’ of learning with a new experience and situation. This uncertainty and messiness hopefully breeds an excitement and vibrancy for the future.

**Staff Ownership**

The Community Training Plan is driven by the involvement and role of frontline staff and the training committee members in partnership with Labour, Management and the Training Unit. This program, in which the staff members play a lead role in their own development, enables many outcomes for staff, tenants and the organization as a whole. There is a development of trust, nurtured through a staff-centered approach. Demonstrating real staff ownership is necessary to uphold staff participation and trust. This is a different emphasis from the traditional training models that are influenced by a top-down approach. In the traditional method predominantly external consultants or management would select which staff or group should be consulted or trained. In such models, staff members have less opportunity to select and discuss which training is best suited their needs – other ‘experts’ decide on their behalf. Not only do some staff experience limited access to training in the workplace through this selective process, but there is a loss of the staff’s knowledge, insights and experience obtained through working directly with tenants.

When the CTP was introduced to staff, there was resistance by staff at first: not only was the organization giving staff control over the design of their own training plan, but it was actually giving the staff the opportunity to choose their own training. Staff members were initially suspicious of the Plan because a training program of this kind had never been done before. In one participant’s words: ‘I did not believe in CTP at first. I questioned all about it and believe it to be management driven’. (Training and Development Unit 2008, 16) There was also resistance and questioning among various stakeholders in the organization: will staff choose the ‘right’ training? Do staff members know what they need? This was also a new idea for managers: staff deciding and consulting with managers on training. Could labour also trust management with this training model?

While some individuals and housing units found it difficult to change and adapt to the new model, over time most staff became more comfortable with the idea of participating in CTP training because they could tell that it was staff driven and followed through with what it had promised. (Training and Development Unit 2008) In this way trust and a sense of ownership began to grow. They became further established and maintained by various important components of the CTP structure. The following are examples of how trust and ownership are developed and supported.

Firstly, an environment is created where the staff are given a forum to have discussions, make mistakes and not be judged, they are able to share their ideas, views, values, experiences and knowledge with each other and build confidence while learning.
Secondly, the CTP encourages staff to look outside the box at learning something new that they may not have already thought about. This includes understanding new perspectives and reflecting on old assumptions. There is trust and confidence that is built when staff talk and share with other staff. Also, staff members actively own the training because they set the tone for the training. By taking ownership, they now ask things of the Training Unit and the facilitators that they know will be relevant to their work.

Thirdly, learning through arts-based activities encourages staff to have an open mind and includes humour in trainings. The hands-on skills training puts ideas into action and develops confidence and safer ways of working. Humour establishes a positive less stressful atmosphere where no one is ‘better’ than another. People are just there to learn. Staff members learn from making mistakes in an open learning forum and people do not feel judged so their confidence develops. In these new settings, people feel they can apply themselves and thereby reinforce their ownership of the model.

Leadership within the model is another way in which staff ownership is established. Responsibilities and leadership ‘learnt’ by those participating reinforce the experiences of ownership and control and ultimately the sustainability of the CTP within the organization. Leadership is built through a 2 to 3 year long training plan that serve to ensure a mapping and visioning of trainings, as well as to make sure the training actually happens. Staff monitoring of the budget has also been strengthened since the inception of the CTP. Now Training Committees propose budgets and keep the expenditures of the Training Unit accountable to the staff. This control over the budget might also reinforce the staff’s trust in the longevity of the CTP and the commitment of the organization to staff.

The development of the curriculum is another way staff members have taken ownership of training, as part of the design process. They choose the trainers, schedule training dates, develop staff training lists for all job groups in their unit while coordinating the logistics that accompany planning and implementation. All in all, staff members feel as though they own the program and they feel a sense of pride. One interviewee explains that “staff associate CTP as something they own and they take ownership. It’s their own independent beautiful thing.” (Training and Development Unit 2008, 17) They feel they have built the program and the ownership is shown by their ability to handle the challenges of the model and organizational change while building their own growth and personal development. Staff learners and committee members are able to work better with other staff and teamwork has improved, enabling the building of skill sets for the community while respecting the diversity and the promotion of human rights in the workplace. Relationships between staff, managers, unions and the Unit teams have improved due to the forums being created for dialogue and negotiation of meanings while learning together. One staff member explains that “relationships are better, more closer. The training has built morale. We see more of each other in the CHU, the office and maintenance staff.” (Training and Development Unit 2008, 12)

The best part of all is that tenant and community relationships have improved. By owning the Training Plan, staff members show pride and ownership of the services they provide, and invest themselves in communication and the strengthening of the TCHC communities. Staff members have a better idea of the issues faced by the tenants and are
able to promote the organization’s commitment to tenants as outlined in the CMP. They are able to do housing repairs more safely (Training and Development Unit 2008, 17) and can de-escalate conflicts with more confidence. As one participant explained, “Conflict Resolution – I try to practice what I learnt to de-escalate some situations – how to treat people equally, fairly and with respect – that’s what we learned in training – to provide better customer service.” (Training and Development Unit 2008, 9)

Through the staff leadership of the CTP, staff members want to continue their learning, and further explore their self-development, their visions, and their feelings of accomplishment. They want more opportunities and to feel that they have a stake in their futures. They can tell you first hand of all the challenges that they have endured and the strengths they have developed to make this something that all staff can look forward to.

The future for all staff looks bright and rewarding and with the support of committee members, staff, managers, unions, stakeholders, tenants and the community, we can do it.

**New Spaces in the Workplace**

Through the stories and observations of the participants themselves, we can see how the Community Training Plan is creating new spaces for staff learning, staff dialogue and the development of respect for our colleagues and our larger communities. These new spaces, created by the participants, are areas where staff members feel free to learn, to share and also to grow closer and build mutual respect and understanding. It is in these new spaces where the CTP engages staff and encourages their participation and their enthusiasm. As one participant shares with us, “I got lots of new knowledge from everyone. I learnt there is another side to the story and not to judge- to have an open mind” (Training and Development Unit 2008, 12).

**Conclusion**

Participatory educational structures provide leadership opportunities for front line staff. The CTP promotes communication, participation, and the willingness to learn. The organizational and personal return is staff members have increased confidence with an additional ability to perform their duties to the best of their ability. Meanwhile staff members develop personal skills and self esteem. Having a solid, well thought out and relevant curriculum (designed in-house with staff) allows staff to express themselves, to communicate, and reflect while having an input on the organization’s initiatives and future direction.

Each of the sub-themes identified in the paper are ways of understanding not only the outcomes but also the key organizing principles of the CTP. They are ways of doing learning at work that have begun to produce positive outcomes amongst the participating staff at the TCHC and the communities in which they live and work. Interestingly, the sub-themes emerged as they do, along with the outcomes assigned to each, largely because of each other. For instance, participation would not have been as widespread and enthusiastic had staff ownership and control not been established, or if learning methods and content were less relevant, or even if the spaces created by the CTP had been less relaxing and staff-
friendly. However, staff participation in the CTP was part of what established their collective ownership of the plan, enabled the development of new learning methods and courses, and the created staff centered spaces.

The re-conceptualization of who can and ought to be making decisions about training in the workplace is a theme that runs throughout the four outcomes of the CTP. So too is the effort towards creating ‘healthy organizations’, and an underlying awareness of how the CTP empowers staff in the workplace. In a similar way, the outcomes which have emerged to date all seem to bear a common link: through the CTP, people are creating moments whereby they might reconnect with some of the most basic components of their lives and of the services they provide to TCHC communities. Through sharing knowledge and growing as a community in practical, artistic, communal and personal ways, the staff members are reconnecting with themselves, their personal and collective agency, with their work, their families, and with those they work with.

References


Non-Formal Citizenship Education in Cape Town: Struggling to Learn or Learning to Struggle?

Kristin Endresen
School of Community Development and Social Work, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Abstract

The advent of liberal democracy in April 1994 represented a political revolution and turning point in South African history. The African National Congress was elected based on their Reconstruction and Development Programme which argued that development is not about the delivery of goods to a ‘passive citizenry’ but about ‘active involvement’ and ‘growing empowerment’. In the past, non-formal education was concerned with ‘learning democracy by doing’. The South African government policy on adult education and training since 1994 has largely focused on the vocational aspect of education. This paper is based on my completed PhD research, which analysed the non-formal training programmes in three organisations, focusing on supporting the efforts of shop stewards (Confederation of South African Trade Unions), the unemployed (Alternative Information and Development Centre) and HIV positive people (Treatment Action Campaign) to define and claim their rights and make citizenship matter.

The study asked: Does this education encourage active citizenship? Does this education help develop citizens that are able to ‘probe’ and ask questions that challenge oppressive structures? Thus, for poor people’s voices to be heard, new attention must be paid to the relationships between poor people and the institutions which affect their lives. This paper explores how participants in these three organisations understand their roles and identities as participants, activists and as citizens; the spaces and dynamics through which they engage and participate to articulate their interests, the learning that happens in these spaces through training and collective action, the relationship of participants’ activism to issues of democracy, participation, rights and accountability, and the relationship of citizenship to issues of power.
Introduction

The ANC was elected in South Africa based on their Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) that served as the basis for economic and social policy post April 1994. The RDP (1994) argued that:

‘Development is not about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry. It is about active involvement and growing empowerment’ (5).

Before 1994, South Africa was somewhat economically and politically isolated from the rest of the world. However, geo-political and socio-economic changes such as 'globalisation' and 'neoliberalism' have integrated South Africa more fully into the global economy, so conditioning socio-economic development. In the past, non-formal education was committed to supporting the mass-democratic movement in opposition to apartheid. Popular education was part of 'People’s Education for People’s Power' (Von Kotze 2005). Post 1994, adult education policy has focused on the vocational aspect of education. Von Kotze (1997) suggests that the focus on vocational training has shifted the focus away from education for social purpose. Lifelong learning is largely reduced to instrumental and economistic terms. Similarly, Lawy and Biesta (2006) argue that the ‘renewed interest’ in questions of citizenship has been ‘allied to an educational discourse’ where the emphasis has been upon questions concerned with 'outcome' rather then with 'process', and with the curriculum and methods of teaching rather then questions of learning and understanding.

T. H. Marshall (1950) defined citizenship in terms of civil, political and social participation. Citizenship involves essentially the question of access to scarce resources in society and participation in the distribution and enjoyment of such resources. A broader notion of citizenship involves the question of social membership and participation in society as a whole. The Department of Education (2001) aimed to establish a unified national system underpinned by democracy, equity, redress, transparency and participation. On the contrary, there exists growing concern with respect to low voter turnouts, declining citizen confidence in the political establishment and the failure of representative democracy to ensure equality of opportunity for all. South Africa is faced with challenges such as poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, violence, crime and xenophobia (Treatment Action Campaign 2008). Dissatisfaction over lack of service delivery has sparked off waves of protest across the country.

The real threat to South Africa’s new democracy comes not from apathy but from anger and cynicism about politics and a government that is not delivering. The recent xenophobic attacks that spread throughout the country showed that poverty and unemployment accompanied by increasing food prices can contribute to further violence and victimization of foreign nationals. It is partly an educational task to help turn such anger into something constructive and hopeful. A democracy needs an active and independent civil society. This requires that people are able to critically analyse what is happening to them in order to make calculated choices for social justice. This presents adult educators with the opportunity to provide people the educational tools to enhance their struggle for democracy and citizenship.
Considering that non-formal education before 1994 was concerned with ‘education for democracy’, i.e. preparing people ‘for’ democracy, it was my intention to inquire what kind of education exists that aims to build civil society by promoting social justice and social reconstruction in the new democracy. I was concerned because such deliberate education played a fundamental part to the struggle for democracy, more especially because democracy is a process. Democracy is not a once-off achievement. It is a system that constantly needs to be nurtured and renewed. Therefore, I decided to investigate whether, in post-apartheid education, there was an ‘educational impulse’ that targeted primarily the citizen (‘homo civicus’) rather than the person looking for work (‘homo economicus’)
(Wildemeersch, Finger & Jansen 2000).

Having explained the background to my research, this paper consists of four parts: First, I explain my research objectives. Second, I analyse the facilitation process. For this purpose I asked: Was it popular education? Third, I analyse the learning process. Hence, I asked: Were the participants’ struggling to learn?; Were the participants’ learning to struggle for active citizenship as in personal empowerment? Was there evidence that the participants’ were learning to struggle for critical citizenship as in collective emancipation? Finally, I conclude by submitting that adult educators have a responsible role to play in contributing to building civil society by giving people the tools to enhance the struggle for greater social justice.

Non-formal Citizenship Education in Cape Town: Struggling to Learn or Learning to Struggle?

In the context of South African ‘democracy’, my PhD research question asked: Non-formal citizenship education in Cape Town: struggling to learn or learning to struggle? Given that non-formal education has a long history in Cape Town, the first part of the title speaks to non-formal education.

My PhD critically analysed the political education programmes in three organisations, an NGO, a confederation, and a social movement registered as an NGO. These organisations were all at the forefront of the Western Cape Coalition, which aimed to build a united front against unemployment and poverty. They focused on supporting the efforts of shop stewards (Confederation of South African Trade Unions), people who are unemployed (Alternative Information and Development Centre) and HIV positive people (Treatment Action Campaign). The three organisations fought for their constitutional rights for employment, better working conditions in their employ, and a decent public health service.

The Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC) aimed to amplify, focus and impress upon the unemployment crisis by building an Unemployed Peoples Movement through campaigning for ‘The Right to Work’. The Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) trained shop stewards from their affiliates in Cape Town to strengthen the trade union movement. The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) aimed to build a Peoples Health Movement to struggle for a better public health service. They aimed to do so through grassroots, bottom-up, network-based modes of organisation that operated in local communities. This involved facilitating political education on how ‘globalisation’ affects
local communities, as well as addressing alternatives to ‘neoliberal’ policies such as the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy in South Africa.

The second part of the title addresses the learning process. Were they ‘struggling to learn’ ‘about’ democracy, both in terms of content and process? Additionally, I asked if there was evidence of them ‘learning to struggle’, for instance, ‘for’ democracy? Were they ‘learning to struggle’ for permanent employment, fair labour practices, or a decent public health service?

Having established what type of non-formal education existed and the fact that all of the facilitators categorised the training as ‘popular education’, I made this an important point of reference. I investigated popular education as an explicitly political form of non-formal education. In fact, Johnston (2003) views popular education as an increasingly important reference point for learning for active citizenship. Building on Crowther, Martin and Shaw’s (1999:4) three defining characteristics of popular education, I asked: Were the programmes rooted in the ‘real interests and struggles of ordinary people’? Were they ‘overtly political and critical of the status quo’? Were they committed to ‘progressive social and political change’?

All of the facilitators wished for a ‘better world’ with full employment, fair labour laws and a decent public health service with more socio-economic equality. As part of their strategy, the facilitators aimed to develop an ‘active’ and ‘critical thinking’ new layer of ‘leadership’. Xolani added that they must question ‘why things are the way they are’. Indeed, Brookfield (2005) argues that if we live in a society where “thought is circumscribed within certain limits that justify the correctness of the existing order”, then “critical thought” must “exist outside of and in opposition to these limits” (205). Popular education could assist such a thought process because it is overtly critical of the status quo. Brookfield (2005) argues:

‘Critical thinking focuses on what’s wrong with what currently exists, on illuminating omissions, distortions, and falsities in current thinking’ (206).

Across the organisations, the facilitators used popular education terminology such as ‘participatory education’, ‘experiential learning’, ‘reflective learning’, ‘critical thinking’ as strategies for ‘collective action’ to achieve ‘social change’. Xolani, Marlon and Lindile referred to themselves as ‘educator’ and ‘facilitator’, rather than teacher. They aimed to ‘assist’ the participants in the learning process rather than ‘teaching’ them about a certain topic. They wanted the participants to explain the issues ‘using their own words’.

The facilitators made big claims and set themselves high goals. Big ideas and claims become a challenge. Such claims seem to indicate willingness and commitment to participatory processes rooted in ordinary people’s experiences. The participants claimed to have learned to ‘think critically’. Had the participants learned to see through distortions and falsities? Were they able to reflect on social and ideological facts of power? Did they develop the awareness that individual fulfilment needs to be combined with the larger demands of solidarity for public good?
Clearly, the programmes aimed to advance citizenship. Yet, the facilitators did not claim to offer ‘citizenship education’ as such. What kind of citizenship did they try to awake? To further help me anaylse the three programmes, I built on Foucault (1980a in Inglis 1997) who suggests ‘there is no truth without power’. Similarly, Inglis (1997) argues that in order to understand the notion of ‘empowerment’ and ‘emancipation’, one must begin with an ‘analysis of power’. Here, Inglis (1997) draws an important distinction between ‘empowerment’ for inclusion in existing power structures, and ‘emancipation’ for liberation as fighting oppressive structures.

Given the aforementioned, I asked: Did it advance ‘active’ citizenship along the lines of inclusive citizenship and ‘empowerment’ (i.e. developing capacities to act successfully within the existing system and structures of power) or ‘critical’ citizenship along the lines of ‘emancipation’ (i.e. critically analyzing and resisting oppressive structures of power), as suggested by Inglis (1997).

Furthermore, I did three in-depth semi structured interviews with Cape Town-based facilitators and thirty in-depth semi-structured interviews with local and national participants. I observed the three programmes over a 12-month period. I recorded and documented review of all the literature used including pamphlets, brochures, posters and t-shirts. I also attended their meetings and demonstrations in Cape Town.

**Was it Popular Education?**

With a focus on unemployment, labour and health, the three programmes were rooted in the ‘real interests and struggles of ordinary people’. This involved struggles against ‘social ills’ such as poverty, domestic violence, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS. Matthew, one of the AIDC facilitators, stated: "Unemployment is like a virus that ‘eats away on our community’".\(^1\) He added, ”Unemployment is not just an individual problem, it’s a public problem”, and the symptoms are increasing poverty, violence, substance abuse, domestic violence, crime, xenophobia and prostitution. In COSATU, Marlon noted that “the apartheid regime” used drugs to “suppress the struggle and the opposition”. He added that the in the past the dop system (a system whereby farm workers were paid in alcohol) had contributed to alcoholism and “children with alcohol syndrome”.

The programmes were ‘political and critical of the status quo’. Popular education is unashamedly biased and aims to push a political line (Freire 1974; Crowther, Martin and Shaw 1999). Matthew argued: ‘...unemployment is not some natural disaster, it’s not the Tsunami. We have to speak about GEAR the neoliberal policy...It might be good for us first but then later on they will try and cut wages, working hours, smashing unions etc’. Likewise, Xolani in the AIDC argued for redistribution of wealth, as he stated: ‘someone lives in a mansion because someone else live in a shack’. Finding himself in opposition to the government, Xolani noted that there had been a shift ‘from AIDS denialism to unemployment denialism’.

---

\(^1\) I use pseudonyms to protect the interviewees’ confidentiality.
The programmes also evidenced “commitment to progressive social change”. They encouraged the participants to struggle for their rights to work, fair labour practices, and access to a decent public health service. This meant holding the government accountable for the rights enshrined in the constitution. In fact, the three organisations saw their struggles as part of the wider struggle against poverty, unemployment, domestic violence and substance abuse. All the facilitators referred to the hegemony of power using different terms. Marlon named it ‘capitalism’ or ‘neoliberalism’. Lindile, A TAC facilitator, blamed ‘the system’ or ‘corrupt politicians’. Their broader aim was to change “the system” whether it meant fighting the state for ‘reforms’ or the abolishment of ‘capitalism’ overall. To strengthen the struggle, Xolani was committed to the unity of leftwing forces. Lindile thought it important to build ‘grassroots intellectuals’. Similarly, in COSATU Marlon aimed to ‘strengthen the trade union’ movement.

Having interviewed facilitators and participants and observed the participants in education sessions, meetings and campaigns, I realized that the participants claimed to have learned about globalisation and neoliberalism but that they struggled to explain it in detail, using their own words. Hence, they often succumbed to ‘sloganeering’.

### Struggling to Learn?

Some of the participants’ were struggling to learn the content because of the past discriminatory ‘Bantu’ education system. They struggled to learn in formal education in the first place. Related to the participants’ struggle was their struggle to speak English, and on the other hand, their right to practice their mother tongue. Whilst many of the participants spoke Afrikaans, Xhosa or Zulu as their first language, English was used as the medium of instruction in all three organisations since this was the only commonly spoken language. In the interviews some participants expressed that at times this affected ‘if’ they spoke, ‘how’ they spoke and ‘what’ knowledge they might have been able to articulate. As a result, even though the content was ‘rooted’, the language made it difficult to process the knowledge and to articulate the knowledge in English. However, facilitators Marlon, Matthew and Lindile noted that they offered participants the opportunity to speak in their preferred language, and they would be provided with translators.

The facilitators constantly emphasised the importance of “letting the participants explain the issues using their own words”; however, they only afforded them limited opportunities to do so, and to improve their skills to do so. AIDC participant Senzeni noted that he wanted “to speak more”. By this he meant that participants needed “more space” to explain issues “on their own terms”. Bongi, in the AIDC, noted there were “too many” inputs that were “too long”. Senzeni noted that the facilitators were so “eager” to start the campaign that they tried to cover “too much” ground “too quickly”. This meant less time to facilitate critical thinking and to treat the wounds of the “lag” of “Bantu” education. This limited their efforts and opportunities to reflect on the information and making sense of it.

Despite this, the participants constantly reflected on their own experiences while trying to make sense of the socio-economic problems around them. They were also learning to struggle to become active and critically thinking citizens. The struggle entailed personal empowerment as well as collective emancipation.
Learning to Struggle for Active Citizenship as Personal Empowerment?

Personal empowerment meant to beat alcoholism and to come to terms with domestic violence. A farm worker at the COSATU training stated: “my dad got paid in alcohol, and he became an alcoholic - now my husband is an alcoholic too”. Another farm worker commented: “my husband keeps wasting our money on cheap wine – sometimes we have nothing to eat”. She added: “information about substance abuse has helped me do preventive work with my own children and in my community”. A telecommunications worker, Eugene eagerly explained: “In my community there are a lot of drugs. TIK [methamphetamine mixed with various fluids and powders] is everywhere. It’s cheap, very addictive and very damaging”. He added: “At the training, I learned to identify the signs of a person who is using or abusing drugs. You can often see it on the person’s pupils and you might notice mood. They always come to me. I take them to the local rehabilitation clinic where they can get further support.”

At the AIDC Women’s School, women spoke openly about their personal experiences related to unemployment and transactional sex, domestic abuse and HIV/AIDS. One spoke about her abusive husband who beats her when he returns drunk from the shebeen (bar). Another spoke of her constant threat of contracting HIV/AIDS because her husband would go out and get drunk with his friends and have unprotected sex with other women. Some stated how they felt they had no option but to stay in the abusive relationships because they were dependent on their husbands and boyfriends for money. Other women said they were economically dependent on their “sugar daddies”. They would get food and clothes from them in exchange for sex, which was often unprotected because “the guys did not like the condom”. Another woman conversed how she was raped by a family member and became pregnant as a teenager. One woman contracted HIV from her unfaithful boyfriend. However, the women established networks of women in the communities so that they could support each other and create strategies to fight the violence they found themselves in. For example, they had formed “groups of women”, to avoid being alone when leaving the house in the evening. Similarly, they had contacted a TAC clinic where they got free condoms that they in return would distribute to their “sisters”.

However, Biesta (2005) argues that critical pedagogy has helped us understand that “there is no individual emancipation without societal emancipation” (55). The participants’ struggle for democracy was related to their rights - to work, to fair working conditions and to free health care, as enshrined in the constitution. Did the participants’ learning constitute more than individual, personal empowerment and shifts towards a critical understanding of the underlying causes of unemployment, unfair working conditions and the absence of a decent public health service? Was there any evidence of collective emancipation, as described above?

Learning to Struggle for Critical Citizenship as Collective Emancipation?

Collective emancipation meant struggle directed at changing the system. This involves making connections about power and understanding the importance of solidarity. The participants acquired attitudes, skills and knowledge to make the struggle more
successful. People can struggle without the aforementioned qualities, but they may enhance their struggle.

From collective action and deliberate education the participants had developed critical consciousness and positive attitudes. Chantal in TAC stated “I feel it has opened my eyes”. Having joined TAC, she “started seeing the world from other peoples’ perspectives”. She felt she had to “do something to better the lives of other people”. TAC participant Clinton noted: “despite different languages, we speak the same language [because we] toye-toye [march and sing] for the same things”. This made him realise that “it’s not about the colour of the skin”. Confirming that this was a collective experience, he argued, because “these are things that we can’t experience by ourselves”.

All the facilitators encouraged the participants to make use of experiences and take those experiences back to the communities. Indeed, participants across the organisations, such as Eugene, Carol, and Sipho argued that they took the struggle beyond the organisation. In fact, they took the struggle to the taxi (public transport), their homes, their communities and their workplaces. This suggested that the participants had developed a critical consciousness in the sense that they had realized the need for tolerance and solidarity for public good. Practical experiences had taught Carol and Clinton that people are all the same. Hence, they had started confronting racist attitudes from family members and work colleagues. Passing on the message beyond the organisations meant that that they had become active and critical thinking citizens, and more socially responsible. However, solidarity was not given unconditionally. At a COSATU workshop, the participants argued that the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) members were “not like other workers” because they often sided with the state rather then showing loyalty and commitment to workers struggles. One participant noted that he did not want to march with POPCRU members because of his previous experience as a worker on the picket line facing police violence.

The participants claimed to have learned skills such as critical thinking. A TAC participant noted: “depending on what side they are on, the newspapers sometimes write something else than what we actually say. The media on the TAC has been positive and negative. They government calls us anti-government or counter-revolutionary. The HIV positive call us heroes and life savers.” Finding herself in opposition to the government, Chantal in TAC noted that “the government wants to control everything” and that they want to “shut down” TAC because it is “challenging the government”. She stated that by educating people from the rural areas about HIV/AIDS, access to ART and rights, TAC was “actually doing the government’s job”. She argued that the government was “against” TAC because the government “fear people being too educated...because they need to have control”. She noted that access to information was used as a tool to control people from taking action against unjust government practises. Thus, critical thinking involved awareness of “power”.

Cock (2007) argues that characteristics such as competitiveness, social inequality and war are commonly accepted as natural. Similarly, problems such as poverty, unemployment and crime are often seen as natural. In practice, such a view implies that we have no control over disaster and hence, that there is nothing that we can do to change it. Newly acquired insights allowed the participants’ to uncover the naturalised world. The
participants managed to think unlike the system, notwithstanding the power of dominant ideas. The participants did no longer view poverty, inequality, unemployment, sexism as something natural, but as problems that were created by people. This meant that they could change these things. From participation in deliberate education and taking collective action, the participants learned that personal troubles such as unemployment, unfair working conditions and lack of access to health are not just private, individual afflictions but public issues that must be tackled collectively, because they involve confrontation with powerful institutions (Wright Mills 1959).

While the participants often found it difficult to explain their knowledge on globalisation in detail, Bongi in the AIDC explained: “the neoliberal policies that take away some peoples jobs are the same policies that turn previously permanent jobs into contract work”. Chantal noted that “the neoliberal policies that cut public spending on health prevent that all people have the opportunity to a life in dignity as we are promised in our constitution.” Knowledge about the constitution and neoliberalism helped them understand that the struggles for employment, fair working conditions and a better public health service were linked. From learning about their constitutional rights, they felt better equipped to fight for their rights. Chantal said, “Knowledge is power”.

**Conclusion**

Given the aforementioned, the three programmes could be characterised as popular education. The three programmes did encourage active citizenship for empowerment and critical citizenship for emancipation, as suggested by Inglis (1997). Across the three organisations, all the participants became more active. The education helped develop citizens that were able to question “distortions” and “falsities” and ask questions that challenge oppressive structures (Brookfield 2005). The participants no longer view poverty, inequality and unemployment as something natural. They are no longer passive citizens. They have become critical thinking actors in charge of their own destiny. This involved “passing on the message” and taking the struggles for social justice to their workplaces, communities and homes. Such struggles promoted equality regarding class, race or gender. This evidenced commitment to solidarity and social responsibility.

Indeed, the institutionalisation of rights and citizenship does not automatically lead to greater inclusion for the poor. Hence, citizenship can be used for exclusion as well as for inclusion. This is why deliberate education is still important. The three programmes signalled an educational “impulse” with values such as solidarity, tolerance, rights and responsibility. My research showed that non formal deliberate education and “learning democracy by doing” can contribute to the democratic practices in South Africa by supporting the people of Cape Town in their grassroots struggle to hold the government accountable by reclaiming their constitutional rights.

**References**


Giving Space to Participate and Reflect: Adult Literacy Workers Doing Research-in-Practice

Guy Ewing  
Parkdale Project Read  
Sheila Stewart  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto

Abstract

In this paper, we describe three recent research-in-practice projects coming out of the community literacy movement in Toronto. The separate but related questions addressed in these projects are: how learning is negotiated within learning circles, how adult literacy learners understand progress in their learning, and how learners and in community literacy programs can listen to each others’ stories across diversity. These projects embody a view of learning democracy that is supported by the community literacy movement in Toronto, that democracy is learned through human relationships supported by an ecology of egalitarian practices and beliefs.

The Community Literacy Movement in Toronto

The community literacy movement in Toronto is an experiment in community learning within a social justice framework. In its current form, the movement began in the late 1970s, under the leadership of a multi-service community organization, St. Christopher House, where a group of social justice workers influenced by the work of Paulo Freire in Brazil established a community literacy program for Portuguese immigrants. This movement soon spread to other communities in Toronto, notably Regent Park and Parkdale, where community literacy programs were established for English-speaking people living in poverty. A fundamental tenet was that the working environment of those who support literacy learning, literacy workers, needs to reflect principles of social justice.
Two of the literacy programs, East End Literacy and Parkdale Project Read, were established as staff collectives.

In the past thirty years, other community literacy programs have been established in Toronto, and the original literacy programs have grown. The programs now receive funding from the provincial government, a mixed blessing, given government policy which has attempted to reform community literacy programs into government agencies promoting a neo-liberal agenda. The history of the community literacy movement’s resistance to this agenda is a story that is too long and involved to be told here. What is important to know for the purposes of this paper is that a number of community literacy programs continue to provide environments, which are community-based and informed by social justice ideals.

A constant theme within these programs is support for relationships between the adult literacy learners, staff and community volunteers that are open and inclusive. These relationships are supported by beliefs about knowledge. The belief that knowledge is created, not given; that it is created democratically, from the lived experience of all members of a community; that knowledge is shared, rather than used for personal advancement; that the imposition of one kind of knowledge over another is a kind of social violence; and that the sharing of knowledge is embodied in relationships between people in how we speak, listen, and learn together.

These beliefs entail ongoing discussion by literacy workers about learning how to address gaps between belief and practice. Research-in-practice has been a part of this discussion, notably the research summarized in The Land That We Dream Of (Gaber-Katz 1991) and the research of Jenny Horsman on learning and violence (Horsman 1999; Horsman 2000; Horsman 2009). Recently, this process has included three research-in-practice projects by community literacy workers in Toronto, in collaboration with colleagues from outside Toronto, with support from the Festival of Literacies at OISE/UT (The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, see http://www.literaciesoise.ca/Index.html), RiPAL (a national research-in-practice network in the adult literacy field, see http://www.nald.ca/RIPAL/about.html), and Literacies (a national journal of research and discussion in the adult literacy field, see http://www.literacyjournal.ca/). These projects are inseparable from the ecology of community literacy work. Through research within this ecology, these projects can advance our understanding of learning democracy as a relational process.

Three Projects

In The Learning Circles Project (Brant 2006), a group of literacy workers in Toronto worked with colleagues in Digby, Nova Scotia, and Tyendinaga, a Mohawk territory near Deseronto, Ontario, to document learning circles in Canada. Learning Circles, as we came to understand them, are community-learning groups in which everyone’s knowledge is respected, no one’s knowledge is privileged. Learning in these circles is not dependent on

---

1 Thank you to the National Literacy Secretariat, the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, and the Canadian Council on Learning.
fluency in written language, although written language may be used to support learning. The circles are supportive, non-hierarchical, and consensual. We looked at models of various learning circles, notably in Sweden, and came to focus on traditional Aboriginal learning circles, based on oral learning and on shared responsibility, around the circle, for negotiating knowledge. Aboriginal learning circles were involved in the study, as were urban learning circles, such as the Multicultural Women’s Group in Toronto, in which women who had recently immigrated to Canada met for mutual support and critical learning about their new country, and rural learning circles, such as the Fisherman’s Group in Digby, Nova Scotia, which met to share knowledge about the ecology of the offshore fisheries and critique government fisheries policy.

In this project, the researchers engaged with learning circles and then discussed what they had learned, with each other and with a larger group of interested literacy workers in Toronto, the Lifelong Learning Working Group. As the project evolved, both the researchers and the working group began to function as learning circles, following the model of shared knowledge creation in the learning circles being studied.

In the last year of the project, more people were brought into the process of analysis-through-discussion at a symposium. The symposium brought together sixteen participants representing three rural learning circles, three Indigenous learning circles and four urban learning circles. This group also included members of the Working Group, the researchers, a staff person from the Federation of Women’s Institutes of Ontario and faculty and researchers from the Centre for Aboriginal and Indigenous Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.

Like the researchers and the Lifelong Learning Working Group, the symposium worked as a learning circle, one that widened the process of analysis-through-discussion. The symposium was called Widening the Circle.

Facilitating the symposium, the researchers used the approach to learning and knowledge creation that they had observed in the learning circles. They did not tell the participants that they were going to do this, but the participants soon recognized what was happening, leading to this exchange between Maria Matias, a learning circle facilitator, and one of the researchers, Arthur Bull, as he facilitated one of the sessions.

Do you know what I felt yesterday and today? This has been a very positive experience for me, because I found that when we came together, it was ... The group is kind of, was set up, you know, whoever organizes things, on ones such as simplicity, acceptance, take it as it is. Because there wasn’t these expectations, you know, you know how sometimes you go into a group or a situation and there is these expectations of this professionalism, of this or that or the other, and then you feel, oh, am I going to be able to meet that level, so I’m not going to do anything at all and be vulnerable. Because in here it was based on just be as, come as you are and be as you are and all of that, then all of us, all right, would just be as we are, but then grow a little more from the experience (Maria).

I think you’ve found us out, because this is ... We thought, “How do you find out about learning circles? You do it with a learning circle.” (Arthur)
The following conclusions were arrived at collaboratively by the researchers, the working group and the participants in the symposium.

Learning circles are:

• Welcoming
• Supportive
• Flexible
• Non-hierarchical
• Self-managed
• Exploratory

In contrast to traditional academic learning environments, they:

• Do not privilege written language
• Do not privilege academic knowledge
• Do not predetermine what will be ‘acceptable behaviour’
• Do not pressure participants to learn
• Do not focus on the transmission of information
• Do not predetermine learning outcomes

Learning circles impact people and communities by:

• Breaking down isolation and barriers
• Synthesizing different kinds of knowledge
• Providing opportunities for adults to learn skills, such as literacy skills, in contexts that are meaningful to them
• Increasing understanding of and tolerance for cultural, social and personal differences
• Helping participants to understand who they are, where they are going and how to get there
• Creating networks for personal support, community development and cultural reclamation

In The Progress Project (Lefebvre 2006) community literacy workers from Toronto worked with colleagues in Wellington County, Ontario, in a dialogue with adult literacy learners about what is meant by ‘progress’ in community literacy work. This process reversed a practice common in government circles of trying to understand progress in adult literacy learning through outcomes that can be simply measured, such as getting a job or demonstrating reading ability, determined by a predetermined hierarchy of skills.

Learners were asked the following questions in a series of focus groups.

• Why did you come to this literacy program?
• What did you want to learn when you first came?
• How long did you think it would take to learn what you wanted to learn?
• How is the learning different from what you first thought it would be? Why did you keep coming to this program?
• Have you learned some of what you wanted to learn? How can you tell?
• Do you see a difference in your everyday life as a result of your learning?

The researchers discussed and analyzed the transcripts from the focus groups collaboratively. The results of this study are summarized in a final report, available as follows:

The research showed the importance of understanding and valuing the perspectives learners have of their progress. We discovered numerous non-academic outcomes critical to learners’ progress that they associated with adult literacy programs. Learners realized very well what literacy could do for them and value the many non-academic outcomes they experience in various facets of their lives.

The learners’ comments also provided insight into the richness and complexity of the learning outcomes and of the interactions between these outcomes, their program environment, the learning process and non-academic learning outcomes they achieved.

**Key Points**

Independence, further education/training and employment related goals are often pursued simultaneously.

Although the majority of learners reported that estimating how long it will take to reach a goal was difficult, they were easily able to articulate the pace of learning they required to be successful.

The learning environment has a powerful influence on learning, motivation and retention of learners. A safe, comfortable and non-judgmental environment where they could learn from and support each other was needed and highly valued.

Learners described their progress by referring to the real life activities they could now do in a wide variety of life contexts (everyday practices, leisure practices, work practices, community practices and educational practices).

Learners described a wide range of non-academic indicators of progress, which they associated with their participation in adult literacy programs. These indicators appear to be both a consequence of learning and necessary for learning to happen. The first three were identified by almost all learners and seemed central to their perspective on progress:

• Self-confidence
• Finding voice
• Opening up to learning
• Independence
• Building relationships; building community
• Wellness
• Taking risks / new challenges
• Public disclosure and asking for help
• Listening to enhance understanding
• Cultural awareness and tolerance
• Conflict resolution

This research also resulted in insights about doing collaborative research in a community literacy environment. To quote the report:

Collaborative research requires building relationships and negotiating meaning of language, concepts, and interpretations... Practitioner researchers should talk about, document and value the research process including the uncertainties and the tensions they experience. These should be viewed as an integral part of the research. (Lefebvre 2006, 13)

The authors of this paper were participants in both The Learning Circles Project and The Progress Project. In the Learning Circles Project, Guy Ewing was project co-coordinator and a researcher. In The Progress Project, we were both members of an advisory committee at the Festival of Literacies at OISE/UT. Now, we are involved in another research-in-practice project by community literacy workers in Toronto, the Story and Diversity Project (Stewart 2009). This project is coordinated by Sheila Stewart. Guy Ewing participates in the research meetings and provides technical support. The research meetings are co-facilitated by Sheila Stewart and Tannis Atkinson.

This project examines how adult literacy practitioners understand and use narrative, implicitly and explicitly, in their literacy practices with adult learners. It looks at the complexities and possibilities of using narrative when working across multiple social differences, by gathering wisdom on these issues from a highly experienced group of practitioners. The project uses simple arts-based methods to deepen a collaborative examination of practice.

The guiding questions of this research are:

• What are the different ways that personal narratives are used, formally and informally, in literacy programs? How do practitioners experience and/or understand these situations?

• How do practitioners hear and understand learners and each other across multiple social differences? How do these dynamics either support or stifle literacy learning?

• How can literacy practitioners learn to work with story to foster more possibilities for learning?

In keeping with the holistic approach community we use in teaching literacy learners, where we attempt to invite the whole self to learning; we have tried to do the same within their research group. We began our meetings after having lunch together. We opened and closed our meetings with movement and gratitude to mark the space and time together as valuable. We tried to be present and honest. Tannis Atkinson and Sheila Stewart planned the meetings so that we could bring as much of ourselves – emotions, body, spirit and mind – as possible to our meetings and have fun. Meeting on a Friday afternoon after a full week of work, our meetings needed to help our work and lives, by being part of our individual and collective search for meaning, rather than serving a
research project’s predetermined agenda. The research project grew with who we are individually and as a group. We built trust as we went. Given that some of us had known each other for years and others met recently, we worked deliberately to try to create a group climate where everyone could contribute as a researcher.

As part of our process, we took time before we talked to go to a quiet corner with journals or coloured pencils and paper for drawing, and a cup of tea. When we had this time with our own thoughts, and let our journals or drawing take us into our own reflection in a non-linear way, our conversation dropped to a deeper place. Referring to our drawings when we talked helped us to express more. Some researchers sent journal entries to the group by email. These emailed stories prompted a flurry of other stories.

Early in our research, we came to the idea of reflecting on moments of discomfort, and began doing it our second meeting. We did not say it had to be across multiple differences, since almost every moment in a literacy program is. But we opened space around the possibility that part of the discomfort we feel may be the unnamed differences between the people in the room.

Maybe we came to moments of discomfort partly because that is what stories often bring us to. Stories, in the broader sense, explore tension or conflict, and contain energy. In our work, we felt that the kinds of stories we tell are often too simple, because of the nature of the stories required or expected from us by the outside world, such as funders, our board of directors, or would-be tutors. Often, the stories we manage to tell are these simple, externally solicited ones. In looking deeper at this notion of literacy stories, part of what is missing is stories of discomfort.

Stories of discomfort are missing for a number of reasons. They are difficult so we want to avoid them. There aren’t venues to tell them. In the funding framework, where it is contact hours and numbers of students that are important, moments of discomfort are a different language altogether. There isn’t the analysis of the possibility of learning from discomfort that would give a frame to examining those moments. Our project set up an environment that we hoped would allow this examination.

The lens of unpacking stories can give an entry point into examining diversity. In mainstream history, certain people’s stories have been told and others have not. The stories of more powerful members of society are told, and in the literacy field that means the IALSS (International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey, Government of Canada, 2003) story, the funder’s story, and the overly simple, less-informed media story that 50% of people can’t read and write well enough to do their daily activities. Our project allowed different stories to be told, which help us learn about power and power differences, in a complex way. The shifting landscape of power and difference is always at play and limits what we are allowed or allow ourselves to think, feel, or say. We made space for telling rich narratives, for expressing ourselves, coming to understand more about what we express or don’t express, and how those dynamics maybe stultify our learning around diversity, where we don’t talk about important things that happen. There is learning in the telling. We are both alone in our learning and with others; we’re in partnerships and groups, and the degree to which anyone feels supported as they learn is a key ingredient. For us as literacy
practitioners, we too need to feel a kind of support as we are learning. Some of us are isolated in our practice so that when difficult things happen, we have nowhere to express our feelings and examine what has occurred. These experiences can be like hot potatoes, which we avoid. As practitioners, there is a greater chance of learning if we can look at some of those challenging experiences.

Examining such moments is a tool in equity work. Because equity work is something many people avoid, and discussions of story seem more inviting, story can be an entry point to equity work. Story is helpful because it is at the heart of literacy work, and it’s something that doesn’t threaten people in the way that diversity work does. When we are on difficult terrain, we want guideposts that seem to simplify things for us. In contrast, using story can create a more flexible and open-ended atmosphere of discovery.

Sometimes in moments of discomfort, we clamp down. We become anxious and then revert to simple ways of teaching or simple ways of being with students. If we are not sure of what is happening, we may revert to less developed and reflective ways of practice. But if we can do as practitioners what we tried to do in the research project, bring space, spaciousness, openness to these moments, there’s much more possibility for learning.

### Relating the Projects: Learning Democracy in the Community Literacy Movement

As we have been describing, we have not used the word ‘democracy.’ But a view of democracy, and how it can be learned, is inherent in these projects. In this view, democracy is seen through the lens of relationship. Democratic relationships are seen to involve equal respect for everyone’s knowledge in a learning group (The Learning Circles Project), understanding learning in discussion with learners (The Progress Report), telling and careful listening to each other’s stories (The Story and Diversity Project). Rather than teaching a predetermined curriculum for democratic involvement, community literacy programs seek to teach and learn about democratic involvement by creating the conditions for human relationship that embody the ideals of equality, engagement, listening. These conditions are seen as crucial whether the group involved is an adult literacy learning group, a staff collective or a group of literacy workers doing collaborative research. This is an integrated view of democratic learning, one that connects learning, practice and research. The research projects that we have described are a resource for examining this approach and its implications for democracy.

The projects arrive at similar conclusions, with differing emphasis and levels of understanding. Learning, whether literacy learning or research, must be open, and occur within an environment of spaciousness. It must be accorded respect. It must not reproduce the social structures that perpetuate oppression by privileging one kind of knowledge or one group of people over another. It must breathe.
References


Enabling Active Citizenship through an Adult Leadership Development Program

Sharon Zivkovic  
University of South Australia

Abstract

Community Capacity Builders is a private adult education program developer and provider based in South Australia. In 2006-2007 Community Capacity Builders piloted a project-based community leadership program that aligns with best practice education for sustainable development principles.

The Community Capacity Builders Community Leadership Program uses a multi-disciplinary approach. This involves integrating and embedding the concepts, tools and techniques from seven different sectors’ perspectives on how to build the capacity of communities into a three-phase process. Participants can take any community issue or opportunity of their choice through this process, enabling participants: to learn about their community, take action in their community and sustain the community development they achieve.

Evaluation of the Community Leadership Program pilot with the City of Onkaparinga in South Australia showed that the program achieved its three target outcomes. All participants agreed or strongly agreed that the program enabled them to: develop the skills and knowledge required to form collaborative community capacity building projects, participate in the ‘whole of community’ visioning and planning processes, and bridge their projects and activities to local, regional and state strategic plans.

An arrangement between Community Capacity Builders and the Mission Australia Training Institute allows Community Capacity Builders to offer participants accreditation for their project work through a comprehensive mapping process. This process maps the tasks participants undertake in developing their projects to two units of competency at Australian Certificate IV level. Due to the program’s multi-disciplinary content, one of the units of competency is from the Australian Community Services Training Package and one is from the Australian Business Services Training Package.
The project presentation by Sharon Zivkovic (Principal Facilitator, Community Capacity Builders) describes the development of the community leadership program, the transformative learning that occurred during the program's pilot and future directions for the program.

Introduction

There is international consensus that increased citizen participation and collaboration between diverse community stakeholders is required to address complex problems in communities (Glenn and Gordon 2004, 28). The international planning process Local Agenda 21 has identified the need for citizen participation and multi-sector collaboration for developing the best strategies for sustainable development at the local level (United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs 1992). Increasing citizen participation and multi-sector collaborations have also been identified as key strategies for addressing social exclusion (Demos 2003).

There is also increasing awareness that communities need to build their capacity to manage the complex changes they face (Funnell et al. 2004, 1). The building of community capacity has been recognised as one of the most important elements for achieving sustainable development (Hallsmith 2003, 48).

The following definition by Cavaye (2000, 2) highlights the key characteristics and benefits of community capacity. ‘Community Capacity consists of the networks, organisation, attitudes, leadership and skills that allow communities to manage change and sustain community-led development.’

Community capacity building involves the building of community capacity characteristics such as networks, organisation, attitudes, leadership and skills. Shortall and Shucksmith (1998) suggest that community capacity can be built as a community works through the following three stages:

- Learning about the community
- Using this learning to take action in the community, and
- Sustaining the community development that has been achieved

The Community Capacity Builders Framework

Community Capacity Builders has developed a project based community leadership program that is based on its proprietary framework which consists of three components: seven community capacity building perspectives; a community capacity building process; and three community capacity outcome areas.

The Community Capacity Builders framework recognises that different sectors and disciplines have different agendas for building community capacity and that these diverse
perspectives need to understand each other’s perspectives in order for a community to harness its collective intelligence and collaboratively solve complex community problems. As the following quote from Falk and Harrison (1998, 612) highlights, a community’s capacity is the combined influence of these different perspectives: “The capacity of the community is said to be the combined influence of a community’s commitment, resources and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems and opportunities.”

During the development of the Community Capacity Builders Framework seven perspectives for building community capacity were identified that each have their own concepts, tools and techniques for building community capacity: a health perspective; an education perspective; a welfare reform perspective; a business perspective, a sustainability perspective, a decision making perspective, and a collaborative planning perspective.

The health perspective has a strong focus on building the capacity of individuals within communities, recognising that communities of place, communities of interest and communities of identity are made up of individuals and families (State Government of Victoria 2005). The health perspective takes a holistic view of health recognising that health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, which is affected by political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, behavioural and biological factors (World Health Organisation 1986). The health perspective recognises the need to empower local people to take action on events that have an influence on their lives, and to increase the interactions and connections between people and groups in order to provide social support and solve complex community problems (World Health Organisation 1986).

The education perspective also has a focus on increasing the capacity of individuals within communities. The education perspective takes a holistic approach to learning, recognising that learning occurs through structured learning programs and as a by-product from taking action in communities (Faris and Peterson 2000). The education perspective includes the creation of informal learning communities where learning is a by-product from taking community action (Australian National Training Authority 2000) and the creation of learning communities that focus on the education and training needs of their community (Henderson et al. 2000).

The Welfare Reform perspective is based on the recommendations made in the Australian Welfare Reform Final Report; ‘Participation Support for More Equitable Society’. This perspective focuses on creating community partnerships that provide social and economic participation opportunities through community economic development and by fostering the development of micro businesses, community business partnerships and social entrepreneurship (Reference Group on Welfare Reform 2000).

The business perspective is concerned with building the community economy through strategies such as: fostering new businesses, retaining and expanding existing businesses, attracting outside businesses, and marketing local products, services and community attractions (Bank of Ideas 1997). The business perspective has a strong focus on regional development due to the need for businesses to draw on a region’s
Enabling Active Citizenship

infrastructure (Australian Local Government Association & National Economics 2001). In recent years the business perspective has taken a more holistic approach to communities recognising the importance of corporate social responsibility and the business opportunities available through sustainable business practices (World Business Council for Sustainable Development 2006).

Sustainable development is development that meets a community’s current needs without compromising the needs of future generations (Robinson 2003). The sustainability perspective recognises the complex interactions that occur between a community’s cultural, social, economic and environmental dimensions (Hawkes 2001) and the need to develop a shared sense of purpose to achieve sustainable development amongst communities of interest and communities of identity within local, national and global communities of place (Participants World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002).

The decision-making perspective is concerned with the processes used in communities for decision-making. The decision-making perspective considers community capacity can be built by developing the ability of diverse community stakeholders to collaboratively make decisions (Figueroa et al. 2002).

The collaborative planning perspective focuses on the processes used in communities for planning. The collaborative planning perspective considers that community capacity can be built through developing the ability of diverse community stakeholders to work together to: develop a shared vision for the future of their community, develop a plan to achieve the community’s preferred future, and collectively take action to implement the plan and achieve the community’s preferred future (Figueroa et al. 2002; Ames 2003; Kretzmann 1995).

The Community Capacity Builders Process is an eleven stage planning process that incorporates community visioning, strategic planning and project management concepts, tools and techniques and has embedded into it concepts, tools and techniques from the seven community capacity building perspectives.

As shown in the following table, the eleven stages of Community Capacity Builders Process align with the three stages for building community capacity described by Shortall and Shucksmith (1997):
### Table 1: Community Capacity Building Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Capacity Building Stages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shortall &amp; Shucksmith</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Learning About the Community** | Defining & Understanding the Community  
Understanding the Changing World  
Understanding & Engaging Diverse Sectors |
| **Using the Learning to Take Action** | Community Deliberation & Visioning  
Assessing Opportunities to Reach Goals  
Creative Resourcing  
Action Planning  
Developing Projects & Organisations |
| **Sustaining the Development Achieved** | Post-Heroic Leadership  
Accountability, Transparency & Increasing Participation  
Evaluation |

The Community Capacity Builders Framework focuses on achieving outcomes in three areas: the formation of collaborative community capacity building projects, the bridging of projects and activities to the strategic plans of governments and governance structures, and the development of foundation skills for the whole of community visioning and planning.

**The Community Capacity Builders Community Leadership Program**

The Community Capacity Builders Community Leadership Program is the first product Community Capacity Builders has developed based on its framework. The program was developed by dividing the Community Capacity Builders Process into the following twenty topics which are delivered as twenty, three and a half-hour face-to-face sessions:

**Topic 1: The Community Capacity Builders Framework**

**Topic 2: Community Based Research**

**Topic 3: Understanding the Changing World**

**Topic 4: Participation & Collaboration**

**Topic 5: Managing Place**

**Topic 6: Healthy Communities**

**Topic 7: Learning Communities**
Participants in the Community Leadership Program can take any issue or opportunity of their choice through the program’s twenty topics, develop a collaborative community capacity building project to address their issue or opportunity, and bridge their projects to the strategic plans of governments and governance structures. Participants can also use the knowledge and skills that they develop during the program when they participate in the community direction setting of governments and governance structures.

In 2002, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2005-2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. The Community Leadership Program incorporates the following key elements of education for sustainability recognised throughout the literature (Tilbury and Wortman 2004, 11):

**Imagining a better future:** participants explore a range of visioning models and techniques; create a vision for the future for their issue or opportunity in collaboration with other community stakeholders; and develop strategies and action plans to achieve their preferred future

**Systemic thinking:** participants explore communities as complex systems, the shift to integrated local area planning and networked governance; investigate the interrelationships between the different perspectives for building community capacity and the need to balance human, social, economic and environmental impacts when making decisions and taking action

**Critical thinking and reflection:** the program challenges participants existing ways of interpreting the world by exploring: issues and opportunities from seven community
capacity building perspectives; global strategic directions and trends; overseas models and initiatives; and the tendency for people to preserve their own beliefs and to focus on their positions rather than their interests

**Participation in decision-making:** participants explore international participation frameworks; analyse methods and techniques for engaging with different types of stakeholders; and explore techniques and processes for engaging in government and governance structure decision-making

**Partnerships:** participants develop collaborative leadership skills; design collaborative processes; and develop a collaborative project

The Community Capacity Builders Community Leadership Program embraces the ‘partnerships’ element of education for sustainability by delivering the program in partnership with a client government or governance structure that:

- Provides a local community centre and the audio visual equipment for the delivery of the Community Leadership Program
- Provides each participant with a copy of their strategic plan to be used for learning strategic planning and investigating the possibility of bridging their activities and projects to the plan
- Provides participants with access to their library facilities, community directory and community information system for undertaking research
- Provides participants with project officer support to encourage relationships to be built between participants and the client rather than between participants and Community Capacity Builders
- Links the program to other initiatives such as community visioning and planning forums, mentoring programs, community leadership networks, additional workshops using local guest speakers, and site visits to local community initiatives and infrastructure

Community Capacity Builders encourages local ownership of the program by encouraging clients to develop an overarching brand for the combined Community Capacity Builders Community Leadership Program and the client’s initiatives that are integrated with the program.

The client government or governance structure is responsible for the recruitment of participants onto the program. Program participants need to:

- Be involved in some way with their community to demonstrate an interest in attending the program and to demonstrate existing community experiences that they can use as issues and/or opportunities to take through the learning process
- Have the time to commit to undertaking the program’s four assignments and to attending the program’s sessions
• Have a sufficient level of literacy and computing skills to undertake accredited training at an Australian Certificate IV level

The four assignments participants undertake during the Community Leadership Program are based on their chosen issue or opportunity and are assessed against two Australian national units of competency at Certificate IV level; one from Australia’s Business Services Training Package and one from the Community Services Training Package. Community Capacity Builders is not a Registered Training Organisation and is therefore unable to offer accredited training in its own right. In order to offer accreditation Community Capacity Builders has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mission Australia Training Institute.

The Community Leadership Program does not easily map to Australia’s National Training Packages as each training package is developed for a specific industry sector and the Community Leadership Program is multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary. Multidisciplinary programs consist of studying a topic in several disciplines at the same time (Marinova and McGrath 2004); the Community Leadership Program studies community capacity building in the health, education, environmental and business disciplines. Interdisciplinary programs link and transfer knowledge, methods, concepts and models from one discipline to another (Marinova 2004); the Community Leadership Program takes a social entrepreneurship approach to community problem solving; approaching community problems with entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen (Barendsen 2004). Transdisciplinary programs involve what is between, across and beyond the disciplines (Marinova 2004); the Community Leadership Program promotes the need for participants to balance human, social, economic and environmental impacts when making decisions and taking action in communities.

The Program’s Pilot

The Community Leadership Program was piloted with the City of Onkaparinga from October 2006 to May 2007 under the banner of ‘Leadership Onkaparinga’. Nineteen City of Onkaparinga residents completed this pilot program.

The City of Onkaparinga’s evaluation of the program’s learning outcomes found 46% of respondents agreed, and 54% of respondents strongly agreed, that the program provided them with the knowledge and skills to form collaborative community capacity building projects and to bridge their projects and activities to local, regional and state strategic plans (City of Onkaparinga, email, 27 July 2007).

The evaluation also found 35% of respondents agreed, and 65% of respondents strongly agreed, that the program had provided them with the knowledge and skills to participate in whole of community visioning and planning processes (City of Onkaparinga, email, 27 July 2007). One month after graduating the participants from the pilot program were invited by the City of Onkaparinga to put their skills and knowledge into practice by developing the pros and cons for a range of options for accommodating future residential growth in the City of Onkaparinga. The pros and cons developed by participants were
published in the City of Onkaparinga’s ‘Strategic Directions 2020 discussion paper: Planning for Growth & Ageing’ (City of Onkaparinga 2007).

**Transformational Learning**

Education for sustainability seeks to be a transformative process for individuals; engaging people in new ways of seeing, thinking, learning and working; enabling people to explore the relationships between their lives, the environment, social systems and institutions; and to become active participants and decision-makers in change processes (Tilbury and Wortman 2004, 9).

The following participant testimonials from the pilot program suggest these participants found the program personally transformational:

The program was brilliant and has transformed my outlook and my direction. It has been like handing me a big bunch of keys that unlocks all kinds of interesting doors. I now have a much greater understanding of my community and its strategic direction. The program has clarified my career path and given me great hope for the future (Elischer cited in City of Onkaparinga, n.d.).

The program is comprehensive and interesting and I am now a better parent and friend. The knowledge base covered lights the way from vision to actualisation of that vision. I have learnt skills in conflict resolution and group facilitation, which has been very useful in many areas of my daily life and interactions (Dunn cited in City of Onkaparinga, n.d.).

Tilbury (2007) Not in final reference list suggests education for sustainability aims to create collective transformation through learners influencing change within a system, organisation or wider society.

The following participant testimonials suggest these participants considered they had gained skills and knowledge during the program that would enable them to influence others:

The program has given me the confidence to speak up, to contribute in a confident manner, and to be a resource to my community groups. It has opened my eyes to the workings of Council and given me an awareness of the strategic directions of state and local governments (O’Donnell cited in City of Onkaparinga, n.d.).

Participation has given me an opportunity to learn how to express views and feelings about ideas within my community. I have received fantastic information to guide me in a modern approach to community capacity building. With this abundance of information I feel empowered to share within my community groups (Pine cited in City of Onkaparinga, n.d.).

**Future Directions**

A second Community Leadership Program was delivered in the City of Onkaparinga between February and July 2008, and a third program will commence in the City of Onkaparinga in February 2009.
Whilst Community Capacity Builders is pleased with the educational outcomes the Community Leadership Program is achieving, Community Capacity Builders is not content with just achieving formal educational outcomes. Community Capacity Builders social mission is to achieve large scale social impact by facilitating the development of strong and sustainable communities that have a culture of active citizenship.

According to de Weerd et al. (2005, vii) there is little evidence that citizenship education programs have an impact on active citizenship. In order to determine if the Community Leadership Program is contributing towards Community Capacity Builders social mission, I have commenced a PhD with the School of Education, University of South Australia to investigate what influence the Community Leadership Program has on the community leadership practice of program participants and on the practices of the organisations and communities that program participants interact with.

Research has shown that the success of training in improving performance is influenced by a complex range of factors in addition to training programs (Brinkerhoff 2006, 22). Given this finding, the research project will also investigate what enabling factors and blocking factors participants’ experience as they attempt to incorporate the skills and knowledge gained from the program into their community leadership practice and attempt to use skills and knowledge from the program to influence change in their organisations and communities.

**Conclusion**

The role of building community capacity does not belong to a single discipline or sector. As described in this paper, there are a variety of disciplines and sectors that have valuable contributions to make towards building community capacity.

The Community Capacity Builders Community Leadership Program has been designed to harness this collective intelligence; to provide community leaders with a smorgasbord of concepts, tools and techniques that span traditional discipline and sector boundaries; and to encourage community leaders to work collaboratively with a range of community stakeholders, including governments and governance structures, to address complex community issues and opportunities.

Community Capacity Builders does not consider the Community Leadership Program to be a panacea for building community capacity. It needs to be stressed that a key ingredient of the program’s success to date has been the City of Onkaparinga’s commitment to supporting community leadership (City of Onkaparinga 2008) and the program’s ability to integrate into the City of Onkaparinga’s existing community development infrastructure.

The next step is to determine if the program is achieving more than just educational outcomes. Do participants put the skills and knowledge into practice after they complete the program?
References


Formación Democrática para la Viabilidad de los Consejos Comunales: Una Experiencia Venezolana

Carmen Varguillas, Silvia Ribot de Flores, Ernestina Báez
Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador

Resumen

La construcción de una sociedad justa y democrática debe ser asumida desde el mismo movimiento comunal, que lucha por consolidarse como sujeto y objeto de su propio bienestar social, económico, educativo, ambiental, político, etc., razón que justifica la transferencia de la gestión de políticas públicas orientadas a responder a las necesidades de la comunidad local y a los consejos comunales. La experiencia sobre el funcionamiento del Consejo Comunal del Casco Sur, Municipio Mariño-Aragua, Venezuela es poco alentadora. A dos años de su creación sus voceros manifiestan muy pocos logros. Los responsables de las mesas técnicas desconocen como actuar, se sienten desamparados. Realizan su labor como un servicio a la comunidad, pero consideran que necesitan más capacitación. La experiencia ha sido muy interesante, pero uno se ha ido formando de manera empírica. Han enfrentado dificultad para organizarse y lograr la participación comunitaria. De manera autodidacta han formulados proyectos, han recibido poco financiamiento y confiesan irregularidad de funcionamiento. A partir de este diagnóstico se propone un conjunto de pautas para conformar un programa de formación dirigido al desarrollo de competencias técnicas-legales y de capital social. El contexto se indagó mediante grupo focal, y la discusión grupal para el análisis. La educación democrática es la formación para una ciudadanía activa, informada, conciente de su capacidad político-social de intervenir en la gestión pública de su comunidad.

Describiendo el Contexto

Nuestra democracia busca profundizarse mediante más y mejor participación comunitaria en la gestión de servicios públicos en el nivel local. Para ello el Ejecutivo Nacional conformó el Consejo Presidencial del Poder Popular (CPPP) de acuerdo a la Ley de Consejos Comunales (2006) promulgada en el año 2006. Con esto el gobierno abriga
grandes esperanzas en torno a los consejos comunales como unidades territoriales básicas desde dónde se potenciará la participación popular y el autogobierno.

La democracia participativa requiere tiempo para su desarrollo. El respeto por la autonomía y el pluralismo deben cultivarse entre la gente. En este sentido, el aprendizaje de la democracia incluye la comprensión de ciertos contenidos relacionados con la ley, el gobierno, los derechos y la procuración de justicia, pero es especialmente importante considerar que la formación de sujetos democráticos tiene un fuerte vínculo con el desarrollo de la moralidad, ya que la educación moral debe tener lugar en un contexto social y político llamado democracia (Magendzo 2005).

Según ley son funciones de los Consejos Comunales (CC):

- Elaborar el Plan de Desarrollo de la comunidad
- Realizar el Presupuesto Participativo
- Evaluar las Políticas Públicas
- Crear organizaciones cooperativas y empresas comunales, como fuentes para la generación de empleos y bienestar social
- Ejercer la Contraloría Social
- Ejecutar las decisiones de la asamblea de ciudadanos y ciudadanas
- Elaborar planes de trabajo para solventar los problemas que la comunidad

Organizar el voluntariado social en cada uno del comité de trabajo.

Como se aprecia los CC son mini-gobiernos con muchas tareas. ¿Están los miembros de los CC preparados para desarrollar tales funciones? Y ¿qué podemos decir de la comunidad?

Para profundizar, especialmente en lo referente a la formación; nos ocupa, el Consejo Comunal del Casco Sur de Turmero, Municipio Mariño-Aragua Venezuela, se realizó un estudio diagnóstico, cuyo resultado fue insumo para formular unas pautas formativas que contribuyeran con la viabilidad del mismo, mediante la capacitación de sus voceros y miembros de la comunidad.

Este CC fue creado por iniciativa de la comunidad hace dos años. Su creación cumplió con todos los requisitos establecidos en la ley. Su estructura organizativa quedo conformada por voceros para coordinar el trabajo de los Comités de Salud, Educación, Cultura, Seguridad Integral, Medios de Comunicación e Información, Recreación y Deportes, Alimentación, Mesa Técnica de Agua, Servicios y cualquier otro que considere la comunidad de acuerdo a sus necesidades.

El Casco Sur, Municipio Mariño, es una comunidad urbana con dificultades como inseguridad, vías en mal estado, problemas de servicio eléctrico, agua, aseo urbano, infraestructura escolar en mal estado, entre otros.

**Aspectos Teóricos**

**Formación Democrática**

La democracia supone la participación activa de los ciudadanos en las decisiones que afectan su destino. Formar ciudadanos significa formar sujetos que nieguen cualquier condición de súbdito y rechacen relaciones sociales enajenantes. En tal sentido, Conde
Formación Democrática

Varguillas, Ribot de Flores & Báez

(2008, s/p) señala que: “La vida democrática comporta unos valores morales sin los cuales pierde su sentido y hasta bloquea su dinámica.”

Magendzo (2005), plantea que las personas se forman como sujetos democráticos al vivir en un contexto sociocultural pleno de experiencias cotidianas e interacciones congruentes con los principios de la democracia.

Es importante señalar, que la formación democrática tiene como objetivo principal que las personas conozcan el marco social en el que viven, razonen sobre él y reflexionen sobre sus propias experiencias en la convivencia habitual para ir consolidando o rectificando sus actitudes en los ámbitos sociales en los que se desarrolla su vida diaria. Se pretende, con ello, su incorporación consciente al medio en el que viven y su socialización progresiva para lo cual debe conocer los conceptos fundamentales y los elementos descriptivos de la sociedad así como llegar a la identificación de los mismos en los espacios más próximos y conocidos de la realidad social que les rodea.

En un país libre como Venezuela, es fundamental conformar pautas sociales que presupongan el respeto por la diversidad, la tolerancia y la comprensión, así como el rechazo a la desigualdad. Esto como punto de partida para el desarrollo de un mayor compromiso social como la participación, la solidaridad, la cooperación y la convivencia pacífica. Esto requiere diálogo, debate, negociación y solución de conflicto por consenso, no opciones que recurran a la fuerza y a la violencia. Es importante que lo referido sea explícitamente diferenciado y analizado para asimilarlo, y poder combatir así el discurso, escasamente razonado y elaborado, de políticos, administradores de la educación y animadores de los medios de comunicación, para quienes los principios, actitudes y valores democráticos se mezclan en una proclama uniforme en la que no se distingue ni se aprecia ni se pretende conocer lo que cada uno de ellos significa.

Ciudadanía

Arendt, sostiene que el concepto de ciudadanía debe entenderse como el derecho a tener derechos y deberes y no como el derecho a la ciudadanía, identificando a ésta con una serie de prácticas concretas (citado en Torres 2001).

Lafer, afirma que:

... la ciudadanía es el derecho a tener derechos, porque la igualdad de los seres humanos en dignidad y en derechos no es algo dado: es una construcción de la convivencia colectiva, que requiere el acceso al espacio público. Ese acceso al espacio público permite la construcción de un mundo común a través del proceso de afirmación de los derechos humanos. (citado en Torres 2001, 4)

Es sólo a partir de la ciudadanía que, se establece un vínculo con algún tipo de comunidad jurídicamente organizada y se vive en una estructura donde es juzgado por acciones y opiniones, en virtud del principio de legalidad. En teoría, sólo la igualdad de oportunidades constituye una condición para el desarrollo del individuo-ciudadano; sólo después se puede ser un ente privado; es decir, habrá ciudadanía sólo en la medida en que las instituciones puedan garantizar a todos, como parte de los derechos individuales, todos los derechos sociales. En resumen, sólo si hay derechos hay ciudadanos (citado en Torres 2001).
Frente a esta reflexión, el mismo autor señala que los seres humanos no nacen iguales, por lo que se logran hacer iguales en la esfera de lo público, a través de las leyes; en consecuencia, al perder el acceso a la esfera de lo público se pierde acceso a la ciudadanía y a la condición de igualdad legalmente construida. La ciudadanía será, entonces, la consagración al nivel del individuo de una propuesta pública. El ciudadano aparece como actor del espacio público por excelencia como la sociedad civil y lo entiende como el lugar donde los ciudadanos, en condiciones de igualdad y libertad, cuestionan y enfrentan cualquier norma o decisión que no haya tenido su origen o rectificación en ellos mismos. La relación que establece el individuo con la esfera de lo público diseña la condición real de su ciudadanía.

Cortina (2006) afirma que las características de una real relación entre el individuo y lo público son:

- Autonomía personal (el ciudadano no es vasallo ni súbdito).
- Conciencia de derechos que deben ser respetados.
- Sentimiento del vínculo cívico con los conciudadanos, con los que se comparten proyectos comunes.
- Participación responsable en el desarrollo de esos proyectos, es decir, conciencia no sólo de derechos, sino también de responsabilidades; y a la vez, sentimiento del vínculo con cualquier ser humano y participación responsable en proyectos que lleven a transformar positivamente la aldea global.

En definitiva, el individuo se asume como ciudadano en la medida en que se entiende a sí mismo como titular de derechos y deberes, y es en este momento donde el concepto de ciudadanía y el de cultura jurídica adquieren significado.

**Participación Comunitaria**

Participación es una palabra derivada del latín participare, está compuesta de la raíz pars (parte) y del derivado capure (tomar), así que etimológicamente significa “tomar parte” de algo, es un término que se caracteriza por ser muy amplio, relativo y con fuertes connotaciones ideológicas y de uso cotidiano. Pero esto no significa que sea comprendida por todos en su real significado.

Para Aguilar (2005, 2) la idea de participación “aparece con mayor frecuencia en el ámbito de la ciencia política, es un elemento básico de las constituciones contemporáneas, sobre todo aquellas que se asientan en el principio de la soberanía popular”.

De Pablos y Sánchez (2002) sostienen que para participar tiene que haber una interacción entre los vecinos de la comunidad, de manera que el interés individual se convierte en un interés de la colectividad por las implicaciones que éste tiene en los otros miembros de la comunidad.

Es el caso venezolano, ya que en las disposiciones de la Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela (2000, Artículo 58), se consagra y define como “el derecho que tienen los sectores sociales de estar debidamente informados, de elaborar propuestas, de identificar prioridades y de recomendar formas de participación que incidan en la
construcción, viabilidad y perfectibilidad de la planificación”; es decir la participación es un derecho de todos los ciudadanos venezolanos.

**Consejos Comunales**

Según la Ley de los Consejos Comunales (2006, Artículo 2), estos están enmarcados dentro de la democracia participativa y protagónica y son definidos como:

...instancias de participación, articulación e integración entre las diversas organizaciones comunitarias, grupos sociales y los ciudadanos y ciudadanas, que permiten al pueblo organizado ejercer directamente la gestión de las políticas públicas y proyectos orientados a responder a las necesidades y aspiraciones de las comunidades en la construcción de una sociedad de equidad y justicia social.

Forman parte de los CC los habitantes de la comunidad que sean mayores de 15 años y la comunidad para saberse parte de un consejo comunal debe tener en común una historia, relaciones entre sí, el uso de los mismos servicios públicos y el compartir de las mismas necesidades y potencialidades. Los límites geográficos son establecidos en asamblea de ciudadanos, para tener un funcionamiento óptimo deben agruparse aproximadamente en su territorio entre 200 a 400 familias en áreas urbanas y a partir de 20 familias en áreas rurales y 10 en casos de familias indígenas. De igual forma la base poblacional será decidida por la Asamblea de Ciudadanos y Ciudadanas de acuerdo con las particularidades de cada comunidad, tomando en cuenta las comunidades aledañas (Ley de los Consejos Comunales 2006, Artículo 4).

La constitución de los CC comienza con la elección, en Asamblea de Ciudadanos y Ciudadanas, de la Comisión Promotora que se convierte en la instancia encargada de convocar, organizar y conducir la Asamblea Constituyente Comunitaria donde se elegirán los voceros y voceras del Órgano Ejecutivo, la Unidad de Gestión Financiera y la Unidad de Contraloría Social desarrollando un ejerció democrático con carácter protagónico en el marco de la participación colectiva.

Con la promulgación de la Ley Especial de los Consejos Comunales se creó la Comisión Nacional Presidencial del Poder Popular designada por el Presidente de la República. Para los efectos funcionales se designará una Comisión Regional Presidencial del Poder Popular y una Comisión Local Presidencial del Poder Popular. Son estas instancias del Poder Público las encargadas de ejercer la coordinación, orientación y evaluación de los Consejos Comunales.

Los recursos provienen del Fondo Intergubernamental para la Descentralización (FIDES), de la Ley de Asignaciones Económicas Especiales (LAEE), de transferencias desde el Gobierno Nacional, las Gobernaciones y Alcaldías. También pueden y deben realizar actividades dirigidas a producir recursos propios.

Los CC están conformados por:

**Un Órgano Ejecutivo**, integrado por los voceros y voceras de cada comité de trabajo. Estos comités pueden ser de Salud, Educación, Tierra Urbana o Rural, Vivienda y Hábitat, Protección e Igualdad Social, Economía Popular, Cultura, Seguridad Integral, Medios de Comunicación e Información, Recreación y Deportes, Alimentación, Mesa...
Técnica de Agua, Mesa Técnica de Energía y Gas, Comité de Servicios, o cualquier otro que considere la comunidad.

**Una Unidad de Gestión Financiera**, como órgano económico-financiero, se denominará Banco Comunal y adquirirá la figura jurídica de cooperativa, se regirá por la Ley Especial de Asociaciones Cooperativas, la Ley de Creación, Estímulo, Promoción y Desarrollo del Sistema Microfinanciero y otras leyes aplicables.

**Una Unidad de Contraloría Social**, como órgano de control. Realizará la contraloría social y la fiscalización, control y supervisión del manejo de los recursos asignados, recibidos o generados por el CC, así como sobre los programas y proyectos de inversión publica presupuestados y ejecutados por el gobierno nacional, regional o municipal. Es un instrumento legal, representa el conjunto de actividades que conducen a obtener información sobre la actuación de los funcionarios públicos y también la posibilidad que la gestión de éstos sea transparente.

### Develando la Realidad

De la consulta realizada a los voceros del Consejo Comunal del Casco Sur, Municipio Mariño-Aragua, Venezuela, se obtuvo lo siguiente:

En el barrio Pedro Villa Castín se recibieron Bs. 30 millones y gastaron 10 millones, pero sólo quedan 3 millones. Hasta ahora la contraloría social se hace de forma autodidacta, lo que dificulta evitar irregularidades.

Se hace contraloría social en el consejo comunal sobre las obras realizadas, se ha rendido cuentas a la asamblea de ciudadanos y a Fundacomún. Realizan su labor como un servicio a la comunidad, pero consideran que necesita más capacitación. La experiencia ha sido muy interesante, pero uno se ha ido formando de manera empírica.

Manifiestan que el aprendizaje autodidacta ha llevado a cometer errores, por ejemplo, el CC del barrio recibió 30 millones para reparar las caminerías del sector y, de ellos, se invirieron 10 millones. Sin embargo, en vez de quedar 20 millones, sólo quedan 5 millones.

Afirmar que no conocen un ejemplo exitoso de fiscalización comunitaria. Igualmente se preguntan ¿quién controla a los contralores? Éste es el gran dilema que tambalea el éxito de la contraloría en los CC, es un problema de técnicas. La gente no sabe cómo ni con qué hacer la contraloría social. Lamentan que los contralores hayan desertado por falta de preparación y que la labor haya recaído peligrosamente en los tesoreros. Es necesario adiestrarlos, enseñarles que la contraloría en las comunidades es tan importante como en los entes de servicios públicos.

Como respuestas al guión de preguntas formulado a los miembros de la comunidad que desearon participar en el grupo focal, se encontró lo siguiente:

- Las relaciones entre el consejo comunal (CC) y la comunidad son positivas y tienen un diálogo permanente
Las iniciativas de conformar el CC fue de la comunidad
La mayoría de los ciudadanos no se involucran en las acciones del CC
Las relaciones entre los miembros del CC son favorables, aunque a veces tienen
deferencias y no se ponen de acuerdo
Los miembros del CC son quienes participan en el diseño de los proyectos y la
Comunidad a veces es quien los aprueba
Menos de la mitad de los proyectos aprobados por los CC tienen financiamiento, el
cual algunas veces es recibido a tiempo, otras no.
Una cuarta parte de los proyectos son ejecutados de acuerdo con lo planificado por la
comunidad
Este CC, no siempre cuenta con la orientación o el asesoramiento de funcionarios
gubernamentales sobre como debe hacer las cosas, especialmente lo que tiene que
ver el manejo de los recursos financieros
Este consejo comunal tiene y no tiene formas para evaluar las actividades que
desarrollan, porque existen normas pero parecen que no saben aplicarlas. Los
mecanismos de evaluación son de tipo comunitarios con escasa utilización de
procedimientos técnicos
Los principales problemas señalados son: Falta de apoyo del gobierno; deficiencias
gubernamentales; no llegan los recursos; falta de participación de la comunidad;
falta de capacitación; falta responsabilidad; falta de organización y planificación;
diferencias políticas; burocracia/papeleo

De estos hallazgos se concluye lo siguiente: Los responsables de las mesas técnicas
desconocen como actuar, se sienten desamparados. De manera autodidacta han formulado
proyectos, han recibido poco financiamiento y confiesan irregularidad de funcionamiento.
Realizan su labor como un servicio a la comunidad, pero consideran que necesitan más
capacitación. Han enfrentado dificultad para organizarse y lograr la participación
comunitaria. Los logros obtenidos no son alentadores.

**Pautas para un Programa de Formación Dirigido a los Consejos Comunales y a la Comunidad**

Con el objetivo de formar a los voceros del CC y a los miembros de la comunidad
para el correcto funcionamiento en cuanto a: formulación, ejecución, control y evaluación
de las estrategias gubernativas, que le permitan como pueblo organizado el ejercicio directo
de la gestión pública y el apego social, se presentan este conjunto de Pautas Formativas:

**La estructura**
La estructura del programa debe contemplar dos vertientes, una orientada al
desarrollo de competencias legales y técnicas, y otra dirigida al desarrollo del capital social.

**Legal y técnico**
- Bases Jurídicas de los CC y Cuerpo Normativo de control y administración de lo
  público nacional y local
- Gestión y administración del Banco Comunal
- Funcionamiento de la Contraloría Social
• Procesos de Constitución de los Comités de Trabajo Régimen de asamblea de ciudadanos y ciudadanas
• Formulación, presupuesto y gestión de proyectos de inversión comunitaria y socio-productivos
• Gestión de finanzas públicas locales en condiciones de recursos escasos
• Planificación Estratégica y toma de decisiones
• Diagnóstico participativo-comunitario
• Desarrollo sustentable, endógeno y autogestión

Capital social
• Ética de la gestión pública
• Derechos humanos y formación ciudadana y democrática
• Diversidad cultural y social
• Gestión pública, formas de organización y participación comunitaria
• Liderazgo para la transformación comunitaria
• Resolución de conflictos y construcción de consensos

El propósito es, desde el enfoque de capital social el desarrollo de la corresponsabilidad, cooperación, solidaridad, rendición de cuentas, eficacia, eficiencia, responsabilidad social, control social, justicia y igualdad social y de género. Y desde lo legal-técnico la adquisición de herramientas para la formulación y ejecución de proyectos de inversión, y la administración de recursos económicos y financieros apegados al marco legal.

Referencias Bibliográficas


Conde, S. La Formación de Sujetos con una Moral Democrática. 20 de agosto de 2008.


Cortina, A. «Educar para una Ciudadanía Activa.» Tribuna, 12 de diciembre de 2006.


Ley de los Consejos Comunales. «Gaceta Oficial de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela (Extraordinario).» Vol. Nº 5.806. 10 de abril de 2006.


If I Were President: Using Popular Education as a Tool for Building a Democratic Society

Rebecca Janzen
Mennonite Central Committee

Nicaragua is no longer on the world’s radar. After its revolution and civil war ended in 1990, life did, of course, go on. Over the past eighteen years, Nicaragua has changed. Three presidents have come and gone. The military has become a non-partisan entity, the four branches of government, executive, legislative, judiciary and electoral, are in place. Free trade zones have been built and the astronomical inflation levels of the past are now at more ‘manageable’ levels. Yet, according to commentator Emilio Arranz Montalban, Nicaraguan politics today are characterized by a cult of personality, authoritarianism, dictatorship and paternalism (Alvarez Montalbán 2000). Shelley McConnell from the Carter Center adds systemic corruption to this dismal list (McConnell 2007). The country’s current president, Daniel Ortega, fits many parts of this description. Since taking office, he has, together with his wife, Rosario Murillo, developed his own system for citizen participation, has not mentioned how he is spending Venezuela’s considerable foreign aid and, in preparation for the 2008 municipal elections, he stripped the legal status of two political parties. “Nicaragua today is a dissociated society, or...at the risk of destruction” (Serrano Caldera 2008, 20).

To prevent this destruction, the commentator Alejandro Serrano Caldera continues, Nicaragua “needs to look for ways...to bring about social cohesion and democracy” (Serrano Caldera 2008, 20) But how? How can this society become more democratic? How can the people rule? At present “citizens only participate at election time, selecting one of various elite factions,” in a government system dubbed polyarchy (Robinson 1997, 15).These generally uninvolved citizens can only rule if they know how. In Nicaragua, the people do not. They need to become citizens who are aware of their rights, think critically about their society and who have among them leaders who work to improve it (Serrano Caldera 2008).

Nicaraguans can learn to become these democratic citizens in different places and in different ways. One way they can do this is by participating in forums provided by non-partisan actors. These forums might be in classrooms, community centers, workplaces or capacity-building workshops. I would argue that capacity-building workshops, especially those that use an interactive, experiential method known as ‘popular education’, work well.
In these workshops, children, youth and adults learn to think critically, develop leadership skills and share what they know with others. Some groups teach through theater, others use primarily didactical games; still others encourage people to write stories and songs. One method uses a combination of many of these ideas. This method, called ‘child-to-child’, focuses on teaching and transforming children.

In the ‘child-to-child’ method, special workshops or classes, an older leader or teacher accompanies a group of children or youth, to discuss community problems. Together they follow a series of simple steps: recognition, study, action and evaulation. First, the group recognizes a problem in their community. It might be that many children have diarrhea, or that their neighbourhood has no place for kids to play. Then, they study the problem they have selected. They try and understand what it is and why it happens. To continue with the first example, children might be getting diarrhea because they drink contaminated water. The children learn the water is contaminated because it is left uncovered. They also learn how to make a rehydration drink if a child gets diarrhea. Once they feel satisfied with their knowledge, they move to the action step. They plan and conduct activities, presenting their new knowledge to teachers, other children and their families. They might tell all the mothers in the neighbourhood to cover their standing water with pieces of wood, presenting posters that display the benefits this small action can bring (CISAS 2006). They might also write letters or perform plays at community assemblies (Bonati 1992). Then, they evaluate their actions (CISAS 2006). By moving through this process, children learn about their rights, learn to think critically and develop leadership skills. They learn the tools needed to improve their society and become democratic citizens, better able to participate in a democratic society.

Nicaragua clearly needs democratic citizens. Many Nicaraguan grassroots groups work towards this end. One of them is a vocational and cultural training center called the Batahola Norte Cultural Center in the low-income neighbourhood of Batahola Norte. The Center’s mission is to encourage people to live a humane and just lifestyle with a preference for the poor. As people learn to appreciate Nicaraguan culture, through a holistic educational experience, staff and students are enabled to appreciate the gifts of human rights, self-esteem, and equality. The Center believes in the empowerment of people and ultimately hopes to transform society into the Kingdom of God. In 2007 it offered 27 different courses, such as computers, cashiering, English, art, drama, music, sewing and traditional Nicaraguan dance. Many of these courses are offered in two or more time slots, and some, like music, follow a series of levels. In 2007 over 500 students graduated from these courses, and many went on to open small businesses or to find employment.

In addition to its courses, the Center offers many workshops (Friends of Batahola Board n.d.). In 2007, through conversations with CISAS, a health information center in Managua that has used popular education to work for community health over the past 25 years, the Center decided to learn about the ‘child-to-child’ method. After receiving a modest grant, it began a workshop under the leadership of experienced facilitator Diana Brooks. A group of almost twenty staff, youth and children were chosen to participate. After several months, a core group of eight children, aged eight through twelve, remained: Kelly, Sarai, Juanito, Brayan, Melvin, Ninoska, Meyling and Rosa. In recent months, Kelly left her
grandmother’s house in Managua to live with her mother in Costa Rica, and two new participants, Pamela and Fabiola integrated.

This workshop gave children the opportunity to critically examine their reality and taught them that they can change it. It taught them their rights, gave them basic critical thinking skills and helped them become leaders. In this forum, then, they gained the skills needed to become democratic citizens, who can participate in a democratic society.

First, the workshop gave the children a chance to critically examine their reality. Nicaraguan children never get a chance to do this. At school they listen to a teacher talk and take notes, at home they do as their parents say in church they learn to obey God. There is no space for critical thinking in this structure. So, the workshop was different than anything they had ever experienced. They looked at their community and recognized a problem, or rather, many: economic problems, gangs, domestic violence insufficient schools and health facilities. Then, because they said it is the biggest problem, they decided to focus on preventing and eradicating violence. As one participant, Juanito, said, “Violence is like a factory. You have to stop it or else it keeps producing.” It is unlikely that this hyperactive boy would have said this outside of the workshop. So, it gave him and other young people the chance to verbalize their thoughts about their community and its problems. The workshop was important in that it gave the young people the chance to assess and analyze their reality.

Then the group began studying. They learned in a participatory fashion to help them remember what they learned, and to increase their critical thinking abilities. First Diana Brooks and then Rebecca Janzen led the young people using participatory techniques, which include skits, role-plays and didactical games, teaching by discovery rather than by rote. The group learned about Nicaraguan childrens’ and adolescents’ rights by playing a board game. By answering questions and discussing various scenarios, the children learned what rights the Nicaraguan law number 287 guarantees. They learned that as children and youth, they have a right to live a violence-free life. Then, to teach them about the kinds of violence that their lives are not free of, Brooks led the children in an exercise. They were asked to stand up if the following had ever happened to them. Statements included: “I have been physically mistreated”, “I have been yelled at” and “I have been told ‘I wish you had never been born.’” They then talked about why adults act this way. They established that they, as children, provoked their parents or other adults, and at other times, their parents were angry for reasons outside of the children’s control. The next week, they were more comfortable with each other. So, to further express their feeling about violence, in this meeting, Brooks had the children draw trees. In the leaves they drew things people had told them or done to them, and in the trunk, who did it to them, and in the roots, why they thought it had happened. The kids concluded that often, adults do not see them as people who were able to understand the problems in their home, so the adults do not take their opinion into account. The children also asserted that they were not born violent, neither were their parents, but that violence is a learned behaviour (Brooks 2007). Obviously, this process impacted them. Some time later, when working on a booklet to summarize the workshops, they reflected on different kinds of violence. Rosa wrote the following about domestic violence. She says,
It is very important, because you hear about it a lot. Sometimes there are families who live only by fighting. Sometimes children see their parents fighting and feel very alone and sad because their parents are always fighting. Domestic violence affects a lot of children and also a lot of people. Sometimes when parents have things on their mind they take it out by hitting their children (Janzen 2008, 3).

Clearly, giving young people the opportunity to study their reality is important. They learn what their rights are and then begin to analyze their reality, and move toward becoming democratic citizens.

After the children had finished studying, they were given the chance to envision how to change their families and society. They thus began the action phase. They began thinking about and planning concrete ways to become less violent themselves and also how to become part of a less violent society. The children made a series of posters describing how they feel when they live in violent situations, how it affects them and what they can do on an individual and familial level to reduce violence. Since November 2007 they have led several presentations. One day, a dental team came to the Cultural Center. While other children and adults waited to get their teeth pulled, the children in the workshop taught other children what they had learned. They began their teaching time with a game to encourage concentration and then they taught them what appeared on their Bristol boards. Then, they got the children to talk about their own experiences by drawing the violence trees. Some weeks later, Melvin, Brayan, Juanito and Ninoska presented to a mother’s workshop, sharing their Bristol boards with their mothers and other women from the community.

The children's Bristol boards tell us “when we live in violence, we feel sad, lost, hateful and spiteful. Living in violence could lead us to prostitution, drug addiction, gangs, fighting, running away from home, alcoholism, complaining, revenge, etc.” They also tell us how to be less violent. On an individual level, we can become less violent,

by being quiet and waiting until the angry person has calmed down to talk to them,
by being tolerant, loving, recognizing and accepting our mistakes, being patient,

having a healthy relationship within the family and not looking for fights. Within the family, by talking when we don’t like something, by paying attention to things that are going on, talking with your mom and advising her not to yell at your dad when he comes home late or drunk, by being courteous when coming and going in the home and talking about what we don’t like in our homes (Janzen 2008, 7).

They also talk about what kinds of parents they would like,

We want kind and good parents, who don't yell, who give us good advice, who don’t mistreat us, who don’t humiliate us or say vulgar things, who don’t take out their anger on us, who tell us that they love us, who say nice things to make us feel good, who hug us, who are responsible, who tell us the truth and who worry about our health (Janzen 2008, 7).

Following this presentation, the children asked the mothers to talk about the own experiences. To do this in a non-threatening way, they asked the mothers to draw the tree for themselves. They invited them to write down the violence they experience as well as what acts of violence they do to their own children.
Later on, the children began writing short reports, stories and drawing. One day, they wrote short stories about violence, based on their own experiences and their imaginations. One group was asked to write a story that included domestic violence, another about sexual abuse. The group that wrote about domestic violence tells a story that could occur in a typical Nicaraguan family, which includes parents, children and grandparents. They told us the following, a story that ‘could take place.’

One morning the mother and father went to work, the children went to school. At night the parents came home very tired. They began to argue because supper wasn’t ready. Because he was so angry, the father hit his wife, his parents and the children. He sent them to their rooms saying vulgar things. The next day he wasn’t there. He went out drinking. He came home at night very drunk and everyone was asleep. He went into Juanita’s room and sexually abused her. The mother, at her wit’s end, denounced him to the police and he was put in prison for mistreatment and sexual abuse (Janzen 2008, 3).

While it is unlikely participants were sexually abused, almost all of their parents, if living together, yell at each other, and their mothers yell at them daily. Many of their fathers, stepfathers or uncles are alcoholics. So this scenario is lived, at least in part, by all participants on a daily basis. So, the children were able to discuss their reality and envision a better society. They were also able to share their vision with others, even taking it to the biggest authority in their lives, their mothers. They developed crucial leadership skills.

Finally, the young people were given the chance to think critically about their actions in the evaluation step. They said that they needed to prepare better and practice more, but asserted that they did enjoy teaching their friends and classmates. Those who came for the mother’s workshop attested that they too had enjoyed the experience. They still talk about how their mothers paid attention and listened to them when they played a soccer-hockey game. They also liked being able to understand why their mothers act the way they do, and learning more about their mothers’ childhoods.

After the first presentations to children and mothers, the oldest participant met and discussed next steps. They decided that they wanted to learn more about HIV/AIDS and different illnesses because they feel that in their neighbourhood health information and services are insufficient. Then, the group went through a short investigative process. They received a wonderful presentation by an experienced educator about HIV/AIDS and then began to synthesize their information. The cycle began again.

For the young people, it was an eye-opening experience. The children learned the skills they need to become democratic citizens: knowledge of their rights, an ability to assess their reality, critical thinking and leadership skills. They began a forum for citizen participation. By discussing problems in their community, children began to feel ownership for it, and that they had a stake in its future. By studying these problems, furthermore, they learned their rights and began to assess their reality. The innovative way they were taught allowed them to absorb the information and remember it. In the action phase, seeds for lifelong citizen participation were sown. The young people began to become leaders. These leaders will be those kinds of leaders who work for the good of many, unlike those in their government today. In the evaluation phase, the young people developed critical thinking skills, which are crucial to the development and refinement of democratic institutions.
The workshop, of course, was not perfect. The quality of the actions was not always as the facilitators expected, so the group spent too much time thinking and not enough time doing. While the oldest and most capable twelve-and-thirteen-year-olds became fledgling workshop facilitators with no great struggle, the younger and more fidgety participants were perplexing. One moment they would say incredible things and then the next minute they would be playing under a table. A better screening method for the workshop participants, greater patience on the part of the leader, and better behaviour management techniques would make the workshop more successful.

Were this type of workshop to be implemented elsewhere, it would be very helpful to have a support group for the facilitator. While the Center had hoped to create one by teaching the ‘child-to-child’ method to a large group of youth and staff, its hopes did not materialize. In fact, few people believe that children could accomplish the tall order of breaking the cycle of violence. This process' major weakness is that it did not directly confront the root of the problem identified. In this case, the root of the problem of violence is the inherent inequality between adults and children. Other workshops, however, do address the underlying causes, for example, the series, called ‘We are different, we are equal: A methodological proposal for constructing alliances between youth.’ It proposes that adults and youth discuss ‘adultism,’ how it affects their lives, and then construct an alliance to combat it in their relationships and institutions. They end the workshop by drawing up an action plan together (Ross 2001). The ideal space to teach democratic skills and to build democratic citizens then would be a space where the powerful and powerless address root causes of society’s problems and work together to resolve them.

I do still believe that this simple, effective and inexpensive method could change society if it were to be implemented correctly. Since the current Nicaraguan government refuses to collaborate with non-governmental organizations, preferring to work with its own grassroots groups, the method will likely continue to be used on a small scale within the non-governmental sector. Still, it has tremendous possibility as a way to solve some of Nicaragua’s many problems. It has the potential to develop leaders who will say, “Enough! I am running for president and I am going to make this country work for the people, not the other way around.”

References


Formación de Competencias para la Consolidación de Cooperativas como Vía para el Aprendizaje Democrático en el Lugar de Trabajo: El Caso de Venezuela

Ernestina Báez, Carmen Varguillas, Silvia Ribot de Flores
Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador

Resumen

La defensa de la economía local en plena era de la globalización puede parecer anacrónica. Sin embargo, el rescate de la identidad local actúa como mecanismo social y democrático de defensa de las regiones. La creación de pequeñas empresas cooperativas cuenta con un importante potencial para el desarrollo local y constituye un modelo específico de empresa que trata de combinar la eficiencia económica con la racionalidad social y democrática. Lamentablemente, la concepción de desarrollo que se ha utilizado en los planes de las naciones ha sido casi exclusivamente económica. En atención a la premisa anterior la presente investigación tiene como propósito proponer un programa de formación de competencias para la consolidación de cooperativas como vía para el aprendizaje democrático en el lugar de trabajo. El estudio se concentra en el caso de Venezuela. El estudio se enmarcó en la modalidad del Proyecto Factible, apoyado en una investigación de campo, la población objeto de estudio estuvo conformada por los habitantes de la comunidad de Cumboto, Municipio Costa de Oro, Estado Aragua, Venezuela. Entre las técnicas empleadas para la recolección de información se utilizó la encuesta y la entrevista estructurada; y como instrumentos el cuestionario y el guión de entrevista respectivamente. Los resultados evidenciaron que un porcentaje considerable de la población no posee conocimiento para la conformación de cooperativas, pues desconocen que el desarrollo verdadero de una comunidad trasciende el mundo de lo físico. Esto envuelve, el interés por el bienestar del otro, vivir sosteniblemente y en verdadera democracia. Las conclusiones se orientan que para formar un ciudadano con visión progresista y democrática, es necesario implementar un programa de formación que contribuya a mejorar la calidad social humana, y a la vez justificar a las cooperativas como una fórmula idónea para el desarrollo del potencial endógeno de una localidad, así como la vía para hacer democracia participativa.
Abstract

The defence of the local economy in an era of globalization could seem anachronistic. Nevertheless, rescuing local identity acts as a social and democratic mechanism for the defence of regions. The creation of small cooperative companies create potential for local development and constitutes a specific business model that tries to combine economic efficiency with social and democratic rationality. Unfortunately, the concept of development that has been used in national plans has been almost exclusively economic. Given this focus on economics, this research proposes a training program for competencies to consolidate cooperatives as paths to promote democratic learning in the work place. The study will use the Venezuelan experience as a case study. The study used the framework of the Feasible Project, supported by field investigation. The population studied consisted of the inhabitants of the community of Cumboto, Municipality Gold Coast, Aragua State, Venezuela. Surveys, structured interviews, and questionnaires were used to collect data. The results demonstrated that a considerable percentage of the population does not have the knowledge for the consolidation of cooperatives, because they do not know that the true development of a community extends beyond the material world. This development includes, an interest in the well being of others, living sustainably and in a true democracy. The conclusions suggest that to form a citizen with progressive and democratic vision is necessary to implement a training program that contributes to the improvement of the quality of social interactions, and simultaneously justify cooperatives as a suitable formula for the development of endogenous potential in a locality, as well as a path to make democracy participatory.

Describiendo el Contexto

El desarrollo económico consiste en generar, dentro de una economía local o regional, la capacidad necesaria para hacer frente a los retos y oportunidades que pueden presentarse en una situación de continuo cambio económico, tecnológico y social. Este cambio provoca transformaciones estructurales que evolucionan hacia formas superiores. La conceptualización del mismo y su implantación será distinto según la zona geográfica en la cual se lleve a cabo, por lo que habrá que estudiar diferentes oportunidades y problemas de cada país, región o localidad en particular, surgiendo así el concepto de desarrollo local (Sanchis 1999).

Las cooperativas de trabajo asociado favorecen el desarrollo local al ser empresas que se encuentran particularmente ligadas al territorio, ya que éstas están vinculadas directamente a las personas que la integran, y éstas lo están al territorio (García-Gutiérrez 1991). De esta forma podemos justificar la cooperativa como una fórmula idónea para el desarrollo del potencial endógeno de una zona (Morales 1998).

Las cooperativas muestran una clara orientación hacia los mercados regionales/locales, incluso dentro del ámbito de la producción industrial, contribuyendo a ofrecer una alternativa directa al paro y cubrir determinados servicios y productos que la
empresa de capitales o el sector público no pueden satisfacer o que los proporcionan a un mayor precio y/o menor calidad (Westlund 1996).

La defensa de la economía local en plena era de la globalización puede parecer anacrónica. Sin embargo, el rescate de la identidad local actúa como mecanismo social de defensa para las regiones (Enríquez 1995). Tal como señalan Ekins y Newby (1998) estas economías adquieren una especial importancia con la globalización por los siguientes motivos:

- Los mercados globales no son capaces de incluir a todos. La competencia global genera ganadores y perdedores; y a falta de economías locales activas, los perdedores se verán apartados de cualquier actividad económica y emergirá una subclase desempleada y marginada.

- La globalización genera distancias sociales y medioambientales. Ante el incremento del número de personas que compran y producen para los mercados globales, las relaciones económicas, que son fuente de cohesión en las comunidades locales, se vuelven menos fuertes. El desarrollo económico local pueden mantener las redes económicas locales y la cohesión social.

- La globalización induce la homogeneización cultural. Una economía local activa contrarrestaría estos elementos.

- La globalización crea vulnerabilidad económica. La especialización que ésta favorece hace a los entes económicos más vulnerables a la reestructuración económica frente a cambios de la demanda de los mercados. Una base económica local fuerte puede dar estabilidad en tiempos de crisis y ofrecer oportunidades para el desarrollo de nuevas actividades y la emergencia de ventajas comparativas.

Esta situación obliga a desarrollar teorías territoriales del desarrollo local, que según Vázquez (1997) defienden la superioridad estratégica de las pequeñas empresas en los procesos de desarrollo. Estas teorías (Friedman 1979; Stöhr 1979; Sach, 1980; (Stöhr 1981) se basan en la idea de que cada territorio es el resultado de una historia que se ha configurado dentro de un entorno institucional, económico y organizativo, lo que le otorga una identidad propia y le capacita para dar respuestas estratégicas a los desafíos de la globalización.

Centrando ahora la atención en la actividad cooperativista, el cooperativismo, como un segmento de la economía social, surge como una simbiosis entre las organizaciones parlamentarias democráticas, las organizaciones capitalistas y la organización sindical; organizaciones de las cuales tomó sus elementos esenciales para convertirse en una nueva forma de organización del trabajo donde se rescata el valor del hombre como sujeto del trabajo. Según García (citado por Vargas 2001a), se trata de un sistema organizado alrededor de unas relaciones sociales que buscan situar a la persona por encima del capital; como señala Morales (citado por Vargas 2001b) la sociedad cooperativa es la empresa humana por excelencia, un modelo empresarial configurado en torno a un valor básico: la soberanía de la persona sobre el resto de los factores productivos.
En Venezuela, con la Constitución Nacional de 1999 cobra fuerza el concepto de economía social y las cooperativas se erigen como su pilar fundamental. De allí que, en los artículos 3, 70, 118, 184, 299 y 308, se deja plasmado su papel, se reconocen sus especificidades y queda el Estado comprometido a su protección y promoción. En este contexto, surge la Ley Especial de Asociaciones Cooperativas (2001), con el fin de regular el sector y dar así un marco legal específico para orientar los planteamientos presentes en la Constitución Nacional.

Ahora bien, el cooperativismo implica un cambio radical en la estructura mental de los asociados a fin de evitar la deformación de sus principios y valores fundamentales, pues exige pasar del paradigma individualista de la cultura occidental a la visión del bienestar colectivo donde los distintos actores involucrados (Estado, asociados y cooperativas) ejerzan en su justa medida los roles correspondientes a sus respectivos ámbitos de acción, ya que, cuando el Estado deja de ser promotor y protector de la actividad cooperativa, cuando las cooperativas dejan de ser instrumentos para el desarrollo y mejora de la calidad de vida de sus asociados y de la localidad donde se desenvuelven sus actividades, y cuando los asociados dejan de concebir su responsabilidad en la gestión y su trabajo como el principal aporte en beneficio del progreso de todos.

Actualmente no existe ningún tipo de organización que le permita a los productores ser representados ante cualquier organismo publico, para así canalizar sus problemas en cuanto a crédito, asistencia técnica y otros.

**Aspectos Teóricos**

**¿Qué es una Cooperativa?**

Una cooperativa es una asociación autónoma de personas agrupadas voluntariamente para satisfacer sus necesidades económicas, sociales y culturales comunes por medio de una empresa que se posee en conjunto y se controla democráticamente.

Por otra parte, una cooperativa es una entidad jurídica sin fines de lucro que se rige por los valores básicos de la cooperación, entre los que se destacan: la libre y voluntaria adhesión, la democracia participativa, la equidad en la distribución de sobrantes, la responsabilidad social y ética y la educación constante.

La cooperativa surge como respuesta a las necesidades del individuo. De esta forma, el primer paso real en la organización de una cooperativa es que exista una necesidad. Luego debe haber interés en conocer el modelo cooperativo.

Es importante resaltar que son de propiedad colectiva, en las que todos sus miembros tienen los mismos deberes y derechos. Para conformar este tipo de asociaciones es necesario que se agrupen o se unan varias personas que tengan bien claro un proyecto en conjunto y deben estar organizadas según los parámetros establecidos en la Ley Especial de Asociaciones Cooperativas (Asamblea Nacional 2001).

**Valores y Principios de las Cooperativas**

Las cooperativas se rigen por valores y principios cooperativos. Valores cooperativos son ayuda mutua, responsabilidad, democracia, igualdad, equidad, y solidaridad. Principios
cooperativos son entrada libre y voluntaria, control democrático por parte de los socios, participación económica de los socios, autonomía e independencia, educación, capacitación e información, cooperación entre cooperativas, y interés por la comunidad.

Estructura Organizacional

La estructura organizacional de una cooperativa está compuesta por los socios, su junta de directores, el comité de supervisión, el comité educativo, el administrador y los empleados. Además, un comité de crédito en el caso estricto de las Cooperativas de Ahorro y Crédito.

Socios
Es la base de la cooperativa, su estructura básica. Deben estar conscientes de la importancia de su rol. Además, deben patrocinar y participar en las actividades de su cooperativa y estar atentos a todo lo correspondiente a su funcionamiento.

Directores
Representan a los socios y son los responsables de las políticas que se implanten. Su función fundamental es realizar las genuinas disposiciones de la Asamblea.

Comités
Estos son elegidos o seleccionados para garantizar la educación y la calidad y supervisión de los servicios.

Administrador
Seleccionado por la Junta de Directores. Está a cargo de la acción gerencial de la institución que incluye implantación de las políticas que defina la Junta de Directores.

Empleados
Personal que rinde sus servicios y permite el funcionamiento de la cooperativa. Son reclutados por el administrador, con el visto bueno de la Junta de Directores.

Estos son los roles básicos de una institución cooperativa. El poder que surge de la Asamblea de Socios es delegado en la Junta de Directores y el Comité de Supervisión. Ellos delegan al administrador, quien a su vez delega en los empleados. Esta relación también conlleva una comunicación y responsabilidad a la inversa.
Aprendizaje Democrático como Principio del Cooperativismo

El aprendizaje democrático es un gran desafío para todas las sociedades, pues el mismo tiende a trascender las fronteras locales, nacionales e internacionales, y desdibuja las fronteras entre el trabajo cooperativo y el mundo. El desafío se plantea en términos de reformar y reforzar las instituciones democráticas y cambiar la cultura subyacente.

Para lograr una democracia más profunda y eficaz se impone cambiar la cultura y educar a la población para que espere, exija y se movilice por un sistema político transparente, sistemas de justicias accesibles y creíbles, la protección real de los derechos humanos, la equidad social entre los géneros y el ejercicio pleno de la ciudadanía.

Al respecto, Diamond (1995), plantea que el aprendizaje democrático tiene tres tareas generales para cultivar la ciudadanía democrática: a) generar la demanda democrática, cada vez que es necesario el entendimiento de la democracia, con sus niveles y dimensiones, para su sostenimiento y mejora; b) desarrollar la capacidad de los ciudadanos de hacer que funcione la democracia, profundizarla y vigorizarla, y c) fomentar la gobernabilidad, para lo cual se requiere cuidar los valores, las normas y las prácticas que hacen a la democracia gobernable, apoyan a las autoridades democráticas y controlan la intensidad del conflicto político. Estas tres tareas se tensionan y refuerzan entre sí; juntas, generan los valores que caracterizan a la cultura democrática.

La consolidación y el desarrollo del aprendizaje democrático dependen no sólo del conocimiento de los valores democráticos, sino también y de manera decisiva del aprendizaje y puesta en práctica de los mismos. Inculcar a la vez el ideal y la práctica de la democracia, así como revertir el desafecto creciente de los ciudadanos por los asuntos públicos, representa un desafío tanto para el sistema político como para la sociedad.

Es por ello, que uno de los principios del cooperativismo es la democracia, pues las cooperativas son organizaciones democráticas dirigidas por socios, quienes participan activamente en la definición de las políticas y en la toma de decisiones. Los hombres y mujeres son elegidos a través del voto participativo para representar a su cooperativa, los cuales deben responden ante los mismo. En las cooperativas, los socios tienen igual derecho de voto (un socio, un voto), igual oportunidad de participación y representación activa en la fijación de políticas y en la toma de decisiones relevantes, ya sea en forma directa en las asambleas generales, en las que se discuten las decisiones significativas y se aprueban importantes acciones y/o como en las cooperativas de trabajo, de comercialización o de vivienda, en las que los socios intervienen más rutinariamente en las operaciones cotidianas (Sánchez 2006).

En todas las cooperativas los representantes electos deben desempeñar sus cargos para el beneficio inmediato y de largo plazo de los socios, ya que éstas no “pertenecen” a los dirigentes electos, como tampoco a los empleados subordinados a dichos funcionarios, sino que pertenecen a todos los asociados y los funcionarios electos son responsables por sus acciones, en el momento de su elección y durante todo su mandato.

En otras palabras, las cooperativas son un espacio de socialización que demanda a sus miembros la comprensión de su identidad cultural, a partir de una perspectiva más bien
inclusiva, que reconozca y apoye la diversidad, respetando los derechos humanos y la dignidad de las personas, prevaleciendo sobre todo la libertad y la participación colectiva y democrática de los asociados, lo que garantiza el mantenimiento de los principios a través del tiempo (Osler 1995).

**La Cooperativa como Modelo de Desarrollo Local**

La globalización ha hecho que actualmente los territorios compitan entre sí, a escala internacional, y busquen ventajas competitivas mediante la valorización de sus recursos y la diferenciación de sus actividades productivas. Por ello, las ciudades y regiones se ven obligadas a emprender caminos de desarrollo endógeno que les permitan mejorar su posición competitiva, y, al mismo tiempo, generar estrategias de desarrollo local (Vázquez 1997).

Las empresas cooperativas se constituyen como un modelo específico de Empresa que trata de combinar la eficiencia económica con la racionalidad social. Al mismo tiempo su carácter personalista favorece su consideración como instrumento de capacitación y formación, donde el aprendizaje proveniente de la acción empresarial es potenciada por el impulso común que da el proceso de decisión democrática. Su objetivo central, dar servicio a sus miembros y al entorno que los rodea, favorece notablemente el conocimiento de las necesidades locales y la forma de satisfacerlas (Navas 1994). La fuerza de las cooperativas reside principalmente en el compromiso de los individuos, en sus raíces locales y en las oportunidades que crea de movilizar a la gente en pro de objetivos concretos y comunes (Westlund 1996).

En un mundo global, donde el cliente ha visto incrementado su poder, las empresas necesitan cada vez mayores dosis de creatividad para generar la capacidad de innovación necesaria que les permita, no solo satisfacer, sino sorprender, entusiasmar e ilusionar al cliente. Las ideas son, por consiguiente, más necesarias que nunca también desde el punto de vista para sobrevivir y desarrollarse. Así, el factor humano se ha situado como eje fundamental de la moderna administración empresarial, ya que la persona es la única fuente depositaria de las ideas, de la creatividad que hace posible la mejora continua y la innovación. No hay que olvidar que la creatividad es la capacidad de generar ideas, mientras que la innovación es la capacidad de ponerlas en práctica (Vargas, 2001a).

La proximidad de las cooperativas a su entorno y su misión de contribuir al desarrollo sostenible de sus comunidades mediante políticas aprobadas por sus socios, tal como figura en el séptimo de los principios cooperativos, las sitúa como modelos que encajan, se complementan y son necesarios en un entorno global.

Las sociedades cooperativas se preocupan por conseguir el desarrollo sostenible de la comunidad en la que se mueven. Este aspecto genera riqueza sobre el entorno, que a su vez, repercute en la propia empresa. A esto hay que añadir que, en un alto porcentaje de sociedades cooperativas, sus socios se muestran en disposición de realizar labores no remuneradas en la empresa; contribución en jornadas, conferencias, ferias, etc.; y producción respetuosa con el medio ambiente (Marín 2003).
Metodología

El estudio se enmarcó en la modalidad de Proyecto Factible, apoyado en una investigación de campo. La población objeto de estudio estuvo conformada por la población de Cumboto, perteneciente al Municipio Costa de Oro del Estado Aragua – Venezuela, la cual comprende los parcelamientos: Las Vegas de Santa Cruz de Cumboto, El Paraíso y la Isleta. La muestra fue constituida por los productores existentes en la población de Cumboto. La muestra fue constituida por los productores existentes en la población de Cumboto. Entre las técnicas empleadas para la recolección de información se utilizó la encuesta y la entrevista estructurada; y como instrumentos el cuestionario y el guión de entrevista, respectivamente.

Resultados

El diagnóstico efectuado a la muestra seleccionada de productores de la población de Cumboto descubrió que la totalidad de los mismos no cuentan un sistema de organización que les ayude a optimizar sus cultivos y por ende a incrementar sus ingresos económicos, la edad promedio de dichos productores está comprendida entre 50 y 61 años. El grado de instrucción es heterogéneo, caracterizado así: 21% de este grupo no tiene ningún grado de instrucción, 21% tiene educación primaria completa, 54% educación primaria incompleta y 4% nivel superior. Las mujeres participan en un 39% de las labores, los jóvenes en un 64% y los hombres en un 100%.

Estos productores no contratan mano de obra, sino que se basan en el uso de mano de obra familiar. El tamaño promedio de la parcela es de 4 hectáreas, y el régimen de tenencia de la tierra revela que el 96% son propietarios por adjudicaciones del Instituto Agrario Nacional (IAN) y el 4% restante es a través de la compra de bienhechurías. El principal cultivo presente en la zona es el cacao, sin embargo los productores buscan otras alternativas para obtener ingresos adicionales: cultivan otros rubros de importancia económica tales como platano y banano.

Los resultados de la caracterización de los productores evidencian que éstos están inmersos en las economías campesinas practicadas por familias (Plaza 1991), observándose niveles de pobreza en casi todos los productores (con excepción de los hacendados), ya que el ingreso de las familias alcanza apenas para cubrir las necesidades de reproducción. Este hecho ha conllevado a que las familias campesinas adopten estrategias para superar esta situación, entre las que se observan la venta de la fuerza de trabajo de algún miembro de la familia en actividades no agrícolas, predominando el turismo y la construcción como fuentes alternativas de trabajo. De igual manera, dado que se ha producido un proceso de éxodo rural hacia las zonas urbanas más cercanas, estas familias reciben ingresos (remesas) de sus familiares.

La zona estudiada presenta una compleja y frágil realidad donde los factores sociales y la dinámica del desarrollo turístico y la agudización de la situación de pobreza rural podría desencadenar un proceso irreversible de deterioro del medio ambiente. No obstante, aún existe la posibilidad de revertir esta tendencia a través de la asistencia a estos productores con un plan de desarrollo integral orientado a estos sistemas de producción.
Los resultados obtenidos en este trabajo evidencian la baja rentabilidad y productividad colectiva, asociada a factores que van más allá del tema agronómico. Esta realidad implica la necesidad de abordar estas poblaciones a través de un programa de formación con un enfoque holístico e interdisciplinario, que les permita consolidar competencias para conformar cooperativas como vía de organización colectiva para el aprendizaje democrático en el trabajo, las cuales conlleven a la búsqueda del bienestar socioeconómico de los productores de la zona en estudio.

**Propuesta**

Para dar solución a las necesidades descritas anteriormente se amerita la implementación de un programa de formación dirigido a los productores de la población de Cumboto del Municipio Costa de Oro, estado Aragua-Venezuela; que contribuya al desarrollo de competencias para la conformación de cooperativas como vía para el aprendizaje democrático. Este programa de formación está concebido desde una perspectiva reflexiva e investigativa, donde se asume un nuevo marco conceptual en el modo de entender el cooperativismo como una manera organizada, democrática y participativa de alcanzar beneficios socioeconómicos en colectivo, es decir, una manera distinta de relacionar teoría y práctica productiva.

Esta propuesta tiene como objetivo: Desarrollar competencias para la conformación de cooperativas como vía para el aprendizaje democrático en los productores de la zona rural de Cumboto, Municipio Costa de Oro, Estado Aragua, Venezuela. Para ello es fundamental crear un espacio de interacción con los productores del poblado para construir e intercambiar saberes acerca de cuáles oportunidades les ofrece el medio ambiente donde se encuentran para mejorar sus condiciones de vida.

La propuesta de formación contempla dos dimensiones, una referente a la estructura y conformación de las cooperativas y la otra relacionada con el desarrollo de competencias para el manejo del capital social.

**Estructura y conformación**

- Bases jurídicas de las cooperativas y cuerpo normativo de la misma
- Gestión y administración de las cooperativas
- Principios y valores de las cooperativas
- Misión y visión de las cooperativas
- Educación formal sobre cooperativismo
- Asistencia en la preparación del reglamento del grupo y sus cláusulas de incorporación
- Asistencia técnica en procesos iniciales de formación, funcionamiento y operación
- Procesos de constitución de los comités de trabajo
- Formulación, presupuesto y gestión de proyectos de inversión comunitaria y socio-productivos
- Gestión de finanzas públicas locales en condiciones de recursos escasos
- Planificación estratégica y toma de decisiones
- Diagnóstico participativo-comunitario
- Desarrollo sustentable, endógeno y autogestión
• Asesoramiento para la organización de la asamblea

Constituyente en caso de cooperativas de ahorro y crédito o la Primera Asamblea General de Socios si se trata de cooperativas de producción y servicios. Se elige una Junta de Directores y un Comité de Supervisión. El Inspector de Cooperativas entrega el Permiso de Funcionamiento o Certificado de Incorporación.

**Capital Social**

• Ética de la gestión cooperativista
• Derechos humanos y formación ciudadana y democrática
• Diversidad cultural y social
• Gestión pública, formas de organización y participación democrática
• Liderazgo para la transformación comunitaria
• Resolución de conflictos y construcción de consensos

El propósito es, desde el enfoque de capital social el desarrollo de la corresponsabilidad, cooperación, solidaridad, rendición de cuentas, eficacia, eficiencia, responsabilidad social, control social, justicia, igualdad social y de género. Y desde lo legal – técnico la adquisición de herramientas para la formulación y ejecución de proyectos de inversión, y la administración de recursos económicos y financieros apegados al marco legal.

Finalmente se prevé en la propuesta el seguimiento, acompañamiento, apoyo y monitoreo de las actividades que se planifiquen. También se determinarán indicadores pertinentes que permitan analizar y explicar los resultados que se vayan logrando progresivamente con la implementación de la propuesta de formación.

**Referencias Bibliográficas**


Introducción

El objeto de este trabajo es analizar la implementación de diferentes políticas participativas en la ciudad argentina de Rosario-Argentina, entre 2002 y 2007, desde el punto de vista de organizaciones de la sociedad civil (OSC) que han participado en ellas. El trabajo se ha desarrollado en el marco del proyecto de investigación “La participación ciudadana en el control de gestión de las políticas públicas municipales: El caso de la ciudad de Rosario”, dirigido por Osvaldo Iazzetta. Dicho proyecto integra el PAV-PAE 22576 de la Agencia Nacional de Promoción Científica y Tecnológica, Argentina.

Justificamos nuestra intención en la constatación de que existen muchos e importantes desarrollos teóricos referidos al valor de las políticas participativas pero no tantos estudios empíricos de su implementación real. La idea aquí es ver en qué medida las políticas participativas son "participativas" para unos actores calificados de ellas como son las OSC. Como la base de este documento es una investigación en marcha, todo lo que desarrollamos está sujeto a crítica y revisión. Por eso mismo, no se encontrarán aquí conclusiones sino más bien aperturas.

En el marco de nuestra investigación, seleccionamos una muestra intencional de 15 OSC de Rosario en base a una combinación de criterios geográficos y temáticos, por lo cual logramos que estuvieran presentes un número similar de organizaciones de los seis distritos en los que se encuentra dividida administrativamente la ciudad, al mismo tiempo
que una variedad significativa de tipos de OSC\(^1\). Luego, entre marzo y abril de 2008, realizamos entrevistas semi-estructuradas a responsables auto-seleccionados de esas organizaciones, que tuvieron participación directa en algunas de las políticas participativas implementadas por la Municipalidad de Rosario a partir de 2002. Consideramos que el diseño muestral no nos permite hacer generalizaciones estadísticas pero sí esbozar tendencias significativas del punto de vista de las OSC referidas a distintos aspectos de la participación.

En las entrevistas, se realizaron preguntas a las OSC referidas a sus objetivos institucionales, las políticas en las que participaron, los intereses concretos que las llevaron a involucrarse, la manera en que se desarrolló su participación, los recursos que tuvieron disponibles y la ausencia de otros, los diálogos y las relaciones establecidas con los funcionarios estatales y con los miembros de otras organizaciones y de las suyas propias, así como los logros alcanzados y su relación con los objetivos previos a la participación en ese espacio.

Analizamos la información generada bajo una doble luz. Por una parte, a partir de la perspectiva de los propios actores al significar cada una de las dimensiones interrogadas; por otra parte, con los lineamientos generales de la conceptualización acuñada por Fung y Wright (2003) para analizar lo que denominan gobierno participativo con poder de decisión (empowered participatory governance). Fung y Wright (2003) proponen el concepto empowered participatory governance para caracterizar a aquel gobierno guiado por los principios de practicidad, participación y deliberación, que institucionalmente incluye devolución del poder hacia unidades descentralizadas con la coordinación del Estado, y que tiene como objetivos la efectividad en la solución de problemas, la equidad y la participación amplia y profunda de la comunidad.

**La Efectividad de las Políticas Participativas para Resolver Problemas**

En la propuesta de Fung y Wright (2003), una de las dimensiones de mayor relevancia es la que refiere a la efectividad en la resolución de problemas. Para estos autores, las políticas participativas tienden a ello dado que principalmente ‘empoderan’ a los individuos y a las OSC –quienes se encuentran cerca de los puntos de acción y poseen un mejor conocimiento de las situaciones relevantes–; promueven mejores soluciones que las políticas jerárquicas tradicionales –ya que suponen la participación deliberativa de múltiples puntos de vista y el numeroso aporte de información útil y, por esto mismo, tienen una mejor aceptación que aquellas que son impuestas–; y acortan la distancia y el tiempo entre decisión colectiva y acción estatal (Fung 2003).

El análisis cualitativo de las entrevistas realizadas permite en general acompañar lo anterior. No obstante, permite también introducir algunos matices no menores. Así por ejemplo, podemos encontrar testimonios de responsables de OSC a partir de los cuales concluir que no necesariamente una mayor cercanía o un mejor conocimiento sobre una

---

\(^1\) La clasificación en la que nos basamos fue desarrollada por nuestro equipo en base a un trabajo previo del Instituto Gino Germani (Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires), y puede consultarse en www.oscregionrosario.org.
Las políticas participativas son un instrumento que permite a las comunidades participar en la toma de decisiones a nivel local y nacional. En este sentido, las políticas participativas no sólo son consideradas como posibles instancias para la corrección de asimetrías sociales sino también como arenas para la demostración de poder y para la lucha por el reconocimiento, arenas de negociación en las que confluyen lealtades partidarias, el cálculo de beneficios materiales y simbólicos así como el trabajo voluntario más desinteresado y altruista.

Casi unánimemente los entrevistados coinciden en señalar la alta incidencia que la disponibilidad de recursos tiene sobre las capacidades organizacionales y, con ello, sobre el ‘empoderamiento’ efectivo de las OSC. Desde recursos humanos en general -y profesionales en particular- hasta directamente los financieros, ellos no sólo condicionan los resultados que pueden alcanzar sino que incluso pueden afectar sus márgenes de autonomía. En este orden, la gestión de recursos puede implicar condicionamientos desde el Gobierno –cuando éste controla el acceso a fondos públicos, por ejemplo- que son aceptados a fines de emprender o continuar determinadas acciones. Cierta inteligencia organizacional les permite a las OSC compensar debilidades como las anteriores (tecnología, infraestructura, dinero, etc.), básicamente a partir de la mayor dedicación de sus miembros en un claro ejemplo de “voluntarismo amateur, el que en muchas oportunidades es menos una opción ideológica que el resultado de la imposibilidad de pagar, en forma sostenida, profesionalismo y formación” (Acuña 2007, 207). Este voluntarismo puede observarse en el trabajo territorial de miembros de OSC, quienes si bien pueden ser pocos, conocen mejor que el Estado determinadas áreas de la ciudad.

Este relativo ‘empoderamiento’ que las organizaciones obtienen interactuando con el Estado, puede no obstante no reflejarse a su interior: las propias particularidades organizativas suelen, en oportunidades, opacar el ‘empoderamiento’ de sus miembros, tales los casos de aquellas OSC verticalistas en las que la participación queda circunscripta a los cargos de Presidentes o Secretarios, o del responsable más visible que de alguna manera encarna los límites de la propia OSC. Tales verticalismos y/o personalismos son sutilmente defendidos por muchos entrevistados en aras de la supuesta conveniencia de que uno o pocos -por parte de la OSC- monitoren ciertos temas, tratando de esconder con ello la más arraigada convicción de que otros miembros no tendrían iguales capacidades de negociación, oratoria, etc.

En lo referido a la deliberación, señalada por Fung y Wright (2003) como reaseguro para el arribo a políticas de mayor efectividad y legitimidad, ella dista –de acuerdo a los testimonios trabajados- de ser el recurso exclusivo en el momento de toma de decisiones, fundamentalmente cuando la participación no contempla los intereses de determinadas OSC excluidas de aquellas convocatorias realizadas desde el Estado. Marchas, ‘piquetes’, campamentos en espacios públicos y otros ejemplos de movilización complementan el repertorio de acciones orientadas a lograr una mayor inclusión, constituyendo ejemplos que no por menos deliberativos son menos racionales y efectivos.

Sin embargo, la amplia mayoría de testimonios recogidos indica que al interior de las políticas participativas la interacción tendió a promover la circulación de la palabra y un respetuoso intercambio de opiniones.
La Equidad en las Políticas Participativas

En el marco de este trabajo, entendemos la equidad como la distribución justa de bienes diversos entre los individuos de una comunidad. Para Fung y Wright (2003) esto implica tres metas. Primero, redistribución de bienes públicos a quienes habitualmente no gozan de ellos. Segundo, inclusión en la toma de decisiones sobre cuestiones públicas de aquellos que habitualmente no deciden. Tercero, deliberación como forma de tomar las decisiones, basada en el intercambio respetuoso e informado de razones (diferente de la negociación, el voto y el mando). Las políticas participativas se caracterizan por su orientación a las tres metas en simultáneo, pero no necesariamente de manera equivalente (Acuña 2007). A continuación analizaremos estas metas desde la perspectiva de las OSC entrevistadas.

En cuanto a la redistribución, de lo señalado por los actores nos interesa destacar la diversidad de bienes que se demandan y se ofrecen en las políticas participativas. Pero cuando la diversidad de los bienes resulta ir en contra de su intensidad, las organizaciones más precisamente orientadas a un fin pierden interés.

Los diversos bienes son inscriptos en marcos complejos. En la formulación de las demandas, los actores diferencian o han aprendido a diferenciar problemas pequeños que deben resolverse en áreas locales y problemas grandes que deben resolverse a escala de la ciudad. Por otro lado, al final del proceso de participación, los actores señalan la importancia de los marcos de provisión de los bienes: no es solamente dar el bien específico sino que es fundamental la información, la capacitación y el acompañamiento en el tiempo.

De la diversidad y complejidad de los bienes deriva la importancia central de la priorización. Es de notar que, en las políticas participativas, muchas veces hay una relación inversa entre priorización y especificidad: en instancias participativas más generalistas y elitistas, como el Plan Estratégico, se somete a discusión la priorización de proyectos de gran alcance temporal y espacial, mientras que en instancias más específicas y populares, como el PP, se trata de evitar discutir de prioridades entre proyectos puntuales, y se deja la decisión al voto de los vecinos.

De manera coherente con la diversidad y la complejidad de los bienes, con las redistribuciones se produce una multiplicación de bienes. Los mismos actores señalan 'ganancias marginales' en la forma de enriquecimiento en la discusión, logro de contactos, ampliación de capacidades, ‘humanización de la gestión’.

Por último, el aspecto emocional. Son destacadas las satisfacciones que generan las pequeñas redistribuciones y las ganancias marginales, vividas como logros de la participación que exceden el mero cumplimiento de una meta estratégica. De otra parte, las demoras o la falta de ejecución generan una insatisfacción visible localmente, porque los actores, además de sentirse estafados, son conscientes que así se agravan los problemas, y estos agravamientos suelen afectar más a quienes menos tienen. Es notable que las satisfacciones se logran muchas veces con poca cosa, pero respetuosa de lo conversado.

Si analizamos ahora el aspecto de la equidad en términos de inclusión, podemos observar que para los entrevistados es decisiva la convocatoria a las políticas participativas.
Más allá de la propaganda inclusiva, hay quienes denuncian ser excluidos por el gobierno de políticas en las que sus conocimientos son pertinentes: es el caso de organizaciones piqueteras de fuerte inserción territorial que plantean no participar en el PP por no haber sido convocados. Otras organizaciones, por el contrario, aparecen sobreincluidas, es decir, reciben no solo la invitación formal sino también insistentes contactos personales, al punto que en algunos casos de organizaciones prestigiosas se vuelve difícil diferenciar entre la organización y la gestión. Por último, otros se autoincluyen: no tienen diferencias insalvables con la gestión pero tampoco son ‘amigos’, y lo que sí tienen son intereses precisos que persiguen de manera pragmática y flexible.

La inclusión genera importantes cambios personales y organizacionales. Lerner y Schugurensky (2007) han demostrado el cambio positivo que la participación trae a las personas en términos de habilidades, conocimientos y actitudes. Por el lado de las organizaciones, además de lo anterior, se destaca como muy valioso un pasaje de la participación aislada a una participación más coordinada con otras organizaciones. En este caso, hay una fuerte relación entre vinculación horizontal y tiempo. Estos cambios tienen una relación inversa con los recursos que las personas y las organizaciones traían originalmente, por lo que la inclusión tiene un fuerte efecto redistributivo por el solo hecho de participar, independientemente de logros estratégicos.

Para finalizar el análisis de la participación de las OSC en relación con la dimensión de la equidad, nos detendremos en el aspecto de la deliberación. Los actores destacan como algo muy positivo de estos espacios la posibilidad de hablar libremente y, cuando esto no se verifica, lo reclaman con fuerza. Así se confirma que las políticas participativas son entendidas, en un principio, como espacios de libre expresión. A veces, sin embargo, se denuncian abusos en el uso de la palabra de algunos participantes, debido posiblemente a un efecto subjetivo catártico que tiene la invitación a hablar, o a una deficiente construcción de las reglas de participación.

Un aspecto complejo de estas políticas es la coordinación de la variedad de puntos de vista y la vinculación entre los intereses particulares y los intereses comunes. Mientras muchos coinciden en señalar la importancia de que existan reglas explícitas y que sean respetadas por todos, menos son los que destacan la responsabilidad individual y de las organizaciones en escuchar a todos y en intentar pasar de la particularidad al interés general.

La Amplitud y Profundidad de la Participación en las Políticas Estatales

La noción de participación amplia y profunda se analizará fundamentalmente a partir de algunos de los aspectos que Fung y Wright (2003) incluyen en su definición. Desde esta perspectiva, la participación aparece como producto del establecimiento de canales adicionales para tratar temas de importancia y ejercer influencia directa sobre el poder estatal, es decir crear nuevos espacios en los que se discutan temas socialmente relevantes y se generen sugerencias de políticas que sean atendidas por el estado. Asimismo la participación amplia y profunda se analiza como resultado de una mejora en la calidad de la participación, garantizada por la difusión de la información necesaria para debatir y decidir de modo informado, de la profundización de las interacciones entre las organizaciones, y de
las participantes, basada en el fortalecimiento de las capacidades de deliberación y decisión. Ambas características son importantes desde el punto de vista que revaloriza la participación del ciudadano ‘común’, disminuyendo las barreras de expertise y jerarquizando la responsabilidad que da el ‘estar cerca’. Importan también a la hora de dar cuenta de la participación atender a las modalidades de la misma, definidas por el quién, el cuánto y el para qué se participa.

En las políticas participativas promovidas por el municipio de Rosario, la intervención de las organizaciones analizadas tiene características diferenciadas en función de los rasgos particulares tanto de las propias organizaciones, como de los espacios participativos escogidos por las mismas para hablar de su participación. En relación al primer punto, pueden establecerse algunas distinciones en cuanto al tipo de organización, atendiendo a si se observa una clasificación en base a la cuestión territorial o bien a la finalidad. Es necesario señalar, que las organizaciones que tienen fines más bien simbólicos, intereses difusos u objetivos generalistas responden algunas preguntas de manera distinta que aquellas cuya base es territorial y tienen una finalidad más concreta, que tiene que ver con el logro de algún bien o servicio que mejore las condiciones de vida de los sectores más vulnerables.

Para abordar la modalidad de participación, nos interrogamos acerca del quién, cuándo y para qué de la participación.

En la pregunta referida al quién participa en la política seleccionada por la organización, nos encontramos que en los casos analizados la persona que responde a la entrevista y que fue señalada (en muchos casos por sí misma) como la más indicada para hacerlo coincide con la que ha participado en la política. En las entrevistas se asegura que la participación de los miembros de la organización es libre, abierta a todos, aunque a veces admiten que es necesario el acuerdo de la organización.

En relación con la duración de la participación en la política, puede observarse una estrecha asociación entre la continuidad en el tiempo de la misma y los logros obtenidos, ya sean materiales o simbólicos. Así las organizaciones que intentaron la participación en alguno de los espacios participativos pero asumieron que allí no habría posibilidades de logro alguno y en algunos casos incluso era poco factible plantear demandas, desistieron rápidamente de participar.

En cuanto a la finalidad de la participación en la política escogida pueden observarse diferencias en las respuestas, en base al tipo de organización. Las organizaciones de base territorial justifican su participación en una política en función de la posibilidad concreta de resolver a través de ella cuestiones puntuales de carácter material. En cambio, las organizaciones cuyos fines son más generales, enuncian respuestas más variadas. La participación se basa en la importancia dada desde la organización de responder a la invitación del Municipio, “para estar y ser vistos, avalando el accionar del Estado” con la presencia de algún referente de la organización en la misma. En otros casos, se observa la importancia dada desde las organizaciones a la participación, entendiéndola como estar, intervenir, proponer, en los espacios de decisión, es decir, en un sentido similar al uso que se le da al término en este trabajo. En definitiva, podemos señalar una variedad de...
fundamentos para la participación: convicción ideológica, logro de fines específicos, cumplimiento con la convocatoria, conocimiento del ámbito y su funcionamiento. Asimismo es dable señalar una fluidez en las razones señaladas, una transición de un fin inicial a otro o bien a una conjunción de objetivos.

Analizando ahora los aspectos referidos a los canales adicionales, las organizaciones que intervienen en el PP lo reconocen explícitamente como un espacio en el que la participación puede resultar en la obtención de logros materiales concretos. Los entrevistados señalan la posibilidad de incidir en la definición de temas relevantes asociados a demandas de los vecinos, y reconocen, aunque en menor medida, la obtención de resultados buscados. Algunos señalan explícitamente la influencia de su organización en el establecimiento de temas de agenda y en el diseño e implementación de proyectos.

En el aspecto referido a la calidad de la participación, un primer punto nos remite a la calidad de la información que manejan las OSC. En este sentido, en general la calidad de la información sobre los temas y las reglas para participar en los espacios es valorada positivamente. La información sobre las convocatorias a la participación así como sobre los modos de intervención de las organizaciones y las reglas de juego al interior de los distintos espacios, son reconocidas como útiles y ampliamente difundidas. En el caso del Presupuesto participativo, aparecen muy bien valorado el rol de los coordinadores de los espacios en cuanto a la facilitación de la información y la aplicación de las reglas en pos de garantizar una participación equitativa, así como en el uso de un lenguaje claro y comprensible para todos, atendiendo a las diferencias en la formación de los sujetos que concurren.

Como señalamos en relación con la dimensión de la efectividad, en todas las entrevistas aparece como un aspecto destacado positivamente la posibilidad de establecer vínculos con otras organizaciones. Estos espacios son productivos para conocer a otras organizaciones, identificar sus objetivos y perspectivas sobre problemas comunes; así como para establecer relaciones con nuevas organizaciones para potenciar los resultados obtenidos.

En este sentido, los aspectos positivos más destacados por los entrevistados son la experiencia como tal, la interacción con otros y la obtención de algún resultado. Por su parte, los aspectos negativos son resaltados de manera más esporádica y son diferentes según el entrevistado de que se trate, un ejemplo de esto lo constituye la alusión a que algunos espacios participativos funcionan mejor para aquellas organizaciones que pueden articular sus necesidades con otras de intereses afines.

**Referencias Bibliográficas**


Learning Civic Environmentalism by Doing: Reflections from Activists’ Experiences in Rural Ontario

Suzanne L. Cook
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto

Introduction

The environmental movement is the key social movement of our time (Barkan 2004; Stern 1999). Research has examined civic engagement with large national environmental organizations and small grassroots organizations (Barkan 2004; Knopman 1999), as well as general public support for environmental issues (Barkan 2004; Stern 1999). The term civic environmentalism\(^1\) has been coined to refer to citizens who believe that the environment is a political issue, and who participate actively and politically to achieve environmental ends (Teles 1997; DeWitt 2006). What types of informal learning are they engaged in through civic participation?

This paper examines informal learning through a case study of four activists who were involved in civic environmentalism through an Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) appeal regarding the decision of the Region of Peel to approve an amendment to the Official Plan for urban growth and designate the remaining 6000 acres of agricultural land in Northwest Brampton into development lands. This paper examines these issues using a phenomenological approach (a first person or lived experience) and an autobiographical ethnographic design through the sharing of four activists’ lived experiences where I am writing about our group’s experiences. All four of us are middle-class residents, living in the region and its vicinity, who are interested in environmental issues. Three of these activists were Therese Taylor, Steven Kaasgaard and Robert Heaton and the fourth was myself.

Little previous research has examined informal learning (Schugurensky 2003), and even less has examined informal learning and unpaid activities such as volunteering and activism, despite the fact that meaningful and significant learning occurs through civic

\(^1\) Although environmental citizenship, environmental engagement, environmental action, and civic engagement in environmental issues are also terms used to describe political engagement in environmental issues, for the purposes of this paper, civic environmentalism will refer to this type of engagement.
engagement. To date, there is very little research conducted on civic environmentalism in Canada (Bocking 2002; Salazar 2002). Furthermore, there is no research examining civic environmentalism through an Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) appeal process, and little research examining the informal learning that takes place through civic environmentalism. This paper addresses these gaps in the literature by creating insight and understanding about these experiences. This paper argues that 1) an OMB appeal is one site for civic environmentalism and civic learning; and 2) informal learning is integral to activism since knowledge and skills are developed through civic engagement. This paper begins to explore these areas in order to provide an opportunity to generate new and valuable knowledge on this topic. Our experiences and our learnings from the OMB appeal provide an insider’s perspective that has not been adequately addressed in the literature. Our informal learning can assist groups interested in education and civic engagement. While our experiences are the focus of this case study, we feel that our insights will benefit and inform other groups involved in local environmental issues and OMB appeals.

First, this paper explains the difference between environmentalism, environmental advocates and activism. Second, it discusses civic environmentalism and demonstrates how our OMB appeal was a form of civic environmentalism. Third, it highlights informal learning during the civic engagement on the part of the four of us as activists who fought to protect agricultural land in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). These are learnings that other groups can take and apply from our experience. Finally, it discusses directions for future research.

**Activism, the Environment and Civic Environmentalism**

Civic environmentalism is a type of civic engagement. It occurs when citizens come together through social action to solve environmental problems in order to improve their communities (Conolly Hokenmaier 2007). Through their efforts to direct and influence public policy, they become participants in the democratic process, their goal being to ensure a sustainable community for future generations. Individuals who engage in civic environmentalism are environmental activists. The overall aim of civic environmentalism is to broaden the political and philosophical premises that underlie environmental issues and bring these to the forefront above individual interests (Landy 2001). In the most successful examples of civic environmentalism, a top political official grasps the bigger picture and becomes a sponsor, bringing political clout and resources to the negotiating table and leading to the most innovative solutions (DeWitt 2004). Throughout this paper, the term civic environmentalism will refer to taking political action on environmental issues. The term activists will be used to refer to citizens who are politically engaged in environmental issues.

Public surveys indicate that most people care about the environment and are concerned about environmental issues (Decima Research 2007; Strategic Council 2008; University of British Columbia 2002). A recent poll indicated that Canadians felt the environment was the most important issue facing Canada, and 49% were in favour of a carbon tax (Strategic Council 2008). The environment was rated as the top issue in every part of Canada, except Manitoba and Saskatchewan, in a 2007 poll, by men and women alike (Decima Research 2007). In a 2002 poll, the environment was one of the four top concerns among Canadians, where 43% of Canadians believed the government’s top environmental
priority should be reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and 38% felt it should be global warming or climate change (University of British Columbia 2002). It is easy for individuals to talk about the environment and express concern (Kempton 2003). Although many people consider themselves to be environmentalists or environmentally conscious; few would call themselves activists. And yet, it is action on environmental issues that is really necessary.

Environmentalists are concerned about the environment and are aware of environmental issues and problems (Pearsall 1996). Environmental advocates go one step further and seek environmental protection. Activists go beyond this position and become involved socio-politically to address environmental issues; they take action on the environment. Taking action may mean that individuals are willing to make personal lifestyle changes (Kempton 2003), which may involve confronting the dominant culture’s abuse of the environment, or it can mean becoming engaged at the political level. The former is lifestyle or cultural reform; the latter, civic action (Kempton 2003). Either way, activists are civic-minded, engaged individuals who are voluntarily making change for the betterment of society as a whole.

Certain individuals become activists; they take their awareness and interest in environmental issues to the next step. They go beyond increased awareness of environmental issues to action taking or political engagement. Political engagement is critical to the environmental movement (Lukasik 2003) and the social change necessary to live on this planet (Clover 2000). Through the process of political participation, they learn and these learnings are transferable within other arenas of civic engagement.

Civic Environmentalism and Learning

Background on the Ontario Municipal Board Appeal

The Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) is an independent Ontario court that provides a public forum for resolving disputes related to land use issues. In Ontario, the board is the mechanism for the community, developers and local government to have a voice in land use issues when there is a dispute that requires resolution. It is a government body, created through Ontario government legislation, which sets the Board’s mandate. It falls under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The Board hears appeals on municipal and planning issues and makes decisions on each case that comes before it.

In this particular OMB case, several parties appealed the amendment of the Region of Peel official plan to change the last 6000 acres of agricultural land in Northwest Brampton into development lands. One of the prominent groups that decided to appeal this amendment was the Sierra Club Peel Chapter executive. In November 2006, five of us worked together at an OMB appeal regarding an amendment of the official plan. This case study examines four of us out of the five who worked together on this appeal. Two of us were involved with the Sierra Club Peel Chapter, one as a member of the executive, one as a member at large. Funds were raised to hire a lawyer and pay consultants for this appeal. Two of us contributed financially to the fundraising. Less than one week before the OMB hearing was to begin, the Sierra Club Peel Chapter reached an agreement with the Region of Peel and the City of Brampton that would see this change in land usage designation from agricultural lands to development lands, but with a commitment to create higher density
housing and incorporate public transit accessibility into residential development on these lands. Nevertheless, several Region of Peel residents, including the four of us in this study, disagreed with annexing the last remaining 6000 acres of agricultural land and decided to continue with the OMB appeal. Preservation of the agricultural land, especially the orchards, was our objective because we strongly believed in supporting local agriculture for the environmental and economic health of our community. We viewed the destruction of local agriculture lands as an environmental problem. However, at the end of this process, this appeal was lost.

Making an appeal means going through a process that involves a lot of informal learning in a short amount of time. The OMB follows a formal court appeal process. All hearings take place in a courtroom, and there are lawyers, municipal/regional planning staff and witnesses present. A preliminary hearing takes place first to identify parties and set the court date. Some hearings last months, whereas others take only a few days. Witnesses can be called, including expert witnesses who have expert testimony to provide. The Board only makes decisions based on the evidence presented, so the advance background work is critical to making and presenting a case. It is important to present a logical and compelling case. Conveying a broad or general environmental perspective is not effective. Fines can be given out to people who waste the Board’s valuable time.

There are deadlines for parties to the appeal case to submit statements to the Board, as well as a process for calling expert witnesses. Adhering to the schedule and process is critical. It helps to have a background in law to follow and understand all the procedures.

At the preliminary OMB hearing, one of us won party status in the OMB appeal in order to more effectively present our case and the others worked to support the appeal process and were as participants in the appeal. Party status can be conveyed upon a person, public body or organization. Having party status means that you are directly involved in the case; you must be present for the entire hearing. You can present material, call witnesses and question other parties’ witnesses (Ontario Municipal Board 2008).

In an appeal, there are planning documents, reports, party statements and expert statements to go through. Depending on the complexity of the case, and the number of parties involved in making the appeal, the number of levels of government involved, and the number of lawyers and expert witnesses brought in, the documentation can be extensive.

For this particular OMB appeal, there was an overwhelming amount of documentation sent to the individual with party status about one week before the appeal. The amount of material and the timing of receiving it were extremely frustrating. Since none of us have backgrounds in law, the process, procedures and documentation were an immense informal learning experience for all of us. Because of the statements and other

\[\text{\footnotesize{\cite{OMB}}}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize{\cite{Ontario}}}

\[\text{\footnotesize{\cite{OMB}}}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize{\cite{Ontario}}}

\[\text{\footnotesize{\cite{OMB}}}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize{\cite{Ontario}}}

\[\text{\footnotesize{\cite{OMB}}}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize{\cite{Ontario}}}
documentation, our time commitment to this appeal involved more than just the amount of time we were actually present at the hearing.

The remaining four of us were participants in this appeal. A participant is a person, group or corporation who is not required to attend the entire hearing. Participants attend part of the proceedings and make a statement to the Board on all or some of the issues in the hearing. Statements can be provided in writing or can be read out by someone else if a participant is unable to attend the hearing due to other commitments. Providing oral or written submissions to the Board or council is not necessary in order to be added to the appeal as a participant.

**Methodology**

As mentioned previously, this case study uses a phenomenological and autobiographical ethnographic approach to examine informal learning through taking action to conduct an OMB appeal. Four of us who were politically engaged as activists in the OMB appeal are the focus of this case study. All of us are middle-class residents in the Region of Peel and vicinity who are interested in environmental issues. We have all been interested in environmental issues and have been part of environmental organizations in the past. All four of us had a strong connection to the community in which we are living and we planned to remain in that community for some time. We were all interested in environmental issues in the local community and our concerns were related to community values, lifestyle, health and wellbeing. Three of these activists were Therese Taylor, Steven Kaasgaard, and Robert Heaton and the fourth was myself. Our learnings civic environmentalism during the OMB appeal provide an insider’s perspective that has not been adequately addressed in the literature.

This was a collaborative effort despite the fact that the appeal rested mainly on one key activist. We each brought our own strengths to the OMB appeal process. One of us spearheaded the fight. One worked in the background: networking, creating awareness, striving for media attention and bringing in visual artifacts to the OMB. One represented the historical fight to save agricultural land in Peel and brought that history and experience to the OMB appeal. A fourth activist who acted as a participant was a formerly elected municipal counsellor. This activist’s knowledge about government procedures and systems was useful during the OMB appeal. The fifth participant was a member of the community.

For this case study, each individual involved in the OMB appeal was asked if they were willing to participate. Each individual was contacted via email, with a follow-up telephone call. Four of us agreed to be part of the case study.

The four of us independently answered questions about our motivations and learnings using an open-ended questionnaire. Questions were developed based on the conceptual framework described above. This chapter presents a portion of the findings from this case study.
Findings

Learning from ‘doing’ during the OMB process

Through the process of appealing the amendment of the Region of Peel official plan to designate the last 6000 acres of agricultural land for development purposes, we learned several things. First, activists are volunteers in the community and in our society, striving to engage local government to make change. Volunteers donate time and energy to their community and/or to those around them. But activists are a particular kind of volunteers. Society and activists themselves do not seem to consider activists to be volunteers, perhaps because they are questioning the status quo, challenging people to think critically about issues and examine political and social order. Activists may never be nominated for Community Volunteer of the Year awards. However, essentially they are volunteers because they are donating time and energy to a cause, to a community or to a group. For us, taking action took time away from work, family and school activities and it was voluntary in nature.

Second, for us, taking action was a moral or ethical issue; it was the right thing to do. A moral commitment was made to the agricultural lands that no one else was speaking out in support of. “When you develop awareness of the issues and reflect on this, taking action is a moral issue” (Suzanne Cook). Taking action was also timely; there is a need to change the status quo. The fight to preserve agricultural land is a fight that has been repeated for decades in urban areas, which are expanding around the world. There is ongoing debate about better ways to build and fund successful and healthy cities (Jacobs, 2004). Good quality agricultural land continues to be paved over despite historical knowledge that this practice is a mistake. Other jurisdictions like Vancouver have created an agricultural land reserve. Development of agricultural land is tied to government policy (Kitchen 2003; Schwartz 2008; Song 2006), and this policy has been accepted by citizens and never really questioned by them when there are alternative models available that take the value of land into account (Schwartz 2008). Therese echoed this comment. During the OMB hearing, and subsequently in answering the case study questions, she quoted from Ronald Wright’s book A Short History of Progress “Don’t build on your agricultural land” (Wright 2004).

Third, one of us learned that while it is important not to be afraid to ask for help from other activists and other organizations, sometimes it is difficult to find others who are truly willing to help: “What I learned was that even though Non-Governmental Organizations may agree with your cause, you can’t count on them to get involved even thought the case seems pretty important.” (Therese). It is possible to find other individuals to join the cause and help out if you search them out. This involves finding like-minded individuals who you can trust. However, you need to ask for help and join forces because together you are stronger. We found an immense amount of strength and support among each other. In reflecting on asking for help and supporting one another during the process, Therese said, “Had I known how supportive you and the others would be, I would have asked for help developing the case ahead of time.”

Fourth, we learned to be better prepared and better organized next time. As Robert said “it takes significant resources … to fight at the OMB…You can only donate so much to the appeal whereas all the developers costs for a fight get rolled into the price of a house.”
Fifth, all of us learned a lot about the OMB and the process of appealing decisions in this system. It was an educational experience to be so fully involved in an OMB appeal. For example, one of the activists learned to verify information from the OMB staff and to double check OMB procedures and processes. We also learned that it is acceptable to quote from expert witness statements when making statements to the Board. It was also important to gather more support for the appeal and raise money for expert witness opinions. It is important to be prepared to subpoena witnesses. We learned that it would have been beneficial to visit an OMB hearing in advance our own appeal because it would have helped us to learn about some of these processes and procedures in advance. It would have been helpful to find other members of the community who have gone through an OMB appeal before. Someone with this experience can provide valuable knowledge and insight for an appeal.

Sixth, on a personal level, more than anything, an activist needs to have family support or the whole process becomes so much more onerous. Activism activities require a lot of time and energy. Family members have to see the activism as more than a hobby. They have to see the bigger picture that you are working towards. Family members have to see it as actual work and work that is important.

Seventh, while becoming an OMB party is not an easy role because it is demanding, stressful and one of the most difficult roles to take on, it is probably the most effective way to appeal at the OMB because it ensures you have an actual voice in negotiations. Your voice will be heard and you have more standing in the process. You have the opportunity to cross-examine expert witnesses of the other parties. As a party, you can make a statement and quote from expert witness statements. You are also expected to do a summation. By acting as a participant, your involvement is much more limited and you are not fully engaged in the process. It is critical to fully understand the difference between being a party or a participant in the OMB process and the implications of this decision. Conducting the appeal whether as a party or a participant is a stressful experience, but becoming a party is especially stressful because of the potential risk of being sued by the court and paying financial penalties. This risk intimates community groups who wish to lead an appeal. This barrier needs to be addressed by the Ontario government. For us, support of each other was vital. It was invigorating and rejuvenating to work with a group of other activists who believed in the same issues and were equally dedicated to the cause. We provided emotional support to each other throughout the OMB hearing. This support was also particularly important after we learned that we lost the hearing.

Eighth, debriefing after the OMB hearing is important for the people involved in the fight. It provides a further opportunity for critical reflection and the development of learnings from the experience. This case study was a debrief for the four of us. In addition, in coming together, taking action and fighting for a cause, you realize that there are other people interested and concerned in the same issues. You are not alone. Robert said “The finding of support from one another happens at OMB appeals. People don’t understand until (the appeal) that their neighbours’ problems are their problems. They don’t talk their whole life until they meet through the OMB process”. This raises another issue that should be noted: the environmental concerns of one community will probably become environmental concerns in another community in another location. Robert’s insights into this issue are
summed up with his comment which highlights the importance of sharing learnings that other groups can apply:

Other communities should be paying attention to what is going on at the OMB and what is going on with development in the community next door, because what ever is happening over there, will be shortly coming to your neighbourhood, whether it be bad planning or good. Developers, planners, and politicians recreate the failed urban landscape from one municipality to the next. They create the same mistakes and problems. They are moving outward into the agricultural land and coming here to your community with the same echo from south to north and from east to west right across the GTA and beyond, instead of taking lessons from Europe and bringing them here.

Finally, one strength that was missing from our group was someone with municipal law experience. This meant a lot of background work had to be done before the appeal began. We recommend that other groups make it a priority to find someone with municipal law experience. If possible hire a municipal lawyer who tends to take community groups or rate payers associations for a stipulated fee. Finding a good lawyer takes networking and research. A lawyer can be found for a reasonable price but this means investigating costs and finding a lawyer who is willing to take on this work at a cost you can agree on. A municipal lawyer who is beginning to decrease her or his work hours as she or he approaches retirement (and is phasing into retirement) might be a good choice. In addition, media attention is important however, we learned that it is very difficult to obtain mainstream media coverage for this kind of fight. Major and minor newspapers did not provide coverage leading up to it; articles on the appeal were only published after the appeal was completed. Other groups may want to consider tapping into alternative forms of media as well as approaching mainstream media. In this appeal, we were more successful with alternative media.

Discussion

Much informal learning occurs among activists involved in civic environmentalism. Informal learning was evident from our comments and reflections while we were conducting the OMB appeal.

Informal learning was evident while the appeal was occurring and afterwards. The whole process was an informal learning experience for us. We were easily able to identify the many lessons we experienced from participating the OMB appeal itself. We hope that other groups will learn from our experiences and insights into the OMB process.

Sirianni and Friedland (2001) discuss how learning is part of the process of civic environmentalism. Kempton and Holland’s (2003) mention how learning is derived through doing or acting. The learning we experienced was not deliberate; it was unconscious and was only revealed upon further reflection (Schugurensky 2000). The learning occurred through the process of becoming engaged in civic environmentalism and took place during the preparation for and during the appeal process, as well as upon further reflection.

In his study, Aronson’s (1993) participants highlighted the importance of receiving social support from other people and we also felt that having each other’s support was
critical. We found in each other support for protecting local farmland that we would not have found if we had not all come together for the OMB appeal. During the OMB hearing, we developed new skills and found reserves that we did not know we had. We were stronger when acting together. This is similar to the experiences of Aronson’s participants.

The support that was given among the four of us was very positive and led to a further desire to support and work together and with others in action-taking. It connected us together as activists and we identified with each other and saw each of our strengths and talents. Our team volunteer work was very powerful for us. It showed us that we were not alone. Other individuals involved in OMB appeals appear to have had similar experiences when they realize that other community members feel as strongly as they do about an issue.

In learning by doing we were all community volunteers. We were devoting time and energy to our civic environmental pursuits. Some people reject or avoid the activist label for fear of being seen negatively and regarded as extremist. There are different grades or levels of activism. It is possible to be a moderate activist and still take political action. Political action can take many forms, including writing letters to MPs, businesses, and the newspaper, making petitions, and taking your fight to the OMB, as it did for us.

The learning we experienced touched us on personal, communal and societal levels. We clearly see our commitment to our community through our activism as volunteering. Few people would see it this way. They may describe it as a hobby. In hindsight, we personally see activism as more than a hobby, although we are not career activists as Aronson (1993) described. For us, this is volunteer work but it is work nonetheless. It is important that our families, communities and society in general recognize this.

Appealing the change in land use was a stressful process, and mutual support was important. One component of this stress is that engaging in activism can have personal, social and political consequences. One type of political action can preclude other types. Connections with one set of politics and group can lead to reduced social and community ties in other areas.

The OMB appeal was an informal learning experience for us. The steep learning curve we experienced during our appeal indicates how difficult it is for community groups to navigate this provincial organization. The OMB is court-focused and this limits citizen participation and the kind of citizen participation that is possible. True civic democracy has more dialogue, negotiation and interaction (Schugurensky 2003). In some circumstances, citizens may only feel that their voice has been heard and that they have influence only if they win the appeal case.

Our case study indicates that it is important to examine not only developing knowledge from doing or acting, but to take the next step and use that knowledge in other activist activities, and share that knowledge with others. To achieve this objective, there are some key recommendations that we can share with other groups. First, the OMB is a court for land-use disputes and appeals and like other courts, it follows legal processes and procedures and maintains legal records. It issues Board orders and maintains records of these decisions; however these are not currently made available to groups making OMB
appeals. We recommend that other groups make it a priority to find someone with municipal law knowledge and experience. This was missing in our group and this meant a lot of background work had to be done before the appeal began.

We saw our fight as a morale fight. Our feelings on taking on this morale fight resonate with the experiences of others struggling for environmental causes who also see taking action to be morale and right (Clayton 2003). The learnings we experienced are important and this knowledge can be very valuable to other community groups involved in a similar fight.

**Conclusion**

This case study was an exploration of lived experiences and a debrief of the OMB appeal for us as activists. It increases our understanding of the informal learning involved in civic environmentalism. The learning we engaged in was at first unintentional and unconscious, until we reflected on our experiences as activists and our transformation process (Schugurensky 2009). Then this learning became clearer and was conscious to us and was readily identified. Our appeal led to a steep learning curve. Our learning can be used by other groups who are involved in an OMB appeal. Making an appeal at the OMB is a difficult path. Information and support to help groups through this process are both required.

Our experiences and concerns point to issues of land use in municipalities across North America, even across the world. Questions need to be raised about the value of land and the appreciation of local farmers and the local food that they grow and produce. In addition, there are systemic biases that make agricultural sustainability very difficult. These are biases within the municipal system that promote urban sprawl such as the dependency on property taxes based on house size and value compared to the land size or land value property tax systems found in countries such as Denmark and Israel (Schwartz 2008).

We have learned that as environmental activists we are also community volunteers. We have put ourselves out there in the public realm because we feel the government and the rest of society are not addressing these issues. We have been provoked into action. Now that we have made this transformation, there is no going back. What we have learned will prevent us from becoming politically disengaged. Given the Canadian public's concerns over the environment, knowledge on political engagement is important and timely. Adult education and engagement is urgently required, especially critical discovery that leads to change (Clover 2000).

Citizen and community learning and education contribute to social movements and social change (Ellis 2003). The sharing of learning is a key educational goal as well as a community value. It is important for local community grassroots groups to share and discuss informal learning from their involvement in environmental issues because often this learning can be applied by other community groups if awareness can be developed. Stories are powerful in and of themselves, and may serve as motivation for other groups to take action.
This case study leads us to ask why additional support is not available for groups of concerned citizens who are clearly disadvantaged during an OMB appeal unless they have raised significant funds and hired lawyers. There is much that can be done at the OMB to even the playing field and assist community groups through the process, through a formal or informal education process. Resources, information and support could be provided to make an OMB appeal much less difficult and intimidating.

One idea that has emerged for future research is an investigation of the synergies around this type of volunteering. For us, volunteering was powerful because of our collective identification as activists for local food and our collective dedication and commitment to farmland and local food. Our experiences reaffirmed our commitment to environmental issues, despite our loss at the OMB, because of what each of us gained from working together.

References


The Roots of Engaged Citizenship Learning: Confrontations with Murderous Injustice, with Reference to Argentina and Colombia

Dieter Misgeld
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Abstract

To make our superficially democratic societies more profoundly democratic, a deep commitment to justice is required. I will argue that a major avenue for developing this commitment is the systematic and ongoing confrontation with extreme, sometimes event murderous types of injustice. In the Federal Republic of Germany (1948-1990) this issue generated a heated debate between those who wanted to “overcome” the National Socialist past by leaving it behind and those who challenged the very concept of “overcoming” (Adorno, Habermas, others). Education for democracy, holocaust education and “re-education” were discussed in this context.

Similarly, conflictual processes and educational projects can be found in Latin America in our times, as I learned recently when teaching seminars in Colombia and Argentina. In Argentina, efforts to reflect on the past military dictatorship of 1976 to 1983 are very advanced, while at the same time they meet much resistance, including disappearances of witnesses and threats. At the same time, numerous educational projects have been designed, such as those around the themes of memory and history. In Colombia, the process of coming to terms with massacres and assassinations committed by organizations frequently linked with the army is still embryonic. It is frequently overshadowed by media-campaigns highlighting the crimes of abduction and kidnappings committed by the armed insurgency.

The three situations mentioned will be reviewed, with reference to my recent visits to Argentina and Colombia and what I learned there. I witnessed very impressive efforts in public education and the formation of vigilant citizens capable of resisting threats of massive force. I hope to identify creative opportunities that help people overcome the oppressive weight of the past, and of the horrible events that had occurred in it, while also preserving the courage to confront them. Thus, a foundation can be built for an active
educational engagement with justice, humaneness, and reconciliation as a foundation for the formation of citizens capable of constructing reciprocally supportive environments.

“In a fearful nation, public sorrow was stamped down by the climate of uncertainty. If a father protested a son’s death, it was feared another family member would be killed. If people you knew disappeared, there was a chance they might stay alive if you did not cause trouble. This was the scarring psychosis in the country. Death, loss, was 'unfinished,' so you could not walk through it. There had been years of night visitations, kidnappings or murders in broad daylight. The only chance was that the creatures who fought would consume themselves. All that was left of law was a belief in an eventual revenge toward those who had power.” (Ondaatje 2001)

**Problem and Diagnosis**

Philosophers have identified certain concepts as contested. In reality, justice certainly is a contested concept, and more than that, its real existence or non-existence is contested, subject to struggle. Thus, in order to know where to begin, when we want to commit a society to being sincere about justice, we need to begin with it the strongest cases. Those are the ones, which signify the non-existence of justice, and they usually are the ones which involve the state, governments, the terror produced by the state. To remind people of this is a major task of education, public democratic education, and education in public, in my view.

The most horrible, terrifying forms of injustice are massive cruelty (Rorty 1989; Rorty 2002) and the murderous exclusion of populations from participating in life in the society. Straightforward cases are genocide, systematic persecution, and policies and practices of extermination. If they are not recognized for what they are - deeply debilitating deformations of society and the body politic - fear, cynicism and resignation dominate the activities and interactions of those who are not the direct victims, and constructive participation in the society, or the will to bring about something better, becomes impossible.

The first step toward building societies of humane cooperation therefore is, I firmly believe, the determination to look horror in its face. This is why Theodor Adorno, in the Federal Republic of Germany in the late 1950’s and onward, objected to the slogans of “overcoming the past” or “coming to terms with the past”, or “learning to control the effects of the past” (Cited in Hartman 1986, 114-129). This is why in Argentina today, projects of not forgetting, such as “historia y memoria”,¹ are a cornerstone for a politics of inclusion in

¹ See the project and Master’s program “Historia y Memoria”, of the Faculty of Humanities and Sciences of Education of the Universidad Nacional de la Plata, and of the Comisión por la Memoria de la Provincia de Buenos Aires. Argentina. A state sponsored archive and research centre dedicated to the development of a collective memory of the recent Argentinean past and of the recent past of Southern cone countries in Latin America (Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile) it also works with a public university in this project. It finds much resonance among students and in the public, and has considerable outreach, also in the school-system.
Argentinean society, even though approximately 25 years have passed since the last military dictatorship. This is why in Colombia, MOVICE, the Movement of Victims of Crimes Committed by the State, and similar movements and organizations constantly struggle against the elimination of memory and for the revelation of the full truth about political persecution.

We cannot even begin to think of participation and of the intensification and fuller development of democracy, as well as education for them, unless the dramatic effects of extreme repression and persecution, the fundamental crimes against social exclusion, are recognized in their full extent. It is very important to insist on this point because in the more affluent societies of the North-Atlantic region, the tendency has been the opposite: to externalize that which people are to fear - the enemy without; to create and project a monstrous threat, by means of the war on terror, so that people in these societies do in fact accept and condition themselves to retreat into fear, cynicism and resignation; and to deny solidarity and forego active struggles for justice.

“Coming to terms with the past, mastering it” was a slogan used in the 1950s and early 1960s in West Germany, which was promoted in order to repress the will and desire to recall the horrors of the Nazi period and the complicity of millions of Germans in the commitment of these crimes. One was not to refer back to Hitler Germany, National Socialism and, to some extent, recall the great war as a reference point for a politics of the future; a politics of Nunca Mas, to use the title of the famous Argentinean study on the assassinations, disappearances and torture, and the systematic persecution practiced by the last military dictatorship (1976-1982) (Nunca Mas 1984; Nunca Mas 1986). Germany was to be rearmed and join the anti-communist system of the West, an opportune moment, of course, to recall that Nazism also had engaged in a violent crusade against Communism.

It was argued that in the 1950’s, Germany had become a democracy, a liberal state; it had become solidly Christian and integrated into the “Western” (NATO) system of defence against the “evil” ruling in the East, Communism. Now freedom ruled and one could get on with the tasks of the present and future, putting morbid preoccupations with death – camps and the politics of extermination – aside. And one had, of course, begun to pay reparations to the state of Israel and to the Jewish survivors of the genocide, even if one was reluctant to extend the same support to former or present members of the persecuted and decimated parties of the political Left. Adorno (1986) argued against these propagandistic conceptions. He stressed that only the conscious working through of this not so recent brutal and brutalizing past would put the society on a road towards significant improvement. I want to choose one theme from among the many Adorno addressed in order to resist the strong tendencies toward internal appeasement and moral/political closure which ruled the West German public domain at the time, thus undermining the creation of a public sphere of fully open, unrestricted communication, the central theme of Jurgen Habermas’s subsequent work (cited in Hartman 1986). This theme is that of terrorism and the role of the state in it and in relation to it. I choose this theme because I

---

believe that the “war on terror”, the project promoted by Washington and passively accepted by many mostly “Western” governments and agencies, is aimed at the restriction of democracy or the creation of restricted democracies, to use a phrase some Latin American political theorists employ when referring to democracy in their countries.

A restricted democracy is what the German Christian Democratic Right (CDU) wanted in its time. It did not want a fully flourishing, highly participatory society, as this would invite strong egalitarian tendencies, and would begin to look like a society and state giving in to communism. This was the ultimate disease for the CDU, to be feared more than Nazism: the continued existence of fascist and pre-fascist mentalities, and the repression of memory and guilt (Wellmer 1991). This repression is also what the still strong and organized Right wants in Argentina, and what it even actively works for, sometimes violently opposing the judicial proceedings initiated by the governments of Nestor and Cristina Kirchner-Fernandez, and supported by sections of the judiciary. The war on terror serves as a pretext, in Colombia, to maintain the most repressive and most extremely militarized state in existence at present in the Americas. It is used to tarnish all forms of opposition and resistance as monstrous and inhuman, and supportive of terrorism.

Thus, the greatest danger for the development of democratic attitudes and capacities in the Western part of the world at present is not to resist the scheme of the “war on terror”, and the politics of domestication and intimidation, which place terror on the outer edges of society and do not identify it where it is the most dangerous: at its very centre and top - the terrorism of the state. I do not know whether many among us are aware of the role this “discourse” (Zizek 2004) and the corresponding practices that have played in the formation of the formerly liberal and increasingly less liberal democracies of the West. The discourse claims that terror, the threat to security, and the mortal threat to well-being are out there, connected with an elusive enemy, and peace, security, and well being are “in here”, at least as long as we are willing to do everything possible to deal with the threat from out there.

The practices that I refer to above are: draconic legislation waiving basic democratic and human rights, such as habeas corpus; selective persecution; prosecution; isolation of those representing (supposedly) the enemy without; strengthening of the police, intelligence services, and the military apparatus; and most of all, planning all this in a way that citizens’ sense of their own security becomes conditioned on their acquiescence, their passivity before the removal, control and criminalization of those who are the object of exclusionary practices by tarnishing them with the terrorist brush. A brief look at history may help us be more aware and concerned, especially in countries such as the Anglo-American ones, where repression has always been practiced skilfully by being applied selectively, even if at times mercilessly and without scruples (Zinn 1980; Zinn, 1997; Wright 2008). Apart from the French Revolution and the positive reference to terror as a requirement of the revolution in its Robespierrean phase, I believe the term gained major currency in Czarist Russia, when rebellious movements, such as. movements of anarchist groups, at times embraced “terror” as a method of attacking the Czarist authorities, though such behaviours as street bombings, attacks on the police, intimidation of civilians in some cases, and all meant as a tactic of subversion and insubordination. Swiftly, the state resorted to the organisation of counter-terror, or the creation of a state-terrorist force, the
feared Czarist secret police. All this changed, of course, for a while with the 1917 revolution. At the same time, in Germany after the defeat of 1918, right wing terrorist groups arose, often consisting of former military officers, who began targeting the Left, especially the radical Left, thus building one of the nuclei of Fascism and Nazism. Hitlerism made ample use of the charge of “terrorism”, in order to de-legitimize any form of opposition and especially of active resistance in occupied regions and countries. I believe the term “war” was used because though this term one could exploit echoes of the Czarist aggressive defence of a purportedly legitimate order in which only “madmen” could attack, thus also delegitimizing the Soviet revolution, the German Left and internal opposition by exploiting fears of social upheaval, chaos, confrontation.

Thus, the resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto was labelled “terrorist” in Holland, France, Greece, and areas of the former Yugoslavia. By doings so, Nazism and the German army (the SS) all meant to justify grim methods of reprisal, such as the shooting of all male members of a village community because, supposedly, they were partisans or sympathizers of partisans. This is the model followed in the present day in Colombia. State and army proceed in a similar way, in areas where they suspect there is sympathy for the guerrillas. State terrorism flourishes, as the terrorists are depicted as always being out there and frequently are labelled as the dreaded communist subversives organising partisan armies. State sponsored policies of extermination, of the total destruction of resistance, became normal. I see similar processes at work at present in the repression of resistance in Afghanistan and Iraq by the US and its allies.

To leap ahead, really, I believe Hitlerism and Fascism provided the West with a powerful counter-revolutionary, anti-democratic model, for which ways were found to integrate this into “democracy”. The model is that of counterinsurgency and of the national security state, a model which was exploited in the extreme, for example, in Argentina. It still colours some of the discourse there of those opposed to the present government. It has transformed the Colombian state into one of deadly paramilitary rule and intimidation. I recognize that this is a bold and speculative thesis. Yet, we need to be alerted to what it aims at. By this I mean that we need to provoke awareness of the possibility that the defence of privileged security and well-being in the North-Western hemisphere, really the NATO countries, requires exclusion, and at times elimination. It draws on the imperial philosophies of counterinsurgencies such as national security, especially in the United States. Our democracies are imperial, privileged democracies. They thus fear a world in which most people do not enjoy the same conditions of life, faced as they are with hunger, starvation, lack of resources of all kinds, and the possibility of repression and elimination

---

3 This situation already is a theme in Dostoyevsky’s novels. Also A. Camus 1956 and 2002.
4 See the remarkable film “ROSA”, by the German director Margareta Von Trotta. Rosa Luxemburg, the Great Marxist theorist and leader in the working class movement of the early twentieth century, is the heroine of the movie. In 1918 she was murdered by the Prussian Free Corps, an organization of army officers turned “paramilitary” assassins, forming death-squads.
5 Note the regular killing of civilians in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Recently bombing by the US Air Force led to the death of hundreds of civilians in Afghanistan, where cluster bombs have been used as well, especially during the initial phase of the invasion. See the column by Haroon Siddiqui, Toronto Star, p. AA8. Sept. 11 2008.
once they raise their voices and resist. The increasingly less liberal democracies of the North-Atlantic region systematically locate destructiveness outside their borders, so that the full extent of counterinsurgency practices hardly ever reaches their own populations.

The charge of terrorism has, of course, also been used systematically in order to repress movements rising up against imperial rule and exploitation, including antiracist ones, from China and India to South Africa and Latin-America. The historical and contemporary record of this is sordid and deeply disturbing. Thus, Adorno is vindicated; overcoming or succumbing a past of state-terror by calling for closure only makes us less conscious of the potential for it in the present. It also invites the formation of attitudes which stifle the potential for fully developed human relations, without which democracies become mere hollow shells, relations of trust, reciprocal interest, and cooperation, and, as Seyla Benhabib and others once wrote, (Benhabib 1986) a place where relations of care whither and are diminished in their role in everyday life. I am sure many among us have noticed tendencies in everyday life and in organisations and institutions which go in this direction.

One might say that Adorno has been heeded, in Latin America more than in Germany, especially in Argentina of recent times, and in Colombia, given the ongoing resistance there to an extremely brutal and refined system of repression and terrorism practiced by the state. To use a dramatic formula, a state that is one of the three major recipients in the world of military aid from the U.S., (Tate 2001; Brittain 2006) a client state ruled by counterinsurgency mentalities, many of which have been fostered by U.S. agencies such as the US Southern Command, DEA, and intelligence services. Before turning to these both frightening and encouraging situations, it is important to remember how much it takes to engage in strong citizen action. Nazism and Italian Fascism, as well as Spanish “Fascism” (the extreme Catholic and highly repressive Authoritarianism of Franco) were not defeated by internal resistance, but by external forces, such as a lost war or pressure by the European Union as an emerging force of order in Western Europe. The French Resistance was not a majority undertaking, nor was the Dutch resistance. And yes, in Argentina the majority of the middle and upper classes accepted the regime of terror, and may even have regarded it as necessary, as they did in Chile and do today in Colombia. So did a majority of Germans before the war began, and the Jewish resistance in Poland and elsewhere found little or limited support, apart from the Communists. Without active effort, educational and other, and without conscientization in these matters, the silence of the cemetery and the silence bought with economic rewards prevailed. It ruled in Franco’s Spain for decades.

**Remedies**

It follows that I recommend adopting a very realistic perspective. One may remember Adorno’s negative utopia, (cited in Wellmer 1991) that which will heal the wounds of terror, the fully pacified society, as Herbert Marcuse once called it, and which remains without a name, was rooted in methodological and painful, almost unbearable pessimism, always raising doubt about whether human beings are, indeed, capable of justice in our times (Marcuse 1968). Thus, participatory planning, budgetary exercises of the kind once practiced in Porto Alegre at the Social Summit Movement, and the like do not manage to reach the depths of a realism of fear, fear of the worst, from which we must
begin. The much discussed movement of the “Madres de la Plaza de Mayo” in Argentina begins from this kind of fear, as I had the occasion to observe quite recently, and also from reading their journal. ESMA, the former School of the Navy Mechanics in Buenos Aires, had been one of the most notorious torture centres in recent history, certainly in the history of repression in Latin America. It is now being transformed into a centre of memory and recollection. One part of it was opened as “Espacio Cultural Nuestros Hijos” on the 30th of April this year by the Association Madres of Plaza de Mayo. I had the opportunity to participate in the ceremony.

Here there was, indeed, interplay of the recollection of the terror of remembrance, remembrance of the forced and hideously planned disappearance of sons and daughters, the agony of the parents, and particularly mothers, with intervention in the present, even reaching into a sense of wider Latin American solidarity. It includes frank comments on the role the U.S. government plays in the ongoing murder campaigns against the opposition in Colombia, such as in the monthly publication of the “Asociacion de las Madres”. It is thus remembered that the US government, at the time of the dictatorship, supported the coup and the repression, and had been involved in Plan Condor, the notorious scheme which did so much harm to the countries of the Southern Cone in Latin America. President Carter subsequently changed this policy, but without publicly admitting to U.S. complicity. In Argentina, there has been recognition of liberation, especially as Cristina Kirchner Fernandez’s government is on the side of the Madres, and celebration of the newly gained cultural space for recollection, but no overcoming of the past; “No Olvidamos.”

Thus, recollection is carried forward into a project of taking on the conditions of viciousness in the society. In the continent, it is a remarkable form of conscientization, (Freire 1971) involving the arts, politics, and at its centre, the solidarity, affinity, and fellowship, of those, who share the burdens of extreme suffering, of the loss of sons and daughters disappeared and never to return. One may add here that trials do happen, such as a recent one in which a once prominent murderous general was convicted of crimes against humanity, even in his old age. He left the court unrepentant, but he did go to jail, something which did not even happen to some Nazi generals and will probably not happen to those who made war in Iraq.

These are educational events and practices, and they frequently provoke angry reactions including resentment and extreme hostility in some circles. They do not reach the level of publicity of “football” (soccer), so prominent in the Argentines. But they reveal the truth and do not permit society to avoid facing its responsibilities. How liberating, to hear, read the phrase “Terrorismo de Estado” as one does in Argentina, the word “state terrorism”, terrorism practiced by the state, which always is the worst and which in North America is a phrase one may not use, certainly not with respect to situations on our own continent. Experiencing this discourse and observing the accompanying activities, the strength of feeling expressed, was especially moving and liberating for me, as I came to Argentina this April after spending a month in Colombia (Bogota), witnessing the grim situation that Colombians currently face. It is understood by many in Argentina, I believe, that the recollection of state sponsored and practiced massive murderousness, the cleansing by force of a society of all its supposed vices and aberrations, of subversion, is a cornerstone for democracy; learning democracy in the best sense. Democracy has to be
built by “learning”, experiencing in the sites mentioned. It has to be understood that it is something which is not yet; it is still to be made. It is to be a society, and not just a system of government, that which realizes nunca mas, so that the atrocities mentioned cannot happen again.6

This, to me, is a primary task of teaching democracy, of helping others learn, as one learns oneself. The Madres are still present today, 26 years after the collapse of the military and paramilitary regime. It is not only that they have the museum and where it is placed, it is not only the inclusion of art, the on going activity of publicity, the new evening university for the poor and marginal, their cafe and bookstore. It is that the white scarves which they always wear remind everyone of 1979 and 1980-1982, when they were marching, circling in the Plaza de Mayo, when sons and daughters and others were still being disappeared. It reminds everyone of the demand for justice, the indictment of extreme cruelty from which any democracy worth having must begin and where it must end with the kind of vigilance required, as represented by the Madres.

In my seminar on social theory in the Universidad Nacional de la Plata, Province of Buenos Aires, I had a Colombian student. She had worked for the Commission of Reconciliation and Restitution of the Colombian government, an organization set up to pretend that reconciliation, in a country with a history of serious armed conflict, waves of violent confrontation, and armed insurrections and murderous repression, was a real concern of the present government. It was set up to pretend that there was serious concern for healing in a society long traumatized by a historical conflict. The Colombian student was shocked by the fact that in Argentina these days, state-terrorism is called by its name and the war on terror led by Washington and its satellites is understood to be a version of this form of “terrorism”; that it is a method for legitimating systematically generated practices of intimidation and repression. The student also was not capable of assimilating the emphasis on “Memoria y Historia”7 at present in Argentina, on memory, historical recollection and analysis.

Topics of this reflection were the recollection and systematic investigation of what had happened and why between 1976 and 1982, and what preceding factors, conditions politics, and policies had been; what the tensions in Argentinean Peronism were at the time, and the subsequent consequences, up to and including the cruel neoliberal post-dictatorial elected regimes. My student had worked with the Commission of Reconciliation and Restitution (CNNR 2007), a scheme established about 4 years ago in Colombia, designed to establish closure, primarily, on paramilitary crimes against humanity, a scheme that now looks increasingly fraudulent and like a major bureaucratic manipulation of public opinion, an exoneration of paramilitary murderous excesses, including large scale massacres, forced disappearances and displacement, and of the participation of the state, the army, and several governments in all of this.

6 Note the campaigns of a remarkable daily Argentinean newspaper, “Pagina 12”, which regularly publishes photos of the disappeared, often under the slogan: “No olvidamos ni perdonamos”...

7 There are several museum projects either already established or being constructed and there are educational and academic programs of this kind.
I derive from these observations and subsequent ones that participation is not a value as such, unless it is very clear what the basic value commitments are with reference to which people develop their willingness to be active and, critically alert citizens, to be vigilant before the machinations of public authority in particular. Thus, basic commitments have to be renewed which can inspire and arouse the will to participate, which is to say, influence, transform and mobilize people to struggle for a real and lasting improvement of our declining democracies. This is why I now turn to a very inspiring positive example, to an educational effort to counteract a systematically maintained process of political persecution, frequently slipping into cruelty and murderousness, such as the assassination of trade unionists and of human rights defenders. The example is that of MOVICE (Wellmer 1991), the National Movement of Victims of Crimes by the State, in Colombia, whose fourth biannual conference I had the opportunity to attend in March 2008. MOVICE has a short history, 8 to 10 years, but it has unfolded an array of important activities, always under conditions of threat, danger, repression, and administrative hurdles. I took part in a large march, a public demonstration, on March 6th. This demonstration of more than a 100,000 people took place despite the opposition of the state and governmental apparatus and threats by resurrected, recycled paramilitary organizations calling themselves “Aguilas Negras”. These were, in all likelihood, linked with the military and sections of the intelligence apparatus, with a very short lead time and hardly any funds. The march was successful and had a great impact. A sad, disturbing criterion of success is the fact that several of the leaders and organisers received death threats, a few were accosted in the street, and worst all, as if to drive the message home, in the subsequent weeks following the march, four trade union organisers were murdered, following a pattern in existence for a long time.

What was educational in these activities of MOVICE, and how did they contribute to the building of democracy? To begin with, MOVICE’s slogan is: “contra los crimenes del terrorismo estatal, verdad, justicia y reparacion integral para las victimas” or in English, “Against state-terrorism, truth, justice, and full compensation (restitution) for the victims” (Wellmer 1991). To say this, to proclaim these basic humanitarian principles, is to lay the foundation of democracy, of citizens’ action, of a meaningful presence of the citizenry in public life. This proclamation takes place under conditions, when the President of Latin America’s “oldest democracy”, as they always repeat, says the following in a public confrontation with a student who criticises him: “I know your name, I know where you live, your telephone number, who your family is”. One gets the idea. The young man replied: “Mr President You can threaten me, frighten me, but you can not force me to be silent”.

This is the spirit of MOVICE, a spirit which, if it grows, will transform what one of the heroes of the Colombian resistance, the Catholic Jesuit priest Padre Xavier Giraldo has called the “Genocidal Democracy (Giraldo 1996). This spirit could transform Colombia into a country willing to enter a path of healing itself, a country deeply formed and deformed by U.S. Intervention, from the origins of para-militarism in which the US military was involved (Giraldo 1996; Tate 2001), to Plan Colombia the continuing high level of military and related aid, the third highest amount of aid distributed in the world, after Israel and Egypt. It has been stated repeatedly in Argentina, (Nunca Mas 1984) and also in Chile after Pinochet, in South Africa, and now in Colombia, that what is most important is to tell the
truth, to uncover all actions of inhumanity, to let those close to the victims and the general public know what has really happened. The truth must be told; the truth about the assassinations, massacres, systematic persecution and exclusion, the truth about exile and forced internal displacement. In Colombia, 4 million people have been affected by this, one of the highest levels of this kind in the world. MOVICE, by mounting successful demonstrations, musical and dramatic presentations, by joining people in activities of remembrance, and through the planning of strategies (several well developed strategies), of resistance, does all this. It educates the Colombian public, as the media try to ignore them. But most of all, it educates its own members and supporters, giving them courage, guidance, and especially by making them feel that they are not alone, that theirs is a shared predicament, and that people in all regions of the country are participating in this effort. Everyone understands that they must be there for those in similar situations; that they must be there for one another.

And now, as much as I would like to do the opposite, I feel I need to end on a sad note, with feelings of deep regret. It compels me to adopt a deeply critical perspective on the country where this conference is taking place, on Canada. In November 2007, I was a member of an International Tribunal of Opinion in Colombia, reviewing the situation of forced displacement there. This tribunal took place due to the cooperation of many from Europe and the Americas. It found the support and encouragement of the Vice President of the Human Rights Commission of the Colombian Senate, a very courageous oppositional politician, someone who cannot count on a quiet existence as a prominent senator. We heard the public testimony of many people, poor people, people who had often come several hundred kilometres in order to give testimony, travelling more than a day at times. Their testimony was delivered in the totally crowded senate chambers, which had rarely seen such a large crowd of poorly dressed people, campesinos and indigenous Colombians, Afro-Colombians, and people of the mixed race majority of this country. Among them I encountered an amazingly forthright, strong and eloquent young black woman from the Pacific coast (Buenaventura) who spoke of the brutal assassination and mutilation of her brother by members of a paramilitary unit. She had to flee, all her family fled. She now lived in another city with her daughter, where she was also threatened. When she found out, that she had been located, she kept her daughter at home because she feared that her daughter would be abducted after receiving threats of this nature. Her daughter was very eager to go to school, but the mother could not let her go, as she feared that this would provide an opportunity for the kidnappers to abduct her. I met this woman again in March. She had the courage to come to the conference of MOVICE, participating in the same indomitable spirit, a model citizen standing up for justice and inspiring others in the face of extraordinary danger and with no concern for revenge. She was also desperate. She asked me whether I could help her leave Colombia for Canada to find security for her daughter.

I later went to the Canadian embassy to organize an official visit by representatives of MOVICE to the embassy. At the embassy I learned, among other matters, that embassy staff is not directly in charge of immigration and refugee matters and that chances of gaining direct access to a councillor were slim. Colombian friends recommended organizations, including Amnesty International and others that might help. But what remained with me was the young woman’s liveliness and courage, and her despair and the
bitter feeling that this country, Canada, does not open its doors to people like her, while actually receiving persons who can either pay to come into the country, or who have the right connections, sometimes running through organisations which themselves have connections to paramilitary ones. Canada supports policies in Colombia which lead to the atrocities this woman has been subject to, just like so many others. Canada may even receive as refugees and immigrants people who may have been the tormentors of others. Signing a free trade agreement with Colombia, as the present government plans to do, gives legitimacy to a government in Colombia which refuses to take serious action against these murderous groups and which puts persistent pressure on its most insistent critics, to the point of driving critical journalists out of the country or manipulating conditions in such a way that they do not feel safe anymore.

So, where to begin with educational citizens actions in Canada? I believe it has to be by opposing this country’s complicity in the construction of a new world order based on fear, exploitation, creeping militarization, and low intensity wars, and to get rid of all the schemes which have been spawned by the so called “war on terror”. Without the will to resist fear-mongering, intimidation, the wilful creation of enemy- images, of enemy-aliens, unlawful combatants, dangerous subversives, and the like, democracy only is a shell of itself. It becomes a pretext for domination, and may become a national surveillance state and internationally, an abusive, opportunistic “partner” to other states. Moving in this direction will undermine even further the little that is left of functioning international institutions based on principles of reciprocity and cooperation.

References

Alvear Restrepo, J. *Corporacion Colectivo de Abogados*. Bogota: FIDH.
Modelos por la Memoria: *Para Armar Hacia una Pedagogia de la Memoria*. Directed by Pasado Reciente.

Performed by Comision Provincial. 2008.
"Comision Provincial por la Memoria." Buenos Aires, 2008.
Participatory Democracy and Ecojustice: Framing a View of Healthy Learning Organizations through Complexity Science

Darren Stanley
Faculty of Education, University of Windsor

Kelly Young
School of Education and Professional Learning, Trent University

Abstract

In this paper we consider how the theoretical framework and hermeneutic lens known as complexity science might inform a view of participatory democracy and, by extension, a view of ecojustice. Specifically, we examine certain underlying principles of complexity science as organizational invariances that arise within and without all relationally-embedded organizational bodies—physiological, biological, psychological, social, cultural, political, and ecological. In terms of thinking about “learning democracy by doing,” we turn our attention to the more contemporary view of dynamical systems, the growing ecojustice movement, and more traditional views of indigenous knowledge to frame an understanding of participatory democracy that is (w)holistic, organic, and sustainable. To this end, we consider important principles and notions like diversity and variability, redundancy, self-organization and emergence, relationships and connections, distributed leadership and governance, and organizational health and learning. By way of examples, we will draw from our own experiences as educators and citizens of the world to show that “learning democracy by doing” can happen across many different scales. To help us achieve this, we turn our attention to Nature for guidance in the way that life self-organizes and for a new set of images and metaphors to frame and describe participatory democracy and ecojustice. In doing so, we will show that while the substance of the organizations may be different, beneath each deeply entangled and embedded organization is a set of underlying principles that prompt and give shape to healthy, sustainable, democratic organizations.
Introduction

Looking outward and inward, it should not be surprising to notice that the world appears as a vast collection of deeply embedded life-forms manifest across various scales of time and space. To be sure, the world appears as a collection of diverse living organizational beings. We argue here, however, that such a vast collection of “bodies”, usually thought of and categorized in terms of disciplinary objects for study, might be better conceived of in terms of organizational principles that, in spite of a diversity of organizational substances, are often structured in very similar ways. Such a stance resonates with physicist Abdus Salam’s thoughts where he noted that “nature is not economical of structure—only of principles” (Kelso & Engstrøm 2006).

In this paper, we draw upon a transdiscursive conception of the world to frame a particular view of democracy as an important aspect of healthy learning organizations. Moreover, we offer a transdisciplinary framework to describe a more thoughtful and inherently participatory view of democracy that resonates with the globally emerging movement known as ecojustice. To conceive of such a framework, we draw upon a relatively new field of study known as “complexity science” and some of its underlying principles. Specifically, we refer to a particular collection of organizational principles that will help frame an understanding of healthy organizations and a view of ecojustice that shows the importance and necessity for all involved to participate in the world in meaningful ways.

In recent decades, an increasing number of scholars, researchers, and practitioners from a number of different disciplines have come to think about living phenomena in ways that resonate with conceptual ideas in more recent times associated with the emerging field of complexity science. As a framework for thinking about a wide variety of disciplinary concerns and matters from the natural sciences to the social sciences, complexity science has come to be recognized for its study of, and attention to, dynamical patterns and processes. As such, the relatively new field has proven to be a helpful way for thinking about and understanding the world as a vast entanglement of living “bodies”—for example, physiological subsystems, various species and biological beings, social collectives, political and governance structures, cultural bodies of knowledge, and the larger ecosphere.

The concept of a “body” is one that suggests something quite specific. In matters pertaining to health, for instance, a traditional view of life, death, health and illness is rooted in everyday assumptions that the body is an object that fills a particular, well-defined space not shared by any other body—a rather atomistic view. Our bodies, therefore, are thought to be like containers, distinguishable and discernable from all other bodies. As such, in matters of health, the origination and location of some illness, toxin, or cancer within a diseased body, as one might typically experience such matters, is rooted in the physical nature of the body and is traditionally thought to be a malfunction of certain “building blocks.” As the physician Larry Dossey (1982) reminds us, fragmentation and isolation are prominent features of this traditional view of health. He continues:

> Bodies, as in the classical view of atoms, stand alone, both in space and in time. Although they form patterns, at heart they are single units in a deep, fundamental
sense. Connectedness is seen only in terms of interaction of quintessentially separate bits and pieces (141).

As our concern here is for the living, the notion that life is a property of various isolated and isolatable bodies does not fit well with a complexity theory view. This view stresses the concept of emergence, a property of all living things across the entire universe, suggesting that all organizational forms of life are, out of necessity, connected with and to one another. As such, we posit that there has been a certain measure of inattentiveness to the notions of collectivity and connectivity in the world. In some sense, then, some healing is required for the invisible relations and connections that normally hold the world together to bring forth a greater, healthier whole.

Considering the adaptive nature of all living phenomena, the notion of living organizations is not far away. It seems quite appropriate, then, for this paper to consider the nature of all living phenomena, as framed by complexity science principles, in light of certain dynamical patterns which can be described in terms of health. Thus, the aim of this paper is to consider the nature of healthy learning communities in terms of certain complexity science principles to frame an understanding of the concept of participatory democracy within the context of ecojustice.

Lessons from Nature: Portraits and Principles of Complex Dynamical Systems

Numerous phenomena in nature seem to unfold within and from a certain logic for predictability, stability, and regularity. An oak seed turns into a young sapling, which grows up to be a fully mature oak tree. A human embryo grows and enters the world as a baby before becoming a child, and then a teenager, and then an adult. And, so on. But, of course, the world is not so predictable, as living phenomena unfold non-linearly across many scales all at once.

Technically speaking, many of these processes and patterns can be described as fractals, a termed invented by Benoit Mandelbrot (1982). The world of nature, in fact, is full of irregular structures that are temporally and/or spatially fractal, manifestations of a particular quality known as “self-similarity”. This is the notion that an object, when magnified across various scales, resembles the original object—like a tree when compared to its branches, limbs, and smaller twigs. In other words, we find details at all scales of the organization that resemble the many scales of the organization, including the entire organization itself. Such systems of organization are, moreover, said to be robust enough to maintain a certain coherent identity for itself (Jen 2003). This sense of robustness might otherwise be described as “being healthy” or “healthy robustness”.

In the mid- to late-20th century, a shift in the ways that certain researchers thought about dynamical systems arose from a realization that there are different kinds of dynamical phenomena. In particular, Warren Weaver, an early cyberneticist and information theorist in the 1940’s and 50’s, was among one of the first prominent scientists to question and address differences in dynamical patterns on a formal level. In a seminal paper, Weaver (1948) outlined three different dynamical phenomena, which he termed
“simple,” “disorganized complexity” and “organized complexity”. These have attracted the interest of many other scientists since then. As a result, the complexity sciences came together around the realization that there are different kinds of dynamic phenomena, which call for different interpretive and descriptive frames.

“Simple” systems were thought of and discussed in terms of small numbers of independent parts or variables that determine the system. These include single-body projectiles, planetary orbits, and generally many mechanical systems where the parts and the interactions of those parts are well-defined. As such, the analytical tools available to early thinkers like Newton and Galileo proved to be sufficient to understand and model such phenomena.

Eventually, scientists and mathematicians encountered or created more complicated systems where the number of interacting parts or variables used to understand or model the system was increased slightly. In the 19th century, as individuals considered systems with increasingly larger numbers of interacting parts or variables, the need for special analytic tools became necessary and new analytic tools and statistical instruments were introduced during this time. Whereas the earlier tools from Newton’s and Galileo’s times were appropriate for describing the interactive dynamical parts of certain phenomena, statistical and probability tools and instruments provided “pictures” of the global behaviours of a system with numerous independent parts. Weaver described these kinds of dynamical systems as “disorganized systems.”

The problem is that there are other kinds of phenomena that stretch across a wide range of organizational structure—for instance, physiological systems, various social collectivities, and cultural and ecological phenomena. These are not examples of disorganized complexity, but are what Weaver originally described as “organized complexity.” Such “complex” systems, like classrooms or the workplace, the nervous system or traffic jams, do not easily “surrender” to the kinds of analytic tools that were originally designed to interpret chance events or various statistical distributions. In fact, complex systems marked a big break that came about upon realizing that they are volatile and unpredictable because they have a capacity to modify themselves or adapt.

Today the terms “simple” and “disorganized complexity” are not so prominent and have been reduced to the concept of “complicated” systems, and the term “organized complexity” has been reduced to “complexity.” “Complicated,” therefore, is now used in today’s more contemporary discourses to refer to events involving individual or collective independent actions. This includes both simple and disorganized complex systems, whereas, “complexity” generally corresponds to “organized complexity” (Waldrop 1992).

In “complicated” organizations, the sum of all of the parts produces a complete “thing” that can be taken apart and put back together to its original form. The various parts are connected and interact with one another in very precise ways. Although the parts may be connected in rather precise ways, there need not be any “relationships” among the various parts. These kinds of connections are tied together as with a string that ties everything together, and the interactions and overall organizational dynamics are completely determined in their collective action. Relationships, however, as in human
relationships, suggest something more than the mere interactions of agents or parts in a system. Relationships are the organizing principle for the world (Lewin & Regine 2001, 7).

**Connections to Ecojustice**

Today, many scholars and organizational practitioners seem to be emphasizing a shift toward and greater attention on human relationships. The essence of these various relationships is, perhaps, more toward being coherent. For instance, intimacy is “closeness”: we are physically close to people with whom we are intimate. But sometimes people in intimate or meaningful relations “drift apart”. As such, there is a certain “strength” to people’s relationships. Framed in this manner, “complicated” or “mechanical” organizations have weak relations or even none at all. At the other end of the spectrum, however, a relation could be so strong that the possibility for action becomes rather limited, and a lock-step pattern emerges. It is, therefore, the relationships “in between” these two extremes that make for healthy organizations.

It is not so much that by moving toward the “middle” of these two extremes that healthy relations and healthy organizations appear. Still, the patterns in between the predictable stable waviness of homeostatic processes and the random fluctuations of uncorrelatedness are, rather, a range of optimal connectedness and expressed in patterns of great variability. To be sure, we are not simply talking about social relationships: we are talking about relationships in general that hold the whole world together organically, sustainability and justly. To this end, we move towards some connections with ecojustice.

By bringing together organizational principles in complexity science that contribute to notions of relationality, holism, sustainability, self-organization, etc., democracy’s role in promoting healthy learning organizations assumes a new significance and has implications for future generations in terms of the growing cultural and ecological crises that perpetuate unhealthy learning environments. It does this through an ecojustice framework that espouses healthy relations and interdependence among cultural and natural systems by way of an intergenerational model that brings into focus a cultural analysis of societal tribulations.

In the ecojustic dictionary, democracy is defined as:

A process of decision making that involves all members of the community; it is expressed in culturally varied ways; in the West democracy is often associated with the assumption that decisions reflect the self-interest of the individual and that collectively the pursuit of self-interest contributes to the well-being of the larger society; in other cultures, democratic decision-making may be limited to decisions what helps to conserve the commons or about who has demonstrated the wisdom and degree of selflessness to make decisions for the entire community; democratic decision-making about which practices sustain the commons may be undermined by authoritarian powers—including universal prescriptions that are too often couched in the language of progress and emancipation from traditions (Bowers & Martusewicz 2004, 2).

By taking into consideration a limited Western view of democracy that focuses solely on human interests and expanding such a notion with a non-Western view of democracy
that considers non-human interests, the sense of the term democracy takes on new meaning. With a more inclusive definition to work with, conceptualizations of what informs healthy learning organizations also expand to include human and non-human relationships at the heart of an ecojustice approach to education.

_Eco-justice_, the condition or principle of being just or equitable with respect to ecological sustainability and protection of the environment, as well as social and economic issues (OED 2008).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term Ecojustice appears in print as early as 1973. _Eco_, the root of the word _ecology_ derives from the Greek _oikos_, meaning “household,” and involves the study of relationships. Linking ecology, justice and pedagogy, _eco-justice education_ (EJE), involves an analysis of the cultural degradation and the ecological crisis informed through an interdisciplinary approach to educational theory and practice. The fields of social linguistics, sociology of knowledge, deep ecology, ecofeminism, and Indigenous studies in an examination of the role of the cultural roots of the environmental crisis inform Ecojustice, and in so doing, provide a framework to: a) explore the ways in which language informs ways of knowing and being in terms of how metaphor plays a major role in human relationships with natural and reconstructed environments; b) provide a critique of scientism and technology in terms of their powerful hegemonic role in the way knowledge is conceived and reproduced in Western culture; c) consider the importance of Oral traditions within diverse cultural commons that is often ignored in social justice frameworks; d) explore issues of environmental racism and provide a feminist perspective about the future of the Earth; and e) provide a commentary on Western notions of “progress” in relation to local and global communities in order to reflect on the historical, cultural, philosophical, linguistic, political, economic and educational roots of the ecological crisis (Bowers 2001, 2005; Bowers 2006; Bowers & Apffel-Marglin 2004).


Through an ecojustice framework, the ways in which “the body” has been conceptualized through a Western lens as autonomous and isolated is explored, deconstructed and reconceived. For example, Shepard (1982) suggests that:

We are reminded with painful regularity of our continuing sense of dislocation, the neuroses of personal identity problems, the terror of loneliness in the crowd, of isolation both from society and from the rest of nature. These anxieties are linked to doubts about the purpose of life, even of order in the creation (26).

Our bodies are, as Shepard notes, “dislocated” and “isolated” not only from other human bodies but also from the natural world. Examples of these can be seen in everyday
conversation that evokes a take-for-granted notion of independence rather than interdependence, such as “self-sufficiency is vitally important,” “do not borrow from anyone as it reveals a weakness,” “strong people do not rely on anyone” “family is best experienced 5000 miles away.” There is a theme that gets reproduced, that is, a theme that somehow “the body” does not need human or non-human interaction in order to survive and even strive to be healthy.

For Bowers (2003), a historical trajectory of a Western conceptualization of “the body” can be traced to Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), who likened the body to a clock through the use of a mechanistic metaphor. He writes, “Mechanism is a root metaphor that had its roots in the transition from a Medieval to the modern worldview” (2). For Bowers, Kepler “used the root metaphor of mechanism to explain the universe as a celestial machine” (ibid). Clearly, ecojustice educators believe that language is central to the cultural ecological analysis of healthy environments since language has a history and reproduces deep cultural assumptions that shape a world-view. With English being a dominant language that shapes Western ideologies that reproduce Enlightenment principles, elements of language such as mechanistic metaphors need to be explored. This is vital in order to: a) recognize and name the root metaphor of mechanism in order to understand the ways in which “the body” is not a clock, and b) develop an ecological consciousness that interprets “the body” as holistic and embedded in an ecosystem in order to demystify the self-nature dichotomy.

By making explicit implicit assumptions that have previously led to ecological blindness, ecojustice educators develop a conviction of ecological concepts by considering where patterns of thought come from since, as Bowers suggests, words encode misconceptions and are carried forward in Western culture. It is inconceivable that an ecological relation to “the body” can exist without reframing “the body” through an ecological root metaphor in order to have a high regard for its complexity. By complexity we mean something far broader than merely imagining “the body” as organs, flesh and bones; we mean complex in a philosophical, cultural and ecological sense. Perhaps the most serious obstacle impeding the conceptualization of “the body” as ecological (as opposed to mechanistic), is in fact that the educational system is headed away from, rather than toward, ecological fundamentals that enable the development of ecological consciousness of “the body” as relationally embedded in an ecosystem and mediated through and by language. Examples include the ways in which “the body” is conceived as mechanistic in the curriculum through “product” and “outcomes based” language that positions students as “producers” of manufactured goods rather than focusing on “processes” undertaken during a democratic approach to fostering healthy learning environments. A complexity science approach then, as conceived through an ecojustice frame, involves, among other things, a critical repositioning of language in order to reveal what interferes with and erodes a participatory approach to democracy that is a necessary aspect of a healthy learning organization.

References


Martusewicz, R. "Eros in the commons: Educating for eco-ethical consciousness in a poetics of place." Ethics, Place & Environment 8, no. 3 (2005): 331-348.


Weaver, W. "Science and complexity." American Scientist 36 (2948): 53-76.
Programa de Capacitación y Formación en Cultura Escolar para la Paz

Belkis Mendoza de Gómez y Daniela Donadi
Universidad Nacional Experimental Simón Rodríguez

Introducción

El Programa de Capacitación y Formación en Cultura Escolar para la Paz, forma parte del Proyecto Escuelas de Calidad (PEC), el cual se orienta al desarrollo humano de los actores sociales sobre la base de la realidad escolar–comunitaria y de su proyecto educativo, a fin de promover y asegurar en los planteles escolares asociados a la UNESR-Núcleo Barquisimeto, gestión escolar para calidad educacional. El programa, busca promover una educación en valores democráticos, conforme a lo establecido en la Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela (1999), los valores de equidad y justicia social que sustentan el PEC y acorde a los planteamientos de paz, tolerancia y convivencia pacífica, propuestos por el Proyecto Cascada (2006). Surge como respuesta, a los resultados obtenidos del diagnóstico escolar–comunitario realizado por participantes de prácticas de licenciatura en Educación Integral y Preescolar, quienes a través de técnicas de recolección de información tales como: observación, entrevista y encuesta, encontraron particularmente en las aulas escolares agresividad física y verbal y violencia entre los niños y niñas. Asimismo en los espacios escolares y comunitarios, de detectaron problemas comunicacionales, conflictos en las relaciones interpersonales y una marcada intolerancia política. La situación evidenciada, llevó al PEC, a proponer el programa ya mencionado, a fin de capacitar y formar a los y las participantes en técnicas de resolución de conflictos, comunicación efectiva, liderazgo para la paz y toma de decisiones efectivas. El programa se desarrolló en cuatro fases: sensibilización y capacitación, desarrollo, seguimiento y evaluación. La fase de desarrollo fue ejecutada por participantes, sobre la base de la capacitación y formación recibida en la primera fase del programa. De este modo, diseñaron talleres y realizaron actividades colectivas con niños y niñas, padres, docentes y miembros de la comunidad. Se logró que los y las participantes, desarrollaran competencias conceptuales, procedimentales y actitudinales para promover y fortalecer una Cultura Escolar que garantice paz, tolerancia y convivencia pacífica; y así contribuir con el mejoramiento de la calidad de vida de los actores sociales en los planteles escolares y sus comunidades.
Programa de Capacitación y Formación en Cultura Escolar para la Paz (PCEP)

El Programa de Capacitación y Formación en Cultura Escolar para la Paz (PCECP), surge de un proceso investigativo, académico y de extensión que se desarrolla desde el año 2000 en la Universidad Nacional Experimental Simón Rodríguez- (UNESR)-Núcleo Barquisimeto, con el Proyecto Escuelas de Calidad (PEC). Este proyecto, se orienta a promover en los planteles receptores de pasantes cultura escolar para calidad educacional, conforme a principios constitucionales y legales establecidos por el Estado Venezolano y en correspondencia a las realidades escolares-comunitarias, necesidades y expectativas de los actores sociales; quienes demandan organización y gestión escolar de calidad y permanente capacitación, motivación del factor humano escolar, como vía para el mejoramiento institucional continuo y aseguramiento de la calidad educacional.

Con el PEC, se intenta abordar la realidad escolar-comunitaria en toda su complejidad, y a través de los diagnósticos realizados por los/las participantes de práctica profesional (PP) de la Licenciatura en Educación Integral e Inicial, se busca identificar la multiplicidad y diversidad de hechos o situaciones inmersos en la dinámica escolar-comunitaria que revelan problemas estudiantiles, académicos, organizacionales, comunitarios y profesionales para su correspondiente abordaje y solución.

Entre los problemas más significativos de velados durante el período 2004-2006, se encuentra que en las aulas escolares se manifiestan situaciones conflictivas en las que predomina la agresividad y la expresión de actitudes violentas, ya sean verbales o físicas entre los niños y niñas y/o entre docentes y estudiantes. De igual manera, se observaron problemas comunicacionales entre docentes, estudiantes, padres y representantes; conflictos en las relaciones interpersonales entre docentes y sus pares, docentes y padres, docentes y directivos. Asimismo, se denotó una marcada intolerancia política-laboral con impacto significativo en las relaciones grupales y el trabajo en grupo entre los actores escolares y comunitarios del plantel escolar. De igual manera, en los procesos escolares relacionados con toma de decisiones, se observó apatía o actitudes impositivas, sin considerar y respetar las opiniones de otros actores escolares.

Esta realidad, motivó que desde el PEC se diseñara y desarrollara un Programa de Formación y Capacitación, dirigido a participantes de práctica profesional en resolución de conflictos, comunicación efectiva, liderazgo para la paz y toma decisiones efectivas, en el marco de la ‘educación en valores democráticos.’ Esto con el propósito, de que dichos participantes promovieran en los planteles escolares una cultura escolar para la paz, desde el ejercicio de la Fase IV y V del Programa de Práctica profesional.

De este modo, además de que los participantes cumplieran con los requerimientos académicos de la PP, se formaban y se preparaban para luego capacitar a los actores escolares en Cultura escolar para la Paz, contribuyendo así en la promoción de los valores democráticos y en la construcción de espacios en los que prevalezca la paz, la tolerancia, la solidaridad y el respeto, como vía para el aseguramiento de una mejor calidad de vida y la consolidación de una sociedad democrática.
Justificación

Los signos de violencia y agresión manifiestos en las aulas escolares y develados por participantes de PP, permiten suponer que tales signos, son el reflejo de la realidad escolar, familiar o comunitaria que diariamente los niños y niñas, jóvenes o adultos viven y conviven, en Venezuela. Mas aún, desde el conflicto político-social acontecido en el año 2002; se ha configurado una cultura de la intolerancia manifiesta en la división, la fragmentación de la sociedad y la separación como ciudadanos venezolanos que vivimos y convivimos en un mismo país.

De acuerdo a Pineda (2006, 100), los conflictos políticos-sociales en los últimos años, ha producido una división que ha generado impactos en los niños, niñas y adolescentes, quienes han sido víctimas silenciosos de dicho conflicto. Señala:

Las pasiones desbordadas traducidas en intolerancia, irrespeto y violencia penetraron su mundo, entraron a los salones de clase, a sus casas y hasta permearon las relaciones entre sus amigos y profesores, demostrando que lamentablemente la discriminación con tinte político, afectó a la niñez y a la adolescencia, generando distintas formas de violencia y restricciones en el ejercicio de los derechos.

Lo anterior podría ser una de las razones que confirma lo encontrado en los planteles escolares receptores de pasantes, donde se ha acentuado la agresión, la división y la separación; consecuencia de un modelaje que se ha socializado, marcado por antivalentes democráticos.

Por otra parte, también se encontró a través de conversaciones informales con los/las participantes de PP, que la mayoría desconocen los derechos humanos, los principios constitucionales de participación, opinión y buen trato, el derecho a la participación, el derecho a bienes y servicios de calidad; lo referido a la separación de poderes y el estado de derecho, como aspectos fundamentales para el fortalecimiento de una democracia participativa. De igual manera, expresaban ambigüedad conceptual al definir términos como: paz, tolerancia, respeto, libertad y convivencia.

Tal realidad, motivó que desde el PEC se diseñara un Programa de capacitación y formación en Cultura escolar para la Paz, además de las siguientes razones:

- Una necesidad manifiesta por padres, representantes y docentes de encontrar mecanismos para mejorar las relaciones interpersonales, la comunicación y solucionar conflictos de manera pacífica
- La ausencia en los planteles escolares, de espacios para la discusión y reflexión crítica de los problemas que se presentan y la búsqueda de soluciones de manera consensuada, participativa y pacífica
- El desconocimiento por parte de los actores escolares de técnicas y herramientas para prevenir la violencia y promover la paz
- La escasez de programas de formación y capacitación orientados a la promoción de valores para la convivencia pacífica y la prevención de la violencia escolar
Finalmente, la necesidad de promover y fortalecer una educación en valores democráticos, ante el incremento de la violencia en todos los entornos escolares–comunitarios a nivel local, regional y nacional

**Fundamentación Doctrinaria y Teórica del PCECP**

**Basamento legal**
- Los fines supremos, los derechos irrenunciables, los valores fundamentales, los propósitos del Estado...condición previa a la responsabilidad social de la educación (Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela - CRBV 1999)
- Los deberes y derechos relacionados con la defensa de los derechos humanos como garantía para la convivencia ciudadana en paz y armonía. Y la participación ciudadana de manera solidaria, como estrategia para promover valores democráticos
- Los deberes ciudadanos para promover la paz: “Toda persona tiene el deber de cumplir sus responsabilidades sociales y participar solidariamente en la vida política, civil y comunitaria del país, promoviendo y defendiendo los derechos humanos como fundamento de la convivencia democrática y la paz social” (CRBV 1999, Artículo 32)
- Las políticas públicas sobre finalidad de la educación, de deberes y derechos, los valores y ética pública como razón social de la educación. (Ley Orgánica de Educación 1980)
- El desarrollo integral, protección, participación del niño y adolescente como corresponsabilidad de la familia, la escuela y el estado (Ley Orgánica para la Protección del Niño y el Adolescente 2000).
- La calidad de bienes y servicios como derecho ciudadano y obligación del estado para asegurar calidad de vida, bienestar social. (Ley del Sistema Venezolano para la Calidad 2002)

**Fundamentación Teórica**
- Promover procesos reflexivos en las personas, que estimulen entendimiento de sus propios actos para lograr una mayor autonomía y libertad personal
- Potenciar procesos transformacionales en las prácticas educativas y en las problemáticas existentes en la escuela, en la comunidad y en la sociedad, mediante una educación fundamentada en la participación, la reflexión, el diálogo, la discusión, la interacción individual y colectiva. Esto hace posible la concientización (Freire 1976) y además de ello, la emancipación social (Habermas 1989)
- La reflexión constructiva, el aprendizaje compartido, el diálogo de saberes, la discusión y la racionalidad comunicativa–social representan métodos y/o estrategias para fomentar el desarrollo humano y promover competencias para la toma de decisiones y la asunción de compromisos que propicien una educación de
calidad; en el marco de una educación basada en valores democráticos, orientada a la promoción de una cultura escolar para la paz y a la construcción de una sociedad participativa, libre y con justicia social

**Educación en valores democráticos**

- La educación en valores democráticos, busca formar a los actores sociales en tolerancia, paz y respeto a la diversidad; como valores indisociables de la persona y del grupo social, que opta por un modelo de convivencia basado en la construcción racional y autónoma de valores ciudadanos, para vivir y convivir en democracia

- La tolerancia y la convivencia constituyen valores cívicos inmanentes a la persona, que se expresan en forma voluntaria y consciente y que además orientan, dirigen nuestras aspiraciones como ciudadanos y todas aquellas, que se deriven en el marco de nuestros derechos y obligaciones consagradas en la Constitución, en las leyes, reglamentos y disposiciones nacionales

- La tolerancia es concebida como cualidad humana y virtud ciudadana. Es el reconocimiento de mis opiniones y creencias, el respeto y la aceptación de las opiniones o creencias de otros y la interrelación entre ambos aspectos, para la concertación. Es reconocer que alguien puede disentir de mis convicciones personales u opiniones y que ello, es un derecho social

- La convivencia, se define como el respeto y construcción de normas que regulan la vida colectiva. Estas normas, son reglas que benefician a todos, dado que subsumen la comprensión, el reconocimiento y el interés al otro, la empatía y la comunicación, como elementos para garantizar el respeto, la solidaridad y la tolerancia

**Competencias para la paz y la convivencia pacífica**

- Las competencias para promover y consolidar una cultura escolar para la paz, constituyen competencias ciudadanas. Es el conjunto de aptitudes y actitudes para el ejercicio de la ciudadanía en el marco del respeto, la tolerancia y la paz. Son competencias para ser, pensar y actuar sobre la base de los valores democráticos y además de ello, saber qué hacer ante los problemas y situaciones conflictivas que se presentan en la cotidianidad

- Las competencias para la paz y la convivencia pacífica son concebidas como el conjunto de conocimientos, habilidades, destrezas y valores que le facilitan al actor social, pensar, sentir y actuar conforme a sus valores democráticos. El actor social ante situaciones conflictivas, ejerce su ciudadanía con tolerancia, respeto, solidaridad y equidad; promoviendo la no violencia, el diálogo, el consenso y la participación responsable.

**Competencias conceptuales**

Se refieren a los conocimientos sobre aspectos conceptuales y teóricos de la educación en valores democráticos. Incluye el conocimiento y comprensión de la base doctrinaria del estado, leyes y reglamentos garantes de la democracia, los derechos humanos, los valores democráticos, teorías y enfoques sobre la formación en valores, entre otros. Incluye el desarrollo de habilidades del pensamiento para: planificar y diseñar
procesos, procedimientos y mecanismos para la solución pacífica de conflictos, el uso y manejo de técnicas comunicacionales, la capacidad de análisis y reflexión constructiva, la toma de decisiones efectivas, la capacidad para crear espacios para el diálogo y la participación responsable; la capacidad para resolver problemas y buscar soluciones nuevas, entre otras (Tobòn 2006).

**Competencias Procedimentales**

Se refieren a las habilidades y destrezas para aplicar aspectos conceptuales y teóricos de la educación en valores democráticos. Comprende habilidad para diseñar y ejecutar un proyecto comunitario, realizar estudios diagnósticos sobre realidades escolares, diseñar, procesar e interpretar instrumentos, diseñar recursos que faciliten los procesos de formación y promoción de la paz, y conformar grupos y trabajar en equipo, entre otras.

**Competencias Actitudinales**

Comprende aquellas actitudes y valores para ejercer ciudadanía y promover la paz y la convivencia pacífica. Esto abarca: motivación al logro; expresión de valores democráticos como respeto, tolerancia, solidaridad, auto reflexionar sobre su ser y hacer en la democracia, sensibilidad y compromiso social, propiciar y consolidar espacios para el diálogo constructivo, participación activa y responsable, toma de decisiones consensuadas con autonomía y responsabilidad personal, manejo de emociones, y asertividad, entre otras.

**Metodología**

Según el Manual de Trabajo de Grado de la UPEL (2003), la presente propuesta se define como un proyecto factible; por cuanto sobre la base de los diagnósticos escolares-comunitarios, se diseñó un programa a fin de resolver una problemática o satisfacer necesidades de un grupo social. Esto significa, que a través del PCECP, se persigue brindar herramientas teóricas, conceptuales y procedimentales a participantes de práctica profesional y actores escolares involucrados, para el abordaje de los problemas de violencia y agresión que se presentan en sus espacios escolares y/o comunitarios y así, encontrar una solución en la que participen todos/todas en forma pacífica como vía para el fomento de la paz, la tolerancia y la convivencia pacífica.

En este propósito el PCECP plantea los siguientes objetivos:

- Desarrollar en los participantes de práctica profesional competencias conceptuales, procedimentales y actitudinales para promover y consolidar en los planteles escolares y sus comunidades una cultura escolar para la paz

- Desarrollar en los actores escolares-comunitarios habilidades y destrezas para la resolución pacífica de conflictos a fin de fomentar en la comunidad escolar paz, tolerancia y convivencia pacífica

El programa se desarrolla en cuatro fases. La primera es de sensibilización y capacitación. En ésta, los participantes de PP además de capacitarse en aspectos conceptuales-teóricos sobre valores democráticos, educación en valores democráticos, base doctrinaria y legal venezolana, entre otros; reciben entrenamiento en técnicas para la resolución pacífica de conflictos, liderazgo para la paz, toma de decisiones y comunicación
efectiva. Esta formación, les permite auto conocerse, valorar, perfeccionar sus concepciones y acciones respecto a la paz y la convivencia pacífica como valores democráticos.

Para lograrlo, se realizan talleres como estrategia de aprendizaje a fin de que los participantes vivencien el modelo democrático y las actividades implícitas en el programa. Asimismo se enfatiza en el dominio conceptual y procedimental de técnicas y actividades sobre resolución pacífica de conflictos, para luego, desarrollarlas con los actores escolares y comunitarios de los planteles escolares.

La segunda fase es la de desarrollo, la cual es ejecutada por los propios participantes de PP, sobre la base de la primera fase. En esta, dichos participantes organizados en grupos de trabajo; planifican y diseñan un Plan de Acción en Cultura Escolar para la Paz, el cual será aplicado en el plantel escolar que decida libremente asumirlo y ejecutarlo. Para ello, los participantes según las necesidades de la escuela y de los actores involucrados, elaboran el Plan de Acción y lo desarrollan a través de talleres y sesiones de trabajo, en un período de cuatro semanas. En cada taller o actividad, los participantes además de que capacitan a los actores escolares en conceptos relativos a paz, tolerancia, respeto, convivencia pacífica y en técnicas para la resolución pacífica de conflictos, ejecutan diversas actividades a fin de involucrarlos en la promoción de la paz y la convivencia pacífica en sus comunidades.

Cabe agregar, que los participantes tienen libertad para decidir los contenidos, las estrategias y las actividades a realizar, siempre y cuando sean dinámicas, flexibles, motivadoras y se enmarquen en la construcción y consolidación de una cultura escolar para la paz. Por tal motivo, el diseño y ejecución del plan de acción se realiza bajo la supervisión de los facilitadores del proyecto.

En la tercera fase, se realiza el seguimiento a las actividades desarrolladas por los participantes. En este sentido, los facilitadores del proyecto, realizan visitas a los planteles escolares, en el propósito de acompañar, apoyar y orientar a los/las participantes en el desarrollo de su plan de acción. En ocasiones, según las necesidades de los planteles, se incorporan expertos para apoyar la formación de los actores escolares, o también se incorporan las facilitadoras del programa para desarrollar talleres y actividades como estrategia de reforzamiento.

Finalmente en la cuarta fase, correspondiente a la evaluación; los/las participantes elaboran un informe final en el cual describen las actividades realizadas, su ejecución e impactos. Adicionalmente, se utiliza como estrategia la valoración de la gestión de los participantes, a través de los propios actores involucrados. En este sentido, los/las participantes utilizan instrumentos de evaluación o entrevistas, los cuales registran las opiniones y sugerencias de los actores escolares. De esta manera, todos se incorporan y participan en los procesos de evaluación de los planes de acción, para luego mejorarlos, validarlos y ser aplicados en otras comunidades interesados en los mismos.

Las cuatro fases para desarrollar el PCECP, son revisadas y evaluadas permanentemente, considerando que las realidades escolares son complejas y cambiantes y que la formación y capacitación a los actores escolares está sujeta a sus necesidades y
expectativas. Es por ello, que el Programa aun cuando es intervencionista, se considera dinámico y flexible dada su adaptación a los diversos contextos escolares que deciden su aplicación y a las necesidades que hacen que en ocasiones; se reorienten o reconduzcan aspectos teóricos o procedimentales, a fin de que sean aprovechables por la propia comunidad o por otras comunidades escolares que lo soliciten.

**Algunos Resultados**

Desde octubre del 2006 hasta ahora, el PCECP ha sido desarrollado en 15 planteles escolares receptores de pasantes, ubicados en el estado Lara y en el Estado Yaracuy. Esto permite suponer, que se han capacitado un gran número de personas que incluye: participantes de práctica profesional, docentes, padres y representantes, miembros de las comunidades y estudiantes.

Entre las actividades significativas desarrolladas por los/las participantes de PP, en su labor de diseñar y ejecutar un plan de acción escolar y comunitaria para la promoción de la paz, se encuentran:

- Elaboración de murales sobre la paz
- Visitas a las comunidades a fin de entregar material informativo sobre cultura para la paz
- Talleres en los Consejos Comunales sobre paz y convivencia pacífica
- Talleres a docentes y estudiantes sobre paz y convivencia pacífica
- Elaboración de recursos didácticos para promoción de la paz
- Elaboración de carteleras en aulas de clases con la participación de niños y niñas
- Actividades culturales
- Convivencias familiares

Por otra parte, evaluaciones realizadas a los talleres diseñados y ejecutados por los participantes, revelan que:

- Disminuyeron las tensiones en las relaciones interpersonales
- Se resolvieron algunos problemas de manera pacífica
- Se promovieron y se respetaron los espacios para la autorreflexión y la participación
- Se lograron cambios positivos en la actitud de los niños hacia otros compañeros
- Se puntualizaron las necesidades de padres y representantes sobre como manejar conflictos en las relaciones con sus hijos, familiares y vecinos

Cabe agregar, que aun cuando se expresen resultados tangibles sobre el desarrollo del PCECP, también se espera que a través de los procesos de capacitación y formación que se vienen realizando hasta ahora, además de contribuir con la resolución pacífica de conflictos en los planteles escolares; se desarrollen y consoliden competencias ciudadanas en el marco de valores democráticos para el ejercicio de una ciudadanía para la paz. Esto posibilitaría, previa valoración, construir un perfil de competencias ciudadanas para la paz y la convivencia pacífica; el cual podría ser considerado en los diseños curriculares y diseños instruccionales de todos los niveles y modalidades del Sistema educativo nacional.

**Consideraciones Finales**
Dado que el PCECP y los diversos planes derivados de éste, fueron construidos sobre la base de los diagnósticos escolares-comunitarios realizados por los/las participantes de PP, podría decirse que dicho programa resulta confiable para promover la paz y la convivencia pacífica en el plantel escolar. Esto significa, que el Programa para la Paz aquí propuesto, puede complementar el Proyecto escolar integral comunitario ambiental (PEICA) de cada plantel, de manera que trascienda las actividades académicas y sea parte de las actividades comunitarias, a fin de que las comunidades y la escuela trabajen de manera cooperativa y colaborativa en la construcción y consolidación de una cultura escolar que asegure paz, tolerancia y convivencia pacífica.

Por otra parte, siendo el PCECP de carácter formativo cuyo propósito es desarrollar en los/las participantes de PP competencias conceptuales, procedimentales y actitudinales para promover y fortalecer en la escuela cultura escolar para la paz, así como desarrollar en todos los actores sociales involucrados habilidades para la resolución pacífica de conflictos; entonces podría decirse que hasta ahora, se ha observado en los/las participantes una actitud favorable hacia el aprendizaje de conceptos básicos de la educación en valores democráticos, hacia el diseño de estrategias didácticas para la promoción y consolidación de una cultura escolar para la paz. Y también, una alta disposición para extender su participación en los proyectos de promoción de la paz.

De igual manera, se ha logrado promover y fortalecer la participación de todos los actores escolares, en el trabajo grupal y el intercambio de experiencias personales y grupales para el manejo de los conflictos en el contexto escolar, en los entornos familiares y comunitarios.

En fin, se han generado algunos insumos descriptivos y tecnológicos para desarrollar y promover competencias ciudadanas para vivir y convivir en democracia.

Referencias Bibliográficas


The Struggle of NGOs in Pakistan for Pro-People Legislation

Mirza Abdul Shakoor
Urban Institute Project, Sialkot-Pakistan

Over the past fifteen years, successive governments in Pakistan have tried to change the existing legislation governing Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). In 1995, a new bill, the Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies Regulation and Control (Amendment) Act was introduced in parliament. Under the bill, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (both intermediaries and community-based organisations) would have to register with the state authorities and could be suspended or dissolved, thus violating citizen’s fundamental rights to association, expression, and assembly. According to government sources, the reason for introducing the law was that some NGOs were involved in sectarian and ethnic clashes and anti-state activities. They also argued that there were inadequate checks and balances in the existing law governing NGOs, and that state authorities did not know about the nature and scope of activities carried out by the various organisations. The proposed bill was strongly opposed by NGOs on the grounds that it violated the fundamental freedoms available to citizens of Pakistan under the constitution. They argued that that powers of registration, suspension, and dissolution of NGOs given to the Department of Social Welfare were bound to be misused and would discourage independent social thinking and citizen action. They began to develop strategies to oppose the bill.

Developing Strategies

A group of 20 NGOs (mainly support organisations) joined together to initiate a process of consultation and dialogue among NGOs across the country. The first meeting of this core group decided to adopt a four-pronged strategy:

• Analyse and develop a comprehensive critique and alternative position on the government’s proposed bill

• Form a task force to give legal input on the bill and develop alternative, supportive legislation

• Form different committees to:
  o Mobilise NGOs all over the country
Engage with relevant government departments to convey the concerns and demands of the NGO community

- Negotiate with the ruling political party as well as opposition parties who might support the NGOs while the legislation was under discussion

- Engage in a consultative process with a wide range of organisations from all parts of the country

The core group felt that there was a need to mobilise civil society and build a broad-based movement to oppose the law and suggest alternatives, but there was no formal representative body of civil society that could engage government and political parties on their behalf. Most NGOs operated with a welfare mindset and considered advocacy to be too ‘political’. There were also strong differences of opinion at the very beginning of the campaign, in part because development NGOs had no experience in this kind of legal activism, and there was some pro-government NGO influence. The members of the core team also realised that there was little support for their position from parliamentarians, either in the ruling party or in the opposition. The media was very hostile and, with the blessing of the government, regularly slandered the NGOs and their campaigning NGOs in the press. The NGOs started the campaign at various levels but the focus was on mobilising the larger community to highlight the negative impact of the proposed bill and negotiate with government, especially the relevant ministries.

**Engaging with Civil Society Organizations**

The core group started to mobilise the NGO community to create a strong and representative voice against the proposed bill. As a result, five coalitions of NGOs and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) were formed in all four provinces of Pakistan to publicise the negative effects and legal problems in the proposed bill, and advocate for the alternative legislation. These coalitions then formed a national forum called Pakistan NGO Forum (PNF), the first representative NGO body in Pakistan. The Forum also gained the support of some important politicians and civil servants. At the same time, the NGOs held several dialogues with government, which resulted in the government’s agreement to the basic principles of the NGOs position. When a bill was sent to the senate committee for its approval, the NGOs had a feeling of victory, especially in the PNF, until they learned that the senate committee was sent the same old bill that the NGOs had rejected. The PNF was shocked.

After the government was illegally dissolved, NGOs held another round of meetings with the senate committee and the new government. But with the PNF in place, there was a qualitative difference in the campaign: less effort, more results. The NGOs had learned to be more effective. To stay a step ahead, the PNF took responsibility for preparing an NGO Bill with the help of prominent lawyers and its own technical committees. A consensus bill was drafted after a debate at the provincial and national level where a large number of diverse NGOs were involved.
Principles of the Consultations

Throughout the campaign, the PNF consciously adopted the following principles of consultation:

- All member and non-member like-minded organisations should be engaged and consulted before developing alternative laws and policies
- Member organisations, regardless of their size, nature of activities, rural or urban profile, new or established, would be given equal status in the consultations; each comment or suggestion received from these members would be taken seriously and on merit
- The process would be bottom-up and not top-down; comments and suggestions received from the lowest tier coalition would be used as basis for further consultations at the provincial and national levels
- Language and format would be kept simple and conform to local situations, so that the maximum number of groups could be involved in discussions without the risk of alienating them because of complexity of format or language
- All suggestions and comments should be properly recorded, documented, and reflected in other forums
- Concerns of community and indigenous groups (who are in the majority in Pakistan) should be given priority in the final process
- For all consultations with government, political parties, and media, the PNF delegation should include members from those organisations working at the grassroots so that they could directly articulate their concerns to the policy makers and opinion leaders
- There should be decentralisation of power
- There should be no permanent secretariat but rather a permanent coordinating mechanism
- Any federating unit could invoke the coordinating mechanism when needed
- The mechanism would under no circumstances serve as a go-between for donors and NGOs

Achievements

The final version of the law prepared by the PNF was submitted to the senate committee and the government for their consideration. For the most part, the proposed bill was well received. Thus far, no decision has been made because two governments have been dissolved during this time. However, with the consensus bill in the Senate, it will be difficult for any future government to legislate without considering the draft submitted by
the PNF or without consultation with the PNF. This is the first time in the history of Pakistan that any government has willingly accepted the views of civil society in formulating legislation. This success helped to set a precedent for others to follow. The PNF, which emerged to protest against bad legislation, has taken on a life of its own, much beyond a movement against a single law. The PNF is now considered an important player in the civil society movement in Pakistan. It has a membership of 3500 large and small NGOs spread all over the country. Representatives from the original five coalitions unanimously decided that they needed to federate themselves into a national body. At the same time, there was a serious concern that this national structure could lead to a concentration of power in the centre while depriving NGOs in the periphery of genuine representation.

Principles of parity and participation of all stakeholders on equal terms helped in creating a culture of tolerance and acceptance of each other’s points of view, and promoting larger consensus building. Since there are several thousand NGOs/CBOs in the country, their concerns are numerous and it is not possible to incorporate all of them into the objectives of the federation. However, it was considered important for the NGO sector to develop structures to preserve its ability to function independently of government and donor pressures. For this purpose, unity among NGOs is necessary. While the threat of government control of NGOs through the NGO bill has increased, other equally dangerous threats have also emerged. The NGO representatives felt the need to unite, not only to counter the government’s attempts to control them, but also to resist donor agencies’ tendencies to determine or direct NGOs’ agendas. There was a clear need for greater networking among NGOs and a coordinating mechanism for the PNF to accomplish its objectives. Due to persistent pressure and consistent advocacy at the national level, the federal government decided to shelf the bill. In the meanwhile, due to changes in the government, the process on the bill was stopped for some time. Apart from this, the PNF started functioning as an independent body, raising its voice on economic and socio-political issues, and organising seminars on issues such as state brutalities and religious intolerance. The PNF currently plays an active role for civil society organisations by providing a platform for discourse and collective action.

PNF Progress since the Campaign

Since the campaign, the PNF has organised at the provincial and national levels, and the membership of the Forum has increased. Dialogue has been initiated at various levels of the Forum on the challenges facing NGOs. The Forum has also engaged in policy advocacy with government, opinion makers, and parliamentarians. It organises media dialogues and conveys its position on current issues to the media. The PNF devised a legal framework for NGOs through a panel of experts and NGO leaders as well as a code of conduct for the Forum and its member organisations. It organised dialogues with government departments at provincial and national levels, lobbied government on the proposed law, and held several meetings with members of parliament to press for PNF demands. The PNF also gathered data on NGOs that had been dissolved by the government and worked to restore the active status of these NGOs.
Lessons Learned

A number of lessons have been learned throughout this process. In the last fifteen years, the PNF has been mainly involved in facilitating dialogues among government, support organisations, and CBOs to resolve issues concerning civil society and the rights of the marginalised. In recent years, the PNF has realised that without engaging media in this struggle to convey its point of view to the larger public, the required support cannot be achieved. Similarly, all the discussions and debates should be held in a more transparent and participatory manner. Winning the trust of members is essential for the health of the campaign and for retaining the integrity of members. Consultations with grassroots organisations enhance their confidence in and increase their ownership of the process. This was critical to building a strong campaign with broad-based support throughout the country. As the PNF ensured participation of all groups on equal terms, the NGOs and CBOs from smaller provinces felt empowered and contributed generously to the national process. A culture of dialogue, debates, and consultation is essential to building and using collective strengths to further common interests. Finally, in order to win public trust and confidence, the PNF also initiated debates on formulating principles of accountability, transparency, and self-regulation within the NGO community. The self-adopted code of conduct by PNF member organisations helped in cleaning its own ranks and winning people’s confidence.
How and Why do Women’s/Feminist movements in Ecuador Use the Internet?

Maria Svenning
Örebro University

Abstract

Would there have been female studies at universities without women’s movements? Would there have been green parties without environmental movements? And if the movements have led to these changes, how did they do it? Often we read about the importance of social movements but it is not that common to talk about why they are important and how they affect society. I consider movements to be a place for collective learning. I mainly build my thinking on the work of Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison (1991), who consider movements to be a sort of collective learning. They define social movements as loose formations of individuals who together create knowledge of new issues. With this perspective it is interesting to study what issues women’s/feminist movements have brought to the agenda in Ecuador. In the western world Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is talked about as the main tool for movements today. We talk about how ICT can improve and facilitate the work of social movements, but we need to think about how ICT affects movements and what comes out of this. And, if movements are a space for learning, what happens with this learning when movements start to use ICTs. We also need to think of how it appears in a global perspective, what happens in countries where most of the citizens lack the technology. In Ecuador only 4% of the population has access to the Internet and even fewer own their own computer. This made me think about why some movements use internet at all; why are they using it and who does it serve? In this paper I will focus on social movements, ICTs and learning. This has been a missing piece in the research about social movements and their impact on society. In my research I focus on the women’s/feminist movements in Ecuador.

---

1 I use both the concepts women’s movement and feminist movement since the movements call themselves different things and some women’s movements find it provocative to call themselves feminists.
In my forthcoming thesis, I study women’s/feminist movements in Ecuador that use internet; why they use it, how they use it and how it affects the social movement learning. I consider this to be an important piece in the work of social movements. Social movement learning occurs in the interaction between activists, but even people outside the movements can learn from the movements when they start to reflect on different things as a result of the movements’ activities. A lot of this learning happens as a result of the effect of human interaction. This leads to the question of what happens when movements starts to use Internet? Will they be more introverted, or is it just another tool for them to spread their messages? In the North we now talk about how Internet can improve and facilitate the work of social movements, but we also need to consider how it appears in a global perspective and what happens in countries where most of the citizens lack access to the technology. Will the participants that lack access be marginalized within the movements?

In this paper I focus on women’s/feminist movement in Ecuador and how they use Internet. The paper is based on my empirical work in Ecuador that took place in February 2008. I did interviews with members of seven different women's/feminist movements. They differ a lot in their use of Internet; only three of them have WebPages, two of these are youth movements and one is a group of middle-class intellectuals. The movements that do not have websites use the Internet to communicate and to search for information. Two of these movements are peasant movements and a lot of their activists do not have access to Internet.

A Meeting

Standing outside of the conference room at the Skåne Social Forum, I had the opportunity to talk with a female leader from one of the peasant movements in Ecuador. We were talking about my old friends in Quito and how hard it is to keep in contact with them since they cannot use email due to lack of money and knowledge. Last year some of them finally got themselves telephones, but that is expensive and since we live in different time zones is hard to find a proper time to call. She told me that she now uses email and Internet but not because she wants to, just because she has to as a leader of her movement. She needs it to keep in contact with donor organizations and to try to make important issues visible in a world where politicians and multinational co operations dominate the traditional media.

She gave a fantastic speech at the Forum and I was really inspired by it. Afterwards I was looking at her movement’s website and it did not inspire me in the same manner. That made me question why and how movements use the Internet in countries where very few have access to the technology. In Ecuador, for example, only 4.7 % of the population has access to the Internet (World Bank 2005). Is it only useful to keep in contact with donor organizations, or do the movements use the Internet to improve and facilitate their work? If so few people in the country have access to the Internet, who is the website created for?

---

2 A local forum in the south of Sweden similar to the World Social Forum.
Social Movements as a Place for Learning³

When we talk about social movements we do not know if we all talk about the same thing since it is difficult to find a good definition⁴. I consider social movements to be a place for collective learning, and I mainly build my thinking on the work of Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison (1991). They define social movements as loose formations of individuals who together create new knowledge. According to Eyerman & Jamison (1991), a social movement is a kind of knowledge producer, a place where new ideas can grow and were interaction between different persons take place. These can represent a form of collective learning. Eyerman & Jamison are not the only ones that discuss learning in social movement. Budd Hall et al (2005), for example, discuss social movement learning, which they claim is learning that occurs within social movements and learning for persons outside the movements as a result of the activities of the social movement.

According to Hall (2006) you can learn many practical skills within social movements, such as how to organize demonstrations, write leaflets etc. You can also learn new things about yourself and the world. As one of the interviewed said:

“Even if I have learned a lot of practical skills, the most important is what I have learned about living and how to create a better life. Knowledge is not what is written in books, it is a gift from the people”.

As I see it, some practical skills can also be learned through access to the Internet, such as creating websites, writing, and searching for information. Many of the people interviewed said that they learn a lot from the Internet, but as stated before, the most important thing is to learn about the world:

Thanks to Internet we have “met” people all around the world and when you see the things others have that we lack you want to work harder to change the society.

Hall (2006) mentions that the educational instruments for learning outside of the movements are, for example, marches, theatre, panel discussions, etc. These forms of activities also exist on the Internet. One of the movements in my research uses their website to show the activities they do out on the streets, for example, theatre. Another movement wants to use their website as a discussion forum. The Internet can be a place where people publish information, describe activities or have discussions. This can be an educational instrument for learning inside as well as outside of social movements.

When we talk about learning in/from social movements, we also need to think about how this learning changes societies. Pedagogy, to me, is as a way to create understanding and to change society, which is close to what Hall, Eyerman and Jamison talk about. Paulo Freire⁵ has been very influential in thinking about pedagogy as a way to change society. He

---


⁵ In my thesis I am going to link critical pedagogy to theories on social movement to understand the connection between learning, social movements, and changes in the society.
argues that poor and oppressed people need to create a consciousness about their situation. By consciousness, Freire means that people think, reflect, and then take action (Freire 1970). Freire (1973) also argues that people liberate themselves in cooperation with one and another. This cooperation, as I see it, takes place, for example, in social movements where individuals come together on a voluntary basis. In my interviews, some of the participants said that they use the pedagogy of Freire as a tool to change society. Others did not mention Freire but said that they first of all need to have activities and discussions within the movement so that the participants get courage enough to fight for a change.

**Women’s/Feminist Movement in Ecuador**

Women’s/feminist movements are a kind of social movement that focuses on women/feminist issues. In my interviews, the participants said that it is hard to talk about feminist movements since this is a provocative concept in Ecuador. They said that Ecuador is a society with a lot of machismo, so if you call yourself a feminist you are against all men or are a woman with bad morals. Another problem with the concept of feminism is that Indigenous groups do not want to use the term since they consider it to be a Western concept. Four of the movements I interviewed defined themselves as feminists.

It is hard to talk about a women’s movement in Ecuador since they differ a lot; there are big differences between women from different social groups and different ethnic groups. Indigenous women live a very different life from white women; they are not only fighting for their rights as women but as Indigenous people as well. Some of the movements I researched consist of women from different social and ethnic groups. They say that it is sometimes difficult to manage the diversities but if they do not accomplish working together as women with respect for one another, the society will never change. As one of the interviewees said:

> Around this table we have been many different women, upper-class, Indians, farmers, prostitutes for example. In the beginning some of the upper-class women left since the didn't want to be close to a prostitute but after a few weeks they came back and now we all are friends that learn a lot from each other.

They say that it is hard to work for change in society since the situation for the women differs a lot, but if they do not fight together they are not enough people to achieve change.

The main issues for the women I met were sexual and political rights. The movements that consist of younger women focused more on sexual rights than the movements of the older women did. According to the participants interviewed, there is a lot of sexism and sexual abuse in the country. When it comes to political issues the main thing has been to increase the number of female politicians. The movements also work to change legal system. One of the movements does not believe in political change. They say that if people do not change their way of thinking it does not matter how many laws there are:

---

6 *conscientización*
Everybody knows that it is dangerous to smoke but still they do it. You can’t tell people what to do, they need to change the way of thinking. That’s why we want to provoke people instead of working with politics.

One of the peasant movement said that it does not matter if the politics change if the people on the countryside do not get the information about their rights as the situation is today. If the people do not get the information, their situation will not change.

**Internet in Ecuador**

Patricia Bermudez (2003) claims that the Internet became available for use in Ecuador in the beginning of the 1990s. According to her, Ecuador was one of the first countries in Latin America to use the Internet but now they are way behind most of the other countries. There are barriers in the use of the Internet in Ecuador due to the economy, education and infrastructure. As the people interviewed said, a lot of people cannot afford the Internet and they do not know what to use it for. If they cannot see the benefits associated with it, they are not interested in learning how to use it. There is a big difference in the use of the Internet in the cities and in the countryside. In the countryside there are difficulties due to the lack of infrastructure. As one of the interviewed said:

> If someone would offer us millions to buy computers we would rather use the money to get water and electricity. If you don’t have the basic things you are not that interested in computers and Internet.

In the North, the Internet often is considered as something necessary in society; we even question how we could live without it before. Ian McLoughlin (1999) claims that the use of the Internet can lead to social injustice since only a few categories of people participate in the so called Information Society. Some groups are left out, and this is often groups that already are marginalized. This could make society even more unequal, and that is what worries the people from the peasant movements I interviewed. They said that they are getting farther and farther behind since they do not have access to the same information and communication tools as other groups. Since they do not get access to the information, many of them do not know anything about their rights in society.

In Ecuador, just as in many countries around the world, a digital divide exists. ‘Digital divide’ means that the new technology is not equally spread in a global perspective. There is a big difference in where the Internet is used and not used. In the case of Ecuador only 4.7 % of the population uses the Internet, compared with 76.4 % of the population in Sweden (World Bank 2005). As the participants interviewed said, a lot of people do not even know what the Internet is and what to use it for, and some of them live in areas where it is impossible to use the Internet due to the lack of electricity. As Adolfo Rodriguez (2001) points out, half of the global population has not even made a phone call, and if you do not have access to the old technology you are getting farther and farther behind when others develop new technologies.

**Internet and Movements in Ecuador**

The seven movements I researched had different purposes in their use of the Internet: for communication, to look for information, to keep in contact with other
movements, to try to find donor organizations, etc. Arthur Edwards (2004) is afraid that the use of the Internet will lead to fewer activists on the street and says that it is necessary for mass protests as well. Some of the participants interviewed said that they miss face-to-face contact. “What is a hello in a mail compared to a hug in real life?” one said. They all think that they have fewer meetings and less action out on the streets, and many of them think that that is bad, but they all say that the communication is much faster and that it is positive that they can reach many people in a short time.

The peasant movements said that a reliance on the internet is a problem for them since very few of their participants have access to the Internet, and therefore, these movements miss a lot of information and chances to cooperate with other movements. One activist even said that it is difficult to be a participant in a movement that uses the Internet if you do not have access to it since you are not a part of the discussions that takes place on the Internet. This means that not everyone can be a part of a specific movement even if they want to. Edwards (2004) says that the people with access could “adopt” the ones who lack access so that they can get the information as well. The peasant movements said that they use radio to send out messages, and if anyone finds something interesting on the Internet they can send a radio message so that everyone can have access to it. The problem is that this is just a one-way method of communication, and someone decides what is important and what is not.

The movements chose different strategies in their use of the Internet depending on their goals and their need for technology. Communication with each other and with other movements was the most common use of the Internet for the movements I interviewed. They considered meetings with others on Internet to be very important. When you communicate with people all around the world you learn about their situation and can put your own questions in other contexts. As one interviewee said:

When you communicate with others on Internet, you see that you’re not alone and this gives you strength to carry on.

This is something that the people without access miss:

There are a lot of women on the countryside with capacity to do things but since they lack information they don’t know what’s going on in the society. If they have had access they would have wanted to change their situation.

When we talked about how the Internet affects the globalization process, one of the women from a peasant movement answered: “We can’t talk about globalisation when so many people are left out”. Steve Wright (2004) even claims that it takes important time away from activists in the South to keep in contact with activist in the North. Instead of being out on the streets they have to write emails. One of the interviewees from a peasant movement said that it is a problem that it takes so much time to answer emails. Since they do not have opportunities to use the Internet daily they have a lot of emails to answer when they have a chance to use a computer. An important thing for the movements I met with was to try to find donor organizations around the world. To do this it is very important to have a website, and four of the movements could not afford to have one.
The three movements with websites use different strategies to create their websites, and naturally this gives different results. One had an expert create their website and two did it on their own but had different knowledge about how to do it. The one created by an expert has a lot of colours, a chat forum, pictures, information, etc. and is very user friendly. The problem is that no one in the movement knows how to change anything on it so it is hard to keep it up to date. This movement uses the website to provide information to young women, other movements and donor organizations. One of the other movements mainly uses their website for video clip of their actions out on the streets. They do not want to have anything written since they want people to think for themselves. They mainly use it to show their activities to people and groups around Latin America that already know them. The third movement just has a lot of text and wants to use the website as a discussion forum. Currently it just is being used to facilitate discussion within the movement since it is not very user friendly. They all said that it is hard to make themselves visible on the Internet.

One of the problems with the Internet is the huge amount of information that it contains. It is so much information that it is hard to know what you are looking for and how to find it. Many of the interviewees said that to be able to handle all the information you need to know what to look for and how. If you have that knowledge you could learn a lot from Internet.

**Movements, Technology and Learning**

This leads me to discuss what we can learn from this new technology. We learn how to write, how to look for facts, how to participate in discussions online, how to sort information, etc. If we create our own websites we also need to know how to make ourselves visible, since a lot of people and organizations fights for the attention. But to be able to do all of that we need some knowledge on how to do it; this is to say that we need knowledge about how to create new knowledge. For the movements I met, the most important thing was what they learned from others on the Internet, how people live, which issues were important for others, and how other movements work. As they said, they learn about the world. They also learn to put their own issues into other contexts. This is also what the movements with few participants with access to the Internet think is the biggest problem; they do not get the same possibilities to see other realities. When you learn about others you start to reflect up on your own situation and that changes you as a person. This is what theories on social movement learning say happens when you are a part of a movement; the only difference is that now you communicate with people around the world. In relation to Freire, this means that you start to reflect on your own situation when you learn about and compare it with others, and this makes you want to take action.

Social movements, learning and the Internet clearly have a relation to one another, but the problem is a lack of access. More people get impressions from other parts of the world which affect their way of thinking, but many people are left out. You only communicate with the people with access to the Internet, which means that a lot of people are left out. What happens when so many people are left out is a problem. Or is it? As one of the women said:

7 The problem is that in this context you only communicate with people with access to Internet.
No problem since they live in another reality where technology isn't important and they are happier without it. They have other problems than access to computers.

Even if people live in a different world they need information, opportunities to communicate with other people, and most importantly, they feel left out. The peasant movements I interviewed said that this is a problem for them since no one notices them in a world where everyone uses technology they cannot use. They have to work extra hard to make themselves visible. Will movements without access to the Internet be marginalized? Or will these movements make themselves visible in other ways?

References


Democracy in Social Movements: Learning through Protest

L. Deborah Sword

Conflict Competence

This research rethinks the impacts of public conflict on democratic processes. There is a large body of research going back to Coleman (1957), among others, establishing that prevention, management, and resolution of conflict can be important to individual, community, and societal well being. However, in some cases, conflict resolution processes can stifle dissent, preserve the status quo, and improve the lot of the powerful (Cruikshank 1999). There is little research on peoples’ lived experiences of public conflict aside from the processes leading to resolution. Since complexity science is not a theory concerned with prevention, management, and resolution of conflict, it proves a useful frame for conflict analysis.

Identifiable Characteristics of Public Conflicts

Dukes (1996) noted that public conflict at best is recognizable by "general guidelines" that distinguish it from other kinds of conflict, such as:

- Parties might be made up of groups, organizations, individuals, and others that claim to also represent more who are absent;
- Each party has unique internal structures and decision-making processes;
- Situations are novel or ambiguous;
- There may or may not be common deadlines for decision-making;
- Resistance to reaching consensus by official means;
- Involvement of multiple, complex issues;
- Subjectivity to changing developments affecting more and/or different people;
- Rare requirement of an invitation to attend;
- Attempts to draw attention to risks and issues not on the political agenda;
- Presentation of a worldview with alternative solutions or different questions;
- Tying policy interpretation to issues of democracy;
- Having conflicting scientific analyses or expert uncertainty;
- Reliance on numbers to demonstrate broad support;
- Ambiguity about who might be affected by the outcomes (Reicher 1984; Dukes 1996; Carpenter and Kennedy 2001; Daniels and Walker 2001; Sword 2007)
Of course, even having the option of public conflict reflects the privilege of a democracy where bloody conflict and violence are not used to settle differences. In those cases, a completely different conflict analysis would be necessary.

**Complexity Science Conflict Analysis**

Everyone has skills for analyzing how conflict happened, where conflict currently stands, and what they wish would occur (Furlong 2005). People take actions to achieve whatever conflict goals seem possible and optimal, based on that subjective analysis of conflict history, present, and future. Sometimes their analysis is global, altruistic, and/or correct, sometimes it is local, self-centered, and/or irrational, and always it is constrained by imperfect and incomplete data. We do the best we can within the boundaries of unique personal, factual, and skill limitations. However, conflict analysis is where everyone starts, whether intentionally or intuitively, artfully or ineptly.

Conflict theory, however, proved only partially effective in the analysis of my three selected public conflicts. First, conflict theory alone tends to focus on issues that were not part of my inquiry. Fisher (1997), for example, summarized the three issues addressed by most conflict research: why or why not does a conflict resolution process succeed; what will prevent, mitigate or resolve conflicts or disputes; and how conflict skills can be improved. I was not inquiring into how some unwanted facility got sited somewhere, or how a conflict was mediated to resolution, or to generalize an intervention model.

Second, conflict literature does not regard conflict as a legitimate expression of civic engagement. Conflict resolvers market services on the bases that conflict is costly and resolving conflict is the norm. Most conflict researchers consider dialogue to be the functional way of dealing with public conflicts (Susskind and McKearnan 1999; Yankelovich 1999). Carpenter and Kennedy (2001) noted that most parties involved in public conflicts are unaware of the conflict spiral and how they can make things worse. Other theorists suggest that consensus seeking can smother debate while privileging elites, whereas more disagreements make it more likely that social justice will prevail, and democracy is brought to good health (Lasch 1989; Eisenhardt 1997). Cruickshank (1999) pointed out that, while the smallest acts could create political capital, it would be preferable to transform the political territory rather than leave politics as it is and add a layer of struggle. Where conflict theory normalizes resolution, adding other theories permits civic engagement to be expressed through public conflict.

Third, the professional conflict resolver seeks out different perspectives to understand what is happening, and determines the parties’ interests. Then, the conflict resolver convenes safe and orderly processes for parties to dialogue and resolve or manage their conflict. Even without the vast literatures people know that conflict is debilitating and resolving conflict is a relief. Complexity science, however, suggests that finding causes or analyzing outcomes after something happens may or may not be useful. Complex systems tend not to repeat the same story or events. Each conflict, electrical outage, and traffic jam is unique and also follows patterns. The cause might be interdependencies inherent to the system that create the conditions for the event. In some situations, conflict theory alone might not expose systemic interdependencies. My inquiry into conflicts that had no
intervention processes seemed not to advance conflict theory, yet made sense when combined with complexity science.

Fourth, conflict theories’ usual definition of conflict as an actual or perceived incompatibility of needs, values, or interests has limited application in public conflict. In large-scale public conflict, siding with one group does not necessarily mean sharing the group’s needs, values, motives, resources, identities, attitudes, interests, policy experiences, decision-making, or advocacy skills. Public conflict binds people together despite their differing agendas and reasons for participating. Public conflict is more as Rex (1981) defined conflict: “action which is oriented intentionally to carrying out the actor’s will against the resistance of the other party or parties” (at 3). Where the parties’ actions form the boundaries containing the conflict, then their agendas, positions, psychological states, or resources could be different or the same, and they may still be in conflict. My interviewees described the challenge when “disparate interests left the steering committee struggling to keep the thousands of supporters on task” in a public conflict that was more a “movement with adherents” than a cohesive organization. Defining public conflict with an action orientation fits well with complexity science’s methodology, which studies “processes that change over time” (Guastello, Craven et al. 2005:298)

Diverse theories posit possible explanations for social conflict (de Bono 1985; Kolb and Bartunek 1992; Rubin, Pruitt et al. 1994; Tidwell 1998). With Schellenberg (1996), I find that it is most effective to combine the insights from various theories. As Watts (2003) noted, all the relevant ideas from each discipline must be brought to bear, creating a network with information that each alone could not have. There are many models available and, “only by thinking like sociologists as well as like mathematicians can we pick the right one” (2003: 156). Applying complexity science to the analysis of public conflict revealed perspectives outside the scope of and complementary to conflict theory. That was my starting point. My purposes were to add complexity science to analyses of public conflicts, and explore what findings came of that.

**Dominant and Shadow Systems**

Public conflicts attract a lot of people (participants in public participation terms) grouped into multiple parties (in conflict theory terms), which can be described as two collections of agents (in complexity science terms) - the dominant system and the shadow system became interdependent in one conflict system (Stacey 1992). The dominant system consisted of proponent(s), decision-makers in power - usually elected politicians or their delegates on committees - and their agents, such as police or security guards who may be called upon to control the shadow system, and ‘the general public’ on that side. The shadow system, existing parallel to the dominant system, consisted of individuals, ad-hoc groups, established organizations, and ‘the general public’ on that side.

The dominant and shadow systems rejected each other’s data, knowledge, and risk assessments. The dominant system labeled the shadow system untrustworthy or misinformed (Dukes 1996). Then City of Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman, for example, called those against the Olympic bid untrustworthy, their attitude “counterproductive” and their claims “ridiculous” (MacKinnon 17 April 1998). The shadow system likewise did not accept
the dominant system’s assurances that the risks of harm would be negligible, or that any unintended consequences could be managed as necessary. Each professed strong beliefs in the accuracy of its own information coupled with disbelief in the accuracy of the others’ information. The same information was interpretable through the values and risk tolerance of each side. Where the respective experts expressed uncertainty and an inability to forecast what might happen, the parties expressed certainty that it could not go as the other sides predicted. Although acknowledging the data was imperfect, they derided the other sides’ data and defended their own. In the complexity science conflict analysis, agents in public conflict can be visualized as managing uncertainty (Funtowicz and Ravetz 2001).

**Agents**

Complexity science conflict analysis reveals unusual parties to the public conflict, which conflict and public participation theories tend to ignore. Public participation theorists might ask who will be affected and thus should be at the public consultation, and conflict theorists might ask who has an interest to be represented in mediation. Complexity scientists might ask what and who contributed inputs into the conflict system that could amplify or dampen changes over time. Conflict theory would not normally include all on the list that complexity science might. Because complexity science deals at a systems-level rather than with the constituent parts of systems, there could be a more complete list based on varied inputs to public conflict. Included as agents could be police, security, courts, news media, and in two of the case studies, the Pope, the Governor General, and the International Olympic Committee (Angus 10-16 August 2000).

It is unlikely that conflict theory, and public participation theory would expect the news media, or the police, lobbyists, pollsters, or government analysts would then join the public consultation as participants, or the conflict resolution process as parties. From a complexity science conflict analysis, those agents, even His Holiness the Pope, had direct and indirect inputs into the conflict system, because the shadow systems set strategies, and conducted activities taking them into account. In other words, conflict theory excluded some agents as parties even though their influence was felt, while complexity science included agents who denied being parties yet contributed inputs.

**Governance and Democracy**

The public conflicts, as complex systems are wont to do, followed patterns. An overarching pattern was "hysteresis: once a change has been made, it is difficult or impossible to undo" (Orrell 2007). If the dominant system’s plan proved flawed, a return to the prior state was not possible. Recent research in complex systems suggested that an emotional involvement in the possibility of gains or losses changes the nature of decision-making. As people become more emotionally engaged, they conduct risk assessments differently and value the options differently than if they were less emotionally involved (Oliva and McDade 2008).

Public conflict is an emotional experience with high stakes. Thus, it fostered either/or thinking with extreme rhetoric. From the dominant or shadow system point of view, one plan was either a 20-year landfill contract with years of technology creating a
900-year risk of polluting the watershed, or a state-of-the-art facility that would solve Toronto’s garbage problem for a lifetime. The second case was “either an anti-democratic screed tantamount to the War Measure’s Act or a timely blueprint for a better city. Take your pick” (Swainson 19 December 1997). In the third case, as shadow system members tried to explain that the dominant system’s plan would destroy communities, union members, later described as intimidating jack-booted crashers, shouted about being deprived of jobs (Byers 2 March 2001).

Public conflict has been viewed as evidence of citizen alienation. However, Box (1998) conceptualized public conflict as engaged citizens doing more than voting, and a step in participation. This was a typical comment:

> Citizens had taken control of the public debate. I was euphoric. We told the representatives that it was a public space. The cab driver that night, and the store clerk the next morning were discussing it. I had the feeling that all the little bits were coming together to create legitimacy. People who didn’t know who I was were talking about it ... We got to a place where people realized that their government was doing something fundamentally undemocratic. The public became advocates of accountability and free speech. Without these moments then social movement activists cannot do their work. Without this, we have to leave it to the corporations and governments to decide public policy, because this debate cannot happen at a ballot box. Suddenly, everyone had an opinion and was talking about politics, and seeing the possibilities of involvement and responsibility. All the issues were getting shoved into the frame and the frame exploded. It was getting so big that there were no constraints on the debate. What we win is public’s expectations of what government should do and governments’ understanding of the change in the public’s expectations (Interview with Peter).

Box stated that, depending on how they make information available and organize public engagement opportunities, public institutions can be open to or a barrier to public involvement. Nevitte’s work on attitudes towards authority (1996 and; Nevitte and Kanji 2002), found weakening public attachments to traditional politics, declining levels of confidence in both governmental and nongovernmental institutions, and shifting bases of communal identifications. These pointed to changes in how Canadians connected to governments, unhappiness with the status quo, dissatisfaction with the political system, and increasing potential for different styles of participation in public life.

Civil unrest has always existed; “A little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing” (Jefferson Jan. 30 1787). Most theorists agree that debate is necessary for healthy democracy, but privilege dialogue as functional, thus excluding public conflict. The interviewees disagreed. Despite being excluded from categories of engagement and participation by the dominant system, news media, and much of the conflict literature, the interviewees considered themselves engaged and participating directly in democracy.

Public conflict occurs when an issue causes people to think, and then act. To effectively protest, they learned to understand the structure of government and local laws, the politics of individual and group interests, and what is needed for them to make a difference in community governance (Stein, Cameron et al. 1997).
Power

A feature of the three case studies of public conflict was a power imbalance so overwhelming that there was little incentive for the dominant system to negotiate with the shadow system. The dominant system had access to power sources such as the police to control crowds by detaining and arresting protesters; security guards to clear the public galleries of the legislature and city halls; the courts to obtain injunctions against the protesters, which the police then served upon and enforced against the protesters; and the news media to publicize the government’s version of the facts. Yet the weaker shadow system continued as if it believed it could ‘win’ (Sword 2007). By a traditional conflict analysis, the power asymmetries were daunting. A complexity science view better demonstrates what the shadow system experienced.

Instead of attempting to use dominant power against the dominant system, which had effective and legal control over that power, the shadow systems used power of the nature that complexity science recognized. They perturbed the dominant systems as often, as robustly, and in as many creative ways as they could manage. They hoped that one of the inputs they added to the system would amplify, and affect the dominant system’s fitness. “We thought that everything we did was creative... given the climate and high security ... We brainstormed radical ideas then crossed off the unfeasible ones” (Interview with Helen).

They were counting on, although they did not think of it in these terms, the inputs either accumulating, or one input causing a cascade effect (Watts 2003). Their power, such as it was, lay in driving the dominant system to learning and adaptation.

Learning

Like any complex adaptive system, conflict is “formed out of many components whose behavior is emergent, that is, the behavior of the system cannot be simply inferred from the behavior of it components” (Bar-Yam 1992 at 10). Complex systems accept positive and negative feedback from which they adapt and learn. The parts are interdependent, meaning they influence each other in feedback learning loops, not in linear action and reaction. Simple, single cause and effect, however neat its solution, does not apply in complex systems (Waldrop 1992). Watching 10,000 individuals work or garden, would not explain a self-organizing march to the legislature. In complex systems, be they conflicts, electrical outages, or traffic jams, there can be cascades, where once something happens more things are likely to happen.

Complexity principles suggest that the shadow systems, on a landscape bounded by limited resources, power, and time, created adaptive organizational structures optimal to their fitness. They were so many-headed, leaderless and self-organizing that there were, intentionally or otherwise, built-in efficiencies. Stretched thin, the shadow systems created coordination hubs, clustered nodes and interlinked social networks that Arrow (2002) suggested are effective for dealing with turbulence and crises. Their organizational structures drew on ‘small world networks’ with interconnected hubs, nodes, and links that are resilient and inspirational in strength and information transfers (Arrow, McGrath et al. 2000; Watts 2003). Zimmerman (1998), citing Kelly, referred to flexible, networked
leadership structures as “swarmware,” with rapid response to new information coming at high speeds and turbulence. Swarmware is distinguished from less responsive hierarchical “clockware” structures.

In essence, dominant and shadow systems learn their way through conflict:

We took knowledge out there, made it locally relevant and got it to people in non-technical language. We helped locals hold big public meetings. We helped negotiations with proponents and media. We held rallies and the hands of the overwhelmed. We gave them the confidence to keep going and supported them (Interview with Peter).

“Politicians became very knowledgeable and that’s my goal. Some were on a learning curve, which is necessary for good decision-making” (Interview with Casey).

Whatever the conflicts’ final outcomes, that learning stayed in the public systems. Over a global time scale, the shadow systems added inputs hoping for systemic change. For example, Mayor Lastman, who had shown little environmental interest before the conflict, promised increased recycling and composting afterwards (Palmer 29 October 2000). The line of sight for bifurcations is from the future looking backwards, so whether they made a difference globally awaits an answer. For how long is uncertain, since, as Holland (1995) points out, adaptation can take milli-seconds or millennia.

### Media

The mainstream news media supported the dominant system’s position that it was simply maintaining public order against public conflict. News accounts of public conflict frequently conveyed disapproval, both in dismissive quotes from the dominant system and also in the news media’s own choice of words, for example, describing public conflict as ‘marring’ government business (Armstrong 17 April 1998).

The dominant system, secure in its power, could influence public opinion by getting in the news. The shadow system struggled for publicity it needed:

The media also didn’t treat us very well. To get a good interview in the *Toronto Star* was a fight. They sent reporters to the church but the *Globe and Mail* didn’t (Interview with Pedro).

We were mice trying to get attention from the floor. We had a meeting with the [Toronto] Star, with their writers. We were shunted to a little cramped room on stools, like a principal’s office. They thought they were supportive, but [they] did damage to us. We had similar meetings at the *Globe and Mail* and CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] (Interview with Kate).

The CBC also retracted an invitation for two shadow system members to sit on a panel discussion with members of the dominant system (Starkman 11 January 2000). As Peterson (2001) and my interviewees noted, media attention is a precondition for success, the conduit of messages, and part of the meaning making of public conflict, defining and interpreting events in ways that influence learning.
Conclusion

The importance of the shadow systems is that they made dominant system decision-making controversial. Agents in the shadow systems framed their conflicts as democratic civic engagement with freely contributed learning, data, information, risk assessments, and resources that stayed public after the conflict ended.

Public conflict’s educational and democratic contribution to public dialogue, civic engagement, and social learning is often unappreciated, and the shadow system’s influence on the dominant system is often unacknowledged. Without the conflicts there would have been impoverished public discussions. The rich conversations about possible unintended impacts, acceptable risks, uncertain science, and mitigation might have been missing altogether. Therefore, whether or not the public conflict was good or bad, or what the final outcome was are not as interesting as the fact that the shadow systems started a public dialogue about decisions that would otherwise not have moved outside the dominant systems’ official, structured public participation processes. The knowledge that the shadow system generated to contradict the dominant system’s knowledge remains for the dominant system to access.

References

Armstrong, J. "Toronto bid group anticipates green light for Games try: Canadian Olympic Association expected to approve city’s plan today, but many obstacles remain before Games come to town." Globe and Mail, April 17, 1998: A6.


Political Parties as Voluntary Social Service Organisations: 
Alternative Processes of Recruitment for Quality Participation 
in Political Parties in India

Vinay Sahasrabuddhe 
Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini

Abstract

In India, political parties emerged as a result of freedom struggle. Like India, several 
other countries also witnessed the emergence of parties while they were waging war 
against colonialism in the first half of the last century. As a consequence, the popular 
expectations from political parties are markedly different in these democracies. In countries 
like India people expect parties to be engaged in several other activities for the overall 
public good, besides in the pursuit of power. However, things have changed in the recent 
past. Not only the people at large, but the new generation functionaries of old political 
parties as well have forgotten the larger context of the emergence of their respective 
parties. This has altered the organisational character of political parties beyond recognition.

On the one hand, parties are brazenly pursuing power-politics in a no-holds-barred race 
while on the other, with the failure of governance, people are doubly at a loss. In this paper, 
an attempt has been made to suggest the ways in which re-establishing the linkage between 
voluntary social work and political party activism may lead to a more meaningful party-
functioning.

In the 1996 edition of "Political Parties of the World", the editors came out with a 
largely acceptable definition of a political party (Day, German and Campbell vi). They state 
that a political party is "the organisation seeking to obtain or retain direct political power 
over the process of government at some level, usually through the ballot box". All in all a 
political party could be described as a relatively durable social formation, which seeks offices or power in govt. exhibits a structure or organization, which links leaders at the
centres of govt. to a significant popular following in the political arena and its local enclaves and generates in-group perspectives or at least symbols of identification or loyalty.

The latest edition of this volume also brings about the important features of the worldwide party scene (Szajkowski 2005). These features are as follows:

1. The growing importance of racial and/or religious identity as a determinant of party political affiliation and the often related rise of regional political movements demanding greater autonomy and in some cases outright separation

2. The parallel trend towards formal international co-operation between national parties and supra-national bodies such as the European Parliament, and

3. The emergence of a strong anti-globalisation current in many countries, notably in the Green parties which have become an established feature of the party scene in developed countries and parts of the developing world (vii).

I was privileged to have a close look at various functional aspects of democracy in India, thanks to the various opportunities that I had during the last thirty years of active public life. Initially as a student activist, later as a journalist, and thereafter both as an institutional head and a party functionary I gathered enough experiential data to make some general observations. Exposure to the functioning of institutions like universities and training academies for government officials also added to my insight. Interaction with key functionaries and grassroots level activists of major political parties earlier and during this study later helped me crosscheck my observations.

I was aghast to find that most politicians are aware of the perversions that have crept into India’s political system, but they have apparently either:

1. Chosen to ignore these threats and compromise with the situation albeit unwillingly

2. Surrendered to the circumstances helplessly and have almost abandoned efforts to transform the situation, or

3. Decided to make the most of this situation since changing the same is considered impossible

Some of the nagging questions this situation brings forth are as follows:

1. Has political leadership in India grasped the enormity of the manifold crises emanating from a decadent political system? Are Indian political leaders aware of the gravity of the impact of institutional degeneration of political parties in India?

2. Is the overall absence of any structured efforts for salvaging political parties and party politics in India from its present mold a result of inertia and a feeling of helplessness? Or, has the establishment in general and particularly India’s politicians developed a vested interest in maintaining a status quo?
3. Are there any possible systemic solutions to the problem of political parties in India succumbing to populist pressures and electoral compulsions? Would the political class be accepting of such solutions?

**Parties Are Essential**

In India, especially during Jayprakash Narayan’s movement in 1974, the concept of party less democracy was propounded. But, in reality, the talk of democracy without parties sounds impractical, making it almost a utopian concept. And if parties are to be looked at as vehicles of ideologies, they almost become an indispensable component of democratic polity. To wish them away would not only be fallacious but also detrimental to the health of democracy itself. Underscoring his concern for the decline of parties in the U.S., John H. Coleman (1996, 57) writes, “Declining relevance and impact of political parties presents a hole of sorts in the mediation between citizens and the state. This hole in the representative system raises direct questions about the nature of American democracy. Ultimately the point is the people and Democracy”. Poggi (1978 p.144) asks of parliament what one might well ask of party: “If it ceases to operate as an effective link, what or who can politically direct, control and moderate the ever-growing mutual involvement between state and society? If parties lose control of policy and the state, citizens lose as well.”

Patric Syed (1998), in an essay very effectively advocates the need for good parties. He writes, "None of these proposals for citizen juries, deliberative polls, referendum, state funding, elected city mayors or electoral reform are universal panaceas for the problems of representation and government, nor are they, in my opinion, a substitute for party. The Houghton Committee¹ set up in UK stated that “the existence of political parties is an essential feature of our system of parliamentary democracy” because they are the agencies through which the electorate can express its collective will; they provide an orderly framework within which political leaders can emerge, develop and strive for political office; they provide the means whereby the general public are able to participate in the formulation of policies; they ensure responsible government since with an executive drawn from the House of Commons and an uncodified constitution, without party, gridlock would be more likely; and they aggregate differing opinions and views into practical political programmes. One additional function should be added to the Houghton list which is that parties help organise disappointment - politics is not solely about victory; and coming to terms with defeat, rethinking and regrouping is an essential feature of a democratic society. The report further argues: "At the institutional level, they encounter the problem that policy delivery is more difficult in the face of weakened national government. At the socio-cultural level, they face the problems of shifting cleavage patterns. But they have been responsive and adaptive and that explains the longevity of the party system”.

Parties fulfill important collective functions in an increasingly atomised, individualised society. The danger today is of the atomised individual at the mercy of powerful elites. There is therefore a need for mediating structures. Both party and group are vital to a robust civic life. David Ryden (n/d) writes: ‘Individual political efficacy in a

---
¹ For details, see http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2000/rp00-002.pdf as on November 11, 2005.
large-scale democracy hinges on the collectivities that exist to represent one’s interests. Individuals are empowered through vigorous group participation, their voices discernible when raised in concert with others who share their interests’. But parties should continue to be the major instrument of democracy. “Not the illiberal, undemocratic National Front in France, the Reform Party in Canada, or the Freedom Party in Austria, but the open, democratic party. The Democratic Party needs to be reinvented. It needs to make use of new technology and it should democratise the access to information. The party should be porous (taking serious note of pressure groups and movements). Finally the party needs to be transnational. We need to encourage the maximum possible amount of participation and face-to-face contacts. It is for these reasons that the future of democracy still lies with the future viability and strength of the grassroots, democratic party” writes Patric Syed (1998).

The Economist, in its July 1999 “Politics Brief”, dealt with the same question in a forthright manner. It asked, “What would democracy look like if there were no political parties? It is almost impossible to imagine. In every democracy worth the name, the contest to win the allegiance of the electorate and form a government takes place through political parties. Without them, voters would be hard put to work out what individual candidates stood for or intended to once get elected. If parties did not “aggregate” people’s interests, politics might degenerate into a fight between tiny factions, each promoting its narrow self-interest.”

Scores of examples could be advanced to establish the need for political party reforms world over and more so in India. One of the most significant is that popular expectations are growing at an unimaginably fast pace and parties in governance, almost all over the world, are finding that it is becoming increasingly difficult to deliver the goods. Governance itself is fast becoming very difficult. This situation has all the potential for people to lose faith in Democratic governance itself. No wonder then, when Shiv Sena Chief Bal Thackeray openly advocates the introduction of benevolent dictatorship, the number of takers is not all that small.

**Depleting Recruitment**

Recruitment of individuals to politics is one of the most important functions that parties perform. Joining a political party still remains the most effective option for anyone deciding to play an active role in democratic governance, especially at the implementation level. Generally speaking, an attraction for a particular ideology, or a leader with a charismatic personality or a liking developed for a set of persons associated locally with a political party, etc., could be the reasons for an individual’s entry into a political party. However, in none of these cases is the new entrant either formally told about the aims and objectives of the respective party or informally asked about his or her intentions for joining the party. As a result, several political parties end up just as any other organisation with few office bearers, several storm-troopers and no particular direction. No wonder such parties fail in generating any confidence in the minds of the people.

With party affiliated candidates, cultivation of principal-agent relationship is likely to be served more effectively. While it is true that competitive indulgence in partisan politics and its horrendous consequences have prompted some Indian leaders like
Jayprakash Narayan (JP) call for promoting a party less democracy, the concept has largely been looked at as just another utopian idea. Moreover, if parties are considered as an important part of the problem of the degeneration of our polity, they also have to be considered as an equally important part of the solutions to the crises. The success of representative democracy mainly hinges upon political parties since they constitute the most significant vehicle. For the simple reason that in any democracy, where the number of electorate runs into several millions, what is always required is a "linkage" institution that "organises, distils and translates" public opinion (Ladd 1982, xxi). When political parties allegedly fail in doing this job properly, two significant aspects of representative democracy namely popular control and responsiveness are bound to suffer.

Hence, it is undisputable that for rehabilitating the confidence of the people in a formal democracy, parties need to be reformed. A crisis of weak and ineffective political parties has a number of aspects. Prominent amongst them are:

a) The erosion of ideology, and hence, the depleting numbers of ideologically motivated party rank and file

b) Organisations sans cadre

c) An exceptionally high proportion of dynastic parties

**Erosion of Ideology**

Ideology is, or rather, is expected to be, one of the basic tenets of identity of a political party. Across the world, people used to distinguish between two or more political parties on the basis of their ideology. However, in the post cold war world where communism as an ideology appears to be losing all its strength, ideological differences are fast vanishing. The Left is no more left, and there is very little right with the Rights. Apart from the socialistic ideas present in several parts of the globe, the forces of economic liberalization are causing the emergence of the phenomenon of "End of Ideology".

While a number of examples could be advanced to establish how ideology is fast vanishing, the recent happenings in India and the UK bring about this fact most effectively. In India, in 1957 All India Congress Committee’s session held at Avadi witnessed how the entire socialist agenda was usurped by the Congress, making the socialists feel that it was better to join the ruling party to translate their ideals into reality, than to continue in the opposition. Even today, it is bemusing to observe how Bharatiya Janata Party (India’s principal opposition party) often chooses to follow the trodden path, allowing several issues that were intertwined with its own identity to be pushed to the periphery. More interestingly, Communist Party of India (Marxist) has meekly accepted to allow foreign capital in certain key areas, indicating a major shift in its stand.

Of all the factors causing major shifts in positions, the most crucial is the free market economy and its all-pervading impact. After their 1997 defeat, the Conservatives in the UK felt the heat and they started a programme called "Listening to Britain". During this very special campaign to meet voters at their doorstep, the Conservatives realized how people
really viewed them. Commenting on the campaign, David Willets (1998) in *The Political Quarterly* wrote:

Organisational renewal and 'Listening to Britain' are the twin instruments which William Hague is deploying to renew the party politically. At the same time the party needs to secure the intellectual high ground which we have surrendered over the past few years. One of the key reasons why we lost in 1997 is that a lot of voters took our belief in the free market to mean that we were willing to destroy institutions and traditions which they hold dear. It has become fashionable for politicians to offer a story of a conversation which brought home to them a crucial political point while out canvassing. My example would be knocking on the door of a house in Havant. The lady who answered the door used to vote for us but now, she said, 'I call you Conservatives the demolition squad.' That is an absurd position for the Conservative Party to have got itself into. Blair claims that it is Labour which can combine social cohesion and economic efficiency. This is the political battleground which Labour has seized and which we must regain (114)

Increasingly, our political parties are finding themselves in a position where their main planks are changing and yet they are reluctant to accept this fact. Agendas are getting intermixed and more than airplanes, it is the agendas that are today being hijacked frequently.

**Organisations Sans Cadre**

Since winning elections has become more of a technique, political parties are concentrating more on mastering this technique than building an organisation. This certainly has had a very telling impact, and parties, more often than not, realise this only when they test defeat. They forget that:

Organizations are tools for shaping the world as one wants it to be shaped. They provide the means for imposing one’s definition of the proper affairs of men upon other men. The man who controls an organization has power that goes beyond that of those that do not have any such control (Perrow 1972, 14).

Having perfectly realized the importance of organisation, William Hague, the conservative leader who is now aiming at the renewal of his party, noted that the fundamental weaknesses from which the party organisation was suffering included "a shrinking and ageing party membership" (Willets 1998, 112). Besides doing away with this situation, the organisational renewal of the party involved, "a new democratic procedure for electing the leader and a national membership register" and most importantly; unification of Parliamentary Conservative Party, Central Office and the National Union, representing the nationwide party volunteers (Willets 1998, 112).

**Dearth of Leadership and Eventual Growth of Dynastic Politics**

A crisis of leadership especially at the top is an important factor afflicting party organisations. A noted jurist in India and Gandhian thinker Chandrashekhara Dharmadhikari² has described ‘Leader’ as a person who leads the masses and refuses to be

---

² In an interview with the author in Mumbai on June, 27, 2008.
lead by them. Today, most democracies are facing this leadership crisis, basically as a result of leaders who are being led by the masses. Lilliputians, who are wary of going right into the masses and courageously explaining to them why a seemingly unpopular decision has been made, are almost a vanishing tribe. Leaders, who relish in finding short cuts to win popular support, are so common place that it has become hard to explain the classical concept of leadership through illustrations from the present scenario. This situation, as many argue, is the product of a changing environment in its entirety. Citing an example of how Tony Blair had to bow before popular demand vis-à-vis wiser counsel, F. F. Ridley (1998) in his preface to an issue of Parliamentary Affairs, writes:

> There is probably a lesson about the society we live in here. Pursuit of self-interest appears to dominate. Indeed, an international survey just published claims that the British, from childhood onwards, now rate material interests more highly than anything (including family life) and outstrip other Europeans in this respect. The result, of course, may be that latent emotions, if touched on a national scale, can bring unexpected disarray to our socio-political order (the Princess Diana case a portent?). Mr. Blair, backing away from support of anti-bloodspots legislation in the face of a mass rally of hostile future voters, may one day regret disregarding the quieter but much larger number of people that opinion polls show opposed to such sports.

> With idealism also being pushed to the periphery, the crisis is bound to acquire serious proportions because leadership may not chose to stick even to a particular set of values, in the emerging scenario of fusion and confusion, accommodative approach and compromise, flexibility and surrenders, so on and so forth.

> With the dawn of an era of coalition governments, we are witnessing in India what has happened in several other democracies the world over in the past. For example, in France, one comes across several scenarios showing the more powerful parties (RPR, PDF, PS etc) responding to conditions of challenge less by policy adaptation than by the energetic manipulation of resources, persons and rules.

> Kay Lawson (1994), renowned political scientist, in his book "How Political Parties Function?" makes a distinction between power-seeking and policy-seeking parties. But, very unfortunately though, policy-seeking parties appear to be transforming themselves into power-seeking parties. This happens because, as Lawson says "Once parties focus on the purpose, they risk losing followers, sacrificing means, missing opportunities, and succumbing to the challenge of those who are more focused on getting a better job than on making a better world.

> How can those who insist nevertheless on using parties as agencies of participatory linkage, as instruments for transmuting belief into policy, make parties work for them? The answer from these studies is clear if unsatisfactory: Nobody really knows. The Norwegian case offers a possibly helpful hint: Given reasonable security of office, leaders may be more likely to focus on policy commitments.

> Parties are fast becoming a ‘type’, a particular kind of organisation. This phenomenon of parties becoming organisations of a similar type is basically because all of them are out to seek power and, that power they can acquire only after winning elections.
Naturally then, the emphasis is not on winning the minds, it is on winning the votes. And now that electoral success has become something that can be achieved by a particular technique, parties appear to be concerned about just that, nothing more and nothing less. This has also affected the development of parties as institutions. Parties, especially when they acquire power, appear to be speaking alike, behaving alike, governing alike and above all, thinking alike. This has reduced our political parties to organisations caste in the same mold and the politicians to a class in themselves. Power, in this sense, becomes a great leveler.

In the good old days, parties used to be the agents of transformation, vehicles of voluntary social work and means of articulation of popular grievances. Today, when they lose any ideological identity, organisational network, and ability to provide leadership, they offer precious little to a poor voter who is left with a real Hobson’s choice. If desperation grows in a situation like this, passion for democracy is bound to make way for attraction for authoritarianism, which, as is hoped by several who are knave and innocent, is more likely to deliver the goods.

Dearth of Voluntary Social Workers

In a situation like this, people do look at some other agencies to influence the political process and thereby seek good governance. In several western democracies, think tanks, lobbyists and interest groups play a very significant role in the political process, but they certainly cannot match to the role of the political party. No political party can be complete without a think tank within, interest groups around, and lobbyists along with it. To expect lobbying agencies to take up a cause, interest groups to mobilize masses and think tanks to create a public opinion on their own is impracticable. It will usher in a fragmented thinking and a disjointed approach. Considering the limitations of all of these voluntary social works appears to be the only alternative available for a publicly-spirited person.

In fact, to a particular extent, the influence of lobbyists and interest groups overriding the political parties can pose a severe threat to the concept of ‘integrity’ to the voters. Alan L. Clem, in his “American Electoral Politics : Strategies for Renewal” rightly argues that, “When a legislator votes contrary to the majority of his party colleagues, it means that some principle or interest is more important to him than voting agreement with his fellow party members. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Majority and party preferences ought to be examined constantly and critically. But too much antiparty behavior in legislative bodies opens the door to more random, casual, or even selfish deviation, which too often seems to be the rule rather than the exception in America. Low party cohesion constitutes a dilemma and a potential danger to the idea of representative government, because it seriously undermines the ability of rank-and-file citizens to affect or even to understand the policy decisions their legislators make in their name” (Clern 1981, 23).

While on the one hand, less people are joining political parties. On the other hand, the number of non-professional voluntary social workers is diminishing quickly. Erosion of ideology is one of the factors common to both the depleting membership strength of parties
and the diminishing number of voluntary social workers. Besides, the fast pace of modern life, all pervading cynicism, and a growing skepticism about the result orientation of anything where one has to go extra mile are some of the main factors responsible for genuine, non-professional voluntarism losing ground. In so far as professional voluntary organisations are concerned, it is a fact that there has been a tremendous proliferation in the number of Voluntary Organisations universally, over the past decade. However, the achievement of long-term, sustained goals and having a larger-scale impact on social and economic development continues to elude many NGOs in their region A report published by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) in 1999 at its Bangkok conference very clearly stated that the reasons for the relatively limited impact of the Voluntary Organizations are "complex and arise from factors having to do with their weak organizational structures and poor strategies, programs and projects." A crisis of motivation, crass careerism in voluntary action, a spurt in individualism, respect without responsibility, and authority without accountability etc. are some important factors that have contributed to the process of reduced impact of voluntary activism.

In this scenario, a combination of the two – voluntary work preceding political activism – may perhaps work. If politicians could first take to mandatory social work, then perhaps they could understand in a better way all those whom they desire to represent later. They could also analyse issues, study their impact, and most importantly, relate themselves emotionally with the society at large. A five-year stint in voluntary social work may ultimately bring a semblance of seriousness to political activism. More than anything else, such exposure to the politicians of tomorrow would change the character of present day politics enabling it to go beyond elections and competitive compromises.

When it comes to striving for keeping the faith of the people at large in a Democratic system intact, reforming the political parties naturally tops the agenda. For a well-knit and organised political party, the following are the basic characteristics that need to be promoted:

1. **Changing the organisational composition by attracting younger minds** – Generally speaking, young people have become cynical and skeptical about politics, and for that matter, the entire democratic process. If voluntary social work precedes political activism making the later little more meaningful, youngsters would be more inclined to join politics for a purpose.

2. **Policy making** – Experience of voluntary work may add a new, more serious dimension to the thinking of a political functionary. This may eventually lead to revisiting the once well-defined ideology and policy perspectives on issues of popular concern.

3. **Internal democracy and collective functioning** – With the spurt in dynastic parties, internal democracy and team spirit and also collective functioning of parties is declining fast. Voluntary work, where would-be politicians would be exposed to real selfless volunteers working without any material expectations may impress upon their mind the need for internal democracy. They might also realise the need for a cohesive and harmonious organisational functioning where every person of a
4. **Transparency in financial matters** – In today’s political party functioning, all and sundry are bogged down by a real as well as imaginary sense of insecurity. This very unmistakably leads to a trend towards corruption, leading to amassing personal wealth in the name of a party’s electoral preparedness. Exposure to self less voluntary work earlier may make politicians more conscientious and value conscious. Also, experience of voluntary work earlier may give party workers of tomorrow, a sound reason to be living a meaningful life even in limited financial resources. More importantly, it would do away with a sense of a great void feared by politicians when they think of their retirement from active politics.

For all of this to happen, a mandatory five-year stint in genuine voluntary social work at the grassroots level for all those who are aspiring for elective positions in party organisation or a government body could be an alternative. This may enable them to gain hands-on experience in public life, just like an apprentice preceding formal employment. Besides, this may also help overhaul the system by re-introducing the aforementioned aspects of the organisational character of political parties.

**Will This Work?**

Considering the present party scenario in India, there is reason to believe that this may work. This is because all of the major political parties in India that are having their presence almost all over India, namely Congress and the BJP have their roots in cadre based voluntary organisations like Seva Dal and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha (RSS) respectively. In fact, the RSS founder himself was a Congressman in the pre-independence era. While Seva Dal has almost become defunct, RSS still provides the organisational muscle to the BJP. The background of voluntary social work has also greatly contributed to the development of the only two non-dynastic and organizationally better positioned parties like the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the BJP. Most of the other parties from Congress to Rashtriya Janata Dal have apparently accepted that dynastic leadership alone can help them grow. Again, some mid-way parties like the Akali Dal in Punjab, Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and the Assom Gana Parishad in Assam continue to have the roots of their oragnisational prowess in their historic background of a voluntary mobilisation in the form of a movement towards a non-partisan, social cause.

Of the three characteristics stated earlier, save for ideological issues and organisational matters all others, namely internal democracy and financial transparency could be regulated by a set of rules and regulations similar to those laid down for the registered charitable organisations. To monitor the observance of these rules and regulations, what would be necessary is perhaps an autonomous regulatory authority like the Registrar of Political Parties. Considering the fact that the Election Commission is already under heavy work-pressure, to have a separate authority like an independent Registrar of Political Parties, definitely makes sense. The Registrar of Political Parties, while laying down the guidelines for ensuring internal democracy, would also have to focus on regulating the ways in which a political party selects candidates for elections.
The ultimate objective of the Political Party Reforms in the Indian context will have to be freeing the political parties from the compulsions of populism and electoral considerations. To achieve this, political parties will have to have at least some guarantee of stability when in governance, so as to be free from the considerations of electoral reverses. Besides, they should be in a position to select candidates on the basis of merit, not just electability.

The overall scenario in Indian politics today is far from encouraging. A lack of lofty ideals leading to a lack of proper motivation is making personal ambition the only effective driving force at the recruitment level. This has added to the increasing tendency of intense dislike or hatred towards the entire political class. Also, the inability and basically the disinclination of political parties to educate the masses is further diminishing the chances of any courageous decisions coming from the leadership. The tendency to always “Play to the Gallery” is growing at all levels, with excessive insistence on factors such as image building and publicity mileage. Against this backdrop, liking political work with voluntary social work would certainly make an important difference. Apart from all other things, this linkage would at least partly do away with the crisis of motivation related to performing in a better way for bettering the lives of the people that is haunting the political class. De-motivated or ill-motivated politicians have done enough harm to the democratic polity, and hence, an experiment of this kind needs to be given a chance.

References

Section 6: Learning Democracy in Local Communities


Please do not quote without permission

Praxis and Place in FedUp: Windsor's Local Food Activism

Jamey Essex and Maya Ruggles
University of Windsor

Introduction

Activism focused around food issues presents numerous opportunities for crafting new forms of democratic participation and critical praxis. The most productive forms of food activism concentrate on re-localizing food systems, using these as entry points for building a critique of and alternatives to market-dominated capitalist systems of provisioning. Re-localizing food systems should not, however, be understood as a straightforward process of disconnecting from globalized markets, and entails redefining taken-for-granted terms such as ‘community’ and ‘locality’. This results in and contributes to a complex politics of place as it relates to knowledges, resources, and organizational capacity, and food activism and activists must engage with the politics of place and the concrete practical limitations of local communities. The success and sustainability of urban agriculture and community food security projects therefore depend on reckoning with the concept and practice of place, even as such engagement dialectically helps remake place. Such projects have become common in urban centers in North America and Western Europe, especially in larger cities where activist networks and collective resources may be more readily available and more easily mobilized than in smaller cities. This paper examines ongoing food activism in Windsor, Ontario, a smaller city in economic and social decline, but which nonetheless holds potential for building a participatory and democratic local food system not beholden to the interests of retail capital or global agro-food markets.

Specifically, we discuss the activities of FedUp Windsor, an organization that began in 2007 with the establishment of three community gardens, and which defines its goals as reclaiming the urban landscape, rebuilding food skills and knowledge, producing food collectively and democratically, and strengthening the local food system. Both authors are
members of FedUp, and here we highlight the group’s successes and challenges in relation to its engagement with place, particularly the ways in which it is embedded in existing networks of knowledge, resources, and activists. The resulting critique represents an assessment of the group’s ability to develop a critical praxis that is both responsive to the possibilities presented by this local place, and able to transcend the specific constraints of Windsor.

**Critical Praxis and Food Activism**

Praxis is a tricky process, pulling together the work of theorization and abstraction with the messy realities of everyday life and organizing. As Castree (2004) argues, critical leftist geographers and other social scientists must construct progressive imaginaries that can be translated into practice if they want their intellectual efforts to be meaningful and relevant to the world beyond the university. This should occur in part, Castree (2004, 988) suggests, by rebuilding the "lost skill...of understanding people and places in all their rich diversity and interconnectivity." Such understanding can only be built through an active program of engagement and negotiation with place, and the networks of people, resources, and knowledge that constitute place. The mediation of theory and practice that produces praxis and cultivates a reflexive relationship between our conceptualizations of the world and how we actually move through and with the concrete realities of life can proceed best when we understand place as more than a mere backdrop. Rather, we should understand place as actively made and remade, and as a constituent element of political activism and of daily life’s structures and processes (Harvey 2006; Massey 1994).

All of this presupposes that academics’ concerns about their own relevance are the principal points of departure for examining praxis and its relationship to place. How non-academics engage with place or construct a critical praxis is often taken for granted or treated as the object of research and reflection, a task for academics who provide intellectual contextualization and theorization. Surveying the feminist literature on reflexivity and positionality in activist research and methodologies, however, Moss (2004, 104) argues that "no one, not even the researcher, has a fixed, static, or easily recognizable subject position." Reflecting on her own experience as both academic and activist, Moss (2004, 112) contends that a process-oriented approach to praxis unsettles such activist/academic dichotomies and the divide between "intellectual" and "non- intellectual" activist work they embody, accomplished by adopting "the strategy to identify the tension giving rise to conflict within an activist group." Identifying and working through such internal tensions highlights what Moss (2004) calls "the politics of local politics," revealing the wider networks and structures of local power that shape and constrain activist efforts in place.

Doing so also highlights "where praxis actually takes place," so that activism can work more effectively to locate and work in "places that matter" to produce meaningful and practical change (Moss 2004, 112). The question that remains is, why food activism? There is increasing concern about the safety and environmental impacts of the global industrial food system, as well as the widespread economic and social injustices produced and demanded by such a system. While numerous responses have emerged to address the ills of global industrial agriculture, ranging from green consumerism and organic and 'slow food'
movements to more radical food sovereignty and land reform movements, general trends in food activism in the urbanized West focus on (re-)localizing food provisioning and building community food security. As Winter (2003) argues, the food economy’s embeddedness in local places and networks of production and consumption has become a basis for far-reaching political and social change through localized food activism. Winter (2003) also demonstrates this can be counterproductive, leading to a regressive defensive localism, while Allen (2008 159) warns that many food justice movements "are much more accessible to relatively more privileged people" and thus replicate inequality and injustice. Recapturing a sense of the consumer’s place in food production and distribution nevertheless remains central to what Barham (2003 129) calls "responsibility to place," which can lead to more environmentally and socially just economies. Food activism articulated through locality, and drawing on the unique physical and social attributes and networks embedded in place, presents rich ground for cultivating broader processes of change, and for learning new forms of responsible, democratic participation. The community garden, the soup kitchen, and the farmers’ market therefore offer potentially fruitful ‘places that matter’ in the construction, extension, and reproduction of activist networks and democratic forms of participation at the local scale. To understand how FedUp Windsor has tried to create such spaces, it is first necessary to examine what kind of place Windsor is.

**Windsor as a Locality**

Entering Windsor via Canada’s 401 Highway, a roadside sign reads “Welcome to Windsor ‘The Place to Be!’ Automotive Capital of Canada," and a large downtown looms on the horizon ahead, much larger than its relatively small population of 200,000 would suggest. On approaching the city’s core, however, it becomes clear that the skyscrapers belong to Detroit’s downtown, across the Detroit River and the international border. Because of its geographical proximity to Detroit and shared history of automotive production, Windsor is more intertwined with Detroit than with other Canadian cities. In some ways, Windsor ‘deals’ with Detroit even more than it does with its surrounding county of Essex. For instance, Windsor and Detroit share the only international public transit transfer system in North America, though there exist no public transit lines into the county. While this system is convenient for people wanting to cross the border for entertainment and consumer activities, efforts to build local grassroots networks, particularly around agricultural and food issues, encounter enormous logistical and jurisdictional challenges. Connecting with activists in Detroit, while physically more feasible, is limited by legal restrictions on what and who can cross the border; at the same time, countywide activist projects are dependent on private vehicles for solving many logistical problems. FedUp chose to focus on urban gardening projects within the city of Windsor for several reasons, one being that transportation needs could more easily be met with alternative means, such as bicycles.

Using city boundaries to delineate activities has not simplified the issues with which FedUp must work. A longstanding dependency on private vehicles has facilitated urban sprawl, making even specifically urban gardening projects difficult to organize and manage. Socially and politically, linking the work and knowledge of both urban and rural residents is
pertinent to FedUp’s goals, especially strengthening the local food system and rebuilding food skills and traditions through collective, transformative, and democratic processes. Yet resources are often stretched thin in efforts to network people who are scattered geographically, and to do so in ways that bring them together in place.

Here, as elsewhere, locality takes on many hues. FedUp is influenced by geography, but it is not simply space that must be considered. It is the creation, reproduction, and navigation of place – by interacting cultural practices, dynamic political relationships, and social institutions – that must be engaged and reckoned with. Windsor has one of the most diverse cultural landscapes in Canada, in part because of continued immigration from countries all over the world (CBC Windsor 2008). Many Windsor residents have food skills specific to their homelands and cultural traditions, including the communicative skills that accompany eating meals together. Another key participant in the history of activism in this region is the Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW). While Windsor’s activist networks and organizing skills have been shaped, in large part, by the CAW’s institutional structure, projects of (re-)localizing our food system involve a more participatory and horizontal structure than the CAW or other industrial and trade unions traditionally offer. The challenge for FedUp is to provide opportunities for participation in the development of a local food system by diverse, and often conflicting, cultural practices and political interests. FedUp’s relevance and sustainability depend on engaging with and navigating these complex relationships.

**FedUp Windsor**

**Mobilizing knowledges**

FedUp’s aim of strengthening the local food system requires the mobilization of various knowledges. The need for organizations such as FedUp arises out of struggles with the current global, market-based food provisioning system. In order to counter such a system, we need to engage and refine a discussion about its character and limitations, but always in light of potential solutions. The best solutions are constructed through collaboration between individuals with diverse experiences and knowledge. We need to know about small-scale gardening practices (including organic methods, permaculture, water conservation, and food preparation using local products); building organizational structures (such as developing effective lines of communication between different working groups and building a legacy of documents for future use); and planning forums for collaboration (such as workshops and social gatherings). While FedUp’s ultimate goal is to build a strong and sustainable local food source, its participants have found that community food security can be developed only by connecting people with one another; FedUp’s relevance rests on its networking efforts and collective character.

FedUp has received numerous positive responses from community members, particularly in the form of suggestions about resources or expressions of interest to be involved. On one hand, this poses a challenge. We want to keep people engaged (and encourage further interest) without burning out those individuals who take on much of the responsibility for recruiting new participants (including tasks such as doing outreach and compiling helpful materials). On the other hand, the strength of FedUp is relative to the variety of knowledge and skills that are involved. So far, the majority of participants are
Caucasian, middle-class, and only temporarily in Windsor. In order to be sustainable as an organization, and relevant for the broader Windsor community, we need to find ways of diversifying our demographics. Much of our work, then, goes into imagining new and interesting opportunities for participation, and then bringing those visions to fruition.

There is a significant dialectic between the cultivation of FedUp as an organization and its relevance for Windsor more widely. Participants have not brought ready-made knowledge about how to build community food security and then offered it to others. Rather, all of us have learned through doing: through gardening we have learned different methods for growing healthy gardens, through meeting and talking we have learned how to create effective lines of communication, and through planning events we have learned the importance of social gathering for the vibrancy of our communities. As such, each new person who joins us in our efforts, whether it is simply a suggestion about where to get seeds or it is to organize a cooking workshop or help water a garden, expands our collective knowledge and strengthens our network, ultimately contributing to food security in our communities.

**Coordinating resources**

The most difficult aspect of coordinating FedUp Windsor’s resources has been the relatively small number of committed people associated with the group, reflecting the larger problem of radical activism in the city. More specifically, the challenge is not a lack of interest, but the scarcity of people with time, energy, and organizational knowledge that can contribute effectively to the group’s work. FedUp’s membership includes many who participate in multiple groups within and beyond Windsor, including the University of Windsor and several environmental, labour, media, and other activist organizations. On the one hand, this is a problem, as many FedUp members must balance the hectic schedule of full-time student or employee with that of committed activist; one tangible result of this was that a garden on Windsor’s urban fringe had to be abandoned in late 2007. On the other hand, overlap with other groups’ memberships builds and reinforces activist and academic networks, and helps FedUp work through institutional differences and facilitate practical goal setting. This promotes a shared sense of purpose and collective learning, making for effective use and planning of other resources.

Currently, FedUp has a narrow range of groups with which to work in Windsor, drawing largely but not entirely on university connections held by members who are faculty and students at the University of Windsor. FedUp has also recently established connections with Iris House (a mental health facility), the Citizens Environment Alliance (CEA), the Green Corridor, the Windsor Workers’ Action Centre (WWAC), and the Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG). Resource challenges include physical maintenance of gardens and tools, navigating disputes between and within other organizations, and finding funding and volunteers to fulfill the group’s broad and far-reaching objectives. This is especially challenging in Windsor, which is marked by deep social atomization and the channeling of collective action into goals dominated by the concerns of autoworkers and their specific labor unions. Given this, FedUp’s coordination of institutional and physical resources has, to use an agricultural metaphor, done well in some rather rocky soil.
Although the group has relied on a shoestring budget and donated tools and space, the results have been encouraging and suggest more resources and an expansion of activities is possible.

New gardens have been added in 2008 in association with Iris House and CEA, bringing the total to four working plots, and FedUp has reached beyond Windsor through visits to Detroit Earthworks and informal meetings with the Canadian Organic Growers. The greatest resource challenge facing FedUp, however, remains the reliance on a handful of members to carry out the long-term tasks of organizing and managing resources. Adopting a radical democratic approach to these issues will, it is hoped, facilitate more sustainable and less hierarchical coordination.

**Democratic, sustainable, and collective processes**

Democratic approaches to decision-making, such as consensus, focus on the potential of collaboration for developing relationships of trust and illuminating broader knowledge resources. While consensus-based decision-making offers various techniques that help guide a group through discussions and disagreements, the specific needs and skills of the organization guide how, and to what extent, those techniques are utilized (Butler 2006).

FedUp’s activities are shaped by principles of collaborative interaction, taking advantage of the diversity of resources that individuals and community groups can contribute. The challenge of balancing the need to get things done (in moving towards our goals) with the desire to build a horizontal decision-making structure is always present, though there is not always a tension between these two aspects. On a basic level, FedUp’s committee structure affords the space for several people to be involved in ways, and to the degree, that is appropriate for them personally, and these varying sorts of participation work to individual strengths while offering opportunities for collective knowledge and skills building. Offering various points for involvement is also pertinent to FedUp, where all kinds of knowledge and skills are necessary for the work we do collectively.

More specifically, however, there are some limitations to this structure. For instance, generally only a handful of people take on much of the organizational work (such as updating records, calling and facilitating meetings, organizing work parties, and keeping track of budgets). This also means that only certain people learn the skills necessary for the upkeep of the organization itself, and the sustainability of the organization, then, is reliant upon those individuals. With such a transient membership, this may prove problematic in the future. At the same time, efforts are being made to shift the organizational operations so that it does not rely so heavily on specific individuals, but can more easily be taken up by incoming participants who are interested in contributing to the organizational aspects of FedUp. One example is the development of a communications protocol, so that there is some consistency with who gets what information (relevant to their contribution), how that information is communicated (clearly, concisely, and with all the necessary information), and through channels that simultaneously keep secure archives of our communications (so that future generations of participants can learn from our experiences and conversations).
Conclusion: The Future of FedUp

FedUp Windsor has worked to build a community gardening network in Windsor, Ontario, facing numerous structural and organizational challenges along the way and working within, and sometimes around, the already existing structures and networks of place that define Windsor.

With a transient population, a relatively small community of activists, a local economic agenda dominated by the concerns of auto manufacturing, and a local population divided by socioeconomic difference and the city’s own built environment, FedUp has struggled to achieve its objectives. Yet the group has achieved much in this context, with four working gardens and a committed core of approximately a dozen members, as well as a concise if broad set of objectives and a handful of fruitful collaborations. Without wanting to overstate FedUp’s impact in Windsor, it is safe to say the group has successfully established itself in its first two years precisely by drawing on Windsor’s politics of place, tapping into existing local networks of activists, knowledge, and resources. FedUp’s future progress depends on continuing to facilitate these networks and developing the capacities of Windsor as a place, focusing on creating and expanding those ‘places that matter’ and which can build a more robust and self-sufficient ‘responsibility to place’ within the city. In the short term, FedUp will need to focus on expanding its funding and volunteer base to maintain the progress already made. Longer term plans must expand food knowledge and awareness in the city by linking with institutional care providers and promoting community gardening by connecting those with space and those with skills, and on making trans-local connections with similar groups and movements in other cities across the US and Canada, while maintaining a central focus on justice that does not merely replicate consumerist and market-centered forms of equality and democracy.

References

Workplace Democracy and Solidarity Development: An Empirical Study of Venezuelan Cooperatives

Camila Piñeiro Harnecker

Introduction

The idea that members of cooperatives and other “democratic” or “self-managed” workplaces are generally bound by solidaristic ideas and attitudes, that is, by a collective consciousness, is commonly accepted as a self-evident truth. There is less agreement on whether members of democratic workplaces expand their individual interests beyond those of their collectives to include the interests of other communities, that is, on whether they develop their social consciousness. Then, it is pertinent to ask: why and how do workers in these democratically-managed enterprises—characterized by workplace democracy—tend to expand their self-interest and develop their collective consciousness and, especially, their social consciousness?  

In this chapter, I consider the relationship of workplace democracy with workers’ collective consciousness as well as with workers’ social consciousness, in Venezuelan cooperatives. I also analyze the main factors that facilitate or limit the development of workers’ collective and social consciousness and explore some of the challenges in the practice of workplace democracy.

The process of social transformation that Venezuela launched in 1999 stands out for its commitment to the practice of participatory democracy in all spheres of social activities, including the economy. The importance of participation in decision-making as a key for the development of solidarity and as a fundamental component of full human development, is generally recognized by those involved in the Venezuelan process, to the extent that it is explicitly stated in the 1999 Constitution. Democratic participation often generates a learning process that allows us to break with psychological barriers that prevent us from

---

1 Workplace democracy refers to the extent to which the management of an enterprise is genuinely democratic. Collective consciousness and social consciousness concern to the degree to which workers develop their solidarity towards their working collective and towards other communities outside their workplaces, respectively. These three variables are formally defined and conceptualized below.
developing our human capabilities, at the same time that it creates conditions for exercising them.

In Venezuela, public programs and regulations, and especially the public discourse of governmental institutions, aim at motivating enterprises to produce not just for the benefit of its workers but also for the satisfaction of local community needs as well as those of the Venezuelan society in general. It is believed that members of democratic workplaces can expand their self-interest and develop solidarity not just towards their co-workers, but also towards others outside their collectives. This ongoing experiment in Venezuela allowed me to empirically analyze the questions mentioned above.

I studied twelve workers’ cooperatives and three civil associations self-described as cooperatives located in Caracas, Mérida and Lara between early June and late August 2006. Due to the short time available to conduct research, and to make my sample more easily comparable, I focused on nonagricultural production cooperatives. At the time of the study, the newest cooperative was 1.5 years old, while the oldest had been in operation for 22 years. The size of their memberships varied from 5 to 160 members. The cooperatives I studied specialize in food production (4), construction (3), textile production (3), footwear (1), ironworks (1), and handcraft wool production (1). Due to their similar origins and circumstances to other cooperatives in the sample, I also included two tourism services cooperatives. My sample was strategically chosen by looking for the widest possible range of workplace democracy levels, and it is not representative of the vast population of cooperatives or other democratic workplaces that exist in Venezuela today.

Drawing on Manson (1982) and Espinosa and Zimbalist (1978), I developed a conceptualization of workplace democracy (WD) that has ten dimensions:

1) *extent*—which workers can participate;
2) *mode*—how decisions are made;
3) *scope*—which matters are subject to democratic decision;
4) *access to information*—how much equality there is in access to information about the organization;
5) *elimination of the social division of labor*—the extent to which manual and intellectual or administrative tasks are shared among workers;
6) *collective monitoring*—the extent to which workers collectively evaluate individual and group performance;

---

2 For a description of the Chávez administration’s policies promoting cooperatives, see Piñeiro (2007: 28-30) and Piñeiro (2005).

3 Since I was not concerned with assessing levels of workplace democracy, collective or social consciousness in all Venezuelan cooperatives, I was not interested in finding a representative sample, but one that serves to understand *if* there is a relationship between them, and *how* it occurs.
7) workers’ sense of control—the extent to which workers feel that the process of
decision-making allows them to be in control of it as active subjects and not just as
passive objects;
8) workers’ motivation—the extent to which workers actually participate;
9) workers’ comprehension or analytical skills; and
10) workers’ communication skills.

The first four indicators are related to the “formal” dimensions of workplace
democracy, and the rest to its “substantive” dimensions. 4 In this study I estimate the level
of workplace democracy as the average of assessments of these ten indicators.5

For the same reasons mentioned before, I measured workers’ collective
consciousness (CC) by the average of assessments of its indicators, one for each of these
three dimensions in my conceptualization of CC:

1) Awareness of the interests and problems of the working community the worker is
part of—extent to which the problems identified by the worker coincide with the
main problems of the collective as articulated by its members, assuming there is a
certain consensus about them

2) Willingness to contribute resources towards their solution—self-expressed
disposition of the worker

3) Materialization of this disposition into statements and/or actions—concrete examples
of support or consideration provided by the worker

Similarly, the conceptualization of workers’ social consciousness (SC) I employ is my
own and has these three dimensions:

1) Awareness of the interests and problems of the external community—extent to which
the problems identified by the worker coincide with the main problems of that
community as articulated by its members, assuming there is a certain consensus
about them

2) Willingness to contribute resources towards their solution—self-expressed
disposition of the worker to assist that community

3) Materialization of this disposition into statements and/or actions—concrete examples
of support or consideration provided by the worker and/or her enterprise to that
community

4 For more detailed assessments of each dimension of WD in the co-ops in my sample and some of the factors that act upon
them, see Piñeiro (2007: 30-34).
5 All indicators I use to measure workplace democracy, collective and social consciousness are ordinal scales from 0 to 4
representing “nothing”, “a little”, “more or less”, “some” and “a lot”.

When analyzing social consciousness, I make a distinction between *local* social consciousness (LSC), which refers to workers’ internalization of the interests of surrounding communities, and *national* social consciousness (NSC), in relation to communities within the Venezuelan nation. In other words, LSC refers to local communities, while NSC refers to communities located farther away. \(^6\)

In order to assess levels of workplace democracy, collective and social consciousness in the cooperatives in my sample, as well as those factors that seem to act upon them, I combined different qualitative and quantitative \(^7\) research methods such as participant observation, ethnographic field notes, a standardized survey of 229 cooperative workers, \(^8\) semi-structured interviews to 176 of those surveyed in order to better understand their perceptions, and archival analysis. I also interviewed 33 members of the cooperatives in my sample and 18 members of their host communities in order to better understand the cooperatives’ situations and their relationship to their surrounding communities. Seeking to gain deeper knowledge of the cooperatives in my sample as well as more generalizable understandings, I conducted several open-ended interviews to public officials and academics, \(^9\) and analyzed archival data and publications.

### Workplace Democracy and Development of Collective and Social Consciousness

The theoretical framework to analyze the relationship between workplace democracy and collective and social consciousness is symbolized in Fig. 1. This framework points to the main dynamics that take place within a genuinely democratic or “participatory” community (a workplace or any other kind) regarding the development of solidarity among its members.

The lower section of Fig. 1 models how individuals’ participation in democratic decision-making produces psychological effects that can drive them to internalize or adopt the interests of others *in that community*; that is, to develop their collective consciousness. This expansion of their self-interests to include broader, collective concerns can be produced by two dynamics: 1) individuals’ *moral self-transformation*, evidenced by greater self-confidence and feelings of control over their lives, as well as the self-restraining or moderating effect that occurs when one adopts a public role; and 2) the *sense of community* that emerges among them, i.e., a sense of belonging, trust, equality of rights and

---

\(^6\) I only measured the second component of NSC because it would have been very difficult to attempt to effectively evaluate its first and the third components.

\(^7\) Quantitative data involved in this study can be obtained by contacting the author at camila.pineiro.harnecker@gmail.com.

\(^8\) The survey gathered data that served to assess measurements of workplace democracy, collective and social consciousness, as well as members’ characteristics (age, gender, educational level, professional experience, time in the cooperative, location of their residence, community participation, income, etc.) that could intervene in the relationships.

\(^9\) I interviewed 21 public officials working with cooperatives at different levels, as well as 11 academics and others knowledgeable about cooperativism in Venezuela.
responsibilities. Both dynamics are products of members’ experience with a genuinely democratic practice. (Piñeiro 2007, 35-37).

Figure 1.- The process of expansion of individuals’ interests in a participatory community

Theorists of workplace democracy like J. S. Mill (1909), Pateman (1970), Manson (1982), and Devine (1988), and of deliberation, such as Miller (2003), have pointed to the moral self-transformation and sense of community that individuals in genuinely democratic communities experiment, and lead them to develop a collective consciousness. My analysis goes beyond that “internal” solidarity among co-workers to focus on whether individuals in democratic enterprises can also consider the interests of others in communities “external” to their workplaces. In other words, can workers develop their social consciousness just as a result of their democratic practices in their workplaces alone, or are other conditions necessary?

Dow (2003), Bradley and Gelb (1982), Espinosa and Zimbalist (1978, 134-135) and Berman (1967) have provided empirical evidence that workplace democracy has the potential to develop workers’ social consciousness. In the upper section of Fig. 1, I represent the potential for the development of social consciousness by members of democratic workplaces in cases where there are no spaces for democratic planning or coordination among cooperatives and other communities. I identify two dynamics that could explain how workers in democratically managed enterprises are encouraged to internalize the interests of other communities beyond their workplaces: “proximity” between workers and members of other communities (social interaction, through meetings and other social activities), and workers’ adoption of solidaristic values. The occurrence of these two conditions can exist independently of workplace democracy in the enterprises, but they can come to influence and be reinforced by democratic decision-making processes inside and outside the enterprises (Piñeiro 2009, 309-339; Piñeiro 2008, 16-18).
There is proximity between the workers and other communities when there is a considerable amount of shared experiences obtained from sustained social interaction. Proximity is more likely when workers are also members of the communities in question, but this is not a necessary condition. By extending workers’ sense of community beyond the limits of their workplaces, proximity serves to expand their interests in a similar way to the sense of community that develops between co-workers through democratic practices in the cooperative (Piñeiro 2007, 35-36).

Members’ adoption of solidaristic values can be seen as a step further in their moral self-transformation resulting from workplace democracy; once they feel more self-confident, they are more able to open themselves to others (Piñeiro 2007, 36-37). By drawing attention to the interconnectedness of all humans, an ethics of solidarity should encourage workers to see other communities as part of an extended family, even if there is not as much proximity.

**Collective Consciousness in Cooperatives**

Confirming the hypothesis that the experience of true participation in decision-making in an egalitarian environment encourages individuals to view the interests of others in the participatory community as their own, this study found a very strong connection between degrees of each cooperative’s workplace democracy and its members’ collective consciousness. In workplaces with the highest levels of genuine democracy, workers appeared to be more aware of the needs of co-workers—the first component of collective consciousness (CC).

However, in those cooperatives with ineffective or absent collective monitoring, there was seldom recognition that some members have special needs and/or different capabilities that do not depend on their effort level. When asked why not give a higher monthly compensation to those with greater needs, some explained that “everyone has many needs,” and “only the cooperative’s social funds should be used for those special cases” (July 5 and August 12, 2006 interviews). Others said: “The idea is that we all produce the same so that we all get paid the same” (August 19, 2006 interview).

The more democratic workplaces were also more inclined to contribute resources towards the solution of members’ problems—the second component of CC. As one member said, “If there is a member in need, the cooperative ought to help” (July 25, 2006 interview). And this willingness generally was materialized —the third component of CC— in the form of no interest loans with a flexible repayment period. In some cases, cooperative members made house visits, talked with family members, and, especially in cooperatives with a better economic situation, gave donations or awarded paid hours for study.

The transformatory dynamics of participation are evidenced in a strong relationship between levels of cooperatives’ workplace democracy and its most immediate effect—members’ own sense of self-transformation. As one member said, “I feel useful and happy, and my understanding of many things has increased” (July 31, 2006 interview). Along the same lines, a woman reported the transformation that she experienced as a result of her participation in the cooperative:
I feel like a better human being. The cooperative has changed my life. Before I was afraid to talk to people, now I even give my opinions to my husband and feel more secure when I run errands (July 27, 2006 interview).

More than 86 percent of all cooperative members surveyed felt better professionally prepared; 82.2 percent valued manual labor as important or almost as important as intellectual labor—evidencing their rejection of the traditionally-assumed superiority of administrative tasks; and 56.5 percent asserted that relations with their neighbors had improved since they joined the cooperative.

The sense of community among members—the least immediate effect of participation—was expressed in their awareness of the concerns they share (“We all have the same problems”) and in workers’ sense of equal status, rights, and obligations:

“This cooperative is mine; here we are all owners, we are all the same” (July 27, 2006 interview);

“We are all accomplishing something together, without bosses” (August 3, 2006 interview);

“The cooperative is like a family: one works as hard as one can, and one’s problems are better understood” (July 27, 2006 interview).

Social Consciousness in Cooperatives

The transformative dynamics of workplace democracy are not limited to the development of workers’ collective consciousness. Some members are applying their new skills and attitudes to their lives outside of the cooperative, including their relationship to the communities where their workplaces are located.

Several cooperative members explained that the deliberative and egalitarian character of the participatory practice within their workplaces promoted their awareness of the problems of the communities that host their cooperatives—the first component of LSC. One member of a cooperative created as part of the Vuelvan Caras program stated: “being in the cooperative has changed my vision of this community, now I see their needs more” (July 28, 2006 interview). Another member noted that “the communities around here lack many things and we should all help”, and a third suggested that “we should put ourselves in their shoes” (August 24, 2006 interviews).

Although most members seem to be more aware of what they perceive are the problems of their neighboring communities, their disposition to contribute toward solutions—the second component of LSC—varies considerably, and seems to be influenced by several factors beyond the internal dynamics of the cooperatives. Playing down all the support that older (created before 1999, the beginning of Chávez’s first presidency) and newer (created after 1999) cooperatives have received from international organizations

---

10 Literally “about-face,” Vuelvan Caras cooperatives are those created under a program with that same name managed by the Ministry of Communal [then, Popular] Economy (MINEC) that trains Venezuelans from the most marginalized sectors, encourages them to create cooperatives and assists them in the process by providing financial, technical and advisory support.
and the Chávez administration, respectively, the most common argument used to oppose contributing to neighboring communities were claims that their cooperatives’ economic success was mostly/above all/by far the result of their own efforts. Ignoring the inadequate capabilities that some have due to limited opportunities and/or historic exclusion, some workers claimed that community members “were not trying hard enough” and had to “help themselves like we are doing it in the cooperatives” (July 5, 2006 interview). Taking no notice of the social character of production, others stated that their revenue was not enough to be redistributed, as if only they were entitled to it.

On the other hand, other cooperative members understood solidarity towards their host communities as a responsibility that does not depend nor should affect their economic standing. One Vuelvan Caras cooperative member stated: “that is why cooperatives are being created—to satisfy our needs and those of others around us at the same time; everyone would like an opportunity” (July 19, 2006 interview).

Workers who had a sense of solidarity that pre-dated their incorporation into the cooperative said that being in the cooperative has allowed them “to put [those ideas] in practice” (August 4, 2006 interview). This disposition to contribute to their surroundings communities was materialized—the third component of LSC—to different degrees and in different ways. For example, one of the Vuelvan Caras cooperatives I studied decided in September 2005 to move indigents off the adjacent streets and into an abandoned apartment on a floor of their own building. According to one member, the cooperative had spent around $2,000 in food, transportation and other expenses to help 20 homeless persons, many of them drug addicts, to leave the streets and drugs and start a new life. Likewise, some of the construction cooperatives that I studied responded to community requests and contributed their labor and even their own resources to add extra features to local infrastructure projects assigned to them. The most democratic and oldest cooperative in my sample lends part of their space to host the only local secondary school as well as various community events. Yet, other cooperative members felt they were contributing enough just by employing themselves because it reduced the unemployment in their communities.

As one would expect, the relationship between workplace democracy and social consciousness at the national level is far from clear. Since it is very unlikely that references to the problems of other communities removed from their daily experience are raised during decision-making processes within their cooperatives (and that’s why I did not attempt to assess the first component of NSC), some workers’ solidarity towards those distant communities is not as much the result of those practices. In any case, since many communities in the same social groups or classes that comprise Venezuelan society have experienced very similar realities, many cooperative members were aware of the comparable problems of other communities in that nation.

Even if workers’ perceptions of the main needs of other distant communities were not always accurate, sometimes they manifested a considerable disposition to contribute towards the solution of those communities’ problems—the second component of NSC. For example, some cooperative members stated:
We have to help because “one knows that there are communities that are worse than ours” (August 8, 2006 interview).

“We are all Venezuelans […]; if we work together, we can have a better country for all” (August 17, 2006 interview).

In contrast to these statements, a significant number of workers interviewed were opposed to the idea of starting to pay national taxes, even under the assumption that they would be efficiently and transparently used.

Since it appeared to me that comparing concrete evidence of solidarity towards distant communities would be a fruitless task, I decided not to attempt to evaluate the third component of NSC. In any case, there were only a few instances where cooperative members’ solidarity towards distant communities had materialized into actual contributions. For example, a textile cooperative in the municipality of Rangel (Mérida state) formed through Vuelvan Caras, donated at least 100 pieces of children’s clothing to victims of a flood in another state in February 2006, even when at that time they were enduring six months of negative net revenue.

An important finding of my study is that neither members’ geographical or physical distance11 to another community, nor their alleged adoption of solidaristic values, make the development of their local social consciousness more likely. This suggests that those participatory processes whose own internal dynamics allow workers to adopt a solidaristic ethics and a sense of proximity towards another community might be more important in explaining the development of workers’ social consciousness than external conditions like physical distance and exposure to a solidaristic discourse. However, I could not verify this idea because the cooperatives in my sample did not participate in any democratic planning spaces that would allow workers to experience such processes.

In fact, although more than 80 percent of members live in the communities where their workplaces are located, this study shows that physical proximity is not tied to members’ degree of local social consciousness. Physical proximity does not guarantee that workers are aware of the general interests of that community (SC1), nor that they will be willing to see those interests as their own (SC2), and even less that they will materialize their disposition into acts or statements (SC3). Thus, it seems that Venezuelan officials’ expectation that cooperative workers, because they are also members of their host communities, will internalize and act upon those local interests is too optimistic.

Similarly, although more than 90 percent of workers asserted their agreement with the “ideas and objectives” of the national government,12 I did not find a connection between workers’ alleged adoption of these solidaristic values and their local social consciousness.

---

11 Although in my theoretical model proximity does not refer to geographical or physical distance but to degrees of social interaction, I decided to use the first as a proxy of the latter because the latter is difficult to assess, and it is generally assumed that the first results in the latter. A better proxy might be levels of workers’ participation in the affairs of those other communities, as will be analyzed below.

12 Hopefully, this result is not because the corresponding survey question did not consider other sources of solidaristic values, or because asking about the Chávez government was too politically sensitive. I did not ask about religious affiliation because the vast majority of Venezuelans consider themselves Christians.
Cooperative members’ alleged adoption of a solidaristic ethics was only significantly tied to their social consciousness at the national level. Many members evidenced their assimilation of solidaristic values such as reciprocity, fairness and pure altruism: “Everyone should help others because everyone depends on everyone; we are all members of this community” (August 17, 2006 interview). Yet, some justifications for socially responsible behavior were based more instrumental considerations: “There is no point in living in a nice house if everything around you is falling apart” (August 23, 2006 interview). “One has to help others so one is helped by others in the future” (July 25, 2006 interview). “It would increase our chances of winning contracts from public institutions” (July 19, 2006 interview).

Factors Related to Workers’ Development of Collective and Social Consciousness

Members’ sense of self-transformation and level of collective consciousness are both strongly linked to workplace democracy. However, the connection between workers’ sense of self-transformation and collective consciousness is not as clear, as the emergence of the first was limited by some internal and external conditions. Similarly, the somewhat significant levels of social consciousness among cooperative members are not only the result of their experience within their democratic workplaces, as other factors intervene to promote or diminish the development of their solidarity.

In this study, the most significant factor limiting the emergence of collective consciousness in the cooperatives was the level of internal conflict, which coincides with the size of the cooperative. With the exception of one small cooperative, where conflict emerged from animosities between two families, the cooperatives with the most intense internal conflict were those from the Vuelvan Caras program, which are the largest in size and whose members did not know each other before joining the cooperatives. Those with the largest membership had been less successful in achieving genuine workplace democracy because equality in access to information, work roles, and control over the decision making process, as well as collective monitoring, become more difficult to implement as the size of the membership increases. In cooperatives where income distribution was egalitarian and collective monitoring was non-existent or entirely ineffective, some discrepancies within cooperatives membership also stemmed from the fact that those who worked the hardest felt “exploited” by those who worked below their capacities.

The study also found that female members had a significant lower level of local and national social consciousness. This can be explained by their lower levels of formal education and by their inexperience in social relations. Indeed, most members of cooperatives are women who were either housewives or who had little work experience outside their homes, and this tends to aggravate workplace conflicts, making an egalitarian environment and effective communication among members more difficult.

A conflictive environment within the cooperatives is incompatible with the expansion of workers’ solidarity not only towards others within their workplaces but also outside of them. The development of members’ local social consciousness is also undermined by the intensity of conflict between cooperatives and their neighboring
communities. Although apparently contradictory, there was generally less inclination among the cooperatives to contribute to their more proximate communities than to other ones further away. This may be because the negative consequences of a closer, quotidian coexistence between cooperative members and their host communities have intervened separating workers from their neighboring communities. In fact, members of the cooperative with the lowest level of local social consciousness feel abused by their communities.

The amount of sociopolitical training, or education on citizenship and cooperativism (with an average of thirty-six days of classes) received by members from public institutions or cooperatives’ own schools, is an important factor promoting workers’ collective consciousness. Other than members of older cooperatives-- influenced by the Canadian Antigonish Movement, where the main objective is for cooperative members to experience a “liberating education,” individuals who had received the highest levels of sociopolitical schooling are participants of Vuelvan Caras. However, Vuelvan Caras’ sociopolitical training has had limited influence upon them, due to the program’s inconsistent quality.

The link between sociopolitical training and local social consciousness, although significant, is not stronger because the Vuelvan Caras program and other workshops largely only addressed the importance of solidarity within cooperatives. Some participants in Vuelvan Caras asserted that references to social responsibility appeared only recently as a theme in the training program. The negative relationship between the amount of sociopolitical education received by members and their national social consciousness might indicate that the content and the quality of sociopolitical education is crucial for it to contribute to the development of workers’ solidarity.13

The most important explanation of collective consciousness, in addition to members’ experience with workplace democracy, is the extent of their engagement in political and social organizations in their communities. Members’ community participation facilitates the development of their collective consciousness, because participatory skills and attitudes are reinforced by participation in other spaces.

Members’ experience in community participation is also the second most important factor explaining the development of their local social consciousness, after workplace democracy itself. The most solidarious cooperatives were those where some members had had a tradition of actively participating in social and/or political community organizations. Workers’ involvement with organizations in their communities augments both their awareness of problems in those communities and their sensitivity or empathy towards them. Since members generally reside in the communities where their cooperatives are

---

13 Since June, 2007, with the reorganization of MINEC’s Vuelvan Caras program into the new Ché Guevara Mission, the vision of cooperatives as enterprises committed to satisfying the needs of their neighboring communities is supposedly being consistently and more effectively highlighted. Starting in September 2007, classes received by participants of the Ché Guevara program will go deeper on sociopolitical and ideological subjects under “a new education model guided towards […] the model of socialist economy” (MINEC, 2007).
located, this seems to be a better indication of their proximity to those communities than physical distance to them.

Interestingly, members’ disposition to contribute to other communities at the national level is generally lower in older cooperatives than in new cooperatives. This is because the first are almost purely family businesses, and there is a somewhat significant negative relationship between degrees of family ties within a cooperative and their members’ national social consciousness. When a group of persons is linked by family ties, it tends to be less open to cooperation with outsiders, because, as Granovetter (1973, p. 1376) explains,

‘strong’ interpersonal ties (like kinship and intimate friendship) are less important than ‘weak ties’ (like acquaintance and shared membership in secondary associations) in sustaining community cohesion and collective action (p. 1376)

In general, the quantitative findings show a modest negative relationship between cooperatives’ economic situation and members’ local and national social consciousness. But, if we remove one of the three cooperatives with a stable economic situation—because it operates more like a private firm where workers who are excluded from decision-making—the relationships are either not significant or positive. Certainly many members, especially of the least democratic cooperatives, saw the difficult financial situation of their enterprises as an impediment to contributing to their communities. Others, while pointing out that a positive economic situation increases the forms and quantities in which they can put their solidarity into practice, acknowledged that it does not preclude them from trying to orient their activities towards the satisfaction of social needs.

In order to test my hypothesis that a participatory practice between democratic workplaces and other communities (i.e., democratic planning or coordination) is more important than participation within the workplaces (i.e., workplace democracy) in explaining the development of workers’ solidarity towards those communities, I intended to look at cooperatives’ interactions with their host communities. But the reality is that democratic planning institutions are still very rare in Venezuela. Where they do exist, cooperative members who participate do not act as representatives of their organizations, at least in this sample.

**Need for Democratic Planning**

The findings of this research suggest that, although workplace democracy does play an important role in promoting workers’ local social consciousness, that practice per se does not guarantee the development of their social consciousness, especially towards more distant communities. Workplace democracy alone does not generate the necessary conditions for the development of workers’ social consciousness—that workers feel connected to other communities and that they adopt solidaristic values—even when they are also members of the communities, and even when they are exposed to discourses and material incentives calling for solidaristic behavior.14

---

14 Cooperatives and socially-responsible enterprises are eligible for preferential loans, technical assistance,
With the recent revision of the concept of social property and vast evidence that cooperatives seldom contribute to the improvement of quality of life in their surrounding communities, Venezuelan officials have acknowledged the need for communities to exert certain control over enterprises. The national government first proposed the concept of “Social Production Enterprise”, where control was reduced to the workers’ collective and social responsibility was going to be achieved through material incentives, and more recently promoted the concept of “enterprises of social property” or “socialist” enterprises, where communal councils are expected to participate in managerial decision-making.

Since the internalization of the interests of others takes place fundamentally through the dynamics or conditions created by genuinely democratic decision-making together with others, the government argues that the optimal situation for the development of workers’ social consciousness would be one where worker collectives and other communities jointly exercise democratic planning or coordination. To promote the development and consolidation of workers’ social consciousness, the democratic decision-making within workplaces should be expanded to spaces of democratic planning where all communities affected by their production can participate (not necessarily in a physical or direct way) as symbolized in Fig. 2.

**Figure 2: The process of development of social consciousness among communities that share a space for democratic planning**

To the extent that dynamics counter to the development of workers’ solidarity are not in place, institutions of democratic planning would significantly facilitate the development and exercise of workers’ social consciousness because the necessary adoption of solidaristic values and sense of proximity would be both generated by the participatory process itself. Democratic decision-making is a great source of social interaction, and it

and state contracts. For more details, see Piñero (2007: 28-30) and Piñeiro (2005).
entails working rules that include universal norms of reciprocity. Rather than conditions external to and beyond the control of workers in democratic enterprises, as in the paradigm symbolized in Figure 1, they could be the direct result of the expanded participatory practice.

Only democratic planning allows workers to be aware of the truly most important problems of those communities, especially once the most visible and basic needs are satisfied. For workers to internalize the “interests of a community,” those interests must be first clearly defined. And for this to be done effectively and fairly, members of that community themselves should democratically identify and prioritize them. Not only community members know best about their own problems, but it would be unfair to exclude them from decision-making that affects them.

Even once workers are aware of the main needs of a community, it is unrealistic to expect that they are going to spontaneously see those social interests as their own, especially if they seem to clash with their individual and collective interests. Just as workplace democracy encourages members to internalize the interests of co-workers, democratic planning is necessary to drive them to take on the needs of other communities as their own.

Moreover, the establishment of democratic planning institutions would make it easier for cooperatives to materialize their social consciousness into concrete contributions. It would aid cooperatives to address some of the most difficult challenges that threaten their sustainability, and could even eventually corrupt them into capitalist enterprises. By increasing coordination among enterprises and with communities, democratic planning would help them secure access to inputs, technicians, administrative personnel, and consumers. Cooperatives’ dependency of dysfunctional state institutions as well as their vulnerability to the instability and inhuman pressures of markets would be also diminished (Piñeiro, forthcoming).

To the extent that institutions of democratic planning are consolidated and expanded to include an increasing number of enterprises and communities, it would considerably reduce workers’ exposure to the operation of markets. Thus, it would also lessen the effects of a practice that is based on selfishness and an atomistic worldview, and thwarts the development and exercise of solidarity.

References


Learning Democratic Citizenship: Neighbourhoods as Key Places for Practicing Participatory Democracy

Lake Sagaris
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Why the Rush? Sustainability, Neighbourhood, Democracy

A distinguished congress of some of today’s finest thinkers are warning us that we, the human species, must make substantial changes to how our societies, economies and cultures work, if we hope to survive, with a decent quality of life, for a few millennia more. Recently, the CBC reported that one out of five large mammals face extinction (CBC, Guardian and other news reports, 6 October 2008), while Ronald Wright, Jane Jacobs and Al Gore, to name just a few, report from the front lines of human-environmental conflict, and the score does not look good (Goodstein, 2005; Jacobs, 2005; Kunstler 1998; Ward 1994; Wright, 2004). Sustainability or resilience are the sought-after qualities that, many believe, will bring humanity through this crisis and establish a new paradigm and a new way of living with, rather than off, the planet.

Cities will be, in fact already are, crucial to solving this conundrum in a humane, fair, durable way. The fact that 75% or more of the population of the Americas already live in urban areas (CELADE, 2005), makes this region a good place to start. While authoritarian approaches will certainly tempt many in the conflicts to come, they will not build the conviction, cooperation and commitment necessary to overcome the obstacles that we face. We need both strong political leadership and committed citizens to face these challenges.

1 An earlier version of this paper was initially prepared for Professor Daniel Schugurensky’s course on Citizen Learning and Participatory Democracy. I am grateful to him and my fellow students for their comments and suggestions.

2 See, for example, www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/oct/06/conservation.wildlife: “At least 1,141 of the 5,487 known species of mammal are threatened, with 188 listed in the highest risk ‘critically endangered’ category. One in three marine mammals area also threatened,” according to a five-year review by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The assessment involved more than 1,700 experts in 130 countries, and “confirms the devastating impact of forest clearing, hunting, fisheries, pollution and climate change..."
Just as the cities of the 20th century were profoundly different from those of the 19th, so must the cities of the 21st century see many of the everyday sights and habits of the past give way to a future that we must begin to build now. In this sense, we must learn from indigenous peoples of the Americas and Australia, opening our eyes and seeing through our dreams and songs into the changes that we must make, because they are so urgently needed.

We must also significantly deepen and improve democratic governance at every level. People respect most the laws and rules they believe in. People believe most in those things they have created together with their own muscles and minds.

There is, however, no easy way to build democracy. Low voter turnouts are virtually universal and a clear sign of widespread dissatisfaction with current political systems. In post-dictatorial societies, such as Eastern Europe or Latin America, it is particularly hard to break with recent social learning and bring people together to work for the common good. Each country is different in this sense, with a heritage that must be recovered and, often, built anew, before it can properly inform present and future practice.

In Chile’s case, rebuilding democracy on the day-to-day, community level where it is most needed, has been particularly difficult. Students protest a rigid, authoritarian, underfinanced educational system using the same techniques developed to oppose a brutal dictatorship, often seeing violence as the way to get media and therefore society’s attention. Peaceful rallies deteriorate into Molotov-throwing confrontations with police, regardless of the organizers’ original intentions. When people come together for social or civil causes, meetings tend to follow one of two patterns: endless, shapeless talk that never leads to anything concrete, or authoritarian control by a leader who ultimately makes all the decisions.

These experiences raise the question of where citizenship can be learned, relatively quickly and well, in societies for which innovation at the school level is difficult, and not enough. Schools remain complex, rigid and relatively authoritarian spaces in Chile today, making them a difficult space to learn and practice democracy. It is important to overcome the gap produced by dictatorship among adults too, making adult learning a crucial necessity not fulfilled by public schools. Families are usually considered another significant location for learning these kinds of skills, but many parents, born and bred under the dictatorship, don’t have them. Moreover, Chile’s families today are places where authoritarian patterns, reinforced by military government, remain associated with some of the continent’s highest levels of family violence (UNICEF 2006).

In this environment, for many reasons, neighbourhood organizations tend to be fragile, underfinanced, sometimes inoperative and, on rare occasions, suddenly and

---

3 According to UNICEF studies, barely one quarter (24.7%) of children in Chile are not abused by their parents. More than one quarter (25.9%) experience serious physical violence, 27.9% less severe violence, 21.4% psychological violence (Figures for 2006, from www.indicadores/maltrato.htm, accessed 6 December 2008. Similarly, 56.3% of households have experienced serious physical violence ("been hit many times") toward the children and between the parents. Moreover, of the 16.2% who suffered physical injuries as a result, 4.3% had to go to hospital, and just 3.4% reported the incident to police.
surprisingly effective. Why then propose the community, and specifically the physically bounded space of neighbourhoods and city streets as crucial spaces that can be used for effective citizen education? How could this happen? And what would be necessary for this to occur?

The intention of this paper is to explore these questions, from the perspective of a particular community of communities, Living City (Ciudad Viva) in Santiago, Chile, as one step toward designing a project that could make these ideas a reality. Living City is an award-winning, self-managed, self-created community organization widely considered the most important urban citizens’ organization in post-dictatorial Chile. Citizens’ groups seldom have the opportunity to step back and think deeply about the theoretical foundations for their work, how that theory should inform their tools, relationships and actions, and where they should concentrate their always scarce resources This paper, then, is designed to do just that. This makes it quite unique: the analysis and development of a project, elaborated with no funder in mind. Just the urgent need to build change through peaceful, participatory means and measures. Part of the urgency for this, in Chile at least, is that the country has gone through more than a century (and some would argue its entire history) of widespread social movements struggling to achieve greater equality and social justice, only to be bloodily suppressed by civil wars, military or other types of dictatorships. Finding ways to achieve deep and real social and political change without triggering this violent response is, then, an added imperative for any civil society effort.

**Conditions for Citizen Learning: Ideas from Planning and Participatory Democracy**

Both urban planning and citizen learning theory have evolved considerable knowledge about the relevance of collaborative planning, deliberation and communication in a profound Habermasian sense, in order to build what Brannan et al. call active citizenship:

Active citizenship has become a central concept in the government policy agenda. The ambition behind the agenda is substantial a vision of strong, active, and empowered communities-increasingly capable of doing things for themselves, defining the problems they face and then tackling them together (Brannan et al., 2006, 903).

Cornwall and Gaventa review strategies to improve participation in social policy, examining four approaches: 1) consultations among users or consumers, 2) self-provisioning through civil society, 3) social and advocacy movements, 4) and accountability approaches “which emphasize new relationships between service providers and citizens through their active participation in processes of democratic governance”. They conclude that more functional concepts, based on mere consultation or self-provisioning, are “of limited utility” (Cornwall and Gaventa2001, iii).

Not only do they fail to include people in broader aspects of the policy process, but they also ignore their contribution to self-provisioning outside formal government arenas. Most importantly, they fail to recognize or realize the potential of more active citizen engagement in making and shaping social policy and with it
opportunities for enhanced service responsiveness, transparency and accountability [my emphasis] (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001, iii).

In the late 1980s, Porto Alegre’s experience with participatory budgeting developed a significant model of government-initiated learning by doing, through participation in governance (defining the discretionary portion of municipal budgets) at the local level. Participatory budgeting was taken up by the World Bank and many other policy-making instances, and today a substantial literature examines similar experiences in Brazil, Argentina and elsewhere, pointing to its success in involving and building more active citizenship among participants. The participatory budgeting model is now increasingly being applied in both developed and developing countries (Abers 2000; Acharya, Lavalle, and Houtzager 2004; Blakey 2008; Caceres et al., 2007; Dagnino, Olvera, and Panfichi 2008; Danilo Romeu 2004; Fung and Wright 2003; Sintomer, Herzberg, and Cke 2008; Weyh and Streck 2003; Schugurensky, and Lerner 2005).

However, where governments are reluctant to lead the way, as is most common, citizens themselves have to take the initiative. Often the catalyst for citizen initiative is a major conflict, severe problems such as delinquency, homelessness or extreme poverty, or simply the longing for a better place to live. Usually, the ad hoc citizens’ groups formed to confront a single issue function like athletes running the 100-metre dash: they put out a huge amount of energy to win (or lose) their particular race, then desert the civic arena and head home. All the training and learning from the initiatives gets lost.

When citizen initiatives can be captured and enrich permanent organizations, however, such as the neighbourhood associations (juntas de vecinos) that form part of Chile’s legal governance structures, this energy can be invested in longer term structures capable of developing a more sophisticated analysis of what’s going on and what neighbours want, turning momentary participation in the political system into a permanent resource for the community.4

Lucy Taylor, who explores key themes in Latin American citizenship, including the “messiness” of everyday life, notes that:

we should not regard ordinary people as being helpless victims of conniving, unscrupulous oppressors. Power is not evenly distributed and oppressive hierarchies prevail, yet even so ordinary people are capable of exercising their intelligence and agency. This might not be citizenship in a strict or theoretical sense, but neither is it subjugation nor helpless victimisation. The actions involved in the negotiation of power identify people as protagonists in their community and society (Taylor and Wilson 2004, 163).

Taylor, like others thinking about citizenship and participation, underlines the dual nature of citizenship, as both a condition of belonging to a specific place and the possibility of action for the common good. Many explore the swarm of issues and requirements for fully

---

4 For brevity’s sake, I will not discuss the implications of this strategy for building and accumulating social capital within a community, but clearly this is one of the benefits of creating structures able to retain this kind of knowledge, because it also involves know-how about people and relevant political and administrative systems, and how to bring them on board, isolate opposition, and generally move ahead politically.
developing this second aspect of citizenship, but few examine the relevance of specific physical places to the kinds of spaces necessary to build this kind of action, or active citizenship.

Fung and Wright, however, combine their search for how to build more participatory democratic instances with the issue of where this space can be made. They compare participatory instances in several places around the world, specifically neighbourhood governance councils in Chicago, participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, conservation planning (US), and Panchayat reforms in India, which have devolved some administrative development to village councils. Although very different, each of these experiences focused on specific tangible problems, involving ordinary people and officials in the search for solutions, through deliberative processes. Fung and Wright label this “empowered participatory governance” (EPG) and define three essential ingredients to avoid manipulation of collective, participatory processes. These must involve “deliberative decision processes,” and “earnest arguments and justifications must constitute the central kind of reasoning through which problem-solving actually takes place.” Most importantly:

While empowered participatory governance shares this focus on persuasion and reason-giving with all accounts of deliberation, its practical focus departs from many treatments that depict discourse as the proffering of reasons to advance pre-given principles, proposals, values, or policies. In these experiments, deliberation almost always involves continuous joint planning, problem-solving, and strategizing. Participants in EPG usually enter these discursive arenas to formulate together such means and ends. They participate not exclusively to press pre-formed agendas or visions, but rather they expect that strategies and solutions will be articulated and forged through deliberation and planning with the other participants (Fung and Wright 2003, 18).

This focus on deliberative processes as a way in which groups and communities forge new, collective truths dovetails well with current thinking in planning. Indeed, in the English-speaking world (Hall 2002), planning has a long and fascinating engagement with social and urban reform and participatory governance. John Forester, Patsy Healey and Leonie Sandercock are all planning theorists and practitioners that offer theoretical and practical tools rich in possibilities for city and regional planners, and the communities whose needs they attempt to address.

Healey’s contribution is inspired largely by the work of Jürgen Habermas, a “rich seam of ideas” (Healey 2000, 49) about planning as a collaborative, intercommunicational effort, although some theorists have criticized her work for downplaying the role of the state and power relations that often undermine planners’ effectiveness.

Both Healey and John Forester see planners’ role as helping communities and decision-makers work through conflict to reach new meanings and through these, meaningful decisions. They relate these processes to places, particularly the local, where they can be worked on and worked out. Healey notes that,

Local conflicts over space and place thus bring together not merely individuals with different interests and stakes, but people operating in different relationship cultures, with different ways of doing, seeing and knowing (Healey 2000, 60).
Healey also relates these concepts to learning processes, developing Schön’s idea of “double-loop learning”, very similar to Merrifield’s “spiral”, discussed below. The spiral requires learning new skills, but also reflecting and learning to apply them differently in different situations. Above all, the spiral means learning to use acquired knowledge to transform.

Forester specifically identifies the civic relevance of place-based conflicts, often played out at least partially in a planning sphere. Place based conflicts deal with practical difference in and through conflictual settings... At stake is not just consensus building, but the integration of acting and learning, relationship building and world shaping... The transformations at stake are those not only of knowledge or of class structure, but of people more or less able to act practically together to better their lives, people we might call citizens (Forester 1999).

In her “love song to our mongrel cities” (Sandercock, and Lyssiotis 2003), Sandercock, meanwhile, does much to integrate indigenous people, immigrants, people of varied race, ethnic origin, cultures and language into modern day planning practice. She advocates an epistemology of multiplicity for planning practice, based on knowing from dialogue, from experience, from learning to read symbolic and non-verbal evidence, from local knowledge, from contemplative or appreciative knowledge, and from learning by doing, or action-planning (Sandercock, and Lyssiotis 2003, 78-82). Echoing Fund and Wright, she endorses a planning model that empowers those affected.

As opposed to the advocacy model, in which professionals work on behalf of poor communities, in the empowerment model the role of the professional planner is to enable communities to do things for themselves (Sanderock and Lyssiotis 2003, 81).

Yet, somehow, for all planners’ efforts, something is missing. Planners may define their role as helping citizens to climb Arnstein’s ladder toward more meaningful participation (The ladder defines the stages or rungs of citizens’ participation, ranging from tokenism and manipulation all the way up to partnership building and citizen control of specific processes; Arnstein 1969), over and over again, but they fall short of actually building them into the system in genuinely powerful, ways.

Similarly, deliberation, participation, and active citizenship, are well-used terms in planning, and are familiar to theorists and practitioners of participatory democracy. Oddly, though, to date there seems to have been little exchange between theory and practice. Likewise, on the planning side of the question, with some noteworthy exceptions5, political and particularly governance issues tend to be left out of current debates.

I see bridging across planning and participatory democracy theory as an essential part of achieving the social changes necessary to build a better, fairer, more sustainable

---

5 Krumholz, for example, with his equity planning approach, applied in Cleveland, in which planners actively and very politically advocate on behalf of vulnerable, excluded communities subject to considerable discrimination in normal planning Systems. Krumholz and Clavel 1994.
world. In the next section I will, therefore, examine Merrifield’s ten components of effective citizen learning and discuss their application at the neighbourhood level.

**Citizen Learning, Neighbourhoods and Communities of Learning: The Case of Living City**

Judith Merrifield, a researcher with the Institute of Development Studies Participation Group (UK), says:

Citizens believe that a good society is one in which they can participate in public spheres to make their own contribution toward the public good... They want to be heard and consulted on a regular and continuing basis, not merely at the time of an election. They want more than a vote. They are asking for participation and inclusion in the decisions taken and policies made...(Merrifield 2001, 4).

Citizen learning, she writes, is purposeful and social, and involves ten key components. This section will explore those ten components with reference to a case study of the prizewinning Living City organization (www.ciudadviva.cl) in Santiago, Chile.

Living City’s roots lie in the organization of a broad, citizens’ coalition against Santiago’s first major urban highway project in the 1990s. The brainchild of public works minister, Ricardo Lagos, the highway was intended to be a major plank in the platform that would make him president of Chile. As a political gesture, the highway was highly effective, helping rocket Lagos into power.

Born as the *Coordinadora No a la Costanera Norte*, the anti-highway coalition united communities in three separate municipal areas and from widely diverse backgrounds: low-income *allegados* (homeless people housed in overcrowded conditions with relatives or acquaintances), renters and homeowners from *Independencia*; flower and other market vendors from the *Vega* (Santiago’s main market area); residents and business people from the *Bellavista* arts neighbourhood, and well-to-do professionals living in *Pedro de Valdivia Norte*.

For different motives participants joined together to oppose the highway project, delaying its implementation for five years and profoundly changing the final project. It was the first major citizens’ movement to arise in Santiago in post-Pinochet Chile. Born into an atmosphere of extreme distrust and social trauma, the result of the military regime (1973-1990), Living City raised profound questions about transport policies that have gradually changed the way urban planning is carried out.

While running their highly successful oppositional campaign to the highway, Living City’s leaders accumulated a vast store of knowledge about sustainability, urban transport,

---

6 Living City has twice won the prestigious award for innovation in citizenship (*2002-Reciclar para vivir mejor, 2004-Muévete para una ciudad mejor*) from the Ford Foundation, the University of Chile’s public policies institute and the Foundation for Overcoming Poverty; and recently was awarded the award *Territorio Chile*, for participatory Management of the troubled Bellavista neighbourhood in Santiago. All three awards include a rigorous examination by an external examiner, involving interviews with the multi-stakeholders involved in the effort.
health and equality, thanks to support from respected academics and experts, and mobilization of their own resources. Above all, Living City became a school for a new kind of political citizenship, based in urban communities, which has become widely recognized for its effectiveness and innovation in the Chilean context.7

According to Merrifield, citizen learning should:

- Help people acquire new knowledge by linking to the core concepts in their existing patterns of knowledge.
- Practice what it preaches, provide experiences of engaging in democracy not just information about it.
- Provide opportunities to practice problem solving and to become self-aware about their problem solving processes.
- Provide opportunities to re-present experience in different ways, in order to deepen analysis and understanding.
- Allow spiral learning (revisiting and understanding at a deeper level), in order to facilitate growth and development.
- Provide ‘scaffolding’ opportunities, in which those who are more experienced help novices with tasks that they cannot quite manage themselves, giving control back to the novice when he or she can manage alone.
- Provide practice at all levels of reflection from immediate to deeper self-examination.
- Be conducted in the context of communities of practice -- establishing group norms, values, language, meanings and purposes.
- Incorporate cultural expressions and social activities to create the learning community.

Local neighbourhood associations have been a feature of civic life in Chile since they were created by law, in the 1960s. Although the military government (1973-1990) removed all elected leadership, replacing it with loyal appointees, elections in neighbourhood associations up and down the country took place in the 1990s.

Since then, this venerable institution has suffered from neglect, lack of funding, limited civic skills among local leaders, and other problems. The local authorities often boycott or even actively work to undermine or control these associations through clientelist and other subversive strategies. Despite these challenges, the neighbourhood associations, or juntas de vecinos, are well-known, mostly functional, and in some cases highly effective advocates for local rights on a wide range of urban and social issues.

7 See, for example, Ducci or Poduje, as quoted in Que Pasá, a conservative news magazine. Iván Poduje, a respected academic and consultant to real estate developers says (my translation) “The movement against the Costanera Norte is a landmark in post-dictatorial citizen participation. Its success meant it was quickly imitated by other groups, some to be fashionable, others out of duty.” The journalist goes on to say that “according to a study by Poduje, Living City is today the most important citizens’ group in Chile.” (López 2008, e-version, accessed 10 November 2008). María Elena Ducci, architect and urbanist from the Catholic University, followed Living City’s career during the early years, reaching a similar conclusion.
The neighbourhood association structure is simple, democratic and very accessible to people living in local communities. Membership is open to anyone who sleeps overnight in the community, with no distinction made between renters, home-owners or others (allegados and so on). Indeed, anyone over 15 years of age can belong to a Junta de Vecinos. Every two years the membership elects a five-person board, a directiva, which is responsible for organizing and carrying out activities as mandated by the required annual assembly and any additional meetings called by the board.

Juntas de vecinos have judicial status, which means that once constituted, they have access to bank accounts, tax identification numbers and other elements required to function effectively. Where functional, they tend to be rather slow to respond to immediate threats, and are often questioned by ad hoc committees formed by neighbours when they feel that an essential issue, such as a mobile telephone antenna, a high-rise construction project, or an urban highway, threatens their neighbourhood.

As Merrifield and other authors point out, an extensive literature points to the need for people to experience democratic practice personally and directly in order to understand it. In this sense, neighbourhood associations as constituted in Chile offer interesting possibilities to learn while doing. The basic practice of responsibility—going to meetings, giving an opinion, helping to implement decisions, organizing activities, and so on—is facilitated when the sphere of action is immediate, right outside people’s front doors, and stands to benefit them, their families and their neighbours and friends very directly.

In Canada, I learned these skills for democracy in high school and university student clubs and movements. In Chile, even today, there are few spaces for democratic learning and an enormous gap where existing knowledge, experience, and collective wisdom was erased by the military regime (1973-1990), as it drove people into exile, tortured them or made them disappear. The neighbourhood level, then, becomes a promising space for redressing this democratic vacuum, in a context that can impact the lives of people of all ages and walks of life.

In the case of the anti-highway coalition, Coordinadora No a la Costanera Norte (1997-2000) and the institution its communities founded, Living City (2000-present), leaders managed to pull together both the legally constituted and recognized neighbourhood associations and energetic, committed ad hoc committees formed to defend the different territories impacted by the highway project. This organizing created a dynamic engine that drove the participating groups ahead, at the same time as it sometimes hung back to reconsider, deliberate and even change course.

Merrifield emphasizes (#1) the importance of linking new to already existing knowledge. In urban conflicts, local residents and users tend to have profound and intimate knowledge of their own streets and neighbourhoods. Seeing these threatened by a highway project, the Costanera Norte, that was slated to run right over their particular corner of the city, individual citizens and organizations in these four central communities/territories, all adjacent, interrelated but also extremely diverse, responded by fighting back, first individually, then collectively. Communities involved in the anti-highway campaign had to
draw on everything they knew, and seek out experts to answer the many questions that arose about the project and about urban transport systems in general.

Fighting a highway project is a daunting prospect, particularly when civil society is just relearning its role in the wake of a brutal military regime. All of the individual groups that came together to create the coalition, Coordinadora No a la Costanera Norte, practiced some form of internal democracy. In organizations dependent on volunteers, such as Juntas de Vecinos or ad hoc committees, people simply don’t implement decisions unless they believe in them. The anti-highway project, which took place over four years, both challenged and honed democratic skills, forcing leaders to reach out for help and negotiate differences to reach the consensuses necessary for political effectiveness. They very much practiced what they preached (Merrifield’s #2). The campaign deepened and expanded democratic practices to include not only individual group practice, but also that of the coalition groups founded to work together.

The practical demands of trying to influence a political policy and an administrative process in very hostile conditions created numerous problems for the coalition to resolve (Merrifield’s #3). To get their point across, coalition members had to plan and implement a wide variety of activities, from strategizing to research to mobilization. Indeed, individually and collectively the different community groups organized marches, “hugs” of entire neighbourhoods (wrapping them in coloured ribbons, surrounding them by neighbours holding hands, and so on), press releases and participation in the environmental impact assessment.

Thus, relearning how to practice active citizenship—in a very hostile context—was broken down into a series of steps that neighbourhoods, with their widely varying capacities and resources, could address and master. The countless meetings, forums, study sessions, and preparation of documents for the environmental impact assessment also offered opportunities to “re-present experience in different ways” (Merrifield’s #4, Merrifield 2001, 28-29). While the ministry attacked the “selfish neighbours”, standing in the way of progress, coalition leaders contended they had a legitimate right to defend their democratic rights, and the environmental, social, economic and cultural needs of their members.

Coalition members were forced to reach out to experts who could advise them, and make the most of their own collective wisdom, a process that corresponds to Merrifield’s spiral of learning and her learning scaffold (#5 and #6). Coalition members developed an extensive network of contacts, experience and practical skills that continues to grow to this day. Living City has constantly striven to keep these networks available to new organizations and others in need of support, through its own activities, its dense communications network (including the magazine, La Voz de La Chimba, published four times a year and distributed free to 15,000-20,000 readers throughout the city), meetings, training sessions, and forums.

This informal learning process is very similar to Schön’s “double-loop” learning, discussed by two outstanding planning theorists, Healey and Sandercock. During the anti-highway campaign, the ad hoc committees, neighbourhood and local market associations
started out by learning more about the specific impacts of a specific highway project on their territory.

Merrifield (#7) specifies the need for reflection to occur at different depths and in a multitude of ways. The quality and nature of collective reflection (Forester would call it deliberation, Forester 1999, 20) is often directed to the place and space in which it occurs. In the case of neighbourhood efforts such as Living City’s (which involved four very different neighbourhoods/territories), these included: formal meetings, lengthy one-to-one phone calls as events unfolded, fundraising meals that build multi-layered relationships among key actors, marches, assemblies, publications and many other initiatives. These in turn fostered profound relationships among key actors. For example, relatively early in the campaign, as pressure was building, the public works minister accepted a meeting with the Coordinadora, the coordinating body formed by the 25 organizations opposing the highway project. A ministerial spokesperson invited two representatives to meet with the minister. But the Coordinadora replied that citizens had requested the meeting and they would define who attended. In the end, 16 people went. They represented 14 of the 25 organizations involved, and also took two advisors (an urban transport expert and an architect-planner). When the meeting started, each group of organizations from the different territories involved (central market, Bellavista arts neighbourhood, wealthy and poor residents), spoke out against the highway for different reasons. Bellavista was opposed for environmental and heritage reasons. Pedro de Valdivia Norte because of the damage to the San Cristobal Hill, a major park. The Independencia people because they would lose their homes in the city centre. For the market people, their livelihoods were at stake.

As the process advanced, these individual claims became collective. That is, a leader from Bellavista (for example) would emphasize opposition to the highway project for a series of reasons, including those initially raised by the other groups.

At one point, this gentle convergence of what began as distinct reasons created controversy with some of the environmental activists that were advising the Coordinadora. They considered some reasons (air pollution and environmental damage) legitimate and others (economic survival, housing) “mere self-interest”. At one point, they even insisted that some coalition members (from the markets) should be expelled from the Coordinadora. This point was the subject of lengthy deliberation at an evening meeting. Eventually the group of leaders decided that social, economic, environmental and cultural reasons were equally important for the Coordinadora, and this position later became the foundation of Living City’s initiatives.

All of these reflections were deeply rooted in practice: they involved strategy, tactics, logistics and other actions to further the campaign. This common experience, of

---

8 The structure of meeting is also germane to this process of citizen learning. Typically one leader would lend a living room, a church hall or a room above a store, and representatives from all the different groups would sit in a circle. Chairing was such that everyone was invited to give an opinion, to ensure that all organizations’ views were represented. On some occasions, when attendance was low (a dozen people instead of the usual 20-25), participants tended to be from two of the four neighbourhoods (since most came with a couple of friends from their sector). This created the opportunity for sometimes intense debates between very different leaders, languages and cultures, building consensus and very deep trust among participants.
deliberation and action, solidarity and need, in a context of physical proximity and interdependency of the neighbourhoods involved, built a “community of practice” (Merrifield, #8). The “community of practice” was built on common bonds, language, trust. The lessons learned in the anti-highway campaign became the foundation for Living City’s whole approach to community organizing, based on networking rather than top-down authoritarian structures.

Most significantly, the organization set as one of its main goals “building equality”, rather than “fighting poverty”. While the two goals are clearly related, an anti-poverty approach tends to focus on the poor as objects rather than subjects, characterized by what they don’t have, rather than their strengths. Building equality, in contrast, requires that people from different classes, education and income levels interact, in a wide variety of settings. When done well, this approach of building equality empowers, by focusing on the skills and contributions that people can make, whether they learned them in formal institutions or in the “university of life”, as one Living City participant called it.

When she speaks of “communities of practice” Merrifield is not necessarily referring to physically bounded neighbourhoods or urban communities. Nonetheless, there is a relationship between the physical proximity and spaces available to people to meet and organise and their approach to citizenship. Living City’s communities have become increasingly aware of this fact, and heritage, both tangible and particularly intangible quickly became a central pillar in its work.

The presence of a popular, mostly oral, culture in the markets, combined with the artists of Bellavista and the university campus located in Pedro de Valdivia Norte had a major impact on the highway campaign and the quality of learning among its leaders (Merrifield’s #9). Artists themselves organized and supported the campaign, offering their works, which were auctioned off, to help finance the costs of the campaign and later the development of Living City. They also helped Living City’s message reach the ears of many arts lovers among Chile’s small but powerful ruling elite. Above all, they added both a sensual and an intellectual richness to the movement that was very attractive for all involved.

All too often, citizens’ campaigns of this nature tend to force people into roles that emphasize only a handful of characteristics: their willingness to sacrifice time, energy, and effort for a common good. In this case, however, participating in the anti-highway campaign, and later, building Living City, has involved producing books with distinguished literary writers and urban thinkers, learning about Chilean art (from the artists involved in the campaign and our neighbourhoods), developing very significant culinary skills, enjoying fine (but inexpensive!) Chilean wines, dancing, singing and a wide range of events.

These activities proved extremely important, not only for the diverse bonds they created across Chile’s highly segmented society, but also because at the individual level they involve the whole person, people who live, eat, think, worry, question, propose—and like to party. This sharing created very deep relationships and trust, capable of withstanding significant challenges, during the campaign and afterward.
This kind of depth and variety of interrelationships also inevitably led to a powerful engagement with values (Merrifield’s #10), not all of them compatible. Although it came together in 1997, when the impact of the military regime was still very strong (General Pinochet remained a major public figure, as former commander-in-chief of the armed forces and senator), the Coordinadora was very cautious and respectful in addressing the issues involved. Leaders included people who had supported the regime throughout, people who had actively imposed it and even been imprisoned or disappeared, and people who had avoided having any particular opinion. Between the lines, there was a sense among virtually all the key leaders that this instance offered an opportunity to repair the abyss in Chile’s social relations created by the divisive years of the 1970s and 1980s. This opening was expressed in personal conversations, rather than formal decision-making at meetings. It was also made explicit, however, when the assembly of organizations approved Living City’s new by-laws, which proclaim as one of its goals achieving respect for human and civil rights. Moreover, other rights, such as those of people with religions other than Catholic or sexual orientation other than heterosexual are also recognized in Living City’s founding statutes. These statutes, very unique and unusual for their time, reflected the enormous diversity, but also the mutual respect and tolerance, built up over years in the organization.

**River Babies: Building Democracy from the Bottom Up**

There are a lot of versions of this story, but basically it goes like this:

You’re standing on the riverbank, maybe even the Mapocho River that stretches like a broad grin across the width of Santiago, and all of a sudden you see a bunch of babies being carried along, screaming and crying, by the swift, muddy water. All around you people start leaping into the filthy waters, yelling for others to help them. They form chains, they labour through exhaustion, to get those babies out of the cold, swirling waves. But they just keep coming. Finally, someone thinks to ask, but where do these babies come from? Who’s throwing them into the river?

Often this story is used to explain the importance of prevention. Sometimes it is told to illustrate why our practice needs to be informed and shaped by theory. To me, it offers a disturbing portrait—and raises some difficult questions—about what is happening in many cities around the world today.

What should we do about all these babies, seemingly isolated, individual projects that never get discussed in terms of the policies and the problems they are supposed to address? How can we get away from the knee-jerk reactions these projects produce, opposing one tower after another instead of addressing the laws—environmental, urban, social—that give all the rights to a handful of developers who reap short-term profits and create long-term costs? How and where can meaningful deliberation that results in necessary changes take place? Where do citizens concerned about the integral wellbeing of their neighbourhoods, their cities and their countries finally get a meaningful say? And who gets to make the final decisions on these issues?

At rock bottom, how can this paper’s discussion of planning and citizen learning theory contribute to resolving these issues in a specific place, such as Santiago, Chile?
Let me address these questions in the context of Living City’s experience in citizen engagement with crucial planning decisions over the past ten years.

After the end of military rule (1990), Chileans were largely disappointed by the “transition” back to elected government. Myriad problems, suppressed and hidden for more than a decade, bubbled and burst to the surface, and solutions were few and far between. As described above, in the case of the territory on the north side of the Mapocho River, four communities soon found their survival threatened by the new government’s flagship highway project, and organized, first individually, then collectively to oppose it, triggering an intense process of citizen learning (and teaching) that continues to this day within Living City and the organizations it continues to serve.

Thus, the four communities banded together in the country’s first urban coalition, building a movement to stop the highway project. Although the project eventually went ahead, they achieved their main goal: in their sector, known as La Chimba, the highway dives under the river, only to emerge at the other end, thereby allowing the communities to survive intact. Media and academics covering this struggle concluded that it marked a turning point in city politics.9

But just when everyone should have gone home and taken up “normal” life where they had left off, the leaders of the 25 organizations were sitting in a circle in María Inés Solimano’s living room in an old adobe heritage house in the Bellavista neighbourhood. One by one they took turns to evaluate where they were at, what they had won, what it had cost, and where they thought their neighbourhoods were headed. They concluded that they’d saved their neighbourhoods from the highway project, but in real terms, they had expended an enormous amount of energy, only to end up where they’d started.

When, as evening seeped into night, they decided unanimously to stay together, they chose a new name, Living City (Ciudad Viva) and they established a sole condition: this newborn organization had to go beyond defending and create new proposals for embattled urban spaces. The knowledge and the learning acquired through the anti-highway battle had to be saved, accumulated and put to use, remaining available to existing and new groups still to form.

Since that day at the end of 1999, more than a hundred citizens’ groups have followed the example of the Coordinadora/Living City, joining forces mainly to oppose zoning by-laws, high-rise buildings and more highways. Living City, meanwhile, has fought its way through survival, designing and implementing several prize-winning, participatory community projects that have contributed to opening up thinking and debate about the future of the city, particularly in terms of heritage, transportation for equality, recycling and citizens’ empowerment.

Now Living City has even more knowledge, and continues to enjoy the support of a dedicated group of leaders, advisors and a small, committed staff. It has achieved some

---

9 See for example, Ducci, 2002.
outstanding successes through alliances in Chile and abroad, particularly in the field of active transport (walking, cycling and transport for people living with disabilities).

Notwithstanding, developers are building high-rise projects all over Santiago, wantonly destroying neighbourhoods to reap short-term private profits, leaving costly problems for local governments and neighbours to face. The national government intervenes shamelessly in the city. With a population of five million, Santiago is governed by 34 separate, fragmented municipalities while the regional metropolitan government is headed up by a presidential appointee, the Intendente. Government and private business alike regularly flout environmental and other regulations, all in the name of economic progress. Lack of transparency, lack of accountability, lack of the usual checks and balances that help to keep these forces in check in developed cities, all militate to keep the city prey to a few, at the cost of the many.

So, even today with some successful citizens’ initiatives under our belts, if we stand on the bank of the Mapocho River and look at all the different citizens’ groups, we can see they’re still doing far too much running around to save all those precious babies, their neighbourhoods, from drowning in a sea of highly destructive, apparently isolated, projects. One community after another is goaded into action by a specific project when it erupts on their individual horizons. How can we break free of this dynamic, head up stream and tackle, more systematically, the ones who are flinging these challenges into the water in the first place?

“Citizen participation” is a term much used by the Chilean authorities. But citizen groups of all shapes and sizes have been there, done that, only to discover that it’s no substitute for genuine democratic control over what’s happening in the city. No less than five separate laws regarding urban governance are currently on the order table of the Chilean congress. The housing minister promises they will bring even more “participation”. But a close reading of his bill indicates that far from improving the current state of affairs, the proposed legislation could even make them worse.

At the same time, citizens’ groups themselves struggle to come together, to function, to become effective. Many burn out fighting a single issue and end up back at home, licking their wounds. Sometimes they achieve significant successes. Sometimes, however, they don’t notice because they are so focused on one central goal that they don’t see the progress they have made on related issues.

Living City’s ability to build an ongoing institution and, with its partners, apply the knowledge and skills acquired in fighting the highway project to obtaining cycling-friendly policies and urban designs, suggests a way forward. Indeed, as diverse movements around the world demonstrate, citizens’ initiatives can be highly effective when properly framed and pushed ahead by active, well-informed, persistent citizens’ groups. How then, can we squeeze the key features of this learning from our experience, and make it available for other groups in Santiago and in Chile?
There are three fundamental spheres in which Living City could mobilize its knowledge to help build stronger local neighbourhood associations in Santiago, capable of pushing local authorities for more participatory democratic spaces.

**Civil Society Governance**

One relatively simple and immediate way to improve the democratic skills of citizens’ groups involves improving their own organizations, to make them more welcoming, better learning spaces and more politically effective. This improvement can be done relatively easily by creating workshops and other spaces for new and experienced neighbourhood leaders to exchange ideas. These discussions can also build up common values in terms of the democratic governance and accountability of their own organizations to their membership. Typically, these traits are weak in Santiago today, and often the inner workings of neighbourhood associations may be shrouded in the same dense clouds of invisibility as the authorities they are critiquing.

**Building Citizens into Local Governance Structures**

In theory, there is already some citizens’ representation and participation in the development of local zoning bylaws (*planos reguladores*), planning secretariats, and local development bodies. Indeed, in the past five years many citizens’ groups mobilized specifically to contest municipal proposals for new bylaws, acquiring substantial experience and know-how in this complex, supposedly highly technical field. Capturing this experience and using it to inform drives to place elected representatives, responsible through local neighbourhood organizations (*juntas de vecinos*) on specific planning bodies would go a long way to bringing citizens into debates that are currently closed to them. Spaces, both formal (regular planning meetings) and informal (coffee breaks, personal contacts, etc.) that typically shape most decision-making could also be made more accessible to local neighbourhood organizations.

**Building Capacity to Work Together from the Local to the Regional and National Levels**

Many key city governance structures function at the regional level or are established in national laws governing housing, environmental assessment, transportation, urban planning, city financing, liquor-related and other laws. This is often the level where those babies are getting thrown into the river, or at least where measures can be taken to ensure that they are not. Effective work at this level requires combining the following elements:

- **A research capacity**, so that citizens’ proposals are based on carefully studied, informed analyses of the possibilities open to them.
- **A deliberative capacity**, that is, a space in which different citizens’ groups can come together and debate the relevant research and proposals, building new consensuses and reinforcing positions and priorities that will strengthen their position when they confront governments or the private sector on issues that are important to them.
- **A communicative capacity**, involving a dense weave of internal and external communications, controlled by citizens themselves. The media can help position citizens’ concerns on political agendas. But typically in the communication process central messages are distorted and key perspectives lost. To avoid this loss, citizens must have their own internal newsletters,
blogs, websites and other means of communication. Ideally, they would have their own “mass” media that can reach out to their fellow citizens directly.

Last Reflections: Participatory Democracy and Planning

The time has come to build a bridge from deliberative or collaborative planning to participatory democracy, in both theory and practice. Local urban governance offers ample room for both areas of thought to cross-fertilize and produce interesting and enlightening experiences of what works, and what doesn’t, in this sense.

Bringing theory and practice together and examining their contributions to improving urban governance and building citizens’ opinions directly into planning processes, on a structural as well as procedural or momentary basis, can enrich both local planning and democratic practice. Moving beyond the restricted “participation” of today, which often amounts to occasional consultation and little more, can greatly enrich the mechanisms available for collective deliberation and decision-making. This is an essential process on the way to building a powerful constituency, capable of persisting in its search to build more sustainable, more socially just, friendlier and safer cities.

As discussed in the context of Merrifield’s ten components of citizen learning, neighbourhood governance spaces offer fertile conditions for citizen learning. Moreover, there is a solid literature indicating that this combination of local governance, community and place intersect favourably for developing the kind of citizenship necessary to bring about the substantial political changes that sustainability requires. Putting these ideas, this theory, to good use in local governance and the “communities of learning” it can nourish, is a necessary step toward building more sustainable cities—and happier citizens.

References


Learning Intercultural Understanding in Public Places

Linda Dale Bloomberg, Christina Cataldo, Maria Cseh, Bridget O’Connor, Victoria Marsick, Peter Neaman, Ruud van der Veen, Marie Volpe, Janet W. Youngblood

Columbia University

There is a widespread assumption that social contacts between persons of the same culture who differ in significant ways, and contacts between persons of different cultures will enhance their mutual understanding. Within the social sciences, this assumption is more generally known as "the social contact hypothesis": contact that is more frequent has the potential to create or bring about more mutual understanding. However, does it really work like that? An important counter-argument claims that increased interpersonal contact can lead to greater negative reactions and open conflict.

Against this theoretical background, we intend to engage in an empirical examination of these contacts. Our research sites will be small public places in big cities where people of the same culture who are strangers to each other, as well as people who are strangers to each other by virtue of their different cultures might gather. With professional grounding in the fields of adult learning and education, our research interest is to examine informal learning processes among these "strangers." As such, our central question is summarized as: How, if at all, can small public places contribute to understanding of other people, and to what extent can this be theorized as an informal learning process?

This paper will describe our sensitizing concepts under three main headings: 1) public space/public places, 2) mutual understanding, and 3) informal learning. The paper then moves on to a description of the research design and the details of its implementation from 2008 to 2009.

Public Space/Public Places

Definitions of public space can be arranged on a continuum from abstract public functions toward concepts that refer to concrete public places. “Abstract” public space is any institutional context for public discourse (Greene 1988). This includes websites, lectures, and campaigns. “Concrete” public spaces are the places that are open for gatherings of the general public such as parks, squares, and streets. Our research will touch upon different situational and behavioral aspects of contacts among people from different
social and cultural backgrounds, with a particular focus on behavior in “concrete” small public places. That is any place, whether it is (part of) a park, a plaza, a street, that for a person is accessible and oversee-able by them.

Some of the public places we will identify normally have no special function with no special events scheduled to take place. We will identify them because a diverse public uses the site for reasons of their own choice, such as to enjoy the sun, to have lunch, to wait for others, or simply to rest for a while. However, since we also have an interest in public cultural events, we will include public places where musicians or other artists perform, particularly where the performance clearly comes from a cultural tradition that might be novel, or strange to many people in the audience. This will be our opportunity to observe the effect of experiencing culture in the more narrow sense of artistic expression. In the theoretical field of community arts one finds a specific application of the social contact hypothesis (that arts can lead to better understanding between people from different cultures). We will ask the critical question, does art lead to greater understanding? If so, how does art do it, and what is the impact on the different observers?

Research about public places has been conducted from different theoretical perspectives. Within sociology, there are “macro” and “micro” approaches. The macrosociological approach is based on the hypothesis that modernization and particularly urbanization leads to the creation of a formal public domain. In the formal public domain people keep each other at a certain distance. Sennett (1974) describes this development for Paris and London. In the 18th century, the public domain was a place for impersonal contact between people from different socio-economic classes. By the 19th century, public contacts became reduced to just observing one another in public, described by Balzac as public voyeurism and “the gastronomy of the eye” (Sennett 1974, 154-161). For the 20th century Sennett (1974) emphasizes an underlying trend toward both narcissistic personalities (obsessed with personal desires) and romantic dreams of homogeneous communities (excluding those who are different).

The best-known micro-sociological perspective is symbolic interactionism. Goffman (1959 and 1963) studied the everyday behavior of people in public places and gatherings. He shifts the attention from historical developments to concrete inter-personal contacts and explains how people try to balance such relations. Within the same tradition, Lofland (1985) analyzed interaction in public places from the perspective of the other as “stranger”. Lofland (2000, 152) recently added that “...tolerance, cosmopolitanism, urbanity are about the fact that humans differ significantly along important lines and that these differences matter to them. Tolerance, urbanity, and cosmopolitanism have to do with living civilly with such a reality”. It is suggested further in Lofland’s analysis that it is through very limited, episodic, non-intimate (hence non-threatening) exposures of difference that civility and urbanity are learned.

Finally, there is a long tradition of studying architecture of public places. Based on these architectural studies, social scientific studies have been conducted to study the effects of intentionally designed environments on the behavior of individuals. In particular, Whyte’s (1980) study of small urban environments comes close to our research interest. Whyte (1980) also observed that people prefer public places that are neither crowded nor
empty. Likewise, the work of Low (2005) is relevant. She concluded that some privatized renovations of urban parks led to the exclusion of minority cultures.

Mutual Understanding

In today’s global and multicultural environment, a significant question is how adults come to understand and deal with the tensions and opportunities generated by the increasing social complexity that confronts us. Susan Wolf (1994) writes that the politics of recognition urges us not just to make efforts to recognize “strangers” more actively and accurately, but it also urges us to take a closer, less selective look at who is sharing the cities, the libraries, and the schools we call our own.

Sharing places, then, can lead to more than just becoming more tolerant. In sharing public space, people may develop the potential for deeper understanding and respect for strangers, although this does not always occur. Whereas ‘tolerance’ implies, “...a permissive or liberal attitude toward beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one’s own” (Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language 1981). Mezirow (2000) explained that, ‘understanding’ is the process of making meaning of our experience and integrating that meaning with what we already know. Understanding entails developing a critical awareness about the constricting limits of old assumptions, as well as reframing and reformulating old assumptions to permit more discriminating, permeable, and inclusive perspectives. Through this process, one can then take action because of these new perspectives. ‘Respect’ then develops out of regard for others’ points of view and values.

‘Understanding’ and ‘respect’ imply ‘inclusivity’ Martin Buber (1965, 97) describes ‘inclusivity’ in this way:

It is the extension of one’s own concreteness; the fulfillment of the actual situation of life, the complete presence of the reality in which one participates. Its elements are, first, a relation of no matter what kind, between two persons, second, an event experienced by them in common, in which at least one of them actively participates, and third, the fact that this one person, without forfeiting the reality of his felt activity at the same time lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other.

‘Diversity’ is a term that captures the concepts of ‘understanding’, ‘respect’, and ‘inclusivity’. The dictionary definition of the term ‘diversity’ is “the condition of being different or having differences” (Webster 1981). From the perspective of the dynamic nature of human interaction, ‘diversity’ consists of “unique mixtures characterized by similarities and differences” (Thomas 1996).

This unique mixture of similarities and differences form the core of an individual’s identity. Identity develops out of inborn and/or acquired characteristics including race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, physical and mental ability, economic status, and sexual orientation. People use these dimensions, often tacitly, when meeting others and making determinations regarding their ‘in-group’ (others who are like us) or ‘out-group’ (others who are different from us) status. Dimensions of diversity tend to shape perceptions and behaviors. Self-categorization Theory (Turner 1982), Social Identity Theory (Tajfel 1978),
and Racial Identity Theory (Jehn 1999) provide descriptive explanations of how people react to observable and demographic characteristics of ‘strangers’.

The similarity-attraction paradigm as articulated by Byrne (as cited by Thatcher 1999) predicts that people tend to be attracted to others similar to themselves, and that people tend to apply negative assumptions to those with whom they differ. Stereotypes and prejudice based on the inborn and/or acquired characteristics listed above reflect the categorization process of distinguishing between similarity and difference, and often lead to miscommunication, confrontation, tension, conflict, and avoidance. Our question then is enlarged by asking how it is that people learn ‘tolerance’, ‘understanding’, and respect, both as the ‘stranger’ and while ‘observing’ the ‘stranger’.

**Informal Learning**

Peter Jarvis (2006) suggests that to live is to learn—that once we stop learning, we cease to be. We learn simply by being an active part of our environment, and while sometimes learning is intentional—we have learning goals around which we make efforts—other times we learn simply through everyday activities. A distinction that needs to be made around these two states is the degree of participation the individual has in the learning environment. When the environment is routine—when there are few surprises—learning is difficult to describe and even more difficult to measure. When the environment has an element of the unexpected or novel, an individual is forced to examine his or her preconceptions about that novelty, subsequently questioning what one knows to be true, or engaging in dialogue with others to help bring perceptions back into balance with what is known. When one holds strong beliefs, as Westen (2007) points out, based on recent MRI studies of the brain, individuals may be constrained by a priori mindsets that make such questioning difficult or impossible. This could mean that the contact hypothesis works only if the learner doesn’t hold such strong a priori beliefs.

As one focus of our research, for example, might be community arts, we suggest that for these events, that are open to the public, the individual attending the event may have targeted the event or, alternatively, could have happened upon it by accident. In either case our assumption is that, the environment has the potential to provide something novel. Thus, we suggest that community arts events are promising locations to examine 1) if learning tolerance, understanding, and respect for others takes place (or may be constrained by a priori mindset); 2) how learning takes place (reflection, dialogue); 3) what learning takes place (a confirmation or a change in attitude, new insights); and 4) how/if the location of the event itself adds value or detracts from the learning process.

As discussed, an individual commonly constructs new knowledge or understanding by participating in novel experiences; those experiences that confirm knowledge are useful, but do not provide as rich opportunities for learning. While an individual sitting on a park bench eating lunch may be enjoying the cool breeze and comfortable seat, the environment itself is not usually a major player in learning—unless something out-of-the-ordinary takes place. Therefore, we might examine community arts events as out-of-the-ordinary events whose purpose can not only entertain, but also create understandings between “strangers” through their shared public aesthetic experience.
From the work of Stephen Billett (2001), we borrow two concepts that he has used to describe routine and non-routine learning in the workplace: ‘dispositions’ (the degree to which an individual interacts in the environment) and the ‘transfer problem’. Dispositions come from the work of Perkins (1993), who described learning as a journey and destination, and suggested that some individuals who engage in their environments more than others are thus more predisposed to learning. The transfer problem, which comes from the work of Royer (1979), is useful in that it suggests that sometimes an event may be too complex or foreign to the individual to be assimilated (resulting in far transfer) or may be easily assimilated (near transfer). Disposition is important as it helps us determine the degree to which an individual is open to learning; and the transfer problem reminds us that it’s difficult to learn about something, which one has no prior knowledge. These concepts can help determine the measures that can be used in examining not only the ‘what’ and ‘how’, but also the ‘why’ (or ‘why not’) of learning.

Marsick & Watkins (1990, 6-7) suggested that much important learning happens informally or incidentally “under non-routine circumstances, that is, when the procedures and responses that people normally use fail” leading to greater attention to, and awareness, of “tacit, hidden, taken-for-granted assumptions” that may help learners rethink novel situations in which they find themselves and re-frame their understanding of the kind of learning they might need to undertake. They argue that important enhancers of such learning are proactivity, creativity, and critical reflectivity.

Subsequently, Cseh (2002) emphasized the pervasive influence of context on understanding why and how such learning takes place. Although ample evidence of studies of learning in the workplace can be found in the literature, there is little evidence of such studies in society and, more specifically, in urban public places where people interact on a daily basis. Raelin (1997) noted that the process by which individuals create knowledge is influenced by the local community in which work is accomplished and thus deemed a collective activity. Van der Veen (2003) describes forms of informal learning of active citizens. Although people spend many hours of the day in the workplace, we believe that learning ‘tolerance, understanding, and respect for the stranger’ (learning to become citizens of a diverse society) happens both inside and outside of the workplace in the social spheres of our existence.

Approximately 60 to 80 percent of the adult learning that occurs in today’s workplaces is informal and arises as a result of natural opportunities to learn (Center for Workforce Development 1998; Koopmans 2006). The prevalence of informal and incidental learning in the workplace is documented in studies conducted in the past two decades (Watkins 1992; Marsick 1997; Marsick 1999). Less is known about informal social learning as it relates to understanding people who are strangers to us in non-work settings such as our public places.

To help us understand what informal or incidental learning essentially is, we will rely on the lenses of constructivism and social learning. Constructivism is the theory that we learn as individuals by actively making new meanings from our environment. Social learning holds that we learn by simply participating in our environment. Separately, these concepts are useful to us and used together, social constructivism—whereby individuals
make new meanings (knowledge) and gain greater understanding of their environment—may help us more completely describe the interactions of ‘strangers’ as we observe these individuals in a public setting.

### Research Design

Studies of urban, public places as a source of knowledge emerge from the observation that city dwellers share lived experiences and value socialization due to continuous exposure to specialized groups of people, information, structural form, and economic activity (Low 1996). Building upon this premise, our research team utilizes an ethnographic design to capture how, if at all, small public places contribute to city dwellers’ understanding of each other, and to what extent this process constitutes informal learning.

Ethnography is defined as the description and interpretation of a cultural, social group or system (Miles 1994). This method was chosen as it effectively captures the subtleties of cultural data. Foremost, this naturalistic investigation is designed to explore holistically the observed culture as well as its sub-categories: individual behaviors, language, customs, and artifacts (Creswell 1998). Similarly, ethnography is used to capture rich, thick descriptions (Geertz 1973) through participatory observation and open interviewing techniques (Lofland 1995). By using ethnography, researchers can react to progressive findings, examine phenomena in their natural environment, remain grounded in reality, and account for multiple sources of data (Yin 1994).

Responsible researchers must also consider limitations in ethnographic methods, which Yin (1994) outlined as: a lack of scientific generalizability due to the uniqueness of context, a tendency to ‘go native’ by becoming too personally involved with the subjects, the potential presence of self-selecting bias due to non-mandatory participation, and longitudinal restrictions resulting from limited time and resources. While such drawbacks are inherent to this particular methodology, we believe that theoretical generalizability and information richness will compensate for these potential drawbacks (Daft 1984).

In Fall 2008, we will begin to select research sites using Lofland and Lofland’s (1995) criteria for appropriateness, access, ethics, immediate risk, and personal consequences. We will investigate small public places in at least three cities in the USA (Atlanta, Georgia; New York City, New York; and Washington, DC) and one in Europe (Amsterdam, the Netherlands), but others may follow. Beginning in spring of 2009, after securing IRB approval, graduate students at the various locations who have been recruited and trained will begin to gather data over the course of three months. To ensure consistency of approach and methods across both the sites and students, a training session on data collection will be delivered prior to the beginning of the study. The graduate training session will consist of: 1) examining related studies; 2) observing participants, with researchers incorporating a blend of ‘looking and listening’ and ‘watching and asking’ methods; 3) conducting unstructured interviews to discover location dwellers’ experiences of the situation; and 4) collecting full field notes, post-interview reflections, and artifacts (i.e. written documents, pictures). To ensure the security of the information gathered and protect the anonymity of participants, data will be housed at research team members’ home universities.
Upon the completion of data collection, our research team will analyze the data for recurring themes, phrases, and trends in an effort to uncover naturalistic generalizations across the varying data types, enhancing triangulation (Creswell 1998). Further, we will individually examine the data and compare findings to establish inter-rater reliability. On specific occasions when full agreement is not obtained, an outside expert will be brought in to mediate a consensus.

**Conclusion**

Through this research, we hope to add new insights into how people from diverse backgrounds interrelate in the public domain. Our interest is not so much in the public debate at the city level among political institutions, civil organizations and the media but, rather, in how these individual relations in a diverse society work out in public places. Do ‘street level’ contacts result in more mutual, tolerance, understanding and respect? If so, under what conditions do these interactions produce the desired results? Lastly, under what conditions do relations between strangers from diverse backgrounds worsen with public contact?

The scientific distinction of our approach, compared to earlier projects that analyze relations in concrete public places, is that we are specialists in adult learning. We will apply concepts from informal learning theory to the public domain. How do people learn through public contacts? Are there ways to support learning of tolerance, understanding, and respect? Many theories about informal learning have been developed in the context of organizations and we wish to apply these concepts outside the domain of work.

Finally, at the university level this research provides an opportunity to involve students in real-life research activities. For our students it will be hands-on learning opportunity (not just learning from a textbook), through which they can develop proficiency in analyzing concrete social settings - a crucial competency that all academics in social sciences should possess.

**References**

"Webster's Third International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged." (Merriam-Webster, Inc) 1981.
Mobilizing for Democracy through Nurturing Democratic Intelligence

Kathleen Kevany
The International Leadership and Stewardship Institute

Abstract
To remain vibrant and vital, democracies need to be nurtured and primed through creative and conscious endeavor. The quality of democracy can be improved by mobilizing for democracy through educating for democratic intelligence; fostering media acumen; opening space for community dialogue; and developing and protecting social capital.

Introduction
Democracy carries tremendous opportunity. It holds the promise to improve the lives of many. It also can be usurped for the benefit of a minority who are well connected, easily financed and better positioned to impose their powers. If democracy is mismanaged it will deteriorate like the bodies of many friends, (current readers excepted), who have not undertaken substantial physical activity in years. Maintaining a fit democracy necessitates a regular workout. To remain buoyant and renewed, democracy regularly needs fresh air to be breathed into it. A healthy democratic society calls for active citizenship. In democracies, the power and authority of the government comes from the consent of the people. The only title in our democracy superior to that of the head of state is the title of citizen (Brandeis 1937). Do most citizens act like they agree with this? How can citizens become more engaged, active and effective? The quality of democracy can be improved by mobilizing for democracy through educating for democratic intelligence; fostering media acumen; opening space for community dialogue; and developing and protecting social capital. This essay discusses the ways to mobilize for and revitalize democracy.
Mobilizing for Democracy

In spite of a millennia of building societies through democratic means, many ills persist – like starvation in a world of plenty, poverty in a world of abundance, wars in a world civilized for peace, or environmental degradation in a world calibrated for survival. In the face of great abundance, threats of hunger and starvation from food shortages can be seen as a crisis in ethics, in compassion, good judgment and citizen empowerment. Frances Moore Lappi (2008, 1) argues that our hunger crisis is a crisis in democracy. “Hunger can be eliminated only as we remove the influence of concentrated wealth over public choices and ensure the ongoing, healthy distribution of power”. Through acknowledging a shared humanity and by mobilizing for democracy such human tragedies can be averted. The task of ‘tidying up’ society or addressing social, economic or other issues, cannot be left to one sector on its own. Sustainable change necessitates partnerships and commitments from governments, private sector and civil society. If the obligation to ‘fix society’ were placed solely on religious and spiritual thinkers, or business management, or labour unions, or governments, or social justice advocates, or the artistic community, or the women’s movement, or ecologists or technologists, not one of these groups, by itself, would have the knowledge or the wisdom to resolve the crises that societies have created (Clements 1997). Representatives of specific organizations would be compelled to talk about their priorities causing remedies to become disintegrated. Indeed, if one sector were in charge of human destiny, it would probably worsen problems.

Through mobilizing for democracy, individual and collective capabilities and responsibilities are harnessed as valuable assets. The task of fostering full human development belongs to all sectors. Many individuals, organizations, and groups work together to support human development and healthy living. Cooperation and collaboration become essential approaches to bring to fruition the visions and dreams of the human family, like achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Partnerships among organizations like institutes of higher learning, civil society organizations, business associations, and service clubs have proven their capacity to improve society. An inspiring example is the near worldwide eradication of polio through the collaboration of service clubs, universities and hospitals along with governments and businesses. The reversing of iodine deficiency too is becoming a reality. Progress on peace and prosperity too can be found in many countries. Yet an enhanced quality of life or 'livable life' remains out of reach for many of the world’s citizens. More strategic mobilization for democracy is imperative to enhance vibrant democracies and to advance quality of life for all.

Vibrant democracies are made up of people who have become adept at expanding and applying their democratic intelligence. Systems that support freedom, choice, rights and responsibilities also are necessary for vibrant democracies. Features essential for but that do not guarantee vibrant democracies are:

- Access to quality, unbiased, free education
- A free and critical press
- Equal access to information
- Transparent systems, unobstructed by corruption
- A fair voting system
To revitalize and mobilize for democracy a four part approach is proposed. Strategic interventions include: educating for democratic intelligence; fostering media acumen; opening space for community dialogue; and developing and protecting social capital.

Educating for Democratic Intelligence

It is a fine art to arouse people to use their valuable ‘will, wisdom, wit, and wealth’ to build and maintain productive democracies. Central to vibrant democracies is the promotion and protection of personal, political and economic rights and responsibilities. Advocates of democracy consider it imperative that individual rights be exercised to remain protected. Educating on democratic intelligence provides a foundation for civic engagement and may inspire members to become better informed and able to act for the betterment of the community.

Young people particularly may be challenged to agree that they should be concerned about working for democracy or protecting their rights. Some have a sense that their rights will always be there, as evidenced in increased expressions of entitlement. Others may have become more cynical and dispossessed believing that nothing they do will make any difference in the big democratic scheme. Others still may argue that previous generations have not provided sufficiently stellar examples of or clear rationale for democratic citizenship. Contemporary democracy can be confusing and frustrating.

Effective navigation of democracy requires developing and utilizing ‘democratic intelligence’. Democratic intelligence is to informed and engaged citizens what political acumen is to successful politicians. Nurturing democratic intelligence involves cultivating democratic skills and attitudes.

Qualities of Democratic Intelligence

- Develop skills to build consensus and the capacity to respect and accept the will of the majority, when appropriate.
- Remain cognizant of, not impervious to, suffering and concerns and finding ways to ameliorate them.
- Raise probing and provocative questions within an atmosphere of critical and appreciative inquiry.
- Foster relationships built on mutual trust and understanding.
- Articulate substantial policies and laws to protect individuality and enhance the common good.
- Develop and guard social and judicial systems that preserve the rights of individuals and the common good.
- Exercise rights and fulfill responsibilities as vibrant democracies require.

To help people become aware of and able to exercise their rights and responsibilities as national or global citizens, they require access to opportunities to expand their knowledge, skills, and commitment to democracy. Education for Democratic Intelligence involves teaching and learning about:
• Demonstrating empathy
• Exercising self-awareness and self-discipline
• Demonstrating political acumen
• Developing creativity
• Exemplifying leadership
• Reading society

**Demonstrating Empathy**

Practicing empathy is a pivotal part of democratic intelligence. Learning to understand and respect divergent opinions requires broad and critical thinking. Empathy skills are helpful to appreciate the complexities and navigate the sensitivities ushered in by a highly technical, interconnected and globalized world.

**Exercising Self-Awareness and Self-Discipline**

Previous research revealed the value of facilitating apprenticeships and teaching about active democracy and stewardship (Kevany 2002). Most inspiring, as examples of democratic citizenship, are those who live by principles of openness, trust, empathy, and compassion, self-awareness and self discipline, including a well developed democratic and peace consciousness.

People like Vaclav Havel or Mikhail Gorbachev who helped to usher in a non-violent transition from communism to democracy, are superb examples. They were guided by and acted out of principles that served the common good. Less important were their personal gains. More important was how they could use their influence and powers to benefit the broader society. They were astutely aware of their role in society and how they must exercise discipline and focus to make the most of their time in office.

**Exemplifying Leadership**

Closely linked to self-discipline is leadership. Community building rests upon the ability to harness the talents and contributions of members. Leaders exemplify the skill of inspiring teams of ‘partially evolved’ people to become ‘more evolved’. Examples of confident leadership and prudent action can inspire others to apply their skills and demonstrate their courage. Through stretching themselves, people then become able to grow fuller and more capable then they would otherwise be. Ironically or delightfully, it is the part of the enigma of human nature that the ‘typical’ person – unmotivated, immature, and at times inept-is capable of great dedication and heroism if wisely led (Greenleaf 1998). Greenleaf reminded us that many people, who would lead, are disqualified because they cannot work with and through partial-people as they are. Anybody could lead perfect people-if there were any but partial people are all there is (1998).

Leaders serve set off a chain of positive effects. By recognizing hidden possibilities within the community or society, these leaders prompt members to apply their capabilities in service and increase the likelihood that more people will serve and activate another series of ripple effects. Much evidence supports the fact that those who benefit from service themselves become inspired and more willing to act in service (Block 1993; Rogoff 1990).
Demonstrating Political Acumen

Students of civil society and democracy also can benefit from demonstrating more political acumen. Learners can become alert to and more proficient in applying the factors that contribute to political success – that is mobilizing the public in support of an articulated agenda. One task of the politically astute is to raise and discuss critical questions to generate the most innovative solutions to social, political, economic and environmental problems. Examples of some stimulating questions may be:

- How can the government be held to account and to live up to its promises or commitments?
- How do we mobilize support for and spark appropriate action by elected officials to increase the overseas development aid (ODA) to meet our obligation of 0.7% GDP?
- How are the world’s human and natural resources used to generate wide-spread prosperity?
- How can democracy be strengthened and individual rights and responsibilities more widely exercised? (Kevany 2003)

Developing Creativity

Punctuating democracy with democratic intelligence is like adding air to car tires. Cars can be driven with lower air pressure but this damages the rubber and lessens the car’s efficiency. With less and less air, the car runs the risk of getting a flat and becoming unable to fulfill its purpose of effectively moving people around. Democratic intelligence breaths creativity and innovation into democracies and expands the possibilities for creating solutions. Rather than discouraging creativity and compassion, innovative solutions thrive in democratic and free societies. Csikszentmihalyi indicates that people learn about creativity from successfully creative people (1988). Communities can proactively develop creativity through incorporating mentoring and role modeling initiatives. Creativity, unconventional thinking, and flexibility become essential to overcome challenges and to thrive in tumultuous times.

Reading Society

Students of democratic intelligence know that the pulse and mood of the society determines when and how transitions can be successfully introduced. Engaging the will of the people is critical to success. When people are fearful and concerned about security for their families, for example, they are not able to take up transitions that distract from building a sense of security. Mobilizing for democracy requires knowing how to read the waters to know what to prepare for a safe voyage and when to head out to sea.

Fostering Media Acumen

Communicating and nurturing democratic intelligence can help advance desired goals. Democratic intelligence can become prolific through broad education, fostering media acumen, enabling community dialogue and developing and protecting social capital. A critical piece of any vibrant democracy is a vibrant free press. Media outlets have become essential, creative paths to reach diverse pockets of people and to bolster a greater sense of community.
A free and critical press should translate into all media being equally accessible to advance all political agendas. Yet media is becoming concentrated in the hands of fewer corporations. The demise of the local daily newspaper is but one vivid example. “After World War II, mass advertising steadily destroyed competitive dailies; monopoly became the norm...In 1920 there were 2,722 urban places and 2,400 daily papers in the country. By 1980 there were 8,765 urban places and only 1,745 dailies. Today more than 7,000 American cities have no daily paper of their own” (Bagdikian 1997). “No national paper or broadcast station can report adequately the issues and candidates in every one of the local voting districts. Only locally based journalism can do it, and if it does not, voters become captives of the only alternative information, paid political propaganda, or no information at all” (Bagdikian 1997). Yet in practice the media, like the people who run them, become sympathetic to select political views and work to promote these above others. When the mainstream media remain indifferent to alternative political views these views become tremendously disadvantaged in the game of gaining credibility and winning political support. When mainstream media fail to communicate democratically and when citizens fail to challenge them to do so, the whole system is in jeopardy.

Many tools are employed to mobilize for democracy. Possible tools and techniques may include: videos; films; documentaries; radio programs; PSA; internet radio; electronic coalitions; e-governance, listservs; virtual communities and world cafés; electronic and in-person discussion groups; mainstream theatre; popular theatre; demonstrations; activism; experiential education; live-in exchanges; posters; flyers; pamphlets; post cards; music; artwork; articles; cartoons; magazines; books; and specialized programs. Boundless creative means are available to inspire people to assume their roles as democratic citizens.

Opening Space for Community Dialogue

Democracy, while not a panacea, holds the potential to create better results for the majority of people. A key element of mobilizing for democracy is enabling open space for people to dialogue, to communicate freely and creatively with others about what type of society they want to create. Through "people power," that is, people strategically channeling their power, more constructive results are orchestrated around the world.

Vigilance and attention are needed by freedom loving citizens. One of endless illustrations of the system failing its citizens is the deployment of combatants in Afghanistan. Twenty billion dollars are being spent on an annual basis, largely on armaments and troops deployed in active combat roles. According to polls, those in power are not heeding the "will of the people." The cost is great when citizens are ineffective in mobilizing for democracy. When such scenarios are evident, democracy is failing its' people and its' people are failing democracy. More open space for dialogue and democratic intelligence are called for.

Features of Community Dialogue

Meaningful community conversations build-in many components: avenues for sharing diverse perspectives; access to knowledge to increase understanding; the time and
willingness to consider the implications of options; mechanisms to propose and apply changes.

Communities that have employed a multisectoral approach to problem solving have generated significant solutions (Vibrant Communities, 2008). When community members rally together and develop comprehensive solutions this opens up access to diverse and significant pools of knowledge and resources – human and financial. When leaders representing all areas of interest join together, mutual respect and shared visions are more likely to emerge. Leadership that is widely representative attracts attention, earns more credibility and wields greater influence and orchestrated results. Multisectoral leadership is instrumental in bridging divides, extending power and getting more things done.

Members of communities are joining together in a process of ‘co-authoring’ new community stories and co-creating needed innovations. These stories have no less drama than previous approaches but they hold the promise of creating much better endings. The coming heard expression, “They should do something about this,” becomes, “By working together we can become the change we want to see in the world.” Mobilizing for democracy and channeling collaborative efforts exponentially increase the possibilities of individual and community transformation. The following examples of community dialogue demonstrate diverse tools and techniques available to raise awareness and mobilize for democracy.

National Social Inclusion Programme

Many conversations are underway in many communities to create greater inclusiveness and community well-being. Research from the National Social Inclusion Programme in the UK suggests that “by bringing people together to address their own concerns, facilitated by community development practitioners and supported through partnerships, it is possible to reduce stigma, create new community-led resources and develop new connections between individuals, groups and organizations.” Similar community building initiatives are underway in diverse countries. Campaign 2000, a pan-Canadian, child poverty reduction, cross-sectoral project effectively analyzes and promotes comprehensive social inclusion policies for vulnerable families and children.

Canada’s World

Canada’s World is a pan-Canadian effort to get Canadians talking about Canada’s role in the world. These conversations are important because more are realizing that the actions and thoughts of people all around the planet impact one another. These conversations are intended to generate a new vision for how Canada should act and fulfill its global interests and responsibilities as defined by what individual Canadians can do to make change. Citizen input is then used to inform public policy development. Conversations are going on in many locales: online, through social networks, on a wiki, in cafés, through book clubs, blogs, at events, in multiple classrooms and in numerous private homes.

World Café

The World Café website indicates that through both their research and a decade of engagement, they now view the World Café as a conversational process based on a set of
integrated design principles that reveal a deeper living network pattern through which we co-evolve our collective future. As a process of growing global community of people, groups, organizations, and networks connect and participate in conversation. World Café invites people to engage in inventive ways: by hosting a World Café, or by attending one, by sharing stories, and to co-create stories in the process. Additionally participants can form online communities and open up community space on a blog. There is also encouragement for the computer savvy to help others to become more experienced online. In addition to sharing time and talent, participants can also share their finances to foster support more of these online conversations (World Café n.d.).

**Campaign for Love and Forgiveness**

Another intriguing example of transformative or life-altering community conversations occur through the Campaign for Love and Forgiveness. The website for the Campaign for Love and Forgiveness instructs community members to consider taking a number of constructive actions. Readers are invited to show simple affection and do small but significant acts for others. Also readers are urged to practice self-forgiveness and to share stories of challenges and success. Readers could also become engaged in sending out love to the world through planting a garden, reducing pressures on the planet, or such acts as coordinating the sharing of rides in an area. Also, through rigorous research many have come to appreciate the value of focused meditation that helps to manifest a shared vision. Readers are additionally reminded to regularly pay strangers and non-strangers compliments and to readily share in the joy and success of others. As well, they suggest that it is helpful to build community by reminding people directly of their good qualities and deeds. All these practices and more, foster neighbourliness, greater openness to and respect for diversity (Fetzer Institute n.d.).

**Vibrant Communities**

Vibrant Communities too is a compelling story of people joining together to express their vision, tenacity and compassion. It is a story about improving the lives of Canada’s most marginalized. To generate high degrees of inclusion and impact, Vibrant Communities developed cultural shifts to breathe new life into tired efforts of community building. By community members joining in new ways, creative avenues for dialogue open up and increase community engagement. The Vibrant Communities method also ensures issues are more effectively diagnosed and needed solutions and resources brought to bear by engaging with the most passionate and most knowledgeable people in the country.

An evaluation of Vibrant Communities conducted by CAC International revealed that participating communities and national sponsors unanimously agree that building an enabling environment through dialogue with government and the creation of a funder’s network are critical steps in reducing poverty in Canada. CAC noted that creating an environment that enables constructive results is one of the more challenging elements of this initiative. Participants in Vibrant Communities also suggest that aligning energies and efforts with other significant initiatives in areas of common interest unleashes greater potential to generate constructive system improvements.

**Developing and Protecting Social Capital**
Social capital is a key tool to unlocking democratic intelligence and creating the desired outcomes in communities. Like Vibrant Communities, many community-building processes are shifting away from “deficits” and “problems” and cultures of “blaming” to focus instead on “opportunities, assets and possibilities”. Tremendous possibilities emerge when social capital becomes activated and mobilized. All communities are rich in human and natural assets. Every community could tap into these assets if members were more alert to them. Recognizing and utilizing social capital is like trees extracting the carbon dioxide from the air and fish feeding on the microbes in the water and humans relishing the harvest of the fields. Often the harvesting of assets is not a conscious act. Similarly, the ineffectiveness resulting from the poor management of social capital is often unconscious. While some assets are obvious; others may be less so. Some social capital is ready to be enjoyed and employed while other capital requires some nourishing to become full grown and most vital. Following is a list of community assets or social capital that may be worth tapping into:

- Economic – wealth, savings, equipment, and tools
- Legal – licenses, insurances, credit, rights, and guarantees in law
- Educational – study certificates, acquired knowledge, skills, confidence, and self-esteem.
- Political – influence on public opinion, access to mass media, multiple forms of power, organizational support, and capacity to mass mobilize.
- Social – friendships, supporting networks, alliances, and favours owed.
- Cultural – language capacity, cultural understanding, rites and practices, and support of community. (Anderson 2005)

For example, bringing people together in dialogue allows them to get to know each other, to network and develop new relationships. Mobilizing a strong base of social capital becomes essential for high quality community life and well-being. In his 2000 book, Bowling Alone, Robert Putnam extols the importance of protecting and building our social capital rather than letting it deteriorate. Putnam explains the process of building stronger communities that include strengthening the roles of bridging and bonding. Bonding is energy focused internally that helps to fortify members and multiplies internal resources. Bridging skills involve being able to link to assets outside of a tight community.

Bonding social capital is good for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity. Dense networks in ethnic enclaves, for example, provide the crucial social and psychological support for less fortunate members of the community, while furnishing start-up financing, markets and reliable labor for local entrepreneurs. Bridging networks, by contrast, are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion. Economic sociologist Mark Granovetter has pointed out that when seeking jobs -- or political allies -- the “weak” ties that link me to distant acquaintances who move in different circles from mine are actually more valuable than the “strong” ties that link me to relatives and intimate friends whose sociological niche is very like my own. (Putnam 2000)

Conclusion
Many people worldwide are together contributing to movements and creating new solutions to challenges. Through creative collaboration many are losing the attachment to independence or partisanship or working in silos. Increased focus is being placed on civic engagement, citizen inclusion, strategic approaches and broad participation. Power that was previously centralized in national governments is moving out into local units. Municipal and regional governments are managing more of their own affairs. Greater control in communities is enabling more local, "economic and social development...through genuine ownership" (Mbogori and Chigudu 1999). Fostering citizen is an effective avenue for achieving shifts in power. Community dialogue helps to develop local leadership and opens up space for citizens to become inspired, engaged and more powerful together. Through mobilizing for democracy with democratic intelligence, conscious community dialogue, and protecting and expanding social capital, goals previously considered beyond the scope of a single individual or community become more attainable and compelling.

References


Grupo Arte Nuevo de Paraguay: Reserva de Prácticas Democráticas en un Contexto Autoritario

Ángel Mariano Jara Oviedo
Universidad de Buenos Aires

Introducción

En este trabajo realizamos un análisis sobre la constitución del campo intelectual en las artes plásticas paraguayas en la ciudad de Asunción de Paraguay, a través del estudio del colectivo artístico Grupo Arte Nuevo y su relación con los hechos relevantes para las artes plásticas en la década de los 50. Así como las prácticas que desarrollaron frente al contexto autoritario que estaba gestándose en ese momento.

Grupo Arte Nuevo

Se trata de un grupo de artistas cuya actividad plástica renovó las formas artísticas del Paraguay. Su constitución data del año 1954. Pero la conformación podría rastrearse a partir de 1950, con la llegada al país de Joâo Rossi, artista plástico cuya formación en arte moderno resulta vital para la constitución del nuevo campo. Desde su llegada, Joâo Rossi se dedicó a la enseñanza de arte. Entre los contenidos que enseñaba estaban incluidas importantes lecciones sobre historia de arte que permitieron a sus alumnos conocer nuevas estéticas, nuevas soluciones formales y nuevos contenidos para las artes plásticas. Otro evento importante es la publicación de los Manifiestos de Arte Moderno en la ocasión de la primera exposición individual de Olga Blinder en 1952.

Con anterioridad a la creación del Grupo Arte Nuevo se conformó en Asunción el Centro de Artistas Plásticos, entidad desde la cual, bajo el liderazgo de Roberto Holdenjara, se intentaba desarrollar distintos aspectos de las artes plásticas, y por la cual pasaban algunas decisiones importantes, como por ejemplo el envío de obras artísticas a eventos extranjeros. Con motivo de una diferencia en la representación enviada a la Segunda Bienal de São Paulo, se produjo una discusión que marcó un alejamiento de una parte de esa

---

1 La presente ponencia se enmarca en el proyecto de tesis “Grupo Arte Nuevo. Génesis del campo Artístico en Asunción” dirigido por el Dr. Guillermo Wilde, en la Maestría en Comunicación y Cultura de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad de Buenos Aires.
formación. De esta manera, José Laterza Parodi, Josefina Plá y Lilí del Mónico, se unen a Olga Blinder para constituir el Grupo Arte Nuevo.

El comienzo de las actividades de este colectivo artístico está marcado por la Semana del Arte Moderno, realizada a mediados de 1954, que constituyó el evento que los lanzó al terreno público a partir del cual fueron creciendo en sus respectivas tareas artísticas. Las acciones que mantuvieron los miembros de este grupo y los artistas que se acercaron de una u otra manera contribuyeron a generar un campo autónomo que a su vez permitió una determinada modernización estética.

A partir de la difusión de los manifiestos de arte moderno paraguayo escritos por João Rossi y Josefina Plá, podemos decir que hay un tipo de discurso que opera en la producción del discurso fundacional del campo artístico paraguayo. Este discurso se alimenta del discurso de vanguardia, de la vanguardia europea y Latinoamericana. Es un discurso con ciertas características y estas características pueden percibirse en el discurso del arte moderno paraguayo en las huellas o marcas que deja el discurso de producción en el discurso fundacional relevado. El mismo discurso de vanguardia implica la búsqueda de la autenticidad, así que los actores que buscan ganar legitimidad al interior del campo tienen que establecer que el discurso, una vez renovado, se trata de un discurso auténtico, generado por la actuación de un ser interno al artista, pero que también responde a la realidad exterior específica, local e histórica de Paraguay (Plá 1997; Escobar 1997; Blinder 1997).

Los enfrentamientos para este grupo de artistas se daban en distintos frentes y niveles:

en contra de una sociedad difusa, algo que podríamos denominar el público o la masa, difícil de enfrentar, más bien anónima, que manifiesta agresión y el desconcierto frente a las nuevas tendencias artísticas;

En contra del Centro de Artistas del Paraguay, con el liderazgo de Holdenjara que termina en la separación de los miembros del Grupo Arte Nuevo del Centro de Artistas del Paraguay; y por último,

Contra el gobierno, si bien en este caso, lo que aparece es específicamente la persecución hacia la tendencia política de los artistas, pero en algunos casos manifestados sobre la producción artística de los miembros del campo.

Sin embargo, con respecto a esto último cabe manifestar la vivencia de oposición manifestada por los entrevistados de tal modo que se da una asimetría en la intensidad del conflicto con el gobierno, el cual aparentemente no percibía la producción cultural como amenazante en sí para las estructuras del poder gubernamental.

**Contexto Autoritario**

Este grupo de artistas se caracterizó por desarrollar acciones y asociaciones relacionadas con el aprendizaje de la democracia en la sociedad civil, prácticas que generaron la existencia de un campo artístico paraguayo relativamente autónomo en
relación con el campo del poder en Asunción en los 50, década signada por el autoritarismo interpuso por el inicio del gobierno de Alfredo Stroessner que duraría treinta y cinco años.

El General Alfredo Stroessner asumió el poder luego de un golpe de estado realizado contra el gobierno de Federico Chávez, con el apoyo de las fuerzas armadas, de las milicias coloradas, así como del presidente del partido Colorado, Romero Pereira en 1954.

Uno de los factores de la legitimidad de Stroessner estaba vinculado con la inestabilidad política en que vivía el país prácticamente a partir de la finalización de la guerra de la triple alianza en 1870 y de la instalación del bipartidismo, que algunos autores coinciden en que estaba relacionado con la influencia del subcolonialismo ejercido por Argentina y Brasil en Paraguay.

De manera tal que el régimen autoritario que se estaba instalado era percibido como un mal necesario para sanear las instituciones con miras a un futuro más organizado y sin alternancias sangrientas. Sin embargo, el régimen estaba destinado a perdurar.

Desde la instauración de la democracia electoralista a fines del siglo XIX, y la creación de los dos grandes partidos políticos, el partido Liberal, y el partido Colorado, la alternancia política se había caracterizado por una sucesión de golpes de estado y la falta de legitimidad del camino del voto para llegar al poder.

Dichos partidos políticos sólo podían lograr la alternancia en el poder por vía del golpe militar debido a que expresaban desconfianza hacia el voto.

Sin embargo, podemos interpretar que la discusión, el debate y el disenso estaban instalados en la sociedad de alguna manera a pesar de esta imposibilidad de instalar la legitimidad del voto. Existía un sistema de oposiciones político partidarias que incluía la influencia extranjera directa, de Brasil y Argentina, así como de los Estados Unidos; la lucha por el poder los dos grandes partidos políticos, los partidos más pequeños como el partido socialista y el partido comunista, los distintos movimientos sociales, los sindicatos y gremios, que se habían empezado a conformar a principios del siglo XX, así como los distintos sistemas de alianzas que muchas veces contaban con la adhesión de agentes militares, los cuales eran necesarios al momento de hacer caer determinado régimen. Con la supuesta pacificación stroessnerista lo que en realidad se logró fue eliminar el disenso por medios autoritarios.

La alianza entre una parte del partido Colorado, una facción militar y el Estado iba demostrar ser el pilar para la instauración de un pensamiento monolítico, implantado a través de la coerción, la persecución y anulación de los enemigos políticos.

Una diferencia que se puede marcar con respecto a la intervención militar de esta oportunidad es que en las anteriores intervenciones prevaleció un criterio de reordenamiento de la vida civil para después darse un retiro del actor militar.

Las prácticas de persecución y neutralización de la oposición ya estaban instaladas, y distintos gobiernos anteriores al de Stroessner la llevaron a cabo. Podemos mencionar a
Higinio Morínigo como representante paradigmático de la persecución política desplegada con anticipación al régimen Stroessner.

Esta tradición de prácticas de persecución política puede darle cierta explicación a los niveles de tolerancia a la misma que se manifiestan en un principio, o sea, era una herramienta con la cual contaban todos los contendientes políticos. La misma podía aumentar el poder del gobierno, pero también podía generar la formación de alianzas con la fuerza necesaria para derrocar el poder de ese momento. Stroessner consigue llevar adelante esta práctica de manera tal que constituyó uno de los componentes principales de su política de gobierno sin que determinara, hasta 1989, la constitución de una fuerza capaz de hacerle frente y alejarlo del poder.

### Prácticas Democráticas y Formación de Campo Autónomo del Arte

En este contexto de control de la sociedad civil y desarticulación de la sociedad política, las prácticas ‘libres’ del campo artístico sirvieron para sustentar un ‘reservorio de memoria de democracia’. Mientras que en el resto de la sociedad, las expresiones democráticas estaban virtualmente prohibidas, este grupo realizaba prácticas asociativas que constituieron un reservorio de prácticas democráticas, solidarias y de luchas simbólicas (o difusamente políticas) en forma paralela y autónoma con respecto a las lógicas del poder, manteniendo una conciencia de esta alternatividad y una defensa de lo alternativo con respecto a un gobierno y un contexto social de corte autoritario y retrógrado.

A continuación procederemos a definir lo que entendemos por constitución del campo artístico paraguayo desde la perspectiva teórica del concepto de campo intelectual de Pierre Bourdieu, teniendo en cuenta que “las prácticas que se analizan se insertan en un universo social específico, un campo de producción específico, definido por sus relaciones objetivas” (Gutierrez 2003, 8). Al mismo tiempo que “la relación que un creador sostiene con su obra y la obra misma se encuentran afectadas por el sistema de las relaciones sociales en las cuales se realiza la creación por su posición en la estructura del campo intelectual” (Bordieu 2003, 13). El campo cultural es un sistema de posiciones, y un campo de fuerzas estructurado y estructurante, donde los actores y sus estrategias se definan por su posición relativa en dicho campo. Definimos como campo todo sistema de relaciones sociales que funciona de acuerdo con una lógica que le es propia y que se debe tener en cuenta para explicar su evolución. Cada agente o sistemas de agentes dentro del campo “está determinado por su pertenencia a este campo”, las propiedades que devienen del campo son irreductibles a las características particulares de estos agentes. El campo evoluciona por medio de los “conflictos y las alianzas entre las diferentes posiciones: en este conjunto de relaciones se define objetivamente una jerarquía de legitimidades entre todas las realidades del campo” (Boschetti 1990, 8).

La autoridad de un actor “en el campo, no puede definirse independientemente de su posición en él” (Boschetti 1990, 8). El habitus socialmente constituido se corresponde en alguna medida a las cualidades determinadas que deben poseer la clase de agentes que pueden ocupar determinadas posiciones dentro del campo intelectual. Esto es que las diversas categorías de intelectuales de una época dada encuentran posiciones.
predispuestas por el estado del campo intelectual como si fuera un sistema predeterminado de posiciones (Bourdieu, 2003, 105-106). Bourdieu define el habitus como un “sistema de disposiciones inconscientes producido por la interiorización de estructuras objetivas” (Bourdieu, 2003, 118). “Como lugar geométrico de los determinismos objetivos y de las esperanzas subjetivas, el habitus tiene a producir prácticas -y en consecuencia carreras objetivamente adherentes a las estructuras objetivas” (Bourdieu, 2003, 118). “El principio unificador y generador de todas las prácticas y en particular de las orientaciones habitualmente descritas como ‘elecciones’ de la ‘vocación’ o directamente como efectos de la ‘toma de conciencia’, no es otro que el habitus”, (Bourdieu, 2003, 118). El habitus, por lo tanto, define las prácticas que aunque parezcan desinteresadas pueden ser consideradas como estrategias (Boschetti, 1990, 8). Las estrategias son “conductas objetivamente orientadas por la relación entre los recursos y la estructura de posibilidades que el campo ofrece” (Boschetti 1990, 8). “El habitus, o conjunto de disposiciones adquiridas socialmente, funciona como un sentido práctico que da su forma a las estrategias” (Boschetti, 1990, 8).

Las luchas que sostienen y las prácticas aliancistas que ejercen permiten la cohesión suficiente al grupo para lograr la autonomía necesaria para sostener, sin el apoyo de una clara legitimidad en un principio, las manifestaciones públicas a favor de un arte ‘más moderno’, ‘más contemporáneo’. En este sentido, podemos decir que mediante las estrategias que implementaron se conformó un efecto de campo. Es decir, un sistema social de posiciones donde se puede describir a los actores teniendo en cuenta la posición que ocupan; y que tiene la autonomía necesaria para poder producir materiales simbólicos que en un momento dado no eran bien recibidos por el entorno social asunceno, ni por instancias legitimadoras institucionales (las cuales había que crear en un futuro).

Ahora bien, esta autonomía mencionada permitió la existencia de prácticas democráticas en el contexto autoritario del periodo 1954 a 1989. Es decir, aquello por lo que se luchaba, que era un bien simbólico, estaba bien diferenciado de aquello por lo cual se luchaba en el resto de la sociedad. Mientras que desde el gobierno de Stroessner se desarrolla una lucha por anular a todos los opositores políticos, por desarticular la sociedad civil; en el campo artístico, se desarrollan instituciones, liderazgos, asociaciones, y toda una batería de elementos de la lucha democrática por el interés artístico, y por la legitimidad al interior de ese campo. Arribamos a esta descripción después de haber relevado las entrevistas correspondientes a la investigación de tesis que estamos llevando a cabo. En la reconstrucción que se puede realizar al cabo del relevo de las entrevistas se pueden ver estas prácticas democráticas. Esta memoria de este espacio diferente existe. Y este espacio ciertamente tuvo un valor en la constitución primero simbólica y luego efectiva de una resistencia al régimen autoritario. El sólo hecho de existir espacios sociales dentro del país donde se niegue el autoritarismo ya constituye una contradicción al régimen capaz de generar un reservorio de prácticas democráticas. El régimen no cayó por el trabajo de los demócratas, sin embargo, cuando la democracia fue instaurada, la memoria y el conocimiento necesarios para llevar adelante una vida en democracia existían. A pesar de los 35 años de régimen autoritario, Paraguay no se vio impedido de llevar adelante esta transición a la democracia.

Desde este trabajo, sostenemos que el campo artístico, constituyó, desde sus propias condiciones de existencia, la autonomía con respecto al campo de poder, una reserva de
prácticas democracias en un contexto autoritario. Podemos suponer que esto se repitió en distintos espacios. Pero dar cuenta de cuales y de cuantos sería el tema de varias investigaciones más. El caso concreto es que el campo artístico paraguayo se pudo constituir de modo general en un lugar donde las prácticas democráticas pudieron subsistir. Así mismo, de un modo particular permitió el surgimiento de prácticas directamente subversivas. Esto es en contra del poder político. Las obras de Olga Blinder y Carlos Colombino son un ejemplo de la denuncia que se pudo ejercer desde el interior del campo. Las obras, que podían viajar al exterior, realizaban un retrato de los tipos ideales de la dictadura: los torturados, los capangas, los generales, la gente que era víctima del régimen, ya sea por la violencia o por el estado de abandono y la anomia que el régimen provocaba. Este modo codificado de comunicación pudo subsistir por algún tiempo sin ningún tipo de censura por parte del régimen que probablemente desconocía las posibilidades de denuncia de las obras plásticas.

**Conclusión**

Vimos como el régimen autoritario de Alfredo Stroessner y la formación artística Grupo Arte Nuevo nácen en la década de los 50. En ambas formaciones podemos ver el desarrollo de fuerzas contradictorias. Desde el origen militar stroessnerista se llevó a cabo una toma de los recursos estatales, una alianza entre el Estado, el partido Colorado y el ejército, para conformar un régimen autoritario que desarticuló la capacidad democrática y política de la sociedad civil. Desde la constitución del campo artístico como campo autónomo, a la par que se desarrollaba una modernización estética, se creaban espacios sociales que cortaban el autoritarismo que se pretendía extender a todos los órdenes de la vida social. Podemos suponer que este tipo de espacio, espacios que permitieron la continuidad de la práctica democrática en el contexto democrático del régimen del dictador Stroessner fueron importantes para reconstituir el tejido social del Paraguay.

**Referencias Bibliográficas**


Citizen Engagement and Elections in Nigeria: Learning Democracy through Transformative Theatre and Soccer

Tor Iorapuu
University of Jos

Introduction

The fate of the country does not depend on how you vote at the polls- the worst man is as strong as the best at that game; it does not depend on what kind of paper you drop into the ballot-box once a year, but on what kind of man you drop from your chamber into the street every morning (Thoreau 2000, 18).

No right is more precious in a free country than that of having a voice in the election of those who make the laws... [because] other rights, even the most basic, are illusory if the right to vote is undermined (Hugo L. Black, U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice, October 4, 1937 - September 25, 1971. See Leonard Roy Frank, 2003, 38)

Nigeria’s contemporary democratic journey began on May 29th 1999 in a transition from a military dictatorship to civilian rule. The 2003 general elections marked the first transition to civilian rule from a civilian regime since 1983. Unfortunately, the general elections were marred with multiple irregularities and malpractices. The reports of the Local Election Observers and European Observation Mission (EOM) confirmed that the elections were characterized by irregularities ranging from rigging to police intimidation, unavailability of election materials and other manipulative actions.

As a result, Civil Society activists, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies continued with civic education for democracy by promoting and enhancing mandate protection and citizen’s participation in issues of governance in Nigeria. This chapter describes practical efforts of learning democracy by doing in North Central Nigeria through the strategies of transformative theatre and soccer. Despite deliberate provocative actions by political elites who frustrate citizens’ participation in democratic processes, Nigerians are engaging in transformative actions through a variety of avenues. Nigerians are learning and doing democracy.
The Conceptual Notion of Democracy in Nigeria

It is evident to all alike that a great democratic revolution is going on amongst us; but all do not look at it in the same light. (Alexis de Tocqueville 1956, 26).

Tocqueville’s view captures one major challenge in understanding Nigeria’s democracy, because in this country by no means do we all understand democracy in the same light. As Kukah (1999, 1) pointed out:

If you want to conduct a survey on what ordinary Nigerians imagine democracy means to them, there are many chances that the researcher will be met with great derision. This is irrespective of whether it is on the streets or the classrooms. Most of the respondents will, proverbially, do what Nigerians love doing best: answering questions by asking other questions. Thus in responding to a question like, what is democracy; most Nigerians would simply shoot back, Na democracy we go chop? (Can democracy feed us?) or Wetin be dat? (What does that mean?). On the other hand, some other respondents might just find the acerbic Fela Anikulapo Kuti’s definition of democracy as dem-all-crazy (They are all crazy) to be a much more befitting summary than any preoccupation with Platonian, Aristotelian or Athenian conceptions.

For example, many women groups will argue that democracy in Nigeria is lopsided, as they are discriminated against (Ibrahim and Salihu 2004). Young, unemployed Nigerians roaming the streets doubt if democracy exists. The Niger-Delta region is already defining its sense of democracy. The high proportion of the neglected population in the rural, and semi-urban poor communities who are remembered only when elections are at hand perceive democracy as an activity for the rich and by the rich. Others argue that democracy is dispensing hardship on developing countries through international exploitative organs such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. For Nigeria’s President, Umaru Musa Yar’ Adua and his political cohorts, the most popular dictum is ‘democracy is based on the rule of law.’ He made this statement as a policy direction during his inauguration on May 29th 2007. And the expression appears to be his philosophy because the statement is recited like the rosary by Nigerian public office holders at every function. The confusion and challenge surrounding the concept of democracy is influenced by the failures of democracy to deliver to Nigerians basic democratic dividends basic infrastructure (stable power supply, water supply as many Nigerians, women and young girls still trek distances in search of water for the household; poor hospital facilities, Hence, whether the concept of democracy takes the elitist, participatory or the social approaches (Buhlmann, et al. 2008) many Nigerians have refused to endorse this concept because they are shut out of the process and of the outcomes.

The Challenges of Nigeria’s Democracy: the Political Elites and Prebendal Politics

Nigeria became independent on 1st October, 1960. Since then, Nigeria’s democratic journey has been one of historical interruptions. On May 29th 1999 another phase of political independence began to end the sixteen years of military despotism. The excitement of the transition did not allow Nigerians to focus on the quality of the conduct of the elections. The most important issue was the termination of the military junta. But Henry
Thoreau’s quote cited above speaks volumes on Nigeria’s democracy. Though the act of dropping people from the chamber into the street is yet to manifest realistically, paradoxically since 1999 very few people have been legitimately elected. Thus, Nigeria’s democracy is still in deficit.

Joseph (1999) has summarized Nigerian politics and governance within the context of clientele democracy and prebendalism (politics of representation and benefits). Here I use two different sources to illustrate Joseph’s point. The first comes from Major Kaduna Nzeogwu after he seized power in January 1996:

Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribers and demand 10 percent; those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as Ministers or VIPs at least; the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles; those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds (cited in Joseph 1999, 71-72).

The second example is from another of Chinua Achebe’s prolific works: A Man of the People. Achebe complements Nzeogwu’s speech through the character Mr. Odili who wanted to contest an election so as to sanitize the society of inefficient, semi-literates like Chief Nanga, the incumbent who has earned the love and admiration of his people because he distributes and spends money. Unfortunately, he realizes his inability to change his people’s perspective and mournfully says:

Here were silly, ignorant villagers dancing themselves lame and waiting to blow off their gunpowder in honor of one of those who had started the country off down the slopes of inflation. I wished for a miracle, for a voice of thunder, to hush this ridiculous festival and tell the poor contemptible people one or two truths. But of course, it would be quite useless. They were not only ignorant, but cynical. Tell them that this man had used his position to enrich himself and they would ask you as my father did if you thought that a sensible man would spit out the juicy morsel that good fortune placed in his mouth (my emphasis) (Achebe 1972, 2).

Another important dimension to the challenge of Nigerian democracy is that elections are often the source of armed disputes, violent conflicts and generalized crises.” (Ogunba 1997, 7-8). There are those who want to be mythologized like the days of Jomo Kenyata and Nnamdi Azikiwe. There are those who are claiming to be the architects of Nigeria’s second democratic independence. Fanon (1968) noted the threats of this lionization of “bringers of independence” to democracy. Unfortunately, the attitude of Nigerian politicians described by Nzeogwu and symbolically captured by Achebe several years ago has continued to epitomize the character and practice of democracy in Nigeria.

Creating the Transformative Discourse: Theatre and Citizen’s Engagement in North Central Nigeria

In spite of the challenges I have highlighted, Nigerians are not totally oblivious of the kind of democracy they desire. Theoretically, Nigeria operates a representative government through the presidential system of governance. This means that people freely
choose their representatives to exercise power on their behalf. Whatever coloration given the concept, Nigerians envision a democracy in which all fully qualified citizens vote at regular intervals to choose, from among alternative candidates, the people who will be in charge of setting the state’s policies. Democracy is “government of the people”; therefore, there is also a sense that the full population of citizens will be actively engaged between elections in debate over alternative policies and in the work of setting the policies (Shively 2005, 179).

Citizens have the right and strong grounds for asking their representatives to be responsive when the issues have to do with the matters that touch the lives and vital concerns of ordinary people. Unfortunately, Nigerian citizens have not been adequately engaged rendering the electorates powerless, apathetic and uninterested in democracy.

The experiences of past elections revealed significant knowledge of electoral fraud and techniques by the political class. Thus precedent was a major challenge Nigerians had to confront before the 2007 general elections. Other challenges were the attitudes of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the security agents. The capacity of these agencies to organize a free and fair election was evidently in doubt. Considering these challenges, Nigerians were again doubtful that the country would experience a democratic government. Based on this doubt, a coalition of international agencies put funds together to support civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to embark on engaging citizens in civic and voter education, aspects of participatory democracy, as well as mandate protection for voters. Issues of voter apathy, disenchantment and the lack of interest in the political process, particularly general elections, were evident in most parts of Nigeria.

**Civil Society and Alternative Models for Citizen Engagement**

There can be no patriotism without liberty; no liberty without virtue; no virtue without citizens; create citizens and you will have everything you need; without them, you will have nothing but debased slaves, from the rulers of the state downwards (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, cited in Barber 2003, 234).

Faced with the uncertainties regarding the 2007 general elections, CSOs, NGOs, and Faith-Based Groups embarked on intense political and civic education programs through popular education, capacity building, training on basic democratic values and principles including mandate protection and political participation for grassroots and political groups. The aim of this joint project was to ensure that Nigerians appropriated their political space and exercised their fundamental rights through participation in the decisions that affect them. The Youth, Adolescent Reflection & Action Centre (YARAC) is an NGO based in Plateau state, working in most states in the North Central Nigeria. The organization was among 15 other civil society groups that benefited from the Joint Donor Basket Fund (JDBF). The fund was established to support civil society-led voter education for the 2007 elections. The contributors to the fund include the European Union (EU), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Department for International Development, United Kingdom (DFID) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).
Elections and representation are complex notions. Closely related to election is the notion of the responsibility of the democratic representative. Nigerians want to redefine the concept of democracy where the electorates have a right to choose and reject representatives and the representatives submit themselves periodically for re-election. Democracy will thrive in Nigeria if the various stakeholders take it upon themselves to work on the nascent democracy and if the evils of the past are neither swept under the carpet nor repeated. The voices for democracy need to be more and more robust and aggressive (IDEA 2000, 63). One of the ways to ensure this ‘robust and aggressive voice’ is through citizens’ engagement. Nigerians already know that if democracy is to function well people must go beyond voting to involve themselves in more demanding tasks such as improving on the quality of their community meetings, neighborhood and culture groups, civil society groups and so on, to discuss how they can contribute to the democratic process. Putman (2000) calls this pattern “social capital”. According to Shively it is vital to an understanding of democratic citizenship as it is a pattern of community interaction that produces desirable attitudes of efficacy and trust, and that gives people practical experience in persuasion and collective action that helps them to function well in a democracy (2005, 166).

Transformative Theatre as a Tool for Learning Participatory Democracy

As in many parts of the world, drama and theatre are part of the performative traditions of Nigerians. In sum, theatre is a strong communication tool that:

- drives human beings to see themselves as they are, lets them drop their masks,
- exposes the lie, the spinelessness, the baseness, the sanctimoniousness; it shakes the suffocating inertia of a materialism, which attacks even the clearest assertion of the senses; and by placing collective groups of human beings face to face with their dark powers, their secret strength, it invites them to assume a heroic and aloof attitude towards the fate which they would never have attained without theatre (Artaud cited in Politics and Performance, 2001, 225).

It is this power of theatre as a tool for political socialization that YARAC uses to engage with the different social, culture and political groups in North Central Nigeria. Transformative Theatre (TfT) is an instrument of cultural power that provides the connection between theatre and democracy, where community participants articulate and critically question their assumptions and perspectives and act to amend those assumptions and perspectives. TfT is an emerging study from the gaps created by the practice of Theatre for Development (TfD) in Nigeria over the last thirty years. In most experiences, the practice of TfD ends up problematizing and dramatizing issues, without any significant change in the assumptions of those involved. Most often, those communities are fatalistically passive (Iorapuu 2004), and even after participating in TfD they seldom organize for collective action. Transformative Theatre is also a response to the persistent call by a cohort of Nigerian radical dramatists for a “popular and effective alternative” theatre (Osofisan 2001, 99). By ‘effective alternative’ the Nigerian radical dramatists are referring to a theatre that will serve as a democratic vehicle and can facilitate appropriate dialogue at the community level. This theatre is that which is functional and represents the voices of “those whose struggles never cease, whose dreams never die and their fire never quench, and who in the end determine the course of history” (Osofisan 2001, 23).
The project is titled “Beyond Elections: Protecting People’s Mandate through Transformative Voter Education for Grassroots Women and Youth Organizations in North Central Nigeria”. The paradigm of Transformative theatre is derived from a combination of the pedagogies of Betolt Brecht, Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal and the theory of Jack Mezirow (Iorapuu 2008). However, Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning forms the main body of ideas in understanding Transformative Theatre. Central to the theory of transformative learning is the notion that adults make new meaning of their cultural and contextual experiences. Thus transformative learning takes place when individuals significantly reflect upon their environment and learning. Accordingly Mezirow (2000, 18) notes that learning occurs in the following ways: by elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits of mind. Learning occurs when meaning structures (also known as a “frame of reference”) change. Allen (2007, 33) admits that critical reflection assists learners in confronting their political, economic, social, cultural, and religious viewpoints; allowing individuals to become more aware of how these (and others) affect their view of the world.

The experience shared here is one which has helped Nigerians to reflect and confront unacceptable political vices and traditions. Many Nigerians had a strong postulation that the 2007 general elections would not hold. The actions and inactions of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) officials, the poor handling of the voter registration process, the inability of INEC to distribute the new voter identity cards with embossed photographs, and of course the actions of the former President (Chief Olusegun Obasanjo) following the botched third-term agenda, convinced many Nigerians to think that the elections were not holding. The public anxiety and cynicism that trailed the events caused the call for the cancellation of the elections by some civil society groups. The assumptions were just the right impetus required to process the TfT intervention. Though there are six states in the North Central Nigeria where TfT took place, two states are discussed in this chapter: Benue and Plateau States.

Immediately after the 2003 elections, YARAC started work in Benue and Plateau States with grassroots youth groups around issues of leadership and good governance. The aim was to build grassroots social movements for good governance. Some of the pedagogies used include: community organizing, focus group discussions, listening and sharing experiences, and using soccer and theatre to engage with the young people. Through dialogue and problem posing, basic questions arose from participants, such as: What factors can stall elections from taking place? What is democracy? What factors limit women’s participation in politics? Why are young people involved in electoral malpractice? What makes democracy participatory? The responses to these questions established many possibilities: (a) of engaging one another in dialogue and debates; (b) of reflecting on issues people ordinarily want to avoid; (c) of clarifying deep assumptions, learning and taking on new perspectives; (d) of recognizing the power of unity in diversity to seek collective answers to common issues and so on. All the issues and experiences were translated into a 20 minutes narrative and performed in two communities near the training venue.
Essentially, unlike the TfD approach, the TfT process requires several preliminary activities to guarantee desired audience with the community. The following but not exclusive preliminary steps are necessary.

- First, several visits to the identified community rather than a one-off affair. Or if the issue concerns the neighborhood, the steps would include personal calls, door knocking, and community organizing (CO) as the initial steps.
- Second, each CO or visit is tied to popular education activity.
- Third, the animators must recognize and respect the rights, knowledge and attitudes of the people.
- Fourth, through CO and social learning processes, the people put themselves on the edge: the learning activities challenge their feelings to reflect on their assumptions and perspectives of sustaining the actions;
- Fifth, to critically conduct self-reflection and creatively open to alternative viewpoints for example why they must participate in the elections and insist their votes are counted;
- Sixth, the CO activities and social learning processes enhance understanding through critical questioning to see why assumptions and perspectives must always be revisited, for instance voting is not necessary because the ruling party and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) have decided to allocate the results.
- Seventh and most fundamental of the process is acting on the revisions: shifting from the frame of awareness into more concrete and transformed decision. But this is influenced by the activities of the steps above and of course heightened by the images of the performance.

These steps help to re-energize people who for long have been disenfranchised. Whereas CO provides democratic ways of debating, negotiating meaning and taking acceptable decisions. Transformative learning empowers their actions particularly when they are convinced that they but not anyone else can change their realities.

The facilitators are trained community change agents; development workers or popular education actors. In the case of the example discussed here, the facilitators were popular educators and community activists who use the strategy of theatre to engage communities on social or political issues. During the preliminary visits, community leaders as well as leaders of base groups decided on members of the community that worked with the facilitators. So they learn from the external facilitators the basic steps required in organizing around an issue. The internal facilitators maintain contact with the community, organize the relevant base groups, and ensure that community members do not renege on their new perspectives. The choice of the community depends on the nature of activity or need. It could be external or internally done with the participation of external facilitators. But to achieve all these, the TfT process is the market place where communication is democratized and new resolves made.

YARAC brought this experience to the JDBF project in the North Central Nigeria. The theatre approach built on the existing experiences of the women and young people, and it was easy to relate their past issues and debate their present perspectives and hence the
future. This is what Boal (1998, 7) describes as “two indissociable psychic processes – to reinvent the past and to invent the future. Therein resides the immense power with which theatre is endowed”. Nigerians were already fed up with politicians who promise everlasting life during campaigns and are not seen again until another season of election tales. And so, the images in the performance reflected the “disappearing” actions of political representatives before and after their election, money politics, electoral violence, and discrimination against women’s participation, intimidation and, citizens’ participation. The images of youth unemployment were quite apparent. At every performance the audience condemned all the vices but unequivocally acknowledged actions that promoted the value of participatory democracy.

One portion of the performance that always drew instant condemnation was the aspect of rigging. There was not one single community that allowed the scene with ballot box snatching to pass without intervention. Sometimes the interventions were fierce. In all the states, the audience angrily went after the actors who snatch the ballot box-reliving their past experiences with the performance. It was noticed that some government officials were always uncomfortable with this aspect of the performance. Facilitators recognized that they needed to stimulate further dialogue about rigging, and process the actions of the audience. Each time the ‘Jokers’ or cultural animators (Boal 1998) quickly stopped the performance to interrogate the actions of the ‘spec-actors’ (Boal 1985). At this point community members establish their new frames or perspectives through persistent work with the facilitators. To make the proposed action more sustainable, “community animators” are identified during the preliminary stages of community visits and consultative meetings. As soon as there is a shared understanding of the process, the facilitators assist the community animators in driving the process. This is a significant moment to the technique because the process of ownership is started.

To achieve the outcomes outlined above, Transformative Theatre strategy requires several steps. The first and most significant but difficult stage is the aspect of initiating and ensuring sustained discussion of issues with the communities and other social groups in Plateau and Benue states. To ensure adequate participation of every segment of the community, a variety of consultative activities are carried out where adult women, young people and adult males find space to dialogue and to debate political assumptions. This space is created through a variety of gatherings, including town hall meetings, cultural activities and soccer, especially for young people.

The issue of space to openly engage and dialogue on a variety of issues is missing for many obvious reasons in Nigeria’s polity. The disappointments over promises not kept by political leaders, collapse of infrastructures as a result of high-level corruption in the country, poverty and huge unemployment contribute greatly to the apathy Nigerians show in political activities. Many Nigerians would rather focus on their subsistence farming activities, petty trading and possibly religious functions rather than participate in politics of deceit. To distill relevant information and constructive ideas, the facilitators needed to conduct a series of preliminary visits and consultative meetings with the designated community members. These are the duty bearers and leaders of grassroots based groups. During the preliminary steps and after, the community members decide the venue of the activities. The theatre performance is open to members of the community who are
interested. These actions allow facilitators to connect with the people and empathize with their perspectives through constructive means of engagement. The findings of these consultative actions are what the facilitators and the community animators translate into a narrative performance at the second step. This first step equally requires time and patience because community members have their cultural rhythms and ways of conducting their activities.

Following the consultative actions is the process of animation: rehearsing the findings with specific community voices. Community members revive those experiences again through dialogue and actions. Boal (1998, 86) argues that “the rehearsals are already a form of political activity in themselves”. Like the young Erebulem, Mama Chuwang and one of the community animators expressed transformative learning during one of the rehearsals this way; “Ada Gwi! Haka mu ka cuce kan mu?” (God! Is this how we have been dishonest to ourselves?) Self condemnation! Mama Chuwang was reflecting on her new frame of knowledge. First, she realized the power of drama to democratize women’s voices; second, she recognized that by refusing to participate in elections, she was denying herself the voice to question and the right of contribution to future decisions that might affect her and her community. This revelation was amazing to her and she resolved not to give up until her singular voice was heard by everyone. Mama Chuwang provides an important example of the energy and power Transformative Theatre brings to democratic process. We observed a renewed eagerness because the people see new meaning in dialogue and are able to critically analyze the ideas and practices that oppress them individually or collectively.

The views of the people in Benue state were similar to those in Plateau. The performances were taken to market places, parks and at the palaces of local chiefs. These places provided many community members the opportunity to intervene in the performances. Other cultural nuances such as music and dance accompanied the performances which also attracted huge audience-participants (spec-actors) during the rehearsals and the final presentation. At the palace of Ter Makurdi the paramount ruler, Sule Abenga (Chief of Makurdi town), made the following remarks at the end of one of the performances:

The technique used to dramatize the issues we all face is revealing. I am unable to differentiate between the dialogue sessions and the flow of the performance. My submission is that through this piece I am confident many Nigerians will participate during the elections and many Nigerians will ensure their votes count. The short drama has increased our optimism. I hear the voices of change, I see the readiness to protect our votes and above all, I see great unity. This is the best means of organizing people I have seen recently (March 22, 2007).

The third step is already implied in the performance and the comments of the chief clearly show the quality of dialogue that ensues. The aesthetics of Transformative Theatre approach is in the quality of community engaging, debates and dialogue, the social communion that emerge through theatrical voices. For cultural and religious reasons activities are organized in recognition of the different peculiarities of the participating community. To ensure sustainability of results, facilitators encourage community members to democratically nominate leaders who can help with the coordination of rehearsals and
other responsibilities. This is important because the people feel more encouraged and committed when they see “their own” directing the proceedings. What makes transformative theatre different from other participatory techniques is that one is able to progressively monitor how assumptions are debated. As mentioned in another contribution:

Transformative theatre presents people with unpleasant interactive images; images that expose the electorates to provoking realities; images that make them question their strengths and inadequacies; images that connect and disconnect them. Transformative theatre takes you to another level of instant action by improving on the perspectives of your current assumptions (Iorapuu 2006, 116).

Learning Democracy through Soccer

‘Soccer for Democracy’ (S4D) is another strategy that has greatly enhanced ways of doing democracy in Nigeria. Through soccer, young people began to appreciate that the rules of the game of soccer can be applied to their day to day experiences. Festus Erebulem\(^1\) who is currently using the “soccer strategy” to work with street boys had this to say after one week of the experience:

When you people started, many of us were angry that you are interrupting our game. Some of us decided not to return to the field the next day but it won’t work. So we patiently observed. Each time the game was stopped to discuss the actions or inactions of players, we felt extremely bad within. But surprisingly, we started noticing new attitudes among us, the way we approached each other, issues and even our reactions to others during the game. Now most of us understand and are able to link our experience of the game and what we face in our homes, schools and neighborhoods (Festus Erebulem evaluation remarks, February 6, 2007).

The concept of ‘Soccer for Democracy’ began in 2000 as a contribution to enhancing Nigeria’s democracy. Nigeria had just become a democratic nation. It was quite clear that a huge population of young people of voting age had no knowledge of basic democratic practices. This was evident from the voting patterns and general lack of interest shown in 1999. Understandably most of them were experiencing democracy in Nigerian for the first time. In recognition of the passion Nigerians have for soccer, YARAC started the ‘Soccer for Democracy’ as a strategy to educate young Nigerians about democratic principles and how to participate in decision-making processes in their communities or neighborhoods. In a country where there is so much of suspicion: ethnic and religious conflicts, and political mistrust, Soccer is the only activity that connects Nigerians effortlessly. Soccer is equally used to organise and connect young people around conflict issues, HIV/AIDS. Soccer, theatre and democracy have similar values. These include: the value and principle of team playing; the value and principle of freedom of expression; the value and principle of equality; the value and principle of (fair play) justice; the value and principle of collective responsibility; the value and principle of respect for one another; the value and principle of participation; the value and principle of power relations; the value and principle of the right to choose (select); the value and principle of the right to assemble.

\(^1\) Erebulem, Festus. 2007. Comments made during the evaluation of the Soccer for Democracy project in February 2007. Mr. Erebulem is currently involved with street soccer with children following his new found interest.
Playing soccer smoothly requires space, a healthy pitch and understanding, similarly theatre and democracy require a free space, understanding and a judicious environment. While these young people are expected to improve their soccer skills, the bottom line is applying the basic principle of soccer to learn complex subjects like democracy, good governance and other relevant issues of community interest. But how does this work? Democracy is about freedom to learn, choose and do governance with the people. This means people are at the centre of democracy just as the round leather ball is the main attraction on the field of play.

Soccer like democracy is a game of numbers. Soccer has specific number of players at a time on the field. Similarly there are specific numbers of people that can be elected at a time for particular offices. And so on the field, players are encouraged to communicate with the ball, distribute the ball, defend it, shield it from opponents, trust one another and ensure that they play as a team. That is the only way they can achieve collective results with the help of their supporters. Indirectly we are talking about collective responsibility. These are the same principles TfT promotes: getting people to work together for positive change.

There have been challenges with the strategy of Soccer. The problem of spaces to play the game and experience the concept fully has remained a major challenge. Young people play under very dangerous high tension electric cables, on the streets and sometimes occupy undeveloped plots of land. Despite these challenges there have been remarkable results. During the September 7, 2001 crisis in Jos, the team members whom by now had been used to each stood firm irrespective of their different religions to ensure that the Rantya axis of Jos was not infiltrated. Also, during the 2003 general elections, some politicians approached the YARAC team during one of their training sessions and offered to buy soccer shoes, uniforms and balls for the team so the team members could vote for their candidates and party. But when the team members engaged the politicians and sought to know where they have been all the while, their policy plans for young people and the intension behind the gesture, the politicians left disappointed with unpleasant words of threat to the team. Gradually, young people are getting informed and taking leadership responsibilities in their neighborhoods as a result of the experiences of TfT and S4D.

**Conclusion: Participatory Democracy is Possible in Nigeria**

The challenges to Nigeria’s democracy are enormous and daunting with global dynamics. The argument here is that participatory democracy is possible in Nigeria, through strategies like Transformative Theatre and Soccer for Democracy. TfT experiments have demonstrated that civic education for democracy is possible through participation and practice. The experiences so far contrast the positions of Mill and Dahl as paraphrased in (Przeworski 1995, 19) that “free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities” and “nationality differences within states restricts participation for some citizens”. Interestingly, Nigeria pontificates “unity in diversity”. Nigeria has a vibrant media that could not be pigeonholed during the military regimes and it is extremely vibrant in a democratic environment. There is an equally vibrant civil society. The environment for participatory democracy in Nigeria is fertile.
In this chapter, I tried to expose that the quality of participatory democracy is a function of the quality of involvement. The possibilities of creating more spaces for dialogue and engagement are high partly due to experiments with participatory budgeting in some parts of Nigeria. The idea behind TFT is about courageously stepping beyond the box of awareness. While awareness does not singularly lead to change, it is the act of translating the awareness into action that leads to transformative change (Schugurensky 2002). For this contribution, the performances exposed men, women, youth and the elderly to new perspectives. In many instances in Benue and Plateau States, people who had been involved in the TFT projects resisted attempts to blatantly deprive citizens of their rights to exercise their legitimate franchise during the 2007 general elections. The most important lesson is that Nigerians are learning and doing democracy through several alternative models: transformative theatre, town hall meetings, soccer and a variety of community initiatives. The experience has not been without unpleasant challenges. Political elites are suspicious of the effect of these participatory approaches on citizens. But as John Stuart Mill said, “When society requires to be rebuilt, there is no use in attempting to rebuild it on the old plan” (in Rubin 1997, vii).

References


Opening Spaces for Alternative Citizenship: Bringing Invisible Bodies to the Public through Art

Mabel Llevat
Fototeca de Cuba

In socialist Cuba there are some virtues, obligations and rights that members of society require in order to acquire complete citizenship. The criteria for admission in the realm of citizenship are remarkable social contributions toward the achievement of the Revolution’s goals, acting with a sense of political belonging and with a high level of commitment to the social project of the Revolution. With regard to the required obligations, the ideal scenario is one where a citizen’s agency is expressed responsibly and contributes to the realization of the Revolution’s goals, while avoiding confrontational points of view and questioning of the legitimacy of the State’s definition of the common good.

The following project attempts to explore alternative ways of building citizenship in a context where societal membership is linked to a particular ‘social performance’ that has been defined and prescribed from above. My intention is to promote the construction of citizenship (social membership) as a process that could take place from below. In operative terms my project involves two steps. The first one is an ethnographic study of women who work as Veladoras (female gallery guards) in Havana and whose work remains almost invisible in the context of the artistic institutional space. I explore who these women are, how they perceive their role at work and how they perceive themselves as actors in their work. In an attempt to connect the private sphere to the public sphere, I explore their lives outside the workplace. I particularly encourage them to share their experiences at home and to describe the organization of their everyday lives. In order to best achieve these goals, I have structured the paper in two parts. The first part explores a historical context where social membership has been linked to a specific ‘social performance’, defined by the State that rigidly defines what constitutes desirable political actions and the ‘ideal’ citizen. I also analyze the relationship between the conception of revolutionary citizenship and gender. In a second section this paper explores some ways to change this ‘social performance’ through building an alternative model of citizenship from below.

Citizenship in the Revolutionary Period

In 2000 the work entitled Apolítico (Apolitical) by Cuban artist Wifredo Prieto attracted the attention of both national and international art critics. It represented a group
of black and white flags of different nations as a metaphor for the situation of increasing apathy in Cuba during the decade of the 1990s. This period marked a shift in Cuban society due to the fall of the communist block and the beginning of an economic crisis known as the ‘Special Period’. The 1990s were a critical moment for the revolutionary process that began in 1959. After the Special Period, the high level of commitment to the social project of the Revolution, which had previously acted as a framework for building a revolutionary citizenship, began to decay.

With the implementation of a socialist political arrangement, the Cuban Revolution promoted a number of social rights that made a space for a more inclusive model of citizenship. On the one hand, the re-organization of societal roles and responsibilities set new criteria for admission in the realm of citizenship. This redefinition of citizenship ensured that many of the previously excluded groups could enjoy access to common benefits. Citizens were required to make significant contributions to the achievement of the Revolution’s goals, which would ideally provided the majority of the population access to new programs such as, public education, health care, social insurance, etc. Indeed a remarkable aspect of the revolutionary program was a nationalist agenda that called citizens to collaborate in ‘the different tasks of the revolution’, particularly in the nation-building project and the defense of the Revolution from both domestic and international enemies.

The Revolutionary government claimed that they would work to create a ‘new man’ who would incarnate the essence of the revolutionary citizen. Remarkable contributions for the common good, a strong sense of political belonging and a high level of commitment to social justice were considered basic conditions for entrance into the realm of citizenship. The ‘new man’ concept also meant a perceived opposition between individual interests and collective interests. Therefore, the ‘new man’s’ personal interests should not go against the interests of the majority. The revolutionary moral code reacted strongly to those individuals who pursued their self-interest. In fact they were labeled as antisocial and their attitudes were understood as remnants of the ancient regime. As a consequence they were both subjectively and materially excluded from the realm of citizenship.

On the other hand, the revolutionary project overlooked some of the most distinctive components of the liberal civic rights approach. Matters that, in a liberal context, would be considered off limits to the State were made the object of State surveillance, since it was thought that no truly private affair could be considered innocuous and may threaten the project of defending the integrity of the nation. In that sense, civil rights, such as free speech, free press, free meeting and free association, were controlled by the State due to their potential interference in the success of the Revolutionary project. In that sense, the Revolution silenced the possibility to question the decision-making strategies of its leaders and forbade any demands for accountability. It also prohibited the possibility of publicly exercising critical thinking or to exercise civil rights in any way that was perceived as opposite to the Revolutionary order. Symptoms of disagreement or opposition towards the political project were purged and seen as antisocial or antinationalist tendencies.
Citizenship and Gender

Gender is an interesting issue in the construction of the revolutionary model of citizenship. The construction of gender in Cuba has been mainly related to the colonial Spanish model, the American neocolonial model after 1902 and the socialist revolutionary model after 1959. Gender dynamics were interlinked with class relations informed by heavily patriarchal gender relations presented in the dominant Spanish regime, which was regulated by authoritarian Catholic moral and social rules. The oppression of the colonial system had many nuances in gender and in class relations, “the conquistadors provided both provocation and model, Spanish Catholicism provided the ideology of female abnegation; and oppression blocked other claims of men to power” (Connell 1993, 612).

After the Revolution started in 1959 there were some changes in the traditional understanding of gender and it was the beginning of an interesting relationship between women and the State. Women's emancipation has been essential to official policies and goals of the socialist State. The socialist paradigm prompted intense transformations in Cuban life and numerous reforms to liberate women from their traditional roles. The new face of Cuban women appeared through the images of women in the militia, in the countryside, in the sugar cane harvesting or as the face of the campaign for literacy. A new model of militant politicized women began to be displayed by all kinds of media and a powerful organization was created to help women in their quest for equality. But, the public sphere remained strictly divided by gender stereotypes and the private sphere continued to reproduce patriarchal values.

According to the studies carried out by investigators such as Sheryl L. Lutjens (1995, 1) the reflection of Cuban women’s situation can not be directly deduced from an archetypical socialist State: “Women are an essential, if neglected, piece of all the puzzle in the Cuban socialism”. From the beginning of the revolution Cuban women made striking gains, with the support of government policies, that improved their general living conditions and emancipated social groups previously marginalized by their class, race and gender. Strategies implemented by the Cuban government regarding women’s emancipation showed considerable advances in society.

To analyze the real commitment that the government had to women it is helpful to explore the State’s ability to make changes in the public spheres as well as the private sphere, where the State has little or no access. The Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC, Federation of Cuban Women), is the organization created to represent the interests of women. People have often criticized it’s lacking of autonomy and see it as another tool of the government: a mere mediation between women and the State. The objective of the FMC was the same to other mass organizations created in the country: to represent specific interests while supporting the main functions of the State.

Especially in the early stages, the organization’s goals and the mentality of their leaders were often counter to the discourse of Western feminism and the idea of a separate struggle for women’s rights. It is very important to understand women’s emancipation inside a larger project of nation-building. This idea shows the need for a branch of feminism that was re-invested and re-oriented to the Cuban specific reality. The Cuban feminist
movement created its own set of values where the idea of women’s liberation was impossible to separate from other social problems. This was a common viewpoint for women in Latin America during the sixties and the seventies who participated with men in the urban struggles or guerrilla movements against military dictatorships. The main leaders of the feminist movement struggled with how to re-organize feminism and cultural identity in opposition to the ‘Western canon’ that responded to a ‘bourgeois’ concept of feminism. Eventually the mentality of feminist leaders changed and sought closer ties with overseas activists, but the isolation of society due to political conditions also grew.

Currently, feminist theory and politics of citizenship have embraced an internationalist agenda by promoting a model in which the interests of women go beyond membership to a particular community. It is interesting to see how struggles for the economic, political and social independence of the nation contributed to create a strong nationalistic ideal that frustrated struggles for minority rights, such as struggles for the emancipation of black people and women. During both the Republican and the revolutionary periods, whenever a particular movement against racism appeared in Cuba it was rejected and discredited under the charge of treason to the ideals of the inclusive nation that Jose Marti and other heroes of independence had sought (Con todos y para el bien de todos, with all together and for the common good).

The ideal of racial and gender equity were perceived of as the particular interests of certain groups even though they were publicly recognized as victims of discrimination and had fewer opportunities to participate in politics. Women had to be Cuban first and therefore, faithful to the goals of the collective before seeking to fulfill to their own needs as women. This logic proved to be an obstacle to achieving the specific goals of women. Indeed citizenship scholars are still debating whether movements that maintained an attachment to the nationalist projects were more or less effective in their own particular struggles for equality.

As years passed some concepts changed. Many researchers pointed out that the idealism of the first years in the Cuban revolutionary process suffered when it adapted to a society with a strong patriarchal system. “Beginning with the notoriously unorthodox socialism of the 1960, history and necessity have informed the ideological and institutional orthodoxies of the revolution’s strategies for women” (Lutjens 1995, 1). A single organization tried to represent and include all the sides of this debate while always supporting the idea that women should be incorporated into revolutionary tasks. In the end our socialist society reproduced the oppressive structures that it set out to abolish, following the same pattern of other socialist countries. Women continued to be confined to the private sphere and this posed real problems for achieving equality. At the same time, different social strategies allowed women to participate in all kinds of revolutionary tasks and to assume different sort of challenges in the workplace and public spheres.

To what degree we can say that women’s demands were met by ‘differentiated citizenship’? Many initiatives show that women demands were not actually met by special representation in the political process (‘differentiated citizenship’) but would have been better served by being incorporated into a shared identity that would integrate previously excluded groups and re-define the national identity.
Nevertheless for the Revolutionary government to continue to be supported by women, some realities had to be publicly accepted by Revolution leaders. Fidel Castro gave a speech in the Congress of the FMC in 1974, where he had to admit that, “women’s equality doesn’t exist yet” (Castro 1974). In the mid-1970s, according to studies done by the Partido Comunista de Cuba only few women had been elected as delegates for the Poder Popular Local due to inequalities in the private realm that condemned them to take care of their homes, their husbands and their children. The Cuban revolution seeks equal citizenship for women on the basis of combining family and public responsibilities, but this initiative has had to deal with many social stereotypes. During the 1970s and the 1980s, films debated the problems and obstacles in the search for women’s equality and at the same time criticized the mentality of society. Nevertheless, many films and TV programs depicted the ideal woman as someone who had no direct interaction with the practical problems of public life (except childcare). An analysis of television and film materials shed some light on the way that problems traditionally related to women, such as the double workload of employment and home, child rearing and labor discrimination, were represented and they showed an educational approach that could be propagandistic. In the end these portraits were unrepresentative of the real women’s problems of sharing time between home, work and children.

Differences between the private and the public realms are also an important issue in the discussion about citizenship and gender. In Cuba, problems of the private domain received plenty attention from the political sphere and, although the State tried discuss private issues in the public domain, changes made to improve women’s lives were seen as considerations for her ‘natural’ obligations. Many stereotypes existed in Cuban society with regard to gender and a gendered subjectivity was applied to women in general. Here we can see the division made by Raia Prokhovnik (1998) when analyzing the different practices of public and private citizenship, there are women who behave autonomously and work as ‘equals’ with men but do not adequately fulfill their role as family nurturer, and there are women who remain in the private realm to take responsibility for the home, husband and children and do not assume paid employment. All these experiences were publicly recognized as evidenced by Fidel’s speech to the FMC Congress in 1974. “Women are nature’s workshop where life is forged; they are the preeminent creators of human beings. And I say this because far from being the object of discrimination and inequality, women merit special consideration from society” (Lutjens 1995, 2).

In Cuba women have many life different experiences that depend on their different characteristics including social, racial and geographic aspects. White women’s experiences were different from those of black women, who entered the public domain earlier but with the stigma of libertinage. These experiences show that attempts to incorporate women by simply adding them into a ‘male-defined’ public space will inevitably fail.

After the ‘Special Period’ that Cuba experienced in the 1990s, improvements in the living and working conditions for women have been almost impossible to achieve. The space of struggle for women’s equality has also dramatically decreased. Society and the women within it became very skeptical about any research or reflexive process aiming to analyze the present condition of women in different fields. When compared to previous decades when talking about women’s equality was so important, the present has seen the
elimination of spaces for debate around concrete obstacles to women’s freedom because these lead to a direct critique to the society's economic problems.

Although the FMC continued existing as organization and other institutions such as the CENESEX (associated with the Ministry of Public Health) continue their campaigns for women equality, the visible institutional problems in the country and diminishing funding for public campaigns and projects are large obstacles.

Cuban women are dealing with new social problems such as exclusionary tensions due to isolation, lack of information, and migrations. Cuba is a country that has generated a great number of migrants and asylum seekers in recent decades and a significant proportion were women. Popular songs and some audiovisuals of elite distribution highlight the increase in prostitution and women who organize their emotional lives in relationship with their economic interests. But this is rarely mentioned in the official means of communication. Ruth Lister (1997) notes in her text, *Citizenship: Towards a feminist synthesis*, the way that exclusionary forces and laws construct women as economic dependents.

**Veladoras: Building Alternative Ways of Perceiving Citizenship**

The following project attempts to explore alternative ways of building citizenship in a context where social membership is linked to a particular ‘social performance’ that has been defined and prescribed from above. My intention is to promote the construction of citizenship as a process that takes place from below. My project involves two steps. It began as an ethnographic study of women who work as Veladoras (female art gallery guards) in Havana. Their role and their contribution within the context of the artistic institutional space are almost invisible. They are always alienated from the institutional process of decision-making and they are represented as ‘invisible objects’ located between the visitor and the artwork.

Once I gathered the information and analyzed it, I began the second step of the project, which was the organization of a photograph exhibition. In doing so I expose the gendered, racialized and stratified life experiences of women who remain socially invisible and open a space for them to experience social membership in the public space of the art gallery.

My approach to a feminist citizenship is different to traditional feminist models that understand women’s citizenship according to the value that women can obtain in the public world. My work does not focus on women who play prominent roles in Cuban public life but rather, it is devoted to researching women who struggle to sustain themselves while dealing with very difficult conditions in low paid workplaces. Although their specific work is the objective of the selection, I try to analyze their lives without subscribing to one or the other side of the public-private dichotomy. They are not women who have chosen to stay full time in the private realm, because most of them need to share home expenses with their family members but their existence in the public realm is precarious and largely ignored.
Describing the Project

My project consisted of organizing an art exhibition using ethnographic data, so I started by conducting a number of interviews. I explored who the Veladoras are, how they perceive their roles at work and the processes of self-perception in which they are involved. During the interviews they focused on their specific biographies, the spectrum of options that they have in the labor force and their relationship with the art world. I asked them to express their opinions about such issues as labor discrimination, and racial discrimination. It was also very important to see them as individuals giving opinions about the way they see themselves as citizens and their ideas about economic, social and politic aspects of society. In exploring this part of their life I sought to explore their worldviews about politics, and to take into account the diverse ways in which they engage in activities in the public realm.

In an attempt to connect the private sphere to the public sphere, I explored their lives outside the workplace. I particularly encouraged them to share their home experiences and to describe the organization of their everyday activities. It is very important, according to the concepts of Public and Private Citizenship proposed by Raia Prokhovnik (1998, 86), to understand practices in the private sphere as also “political in character, in the sense of not being simply ‘natural’”. Therefore, an attempt to look for the value of daily activity in the private realm will focus on the way women commonly act in this sphere, where they usually assume different roles. I asked them to express their opinions about their roles in the private sphere.

Once I gathered the information and processed it, I started the second step of the project, which was the organization of a photograph exhibition. I did not want to restrict my research to only describing the women’s experiences using my own voice, so once I gathered the information I invited them to collaborate as co-creators of the exhibition by giving opinions about the way I should organize the artistic work I was planning to produce. I asked them for suggestions about the selection of the work to exhibit. My purposes in doing so was to move from practices of social ‘invisibilization’ that make certain people passive (merely objects of the photograph), to practices that perceive those people as active participants in the processes of self-representation (to become active decision-makers in regard to composition, scenery or places where the photographs were taken). The exhibition also seeks to empower them by going beyond their anonymous activity and bringing their personal biographies to the public sphere, in other words, the exhibition is an attempt to introduce them as members of society.

The final result was a number of images that represent their roles as guardians and their ‘passive’, invisible location between the artwork and the visitors. They commonly appear inside the space of the gallery and their images appear reflected in different objects as the glasses and work, or taking a rest in a backyard, reading a book or looking at themselves in a mirror. The hierarchical institutional order was also interpreted through images that show the disposition of spaces and people around the gallery.
Contributing to a New Citizenship: Making Visible the Invisible

To make visible the reality many women face in Cuba today and make visible their lives is one of the main objectives of this research. We should take into account that they represent an important and significant stratum in Cuban society. They are working class mothers, most of them Afro-Cuban, with low educational levels. They are not autonomous economically and although they have a variety of choices to participate in the public realm, the multiple obstacles they face have a strong impact in their chances of actually doing so. These obstacles are often related to the difficulties they face when negotiating their responsibilities in both the public and private realms. Although the Revolutionary process tried to change hierarchies and a significant number of women are occupying outstanding positions in public life today, men have historically defined priorities in the public world, and, as a result, the best choices are reserved for men.

On the other hand, many women live in matrifocal homes where they are the breadwinners of their families, in charge of sustaining themselves, their children and elders. That is the situation of one the women I interviewed. Concepcion has had to take paid employment but she has no expectations that she will assume decision-making responsibilities or leadership activities. Throughout the history of discrimination and inequity these women have suffered, so they usually don’t feel confident enough to take the risks that would make them more active decision-makers (with some exceptions, of course). Concepcion’s options are mainly focus on her possibilities of finding a husband with a higher economic income or in the possibility of immigrating to another country.

There is a diversity also of women’s experiences according to the relationship with the sphere of politics. Beyond the general disenchantment with the world of politics and, as Prokhovnik (1998) said, that many women do not identify their concerns with what happens in the traditional political sphere, the women I interviewed have different levels of commitment to politics. That is the case of Mariuska, whose husband has direct commitments through work with the government and in the neighborhood serves as the nighttime guard. Mariuska describes her peculiar status as citizen but she also faces stigma because she is responsible for detecting, and denouncing illegal activities in the community. During the ‘Special Period’ these illegal activities were a means of survival for many of her neighbours. She assumes the same status of her husband by helping him with his activities and, at the same time, accepting low paid institutional work that casts no doubt on her integrity as a citizen.

The issue of the economic crisis in the 1990s has special significance for many institutions and projects, which, prior to the crisis, enjoyed significant funds and then experienced a radical change in its traditional methods, channels and functions. The key element here is the problem of corruption which divided society in two different types: ‘normal’ procedures that use the institutional and official channels created by the government to accomplish specific tasks and that of the corrupted mechanisms as second or informal choices that appear through illegality. Although men usually assume both options, it’s common to find more men in the second choice leaving institutional work, which pays poorly, to women. Illegal work involves more risks, engages activities that are seen as ‘suitable’ for women and has benefits that are much higher than institutional work...
provides. In Cuba, men usually rule in the realm of alternative solutions and alternative experiences caused by economic crisis. Their need to survive obliges them to break the law, separates them from the objectives and goals of the State and causes them to break their own moral standards. Women who participate in these informal realms do so through their husbands, and the women that I interviewed have experienced some improvement in their economic situation but at the expense of becoming entirely economically dependant. This dependence can lead to problems in the home such as domestic violence.

The Veladoras project seeks to go beyond the disenchantment women experience with the world of politics in Cuba. It seeks to empower women by sharing their opinions both about their private lives and about the larger society. Furthermore, the project succeed in organizing and unifying these women giving them the opportunity to identify with the experiences of other people who share their racialized or gendered identities. This research was able to assess the diversity of women’s lives and experiences in Cuba today.

References
Aprendiendo a Transgredir Normas Democráticas: Un Estudio sobre la Socialización Primaria en Argentina

Ana Vernengo Villa Elisa
Universidad Nacional de La Plata

Introducción

La amplitud del permiso social en la Argentina provoca en gran parte de las personas la percepción de que siempre es posible transgredir sin que a ello corresponda una sanción. De esta manera, muchas de las normas, como el pago de impuestos o las reglas de tránsito, son habitualmente ignoradas sin que estos comportamientos acrediten algún tipo de penalización, siquiera el cuestionamiento de los propios conciudadanos. Nuestro interés radica en rastrear los antecedentes de esta conducta en el ámbito doméstico, específicamente en la transgresión de las normas sociales y la aplicación de ‘sanciones’ en la vida cotidiana familiar por parte de la autoridad, encarnada en las madres.

El trabajo presenta los resultados de una investigación cualitativa realizada en la Argentina sobre los argumentos utilizados por un grupo de madres profesionales en la dinámica de la vida diaria, con el fin de evitar la aplicación de procedimientos inhibitorios al comportamiento transgresor de sus hijos. Para ello, se han realizado entrevistas con 30 madres profesionales quienes relataron la forma en que abordan la enseñanza de las normas sociales y las sanciones que eventualmente utilizan para ello.

Desde nuestra perspectiva, consideramos que estas formas argumentales que operan en la realidad cotidiana familiar repetidamente, ‘enseñan’ a los niños ‘formas racionales’ para justificar la transgresión sentando así las bases de comportamientos anóxicos que indudablemente repercutirán en la vida adulta sobre la adecuación al sistema normativo y, en último término, a los procedimientos propios de la democracia republicana.

Materiales y Método

Tipo de estudio

Se utilizó una metodología cualitativa para facilitar la generación de categorías de análisis a medida que se obtenía en material empírico.
Muestra
La muestra fue intencionada y se utilizó una metodología de bola de nieve. Estuvo conformada por 30 casos que debían tener los siguientes atributos:

- Ser madres con niños de 4 a 12 años
- Poseer estudios de nivel superior universitarios y no universitarios
- Ser residentes de la ciudad de Buenos Aires y alrededores

Características del grupo entrevistado
- Edad: la media fue de 38 años
- Cantidad de hijos: 18 madres con 2 hijos, 6 madres con 3 hijos, 5 solamente un hijo y una madre con 4 hijos
- Estado civil: 73% casadas, 20% divorciadas y 10% ensambladas
- El 80 % de la muestra indicó que el padre de los hijos tiene estudios superiores
- En el momento de la entrevista el 66% trabajaba en relación de dependencia, el 17% en forma independiente y el resto no estaba trabajando
- La participación de su ingreso en el gasto familiar representa entre el 30 y 50 %
- El 100% posee vivienda propia de 4 o más ambientes

Materiales
Se utilizaron dos tipos de materiales.

- Un cuestionario para registrar los datos iniciales: edad, estado civil, estudio-profesión, cantidad de hijos, sexo y edad de los mismos, nivel educativo del padre de los hijos, actividad laboral, ingreso, tiempo de permanencia en la casa y ayuda doméstica

- Guía de preguntas conducentes al diálogo con el objetivo de obtener información respecto a los siguientes tópicos: Descripción de las rutinas cotidianas de la madre e hijos (actividades escolares, vestimenta, salud, aseo, descanso y alimentación), descripción de las acciones efectuadas por las madres frente a la enseñanza de normas y su actitud frente a las situaciones de desobediencia. Se solicitó el relato de situaciones concretas y se promovió a que expresaran su reflexión personal sobre los temas tratados

Procedimientos
Las primeras entrevistas fueron presentadas por un tercero en común y las siguientes fueron recomendadas por el primer grupo y, así sucesivamente, es decir se utilizó la estrategia de bola de nieve.

A partir de la entrevista 20 se alcanzó un nivel de saturación de la información provista por la muestra, sin embargo se continuó con 10 entrevistas más a fin de obtener mayor información. Este proceso demandó seis meses para la toma, transcripción y primeros análisis del material recogido y, dos meses para la toma de las restantes entrevistas. El clima de las entrevistas se caracterizó por un diálogo amable y fluido, La duración fue de dos horas en promedio y fueron tomadas en su totalidad por la autora de este trabajo.

Procesamiento de los datos
A medida que se obtuvo el material empírico se clasificó la información recurrente necesaria para generar las categorías de análisis.

**Resultados**

**Aprendizaje social de normas**

Específicamente el aprendizaje social, referido a las normas sociales, se produce a saber:

- Por modelado que consiste en la observación vicaria de los niños del comportamiento del modelo (Bandura 1986, 1991)

- Por participación guiada que sucede cuando adultos y niños en situaciones cotidianas realizan actividades conjuntas (Rogoff 1990)

- Por el uso de procedimientos inhibitorios a la conducta desviada del niño por la autoridad (Bandura 1991)

Independientemente del mecanismo de aprendizaje -modelado, participación guiada o inhibición de la conducta- la intención es la búsqueda de la adecuación de la conducta del niño a las pautas de comportamiento esperado socialmente.

Es importante mencionar que cada grupo social ‘garantiza’, de esta manera, la transmisión intergeneracional de un conjunto de concepciones y creencias referidas al mundo social y de las formas de actuar convenidas por los miembros de la comunidad. Este conjunto, explícita o implícitamente, necesariamente representan en los sujetos un conjunto de significados culturalmente compartidos (Geertz 1992) que repercuten en la calidad de vida de los individuos.

Según Zimring y Hawkins, en la vida familiar la autoridad es representada por los padres y su accionar respecto a la efectiva imposición de una sanción, frente al no cumplimiento de pauta, impacta sobre los resultados en el aprendizaje en los niños. Esto ocurre debido a que la sanción basa su efectividad en la creencia de los sujetos en la probabilidad de que la acción desviada tendrá castigo, es decir en la percepción social respecto a su efectiva aplicación (citado en Bandura 1986, 273). Esto implica que cuando sistemáticamente una sanción no es aplicada la norma que justifica su comisión pierde significación. En esta situación operan tanto el modelado como el fracaso en el uso de los procedimientos inhibitorios de la autoridad. En este sentido, nuestro interés radica en mostrar, no tanto el fracaso en el uso de los procedimientos inhibitorios, como su efecto contrario, la enseñanza de formas de justificar la transgresión a través de argumentos atenuantes por parte de las madres.

Antes de introducirnos en los resultados obtenidos consideramos importante describir la vinculación entre las normas y las sanciones. Desde el punto de vista lógico las normas y las sanciones se vinculan a través de una relación condicional, formando el siguiente razonamiento: Tenemos una norma x (antecedente), pero si esta no es cumplida (condición) entonces se aplicará una sanción (consecuencia).
Se introduce, entre ambos, un enunciado intermedio –la condición– que señala el nivel de dependencia de la consecuencia respecto al antecedente. En este caso el enunciado intermedio es el que introduce el principio de imputación que expresa la pena que se aplicará en caso de no cumplimiento. En Derecho existen teorías que expresan la justificación de la pena que el sistema de administración de justicia puede aplicar legalmente, garantizando así un marco legal para esta aplicación, en el cual las sanciones son expresadas a través de códigos escritos. Contrariamente las sanciones sociales que se utilizan en la vida social no cuentan con instrumentos escritos y el repertorio de procedimientos inhibitorios utilizados finalmente son aquellos convenidos y aceptados por los grupos sociales en un contexto dado.

**Tipos de argumentos utilizados en la vida cotidiana**

Basándonos en el hecho de que la estructuración lógica de los razonamientos prescriptivos no es diferente en el caso de las normas sociales y de las jurídicas, tomaremos como criterios para el análisis de la acción de sancionar en la vida cotidiana parámetros elaborados por las ciencias jurídicas, los que nos permitirán realizar un estudio de los argumentos utilizados por las madres profesionales (en adelante MP) para justificar la no aplicación de una sanción frente a una acción transgresora de su hijo.

Van Dijk (1984, 333) describe el acto de sancionar como una secuencia de acciones posibles de reducirse a, “x prohíbe A, y hace A, x castiga a y, donde el castigo está basado en violación de la prohibición establecida”.

Si bien la función social no se expresa verbalmente en enunciados, entendemos que la organización de sus significados se estructura en forma de representaciones verbales. Los enunciados implicados que representan la acción de sancionar son de tipo condicional, a saber: Si a entonces b. A por lo tanto b.

Donde a es la conducta contraria a la norma y b la sanción. Por ejemplo, si mi hijo le pega a su hermano, entonces no podrá mirar la TV (a entonces b). Pegó a su hermano (a). Por lo tanto no puede ver TV (b).

Ahora bien, nos interesa analizar las situaciones en que las MPs, aún sabiendo que deben sancionar a su hijo, introducen una serie de argumentos que finalizan por descalificar la prescripción y que por lo tanto las libera de la obligación de ‘castigar’. Estos argumentos tiene la finalidad de justificar su decisión.

Es interesante observar que estos argumentos son muchas veces los mismos que utiliza el Derecho, como por ejemplo: declarar inimputable al niño por x motivo o justificar la comisión de la desviación por circunstancias situacionales.

Finalmente es necesario tomar en cuenta que en la dinámica de la vida cotidiana las situaciones ocurren vertiginosamente, y el espacio para detenerse y reflexionar es breve. Como expresa una de las entrevistadas, “Mientras los voy amenazando [a sus hijos] los voy perdonando” (médica).
Argumentos en que se descalifica la intencionalidad del niño en la acción trasgresora, por no ser responsable de sus actos

“Mientras eran chiquitos no prestaba demasiada atención a cómo comían ya que me parece que todavía no eran suficientemente grandes para entender el porqué” (Psicóloga).

“Lucas es muy chico para ser responsable en la realización de sus tareas para el colegio. La verdad que no las hace. No me parece adecuado castigarlo para que hagas las tareas” (Abogada).

“Tomás todavía es chico, la hora de comida le resulta un plomo, y se porta tan mal que finalmente le preparo una bandeja en su cuarto viendo la tele. No sé si hago bien” (Abogada).

“Es tanto trabajo poner orden en la mesa, que pienso: ya van a crecer y listo, aguanto el desorden” (Médica).

“Si el chico hace las cosas que hace es responsabilidad mía no de él” (Psicóloga).

“Muchas veces no los castigo porque pienso que como no estoy durante el día, se acostumbran a hacer cosas que no deberían” (Asistente social).

Argumentos en que se mencionan aspectos personales de los hijos

“Cuando comprendí que mi hijo Pablo tenía problemas de conducta en la escuela porque tenía problemas de aprendizaje, dejé de castigarlo” (Abogada).

“A veces empiezo a enseñarles. Comé bien, cerrá la boca que sino (los amenazo con cualquier huevada), pero las veo tan cansadas que no les enseño más” (Psicóloga).

“Al chico le pasan tantas cosas por la cabeza que eso no lo corrijo” (Ingeniera).

Argumentos en que se mencionan aspectos de la situación familiar o externos

“Yo estoy separada hace unos años, pero durante los primeros meses de separación fui bastante contemplativa con los malos comportamientos de los chicos. Casi no los retaba. Me costó bastante retomar el orden” (Psicóloga).

“Desde que nació Camila, mi marido y yo tratamos de no castigar a Pachu, porque consideramos que es normal que quiera llamar la atención. Preferimos que este celoso ahora y no después” (Psicóloga).

Argumentos para cambiar la decisión de la sanción ya expresada

“Muchas veces pongo castigos, por ejemplo: no te voy a llevar a Mc Donald´s el sábado; cuando es sábado a la mañana tengo que inventar algo, como que bien te portaste hoy u otra cosa, para por supuesto llevarla a Mc Donald´s” (Profesora de Educación Física).

“Si me equivoco cuando los castigo trato de revertir la decisión, para dejar sin efecto el castigo” (Profesora de Danza).

“Por esta vez, y por que en realidad se portaron bien, les voy a hacer el 2 por 1” (Contadora Pública).
Los tres primeros tipos de argumentos son anteriores a la acción de sancionar, mientras el último ejemplo los argumentos utilizados son posteriores.

**Análisis**

Independientemente de los contenidos, nos interesa analizar las formalizaciones de los argumentos en juego, especialmente en la estructura causal que satisface al sujeto para la toma de decisión. En todos los argumentos se observa explícita o implícitamente el reconocimiento de la norma. Pero aún así se organiza un razonamiento que resulta 'lógico' para evitar su aplicación. En todos los casos, los argumentos tienden a mostrar condiciones suficientes para descalificar la necesidad de respetar la prescripción. Se podría formalizar de la siguiente manera: Si a entonces b, a pero no a, por lo tanto no b.

Los argumentos de las madres para evitar sancionar a sus hijos se introducen en la segunda premisa y consideramos que son proposiciones que niegan la norma ya que los argumentos funcionan como atenuantes o descalificadores.

**Ejemplo 1**

“Lucas es muy chico para ser responsable en la realización de sus tareas para el colegio. La verdad que no las hace. No me parece adecuado castigarlo para que hagas las tareas” (Abogada).

Enunciado prescriptivo: es obligatorio ser responsable con las tareas escolares. (a)

Sanción: no es necesario algún castigo (b)

Argumento atenuante: Pero Lucas no es responsable porque es muy chico para serlo, por lo tanto no es obligatorio para Lucas ser responsable en sus tareas escolares (a por lo tanto b).

**Ejemplo 2**

“Cuando comprendí que mi hijo Pablo tenía problemas de conducta en la escuela porque tenía problemas de aprendizaje, dejé de castigarlo” (Abogada).

Enunciado prescriptivo: Está prohibido portarse mal en la escuela (a)

Sanción: Algún castigo (b)

Argumento atenuante: Pablo se porta mal en la escuela, pero tiene problemas de aprendizaje, por lo tanto no está para Pablo prohibido portarse mal en la escuela (a por lo tanto b).

---

1 Van Dijk (1984, 134) expresa que existen atenuantes o constricciones en la aseveración del antecedente de una forma condicional: “las cosas pueden ser diferentes de cómo normalmente son ... puede haber excepciones, debido a circunstancias particulares inesperadas que contrastan con las expectativas normales acerca de cómo parecen los mundos. Tales relaciones se expresan por conectivos como: pero, si bien, aunque, con todo, no obstante, a pesar de, sin embargo, etc.”
Ejemplo 3

“Desde que nació Camila, mi marido y yo tratamos de no castigar a Pachu, por consideramos que es normal que quiera llamar la atención. Preferimos que este celoso ahora y no después” (Psicóloga).

Enunciado prescriptivo: Esta prohibido portarse mal en la casa. (a)

Sanción: Algún castigo (b)

Argumento atenuante: Pachu se comporta mal en casa pero está celoso quiere llamar la atención por que nació Camila. (a)

Ejemplo 4

“Muchas veces pongo castigos, por ejemplo: no te voy a llevar a Mc Donald´s el sábado; cuando es sábado a la mañana tengo que inventar algo, como que bien te portaste hoy u otra cosa, para por supuesto llevarla a Mc Donald´s” (Profesora de Educación Física).

Enunciado prescriptivo: prohibido portarse mal (a)

Sanción: no ir a MC. Donald´s (b)

Argumento atenuante: Lucía se portó muy bien por lo tanto puede ir a Mc. Donald´s (a por lo tanto b).

Ahora bien, suponemos que este razonamiento ofrece ‘garantías’ a las madres de que no están incurriendo en una contradicción. Esta forma argumental es utilizada de manera sistemática en la vida cotidiana, si bien en este apartado hemos solamente seleccionado algunas de las respuestas de las madres el 100% de las MPs han mencionado el uso de este tipo de argumentación.

Discusión

Las MP utilizan un conjunto de argumentos que operan para justificar y explicar las causas de la conducta desviada de su hijo. La noción de culpabilidad que se transmite no es unívoca sino que depende de una gran variedad de factores que condicionan el comportamiento. Los niños observan cotidianamente estas formas argumentales que operan como atenuantes para la efectiva aplicación de los procedimientos inhibitorios. Suponemos que más allá del contenido argumental de la justificación el modelo transmitido permite reconocer que si se crean explicaciones causales es posible atenuar el castigo o suspenderlo. Esto genera expectativas relativas al cumplimiento de las sanciones en la vida cotidiana que conforman en el niño una experiencia rutinaria constituida por un repertorio de concepciones respecto al cumplimiento de las normas.

La acción de atribuir culpa, está asociada, para el Derecho, a la adjudicación a un sujeto de la responsabilidad de una acción contraria a una norma. Se atribuye responsabilidad cuando la acción ha sido efectuada con conocimiento de sus consecuencias e intención de suscitarlas. En estas circunstancias el acto es atribuido a su autor, quien debe hacerse cargo de las consecuencias. La responsabilidad jurídica imputada a un sujeto, por lo
tanto, no es una característica intrínseca del sujeto, sino una responsabilidad funcional que establecemos entre ciertos actos suyos y la eventual acción del órgano sancionador: un sujeto es jurídicamente responsable sólo si puede ser sancionado por un órgano autorizado, ya sea porque es el autor material del acto ilícito o porque no ha prestado ayuda para que no se cometiera otro.

Para nuestros fines es importante resaltar con qué frecuencia se transmite la noción de que el niño no es responsable de sus acciones, independientemente de la justificación en que esto se funde y de que esta idea no responda adecuadamente a los requerimientos de la noción de responsabilidad empleada por el Derecho. De esta manera se ofrece al niño estrategias argumentales que garantizan la no responsabilidad de sus actos.

Para finalizar consideramos que la enseñanza del conocimiento normativo genera en el individuo concepciones o teorías acerca de las acciones permitidas, obligadas o prohibidas por determinada sociedad o grupo social. El conjunto de valores, las representaciones simbólicas internalizadas y las consideraciones subjetivas del contexto acerca del conocimiento prescriptivo conformarán así un modelo de comprensión normativa originado en el aprendizaje social. La experiencia con las normas producida durante la socialización primaria conforma una experiencia que, registrada en el dominio correspondiente, invariablemente incidirá en la percepción adulta de situaciones análogas, haciendo familiares conductas que muy posiblemente dificulten una adaptación adecuada al sistema normativo y la vida comunitaria.

El tema tratado en esta investigación toca aspectos que hacen a algunas de las dificultades de nuestra sociedad para alcanzar un funcionamiento acorde a derecho. Se suele poner el acento, no sin razón, en los aspectos superestructurales de la cuestión. Sin embargo, no debemos olvidar que la cultura expresada por las instituciones y los funcionarios no es independiente de las condiciones en que se ha constituido ni es ajena a valores y procedimientos aceptados por el conjunto de la comunidad. En este sentido, la reflexión en un nivel micro acerca de los problemas de legitimidad de los sistemas normativos, creemos que puede aportar una visión complementaria de las grandes lecturas institucionales, y quizás alguna de las claves para la transformación de la mentalidad, que en cierto modo, debe pasar siempre por instancias individuales. Por otra parte, la oscilación de la sociedad Argentina entre modelos autoritarios o extremadamente permissivos, hace necesario hallar un punto de balance en la ponderación de las normas inserta en los problemas y situaciones reales, en el que una razonabilidad comprometida con el análisis cuidadoso de las circunstancias permita hallar soluciones adecuadas para regular la relación entre las expectativas individuales y la vida democrática.

**Referencias Bibliográficas**


Democratic Practices and Transitional Spaces in a Public Art Project

Astrid von Kotze
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Introduction

Two images animate this paper: The first, a paper plate with a sign saying “ukudla” (food) and the silhouette of a hand shadowed by the sun, drawing closer and closer. A bunch of boys excitedly check the progress of the drama on the camera and then the computer: they are learning about animation and telling a story about what is most important in their lives- procuring food. The second, a group of people perched on make-shift seating under a tree in the late afternoon watch a movie. In it, a young boy holds up a hand-written message: “I wish...” and bit by bit his wish is revealed: “...I could disappear”. Letter by letter, the word “disappear” vanishes, and then the boy himself. Of course, ironically, as a child living and surviving in the streets and as a poor person who is de facto excluded from the rights enshrined in the South African constitution., the boy had already disappeared: from his home, from official records, from the minds and hearts of citizens in the city. He is one of the participants and performers in animated films that are part of the project located at the “drop-in centre” for street children in Durban, South Africa. Now he has reappeared as a performer telling stories about his and his friends’ lives, and there he is in person, excitedly asking other children in the audience whether they saw him!

The animation project, run by the “Moving hands” collective, was a small part of a much bigger international public arts project called “Cascoland Durban 2008” launched in early 2008. Art has often been hailed–and used–as a way of getting different groups of people and communities together to produce meaningful insights, foster peace and create safer and more convivial neighbourhoods (Clover 2006). The interventions of artists, performers, musicians may not always target issues of inequality and democratic

---

1 I would like to thank the participants in the seminar on ‘Diversity and plurality in the urban context, Interdisciplinary study of democratic practices’, supported by the Research Foundation Flanders for having stimulated some of this thinking and writing.

2 Cascoland Durban. 2008 www.cascoland.com
Democratic Practices and Transitional Spaces in a Public Art Project

von Kotze

citizenship. However, when they create transitional spaces—in the sense of both temporary physical spaces and mental spaces beyond the familiar everyday landscapes of thinking–art, architecture, design and engineering projects may also function as collective practices that draw “makers” and members of the public together in ways that further democratic possibilities.

Unlike most private/gallery art the product and/or process of a public art project presupposes an audience. It can only come to life with other people participating in the event. In this case, addressing the public in their potential role as co-creators means cutting through the notion that the design of common spaces should be left to the authority of specialists and professionals rather than the people who inhabit those spaces. (Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Miles 1998) This intention was clearly articulated in the mission statement of “Cascoland”. The project considered public art “an important tool in activating and developing public space”:

In the kind of Public Art Cascoland promotes, inter-disciplinary artists engage themselves in communities to collaborate with audiences and members of the communities in shaping their public space through dialogue and participation. The intention is to motivate and mobilize audiences to become an active participant in the process initiated by the artists and in which the eventual artwork is not as much a physical object but a change in perception of public space with the audience. (Cascoland Mission statement)

The project took place at five different sites within and around the central business district of Durban, a city of some four million inhabitants on the Indian Ocean coast of South Africa. This paper will focus particularly on one of the five sites of “Cascoland 2008”: the drop-in centre for street children. This is a transitional space in many senses: located at the entrance to the Durban harbour, the space is a strip of grass and trees between a railway line and a busy multi-lane road traversed by people on their way to somewhere else. As a drop-in centre rather than shelter, the space is not meant to be inhabited so much as visited. It is regarded as a facility between the street and home and city officials as much as social workers see it as an impermanent transit station for children. The children who are between eight and eighteen years old, use the drop-in centre are somewhere between childhood and adulthood, abandonment and hope, alternating between playing, working and getting lost in glue-fumes. They are constantly on the move, not least because they are running away from hostile attitudes and acts of violence from adults and people in positions of authority. As children living in the streets they are largely regarded as a nuisance and the dominant response to their presence are attempts to remove them. They rarely have a say over anything pertaining to their lives and are not invited to participate in the planning of their futures.

Here, I look at the ways in which artists’ interventions could be described as “democratic practices”. This means asking to what degree “activations” also became confrontations with both the other and the self, that is, how aesthetic experiences defined in the broadest sense as performance art, contributed to challenging unquestioned acceptance of people perceived as “other”. In this project, such confrontations involved in the main local and visiting artists, street children and design students from the Vega School. Finally, I will ask what would need to be in place for a public art project like this to advance
democracy for the benefit of especially groups of people who are socially, economically and politically excluded on the basis of being too poor.

The data drawn on are a detailed journal of observations kept for the duration of the seven-week project, visuals records, documents produced by “Cascoland” members, interviews with artists and conversations with members of the public, and student participants’ reflective writing posted as ‘blogs’ on the Cascoland website for the duration of the festival. The limitation of the study is my inadequate knowledge of isiZulu; however, a previous in-depth study of the livelihoods of different groups of street children and involving outreach workers had allowed some insight into their lives (Trent and von Kotze 2008).

“Cascoland” at the Drop-in Centre

The drop-in centre consists of three caravans (as I noted in my journal [25.2.08] “impermanent mobile structures of the stuff that conjures up road-worker lodgings, holidays away from home, homeless people on the move”) manoeuvred into a triangular arrangement around a central space with a single access point, at the harbour entrance side of the embankment. There is a flying roof structure made of synthetic material (impermanent, again) that contains the set-up visually and provides some shade and shelter. The ground is sandy with patchy grass and littered with rubbish, and with the half-broken wire-mesh fence surrounding some of the centre the impression is one of dereliction. The centre is run by an NGO, supported by outreach workers employed by the city council. Given the experience of frequent raids by police and beatings and harassment associated with those (Trent and von Kotze 2008) the space is used by only a minority of Durban’s approximately 3000 street children.

Here, the art project was focused on process and participation, on building relations of trust and experiencing a re-distribution of power in terms of whose voice was heard. The artists spent six weeks interacting with the children and talking to members of the NGO: there was a continuous “exchange of knowledge” (Gitte interview 27.2.08) as the artists learnt about the children’s lives and concerns, and the children got to understand the intention of the project “to change perceptions”. Alongside ongoing dialogue they worked together on three major projects: the design and installation of site-specific “furniture”, animations and films, and a talent show.

One of the visiting artists, Gitte, had been struck by the restlessness of the children and the fact that save for one bench there was no place to sit, rest, talk. They decided on “small places where you can sit and rest”, seats and benches for “a little stop in the shade” (Gitte interview 27.2.08), tables, and hammock-like swings suspended from branches in the trees. To increase the visibility of the children they also installed bright red post-boxes to serve as lockers as the lack of storage facilities for cash, identity documents and odd bits of belongings had been identified by the children as an urgent need (Trent and von Kotze 2008). James (blog 13.3.08) described the intention as follows:

The basic idea is that these kids don’t exist in a way. They have no home, most have no ID, no family and no space to call their own. The post boxes are going to be numbered and labelled with the kids’ names as a sign of ownership. It will be their
address to keep their belongings in. They are being given a sense of belonging in the world which they never had before. I hope that this sense of identity that they are being given propels them further than they expected to go in their lives.

Since soccer was the favourite game, another artist, Jair, constructed multi-purpose mobile goalposts that were light enough to be moved and used alternatively as stands for an audience. Gitte hoped their interventions would

stay for the kids as a very practical functional thing but also as a statement for the kids, that they do exist, and that they should get much more rooted and that they are visible in society (interview 27.2.08).

The “Moving Hands” animation project shelved some of the ideas they had come with when they realised that the children were not interested and that, as John (interview 29.2.08) said, “some children really have learning disabilities [mainly due to the continued abuse of cobbler’s glue] and hence lacked the capacity to concentrate for longer periods”. However, as John described,

when the computers and cameras came out they got very excited! So we had to learn to think differently and realised the importance of real products that allowed the kids as producers to say ‘I did that!’ The increase in confidence and self-image was important (interview 29.2.08).

When the films were shown to the audience of assembled street-children and members of the public there was great excitement both about seeing themselves on screen as performers and about their roles as creators and producers.

Story-telling and oral performances are very much part of African cultures, and some of the children came up with the plan to make and perform a play based on their lives. During the festival “activation” phase of “Cascoland 2008” when local artists and members of participating communities were invited to showcase their talents the play was a vehicle for telling the public something about what it was like to be a street child. After the performance of the play, many of the children wanted to show off their skills, and so artists and children organised a talent show for one of the festival evenings. It was a great success, as Nonthando (blog 14.3.08) described: “an evening which reminded you of the beauty in the in-between that showed off the talent in the cracks.” Rich (blog 13.3.08), somewhat surprised, commented

There was a talent show hosted by the street kids and it was actually very vibrant and full of talent. (…) Their aim was to show what street kids actually are and how they have been mistreated and how they have something to offer. It was very eye-opening. It was brilliant in fact. There was singing, rapping, poetry, dancing, gumboot dancing and plenty of people, cameras and video cameras.

Aesthetic Interventions as Democratic Practice?

In what way did these activities represent “democratic practice”, and what lessons can we learn about the possibilities of public art to initiate further deepening democratisation? In order to clarify what is meant by “democratic practice” I draw on recent writings concerned with “Democratic practices as learning opportunities” (van der Veen, et al. 2007), “Learning for democracy” (Learning for Democracy Group 2008; Martin
Democratic Practices and Transitional Spaces in a Public Art Project

von Kotze

2008), and “the democratic subject” (Biesta 2005, 2006). In its broadest sense, van der Veen, et al. (2007) describe democratic practice as participation in the institutions and practices of a democracy. Implied here is an embeddedness in “grassroots” and horizontal decision-making—also constituent elements of the 10 proposals put forward by Scottish colleagues: “Democracy lives through ordinary people’s actions. (...) Practitioners should be in everyday contact with people on their own ground and on their own terms”. Hence, “activating democracy is a process of creating spaces in which different interests are expressed and voices heard” (Learning for Democracy Group 2008). Biesta (2006, 139) defines democracy and democratic practice in terms of plurality and argues that acting democratically can only happen with and in relation to others:

To act, that is, to be a democratic person in a world of plurality and difference, is (therefore) as much about doing and saying and bringing oneself into the world, as it is about listening and waiting, creating spaces for others to begin, and thus creating opportunities for others to be a subject.

Drawing on Arendt’s (1958) definition of “action” Biesta (2005, 64) described the moment when subjects emerge as a “coming into presence” and cautioned that for this the presence of “otherness and difference” is important: “we can only come into presence, can only show who we are and where we stand in relation to and, most importantly, in response to what and who is other and different”. He proposed that educators have a role to play in bringing about the emergence of subjects who act in the world and are acted upon:

...one of the key educational responsibilities is that of providing opportunities for individuals to come into the world. What might it mean to provide such opportunities? It requires first and foremost the creation of situations in which learners are able and are allowed to respond (Biesta 2006, 28).

While the notion of “coming into presence” suggests an emergence, practice could also be defined more in terms of deliberative agency. Vandenabeele (2007, 45) argues that to be a citizen today “the focus is on the participation process and learning citizenship is in this respect not an attribute of individuals but of deliberative practices”. An example of such deliberate practices are “diagnosis, deliberation, decision-making, and follow-up” described by Lerner and Schugurensky (2007, 89) in relation to collective participatory budgeting.

Did the “Cascoland” drop-in centre projects present evidence of grassroots orientation and the recognition of others “coming into presence” as subjects? Were there processes of dialogue and decision-making that can be attributed to deliberative actions by the artists?

In the beginning, one artist, Ntando, expressed frustration about the children’s sense of passive expectation. She then conceded that “the kids” were active but “not given a chance to generate ideas and participate” in plans and activities and should therefore not be blamed for their passive stance (Ntando interview 27.2.08). Children of the street live excluded from society and democracy. Despite children’s rights being enshrined in the constitution they have no say over what is to happen to them and often they escape abuse and exploitation at home just to find themselves exploited and oppressed again in the street, by other children, members of the public and figures of authority such as the police. Adults in general and social service providers in particular claim they know what is in
children’s best interests and deny them a voice and participation in planning and decisions. Here, the artists saw their role as breaking that culture of silence, encouraging children to become an active part in decision-making and develop a sense of ownership of the outcomes. Through this process the artists wanted to confront both the NGO, the students and the public to demonstrate the possibilities that arise from children’s participation.

In the process of revealing street children as creative agents the artists would expose prejudices and entrenched attitudes. Gitte spoke of “political structures that colour the urban landscape of how we are supposed to deal with each other”, and how she tried to “establish some kind of dialogue between people and my objects that I was putting into public space”. Through “slight twists” that create moments of alienation from the familiar she wanted to get people “to reconsider” (Gitte interview 27.2.08), that is, reflect on what had been accepted uncritically before, and potentially arrive at a new insight or decision. Another artist, Rike, described their work as “curating the space”,

making a holistic picture of the space between the staff needs, the children’s needs, and then trying to address them on a both long and short-term basis because obviously, what we’re doing there is not only for the festival (Rike interview 28.2.08).

Arendt (1958, 179) has made the distinction between how people perceive others on the basis of their physical appearance as opposed to the identity revealed through practices and actions:

In acting and speaking, men (sic) show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of their body and sound of the voice.

As socially excluded and poor, street children are a prime illustration of the tension between physical identity and identity established through practice and action, and how pre-judgement on the basis of looks may preclude the revelation of much more complex identity.

Through the ongoing dialogue, creative activities and daily performances in Cascoland, the children found the opportunity to articulate and reveal who they are beyond outer appearances. By exposing both the reality of their living conditions and lives from their point of view, the children’s perspectives worked to denounce the dehumanising public attitude and actions that regard them as “non-beings”. One of the girls, Andile, performed a poem in which she commented on her “non-existence”. One of the girls, Andile, performed a poem in which she commented on her “non-existence”. Addressing a “you” that passes her in the street where she sleeps and tosses her left-over food, she asked:

Where do I come from?

It hurts me it really does / I am a human being as you are / we may not look the same but we are all human (...) You just spat on me / You say that I’m a prostitute / My brother that I live with / You say he is a criminal / You make me think that / I am less of a human being / If you sit down with me / and give love, listen to me / you will know / where do I come from. (Blog 29.2.08)
Stridently, Andile reminded the audience of how each one of them was implicated in denying street children their humanity by simple exclusion. Members of the audience heard what was said—and expressed surprise. For instance, upon learning that the rugged dirty appearance of begging children is part of their performance one student wrote:

> When asking the many children at the Drop off Centre (sic), they all said the same thing, they dress up, they have their clothes that they wear when they beg, and then they have the clothes that they wear when they are living their lives, and these two separate identities are very different. (James blog 13.3.08)

Others commented somewhat guiltily how they had previously dismissed street children as ‘lesser’ beings:

> My eyes where opened to many aspects of their everyday lives, while in the past I had just assumed a stereotyped image of a street person, as someone who is dirty, sleeps in the gutter, sniffs glue, and a criminal (Rich blog 13.3.08).

> Not to sound like a typical South African, but when one child grabbed Nick’s camera, we were just about ready to drop our handbags and run after him, you know, get a bit of action on camera. Our stereotypical mentality failed us once again. The little boy just started taking photos of his friends and everything in sight, good pictures mind you (Zinhle blog 28.2.08).

Engaging with the children in their space was a disturbing and then transformative experience for many audience-participants as they were confronted with their own prejudices and realized they had a lot to learn from the children about living without the trappings of middle-class lifestyles. The children emerged as subjects of their stories and not just as deviant objects who had to be assimilated into dominant culture. The performance spaces had opened possibilities for street children to ‘come into presence’ and ‘bring themselves into the world’. Hence, Luke conceded, “I’ve come across some extremely interesting people on my visits...” (blog 28.2.08). Similarly, Zinhle came to acknowledge “I’m still amazed at the fact that these kids have close to nothing but still manage to live life to the fullest, even more than us (the better-off individuals)” (blog 28.2.08). And Sam wrote: “Cascoland changed my perception of people, and in particular my perception of street children, beggars, and hobos, as they are commonly known. (blog 13.3.08). In the end, the confrontation with their previously held uncritical views of children through the actions of those ‘others’ left them feeling humbled:

> I think one of the fundamental lessons I'm learning from the Cascoland project is humility. (...) It's seeing the hope that's burning in their eyes and the desire to succeed that brings about the humility, with the world in front of them these kids are looking at life as opportunity not a burden, and just waiting for the chance to become something (Luke blog 28.2.08).

### Public Art to Advance Democracy?

People across class, race and gender meet all the time in public places and previously unfamiliar spaces, as parents, athletes, consumers, patients. Yet, mere exposure to “other” spaces and people does not automatically bring about insight and change. Individuals do not necessarily come to question their own assumptions and beliefs just by listening to others’ ideas and concerns. Essential to a change in perception was that the art project had
turned the drop-in centre into a “transitional space”, understood as “an environment of interrelation holds the potential to become transitional space when it provides opportunities for us to both act in the world and be acted upon” (Ellsworth 2005, 32).

The drop-in centre site provided the opportunity for members of the public to enter what is perceived as a crime and disease-ridden, dangerous “no-go zone” and transform it into a “commons”. The project addressed all individuals present as agents and co-creators of the space, rather than consumers. In the process, the public, artists and children “acted upon” each other: audience and artists discovered that the children had dreams and hopes beyond their present living conditions, and the children began to experience adults not just as callous yet instrumental targets for begging but as people with compassion who could be persuaded to respect and include them.

Yet, while there was evidence of transformation in “Cascoland” we need to examine the nature of such “new beginnings”. Biesta (2007, 13) pointed out, “whether our beginnings do indeed become action, crucially depends on how others respond to them”. I would argue that the “new beginnings”, here, fell short of becoming action because the material and structural causes of social injustice were not addressed or altered: at the end of the project the children returned to sleeping under bushes on the roadside hoping for food hand-outs, and the public went back to the comfort of their middle-class homes. If democracy is “the situation in which everyone has the opportunity to be a subject, in which everyone has the opportunity to act and, through their actions, bring their beginnings and initiatives into the world of difference and plurality” (Biesta 2007, 14), clearly, this democracy has only begun for a few lucky ones—and the children are not amongst those.

What emerged during the “activation” stage of the project was the construction of a common story where each part impacts on and implicates the other: the poverty of the children must be seen in relation to the prosperity of privileged students and visiting members of the public. Recognising the misery of the children’s lives and their resilience surfaced compassion in the audience—yet, while the existence of street children and drop-in centre spaces is a public issue the project merely alleviated some of the “private troubles” of individual children and made the space look a little better, feel a little safer.

**Conclusion**

What are the challenges of a public art project like “Cascoland” if it seeks to contribute more substantially and sustainably to advancing democracy? Here, I want to suggest three challenges. Firstly, public art is about politics, and therefore, for a small organisation such as “Cascoland” street-children project, it is important to build alliances with people and institutions in positions of decision-making. While it is crucial to have voices from “the ground” speaking up, people in positions of power must be there to listen, so that meaningful dialogue and effective action can ensue. Six months after the “Cascoland” project ended, the personal postboxes have still not been handed over to the control of the children and police continue to break their locks with impunity. The municipality has still not replaced the broken fence, despite promises to do so. No one appears to hold the city accountable.
Secondly, alliances require hearing and understanding the others’ points of view, concerns and questions\(^3\) and this demands a commitment to strong participation as a cornerstone of democracy. Arnstein’s (1969) distinction between participation as manipulation, therapy, placation and consultation on the one hand, and participation as citizen power on the other, is useful here. Participation must have the muscle assured through “the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future” (ibid, 216), or else there will not be follow-through. Is anyone encouraging the children to speak up and name what they want? Until social service providers are ready to include children in proposing, planning and executing actions, top-down attitudes produce passivity rather than the assumption of agency. While the NGOs and volunteers working at the drop-in centre may have the children’s interests at heart, they continue to enact the hegemony that says: if one were to allow children to participate in decision-making about their lives, this would place them beyond the guardianship and protection of adults and hence reduce adults’ power as authorities. The extraordinary trust placed in (well-meaning) civil servants and childhood and youth specialists as moral experts whose power should take precedence over children’s rights has not advanced their cause. Democratic practice must include children.

Thirdly, public art must inspire people about the possibilities of vibrant, beautiful and safe public spaces for all citizens. Creative relationships and trust are “grown” and need to be nurtured and renewed with each action and collective imagination is an ongoing process of learning with and from each other and dreaming towards what could be. As long as some groups of people have no space to call their own while others retreat into private spaces, collective imaginings have little chance.

“Emerging beginnings” can only happen if all participants are subjects acting within the structures and material conditions of context, which still means the context of unequal power in Durban. As long as we deny others their humanity and dignified life we also refuse ourselves the possibility of being human and creating humane public spaces. Meanwhile, making a commitment to changing the world so that the causes of social injustice are eradicated demands deliberate directive action from public artists as much as educators. Practice cannot be politically neutral and democratic practice cannot simply be a laissez-faire process of facilitating emergence. Instead, it requires engagement in the sense defined by Sartre: engagement as an ethical and political virtue and the acceptance of moral responsibility for the other and all our commons. This means the challenge for public artists as much as educators remains how to take sides without controlling; how to steer and direct without dominating.

References


---

\(^3\) Importantly, we need to move beyond the denialism about street children: recognise their existence as more than temporary, and acknowledge the fact that many are orphans and have no families with whom they can be reunited and that the increasing number of children from poor destitute households outstrips the supply of possible homes, services and care.


606
From Objects to Subjects to Participants: Women and Gendered Governance in Kerala’s Participatory Democracy

Manjula Bharathi
Tata Institute of Social Sciences

Introduction

Participatory democracy offers interesting possibilities for negotiated spaces and dialogue in development discourses and practices. This is particularly clear in countries confronted with contested boundaries and multiple voices. In the post-World War II period, the logic of social engineering and its univocal metanarrative of “development” excluded the wisdom of many knowledge traditions. The spread of empirical science and professionalism to socio-cultural spaces privileged positivistic forms of knowledge, favouring hierarchical notions of expertise and power. This exclusionary politics of power denied common people the right to have their lived experiences be involved in development and planning. History needs to be contested in the context of development, to unravel the absence of local narratives in the process.

This continuous relegation of the everyday life of the common people to the periphery caused various forms of resistance. Local mobilisations pioneered initiatives towards an alternative, participative democratic structure. Local struggles have led to subaltern voices being heard, which retraced and redefined the place of oral narrative histories of marginalized people, and initiated the process of democratisation of development.

It is in this context that the ninth plan of Kerala- the People’s Plan -the subject of study of this paper, launched by the Government of Kerala on 17th August, 1996 assumes relevance and significance. Involving 31 million people, the Kerala People’s Plan for...
Decentralized Planning is probably the largest experiment in local democracy and local empowerment being carried out in the world today (Isacc 2001).

Realising the necessity of decentralised planning as a structural pre-requisite for empowering people through their participation and mobilisation of resources, the Kerala Government resolved to allocate 35-40% of the State plan fund for programmes to be formulated and implemented by elected local bodies. A non-partisan campaign of people-the Peoples’ Planning Campaign (PPC) was envisaged to successfully complete the task of plan formulation and execution within the stipulated time frame of the IX five year plan.

PPC, which is based on decentralisation and restructuring of local self governance, was a major departure from the earlier models of planning in its procedures, financial affairs and institutional set-up. Kerala is known to development specialists for the "Kerala Model" for its high levels of literacy, life expectancy, political participation, social justice, and low levels of infant mortality, caste discrimination, and religious violence. The Kerala Model results from decades of organized struggle and in part from an awareness by radical activists that the Kerala Model can only become self-sustaining with new initiatives from the grassroots. The People’s Plan constitutes an extension of the Kerala Model into the areas of local governance, environmental protection, gender equality, and sustainable development.

The PPC was organised in a phased manner with well-defined objectives for each phase. Each of the six phases had a nodal event, and involved a separate round of training at the state, district and local levels. A High Level Guidance Council was formed comprising eminent personalities in the State. Apart from representatives of all political parties and major mass organisations, the Council included the vice-chancellors of universities, heads of centres of excellence and cultural leaders.

The Grama Sabhas -- Identifying Local Needs

The Constitution of India defines grama sabha as a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls at the village level. It highlights positive aspects of citizens’ participation, calling for more innovative efforts and strategies in reconnecting the sabha (people) to the grama (villages) to strengthen grass roots democracy. The grama sabha is an institution of direct democracy rather than of representative democracy (Aziz 1996).

The PPC began with grama sabha in all 14,147 wards of Kerala. In the initial phase between August and December 1996, nearly 3 million people met with their neighbours, listed their grievances, and elected topic groups to set the stage for the local planning process.

Panchayat Development Reports and Seminars

After the identification of the felt needs in the grama sabha, the next phase in the planning process was to make an objective assessment of the natural and human resources of the locality. A series of participatory studies were undertaken in every grama panchayat/municipality and their outcome resulted in a Development Report. In the second phase, every one of Kerala’s 990 villages and 62 urban units produced a report, running from 50 to 200 pages. These reports cover local history and included basic statistics collected from
scattered government offices into a fairly coherent picture of the local community and its resources. Resource mapping and transect walks provide information on local ecological zones for future planning use. Development Seminars were organised in each Panchayat/municipality to discuss the Development Reports. Main objectives of the second phase included: generation of an extensive local data base; a comprehensive survey of all development sectors for all panchayats and municipalities; list of plausible solutions to the development problems; and formation of task force to prepare development projects for each development sector.

**Task Force**

Task force, the third Phase was formed to projectise the recommendations and suggestions that emerged from the development seminars. Twelve task forces were constituted in each local body to cover the development sectors like agriculture, industry, health, education, etc.. The projects in different development sectors were broadly classified into three: projects in material production sectors; in infrastructural sectors; and in service and welfare sectors. Separate set of guidelines for the preparation of Special Component Plan (SCP) Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) and Women Component Plan (WCP) were also given. The task force prepared around one-lakh projects for consideration of the panchayats.

**Formulation of Grass Root Level Plans**

This is actual formulation of panchayat plan consisting of eight chapters on introduction, development strategy, pattern of finance, projects by sector, integrated programmes, programmes for SC/ST, programmes for women’s development, and monitoring system and 4 annexes on statistical statements, project texts, selected documents related to the People’s Campaign, and suggestions for the plans of the higher tiers (Block and Zilla or District). Plan formulation is such that it wouldn’t be confined to scheme proposals directly funded by the State government. Project prepared by the task forces were prioritized and incorporated into the five-year plans of the panchayats by the elected bodies. While 40-50% of the plan allocation was to be invested in the productive sector and 30-40% in the social sectors, 10-30% of the plan allocation was given to the infrastructure sector. Annual plan of the State for the year 1997-98 was 28,550 million rupees. Of this, Rs. 10, 254 million was earmarked for the local self-government institutions (Isaac 2000).

**Annual Plan of Higher Tiers**

This phase consists of integration of local plans at the block and district levels. Block panchayats were to be built up primarily by integrating the plans of grama panchayats. Project integration encompassed three major dimensions: the integration of projects across sectors; the integration of projects across local bodies or tiers; and the integration of the schemes of the central and State Governments implemented through the local bodies in the local plan (Isaac 2001).

**Plan Appraisal**

A pilot review of the projects prepared by the local bodies revealed that a significant portion of them had to be modified to ensure their technical soundness and viability before they were approved for implementation. Hence, a new phase- the sixth phase- was added
for the technical and financial appraisal of the projects and plans. More than one-lakh projects had to be evaluated to rectify the technical and financial weaknesses of the project proposals. Consequently, the concept of Voluntary Technical Corps (VTC) was evolved. Retired technical experts and professionals were encouraged to enroll themselves as volunteers to appraise the projects and plans. The experts were required to spend at least a day a week to give technical assistance to the panchayats. Expert Committees were formed at the block (BLEC), municipal (MLEC) and corporation (CLEC) levels. The expert committees had no roles to change the priorities set by the local bodies.

It is in a changed socio-economic scenario, where the development theorists and practitioners call for grass root participation in achieving development, Kerala’s new experiment – People’s Planning Campaign for decentralised planning - the first of its kind in the world, has its specific research relevance and significance. This paper provides a critical analysis of the gendering process of the People’s Plan. The Paper has two parts. Part one tries to situate Peoples’ Plan in the context of democratic decentralisation. Part two tries to understand the development approaches and interventions in various stages of the accomplished Women Component Plan (WCP) of the People’s Plan.

**Peoples’ Plan and Participative Democracy**

Peoples’ Plan (PP), with its ideological motto, “Power to People,” can be critically analyzed regarding the relation that co-existed between power, the People's Plan and participative democracy. There are at least three theoretical positions on power as an invisible form of domination: a) power in the Gramscian hegemony, which involves the colonisation of popular consciousness, b) the Focaultdian notion of power as crucial to the construction of reality, knowledge and meanings of truth, c) Freirian philosophy of praxis and conscientisation.

The participative perspective of planning approaches the world we experience as reality. This reality is subjective-objective and made up of relationships which we co-author. The participative approach to planning stands in contrast to the positivist dominant paradigm of development with its mechanical metaphors, which underlies the modern worldview, (Heron, and Reason 1997). Thus, an epistemology of participatory planning is a way of seeing and a form of knowing that employs historical knowledge, reflexive reasoning and dialectic awareness to engage with the people. PP in Kerala, a departure from the earlier planning models in the State, needed conscientisation of the people to ensure their participation in all phases of participatory planning.

Training modules, environment creation and review mechanisms were the three main components of the PPC. Environment creation worked toward decentralised planning activities at multiple levels (State, District, Block and Panchayat/ Municipal) to apply various development strategies, through simultaneous communication. Review mechanisms created multi-dimensional information dissemination processes, enabling the PPC to inform a new development culture unknown in the process of planning previously. But, it was the training component that made the most interesting case for deeper analysis of the operation of power.
1.1 Redefining the Training

Training was an important component in the Peoples’ Planning Campaign. Participation in the first stage of the PPC followed vertical and top-down training method as in the earlier development plans. This was because:

- The People's Plan involved devolution of 35-40% of the State plan fund to the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) to carry out the development objectives in a given period. The mammoth nature and massive scale of activities of PPC demanded a cascading form of training modules;
- Top-down training had to be given to organise and mobilise the planning activities in different stages of the PPC;
- Preparation of the local level plan involved many technical details; and
- More than 75% of the elected representatives at the local tiers were holding office for the first time
- A consortium of resource persons, Key Resource Persons (KRP at the state level), District Resource Persons (DRP at the district level) and Local Resource Persons (LRP at the panchayat level) were engaged with training at different levels.

This first stage, with vertical one-way top-down communication in the training modules, lasted only for a short period. Once the elected representatives who received the training to implement the activities of the planning process were confronted with people's lived realities, they initiated a bottom-up dialogic process. This reversal of the communication process initiated the second stage of the PPC.

Besides the two modes of vertical communication, the second stage also saw the emergence of a series of horizontal and vertical communication and interplay in multiple layers between and among elected representatives, local people, planners and bureaucrats. This created a new development culture, through communication and interaction in a participative frame of reference. The training programme, in a sense, reversed the communication process from horizontal to vertical, but in a very positive way. Some of the gram panchayats, like Kanjikuzhy (peoples' vegetable cultivation programme), Kunnothuparambhu (water conservation programme), Thaanalur (health programme), Olavanna (drinking water programme), Thrikunnnapuzha (sanitation programme), Ulloor (Self-Help Groups programme), gained expertise in the above to help residents co-relate their needs with the locally available natural and human resources. Respecting resident expertise in the planning process, followed by effective implementation of the projects with people made these panchayats stand out among other panchayats. This newly gained status, based on experiential knowledge and technical know-how, interested other panchayats and bureaucrats. Though vertical and top-down in nature, the communication process proved to be a landmark in the whole process of the PPC, the very aim of which was to empower the people. Freire notion of critical reflection as a vital element in the making of an alternative participatory development is very much in play here. Series of trainings enabled the subjects to get involved in a dialogic encounter to unveil reality for themselves. Here the positionality of people started shifting from being objects to participants, also illustrating the organic nature of Peoples Plan. Equally important is the gradual blurring of
distinctions as suggested by Friere, here between the power positions held by the trainers and trainees.

Unlike familiar classroom trainings, which seldom contemplate about the practicality of the lessons, the training modules of the PPC were designed to precede the actual infield experience of the different phases of the PPC. The trainees, enriched by theoretical knowledge and practical experience, confronted the trainers at the next session with newly gained awareness and feedback, which helped the planners to remould the Campaign process. Thus, the multi-faceted interplay of different contexts of two-way vertical and horizontal participation in the different phases of the training helped to concretise the objectives of the Peoples Plan. Also, this started an intense process where the exogenous and endogenous reasons for the development problems of the panchayat were analysed and prioritised based on the development experiences of the representatives from the local tiers of administration.

A specific development context of participative communication in the grama sabha in the PPC exemplify the decentralised and participative nature of communication in the PPC. One of the first achievements of the PPC was having discussions in small groups in the grama sabha. Grama sabha witnessed serious arguments, and even confrontations about which immediate local development problems to be addressed in the PPC. Dialogues in grama sabha were initiated by resource persons, who were trained at various levels, to facilitate discussions. Discussion tools, such as flip charts, posters, slides and video, were used to help people visualise, reflect and act on their own reality, thus practicing the Frerian philosophy of action based on reflection.

1.2 Democratising the knowledge of planning

Power of the knowledge society is derived not simply from technological advances, but also from the growth of new elites who embody and institutionalise them (Hall 1989). Within that economic structure, the production of knowledge has become a specialised profession and only those trained in that profession can legitimately produce it. Knowledge becomes the product to be owned, and the expert, the specialist of knowledge, becomes the power (Friedmann 1992). The truth-claim and the procedures for gaining access to that truth have historically privileged the pronouncements of trained experts over the discourses of ordinary people (Foucault 1980). Today, this ideology manifests itself in the deference of people to the expert, and ultimately the subordination of their own experiences and personal meanings to expertise. As a result, decisions affecting ordinary people are attributed to expert knowledge, denying the rationality of individual citizens and their life experiences. Understanding human nature and the problems of living have become the purview of scientists, rendering people dependent on experts to explain and oversee their life experiences. Hence, the specialists dominate any debate concerning issues of public interest because ordinary people are unable to enter the scientised debate, as they lack the technical terminology and specialised language of argumentation. Unequal relations of knowledge perpetuate class domination in the modern information society.

The power relations here are ‘both different from and more complicated, dense and pervasive than a set of laws or a state apparatus’ (Foucault 1979, 158). In thinking of mechanisms of power, Foucault was thinking rather of ‘its capillary form of existence, the
point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning process and everyday lives. The eighteenth century invented, so to speak, a synaptic regime of power, a regime of its exercise within the social body, rather than from above it’ (Foucault 1979, 39). PPC through these trainings and its subsequent People’s Plan was trying to deconstruct this hegemony of power and its complexities engrained in the conditioned psyche of the people and also in the system.

Inequalities exist in access to information, production and definition of legitimate knowledge and in the domination of expertise over common knowledge in decision-making. Underlying all these elements of the power of expertise is the expert’s lack of any accountability to the ordinary people affected by her knowledge. A knowledge system that subordinates knowledge of ordinary people also subordinates common people. The imposed ignorance of people about the working of the system gave space to the common person to have only vertical communication with the system, which always occupied the pedestal of the omnipotent and omniscient source.

The PPC, in this context, made commendable achievements. Through the training, the PPC equipped ordinary people to speak to technocrats and bureaucrats in their language, challenging the power these professionals had enjoyed. Series of training programmes on the nuances of planning, technicalities of project preparation, complexities in the procedures, bureaucratic bottlenecks and impediments at the implementation stage gave the ordinary people an understanding of the functioning of the administrative system that was expected to deliver the new concept of decentralised planning. This experience increased the capacity of ordinary people to question the hierarchical system, challenge its centralised nature and see through the bureaucratic system to suggest solutions to problems.

The training programmes in the PPC deconstructed the omniscient nature of bureaucracy and facilitated resource persons and elected representatives to understand the intricacies of the system to work within the system. This knowledge empowered them to have a face-to-face communication with high ranking officials, communicating with them using the language of the system, creating an atmosphere of horizontal communication, which had never happened. This pool of over 50,000 persons from among the common people, who could communicate with the higher ups in the bureaucracy on equal terms, the very essence of democracy, is perhaps the long lasting positive result of the PPC.

**PPC and the Women Component Plan (WCP)**

Five decades of developmental plans, initiatives and programmes had not produced significant impact on empowering women in India. In the fifties and sixties, the welfare approaches concerned only with family welfare viewed women as non-productive dependents and were concerned only with family welfare. If at all women were considered in development programmes, it was, at best, as adjuncts to their husbands, or as daughters or mothers. It was assumed that women’s position would improve, as did the economic prosperity of their husbands (Cubit, 1998). Further more, it took for granted the notions of
male-bread winner and female housewife. Development programmes, addressed to male households, failed to recognise the work done by women.

The next shift in planning emphasised on efficiency. The earlier attempt to equip women to be part of development process was reversed, for development without the recognition of women’s productive role and without addressing gender differences would be counter productive (Cooper, 1995). But when planners recognised the contribution and participation of women in development programmes for a permanent effect, they also realised the difficulty to design projects to incorporate women, for they effectively knew nothing about what women did. The task planners faced was two fold: first, to uncover the range of work women did in a qualitative sense; and second, to find a way in which this work could be operationalised so that women’s contribution could be quantified. These new perception of women’s role in development brought in a series of studies on the historical reasons for the marginalisation of women, transition from sex to gender, their work participation in the household, women’s role in the economy at the micro and macro levels and so on (Garnsey 1987).

Welfarism was seen as the expression of a sexist socialization, and of a stereotyping that defined women’s nature as biologically wired to nurture rather than being rational, aggressive and competitive. In the 1980s, the Women Integrated Development (WID) was adopted, with aim of achieving women’s integration in all aspects of the development process (Garnsey 1987). This led to a plethora of WID programmes and projects to improve the condition of women and to deliver development (Jahan 1995). However, targeted and segregated women-only projects helped only to marginalise women further and, sometimes, added to women’s already heavy workloads with few compensatory benefits (Ruehl 1983). Relying on women as the analytical category for addressing gender inequalities meant a focus on women in isolation from the rest of their lives and from the relations through which such inequalities were perpetuated and reproduced (Seidman 1994). This led to the major shift from women as the key focus of analysis to a focus on gender relations, i.e., the social relations between men and women that generate and perpetuate gender inequalities. These shifts in development policies of women were reflected at the micro-level in Kerala also.

2.1 Marginalisation of women in Kerala

The invisibility of women in the public domain of Kerala, despite the commendable achievements in their educational and health status, is a paradox that has drawn considerable attention during recent years. The economic marginalisation of women in the development process is reflected in their low Work Rate (WPR) compared to the national average. Further, the WPR ratio has been declining over time, from 16.6% in 1981 to 15.9% in 1991. The low work rate was partly caused by changes in the structure of employment.

---

1 Kerala’s female literacy rate of 86.2% (1991- make it to 2001 ) was nearly equal to that of male, while the corresponding average at the national level for women was only half of their male counterparts. The infant mortality rate of Kerala is 13 against 80 in India. The number of children per couple had declined to less than two. The relative better health status of women was also reflected in the favourable sex ratio. The higher social capability, thanks to better education and reduction in child care had not led to an increase in work participation rate of women or in their social leadership role (Isaac, 2001).
The shift in female labour from intensive paddy cultivation to commercial crops resulted in a decline in the share of women agricultural workers from 43.6% in 1981 to 36.1% in 1991 (Isaac 2001). The incidence of unemployment among females in the State is three times higher than male in the urban areas and two times higher in the rural areas despite the nearly equal literacy standard. Violence against women increased by 125% during the century from 1891-1996.

Marginalisation of women in the economic process, their subsequent invisibility in the respective work spheres and their lack of control over resources were major impediments in improving the social status of women. Despite the general progressive political environment in the State and active involvement of women in grassroots political processes, they are virtually absent at the leadership level. The percentage of women representation in the Kerala State Legislative Assembly has only reached two digits once, in 1996. In this context of asymmetrical gender power equations, gender interventions of Peoples’ Plan in Kerala are significant.

2.2 Intervention of the PPC in women in development

Despite its short tenure, entry of 34% women as councillors in the district leadership in 1991 effected the first major break through in the long tradition of invisibility of women in government leadership. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments have made one-third representation for women at all levels of local bodies mandatory, and significantly, made the office bearer-ship also mandatory. In 1996, Kerala had 4153 grama panchayat members, 595 block panchayat members and 116 district panchayat members from among women. Guidelines were issued to encourage inclusion of women in every stage of the planning process:

- Local bodies were given instructions to elect 1/3 of the resource persons for the PPC from among the women activists;
- A separate subject group on women welfare was made mandatory. A structured questionnaire on gender problems was provided to facilitate the discussions at grama sabhas;
- Guidelines were given to have a separate chapter on women and development in the Development Report, which should include a historical reviewing of the status of women and their problems, both economic and social;
- A separate task force was constituted to prepare projects for women-development based on the recommendations of the Development Report; and
- Most importantly the Women Component Plan (WCP), first time in the planning history of India, was introduced.

All these indicated that there was a conscious communication effort from the very start of the PPC to make the planning process gender sensitive incorporating the gender concerns.

2.3 Critical interim evaluation of the women component plan

An interim evaluation of the Women Component Plan (WCP) at the end of the first year of the PPC delineated two crucial weaknesses, which hindered the genderisation on the planning process. First, the Campaign failed to ensure a sufficient number of women in
the planning process. Second, women participants were not fully empowered to effectively intervene in the process from a gender perspective.

The Kerala State Planning Board conducted a survey in 1998 among the elected women representatives exploring the reasons for low representation in the grama sabha in the first year of the PPC. The survey found that training modules for the WCP were general in nature, not going beyond the basic explanations on the project preparations. Concrete details on how to prepare women specific projects and how to incorporate a gender component, were not worked out properly. The survey also revealed that the poor performance of the WCP was due to the lack of active and qualitative involvement of elected women representatives in the Campaign. A significant percentage of women did not answer the question of their role in the formulation of the plan document. The survey indicated that the women elected representatives did not have clarity regarding the activities of the different phases of the PPC.

2.4 Repositioning the development approaches in WCP

Feedback from the women elected representatives with respect to the WCP redefined the development strategy of WCP. Accordingly, the following changes were made:

- Ten percent of the plan fund for the WCP was made mandatory because panchayats were not complying with the original suggestion to set apart ten percent of the plan fund for WCP;
- A member of Woman and Development Task Force was included as ex-officio member in each of the other sectoral task forces, in order to ensure that gender concerns were also incorporated into the general projects;
- A new subject committee on women and development was constituted at all levels to appraise that women projects satisfied the criteria laid down for them;
- A special gender training programme, addressing women activists, was implemented; and
- Training programmes, focusing on women elected representatives, were held with the objective of developing some of them into a team of key resource persons and organisers.

Even these conscious and explicit changes could not bring out the desired gender sensitivity in the PPC. Evaluation of the projects earmarked for women revealed that though the mandatory provisions were complied with; the qualitative changes envisaged through the WCP did not materialise, because the philosophy of the program was not incorporated into projects. Large numbers of projects were found to be prefixed with 'women' initiatives to make them appear women-focused, such as women’s latrine, women’s stable and women’s drinking water. Women’s development projects were constrained not only by technical and financial factors, but also for ideological reasons. Furthermore, projects outlaid by the WCP, in general, were unsuccessful in generating women’s movements and groups at the grass root level. The evaluation proved to be an eye opener to the planning authorities that even while attempting a qualitative shift in the WCP, they were trekking the same path of the WID approach, which they wanted to replace.
2.5 Engendering the Peoples’ Plan

Evaluation of previous failures of the WCP led to the realisation that development process itself needed engendering. Planners, during the initial phase of the PPC, addressed the practical needs of women to tackle the problem of economic dependency. Through the feedback from the elected women representatives, planners realised that gender sensitivity can be interwoven into the social fabric only by addressing structural realities of gender in socio-economic linkages.

In the Gender And Development (GAD) approach, strategic emphasis is widened to include women’s rights, and women’s unique roles as active participants with specific agendas in development. The GAD approach recognizes that improvements in women’s status requires analysis of the relations between men and women, as well as the concurrence and cooperation of men (Moser 1993). The GAD approach sees gender as a cross-cutting issue with relevance for and influencing all economic, social and political processes, and seeks to redress gender inequity through facilitating strategic, broad-based and multi-faceted solutions (Lotherington, Haung, and Flemmen 1991). GAD aims to identify both the practical gender needs of women, such as health care, water supply, education, labour-saving technologies, and strategic gender to ensure that projects assist women to increase benefits and to overcome structural constraints. Practical and strategic gender needs are closely related, as one is often a prerequisite for achieving the other.

Strengthening Self Help Groups (SHG) to address the economic problems and enhance women’s conscientisation was an initiative of the PPC. The SHGs tried to evolve a working approach incorporating elements of micro finance and decentralised planning. Women’s typical experience in most parts of the state had been economic dependence and exploitation via money-lenders, familial responsibilities and unsuccessful women’s organisations.

In 1997-98, Ulloor Panchayat prepared the project of Samatha Self Help Groups as part of the mandatory Women’s Component Plan (WCP). The women of Ulloor Panchayat mostly belonged to lower socio-economic backgrounds. The micro-credit concept in the SHGs was used to address the economic problems of the women there. Recognising the ongoing contentious debates between micro credit and womens empowerment, PPC was cautious to address strategic needs on par with the practical needs. The SHGs in the Ulloor Panchayat were formed with an initial understanding that poor women’s problems cannot be tackled individually but through collective interventions. Groups were organised on the basis of locality. Each group was registered under the Charitable Societies Act. The SHGs have evolved their own norms for governing the SHG procedures and operated the savings and loans with guidance of the Panchayat Key Resource Persons and the KSSP members.

Easy and accessible loan availing facilities of the SHG at a nominal 2% rate, instead of the 30-40% interest rate of the money-lenders, made SHGs popular among women. One hundred groups, each comprising 20-25 members, were registered within one year after the formation of the first SHG unit. These SHGs represented nearly half the women population of Ulloor panchayat.
The conscious attempt of the PPC to make women participate in different planning stages had a significant impact on the women SHGs in Ulloor. The most explicit observation was the increase of women's attendance in gram sabhas and development seminars after the formulation of the SHGs. Though participation by numbers is a highly contentious way to understand it, the mere fact that women started coming into the public domain of decision making process is an interesting change to mention.

2.6 Challenging the feminisation of invisibility

“He is the Subject, he is the Absolute -- she is the other” (Simone de Beauvoir, 1949, xxviii) sums up why the visibility of the self is such an important issue for women. The main thesis of *The Second Sex* revolves around the idea that woman has been held in a relationship of long-standing oppression to man through her relegation to being man's "Other." In agreement with Hegelian and Sartrean philosophy, Beauvoir finds that the self needs otherness in order to define itself as a subject; the category of the otherness, therefore, is necessary in the constitution of the self as a self. What Beauvoir discovers in her multifaceted investigation into woman's situation, is that woman is consistently defined as the ‘other’ by man who takes on the role of the Self- woman "is the incidental, the inessential, as opposed to the essential" (1949, xxviii). To be the other is to be the non-subject, the non-person, the non-agent, an invisible self in a patriarchal society. In customary practice, in cultural stereotypes and in political and economic spheres, women's visibility has been systematically subordinated, diminished, belittled, and deprived. Feminists account for this phenomenon by explaining that women internalise patriarchal values and norms - that is, these pernicious values and norms become integrated in the cognitive, emotional and psychic structure of womanhood (Soyal 1994 Vogal 1991). Once embedded in a woman's psyche, internalised oppression conditions her desires. To maximise satisfaction of her desires, then, would be to collaborate in her own oppression. Paradoxically, the more completely she fulfils these desires, the worse off she becomes.

Women are consigned to selflessness - to invisibility, subservient passivity and self-sacrificial altruism (Burman 1998). Most often this happens in an unconscious way as the hegemony of the gender is strongly internalized by women, supporting their current status quo by providing visible roles to men, while women assume invisible roles in all spheres of life.

One of the most important achievements of the Samatha women in the PPC was that they had an important role in the beneficiary selection process. Providing financial assistance to those below the poverty line to help them build houses, latrines and wells was one of the important projects of the PPC. The list given by the members was used as vital information by the panchayat in selecting the beneficiaries. Since most women in the area were below poverty line, they enthusiastically attended the gram sabha and seminars, where the final decision of the beneficiary list was made and read out. They registered their protest whenever they felt selection of the beneficiaries was wrong, Their dissent was given due respect and corresponding alterations were made in the list. The feeling of being heard and recognised boosted their confidence tremendously.

Thus, one of the primary objectives of the PPC-participation of women at the grassroots in the planning process-was actually implemented in Ulloor, where the most
socially and economically marginalized women played a significant role in the crucial process of beneficiary selection. Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad, an NGO, played an important role in this process, as both facilitators and animators in coordinating the project.

Samatha and its gender treatment was in every aspect a new experience for women participants, always known and treated as the second sex, both at home and in society. The training and weekly sessions of the groups gave them confidence which, in turn, enhanced their efficiencies and abilities. They started chairing the sessions attended by panchayat presidents, collectors and other dignitaries. Eighty-three percent of the women felt that experience in Samatha opened a new world to them (Bharathy 2001).

2.7 Enhancing social conscientisation

The success of Samatha could not be measured by the hundreds of thousands of rupees saved, but by the family and community problems shared and tackled, and the individual confidence gained. Weekly meetings, discussions, attendance in the gram sabhas enhanced their level of understanding of various issues, especially gender problems. Though the economic benefits of the SHGs attracted the women first, slowly they expanded their area of focus to the problems in their neighbourhoods, their groups and humanitarian issues. For example, the women, who were already finding it difficult to make ends meet, mobilised Rs.5000 from their savings to help Samatha women suffering after a flood. This fundraising reflected changes in the perception of participating women, who began to see the world beyond their homes. Samatha women solved many familial problems of the group members, including wife-beating, and dowry demands in their areas, and filed written complaints against suspects in dowry deaths.

2.8 Failed gender interventions of the PPC

Despite the positive changes described above, all is not well with the gender interventions of the PPC. Most of the gender interventions were unsuccessful in transcending the domains of the practical gender needs to that of the strategic gender needs. Kerala’s experience tells us that the connections between representation and empowerment of women need to be challenged at all levels. Closer attention to women’s political effectiveness—the ability to use voice to politicize issues of concern to women, to use electoral leverage to press demands on decision-makers, to trigger more responsiveness from the public sector to their needs, and better enforcement of constitutional commitments to women’s equal rights are not explicitly visible in Kerala. The relationship between women’s formal representation in politics and female empowerment is still unclear. For this reason, indicators beyond formal political representation should be explored and incorporated in the measurement of gender empowerment. This is not only the case of the strength of the women’s movement, but also of indicators on political participation, understood more broadly than representation to include activities such as voting, demonstrating and getting involved in political organizations, as well as involvement with organizations that take a stand in politics, or participating in informal organizations to solve community problems.

In the case of the SHGs much of the mobilised money was spent as personal loan to members. Money was not pooled into income generation activities, thereby reducing sustainability. Though these micro enterprises enjoyed great flexibility, the minimal profit
margin was a deterrent in their promotion. The soap-making unit, for instance, with its seven members, invested Rs.500 and worked for two days (purchasing the raw materials and making the soap) and earned a profit of Rs.32. When divided among 7 members in a week, this proved to be less than enterprising.

Recognising these pertinent challenges in no way undermines the gender interventions of the PPC. Women in Kerala, in general, were part of a process with respect to gender relations, when the PPC, through its refined gender sensitive approach, gave them visible platforms to air their views and shift the gender perspective. One could trace the conscious application of a theoretical and ideological perspective, with respect to gender in the WCP that helped it to succeed. Sentiments of Chellamama, a grassroots worker exemplifies this spirit.

“I am 68. Started family life at 18. For five decades, my family was my world. Confin ed within the four walls of my home, I never knew the world outside. Grama sabaha opened my world. Today I know there is a society out side my family. In the grama sabha I heard me and, through many voices similar to mine, realised, for the first time, that voices like mine too are important for the society, a fact I was unaware of. This changed my world, lock, stock and barrel”.

Summary and Conclusions

3.1 Concluding remarks

Governance is presumed to be gender neutral. But in fact, the discourses, procedures, structures and functions of governance remain heavily skewed in favour of men in general. This unequal sharing of power leads to an unequal sharing of resources – time, income and property- between men and women. Three years of cautious and conscious interventions of engendering the PPC made the stakeholders realize the need to locate the practical and gender needs of women in Kerala based on the understanding of the hegemonic modes of inequalities prevalent in the socio economic and political spheres of Kerala. It was realized that a study with a gender perspective will help to deconstruct the myth of gender equity and freedom in Kerala. Women Status Study at the panchayat was initiated with this understanding. Series of training to the women elected representatives and task force members facilitated some of the panchayats to bring out Women Status Study Reports, which critically engaged the local issues with gender perspectives. Chembikodu and Dharmadam panchayats in Kannur district, Bysonvalley in Idukki are few to cite. Lack of resource persons at the panchayat level, and the changing profile of the elected women representatives due to the rotation of the reserved seats were serious constraints, which eroded the scope of status study reports at every panchayats.

In Kerala, convergence of a few positive variables caused the success of intervention approaches of the WCP, the point of discussion in this paper. Women in Kerala, in general, were on a fermentation process with respect to gender relations, when the PPC, through its refined gender sensitive approach, gave them visible and audible platforms to air their views and cause the shift in gender perspective happen. One could trace the conscious application of a theoretical and ideological perspective, with respect to gender in the WCP that helped it to succeed. Development interventions and modifications of the WCP, at critical junctures, enabled it to affect the shift from the Women Integrated Development
From Objects to Subjects to Participants

Bharathi

(WID), which focussed mainly on the practical needs of women, to the Gender And Development (GAD), which addressed the strategic needs along with the practical needs. Micro-credit and Self Help Groups enhanced the economic and social position of women and helped them to gain self-esteem and think beyond the family parameters to reach out for a wider cause, as exemplified in the case of Samatha Self Help Groups of women in Ulloor Panchayat. The SHGs freed women from the clutches of money lenders, besides enhancing their self-respect, first in front of their family members and then, before the society. Qualitative changes in the perception of the women elected representatives viz.-a-viz. the WCP also played a crucial role in the success of the WCP. Another important outcome of the WCP is the increased participation of women in gram sabhas, which has reportedly risen from 26 percent in the initial stage to 60 percent more recently. (Geetha 2007) Women also constitute two-thirds of the beneficiaries under the individual beneficiary oriented programmes. One cannot undermine the role of active women’s collective at the local level towards these indicators. The process of WCP, which began with feedback from the intense women training sessions, progressed through the resultant conscientisation of their gender roles and culminated in their self enhancement and ‘self responsibilistion’ (Foucault 1984) so as to achieve the envisaged objective of the Peoples' Planning Campaign - to challenge the spiral of silence and invisibility among women.

But at the time it is equally important to mention that most often the uncritical use of the term ‘empowerment’ in development discourses disguises a problematic concept. Power relationships reproduce themselves, regardless of how participatory or democratic a setting is, unless a conscious, sustained effort is undertaken to alter them. This becomes more relevant in the case of Elected Women Representatives (EWR) and their participation in the PPC. There is an important caveat to be entered between representation and participation, for the former is necessarily the first, but by no means a sufficient guarantee for the latter. Authentic participation of women in the decision making bodies is a long term and complex process. The ubiquity of historically entrenched patriarchal practices is the most formidable social constraint on women’s participation. One can in no way argue that PPC completely changed the internalized structures of patriarchal subjugation and invisibility of women in Kerala. Patriarchy is not overturned, or even significantly eroded, overnight. But the entry of women in the public spaces via grass root institutions leaving the private and circumscribed spaces of the home, to an extent neglecting the question of ‘who will make chapatis’ (Datta 1998) is an important indicator of change. Many of the women elected representatives shared the enhanced sense of social and personal status within and outside the family. Men willingly sharing the household responsibilities and invitations to weddings of higher class families can be treated as trivial at macro analysis becomes quite significant gains at the micro level (Bharathy 2008). Challenges and problems highlighted by various studies of the PPC (Chatukulma, and John 2000; Vijayan, and Sandhya 2004; Radha, and Roy Chowdhary 2002) need to be read along with the success scored by at least some elected women representatives in Kerala, both as participants in local governance and as representatives articulating the interests of the women. A dialectic view of truth must include the notion that there are always emerging possibilities, which are not yet visible.
References


Bharathy, Manjula. 2008. Tribals and Decentralised Planning in India in The State of Panchayats in India eds IRMA India: IRMA.


Introduction

As seen elsewhere in this book, Participatory Budgeting (PB) experiences have acquired an important significance in less than two decades. Many groups, including political classes in numerous countries, international organizations, such as the World Bank and the United Nations, different academic sectors, as well as countless organizations from society at large, have shown a great interest in this new democratic experiment. PB has thus undergone an astonishing worldwide dissemination.

When travelling across the American Continent, we can find experiences in practically all countries from Canada to Argentina. Africa has kindled a strong interest in this theme. Many of its States are trying to encourage economic development, to create more consolidated democracies, to carry out decentralization policies in home affairs to which they now want to associate participatory processes such as PB. In Europe the theme has come to take on increasing relevance with the emergence of countless initiatives and with the growth of places for training and debate. The first PB experiences have begun to appear in Asia and Australasia as well, including regions with distinct political democratic traditions, such as China, Korea, Indonesia.

In some cases, as has happened in Peru and the Dominican Republic, “PB as an experience” has given way to “PB as a public institutionalised policy”, becoming an integral part of the legislative marks of these two countries. Together with the international dynamics that we have seen, these examples lead us to believe that PB is being transformed into “A Theme on a Larger Scale” (Dias, 2008), capable of influencing the agenda of different political classes, offering alternatives to counteract the liberal democratic crisis and favouring a greater proximity between citizens and public matters.

Local government in Portugal has not remained immune to this international dynamic, being one of the countries in Europe that has shown the greatest interest in the theme. In the present article, we aim to reflect on the administrative and socio-political contexts in which these experiences have emerged, their main characteristics and tendencies, as well as the challenges they face. Data shown is the result of research carried out by the authors as part of the project “Participatory Budgeting: the more the participation, the better the democracy”, financed by the European Union Community Initiative EQUAL.

The Administrative Context

According to the 1976 Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (whose seventh revision dates from 2005), the democratic organization of the country’s political power at a local level is nowadays placed in the existence of the so-called “Local Authorities” (or
“autarquias”, Art. 235). These Local Authorities have their own property and finances (Art. 238), their own permanent staff (Art. 243) and they can hold referendums for their respective voters on subjects including the competence of their own bodies (Art. 240).

The administrative structure is made up of 308 municipalities as its base. These are subdivided into 4259 parishes (“freguesias”), which are decentralized political administrative bodies that derive from the former territorial divisions of church parishes.

The elected bodies, representatives of the Parishes and the Municipalities, are the Cabinet (the decision making body elected by universal suffrage in a direct ballot by the voters, whose numerical composition depends on the number of voters registered in the respective territory) and the Parish Council or the Municipal Council (the collegiate legislative body). Both also include members elected by the opposition parties, a legacy that makes the political life of the executive difficult. This situation becomes understandable in the light of the post revolutionary situation when the rule was conceived. Its objective was to give value to all the dynamic forces of society.

A Mayor (or “Presidente”), that is to say the citizen who heads the list of the most voted for party, coordinates the executive body in Municipalities as well as in Parishes.

The elections of the executive bodies and the decision making bodies are separate but simultaneous, except in the case of by-elections, that is to say when one of the two bodies (as was the case of Lisbon’s Executive Cabinet in 2006) has to terminate its mandate for political or judiciary reasons.

In the Municipal Assembly only part of the members are directly elected. This has to be a higher number than the number of Parish Council Chairmen, who are also an integral part as “members by right”.

The functioning of the Parishes is guaranteed by a percentage of the National Budget that is transferred directly to them. Its capacities are bound to the carrying out of some decentralizing administrative tasks and those of the management of electoral processes. However, other responsibilities for services and public spaces can be added on the basis of specific agreements between each Parish and its respective Municipal Council. As the size and organizational/functional structure of the Parishes is very different (ranging from a few hundred to 65,000 inhabitants) the distribution of its capacities and responsibilities has to be “a variable geometry” as a result.

The mandate for the bodies of the Local Authorities is a four-year term of office. Portuguese political culture, up until the present day, is based on the tradition of having a strong continuity of people and “political families”. The Mayors elected as “independents”, away from the spread of traditional parties, are few and far between. Since 2005, the mandate of the chairmen of the executive bodies of the Local Authorities cannot be renewed for more than three consecutive terms.

The administrative divisions, on a higher level than the Municipalities, include the 18 districts of Continental Portugal and the creation of continuous territorial units made up of
Local Authorities: the Urban communities (ComUrb), the Greater Metropolitan Areas (GAM) and the Inter-municipality Communities (Cominter).

As to the creation of Administrative Regions (as foreseen in the Constitution), - after consulting the Municipalities – the brakes were applied by the referendum of November 1998 in which the map of eight regions, made official in the Law by decree 18/98, was not passed. At present, the islands (Madeira and the Azores), made up of various Parishes and Municipalities, are seen as two true Autonomous Administrative Regions. This is in contrast to Continental Portugal, where the “Map of the Region plans” (North, Centre, Lisbon and the Tejo Valley, the Alentejo and the Algarve) only corresponds to five regional commissions for coordination and development (CCDR), with no elected bodies.

Without any doubt, this complex architecture needs a revision on a short or medium term basis. Proposals for reform that are presented never arrive at the point of being truly shared and agreed upon, nor result from careful studies on the real functioning of Local Authority institutions. They normally correspond to “ideological” positions or political party maps. These proposals are, on the one hand, more interested in reducing institutional management costs and on the other hand, securing territorial divisions that correspond to potential political advantages of the different parties in future electoral acts. Proposals that guarantee an unmistakable respect for the principle of subsidiarity have not been dealt with.

At present, a reform of the Local Authorities Electoral Law is in the process of analysis (it has already been passed by the Parliament on January 18th, 2008). This reform points to a more “presidential” model for local Government and foresees the election of the Mayor and the Chairman of the Municipal Council as a joint role. In this way the role of the Mayor is reinforced and the latter is free to choose his/her cabinet members. This reduces the “collective” character of the executive that was drawn up after the 1974 revolution in order to guarantee the greater involvement of all the active political forces in the various Local Authority bodies (even including its own opposition in the executive). The new law equally reforms the Parishes, proposing their reduction.

**Socio-political Context**

New forms of citizen participation in local political life in Portugal have become important for a set of reasons that are worth being analysed, even if succinctly.

In the first place, these developments must be understood with respect to a centralist tradition of power, with consequences in the political and democratic culture of those elected and those electing. The first free elections for the Local Authority bodies date from 1976, thus marking the transition of the Municipalities as auxiliary extensions of the central Government to a model of Local Administration with a greater autonomy and capacity for intervention. This transition clearly made Local Government much more democratic and led to a progressive reinforcement of the State’s capacity to intervene in
areas, such as the creation of infrastructures and public amenities, as well as its ability to provide services to the population.

However, a real process of participation by citizens in public matters did not accompany this change in the Portuguese political and administrative organization. Citizens were to a large extent considered as bystanders in local governments that progressively had assumed key roles in the field of territorial development

The implementation of participatory processes like PB, that imply the adoption of new, more democratic and transparent forms of government, represents a clear paradigmatic change in this respect – the passing of the paradigm of public aid to the paradigm of co-responsibility for the management of “public matters”.

This transformation may be identified as the outcome of the adoption of a new political culture by elected representatives and citizens, on the one hand, and, as already indicated, the rethinking of the political institutional design that has sustained the decentralization process in Portugal, on the other hand.

In democratic culture the political class tends to be considered legitimate because of its electoral status, and therefore often does not recognise the need to initiate participatory processes or render accounts. However, the citizens themselves have stopped being interested in political life, reducing their involvement both in community activities and in elections (the last 2006 by-elections and the national referendum on abortion registered an alarming rise in abstention rates, especially in the Greater Lisbon area).

One of the lessons that we can draw from countries with consolidated democracies is that it is not enough to set up general principles of liberty and civil rights to establish democratic order (Fedozzi, 2001). “The carrying out of true democratic elections is not sufficient in order to guarantee governing forms appropriate for a modern democracy, forms based on the transparency of administration and the credibility of its public services. It is not enough to assure the existence of democratic institutionalisation in order to develop a political and democratic culture for its citizens” (Dias, 2006: 84).

Portugal faces a barely consolidated culture of participation on the part of its associative movements, more specifically, and of the population in general. Participation is normally the result of rather spontaneous and “reactive” processes, as is the case of individual people who emerge when confronted with unpopular decisions from political bodies, a way of replying to situations on a one-off basis. For their part associative movements are very sector based and little or not at all organized, making proactive actions in defence of global interests difficult. These movements are often coupled to the dynamics of political parties that take from them the capacity to intervene, their credibility and their local embeddedness.

The feeble development of Portuguese citizenship, with direct implications of the populations’ attitude in relation to politics, is visible not only on a national level but also on a local level. The decentralization of the State, via the creation of municipalities, would normally bring with it the expectation of a wider democratization of political life, but, in fact, some expectations were frustrated, above all for two reasons: 1) on the one hand,
because the institutional design in which the process of decentralization is placed, has not created a sufficiently expressive rupture with the centralist tradition of Government and, on the other hand, 2) because the architecture of local government in Portugal was drawn up having as its base institutional models with strong hierarchies. This signifies that the processes of decentralization and the institutional basis of local authorities were not conceived with a concern for citizen’s political involvement.

Cases of corruption in Local Authorities are other elements that mark socio-political contexts where new processes of citizens’ participation are emerging. These have been amply reported in the media, often without very solid proof, generating the idea of Local Governments having an immoral nature. Situations of corruption in Local Authorities normally emerge associated with illegalities in the urban sector, such as construction licences and licences for land-use alteration, to which are added cases of illicit financing for the political party machine and also the gaining of wealth and personal favours.

These situations reinforce the present crisis of the representative nature of the political bodies that Alain Touraine (1994) talked about, and that Boaventura de Sousa Santos deepened in his lectures on the contemporary world, when the double pathology of the liberal democracies is referred to. The latter involves a pathology of representation in which citizens are increasingly distant from political life and the elected, whom they often do not even know. Meanwhile, the pathology of participation is associated with the common idea that there is no point in participating, as citizens feel far too small to confront large interest groups and the political and economic agents that dominate society (2008).

Another element to keep in mind in this analysis, is a growing “asymmetry” that is being consolidated in the transfer of the Government’s institutional capacities to Municipalities and Parishes. The delegation of these capacities has been made without the corresponding financial means, causing obvious difficulties to Local Government in the creation of adequate responses to the population’s demands. Local Authorities, especially the Municipal Councils, have been called to intervene in areas that they were previously not involved in. This was due to the decentralizing of capacities, but also, to demands made by the population itself. The areas of education, social action, culture, sport and economic activities are examples of this. Unable to disregard demands regarding access to basic sanitation and to public amenities, Local Authorities today face these new and renewed challenges. They are obliged to think of more integrated and integrating interventions, sometimes more immaterial than material.

The lack of “certainties” or “guarantees” as to the results of participatory processes carries the risk of frustrating the population, especially in the dynamics that imply medium–long term objectives such as Agenda XXI and discussions on urban development plans. This issue becomes more acute at institutional levels with few capacities and resources, such as Parishes – especially the smaller ones.

All of this is happening within the context of a foreseeable and progressive loss of Local Authorities’ financial capacity. Coping with this situation will require new permanent alliances with private profit or non-profit making entities, which allow for an enlargement of the capacity of action and the harnessing of resources.
A predictable renovation of the Local Authorities’ political framework, due to the new electoral law that imposes a limit on the mandates of those in government, is still not a very visible phenomenon when looking at “those at the top of the lists” of the different parties. But in any case, it will become more or less obvious that in the autumn elections of 2009 parties will be obliged to advance processes of internal renovation of their permanent staff, possibly supported by the respective youth branches of political parties. Will this bring the emergence of new political generations, possibly more inclined towards democratic innovation and the consequent implementation of participatory processes, such as participatory budgeting? It is an open ended issue, although there are increasing signs of this possibility, as demonstrated by the fact that the average age of local Mayors or District Presidents who have experimented with PB is lower than the national average age. Another interesting indicator is the fact that the impulses behind the majority of PB experiences have been Mayors who are in their first term in office, demonstrating a desire to construct a “personal style” appropriate in the management of public matters.

Participatory Budgeting in Portugal

Twenty-five PB experiences are known in Portugal dating from 2002 to the present day. Twenty-one of these are promoted by Municipalities and 4 by Parishes, as illustrated in the following map.

A quick glance over this map allows one to easily understand the southern tendency of the majority of experiences in Portugal. This reality reflects the traditional political
division of the country, according to which, the Centre–Right is the most dominant presence in the North, whilst the South is largely positioned Centre-Left. However, a more detailed, chronological analysis of PB development in Portugal allows one to affirm that parties across the political spectrum, including the independent movements that govern some Local Authorities, are opening to these new forms of democratic experimentalism.

If, in the initial phase, PB emerged as a “left wing idea”, with especially prominence for Local Governments led by the Democratic Unitarian Coalition (Coligação Democrática Unitária) (CDU)\(^v\), today the tendency is increasingly related to the emergence of PB in areas led by the Socialist Party (PS)\(^v\) or by the Social Democratic Party (PSD)\(^vi\). The first signs of a will to implement PB in municipalities governed by PSD and the Popular Party (CDS-PP)\(^vii\) are also perceptible. According to the knowledge that the authors hold at the moment, an enlargement of PB experiences in territories governed locally by the PS and the PSD is to be expected soon. As a matter of fact it is these two parties that contest the majority of local governments in the country.

At present, of the 25 Local Authorities indicated on the previous map, 44% are governed by CDU, 24% by PS, the same percentage for PSD, whilst 8% are governed by Independent Movements.

Another element that allows us to think that PB will not be restricted to a specific political tendency, has to do with the fact that no evidence exists at the moment, that allows us to distinguish forms of organization and the implementation of PB that depend specifically on the political party that promotes it. Furthermore, the characteristics of PB in Portugal seem to rely much more on the changeable structures related to the institutional and socio-political legacy, dealt with in the previous two points of this text. The following paragraphs try to synthetically sum up these characteristics.

**Models of participation**

The majority of PB experiences in Portugal are of a consultative character. This means that they are normally centred on the discussion of problems, needs and proposals presented by the citizens, without this implying a real debate on budgeting. In some cases, as has happened in Palmela and São Brás de Alportel, the process begins with an initial proposal of projects elaborated by the respective Executive Bodies. Alterations may then be introduced due to contributions given by the citizens in the “deliberation arenas” or in the different areas for discussion and the handing in of suggestions that are open to the inhabitants (this may be in face to face meetings, enquiries on the Internet or on paper).

Despite this being the tendency in the majority of cases, we are beginning to see the emergence of a second generation of PB in Portugal at the moment. This is laying its bets on the implementation of a decision-making process with a previously defined component in the budget. This second generation is at present played out by experiences such as the Municipalities of Lisbon (the capital of the country) and Sesimbra, as well as by the Parish of Santa Leocádia do Geraz do Lima (Viana do Castelo Local Authority) in the north of the country.
Apart from the learning dimension that this type of process could have for the citizens, as well as gains in terms of democratic transparency, PB promoted by the Parish Councils is, above all, put into perspective as a tool of participation that helps reinforce the role of this administrative level in the political mediation process with their respective Municipal Councils. The Parish Councils in Portugal have very limited investment capacities, unless specific annual agreements are made with the Municipalities to whom they belong, attributing new roles in the management of local services and infra-structures. This may lead Parishes to see PB as a tool towards reinforcing its negotiation arguments with the respective Municipal Councils, urging the latter to contemplate transferring investments within their budgets to the Parish in question.

All the Portuguese experiences favour the participation of people acting individually, although some (such as Braga, one of the largest cities with a Socialist Local Government in the North of the country) also allow systems of representation via local collectives and associations. This is an important aspect, given that local associations are excessively dependent on financial help and logistics provided by the Local Authorities, and are often subject to interference and influence from political party structures. From this point of view, PB partially symbolizes the return of the individual actor, very much abandoned by the logic of representative democratic systems, who normally accord social and political relevance to pre-organised stakeholders. The perspective of this small “revolution” starts mainly with the individual using specific needs or desires as its “driving force” in order to guarantee presence in the public space where more collective visions may be negotiated and “common goods” identified.

The focus taken by PB in Portugal has a territorial tendency. This means that the dynamics of decentralised participation (on the base of neighbourhoods and villages within every parish), that allow different dimensions of local life to be incorporated in debates are favoured. We refer specifically to the possibility of discussing different areas of interest in people’s lives within these processes. Areas, amongst many others, such as for example education, health, transport, the environment, culture, sport, urban problems and the economy. This focus has the tendency to reveal differences among territories and asymmetries between municipalities, as for example, the need to understand the specific problems of urban or rural areas, of the more run down housing estates or the central areas with their more valued heritage etc. The adoption of this focus relates to the fact that Municipalities in Portugal have progressively come to take on capacities in nearly all thematic areas, from the creation of basic infrastructure to the development of the local economy. The fact that this focus sometimes has a limited perspective that does not allow a discussion on “strategic choices” for the interested territory, partially justifies the insertion of Portuguese PB in the category of “proximity democracy” (Allegretti/Sintomer, 2009) with respect to comparisons among different families of European OP.

Parallel to this tendency, we also begin to see the emergence of first initiatives whose focus is, above all directed towards certain actors or social groups, as has happened with children and young people. This is the case of São Brás de Alportel that implemented the first experience of Children’s and Young People’s Participatory Budgeting (OPCIJ) in 2007. This involved the students of the two main schools of the Municipality in a territorial
partnership that involved the Municipality, the In Loco Association and the schools themselves (Dias, 2008). The experiences of the Parish of Carnide in Lisbon also began soon afterwards, involving primary school children aged between 6 and 10 years old, as well as that of Braga in the Northern region of the country. These experiences take on an important role, being a moment of socialization and training on the theme of democracy and citizenship, above all in a setting of almost total absence of institutions that clearly take on this function. They also help to give substance to a panorama of fragmented, pseudo participatory initiatives. In Portugal, these initiatives have had the ambition to work on some topics of interest within the school community in a consensual way. They are to be found in “Charters” and “Education Councils”: a development tool – often a weak one – of social dialogue with students (rarely), teachers and other actors involved in the education field.

The Institutional Drawing

The striking majority of PB processes corresponds to a set of meetings held between Executive Bodies and citizens that normally takes place in the last quarter of each year. This time scale is mainly due to four reasons:

• The consultative character of the processes that does not imply very complex institutional design and architecture, nor the anticipation of public debates with the aim of agreement and voting on the part of the citizens;
• This is the time of the year in which Executive Bodies feel more confident facing the local taxpayers. This is due to the fact that they are able to have a more realistic budget forecast for the following year. Moreover, with respect to the year in progress more public works have been completed from the current budget;
• The marginal role that PB takes within the Local Authorities priorities and within the functioning of the administration itself;
• OP’s low impact within the decision of the Local Authorities’ Executive Bodies in relation to the large scale investments that absorb the bulk of the Local Authorities’ financial resources.

This last characteristic clearly emerges in the inquiry carried out as part of the project “PB Portugal” (2008), as represented in images number 2, 3 and 4 that show the main investment typologies discussed in Portuguese OP and how “careful” the incidence of PB results are calculated and presented to citizens.
Apart from public meetings, many experiences have also come to adopt the use of questionnaires on participation, either using paper or the Internet. On this level we highlight the experiences from Odivelas that in its first year combined the digital method
with real life debates, as well as that of Lisbon that, in 2008, developed a type of OP exclusively developed via the Internet. Nevertheless, in the majority of cases the use of information technology is still limited (Allegretti/Matias/Cunha, 2007).

Some interesting innovations have been developed by the experience of Santa Leocâdia do Geraz do Lima, namely the creation of a Participatory Budgeting Council (Conselho do Orçamento Participativo - COP) and a priorities caravan. The COP is made up of delegates elected in all the Parish’s communities with the right to vote and to make decisions on investments to be included in the Local Authority’s budget. The caravan corresponds to the phase of the participation cycle that precedes the voting of priorities. In accordance with this, the citizens’ delegates (who are the spokesmen elected by the participants) visit all the spots where local proposals have been presented by inhabitants as part of the PB sessions. They do this in order to be able to compare the needs of each community and reduce the level of ignorance that many inhabitants have regarding the territory as a whole in which they live.

**Organizational outlines: PB as a marginal sectorial policy?**

In Portugal, the great majority of the PB is based in the Mayors’ Support Offices showing the political wager that this process represents. This signifies that these initiatives are conducted technically and politically by people whom the Mayors trust. This option also gives evidence that the processes have still not reached high levels of demand within the administration, a reason for which it becomes possible to implement using the frugal human resources of the Mayors’ Support Offices. In accordance with data collected from the already mentioned enquiry questionnaires, more than 70% of the experiences function without PB being taken on by a branch of the Municipal or other service. Simultaneously, more than 50% of the PB also do not possess any political coordination that guarantees the management and assessment of these processes.

On the contrary, PBs with a greater level of structure and complexity that represent a firmer political will tend to generate the internal necessity for the creation of work teams by the administration. The city of Palmela has gone along this path after various years of experience. It has opted to create a structure legally recognised in the general set up of the Local Authority, responsible for the coordination and the dynamics of the different participatory processes. At the moment, Lisbon is going in the direction of the creation of a project team that will bring together technicians from different Municipality services. Odivelas is also inserted in this dynamic, although a peculiarity is to be highlighted: PB has emerged within the Local Authority’s financial department. From this point of view comes the perception that PB will also be a tool to improve the Municipality’s finances and budget’s effectiveness and efficiency. Other Local Authorities have come to create work teams, essentially formed by technicians from the finance department, organizing a first internal proposal of the PB model to submit to the political decision of the elected. It is possible to understand from the consulting and training work that the authors have developed with these teams, that they have easily concluded that PB will not be able to work if the department, to which they belong, does not know how to mobilize and implicate other important departments within the Local Authority, such as, public works, or social, youth and associational affairs amongst others.
Another of the aspects that calls for attention is related to training teams on PB’s conceptual and methodological issues. Local Authorities in which PB is a marginal activity of little significance tend not to invest in the training of its permanent technicians and politicians. On the contrary, Local Authorities that are more concerned with drawing up processes with a greater organisational rigour, usually seek out training offers on the subject and organize visits to other PB experiences. Data from questionnaires suggests that about 60% of Local Authorities have never promoted or looked for training for technicians directly involved in the process and that about 90% have never sought to guarantee this same training for staff that do not directly work with OP.

The Project “PB Portugal” has been a decisive factor on this level in promoting training courses, workshops and free consulting work for Local Authorities for the first time in the whole country. It represents an interesting perspective from which OPs are interpreted not only as “objects” (organisational mechanisms) but rather as constituent parts of a transformation in progress in territorial governance concerning the internal functioning of the administrative machine and its desire to relate creatively to new forms of “collective action”.

Little has changed over the last few years in Portugal with respect to the legal or normative framework of OP: These continue to depend exclusively on the political will of the elected. The creation of regulations or rules for processes has accompanied the dynamic that is emerging from this type of experience. This means that, effective forms of PB have necessarily involved the creation of regulations or norms for their functional framework. It is something that results naturally from the demands of the processes themselves, the management of the unexpected and from team learning. However, in Portugal (differently from what has happened in the majority of Spanish OP) none of the PB experiences has had self-regulation or rather regulation created or defined with the participation of the citizens. In more than 50% of experiences, however, PB is still a non-formalized process.

Intimately related to these issues is the absence of previously defined objectives, as well as the processes of registering, monitoring and rigorous assessment, capable of providing elements that allow for learning with participatory dynamics, understanding what runs well and what needs to be improved. In some experiences (as is the case of Odivelas, Lisbon, Sesimbra and São Brás de Alportel), the results of the process, namely the public wide spread diffusion of information about public works and projects agreed upon as part of OP, is guaranteed via the Internet or in Public sessions. In the case of Sesimbra, we point out an interesting peculiarity related to the fact the work agreed upon by the citizens is reported on the Local Authority’s Internet page, illustrated with photos and with the identification of its state of development (launching, carrying out or completion).

In our opinion this type of detail on the rendering of accounts allows one to think of PB processes as dynamics with two cycles of participation: the first dedicated to debating the budget plan and the second to the carrying out of priorities. In both moments, citizens have an important role in terms of participation and democratic vigilance. This type of dynamics promotes learning on Municipal management and the territorial reality, supplying important elements for the carrying out of an informed citizenship and democracy.
Some final remarks

While Portuguese PBs had an essentially “stable” character in the first experiments (2002-2005), reproducing organisational characteristics that barely evolved from one year to another, the processes have become more “evolved” in the last three years via an increasing transformation. This is partially due to the numerical diffusion, the diversification and the increasing contacts maintained with experiences in other countries via conventions and international networks such as FAL, UCLGex and the International Observatory for Participatory Democracy, based in Barcelona.

With respect to the analysis developed by the International team coordinated by Yves Sintomer, already mentioned, PBs in Portugal have been largely worked within the perspective of creating “proximity democracy” (geographically and communicatively), without great concern for the promotion of justice or socio-territorial cohesion, but as important elements in the re-establishing of a dialogue between the elected and those electing and in the creation of a new source of political legitimacy. However, a gradual shift of paradigms may be observed which in the future could lead Portugal PBs to emulate some features of non-Mediterranean PB models, such as the German ones which were firstly inspired by the new Zealand’s experience of Christchurch rather than by Porto Alegre.

The participation of technicians from the financial departments of various municipalities in specific training courses on PB has been an interesting indicator of this transformation. While in Spain and Italy the majority of technicians trained in PB belong to municipal branches and departments connected to social affairs, the promotion of active citizenship or public works, the recent Portuguese way of looking at PB points to a new hypothesis for interpretation: participatory budgeting has begun to take on the perspective of experiments that can favour a new way of dealing with expenditure and public revenue, starting from reforms concerning ways of working with the Local Authorities’ internal communication and coordination within budget and finance departments.

The Portuguese “hyper-realist” framework has traditionally worked with budget forecasts that were very much out of touch with the reality of real public finances. The resulting excess of unfulfilled promises may have contributed to the distancing of taxpayers and their loss of trust in the Local Authorities’ administrations and in politics in general. Within a country that has come to see the growth of electoral absenteeism the need to regain credibility and authority in the eyes of the citizens is becoming urgent and visible. Improving relationships of trust and “performance” in administrative activities stands to guarantee greater efficiency in the battle against citizens’ alienation with “public matters”.

Further confirmation for the hypothesis of a transformation of PB could be found in interesting new developments, which are strengthened by the first experiments in the Scandinavian world. Portugal has been chosen as a privileged interlocutor for the first pilot scheme in Sweden in an unprecedented relationship between the North and the South of Europe. Although more common, it is to be equally noted that Cape Verde has also turned to Portugal for support within the process of implementation of the first PB experiences in the country. This has been via training and consultancy for Municipal teams and the central government. This allows the idea to be advanced that Portugal nowadays holds a privileged
position as contributor to an extremely enriching dialogue in North-South and South-North relationships.

The case of Carnide, a Parish in Lisbon, may be a symbol for the future, due to its extensive range of tools for social dialogue (nowadays entitled “Participatory Management”). Here in this Lisbon Parish, data for electoral absenteeism is significantly lower than the average for the city and the country. This shows how a coherent dialogical approach may reconstruct ties of mutual trust between citizens and the world of politics. It may be that today participation in public policies has a new option for holistic development when in different cities OP is beginning to be related to other management dialogue tools (urban development plans, Agenda XXI, thematic advisory councils). Interest shown by different parties in inserting PB as “engine of innovation” in the electoral programmes for the 2009 local and national elections, may be another indicator of a transformation to consider.

Some challenges, that have still not been faced, remain for the near future. The main one being the possibility to look at PB as a “energiser” for a civil society which is still weak and low in action, and the opportunity to conceive methods of discussion and co-decision for participatory budgeting to be the “engine for the construction of negotiated solidarity” between citizens and different parts of the territory. With this challenge, it would be excellent to establish a dialogue with the many Brazilian experiences, although we can put forward the idea that some aspects of post-colonial culture (that still have not managed to leave behind the air of superiority regarding the ex colonies) make such an evolution difficult in the imminent future. In fact, in these last three years many Portuguese politicians prefer to look at European examples of OP, culturally closer, and have had the need to be supported by “cultural translations” of the Latin-American models. Mistakenly, they have not managed to consider the latter as credible sources of institutional transformation.

It is to be hoped that it will be equally possible in Portugal, while waiting for this type of openness to the teachings of the South (Allegretti/Herzberg 2004), to strengthen ties with the Spanish and Italian PB experiences. They are beginning to work not only with the “proximity” perspective but are betting on more structural administrative and cultural transformations that PB may bring, marking out an important space of innovation in politics as a whole and not only politics in the local sphere.

The attention accorded in the last three years to “learning by doing” on the part of PBs in Portugal, the European country with the highest percentage of PBs with respect to the total number of municipal institutions, gives hope that it is on the right track towards leaving initial reservations behind and contributing to a creative quantity-quality transformation of PB both in Europe and beyond. With which range of goals, it is still to be discovered...

References

Allegretti, Giovanni; Alluli, Massimo (2007), Os Orçamentos Participativos em Itália: Uma ‘ponte’ para a construção do Novo Município, in RCCS, nº 77, Coimbra


Cabral, Manuel Villaverde; Carreira da Silva, Filipe; Saraiva Tiago (2008, eds.), *Cidade e Cidadania. Governação Urbana e Participação Cidadã em Perspectiva Comparada*, Lisbon, ICS.


Dias, Nelson (2006b), “Em busca de uma democracia de maior proximidade”, in Diálogos nº 4, Rede Europeia Anti-Pobreza/Portugal.


Marquetti, Adalmar; Campos, Geraldo; Rocha, Roberto (2007), *Democracia participativa e redistribuição: análise de experiências de orçamento participativo*, Xamã, São Paulo.


Sintomer, Yves; Herzberg, Carsten; Roecke, Anja (2006, orgs), *Participatory budgets in a European comparative approach. Perspectives and chances of the cooperative state at the municipal level in Germany and Europe – volume II (Final Report - documents)*, Berlin: Marc Bloch Centre.


Touraine, Alain (1994) *O que é a democracia?* Lisbon, Instituto Piaget.

Variations and Effects of Experimental Democracy: Neighbourhood Assemblies and Participatory Budgeting in Rosario

Alberto Ford
Universidad Nacional de Rosario

Introduction: Approach to Experimental Democracy

Democracy is flat, boring, irrelevant and occasionally dangerous. It elevates bias and imitative behavior to the category of virtues, limiting different opinions and existential autonomy. It reproduces itself through the repetition of formal and empty procedures that drown all creative, individual and collective initiative. Democracy is incapable of discussing and solving the most pressing problems, instead spending time in endless discussions - tediously covered by the mass media about "Whether So-and-So said this or really meant that for or against Whomever". When the public gets tired of leaders channeling social resources for their own personal benefits in the name of the general welfare, the attitude is to riot and tear everything down.

The aforementioned is a frequent perception about democracy around kitchen tables that in the academy appears under technical names such as “crisis of representation” or “democratic deficit”, always discussed with a sense of urgency. But when we review the history of democratic countries, we see that crisis and deficit are repeated over the years, which raises a critical question. Is democracy in crisis or is this the permanent state of things? Is it not that there is a type of democracy whose central devices create crisis and deficit as its results rather than defects?

Leonardo Avritzer and Boaventura de Sousa Santos posit this idea in Extending the Democratic Canon (2004). Indeed, the predominant idea of democracy in the modern world is founded on the election of representatives and the limitation of direct participation of citizens. In this design it is maintained that common people do not have an interest in policy, as they are busy with their individual lives. If citizens did have interest in democracy, it would be problematic because people in mass societies often look uncritically to a leader to satisfy their primary needs. On the other hand, it is assumed that public policies are complicated and that a majority of the public is incapable of understanding
what specialized individuals do in policy-making. Therefore, the best thing is that common people do not participate directly in those subjects, and that they leave the decisions and their implementation to those who have the interest, the temperament and the capacity. Consequently, democracy is only a blueprint of the best procedures for free competition between elites for the popular vote, and to decide who gets the power to arrange the priorities of the government.

In this context, it is not surprising that the people do not participate, that legislators and governing bodies are remote, and that problems and their solutions often do not have anything to do with what the citizenry want. But, is this a defect, or, as Pierre Bourdieu argues in *Delegation and Political Fetishization* (1984), the logical consequence of a political form that turn representatives into Oracle-like figures who attempt to sedate the public with cryptic language?

Of course, there is another history of theories and social practices that present alternatives to this restricted vision of democracy. These theories maintain that democracy is a form of life based on the affirmation of the equality of individuals, on the importance of open dialogue to identify the most important questions that are common to everyone, and on the activity necessary to make effective and concrete decisions. These theories and practices do not accept that representational democracy excludes direct political participation nor that regulated procedures (indispensable in limiting dictatorial abuses) are more important than what they make possible. Instead these theories show that the technical complexities of public affairs, when they are genuine and not merely an excuse to exclude those legitimately interested, can still work collectively as long as suitable contexts are generated. They create processes like assemblies, where citizens can talk publicly about previously silenced problems; they invite joyful action, and they develop creative and effective solutions.

These alternative theories and practices respond to the criticism of the democratic deficit and the crisis of representation with a strong experimentalism. They look to extend and to deepen an effective equality and freedom as much in the state space as in the social one, shifting a restricted democracy to a participating democracy.

In order to clarify the experimental democracy proposed by Avritzer and Santos (2004), I propose to think of the *experimental* as both an experiment and an experience at the same time. This means that democracy is a voluntary intervention around solving a problem or to make the desires of the public concrete. It also means that democracy achieves objective and subjective transformations based on the production and the intelligent use of resources in a non-routine manner. This form of democracy has a laboratory approach in which we search consciously and practically. This means to apply, put to the test and modify social nature, which, of course, is not “natural” but rather material and imaginary institutions that have become suspended, consolidated a social order in which some win and others lose. The inherently conflictual nature of democracy turns this experimentalism into a somewhat messy practice in which the scientists, the common people that work with these materials and changing rules, are always rooted in a history and a place, and implicated in such a way that the effects of the action are as much about their environment as it is about themselves.
Democratic experiments are like a matrix, which, liberally modifying what Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright say in *Deepening Democracy* (2003), combines different aspects: (a) inclusion of people who are involved with the problems being worked out, (b) deliberation over the characteristics and solutions of alternatives, (c) fairness in the distribution of any given resource, (d) effectiveness in the implementation of decisions and, (d) creativity in reflection and action. Because of their characteristics, democratic experiments are variable. There is no unique model from which you can derive cases but rather they are integral experiences, each with its own life. If we return to the linguistic roots of the word experiment, we see that it has two meanings. In Spanish and other languages, the word *experimentar* means to experiment and to experience.

In this article I will present the opinions of participants from two such experiments which happened in Rosario during and after the socio-economic crisis that exploded in Argentina in December of 2001: neighborhood assemblies and participatory budgeting (PB). December 2001 is a key moment in Argentina’s history. Rather than a mere crisis of government, in the Gramscian sense it was an organic crisis of the country that encompassed economic, political and cultural subjectivities. During the crisis, people demonstrated in the streets and central plazas of cities across the country, demanding changes to a stagnant economy, extremely lack of care and frivolous politics that were detached from actual people’s lives. After declaring a national state of emergency, which had the paradoxical result of massive numbers of residents taking to the streets on the 19th and 20th of December, President Fernando De la Rúa resigned his post, opening a period of state crisis that saw five presidents in one week.

During that time, there was widespread looting and political repression that left more than 30 dead. Self-organized assemblies were formed simultaneously in cities around the country to discuss local and national problems. People chanted, “¡que se vayan todos!”: may all political leaders leave. The forceful withholding of bank deposits during the crisis and the scarcity and increase in the price of consumer goods combined with lack of government response clearly showed the failure of Argentina’s economic model. In the streets, there was a combination of excitement, uncertainty and fear.

It was in the context of the December crisis that the self-organized neighborhood assemblies burst into existence in Argentina’s urban centres, with the majority happening in Buenos Aires and Rosario. The assemblies boomed during February and March of 2002, had a period of stability for about a year, and by May 2003, started to disappear from the public scene. In the words of Hector, an assembly participant from Rosario, the neighborhood assemblies were a heterogeneous mosaic of people and interests. In the assemblies neighbors directly expressed demands based on social needs that countered the representative political system and the seizure of private finances. Assembly participants found themselves talking together in the streets. They searched for diverse solutions to their own demands, creating political reforms, implementing bartering clubs, assembling "escraches”¹ to banks and politicians, fundraising for community initiatives, and organizing

---
¹ Escrache is the name given in Argentina to a type of demonstration in which a group of activists go to the home or workplace of someone they wish to denounce for different reasons, in order to influence public opinion.
street festivals. The assemblies deeply criticized the established government, explicitly searched for a horizontal political structures outside the state and tried to create a permanent discussion about their own rules and functioning, as well as their objectives and forms of resistance.

The second variation in democracy that we will discuss here is the participatory budget (PB), which was not born in Argentina, but in Porto Alegre, Brazil, under the Workers’ Party in 1989. Through PB, the municipal government promotes direct citizen participation in the presentation of demands for projects and services through neighborhood councils. Later, council follows through with projects, based on the amounts of money resident representatives allocate to each. The PB process takes place throughout the budget year. Rosario has been governed by the Socialist Party since 1989, and talks about implementing PB have taken place for several years. After the crisis of December 2001, municipal leaders launched a pilot PB project that began in May 2002. The following year, the municipal council made PB a permanent project, which has continued each year and is still ongoing.

I will not enter in to a discussion of the complex conditions, motivations and actions expressed in the two democratic spaces I describe here2, as they are fundamentally different. One is self-organized and the other is organized by the municipal government. In this article, I want to focus on certain questions posed by participants, regarding direct participation3. I also want to focus on the effects of direct participation, which show that democracy does not need to be flat, boring and irrelevant.

**First Variation: The Neighbourhood Assemblies**

Hector considers that the mosaic of neighborhood assemblies (NA) that sprang up around Rosario in early 2002 were a symptom of a deep process, a change of political culture, a break, “a turnaround”:

...it was not an instantaneous thing. One came out for an emotional purpose. In my personal case, after two or three of participating a new political understanding was born in me (...) the assembly blows my mind, especially when one submerges

---


3 The majority of the interviews of participants of the neighbourhood assemblies were done by Martín Carné (see Carné 2005). I conducted additional semi structured interviews for my doctoral thesis (see Ford 2008), which also included participatory and non-participatory observation over the period of three years (from 2004 to 2006).
himself in that irreplaceable and unrepeatable experience that is the collective construction of deliberations.

He thinks that with the passing of time...

The assemblies have decelerated but the deliberation has reached, far and wide throughout organizations that were previously repelled by it. Now you see that everything is resolved by way of assembly.

Dante, a participant from Arroyito, another Rosario neighbourhood, agrees:

People will come together for any reason and make an assembly. Perhaps it is the thought, but they make assemblies and function like assemblies. For issues that need specific actions, the assemblies work.

In groups of people who did not participate, many suggest that because the neighbourhood assemblies decayed after a year, they failed. Luis, another member, failure is a relative concept:

Upon what do I measure failure? I gained a friendly group of companions. In that sense, the assemblies did not fail. Now if at any given moment it were said we are established and we are going to grow and promote that this district has its own council, what can I say, it failed.

For Alberto, the assemblies signaled a deep change in attitudes about political passivity during the 1990s, which took a new turn during the rebellion of December 2001:

... it is true, the assemblies fizzled out and are no longer the same, but something remained... The good thing about this is that when the State decreed a state of emergency [in December of 2001], people took to the street. At another time people would have immediately retreated into their homes. Today it is the other way around, that is the change.

Liliana noted that the NA made her a different person:

For me it meant I returned to the same place where I was before, but in a different manner. I was tired of this thing of more of the same, in which everything repeats itself. When I was told to go to the union instead of the assembly I wanted to try something else, to experience what was going on. And now I feel that I’ve returned to the union as a changed person.

This ‘one way or another’ approach⁴ is highly relevant to the assemblies:

... for example, thinking that this process could happen in a more horizontal manner, which is more difficult, but possible, decisions can be made more collectively, the about revocable mandates comes up. Many other things come up, too. ... And I wasn’t the only one that noticed what could be possible, but rather it

⁴ ‘One way or another’ is distinct from Leonardo Sciascia’s thinking in his novel Todo Modo (which was made into a film of the same name). Todo modo speaks of a secret society of powerful actors who make sweeping decisions about Italian politics over the course of a weekend, hidden away in a secret location owned by the Church; these characters are pathetic but harmful. ‘One way or another’ speaks to multiple public circles formed by common people who find that they gain power when they work together through assemblies to make decisions about issues that affect their daily lives.
seems to me that I returned to a union where a great deal of the people were impacted in the same way.

Pablo, who is rather like Luis, but from a different ideological perspective, also thinks the question of the failure in terms of the goal pursued:

> If you see [the assembly] as solely about objective we set out with, it failed. In that sense the assemblies could not fulfill their mandate. But they served to put the political class into a state of alert and desperation. Forcing them, for a time, to change their position and to pay attention to the demands. Not to fulfill them, but at least to have to pay attention to them. The other objective, the raising of consciousness - at different levels of commitment - many people acquired.”

Héctor, who was present in the conversation with Pablo, raises a different point that starts a new dialogue:

> Héctor: “On this point permit me to make a comment. It is important to be conscious that some questions don’t arise from the best base, because they come from the original idea that the assemblies failed. The assemblies did not dissolve because they failed. Historical dynamics indicate that it had to happen.”

> Pablo: “The assemblies had no continuity and they were not successful. They did not prevail, did not impose a project. Why? There are many reasons.”

> Héctor: “This where our thoughts differ. He thinks that [the assemblies] did not prevail, I believe they did. They successfully expressed a symptom. I do not know if the conscious objective was to impose a project - although many deliberators of the assembly suggested that. It was a struggle to impose a project. The assemblies were at a breaking point, not at the level of political reform because that demands another political culture, but rather at the level of subjectivity, which is prerequisite for political culture.”

Despite their differences of opinion, both Hector and Pablo agree that “the assemblies left a legacy or the lesson that people assembling has possibilities.” According to Carlos,

> ...the things that remained... are not that we lived a fantasy. We lived a reality. Between the people who participated in the assemblies we generated connections of solidarity. No one who participated in the assemblies remembers it as a negative experience in their life, quite the opposite, and in that I am very optimistic. I believe that the experience left a big mark on society (...), the experience of the assemblies has not finished. In any case there has been ebb but at some moment this will re-appear. In fact, none of the people who participated in the assemblies returned home as they had left.

Carlos remarks on a couple of concrete things that we noted so as not to lose sight of the fact that the assemblies leave potentialities and materiality, subjective changes, new ways of organizing, bread and books.

> The assembly of Plaza Fausto managed to supply the Gastón Gori Library, which already has three hundred volunteers. The assembly of la Plaza el Ombú produces bread, maintains a community garden, others have managed to start certain types of micro credit systems.
Of the many great projects of the Political Reformation produced by the assemblies, none were shaped through the representative route of democracy. Some actors think that this initiative was a failure because the assemblies did not produce a political and economic revolution, nor did they establish a new order. In other initiatives, there is more of a sense of success. Supporters argue that the assemblies put the representative system on alert, that politicians can no longer do what they wish - at least not in the same way as usual - because people will take to the streets. The assemblies created a social consciousness, the power of people when they are in solidarity, to think and to do. Assembly participants made a special kind of friend in the process: not a friend for all time, not friends from a local militant group, but civic friends. And together, they produced a profound, subjective break.

Second Variation: The Rosario Participatory Budget

We now turn our attention to the other experiment with participatory democracy, the Rosario Participatory Budget (PB). Francisco describes how he came to be a participant in the PB:

One necessity that really we had in our district was not having a neighborhood council that really worked or one that could advocate neighbor’s grievances. Seeing the urgent necessity that we had, I thought ‘well, if I can connect myself with people of the municipality through the PB, I can participate from inside trying to advocate for my issues and to raise the visibility the improvements that we needed for our neighborhood.

The works and services that are decided upon are supposed to be completed within the next budgetary cycle in which they are proposed. In reality, sometimes projects are completed, and sometimes there are delays, modifications or breaches. An example of a breach is that the decision to implement a public park in a Rosario district was never verified on the part of the municipality and there were no official explanations. In informal conversations, municipal civil servants agreed that it was a badly conceived project, because it involved a plot of private property and the multi-annual expenditure of large amounts of money. Modifications to citizen-approved projects are more common, due to the fact that the projects are sometimes vague or that the offices of the municipality have the last word. The process is ultimately technical as much political.

Delays also are common, and there are multiple causes: technical questions, political disinterest, budgetary shortfalls, and problems of communication between the intervening state bodies. In all the cases, the participants indicate that the main source of dissatisfaction is the fact that nobody explains to them the reasons for an incomplete project, including the very fact that a project is incomplete (many people are willing to understand if given acceptable reasons). For sure, when these breaches accumulate, with or without explanation, the participants are demoralized. When the decisions are fulfilled, the city makes investments with a much more intelligent territorial distribution than if they were done in a technocratic way. Participants also feel satisfied and really involve themselves in that.

Thus, the PB process not only facilitates collective decisions on public works and services, but also links people who can act on public questions that exceed, and sometimes
contradict, the aims of the municipal State. These links are one of main products of the PB, because they create potential for collective action and also provide space for public dialogue—which otherwise can be very limited. To meet people and to be recognized, to be able to speak, to feel that the time is used wisely and also to entertain oneself are all important features of participation in the Rosario PB.

Participants’ experiences of the PB deeply changed them. Pitu understands that participatory spaces change people’s ways of acting:

...the decision to explore and not to have prejudices, is amazing. For example take Francisco, who gets angry and leaves. There are people who say they boycott because we argue at the PB, but they would be boycotting if they didn’t go. The question is why does Francisco continue going to the PB? Because he thinks that there are things that can be changed, he can get information, participating provides ties with other neighbourhoods, and he himself has changed, he was very domineering. He changed. We also are less likely to ridicule other people’s opinions, something that was more common at the beginning of the process.

Mabel also talks about how things are learned through involvement in the PB:

Through the PB I learned a whole lot of things. For example, I learned to create a budget, to know what Secretariat [municipal department] it must delivered to, many times. I learned that not knowing, not being informed is perhaps the reason that one remains where they are, and we want our district to improve but we did not know where to go.

As one learns to participate, one changes how one acts. Olga sees that:

People participate indirectly, because they involve themselves, they will confront a neighbor who is throwing garbage, they are participating, that is why I say I believe the people have another consciousness, the people are ridding themselves of the fear of the dictatorship we once had.

Through that participation, something practical is learned. Olga continues,

The people who participate more, despite what little they have, begin to learn, they begin to open up and their minds open up in respect to what they have a right to do, and what they don’t have a right to do.

Some participants point to a great change in the use of dialogue as opposed to violence to demand the need for solutions. This leads one to think that there is not an inevitable relation between needs and violence but rather between needs and (search for) satisfaction, with means at one’s disposal. It seems important to me to observe this because is common to link “needs” with “violence” and “lack of needs” with “freedom.” A corollary is often made that those with more needs are more violent, and that politics should be undertaken by those who do not have ‘needs.’ It is commonplace to say contemptuously “These people will never change”, or more piously “Those poor people, they are incapable of doing anything else”. These are examples of conceptual petrifactions that, made with good or bad intentions, have the identical effect of confining people to a single possible form of expression and being. But what is possible to see in examples of democratic experiments I present here is that between violence and non-violence, there are fluid transitions that
depend, as Gianpaolo Baiocchi (2003) has remarked, more on the contexts of the action than of the people.

The issue at hand is not natural ‘essences’ but relations and processes, as José shows:

We wanted to work and the way in which we were going to acquire things was through a pacifist manner. ...When we first began, we kept running into road blocks and you say to yourself “What am I supposed to do?” (...) Now, thank God, through the participatory meetings we have a community kitchen, as well as a pharmacy that we did not have in the neighbourhood before.

What our actors indicate corroborates changes described by Josh Lerner and Daniel Schugurensky, who soon after investigating, by means of interviews, the personal transformations undergone by delegates of the PP of Rosario in 2005. Lerner and Schugurensky found a 20% increase in participants’ self-described learning and change, going from “modest” before participating to “high” after a year of participation (Lerner and Schugurensky 2007). That average improvement intensified in inverse relation with individual resources, showing a quantifiable tendency in the redistribution of resources in the PB. Lerner and Schugurensky summarize that those participants who had not participated actively in the community before the PB learned much more that those that already had participated. Specifically, (a) delegates living outside downtown underwent almost twice the amount of learning and change than those inhabitants of the center, (b) delegates without university education learned more than those who had attended university, (c) delegates under 50 years of age learned more than those over 50 years, (d) women learned a little more than men, and (e) inequalities between demographic groups diminished through participation in the PB.

The observations and interviews I conducted for my doctoral dissertation, along with my own participation in the PB make me further believe in the real transformative nature of these processes. Changes are not automatic, but rather lineal; they are effects of collective action while at the same time unpredictable and sometimes contradictory. They are transformations that depend on the structural conditions, on political processes, of histories and personal commitments, as well as pure chance. They are not arithmetic; they are examples of ‘living’ politics.

Effects of the Democratic Experimentalism

In this paper we have reviewed two democratic variations from the viewpoint of their own participants. Is there something common that we can identify in them? Without doubt, they produce effects. They are not necessarily fun movements to be part of, nor are they inconsequential, either. Both movements were rich experiences in material, organizational, social and subjective achievements.

Libraries, commons, bakeries, magazines, community centers are the achievements of the neighbourhood assemblies (NA). An important characteristic of the NA is that they are mainly autonomous. As Luis says, this autonomy can be considered an alternative to the capitalist mode of production. However, the organizational difficulties the NA faced, be they
financial, technical or cultural, are not always overcome. In the PB, the material legacy is more evident. The distribution of the municipal investments is more equitable, and therefore more socially equitable, than if budget allocations had been done in the usual technocratic manner.

The organizational effects - evident in the assemblies and also visible in the meetings of PB delegates - are derived only in the exercise of horizontal organization. From there emerge rules of thematic, discursive entry and decision. The fundamental rule of both processes is: all the rules can be changed if the participants consider it necessary. Besides rules, the horizontal organization requires an existential positioning, because the organization lives in its members. The democratic experiments are fundamentally about something different from what is established. Participating requires a permanent disposition to see and to dispute vertical tendencies that abound on all sides, including within the participants themselves.

The fact that people don’t remain home and they don’t remain silent anymore is a great socio-political change. In this same formulation a part of recent Argentine history is contained: before people did not leave their homes, people shut themselves up, but no longer. In addition, the specific and novel thing that the assemblies extracted and contribute to the country is the spirit of asambleísmo, the idea that “the experience of people getting together has possibilities.” It’s not just about going out when you have a grievance, nor is it just getting together with people: it is the purposeful going out and getting together in an assembly. This asambleísmo is also recognized by PB delegates, who are usually contained within the established PB process but at the same time recognize that going out and getting together in the streets is an important mobilizing resource.

The greatest coincidence between assembly members and PB delegates is that these experiences have brought them great subjective changes. In personal terms, “nobody returns home the way they left”. They gain friends, they network, they learn, they transform attitudes, they act to fulfill objectives, they feel many emotions. For some the experience was a great satisfaction; for others, it was the start of a new life.

As we see, these situations are very productive and clearly different, in their form and lived experience, from most conventional political activities, showing that there are practical and nonviolent responses to the dismissive criticisms of irrelevance and shallowness often raised against making representative democracy.

How it can be, then, that democratic experiments like the NA or PB in Rosario are an exception rather than a rule, and when they do happen they receive skeptical, or very little attention? Undoubtedly, representational politics deeply impregnate not only institutional structures but also the way people think and feel. The explicit rejection to direct democracy established in the Constitution is reproduced in public opinion and particularly in the mass media, which criticize the power of elected representatives but without questioning their

---

5 Article 22 of the Argentinean Constitution establishes that the people can only deliberate through their representatives. With different wordings, this principle can be observed in many liberal constitutions around the world.
central and exclusive location in decision-making. In addition, the common perception that we citizens have of our own political possibilities and abilities for political action is that our power is almost nil, even though this assumption has seldom been tested.

In addition to this “representative submissiveness”, democratic experimentalism confronts the double internal challenge of experimenting and being democratic: do we really want to get out of the inertia and voluntarily transform social reality? Are we capable of understanding the necessary tensions that are present in a joint movement that brings different people to the same space? Are we capable of processing this frictions in a non-destructive way, and perhaps enjoying them? Do we do what is necessary so that everyone who wants to be part of the discussion is allowed, and not just our friends? Can we produce comprehensible and relevant information? Can we freely argue and listen to ourselves? Are we able to establish and accept criteria for more equitable distribution of resources? Do we do what is necessary to go from discussions to concrete actions? Do we inspire ourselves, fostering original ideas and encouraging individual creativity? The difficult answers to these questions show the improbability of democratic experimentalism and, at the same time, the treasure it that can be.

References


Echavarría, Corina. 1999. Democratización del espacio público municipal mediante la implementación de instituciones de gestión participativa. Tesis de Maestría, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba / IIFAP.


Rupil, Claudio. 2006. La iniciativa del Presupuesto Participativo en el Municipio de Rosario. Semántica, sentido, expectativas. Tesis de Maestría, FLACSO-Rosario.


Participatory Democracy and Political Learning: Lessons from the Brazilian Experience

Lígia Helena Hahn Lüchmann
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

Introduction

Over the past few decades, Brazilian society has witnessed the multiplication of institutional spaces of political participation. Two models stand out: Public Policy Management Councils¹ and Participatory Budgeting (PB). The PB is an alternative model for public resource management that includes civil society in the discussions and decisions regarding municipal budgets. The PB is a participatory program, which, unlike the councils established by law, depends on political-institutional projects, and will, for its implementation.

The history of Participatory Budgeting in Brazilian municipalities is closely related to the Workers Party², most notably since the experience of the city of Porto Alegre³, which became a model for several municipalities⁴ throughout the country, including a number in the neighboring state of Santa Catarina. The basic premise of the PB is that society must collectively deliberate on the priorities of each neighborhood, region and city, and actively

---

¹ Public Policy Management Councils are councils established by national law that have a defined structured and systemic character. They are found at the municipal, state and national levels and are designed to guarantee the universalization of social rights. They include Health Care, Social Welfare and councils for the protection of Child and Adolescent rights.

² Several parties did, in different ways, implement participatory mechanisms, in some cases even before re-democratization (the city of Lages serves as paradigmatic example). However, the centrality of the Worker’s Party (PT - Partido dos Trabalhadores) in the process is a consequence of its programmatic emphasis on “popular democracy”, which has become the guiding principle for a “worker-oriented way of governing” (Meneguello 1989). Participatory mechanisms were established after the 1988 municipal elections with the PT victories in the capital and other cities of the state of São Paulo (São Bernardo do Campo, Santo André, Diadema, Campinas, Piracicaba and Santos) and in the capital cities of Rio Grande do Sul and Espírito Santo.

³ Established in 1989 during the PT administration.

⁴ The proliferation of Participatory budgeting policies in Brazil and other countries (Uruguay, Argentina, etc.) occurs to the degree to which leftist forces have gained political power. Some experiences with PBs have been carried out by other parties or coalitions, involving adaptations and/or specificities that bear relationship to the different political programs and interests.
participate in the execution and monitoring of the public budget. One important dimension of the participatory experience is its pedagogical character, for which it may be considered a practical “school of citizenship”.

Using data from the PB of the municipality of Biguaçu in Santa Catarina, corroborated by data from other PB experiences in the state, I intend to sketch out a preliminary analysis of the impact of this kind of participation on political and social learning processes. For this I will draw on data extracted from interviews with PB participants and coordinators, from 47 questionnaires completed by PB delegates and council members in 2007, and from focus groups with PB delegates and council members in 2008. These focus groups were designed to elicit, through debates and group interaction, the perceptions, representations and opinions regarding the likely impact of political participation on the political learning of participants in representative roles.

Because it involves many different variables, the learning process may take on different meanings and express itself in a variety of dimensions (i.e. individual, organizational and social). The individual dimension encompasses different levels or degrees going from the acquisition of new information to, finally at the highest level, the development of the critical reflexive capacity that is at the root of what has been referred to as the “post-conventional” type of moral orientation (Fedozzi 2002). In its social dimensions, learning involves, among other things, the establishment of collective action and trust relations, both of which constitute fundamental social capital for democratic societies (Putnam 1996). While this paper focuses mainly on evaluating the impacts of participation on the political learning of PB participants (based on their own evaluations), it also considers the possibility of social learning, given that the PB does exert some sort of impact on the local collective relations.

Participation, Education and Democracy

Democracy requires a certain level of political competence by its citizens, that is to say, some degree of knowledge and commitment to the common good. However, as Dahl (1992) suggests, empirical evidence shows that only a minority of citizens are actively interested and engaged in political life. According to the author, if we were to lower our expectations by replacing the ideal of “good citizen” by that of “good-enough” or “adequate citizen”, there would still be at least three factors limiting the development of civic competence: a) changes in the scale of political decisions (as they concern issues affecting

---

5 Derived from research carried out in 2007/2008 and coordinated by Lüchmann and Borba on three different PB experiences in the state of Santa Catarina and several management councils: “Participação e exclusão nos Conselhos Gestores e Orçamentos Participativos” (Cnpq/Funpesquisa) and “Participação e representação nos Conselhos Gestores e Orçamentos Participativos” (Pibic).

6 Two meetings were held: the first with delegates and council members who had been PB representatives for over four years (whom we call veterans) – attended by 8 people (4 women and 4 men), the second with delegates and council members who had been involved with the PB for approximately one year (whom we call newcomers) – attended by 7 people (4 men and 3 women).

7 Anchored on the theories of Piaget, Kohlberg and Habermas.

8 Standards for good citizenship are too demanding to serve as criteria for the performance of real citizens in our present world” (Dahl 1992, 48).
increasing numbers of people), b) the increasing complexity of public problems and policies, and c) new communication technologies which, while providing new knowledge and information routes, also place new demands on the citizens’ capacity to act.

In light of the above, we can consider experiences of direct participation and decentralization of public policies as alternatives for political learning. In effect, the recognition of the normative dimensions of democracy and the criticism of politics being reduced to a competitive individualist logic have led to a renewed articulation between citizenship and popular sovereignty, and the development of a participatory conception of democracy that is grounded in broad citizen participation in matters of collective interest. This alternative presupposes not only greater legitimacy and political efficacy, but also human development through participatory and deliberative processes.

Despite differences and theoretical variations, the pedagogical dimension of participation appears in some form in the normative conceptions of democracy, whether in their emphasis on the dialogic character of public spaces as formers of opinion and will (Habermas 1995; Cohen 1997) - an alternative to the aggregative perspective of democracy - or in their belief that participatory processes promote social learning and citizenship development both at individual and collective levels, a fundamental requirement to the disruption of the subordination and social injustice cycle (Pateman 1992). Participation creates a new cycle, characterized by the direct relationship between citizen participation, changes in political consciousness and decreasing social inequalities (MacPherson 1978).

While this type of argument, rooted in the contribution of authors such as Tocqueville, Rousseau and J. S. Mill, has been warmly welcomed by those who aim for a democratic society, they are also particularly difficult to prove. According to Mansbridge (1995:1):

\[
\text{Participation does make better citizens. I believe it, but I can't prove it. And neither can anyone else. The kinds of subtle changes in character that come about, slowly, from active, powerful participation in democratic decisions cannot easily be measured with the blunt instruments of social science. Those who have actively participated in democratic governance, however, often feel that the experience has changed them. And those who observe the active participation of others often believe that they see its long run effects on the citizens' character.}
\]

Indeed, as Mansbridge notes, it is very difficult to examine the nature of the changes resultant from participatory processes, largely due to the complexity and multidimensionality of such processes. In recent years a variety of research projects have been undertaken to increase our understanding of the pedagogical dimension of participatory democracy, especially participatory budgeting (e.g. Schugurensky 2002 and 2006, Lerner and Schugurensky 2007, Talpin 2008).

As a contribution to this collective effort, I conducted a study on the PB in some municipalities of the southern Brazilian state of Santa Catarina. Its main purpose was to explore the political and civic learning acquired by the participants.
Participatory Budgeting and Learning: The Case of Biguaçu

Most information discussed in this chapter relates to the experience of participatory budgeting conducted in Biguaçu, a small town (55,000 inhabitants) located in the meso-region of Florianópolis. Its recent urban growth, proximity to the state capital (Florianópolis) and the larger municipality of São José, as well as the increasing concentration of industries within its boundaries, have worked to turn Biguaçu into a predominantly urban municipality. This new configuration has had an important impact on the dynamics of the PB, as regards both the quality of demands and the institutional design adopted by the city. The PB was implemented in early 2001 by the coalition “Compromisso com o povo” (Commitment to the People), a party alliance between the PMDB 9 and the PT. The mayoral candidate was chosen from the ranks of the PMDB, while the PT selected the person second-in-command. In 2003, when the PT broke with the municipal administration 10, the PMDB took over management of the PB and has since promoted significant changes in its institutional design. The PB operates today through the following levels or phases:

1. **Community Assemblies**: Held during the first year of each municipal administration to determine the priorities of each community and the issues to be dealt with throughout the administration.

2. **General Assemblies of PB Municipal Council**: Held every year to formulate proposals to be discussed and approved in the Regional Assemblies. The public administration drafts a suggested set of proposals for each issue based on the priorities selected in the community assemblies, which is then sent on to the Participatory Budget Council (PBC) where it is subjected to alterations and voted on by council members who are duly exercising their representative functions.

3. **Regional Assembly**: The PB team, joined by the mayor and municipal secretaries, meets with residents of each of the thirteen geographic regions of Biguaçu. The population can either approve the PB Council’s proposal or put together a new one observing the technical criteria established by the PB and the PB Council Statute.

4. **Election of representatives**: Representatives for each region and community are elected in the regional assemblies. They participate in defining the services needed by the community and are responsible for getting the community’s claims and wishes across to the government. Each region elects a representative (and a substitute) council member, as well as delegates to represent communities.

5. **Council members’ and delegates’ inauguration ceremony**: Council members and delegates are elected for a one-year term, which can be extended or reduced if the community so decides. At the inauguration ceremony, representatives are

---

9 *Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro*, or Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement, a centrist party.

10 During these conflicts, the PT accused the PMDB of lack of commitment to the PB and failure to execute services that had been requested through the due course of the process. (Nobre 2007).
introduced to the results reached at the regional assemblies and provided with a copy of the PB statute.

6. **Project approval**: At the end of every year, a report containing the social demands defined for each issue is sent to the Municipal Chamber for the knowledge of city councilpersons. Once these points have been approved by the legislative house, the municipal administration can begin implementing the services that have been requested.

7. **Distribution of investment portfolios**: After the requested services have been approved, the PB team builds investment portfolios for the following year, which include all investments for all areas and regions. Each of the council members and delegates receives a copy of the portfolio, which is a way of keeping track of and monitoring the ongoing works.

8. **Execution of services**

9. **Rendering of accounts**: Accounts of the services indicated in the investment portfolios of the previous year must be rendered by April 20th every year.

This participatory format shows several specificities when compared with other experiences, particularly that of Porto Alegre\(^\text{11}\). Although I am unable to render a full and detailed description here, at least two distinct characteristics of the PB dynamic of the municipality of Biguaçu are worth pointing out: (a) the centralization of the demands discussions regarding requested services around the government team (mayor and municipal secretaries), and (b) a rigid territorial division that hinders more general discussion of city-wide issues. However, despite the many problems and limitations of this model, the delegates and council members who took part in this study rated the impact of participation on their own political learning as very positive.

**Participatory Budgeting and Political Learning in Biguaçu: Main Findings**

In discussing the role and impacts of the PB in developing moral consciousness within the processes leading to the post-conventional or critical citizenship stage – characterized by the subjects’ reflexive capacity and use of the values of justice, equality, tolerance and freedom to question social norms and standards\(^\text{12}\) Fedozzi (2002) raises the following hypothesis:

The PB may be performing the role of *alternative institution of secondary socialization* primarily for individuals with lower *educational capital*, since those with a higher educational level supposedly (though not necessarily) have access to

\(^{11}\) These differences appear not only in the institutional design of the PB, but in several aspects such as government team, particular associative tradition of each municipality, political-institutional structure, volume of resources, etc.

\(^{12}\) The author describes three kinds of citizen consciousness (pre-citizenship, conformist and critical citizenship) corresponding to the three levels of moral consciousness: *preconventional*, characterized by dependence, punishment and instrumental hedonism; *conventional*, characterized by obedience to legal norms; and *post-conventional*, oriented towards a transformation process guided by universal ethnic principles (Fedozzi, 2002, p.151).
Secondary socialization concerns the learning and socialization processes that afford those individuals already socialized during childhood (primary socialization) the possibility of insertion into new sectors and relations of the social world, making up to some extent for the lack of resources and limitations imposed by their family and social contexts.

In that case, the creation of new political spaces like the PB seems vital in altering the socioeconomic factors determining participation and political learning. As we know, just as participation is conditioned to some degree by the dimension of the individual's centrality in the social system (Milbraith 1965, Verba and Nie 1987), the process of political learning is also positively correlated to economic and educational resources. It is generally understood that higher status individuals show a greater interest in politics, are better informed, better equipped with resources and abilities, more aware of the importance of politics, and have a greater sense of duty and political efficacy (Verba and Nie 1987).

However, other factors intervene in political participation and learning, notably structures of political opportunity like the PB and the identity networks or contexts in which the individuals are inserted (types of socialization, networks of participation, etc.) (Pizzorno 1985). The PB has, in that sense and in some way, been performing the role of secondary institution.

As a number of studies have shown (Avritzer 2002, Borba and Lüchmann 2007, Fedozzi 1996, Abers, 1997), PB experiences are able to mobilize the poorest sectors of the population, which disproves assessments pointing to an immediate relationship between poverty and non-participation. Despite the marked variations between different PB experiences, Porto Alegre can be taken as a reference. According to Chaves (2000), the socioeconomic profile of PB participants indicates that, despite diversity, most fall under the category “popular”: a significant portion has a family income of up to three minimum wages (39.6%) and level of education up to elementary school (53.9%, including 5.5% with no education).

Table 1 shows data on income and education level of the PB council members of four Santa Catarina municipalities. The numbers appear to be relatively evenly distributed among the different education levels, except in the city of Guaraciaba where the number of representatives that are barely able to read and write or have incomplete elementary education is remarkable (66.66%)13. Also worthy of note is a relatively dominant 1 to 3 minimum wage income. Generally speaking, the PBs can be acknowledged for promoting the political inclusion of low-income (though not no-income) and low-education sectors.

For the PB to be duly recognized as a “school of citizenship”, its inclusion of the poorest sectors must somehow compensate for the social inequalities that are at the root of cognitive and cultural asymmetry, and promote learning that can lead to further stages of political participation and social change.

13 Which can be explained by its lower income levels and general level of education when comparison with the rest of the municipalities.
To examine the learning acquired by PB members, I will draw on the four categories used by Lerner and Schugurensky (2007) to describe Rosario’s participatory budget: knowledge, skills, attitudes and practices. I will also examine the impact of PB on the development of social capital, to the degree that it affects relationships of trust and stimulates local associative practices.

Table 1 – Education and Income Level of Santa Catarina PB Council Members (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biguaçu</td>
<td>0,0</td>
<td>37,0</td>
<td>19,6</td>
<td>8,7</td>
<td>26,1</td>
<td>0,0</td>
<td>8,7</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concordia</td>
<td>0,0</td>
<td>20,0</td>
<td>20,0</td>
<td>20,0</td>
<td>6,67</td>
<td>33,33</td>
<td>0,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criciúma</td>
<td>4,0</td>
<td>16,0</td>
<td>12,0</td>
<td>4,0</td>
<td>28,0</td>
<td>16,0</td>
<td>20,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guaraciaba</td>
<td>0,0</td>
<td>66,66</td>
<td>11,11</td>
<td>3,70</td>
<td>11,11</td>
<td>7,41</td>
<td>0,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income (in minimum wages)</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>No Income</th>
<th>Less than 1</th>
<th>1 to 3</th>
<th>3 to 5</th>
<th>5 to 10</th>
<th>Over 10</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biguaçu</td>
<td>0,0</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>56,8</td>
<td>27,3</td>
<td>6,8</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concordia</td>
<td>0,0</td>
<td>13,33</td>
<td>26,67</td>
<td>33,33</td>
<td>20,0</td>
<td>6,67</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criciúma</td>
<td>0,0</td>
<td>8,0</td>
<td>44,0</td>
<td>20,0</td>
<td>8,0</td>
<td>16,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guaraciaba</td>
<td>0,0</td>
<td>18,52</td>
<td>22,22</td>
<td>37,04</td>
<td>11,11</td>
<td>7,41</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The applied interviews and focus groups showed that PB participation contributed to changing participants’ perceptions, attitudes, abilities and practices. Particularly in the case of Biguaçu, a significant impact was observed on participants’ (delegates and council members) knowledge. All claimed that taking part in the PB had led them to become more familiar with their own neighborhood and region as well as with other people from their community and city. They also claimed that, unlike in previous administrations, they now knew who the mayor and municipal secretaries were. As regards knowledge of the public budget planning process, an interesting fact was observed in many interviews and focus groups. While long-term PB participants seemed to know the rules and procedures better, all participants (newcomers and veterans alike) invariably claimed to know very little of the budgeting process on the whole. As far as abilities are concerned, two findings stand out. The first is an increased ability to negotiate with other districts on the priorities of each region, the second an increased capacity to confront public power in PB meetings.
Interestingly, participants from one district might decide among themselves – when made aware of more urgent demands elsewhere - to relinquish services to less privileged sectors of the population.

As regards attitudes, questionnaire data point to two dimensions. The first is interest in politics. We observed that representatives had, on average, a high interest in politics (40.4 % claimed to be very interested, while 23.4% claimed no interest at all). This is relevant especially when we compare these figures with recently collected data on the political culture of Brazil and Latin America (Moisés 1995; Baquero and Prá, 2007), which show that the majority of the population claims no interest in politics. Roughly 25% of Latin Americans are a little or very interested in politics (Latinobarómetro 2005).

Most respondents (59%) claimed their interest in politics had increased since becoming involved in the PB. “Political apathy” can therefore be understood as not necessarily a “natural behavior”, but one deriving from social and political processes (Lüchmann 2007). The second significant dimension of attitude is “subjective political efficacy” (the realization that participation can influence PB politics). In response to the question “Do you find that, in general, your participation can influence PB decisions?” A high percentage of participants (85.1%) said yes14.

As for changes in practice, one interesting tendency revealed by the focus groups and interviews concerns the institutional widening of participatory democracy. Many participants manifested a desire to expand participation not only within the PB, but into other spaces of participation. As one delegate put it, “participation is an addiction”. In some cases, the PB served as a stepping-stone to other spaces and forums such as the Management Councils or the discussion of the Municipal Directive Plan15. Further evidence of change in participants’ political practices included: (a) wider political action (beyond their own neighborhoods), (b) monitoring of services using investment portfolios, and (c) efforts to find solutions for collective problems together with the municipal authorities.

The Impact of the Participatory Budgeting on Social Capital

Beyond the impact on individual learning, participatory processes of this nature also seem to significantly bolster the social capital in terms of social organization, networks, norms and trust, facilitating coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam 1995:2). A kind of sociability grounded in criteria of trust and reciprocity, the social capital implies a rich and vibrant context of associative life, which is essential to the construction of a political institutionalality that is responsible and efficient in handling collective matters (Putnam 1996).

Trust and associativism are central characteristics of the social capital and indicators of a democratic culture. The latest developments in the field of political science define the

---

14 For more details on this indicator and the research as a whole, see Lüchmann and Borba 2007.
15 The 2001 City Statute Law requires all Brazilian municipalities with over 20,000 residents to elaborate, through a participatory process, a Directive Plan (a program that defines the municipality’s model of territorial occupation according to its social function, respecting its social, cultural, environmental and economic specificities).
Participatory Democracy and Political Learning

Hahn Lüchmann

construction of democracy as a long-term phenomenon involving the learning of norms and processes by the social actors (Krischke 2001). This learning is only possible when actors view institutions as reliable spaces where their problems can be solved. Therefore, stability presupposes trust, and trust presupposes continuity.

Although data on the PB reveal low rates of interpersonal trust (68.1% of respondents claim little or no trust in the majority of people), it is interesting to note that, in the ranking of most reliable institutions, the PB comes second only to family (87.2%) and is above the Church (see table 2), which according to a recent survey published by Latinobarômetro (2007) ranks second in Latin American preference.

Data on associations indicate that the implementation of the PB has triggered rearrangements in existing associations and the rise of new civil society organizations that are collaborative in nature and well-attuned to the government’s political stance. Therefore, notwithstanding the threat of co-optation and political control over civil society organizations, the PB, in rearranging the definition and allocation of services, has promoted the emergence of new associations organized with the purpose of articulating and pressing for demands within this new government program.

Table 2: Interpersonal and institutional trust (%)
Source: Opinion survey with Biguaçu delegates and council members – 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you trust?</th>
<th>Very much</th>
<th>Not very much</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most people</td>
<td>31,9</td>
<td>63,8</td>
<td>4,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>6,4</td>
<td>68,1</td>
<td>25,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>25,5</td>
<td>59,6</td>
<td>14,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>87,2</td>
<td>12,8</td>
<td>0,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>63,3</td>
<td>31,9</td>
<td>4,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press</td>
<td>23,9</td>
<td>58,7</td>
<td>17,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PB</td>
<td>83,0</td>
<td>17,0</td>
<td>0,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data on the relationship between associativism and PB implementation in Santa Catarina corroborate the results of research conducted in other contexts. In a comparative study of eight Brazilian municipalities, Baiocchi, et al. (2008) underline that “Our research shows that PB has a clear but limited democratizing influence on civil society. It moves civil society from clientelist to associational modes of demand-making, but does not contribute to the capacity of civil society to self-organize, at least in the short time period considered. Furthermore, the impact of PB is contingent on pre-existing configurations of civil society” (p. 913).

16 In some cases, as in Biguaçu, the PB seems to have provoked a crisis in the most critical and combative associative sectors. In the municipalities under study, there was an increase in the number of associations, mostly community (residents, neighborhoods) associations and, in rural municipalities, (i.e. Guaraciaba), agricultural cooperatives.
Based on the PB experiences of Santa Catarina, Borba and Luchmann (2007) suggest that the impacts of PB on local associative configurations indicate political learning, and link with collective practice. Due to the type of requests presented by the PB, the greatest level of association in the process happens at the community level. Whether more clientelist or combative, associations form the dominant pattern of the relations between local associations joined by the PB in each different municipality. In Criciúma and Blumenau, a typically clientelist form of community associativism has promoted a conflictive relationship between associations and the new way of organizing the public budget. On the other hand, the existence of a “citizen” or “combative” community associativism has become a factor facilitating the development of the PB, as can be seen in the cities of Guaraciaba, Chapecó and Concórdia.

Clearly, the PB can promote a change in relations between community associativism and the State, especially where these are strained. Again we will turn to the examples of Criciúma and Blumenau. In the first case, an analysis of the coverage given by the local press to the PB (Borba and Luchmann 2007) showed that associations were originally opposed to PB. In the last year of government, a change could be seen in the attitude of several local associations. Through the local press they asked that the PB be maintained regardless of who became next mayor. An ongoing study (conducted by Reidy Rolym de Moura for her doctoral thesis) found that, despite the conflicts between residents’ associations over the years the PB was active, after its extinction these associations began pressing for new participatory mechanisms to mediate relations between civil society and the state. Therefore, some data suggest that the PB experience not only influences the local associative configuration (for instance sparking the creation of new associations) but also has a pedagogical effect in that it alters the traditional standards of local associative practice.

This is a particularly salient dimension considering that we are dealing with a public which, as we saw earlier, has low socio-economic status (low levels of formal education and low income), and generally experiences greater difficulty in articulating demands and being heard. By being involved in participatory budgeting, our data shows that residents are better able to overcome the limiting effects of objective centrality (sole participation of citizens with greater political, economic and cultural resources). By adopting an institutional format that respects the spatial organization of cities into “neighborhoods” or “regions”, PB creates opportunities for residents to sustain and mobilize collective action based on geographically organized groups, such as community or residents’ associations. The PB thus contributes to the creation of new associations and spaces where citizens gather “among equals”, dispelling the apprehension and fears that commonly inhibit participation in more heterogeneous spaces. Furthermore, when actors realize that a demand, which was formulated through popular participation has been satisfied, they tend to feel “part” of the political process (political efficacy) which, in turn, can lead to empowerment and more interest for political learning.

**Final Remarks**

Participants in this study noted that they learned many things during the period in which they were active in the participatory budget. The exact extent to which such
can be attributed to the PB process is difficult to determine, because political and civic learning is affected by many other variables and settings, and by the educational and social background of participants (Fedozzi 2002). The focus group technique applied to evaluate the effects of time spent in the PB demonstrated that senior delegates and council members, despite appearing to possess greater clarity regarding PB functioning when compared to newer members, did not seem to make any particularly different evaluations of the program’s limitations nor elaborate other criticisms of it. This assessment is in accordance with the analysis by Fedozzi (2002) of the Porto Alegre PB experience. According to the author, though the PB is a learning-promoting space, therefore compatible with the notion of a “school of citizenship”, deeper changes in the social consciousness of participants “require long periods of time and are selective in their reach, particularly because each individual carries a school capital that acts as facilitator or inhibitor of learning opportunities through socialization” (p.304). In the case of Biguaçu, we also observed that the formal education level of participants makes a difference; three participants from the newcomers group had a university degree, and their level of education when joining the participatory process seems to have compensated for the larger experience of longer-term participants to the PB.

Another important element to be considered in this analysis has to do with the goals and the institutional design of the PB. The educational dimension did not appear to be an explicit goal of the programs under study, which suggests limited ability to promote collective debates among different sectors of society. Learning appeared as a by-product of participation, but was not fostered or cultivated through institutional design. Typically, the government’s actions and aims are directed at efficacy in provision, that is, in providing services and infrastructure considered as priorities by neighbours, rather than developing citizens’ political culture. This explains the lack of spaces and mechanisms (such as courses, seminars or forums) to promote the expansion and deepening of democratic knowledge, abilities, attitudes and practices that display post-conventional moral orientation. That is to say, that move the social consciousness of participants in the direction of a moral orientation grounded on the principles of justice, freedom and social equality. A kind of political learning that promotes critical citizenship, or the kind of behavior that challenges the status quo and is guided by the search to overcome and transform social relations. In the municipalities under study, sharp limitations are imposed by the government on the institutionalization of the PB as a “school of critical citizenship”.

However, despite their many limitations, participatory processes produce an impact on individual and social learning. According to Rennó (1998), “democratization accelerates a continuous cycle of mutual influence between new attitudes, new institutions, new social configurations, new conditionings and new values and beliefs” (p.78). The intrinsic relationship between political culture and political structure demands an analytic and relational approach encompassing the mutual influences and impact between political institutionality and cultural patterns. Institutional conditions trigger changes in political culture and vice-versa. Participatory experiences may either produce rearrangements that simply present traditional practices in a new guise, or may broaden the repertoire of political action and positively affect the norms, patterns and behaviors of political and social actors.
References


Civic Learning in State-Sponsored Institutions: Accounting for Variation in the British Columbia and Ontario Citizens’ Assemblies on Electoral Reform

Amy Lang
University of British Columbia

Introduction

Participatory and deliberative democrats have long argued that increasing civic and political participation produces a “democratic dividend.” They argue that, in addition to growing individual self-confidence and capacity, citizen participation in community associations, workplaces, juries, churches and political organizations gives citizens knowledge, dispositions and skills for participating in democratic political life (Mansbridge 1995; Pateman 1970; Tocqueville 1966). While there is clear empirical evidence of the correlation between civic participation and democratic attitudes and participation, it is less clear how participation in civic life produces these outcomes. Are all civic engagement experiences the same, or do they vary in terms of their ability to give people democratic knowledge, attitudes and skills? What kinds of civic experiences are most likely to enhance democratic political involvement? Does participating in formal deliberation with other citizens have a unique impact on political learning and subsequent engagements?

In this chapter I argue that we should examine the practical skills that citizens acquire over the course of a participatory experience with a focus on how process informs this learning. Building on the idea that people “learn by doing,” I contend that citizens’ participatory capacities are shaped not only by the information, attitudes and relationships that are generated through civic and political engagement, but also by the practical experiences acquired in civic settings.

To explore this argument, I examined variations in the transfer of civic learning between two extraordinary experiments in citizen deliberative democracy: the British Columbia and Ontario Citizens’ Assemblies on Electoral Reform. Both Assemblies (2004 in British Columbia, and 2006-07 in Ontario) charged randomly-selected “ordinary” citizens with reviewing and recommending changes to their provincial voting systems, and empowered them to set public referendums on electoral reform. Participants of each
Assembly met over the course of a year to learn about electoral systems, conduct consultations with the general public, and deliberate on the best system for their province. Both Assemblies recommended new electoral systems involving greater proportional representation. While these referendums failed to pass in their respective jurisdictions, scholars have hailed the Citizens’ Assembly process as an important new standard for participatory governance. Political reformers in the Netherlands and Australia have convened deliberative forums based on the Citizens’ Assembly model, and proposals to attach citizens’ assemblies to ballot initiative processes were advanced in California, Oregon and Washington.

The evidence from this study suggests that differences in the informal practices of the two Assemblies resulted in quantitative and qualitative differences in the civic learning of the participants. Although both Assemblies were similarly structured, focused on the same issue, and were positive emotional experiences for participants, the BC members reported more and different kinds of civic learning gains than the Ontario members. The BC members also used the skills gained over the course of their Assembly to engage in more widespread public action leading up to the BC public referendum about their proposal. This indicates that even highly similar participatory institutional designs vary in terms of what they ask citizens to do, which in turn affects the kinds of skills and dispositions citizens take away and use in other contexts.

**Civic Learning**

Civic learning refers to the process by which citizens acquire attitudes, knowledge, and practical skills that support civic and political engagement. This understanding builds on research in political behaviour that focused on the individual correlates of civic and political participation such as information gains about current affairs and the political process, growing feelings of confidence in one’s own capacity to be an effective participant, and the renewal of trust and confidence in elected officials and fellow citizens (Gidengil et al. 2004; Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). But drawing on educational and sociological ‘theories of practice’ I also examine the practical skills that are gained inside deliberative forums. Theories of practice focus on processes of learning by doing: through practical experience, people acquire tacit knowledge, dispositions and practical skills that help to organize the other correlates of civic engagement (Lave, and Wenger 1991; Lerner, and Schugurensky 2007, 85-100; Wenger 1998). This approach suggests that learning how to speak in front of a group, how to write a letter to the editor or when to engage in or disengage from political discussion makes it easier to channel motivation, self-confidence and information into effective civic or political action (Eliasoph 1998).

Theories of practice point to the role of institutions in teaching the practical skills that help to tie together other civic learning gains. In particular, the work of Lave and Wenger on communities of practice is useful for understanding the ways in which social contexts vary in the kinds of skills and practices they teach. Lave and Wenger observe that

---

1 As Nina Eliasoph points out, citizens can also learn practical skills for disengaging from politics (Eliasoph 1998).
people learn not simply by absorbing distilled packets of information or observing more competent practitioners, but by participating themselves in the practices that contribute to the joint enterprises of a community. They point to several features of communities that are relevant for analyzing variation in learning processes. These include the division of labor between experts and new learners, control over resources for learning, the opportunities for new learners to engage in relevant community practices, the methods of communication among new learners, and the methods for resolving conflicts between experts and new learners, as the latter group develop their own perspective and stakes in the future of the community of practice (Lave, and Wenger 1991).

Applied to participatory and deliberative settings, this theory suggests that in order to understand the impact of institutional practices on civic learning, we must examine the practical activities that guide the work of participatory democracy. These include the frequently informal practices that establish a division of labour within a participatory institution, that reinforce distinct roles and responsibilities, that define organizational goals and official activities, and that surround the conduct of meetings, the management of conflicts, and the orchestration of co-ordinated action.

Looking at institutional practices is a useful addition to political science debates about the relationship between civic contexts and civic learning. Research on associations and social capital has found that some kinds of organizations are more likely to produce civic learning that can be applied to democratic politics. Organizations that are large, diverse, egalitarian and politically oriented are more likely to enhance their members’ trust, knowledge of politics, and capacities to deal with conflict in constructive ways (Hooghe, and Stolle 2003). While this research has highlighted the relationship between organizational contexts and civic learning, focusing on organizational characteristics leaves open the question of how these characteristics lead to better or worse civic learning gains. Looking at institutional practices is one way to answer this question.

Similarly, looking at institutional practices allows us to evaluate the claim of deliberation theorists that participating in deliberative settings will equip citizens with skills and dispositions that are particular to the act of deliberation and that differ from the civic learning gains associated with other kinds of civic activity. Deliberative forums have been shown to produce gains in knowledge, self-confidence and empowerment, positive feelings about the democratic process, and an increased likelihood of future political involvement (Brady, Fishkin, and Luskin 2003; Fishkin 1995; Fishkin, and Luskin 1999, 3-38; Fishkin, Luskin, and Jowell 2002; Gastil, and Dillard 1999; Morrell 2005). But these civic learning gains are not unique to deliberative processes – they are also associated with other forms of civic and political engagement. According to deliberation theory, the practice of deliberation should produce distinct kinds of learning, including a gain in empathy for others, positive feelings about the democratic process, specific skills that assist in deliberation such as listening, asking questions, identifying opposing viewpoints, and potentially, the ability to mobilize these skills and dispositions in other environments (Gutmann, and Thompson 1996; Mansbridge 1983; Mansbridge 1995; Fishkin 1995; Fishkin, and Luskin 1999, 3-38; Barber 1984; Delli 2004; Mendelberg 2002).
An examination of institutional practices and civic learning outcomes in the case of the Citizens’ Assemblies on Electoral Reform is an opportunity to contribute further evidence on participatory institutions and civic learning in three ways. First, the comparison of cases closely matched on organizational characteristics allows for a more fine-grained exploration of varying institutional practices that may have real consequences for civic learning. Second, because the Citizens’ Assemblies were focused around citizen deliberation, the data provide further evidence on whether the practice of democratic deliberation produces civic learning gains that are distinct from those acquired in other participatory-democratic contexts. Finally, because interviews were conducted between four and eight months after each Assembly, the data include participants’ reflections on the connections between their Assembly experience and subsequent civic and political involvement. These data help to understand the consequences of civic learning in participatory-deliberative institutions for future civic and political action.

**Civic Learning in the Citizens’ Assemblies on Electoral Reform**

The data presented below were gathered as part of a larger qualitative comparison of the British Columbia and Ontario Citizens’ Assemblies on Electoral Reform (Lang 2007a, 35-70; Lang 2007b, 212; Lang 2008, 85-105). Data include observations of 11/12 weekend meetings of the BC Citizens’ Assembly, and all 12 weekend meetings of the Ontario Citizens’ Assembly; interviews with about 1/3 of participants in the BC Citizens’ Assembly and with 1/5 of the participants in the Ontario Citizens’ Assembly; and interviews and ongoing correspondence with staff of both Assemblies. The interview schedule included a question directly addressing the topic of civic learning, posed close to the end of the interview: “Did going through the Assembly process change you in any way?” Data on civic learning come from answers to that question, as well as unsolicited comments about learning arising earlier in the interviews. Responses were coded and grouped into categories such as information, skills, attitudes, and practices.

In these interviews, the BC and Ontario members reported some similar gains in information, deliberative skills and positive attitudes about the democratic process. About 45% of both the BC and Ontario participants reported that information about electoral systems and the political process were important learning gains. Both groups of participants also talked about gaining skills such as learning how to speak in front of a big group (e.g. the Assembly’s plenary meetings), how to share their opinions in small-group discussions, and how to listen to others.

However, BC participants reported additional and qualitatively different civic learning gains than the Ontario participants in terms of ideas about themselves and the civic skills they took away from the Assembly. Almost twice as many BC members as Ontario members (44% vs. 26% of those interviewed) reported growth in self-confidence. In addition to gaining confidence about expressing themselves, some of the BC Assembly members reported they gained a new sense of entitlement to participate in the political process. Although she had a prior career in business, BC Assembly participant Julie Boehmer talked about how political involvement was new for her. With respect to politics, she said, “I was more the person to sit back and watch. In a part of that’s my upbringing, where we didn’t have a lot of confidence in that. I came to have confidence that I could...
succeed with my work but not so much with my viewpoints.” Similarly, Arlene Tully from Vancouver, BC said, “I feel even more than ever interested in politics, more than ever have a vested interest in what goes on in my community and like I want to take on other things and get involved in other organizations.” Although they had self-confidence participating in work and community realms, for these and other participants it took the Citizens’ Assembly to develop confidence at participating in political discussions.

In addition to greater gains in self-confidence, nine of the twenty-three BC Assembly members who talked about gaining skills talked specifically about gaining process management skills. In contrast, none of the Ontario participants interviewed volunteered process skills as important learning gains from their experience. For example one of the BC Assembly members from Vancouver Island said “the whole the way the process was managed, I learned a lot from that. Working with other people but still achieving a goal, not getting bogged in a bunch of inane chatter and so on.” She commented that she would be able to use this knowledge of how to manage a group process in her workplace. Jean Ensminger, another BC Assembly member, noted that “this whole process really empowered me in a way that I feel more and more that we can change things.” He connected this procedural learning with having “tools for change” such as exercises that help groups to identify shared values, and connected these tools with an increased ability to engage in future collective action.

The difference in the practical skills was in full evidence during the public debates leading up to the referendums on the Citizens’ Assemblies’ recommendations. Participants from both Citizens’ Assemblies organized “alumni groups” to publicize their recommendations. In the period leading up to the referendum, BC Assembly participants made over 800 individual presentations to their communities, while the Ontario Assembly participants made over 250. In both cases this should be regarded as positive evidence that participatory democratic settings can inspire future civic engagement. With little or no funding, participants from both provinces volunteered to communicate with the public about their recommendations. But the difference in participation in the referendum campaign is a puzzle – given that both Citizens’ Assemblies endorsed their final recommendations almost unanimously, why would fewer Ontario participants be willing to educate the public about their proposal?

The BC participants also reported more new civic and political engagements than the Ontario Assembly members, after the Assembly was over. Among the Ontario Assembly members, only one person reported “talking about politics” more with her husband and children. Two other Ontario participants talked about investigating new work and volunteering opportunities as a result of participating in the Ontario Assembly, but did not talk about new involvements in politics. In contrast, several of the BC Assembly members – all of them women – sought out new civic and political involvements after their Assembly work was over. One participant described the BC Assembly experience as “the best year of her life” and recounted how since the Assembly finished she had joined her local Chamber of Commerce and was being encouraged to run for office. Another recounted that in addition to getting onto her local parks and recreation board, she would now switch on the all-news channel and watch political debates. A third participant became active on the national board of Fair Vote Canada and joined a political party. Other women reported
greater interest and attention to politics in the news, and attending all-candidates meetings for the upcoming provincial election.

In sum, while participants in both Assemblies gained knowledge, skills, and attitudes that could support future civic engagement, there were important differences in the civic learning going on inside each Assembly. The BC members increased knowledge of their province, trust in their fellow citizens, skills for managing group processes, and self-confidence about their contribution to public decision-making. The BC members participated in the referendum campaigns at a higher rate than did the Ontario participants, and had new political involvements as well.

**Institutional Practices and Civic Learning**

What explains the different civic learning gains of the BC and Ontario Citizens’ Assembly participants? There is little evidence that the participants who chose to take part in the BC Assembly had greater experiences of civic participation than those in the Ontario Assembly. Nor is there evidence that the BC participants were predisposed from the beginning to become more politically active than those in the Ontario Citizens’ Assembly. The two Assemblies had similar mandates, deliberated about the same issues, and allocated approximately the same amount of time to learning, public consultation and deliberation. This suggests that the variation in civic learning is probably not due to differences between participants or between the formal structure or goals of each process.

I argue that the differences in civic learning outlined above arise largely from informal institutional practices that include staff attempts to define the roles of participants, members’ interactions with the public, and the management of conflicts and creation of ownership within the two Citizens’ Assemblies. Particular institutional practices within the BC Citizens’ Assembly can be directly connected to the participants’ larger civic learning gains in procedural skills, self-confidence, sense of entitlement to participate in politics, and the practical application of these skills after the Assembly was over.

“VIPs” vs. “Buddies”

The staff in both Assemblies tried to create a supportive environment but went about it in different ways. While both staffs were genuinely committed to empowering participants, each Assembly staff appeared to be working with a different cultural model of citizen empowerment. This difference in the approach to citizen empowerment was encapsulated by the language used by staff to describe their efforts to provide emotional support for members. The BC Assembly staff treated their members as “VIPs” while the Ontario staff treated their members as “buddies.” They used these different models to define the roles of the Assembly members, asking them to do different kinds of work, giving them different kinds of emotional support and approbation, and reinforcing different ideals of citizenship.

In the BC Citizens’ Assembly, the staff appeared to be working with an understanding that they would give participants support, but would also assign a measure of responsibility to them. The BC Assembly members had assigned homework that they were expected to complete outside of their meetings. They used a fairly advanced
undergraduate text, and in interviews some members reported having difficulty with its academic style. Nevertheless the BC participants ploughed on, with one member independently producing a lengthy plain language summary of the text that he circulated to the rest of the Assembly. During their public hearing phase, the BC Assembly Secretariat encouraged participants to contact their local communities about the Assembly’s work, and many members took up the challenge. In the deliberation phase, the BC Assembly’s research staff recused themselves from participating in the debates about research on electoral systems, leaving it up to the Assembly members to evaluate the quality of each others’ facts and arguments.

In Ontario, the staff’s model for empowering participants involved giving the Assembly members more support. This meant requiring less of the participants, making their job as comfortable and un-stressful as possible. At the opening weekend the Chair of the Ontario Assembly assured members that they would not be required to do reading in between meetings, although many Assembly members did the “suggested” homework. The Assembly secretariat gave the members a choice among three textbooks, including a plain-language distillation of the basic components of electoral systems, produced by the secretariat itself. In the public hearing phase, few members got out to their local communities to talk about the Assembly’s work. In the deliberation phase, the research staff decided to continue to answer questions of fact, correcting Assembly members if they made mistaken statements or assumptions.

The BC Secretariat made the deliberate choice to continually communicate that the Assembly members were important people doing an important task, and talked of the Assembly participants as “VIPs”. Assembly Chair Jack Blaney connects this imperative to his background in adult education,

> When the premier asked me to take on the job of Citizens’ Assembly, I saw this not as a political scientist would see it...but I saw it as a wonderful, probably the first of its kind in adult learning. So my focus was on the members as learners. And my focus was that they had to feel important because they had a very important task to do.

If the emphasis on the importance of the task raised the stakes of what the Assembly participants were doing, the BC Assembly staff worked to equip participants with a sense of authority to engage in this high-stakes game.

For example, borrowing from the cultural repertoire of government ritual, the first weekend of the BC Assembly meetings a bag piper led the members into a hall. At the suggestion of one of the members, each weekend began by singing Canada’s National Anthem. These nationalistic rituals underscored the social and political importance of the Assembly’s proceedings, as all participants bought in to their symbolism. The BC Assembly staff also publicly emphasized the extraordinary civic contributions of the citizens who participated in the Assembly. The online participant biographies constructed by the staff highlighted the participants’ other community involvements, noting their civic capacities. As the staff grew to know more about the participants, they publicly commented on how “extraordinary” rather than “ordinary” the participants were at the opening of their weekends together.
In addition to emphasizing participants’ commitment and civic mindedness, the BC Assembly staff worked hard to treat the Assembly members as important people in informal interactions. The high-status staff members worked to treat the participants with respect. One BC member recounted how this treatment was a pleasant surprise:

What was surprising to me was how...most of the higher up people I’ve encountered in my life have been a bit arrogant and sort of a look down their nose at you type of people. There was none of that from these people [the staff]. They were wonderful. They treated us all as equals. [Another member] and I were in having supper one night and Jack [Blaney] came in, and you know, "Can I join you?" and he sat down and another lady came over and sat down. You know, I’m like [she makes a gesture of nervousness] - this was the first or second weekend we were there. But you know, he was just a normal nice person.

Similarly, Ann a retiree from the small town of Vernon, BC said

I was always sort of amazed that we would go [into the Assembly] and they would call you by name and seemed to remember where you are from and everything. They made it very personal. And I think made everybody feel that they were as important as anybody else.

Other BC members connected this VIP treatment to their sense that it was appropriate for them to participate in public decision-making. One member talked about how the prospect of learning about electoral systems was initially daunting but that her interactions with the staff made her feel comfortable and competent to participate.

My next concern was, was I capable of doing it? I mean that was something that I really struggled with because I don’t have any postsecondary education really to speak of and about how could I possibly be put in charge of deciding this? You know I didn’t feel very equipped...I think [the staff] just being so accessible made everyone so comfortable and be able to feel like they could voice their opinions and not felt like they were being looked down upon. I mean you talk about university professors and very important people, and not important but like very well educated, much more than a lot of us and to be able to sit down and converse with them and feel like they were listening to what you’re saying, I think that was really important.

Although they praised the senior staff’s egalitarian manners, these comments underscore that the Assembly members were well aware of the staff’s high social status. Because all participants seemed to buy in to and reify social status as a concept, the staff’s status added weight to their treatment of participants as “VIPs”. This finding illuminates the complexity of egalitarian relationships in civic spaces. In the BC Assembly, the social approbation of participants by “high status” staff bolstered a sense of “equality” in participants that contributed to their self-confidence.

In contrast, the Ontario Citizens’ Assembly staff sought to empower their participants by creating an atmosphere that was comfortable and low-key. They sought to minimize the social distance between participants and themselves by dressing down: most of the Ontario Citizens’ Assembly staff dressed less formally than the BC staff, wearing dress-casual slacks, button-down shirts and sweaters rather than formal slacks, jackets and skirt suits. The Ontario Assembly staff also sought to create support by generating informal
social networks between themselves and the Assembly members. They developed a “buddy” system in which each staff person was connected to about ten Citizens’ Assembly participants. The Ontario Assembly staff contacted their buddies in between the Assembly meetings, and during their weekends together would eat lunch with their buddies or provide emotional support.

Ontario Assembly Chair George Thomson deliberately toned down his authority and previous expertise in public policy making. In a 2008 panel discussion with other Citizens’ Assembly leaders, he said he was particularly keen not to dominate the proceedings, given that he had extensive experience wading into policy debates. His strategy for this was to adopt a manner of self-presentation that was affable and engaging. He opened the Ontario Assembly’s meetings with less formal ritual, pausing to make a quick joke before starting to work. In the first few meetings of the Assembly, he talked about the commitment and passion of the Assembly members but not their importance or specialness, and this theme of commitment and passion fell to the background as the Ontario Assembly moved through its initial learning phase.

In interviews, Ontario participants were as laudatory about their secretariat staff as the BC participants. The substance of the Ontarians’ praise centred on their staff’s efficiency and organization rather than their high social status. For example, Assembly member Hal Willis talked about calling the Assembly secretariat to ask about expenses and getting a return phone call “within an hour.” This praise extended to the management of the Assembly’s meetings together. David Vittala said that “they were absolutely amazing what they did for us. They definitely kept us on track and the kept everything moving along so that we could accomplish our goal.” Chris Doody talked in particular about the Chair’s abilities:

He really remained neutral, he retained control of the group at times when I thought - I didn’t know how he was gonna do it and he really amazed me with how much he knew about everyone and how much he was able to realize who worked well together and who didn’t, control the situations, see where things were going before it happened.

David and Chris’ comments suggest that the Ontario participants felt that there was a clear division of procedural labour between their staff and themselves as participants, with the staff providing guidance not only with logistics but also in charge of navigating key decision-making moments. This division of procedural labour between staff and participants emerged as another strong contrast between the two Assemblies.

Ontario participants also talked about the down-to-earth friendliness of their staff. Assembly member John Townsend talked about how the buddy system created a “climate of friendliness” in the Assembly: “Where people got upset about things, that did happen from time to time although I wasn’t one of them, I’d heard that they had had kind of heart-to-hearts with their buddies, [and this] had been helpful to them.” Assembly member Arita Droog credited her secretariat buddy Karen for being extra friendly and accommodating while she was in a wheelchair at the meetings. Assembly member Hal Willis spoke of how much he enjoyed talking with Assembly Chair George Thomson, “You know, George was the common man, in spite of all his achievement, and all that kind of stuff. Was, you know, have
a beer with the guys and talk, and wasn’t standoffish or anything like that.” These comments underscore the emotional tenor of the interactions between the Ontario participants and their staff: they were warm and supportive, but more low-key than the interactions between staff and participants in the BC Assembly.

“Ambassadors” vs. “Jurors”

The BC Assembly staff positioned participants as “ambassadors” of their process, while the Ontario assembly members played a role more akin to “jurors”. As “ambassadors”, BC members were encouraged to take on the responsibility of engaging their local communities. Although the responsibility weighed on some, other BC Assembly members largely embraced the task. Several contacted local papers and radio stations about the issue of electoral reform, and wrote regular newspaper columns. One man set up a booth at his local shopping mall every Saturday to explain the Assembly process to his community. Another affixed a sign about the Assembly to his truck that he drove as a traveling dentist. Others approached their local mayors, town councillors and First Nations band leaders to publicize the hearings and invite feedback on the issue of electoral systems.

As “jurors” the Ontario members listened to arguments from the public in public hearings, but otherwise engaged with outsiders in more limited ways. The Ontario staff did provide some resources for Assembly members who wanted to engage their communities or the media. While some members did this individually, stories of their attempts were not publicly reported on in their weekend meetings together, and appeared to be less important to fulfilling their role as a member of the Assembly.

This community outreach by the BC members nurtured self-confidence, experience and positive feedback that bolstered their sense of capacity. A couple of BC members talked about how people in their community expressed confidence in their capacity. For example, Craig Henschel described the role of “ambassador” as “challenging but fun; it’s fun to be a little celebrity every once in awhile; it’s fun for your neighbours to say ‘oh I saw you on television’ or [to] talk to the Burnaby City Council and they all clap and applaud.” A participant from northern BC talked about how the ambassador role gave her confidence at public speaking:

I’m not a good very public speaker and that’s really awkward for me, but by the time we were going into the town meetings and I knew what I was talking about I was quite comfortable going out to the community and talking...had you asked me a year before or told me that I’d be standing in front of the town council and presenting that way I would’ve thought you were crazy because I didn’t want to do that. But once I felt passionate about the topic I didn’t have any trouble sharing with people.

As these comments suggest, the ambassador role gave BC Assembly members important skills. It helped them to consolidate their knowledge of electoral systems, and to become confident in talking about politics. It gave them the opportunity to practice skills for engaging the public, such as speaking to community groups and city councils. Finally, it gave them a chance to receive positive affirmation from their communities. These experiences laid the groundwork for the BC members’ high level of public engagement during the referendum period.
Managing Conflicts and Creating “Ownership”

The BC members also gained more ownership over the organization of their process than the Ontario members. In part, this may be attributed to successfully negotiating moments of conflict with the BC Assembly staff. For example, at the end of their learning phase the BC Assembly members vigorously objected to the content of the Assembly’s preliminary public report proposed by the Assembly staff. The BC staff had planned that members would produce a report that would eliminate some electoral systems from further discussion. Many BC Assembly members objected to this, arguing that it was not legitimate to rule out any electoral systems before the Assembly had heard from the public. The BC Assembly members were eventually successful in reshaping their interim report to reflect the principles they discussed while keeping all electoral systems on the table for discussion. Although BC Assembly participants were not successful in every conflict with the BC Assembly staff, they were successful in other subsequent disputes over the content of their reports (Lang 2008, 85-105). Voicing disagreement about procedure and working through conflict with the staff appeared to give BC Assembly members a sense of ownership over their process.

In contrast, the Ontario participants did not engage in any major conflicts with the Ontario Assembly staff. As Chris and David’s comments above suggest, the Ontario members had a sense that the division of labour within the Assembly left the management of the process in the hands of the Assembly’s staff. The Ontario members were invited to sit on procedural advisory committees to deal with their consultation submissions, to plan the deliberation phase, to produce the final report, and to work on the monitoring and evaluation of the process. These committees removed the need for the Assembly as a whole to focus on procedural matters, and there were no moments where the Ontario members collectively revolted against the management of the process. Paradoxically, the fact that the Ontario staff was in more regular contact with Ontario members via the buddy system and the procedural committees ended up forestalling the kind of civic learning that could arise from conflict between staff and participants.

The BC members also learned to organize themselves. In the deliberation phase, between one and two thirds of the BC members met informally after dinner to discuss a variety of issues. Although the staff observed these meetings, the discussions were facilitated by Assembly members. Before the fourth deliberation weekend, BC member Wilf Chelle organized a meeting of Assembly members from rural areas, to generate some kind of consensus and possibly a rural voting bloc before upcoming debate between the proposed systems. In the later weeks of the BC Assembly, the BC members also organized their own group to discuss which of three ballot transfer formulas they would recommend. They ended up picking one that the BC Assembly staff had feared would be too complicated for the members to understand. Finally, in the last two weeks of their deliberation phase, BC members also organized an alumni association in order to proactively plan strategy for the referendum campaign.

Ontario members did not engage in the same kinds of self-organization as BC members. Recognizing that a “rural” caucus had formed in the BC Assembly, the Ontario Assembly staff organized “Working Groups” during the learning phase that would support the members in discussing specific issues related to electoral reform, including “women and...
underrepresented groups”, “political parties”, “stable and effective government” and “geographic representation.” The Ontario staff invited participants to voluntarily sign up for the different groups during the first learning weekend, a time when the members’ enthusiasm for participating was high, but the salience of these issues was not yet clear.

In contrast to the self-organized groups in BC, the Ontario working groups were facilitated by a staff member who found resources for the Ontario members to read, led discussions and prepared the groups to report on their findings to the Assembly. During my observations of these working group meetings, all but one working group seemed to diffuse, rather than increase, the members’ energy for seriously engaging these issues. Most of the meetings that I observed were often marked by long pauses, with the Assembly members co-operatively answering the facilitator’s questions, but not taking the lead on discussing on the issues. Apart from one group, the Working Groups did not appear to be a catalyst for factions to form within the Assembly. Individual participants in each group conducted some additional research and made presentations to the Assembly as a whole. However, the staff-supported groups did not appear to provide the same experience of empowerment as the spontaneously organized working groups within the BC Citizens’ Assembly.

Given these varying opportunities for working through conflict and for self-organization, it is no wonder the BC members talked more frequently of gaining skills for managing group processes. They had practice running their own meetings and challenging the BC staff when they did not like the process. The Ontario members were extremely pleased with the high level of support they received from their staff, but they walked out of the Assembly without the experience of conflict and self-organization that could allow them to take charge in future public settings.

**Conclusions**

This comparison of the BC and Ontario Citizens’ Assemblies shows that the acquisition of democratic attitudes and skills varies, even within similar institutions. Participants in both Assemblies overwhelmingly reported emotionally positive experiences and the growth of capacities that support public deliberation skills like learning, listening and reasoning with one another. However, BC members reported greater growth of self-confidence about political involvement and greater skills for participating in – and potentially organizing – public processes. Their civic learning gains were more easily transferred to new political settings. By contrast, Ontario members reported fewer civic learning gains. They were proud to have contributed to making an important decision, they were more educated about politics and electoral systems, made important friendships and learned deliberative skills like sharing their opinions and listening to others. However, fewer people reported gains in self-confidence, organizational or procedural skills or new civic or political engagement after the Assembly was over.

These differences in civic learning outcomes for participants in the two Citizens’ Assemblies can be attributed to specific institutional practices. In BC, practices such as VIP treatment by staff, the cultivation of the members as public ambassadors, and the members’ experience of taking charge of their process boosted their confidence and gave them practice in important political skills. The greater transfer of skills by the BC participants
likely reflect their high level of involvement in publicizing their recommendation during the referendum campaign, as well as reports of new involvement in politics and in voluntary work. In the Ontario Assembly, practices such as the “buddy” system, carefully managing the Ontario Assembly participants’ interactions with the public, and a division of labour that gave the participants less responsibility for managing their process, left them with positive feelings about the experience but less self-confidence and fewer practical skills for future public participation.

This finding is important for understanding the democratic dividend that grows out of participatory and deliberative forums. Although some scholars hope that participation in all kinds of civic associations will promote the growth of attitudes and skills for democratic political engagement, the experience of the Citizens’ Assemblies suggests that even within very similar, egalitarian, politically oriented civic organizations, citizens may still gain different kinds of skills and dispositions for public action. Participation in both Assemblies extended or renewed participants’ self-confidence and knowledge about politics. While these are necessary, they may not be sufficient catalysts for future political action. Without also gaining practical skills that are transferable to other public arenas, citizens may have less capacity to channel knowledge, self-efficacy and motivation into civic and political action.

References


Democracy, Participation and Learning: The Case of Venezuela

Manuel Larrabure
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

The political processes taking place in Venezuela, as part of the country's "Bolivarian Revolution" are interesting examples of participatory democracy. Of the many spaces created for the purpose of enhancing democratic participation in the country, one in particular stands out, namely the recently re-nationalized and now worker-run Sidor steel company. In this paper I will argue that the Sidor case, seen within the context of Venezuela's politics and polices, represents a successful attempt at reclaiming the time and space necessary for deepening democracy. It also highlights the pedagogical dimension of participatory democracy and its centrality in the process of social change.

Democracy in Time and Space

Before speaking of participatory democracy one must necessarily say something about democracy. Although it is generally understood that Athens, in ancient Greece, was the birthplace of democracy, the particularities of the city's democracy are rarely given enough attention, much less the particularities of its social composition and its relationship to the former. It is this relationship that holds the key to understanding both Athenian democracy and our current democratic order. As is well known, Athens was a slave society. But as Ellen Meiksins Wood argues, the peasant-farmer, rather than the slave, was its most characteristic figure (Wood 1995). This was not because the slave population in Athens was not substantial. As Wood points out, it comprised approximately 20 to 30% of the total population (Wood 1995). But, rather, the reason why the peasant-farmer was most significant is because of the unique socio-political status it held. Indeed, as Wood notes, the status enjoyed by free labour in democratic Athens was without known precedent (Wood 1995). This uniqueness was due to the combined effect of two factors. First, the peasant-farmer (unlike slaves) had full citizenship rights. These rights, acquired through rebellion on the part of the poor against growing economic inequalities (McNally 2002), meant that he (women were excluded) had equal rights to participate in the Athenian democratic system. This system had two crucial characteristics. First, it was based on the principle of direct democracy. As McNally documents, while citing Finley, there was no representation or civil service. Every citizen had the right to attend the sovereign Assembly, participate in debates and vote on a wide range of proposals (McNally 2002). Second, the Assembly had
the right to interfere with property rights, often deciding to abolish debts and redistribute land (McNally 2002). These, then, were the crucial characteristics that constituted the sovereign Assembly, the central political space around which Athenian democracy functioned. But since democracy requires both space and time, one must note the second unique factor behind the Athenian peasant-farmer, namely that his position as independent craftsman or farmer (small producer) shielded him from the necessity to enter the labour market to secure access to conditions of labour and subsistence, allowing him the leisure to participate in political life (Wood 1995). Thus, at the Athenian Assembly the dynamics of space and time converged to create a substantive democracy, substantive because citizens had the time to participate and the political space to freely and directly deliberate over the city’s various issues, including its material wealth.

Fast forward to today. What are the dynamics of space and time in the Americas and how does modern democracy compare to Athenian democracy? From the point of view of political space, the role that neoliberalism plays in today’s democracies immediately comes to mind. Neoliberalism is an ideology and set of concrete policies based on neo-classical economic theory, whose basic premise is the self-interested individual rather than the community (Lebowitz 2006). Focusing on its material basis, David Harvey describes neoliberalism as an example of “accumulation by dispossession”, which refers to attempts by capital to overcome a continuous crisis of over-accumulation stemming from a lack of opportunities for profitable investment within already existing market structures (Harvey, 2003, 139). Neoliberalism’s core policies are fiscal restraint, privatization and deregulation, all of which amount to the expansion of the role of the market in society at the expense of public spaces. In other words, neoliberal policies, by expanding the role of the market, necessarily reduce the amount of spaces that are subject to public deliberation and democratic control. So much so that, as neoliberal supporter Thomas Friedman candidly puts it, once governments put on the “Golden Straitjacket” of neoliberalism, “political choices get reduced to Pepsi or Coke” (In McNally 2002, 196). Second, from the point of view of time, the most important factor that differentiates ancient Athens from today is that, unlike in Athens, where a significant portion of the population (independent peasant-farmers) were shielded from the necessity to enter the labour market. In today’s democracies almost no one has that privilege because today we are compelled to sell our labour in the market in order to survive. Unlike the Athenian peasant-farmer, we do not have the leisure time necessary to actively participate in political life, at least not to a significant extent. Indeed, our official political life is relegated to voting in representatives rather than participating directly in government decision-making, a state of affairs that is being challenged today in Venezuela.

Venezuela’s “Bolivarian Revolution”

Background and shift to neoliberalism

In the 1980s there began a drastic shift in Venezuela’s economy and politics. In previous decades Venezuela had adopted statist economic policies which relied on the revenues from high oil prices as well as high levels of debt in order to achieve some level of economic development and wealth redistribution (Trinkunas 2005). During this period, statist approaches to development were the norm throughout all of Latin America and were
part of the broader Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) strategy employed by most developing countries. The purpose of ISI was to achieve economic growth through the development of domestic markets and the diversification of industrial output, and its application relied on some level of cooperation between labour, capital and the state. But because Venezuela’s economy relied so heavily on oil revenues, the collapse of oil prices in the 1980s dealt a severe blow to Venezuela’s development strategy. Tied to the collapse in oil prices was the heavy debt burden that the country had incurred during the 1970s, at a time when oil prices were at a record high. As David Myers notes, during the Herrera government (1979-1984), Venezuela’s international debt tripled, reaching $35 billion (Myers 1985). By 1984, foreign reserves were drained, the result of capital flight, debt payments and increased imports (Trinkunas 2005). The combination of high debt payments with the loss of revenue from the collapse of oil prices proved devastating for the economy and, in turn, for much of Venezuela’s population. As Harold Trinkunas notes, in Venezuela, between the late 1970s and late 1980s, poverty and inequality rose sharply while incomes and productivity declined. By 1989 the situation had become dire, with the percentage of people living in critical poverty reaching 53.7 (Trinkunas 2005).

Elected President in 1989, Carlos Andres Perez sought a solution to the economic crisis through the application of neoliberal policies – a strategy followed to different degrees by all of Latin America with the encouragement of the United States. These policies, first introduced in January, included a reduction of public expenditures, the deregulation of prices, trade liberalization, promotion of foreign investment, and the privatization of state companies (Harnecker 2003). This meant less public control over the country’s economy, or, to put it differently, a significant reduction of the public sphere in relation to the market, the essence of the neoliberal strategy. The result was a sharp rise in inflation, a 10% decline in GDP and a 14% decline in personal income (Trinkunas 2005). With this also came the deligitimization of the country’s democracy. The policies became highly unpopular and people demonstrated their discontent on the streets. The most dramatic of these demonstration occurred in Caracas on February 27, 1989, shortly after the implementation of the neoliberal program. The government reacted to the rebellion – known as el Caracazo – by sending in the military, which resulted in the deaths of up to 3000 civilians (Trinkunas 2005). It was in the context of this economic and social crisis of the 1980s that current President of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, would begin his rise to power. Following his rise up the military ranks, which culminated in a failed coup attempt in 1992, Chávez, riding on a wave of popular support, decided to pursue the Presidential Palace through the ballot box rather than with a tank. In 1998, running on a platform of radical change, including the promise of a new constitution, economic redistribution, and participatory democracy, Chávez managed to win the presidential elections with 56% of the vote (Trinkunas 2005). The changes that the Chávez government proceeded to introduce sparked the beginning of an overt political battle against the politics of neoliberalism, marking the beginning of what became known as the “Bolivarian Revolution”.

**Confronting neoliberalism**

The following is an excerpt from one of Chávez’s speeches made after his electoral victory. In front of tens of thousands of people he stated:
In Venezuela and in all of Latin America along came the savage neoliberal project. ‘The invisible hand’, ‘the market fixes everything’; it’s a lie, it’s a lie, a thousand times a lie! Of course there are other ways and in Venezuela we are demonstrating it. (Bartley and O’Brian 2002)

This rejection of the neoliberal program was also demonstrated in the 1999 Venezuelan constitution, approved via referendum by 70% of the population. As Martha Harnecker notes, the constitution focused on social justice, freedom, political participation and national sovereignty (Harnecker 2003). Michael Lebowitz also notes the constitution’s emphasis on human development as evident in the declaration of Article 20 that “everyone has the right to the free development of his or her own personality in a democratic society” or that of Article 299 with its emphasis on “ensuring overall human development” (Lebowitz 2007, 40). In the same breath, as Lebowitz goes on to point out, the constitution retained a support for capitalism, guaranteeing the right of property in Article 115 and identifying a role for private initiative in the generation of growth and employment in Article 299 (Lebowitz, 2007). Thus, although the new Chávez administration did not offer a break from capitalism, it explicitly rejected neoliberalism as a socio-economic model and sought to give the state a much greater role in the economic and political activity of the country. In short, it attempted and is attempting to reclaim democracy by expanding public space and time. But does this simply mean a return to the statist policies pursued before the 1980s? Are there any other options? Can Venezuela move beyond the constraints of modern democracy and, if so, how?

Participatory Democracy, Pedagogy and Participatory Budgeting

Participatory democracy and learning
The concept of participatory democracy points to an alternative, one that has the potential for expanding democratic practices beyond the confines of neoliberalism while avoiding the pitfalls of statism. Participatory democracy can be understood as an associational space that allows for inclusive processes of deliberation and which is bound to real and substantive decisions (Schugurensky 2004). For Schugurensky, one of the crucial characteristics of participatory democracy is that it helps ordinary citizens develop the capacity for self-governance and for influencing political decisions, what he calls political capital. Thus, participatory democracy is a “particularly effective school of citizenship” (Schugurensky 2004, 607). As a school of citizenship, Schugurensky puts forth three hypotheses in regards to its potential. The first is that it holds potential for creating a reciprocal relationship between democratic learning and the quality of local democracies; second, it holds potential for the learning acquired to be transferred to other settings; and third, it has the potential to inspire and broaden the realm of possibilities of the participants while allowing them to learn also about the potential challenges of future experiments (Schugurensky 2004). Thus, participatory democracy is both an end, in that it allows participants real decision-making opportunities, as well as a means, in that the process serves as a pedagogical tool for even greater democratic participation. This is important because, as Schugurensky notes, we are not born democrats and are often not raised to be active democratic citizens. Democracy is thus something that needs to be learned if it is to be practised. And, since one of the best ways to learn democracy is by
doing it, participatory democracy becomes central to the advancement of democratic practices.

Michael Lebowitz highlights another important dimension of learning and participatory democracy, namely the role of struggle as part of these processes. For Lebowitz, it is while struggling for their needs that people transform themselves into subjects capable of changing the world (Lebowitz 2006). As he puts it, the means of achieving a new society are “inseparable from the process of struggling for it” (Lebowitz 2006). Or, to put it somewhat differently, it is struggle that gives rise to the means of transformation. And the reason these struggles must start from people’s needs, Lebowitz argues, is because of the discontent people feel over what society promises them and what they are able to obtain (Lebowitz 2006). In addition, it is struggle that gives people glimpses of a better world and thus spreads the understanding of an alternative society (Lebowitz 2006). In other words, the ends (an alternative society) are revealed, at least partially, by the means (struggles within present society), a convergence of means and ends similar to the one present in Schugurensky’s formulations on participatory democracy described above. And what kinds of struggles are these? In short, as Lebowitz argues, they are struggles for a democratic, participatory and protagonistic alternative society based on solidarity (Lebowitz 2006).

Given the tremendous potential of participatory democracy, what kind of concrete activities would count as such? Participatory budgeting (PB) is one such activity. What follows is a brief overview of PB in Porto Alegre so as to create a comparative point of reference for the processes taking place in Venezuela today.

**Participatory budgeting**

Goldfrank defines PB as the processes of individual and collective decision-making between citizens and government authorities in regard to the public budget (Goldfrank 2006). As Schugurensky notes, this involves neighbourhood discussions and decisions about local fund allocation as well as forums on city-wide issues (Schugurensky 2004). In Porto Alegre, the results of these processes have been impressive. In terms of participation, the PB in Porto Alegre managed to increase citizen involvement from 2,000 in 1990 to 20,000 in 2000 (Goldfrank 2006). And by 2003, PB attracted over 23,000 participants. Participation combined direct democracy with representative committees (Novy and Leubolt 2005) and participants came from varied social classes and included even those who opposed the local government (Goldsmith and Vanier 2001). Of note is that women’s participation in PB, standing at 56.4% in 2004, was drastically higher than in the municipal parliament where only 21.2% of the delegates where women (Novy and Leubolt 2005). In terms of material improvements, as Goldsmith and Vanier note, the PB led to improved water delivery, the building of more schools, improved transportation and more public housing, going some way towards reducing inequality in the city (Goldsmith and Vanier 2001). Indeed, Porto Alegre’s Human Development Index rose to 0.865, among the highest of all the Brazilian capital cities in 2000 (Novy and Leubolt 2005). All of this evidence gives weight to Goldsmith and Vanier’s assessment that the developments at Porto Alegre represent a kind of quasi-revolution that gives power to traditionally excluded groups (Goldsmith and Vanier 2001).
Regarding the pedagogical dimension of PB, Schugurensky argues that the processes have nurtured the empowerment of local associations and organizations and the development of a new democratic culture (Schugurensky 2004). Novy and Leubolt note that competing social movements learned to participate publicly in local politics rather than in a clientelist or confrontational manner, while individuals learned to transform personal needs into public interests (Novy and Leubolt 2005). Perhaps most interesting is that the changes in political knowledge, democratic attitudes and civic behaviours experienced by the participants in the PB processes were sometimes transferred to other settings (Schugurensky 2004). This speaks to the potential that PB holds for broadening democratic practices to diverse areas of society. Lastly, as Schugurensky points out, the ones who are learning these new skills are those who need it the most, namely often excluded groups such as women and low-income people who represent the majority of the PB participants (Schugurensky 2004).

But PB also demonstrates limitations. First, outside of Porto Alegre, PB has not been particularly successful. As Goldfrank argues, after a thorough review of PB in Latin America, only in Porto Alegre were the key conditions for success met, namely a cooperative local mayor, a weak political opposition at the local level, a cooperative civil society and sufficient funds (Goldfrank 2006). Problems are also evident when looking at Porto Alegre. Novy and Leubolt note that political education rarely made its way into the discussions (Novy and Leubolt 2005), perhaps pointing to the limits of informal learning in regard to explicit political issues. In addition, Novy and Leubolt note that contradictions between the city’s ecological needs and the needs of individuals were not adequately dealt with (Novy and Leubolt 2005). Lastly, after Brazil’s Workers Party loss in the 2004 municipal elections, the new mayor of Porto Alegre seems to be shifting PB to a process more oriented towards business and professional organizations (Goldfrank 2006). What all these factors point to is that although PB demonstrates tremendous potential for the forwarding of participatory democracy, it is not enough. If, as argued above, one learns by doing, and if democracy is what we are trying to learn, it follows that learning democracy must mean the reclaiming of public space and time from the politics of neoliberalism. PB certainly went a long way in breaking with the individualist logic of neoliberalism by engaging communities in substantive decision-making, which, in turn, resulted in the redistribution of wealth towards many of those in most need. In doing this, it went some way in reclaiming public space and time. What I will now argue is that processes in Venezuela go even further in this direction, putting the country at the cutting edge of participatory democracy.

Reclaiming Public Space and Time: Participatory Democracy in Venezuela

So why is Venezuela at the cutting edge of participatory democracy? There are several reasons. First, it is among the only two countries in the Americas (Bolivia being the other one) which is directly confronting the politics of neoliberalism at the state level. And since neoliberalism, as I argued above, significantly compromises democratic practices by narrowing the public sphere, confronting neoliberalism is crucial for building democracy. Second, in Venezuela, through the formation of cooperatives, we see the targeting of the workplace as a space for democratic practice in addition to other spaces conventionally
understood as part of civil society, such as community organizations. This is crucial. Going back to ancient Greece for a moment, part of what made Athenian democracy substantive, as I argued above, was the fact that the peasant-farmer, because of his independent producer status, was not compelled to sell his labour for survival and thus had time to participate in the city’s politics. By targeting the workplace as a space for democratic participation, the people of Venezuela are breaking away from their dependence on the labour market for survival and thus increasing their opportunities for democratic participation in spheres outside work. Of course, this is only partial since cooperative workers still rely on the sale of their produce in domestic and international markets, and thus, even while being in a cooperative, their labour is, in a sense, being indirectly commodified. In other words, these workers must still meet the demands of the market in the sphere of circulation. The added danger of this situation is that, as Ernest Mandel argues, within the context of generalized commodity exchange, it would only be a matter of time before cooperative relations of production break down (Mandel 1972). Nevertheless, the growth of cooperatives represents a step forward, particularly given the anti-neoliberal stance of the state which has led to strong redistributive policies that provide workers a further cushion from the necessity to enter the labour market – although this is certainly offset by the significant levels of poverty present in the country. Furthermore, these steps are not simply a return to the statism of the past, characterized by a relatively large but top-down, and only formally democratic, state sector. Lastly, the pedagogical dimension of democratic participation at the workplace holds the potential for expanding democratic practices to other spaces in society in an organic way. I will now proceed to outline some of these dynamics as they have appeared thus far in the country.

The growth of cooperatives

Since the Chávez administration came to power in 1998, there has been an explosion of co-operatives in Venezuela. In 1998, there were 877 co-operatives, while in September 2006 that number grew to 158,917 (Harnecker 2007). As Camila Harnecker notes, this growth has been less the result of spontaneous activity from below than of public policy, reflected, for example, in the 2001 Special Law of Cooperative Associations and the Vulvan Caras cooperative development government program (Harnecker 2007). So far, these developments seem to be producing positive results regards the building of democratic practices. In her study of 15 co-operatives in 2006, Harnecker discovered that there is a strong connection between workplace democracy and the development of collective consciousness, the understanding of, and the disposition to contribute to the interests of others (Harnecker 2007). Thus, through democratic participation people learn the skills necessary to participate more fully in the process. In her words, the participatory process empowers people and “makes it easier for individuals to break with their individualism and embrace their interdependence” (Harnecker 2007, 36). No doubt, there are also problems. Harnecker found that the development of collective consciousness was often undercut by internal conflict rooted in poor collective monitoring and communication mechanisms (Harnecker 2007). Perhaps the biggest problem though, as the author notes, lies in the fact that cooperatives exist within the context of a capitalist economy, which tends to undermine the implementation of workplace democracy (Harnecker 2007). As a solution, Harnecker suggests the use of coordinating mechanisms amongst cooperatives and also
between cooperatives and communities so as to change the logic of economic exchange (Harnecker 2007).

Some of Harnecker’s suggestions seem to have been recently taken up by the workers of the Sidor steel company. Indeed the Sidor example can, in my view, be held up as a model of participatory democracy. Sidor, privatized in 1997 during Venezuela’s neoliberal years, and was re-nationalized on April 9, 2008, following a year-long struggle between the workers and management (Green Left Weekly 2008). The Sidor workers now manage the plant, the most important in all of Latin America, although it is unclear exactly what role the state will play in this regard (Green Left Weekly 2008). The immediate results of this development are extremely positive. Workers have managed to double production levels and have a tentative plan to implement the construction of housing on a mass scale through democratic processes involving both community organizations and other worker-managed cooperatives in the cement and construction sector (Green Left Weekly 2008). It is this particular development that makes Venezuela so interesting. The Sidor workers have learned to go beyond their particular interests and engage in the broader social context, giving weight to both Schugurensky’s three hypotheses regards the potential of participatory democracy as well as Lebowitz’s emphasis on the role of struggle in the process of learning to build a more democratic and solidaristic society. As further evidence, consider the following comments by one of the national coordinators for Venezuela’s National Union of Workers who was part of the battle at the Sidor plant:

This triumph will also be reflected in the experiences accumulated by the workers in an enormous fight, which will be difficult to get rid of. What is fundamental is that the Sidor struggle has raised enthusiasm, and not only to go out and demand economic gains. It has also put the idea in the heads of the workers that there are much more strategic and important political objectives to fight for – ones that produce structural changes. Workers have seen that it is possible to take away control of a company from a powerful transnational and that this company can be administered by its workers with good results. They have seen it is possible to change the course of the government – and even Chávez himself – regarding some of its mistaken policies (Green Left Weekly 2008, 3).

In addition to the pedagogical dimensions of the Sidor struggle apparent in these comments, what stands out is that the developments at Sidor are more than simply the result of a top-down intervention on the part of the state. In fact, the workers had to fight not only the Sidor management but also the local governor and labour minister, both part of the Chávez administration at that time (Green Left Weekly 2008). It is these factors that make the developments at Sidor and the broader community so important for the reclaiming of public time and space and, in turn, the advancement of participatory democracy in Venezuela.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that democracy is conditioned by the dynamics of time and space present in a given society. To illustrate this I used the example of Athenian democracy, in Ancient Greece, noting the unique social status held there by free labourers, who, on the one hand were to a significant extent free from having to enter the labour market while, on the other, had won full citizenship, which gave them the right to
participate in the city’s Assembly. I then argued that in modern society democracy lacks the necessary space and time for it to be substantive, a result of neoliberalism as well as the deeper social imperatives tied to capitalism. A way out of this problem is the concept and practice of participatory democracy, which not only allows for greater substance than formal electoral processes, but also contains tremendous pedagogical content, allowing participants to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge for even greater democratic participation. An example of participatory democracy in action is participatory budgeting. But although PB, as evident in the case of Porto Alegre, goes some way in reclaiming time and space for the purposes of democracy, it also demonstrates significant limits and thus, I argue, must be complemented with other processes. Today in Venezuela one can see examples of such processes in the growth of cooperatives. One particular cooperative stands out, namely the Sidor steel company, re-nationalized after a long workers’ struggle and now currently planning development projects with other cooperatives and communities. If these developments continue and participatory democracy deepens, one can expect more communities to shout out, as the Sidor workers did after their victory, “The dictatorship has fallen, we are free!” (Green Left Weekly 2008, 2). It is this possibility that puts Venezuela at the cutting edge of participatory democracy.

References

McNally, D. Another World is Possible. Winnipeg: Arbeiter, 2002.
Learning Democracy through Participatory Budgeting: Who Learns What, and So What?

Josh Lerner

The New School University

What and how do people learn through participatory budgeting? On October 17, 2008, six experts on participatory budgeting convened in Toronto to debate this question, during a plenary session at the Learning Democracy by Doing conference. Together with dozens of other conference attendees, many of them experts in their own right, we assessed the democratic and citizenship learning of participatory budgeting experiences around the world. This article reviews the findings, ideas, and questions that emerged from this discussion.

Our session in Toronto was broken down into four themes, and this article follows the same structure. In order, it discusses participant learning, staff and politician learning, the effects of learning, and lessons for participatory democracy. Based on this discussion, it appears that through participatory budgeting, participants, staff, and politicians learn valuable new knowledge, skills, and attitudes, although they learn quite different things and in different ways. At the individual level, this learning fosters better citizens, while at the collective level the effects of learning are more mixed. These findings have important implications for the pedagogy of participatory democracy. Both procedural design and political rhetoric shape learning. Democratic learning can serve as an educational equalizer and strengthen participatory democracy. Unfortunately, it can also alienate potential participants.

These conclusions reflect general, but by no means universal, trends across participatory budgeting experiences. Most participatory budgets deviate from these trends at least partly, and some substantially. Many of the conclusions are indeed supported by empirical research presented elsewhere, but this article does not aim to prove them empirically (Lerner and Schugurensky 2007; Talpin 2007; Pinnington and Schugurensky 2008). Here, we take a step back to synthesize ideas and tentative themes, as they arose

---

1 Thank you to Brigid Hannis for providing notes of the conference session, and to Daniel Schugurensky and Anne Latendresse for feedback on this article.
during the discussion in Toronto. But first, some brief background on participatory budgeting is necessary.

**Participatory Budgeting Around the World**

Participatory budgeting is a democratic process in which citizens directly decide how to allocate part of a municipal budget or another budget that affects them (de Souza Santos 1998; Aber 2000; Baiocchi 2005). Although the most famous example is the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, over the last two decades participatory budgeting has spread to over 1,000 cities around the world (Worldwatch Institute 2007). In addition to experiences throughout Latin America, participatory budgeting has become increasingly popular in Europe, Africa, Asia, and North America (Allegretti and Herzberg 2004; Lerner, Josh and Van Wagner 2006). Several people at the Toronto conference were involved with the three Canadian experiences of participatory budgeting, in the city of Guelph, Toronto Community Housing, and the Plateau Mont-Royal borough in Montreal. Several countries have passed laws mandating participatory budgeting for local governments. The UN, World Bank, and other international organizations have actively promoted it. State and county governments, schools, housing authorities, and community organizations have extended participatory budgeting beyond city budgets.

Most of these experiences share a common process: diagnosis, discussion, decision-making, implementation, and monitoring. First, at neighborhood assemblies, residents identify local priority needs, generate ideas to respond to these needs, and elect delegates to represent each community. These delegates, together with experts, then discuss the local priorities and develop concrete projects that address them. Next, residents vote for which of the projects to fund. Finally, the government implements the chosen projects, and community members monitor the implementation. For example, if neighborhood residents identify access to medical care as a priority, their delegates might develop a proposal for a new community health clinic. If the residents approve the proposal, the city funds it. As early as the next year, a new health clinic is built.

The discussion in Toronto brought together scholars, practitioners, and activists to compare and assess diverse experiences of participatory budgeting. Gianpaolo Baiocchi (2003 and 2005), from Brown University in the United States, focused on his extensive research in several Brazilian cities. Giovanni Allegretti (2004), from the University of Coimbra in Portugal, spoke mainly about the state of participatory budgeting in Europe. Anne Latendresse, from the Université du Québec à Montréal and the Urban Ecology Center, discussed her research and advocacy work in Canada and elsewhere, along with her involvement with the Montreal Citizens Summit (Latendresse 2005). Janette Loveys-Smith, from the City of Victoria in Canada, drew on her time as staff coordinator of participatory budgeting in the Canadian city of Guelph, as well as consulting experiences elsewhere in Canada and in Africa (Pinnington, Lerner and Schugurensky 2009). I referred to my research and advocacy work in North America and Europe, but focused mainly on a research project that I conducted in Rosario, Argentina, specifically on participatory budgeting.

---

2 Countries that have passed participatory budgeting legislation include the United Kingdom, Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic.
budgeting and learning (Lerner and Schugurensky 2007). Julien Talpin (2007), from the University of Paris 8, moderated the discussion and added insight from his research in France, Italy, and Spain. Ruth Jackson, from the Participatory Budgeting (PB) Unit in the United Kingdom, was originally scheduled to speak but was unable to attend, so she sent a 10-minute video, which we screened instead. The video presented the rapidly growing UK experiences of participatory budgeting, which have gained new urgency since the Ministry of Communities and Local Government endorsed participatory budgeting as a national policy priority.³

**Participant Learning**

What do citizens who are involved in participatory budgeting learn? When and how do they learn? How does learning differ between different kinds of participants? As Daniel Schugurensky and I outlined in our research on Rosario, there are at least three main types of participant learning: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Of the first type, perhaps the greatest change is in knowledge of other people, organizations, and neighborhoods. Participants get to know people and groups that they would rarely encounter in daily life, from different classes, races, and social spheres. Through participatory budgeting, they often visit neighborhoods that would otherwise be off-limits. Another main type of knowledge learned is technical information. Participants find out how their government is run, how public funds are allocated, how projects are implemented, and what their citizen rights are.

Through participatory budgeting, community members learn instrumental, analytic, social, and deliberative skills. They learn how to monitor government actions, contact public officials, rank priorities, develop project proposals, and complete many other tasks that are instrumental to achieving their goals. Participants develop greater capacity to understand and analyze official documents and political affairs. Through practice, they become more adept at social interaction across different languages and cultures, group work, and organizing and leading meetings. They also gain new deliberation skills – listening, speaking in public, negotiating, persuading, and making collective decisions.

By engaging in such extensive deliberations, participants often experience substantial attitude and value changes. They gain a broader city-wide outlook, learning to empathize with government. They develop greater self-confidence, sense of political efficacy, tolerance, solidarity, concern for the common good, feelings of belonging, respect for the slow pace of democracy, and interest in citizen participation.

On the ground, how participants learn is as important as what they learn. How should participatory budgeting programs try to foster the learning that is so vital to their success? As Baiocchi pointed out, participant learning starts even before the first meeting, when people debate and decide whether to get involved. Most programs include some kind of training workshops and materials, which are critical for jumpstarting learning. In Rosario and elsewhere, however, community members seemed to learn much less from this formal

³ See the PB Unit website for more information: http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/
training than from informal communication. Much learning occurs through casual talk with peers and staff, face-to-face.

Different participants also learn different things, in different ways. In Rosario, those who had not actively participated in the community beforehand tended to learn and change more than those who had already been participating. Delegates with little formal education seemed to learn more than those with university degrees. Often, participants learned not only more or less, but also different things depending on their past experience, educational background, gender, and city district. In the end, participatory budgeting appears to serve as an educational equalizer, as initial inequalities in skills and knowledge between groups diminish through participation. Of course, this learning varies according to the degree of involvement. People who attend only one annual meeting may not learn much, while those who participate regularly as elected budget delegates learn the most. Finally, Baiocchi has found that the learning of new attitudes, as well as knowledge and skills, can be both individual and collective. While individual participants learn a great deal, organizations and communities also aggregate this learning into collective knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

**Staff and Politician Learning**

What do staff (managers, technicians, facilitators, etc.) and politicians who are involved in participatory budgeting learn? When and how do they learn? Like citizens, they often learn new knowledge, skills, and attitudes. As Latendresse and Loveys-Smith observed in Montreal and Guelph, staff members get to know community members and understand their concerns better. Compared with citizens, they start out with much greater knowledge about how the government and budgeting works, so they experience less growth in technical knowledge. Politicians are more likely to expand their knowledge of the budget process, since they are forced to discuss budget details that were previously contained within lower-level administrative discussions.

Staff and politicians are already adept at many of the skills that participatory budgeting requires and that community members learn by participating. It appears that the main skill they learn is to communicate and present information more accessibly, for the increasingly engaged citizens with whom they must dialogue. As Beatriz Tabak, one of the staff leaders of participatory budgeting at Toronto Community Housing, explained, “Staff learn to act as relationship managers, not just program or property managers.”

Perhaps the greatest learning for staff members and politicians is in the realm of attitudes. Just as citizens begin to empathize with government, government learns to empathize with citizens. Staff and politicians gain not just new knowledge, but also new ways of knowing. They become more patient with community members and begin to see more clearly the prejudices derived from their own professional education. Staff members become less fearful of participation. Sometimes this gives them greater confidence to advance progressive ideas, as in the Canadian cases. In many European participatory budgets, however, Allegretti has seen politicians reinterpret public participation as a way to neutralize social movement opposition.
How do staff and politicians learn these new attitudes, skills, and knowledge? In Rosario, I found that repetitive contact with citizens was the main mechanism of learning. Unlike most participatory processes, participatory budgeting forces staff, and to a lesser extent, politicians, to meet repeatedly with the same groups of citizen delegates week after week for highly involved discussions. Whereas staff would previously encounter citizens mainly through intermittent and one-way complaints, in participatory budgeting communication is two-way and sustained over months or years. In addition, the increasing globalization of participatory budgeting has caused staff and politicians to talk more with their counterparts in other cities, through networks such as the European-based FAL (Forum of Local Authorities for Social Inclusion) and the international participatory budgeting listserv. As networks and intercity relationships grow, new ideas flow across municipal and ideological boundaries. Events such as social forums and citizen summits have provided valuable spaces for exchanging these ideas and linking experiences.

**Effects of Learning**

Even if participant, staff, and politician learning is substantial, so what? What are the social and political effects of this learning? Here the findings are more mixed. Individual changes in behavior are perhaps the most consistent effect. As Schugurensky and I found in Rosario, overall, participants become better citizens over the course of the participatory budgeting process. Naturally, they end up monitoring public budgets and evaluating the quality of public works more. Many start to follow the news more and attend more community meetings outside of the participatory budget. Not only do they seek out more information about political and social issues, but they also formulate and propose more solutions to community problems. At the micro level, participants often begin to exercise their new deliberative skills by adopting more democratic behaviors in the community, at work, and at home. Baiocchi clarified that it is not clear whether these democratic inclinations translate into higher electoral turnout. The effects on staff behavior also remain unclear, although in some of the Canadian and European cases their participation compels them to push more forcefully for organizational change. The broader changes of collective learning may have deeper and longer-lasting effects on the community. As participants get to know new neighbors, close and far, their social networks grow and deepen. Baiocchi noted that the number of community organizations tends to increase after participatory budgeting is introduced. With more active community organizations, citizens end up participating more in their communities, and civil society expands. Latendresse noticed that in some cases, the urban movements and grassroots organizations that helped solidify participatory budgeting have gone on to advocate for it elsewhere. In Montreal, for example, the grassroots groups involved in the Plateau borough’s participatory budget have also been promoting participatory budgeting in other boroughs.

Learning also leads to changes in participatory budgeting processes themselves. Each year, participants and staff learn from mistakes and problems. In most cities, this results in constant innovations in the process, such as new quotas for delegates, smoother voting mechanisms, and catchier publicity. Improvements to the budgeting process in turn

---

4 See ParticipatoryBudgeting.org for listserv information.
lead to better political decisions. The decision-making process begins to incorporate more diverse perspectives and knowledge, and more public scrutiny. Public spending usually becomes more equitable, more responsive to citizen needs, and more efficiently allocated.

In other senses, though, changes at the collective level are more mixed. As at the individual level, the effects on electoral politics are undecided. As Baiocchi has found in Latin America and Allegretti has found in Europe, political parties that introduce participatory budgeting often win re-election, but not necessarily. Likewise, there is no necessary effect on social inclusion, according to studies. When participatory budgeting processes do not tout social inclusion as an explicit goal, it tends not to occur, as in many of the European processes that Allegretti has studied.

Furthermore, learning does not always have beneficial effects. Talpin's research in France, Italy, and Spain suggested that after participants have gone through an extensive learning process, their newfound expertise often dissuades others from getting involved. Veteran participants can be intimidating, and their more sophisticated discourse scares off newcomers. Alternately, participants may learn about government corruption and disorder, and become cynical. At the same time, by grasping the inner workings of government, residents may also learn to build better strategies to defend their own interests and points.

**Lessons for Participatory Democracy**

What can the learning experiences of participatory budgeting teach us about participatory democracy? Amongst the many lessons, a few stand out: the importance of design and political rhetoric, the potential for both equalizing and undemocratic effects, and the multiplier effect of learning.

First, the diverse experiences of participatory budgeting suggest that what people learn depends largely on how the process is designed. As I argued, participatory democracy is inherently educative to some degree, but some pedagogical designs lead to more learning than others. Including formal training is helpful, but creating time and space for informal peer-to-peer learning seems to result in even more learning. Peer-mentoring systems, bus and walking tours, social events, and city or district-wide forums all foster learning by helping participants and staff reflect on their experience, compare notes, and articulate their views. Likewise, design techniques can encourage more democratic communication, which enables more participants to learn democracy by doing. Term limits for delegates, time limits for speakers, and designated facilitators for meetings incorporate more people into discussions. By using art, theater, and popular education techniques to communicate ideas, organizers can engage participants who might otherwise remain detached.

Design alone does not determine learning, however. Allegretti and Talpin stressed that the political goals and rhetoric that a participatory democratic process presents to the public also guide learning. If politicians and coordinators explicitly frame the process as inclusive, democratic, and educational, their rhetoric can encourage people to participate in more democratic and open-minded ways. Alternately, if participation is framed as an apolitical administrative process, as in many of the recent European cases, learning is more limited. These effects are greater if the program deliberately practices what it preaches, but
even by itself, preaching tends to have a trickle-down effect on behavior. Of course, the influences of both design and rhetoric are filtered by the local context, so they differ across locations and situations.

The effects of learning are as complex as its causes, and perhaps even less clear. Most advocates of participatory democracy assume that it leads to significant democratic and citizenship learning, and experiences of participatory budgeting seem to validate this assumption. Perhaps more importantly, these experiences illustrate that participatory democracy not only makes better citizens but can also reduce inequalities between citizens. In participatory budgeting at least, learning usually serves as an equalizer, providing the most education to those who are least-educated. Baiocchi and I suggested that this is largely because of the pro-poor commitment of many participatory budgeting processes, which leads to more accessible training materials, targeted outreach in marginalized communities, free transportation and child care, and funding criteria that favor poor communities. By systematically reaching out to poor and marginalized community members, organizers integrate them into the learning loop more deeply than in most examples of participatory democracy.

Democratic learning may be more powerful than many participatory democrats assume, but it can also be more pernicious. Democratic learning at the individual level can have undemocratic effects at the collective level. Following Talpin’s observations, it can lead to ‘enlightened’ in-group mentalities and discourses, which alienate outsiders and newcomers. This presents a challenge for participatory democracy: how can organizers create spaces in which different people can learn at different levels, while working together?

Finally, because democratic learning tends to inspire more active participation, its effects are multiplied. After engaging in participatory budgeting, citizens tend to participate more in community organizations and local government, leading to further learning. Participants and organizers have often gone on to initiate new participatory democratic processes in other institutions and government bodies. Within a given process, learning also tends to inspire new democratic innovations, which can further deepen participatory democracy.

This virtuous circle of democratic learning and participatory democracy is by no means guaranteed, however. Like other examples of participatory democracy, participatory budgeting is not a static process. Changes in design and rhetoric can deepen democratic learning, but they can also dampen it. Only by assessing what and how people learn can we better understand how they might learn more, and how this learning can better contribute to participatory democracy.

References


Construcción de Ciudadanía Democrática y Proyectos Educativos Urbanos: La Experiencia de las Ciudades Educadoras

Pablo Montero Souto
Grupo de investigación en Pedagogía Social y Educación Ambiental
Universidad de Santiago de Compostela

Introducción

En la ciudad moderna, los procesos de urbanización de las sociedades contemporáneas no parecen corresponderse con el pleno desarrollo de un proceso civilizatorio armónico y equilibrado. Hoy, el mayor desafío de la vida urbana consiste en salir al encuentro de las complejidades que ponen a prueba la capacidad de las ciudades para ser espacios saludables, habitables, sostenibles, inclusivos, culturales, amigables, etc.

La filosofía de la Ciudad Educadora es una de las alternativas que trata de sobreponerse al colapso de las metrópolis. De un lado, tratando de leer la problemática urbana en clave pedagógica y social; de otro, proyectando la acción educativa en la ciudad; y, por ambas vías, convocando a toda la comunidad educativa en el aprendizaje de la ciudadanía.

Con estos referentes, se presentan las principales temáticas trasladadas a los Proyectos Educativos de Ciudad, a partir del análisis de 687 experiencias de pedagogía urbana, desarrolladas en ciudades de 13 países distintos, que comparten los principios enunciados en la Carta Internacional de Ciudades Educadoras, adoptada inicialmente en Barcelona (1990) y revisada con posterioridad, primero en Bolonia (1994) y después en Génova (2004).

Un Habitar Cívico y Pedagógico

La crisis del fenómeno urbano es hoy uno de los iconos más reconocibles del planeta. De hecho, según informa el United Nations Human Settlements Programme, por primera vez en la historia, la mitad de la Humanidad vive en áreas urbanas, cada vez más connotadas por las señales de conflicto, de anonimato y de indiferencia. La progresiva degradación de los ecosistemas urbanos, donde proliferan las condiciones de pobreza, de marginación y de vulnerabilidad, cuestiona la universalización del proceso civilizatorio. Es más, en el ámbito de las ciencias sociales no hay discrepancia alguna a la hora de afirmar que la mayoría de
las ciudades viven al borde del colapso, precipitándose hacia procesos de segregación social, espacial y cultural. Por eso, a menudo se habla de la ‘ciudad difusa’, de la ‘no ciudad’, de la ‘ciudad sin límites’ o de ‘la ciudad desbordada’ (Borja 2003).

En estas circunstancias, es preciso recurrir a los beneficios que ofrece la práctica de la pedagogía urbana, por muy exigente que sea en la tarea cívica que comporta. En primera instancia, porque incluso antes que la familia o la escuela, la ciudad es el lugar para la socialización y el aprendizaje de la vida en sociedad. En segundo término, porque la tarea educativa encuentra su verdadera razón de ser cuando contribuye a favorecer un habitar pedagógico, que se caracterice por crear entornos amables y amigables, capaces de salvaguardar los valores éticos que fundamentan el estilo de vida de las sociedades democráticas. Así, la pedagogía social ha de ser observada como un vector fundamental en la construcción y mejora de las sociedades urbanas, transfiriendo a la educación el compromiso no sólo de imaginar nuevo futuros sino también de posibilitarlos (Caride 2005).

Desde esta perspectiva, la ciudad cobra sentido como realidad educativa para el aprendizaje de la ciudadanía, e invita al gobierno local a elaborar políticas de pedagogía urbana que permitan inscribir el desarrollo personal y comunitario en el curso de las prácticas cotidianas. De modo que la Ciudad Educadora es una de las alternativas para enfrentarse a las problemáticas urbanas, queriendo contribuir de manera decisiva al logro de ciudades de todos y para todos.

Con este mismo propósito, en primer lugar se introducen las bases de la filosofía de la Ciudad Educadora, desde su génesis y hasta la actualidad. A continuación, se subraya el valor de los Proyectos Educativos de Ciudad como innovaciones de las políticas municipales orientadas a la producción de comunidades de aprendizaje. Todo ello conduce a una tercera parte que se ocupa del análisis descriptivo de las principales propuestas educativas asociadas a este tipo de proyecto. Para concluir, se señala que las iniciativas de pedagogía urbana son la mayor expresión de educación para la ciudadanía, porque se ocupan de crear las condiciones de ciudadanía necesarias para el aprendizaje de la vida en común y la construcción pedagógica de comunidades democráticas.

**La Ciudad Educadora**

A menudo, la génesis de la Ciudad Educadora se remonta a la memoria de dos hechos destacables. Inicialmente, la publicación del informe *Aprender a Ser*, dirigido por Edgar Faure (1973) para la UNESCO, acuñó por vez primera la expresión ‘ciudad educativa’. Dos décadas después, la celebración del I Congreso Internacional de Ciudades Educadoras (Ajuntament de Barcelona 1990), representó la definición de esta idea, desde diferentes perspectivas disciplinares y atendiendo a un amplio abanico de enfoques teóricos y metodológicos. Desde entonces, aunque la idea de ‘Ciudad Educadora’ ha estado sujeta a un proceso de construcción que se prolonga hasta nuestros días, muchas de las bases primigenias se fueron modificando, a medida que las propias transformaciones urbanas demandaron una educación cada vez más proyectada a lo largo de la vida, con una creciente apertura a distintos tiempos y espacios sociales. A tenor de los ejes temáticos que han ido orientando las 10 ediciones de los Congresos Internacionales de Ciudades Educadoras
realizadas hasta la fecha, se ha ido transitando desde una primera etapa más centrada en observar la ciudad como espacio público, a una segunda fase donde predomina la reflexión en torno a la ciudadanía como forma de habitar la ciudad (Bosch 2008).

A lo largo de esta trayectoria, la filosofía de la Ciudad Educadora ha quedado fundamentalmente connotada por dos aportaciones: de un lado, la que subraya las dimensiones pedagógicas de la ciudad como un contenedor de recursos educativos para aprender en la ciudad, como un agente educativo más de la comunidad educativa y como un contenido educativo a incorporar en la formación de la ciudadanía (Trilla 1999). De otro, la que reconoce la extensión de los tiempos y de los espacios educativos donde tienen lugar los procesos de socialización y de aprendizaje, cuestionando el sentido restrictivo que adoptan las perspectivas empeñadas en equiparar lo educativo a lo escolar, el aprendizaje al currículo, la formación a la instrucción y aproximándose a los sugerentes perfiles que ofrece la educación concebida como una práctica social compleja, en nada reducible a los tiempos y espacios de lo ‘institucional’, de lo ‘reglado’ o de lo ‘formal’ (Caride Gómez 2008; Pose 2006).

Desde estas dos vertientes, un amplia nómina de autores (Alderoqui 2002; Amaro Agudo 2006; Cabezudo 2008; Cabral Pinto 2004; Gadotti 2004; Longworth 2003; Merino 2007; Molina Martín 2007; Tonucci 1997) insisten en señalar que una sociedad-ciudad será educadora cuando todo su entramado social ejerza al unísono una función netamente pedagógica, coresponsabilizando a las instituciones públicas y privadas con el desarrollo integral de todos sus habitantes, ofreciendo un marco de referencia para realizar acciones orientadas a entender y organizar la ciudad como un espacio educativo, que engloba toda la complejidad del proceso formativo y demanda propuestas integradoras. Algo a lo que Caballo (2001) agrega que la Ciudad Educadora, en parte por la carga utópica que entraña, supone un desafío y una oportunidad para la innovación política, la transversalidad, la participación social, el trabajo en red y otras transformaciones de la gestión municipal, que deben de posibilitar una mejor prestación de los servicios públicos, integrando la ordenación de los territorios en la lógica del espacio educativo integral o pacto local sobre la educación.
Como se quiere representar en el gráfico, la Ciudad Educadora responde a la aspiración de configurar una auténtica “comunidad de aprendizaje”, o lo que Elboj (2002, 9) define como “un proyecto de transformación social y cultural de un centro educativo y de su entorno, para conseguir una sociedad de la información para todas las personas, basada en el aprendizaje dialógico, mediante la educación participativa de la comunidad que se concreta en todos sus espacios.” Así pues, la reconversión de la acción urbana demanda nuevos modos de concebir el papel de la educación y de la escuela, atendiendo a los problemas que afectan al mundo urbano y coresponsabilizándose con las soluciones, como ámbitos de interdependencia e influencia recíproca (Gradaïlle Pernas 2008; Imbernón 2008; Subirats 2005; Vera Vila 2007).
Los Proyectos Educativos de Ciudad

Más allá de la reflexión en torno a los principios de la Ciudad Educadora, puede que sea en los proyectos urbanos donde mejor se observe la condición educadora de la ciudad. Los Proyectos Educativos de Ciudad (PEC) son planes estratégicos para el desarrollo urbano, que introducen la centralidad de la educación en las prioridades de la agenda municipal, confiando en la capacidad de la comunidad educativa para llevar a cabo las líneas de trabajo que ayuden a mejorar el estado de la ciudad y de quienes la habitan. Las distintas definiciones al uso destacan además que los PEC se caracterizan por entender el rol social de la educación como un proceso de responsabilidad compartida, que intenta lograr el mayor consenso posible entre todos los actores sociales de la ciudad, como requisito y garantía para hacerlo efectivo. Así mismo, otra seña de identidad de este tipo de proyectos reside en su capacidad para incentivar la transversalidad de las políticas municipales en el interior de los gobiernos locales y, de cara al exterior, impulsar las relaciones entre la ciudad y la educación, por medio de prácticas que impliquen a todos los agentes de la comunidad educativa (Bosch i Vila 1998; Gómez-Granell 1998; Vintró Castells 2001).

En términos generales, los PEC suponen una oportunidad para trabajar desde una perspectiva transversal y transformadora de la educación, provocando un triple desbordamiento del marco escolar: hacia otros espacios políticos municipales, hacia otros ámbitos ciudadanos y hacia otras etapas del ciclo vital. Al respecto, se nos dice que estos proyectos se plantean cuatro grandes objetivos: mejorar el funcionamiento de la red escolar; consolidar las dimensiones emergentes del sistema educativo; coordinar desde el gobierno local toda la oferta formativa del territorio; e impulsar la dimensión educativa de todo un abanico de iniciativas y propuestas (Gomà 2002).

Sin embargo, en la práctica, algunos autores consideran que estos proyectos no han sido del todo aprovechados, pues todavía existe una gran distancia entre las previsiones y los resultados de las experiencias analizadas. Por ejemplo, Civís (2006, 20) señala que al no conseguir verterebra la coordinación todos los sistemas de educación-formación existentes en la ciudad, “acaban resultando iniciativas de intención integradora pero que en su puesta en práctica llegan a ser excesivamente compartimentadas y, en términos generales, no consiguen óptimamente el objetivo de la transversalización de la acción socioeducativa.”

En este mismo sentido, atendiendo a las conclusiones derivadas de los estudios realizados en Cataluña (Alegre 2005; Collet 2004), los PEC adolecen de una serie de dificultades que conviene subsanar. En concreto, son documentos difíciles de comprender, con un reducido nivel de concreción de las propuestas y cuya incidencia en la vida de la gente, por consiguiente, es bastante exigua. De hecho, todo indica que estos proyectos invitan a repensar las realidades educativas desde nuevas perspectivas, con el claro propósito de globalizar y transversalizar la educación en las políticas públicas locales. Pero, en su defecto, también se apunta que los PEC tienen una relativa capacidad para impulsar la cooperación entre todos los actores que convoca. Máxime, cuando sus rendimientos todavía son poco visibles en la transformación sustantiva de las condiciones de vida de la gente. En resumen, las evaluaciones realizadas muestran que los PEC tienen dificultades no sólo en ser un proyecto de ciudad, sino en ser, ante todo, un proyecto ciudadano.
Revisión de la Experiencia Acumulada

El análisis de las prácticas asociadas a los proyectos de las ciudades educadoras depara un recorrido desigual. Entre las experiencias emprendidas conviven ciertas iniciativas de especial relevancia con otras realizaciones que no se ven acompañadas de la misma suerte. Por eso, conviene que los municipios revisen si están consiguiendo satisfacer, de manera efectiva, los compromisos adquiridos al subscribir los principios de la Ciudad Educadora. Para facilitar esa tarea, se sintetizan aquí las principales orientaciones de las experiencias de pedagogía urbana, extraídas del análisis del Banco Internacional de Documentos de Ciudades Educadoras. La explotación de esta base de datos fue realizada durante el primer trimestre del año 2008, cuando el registro contaba con un total de 687 experiencias realizadas en ciudades de 13 países diferentes, distribuidas tal como se observa en la tabla.

Experiencias de Ciudades Educadoras

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ámbitos temáticos*</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bienestar social</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>14,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Civismo y convivencia</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>12,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Asociacionismo y participación</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>12,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sistema educativo</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>9,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Política y administración</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>7,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Formación permanente</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>7,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Cultura y ocio</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>7,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Información y documentación</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>6,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Desarrollo personal</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>4,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Medio ambiente</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>4,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Arte y humanidades</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>3,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Desarrollo urbano</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>3,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Salud y deportes</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Ciencia y tecnología</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Desarrollo socioeconómico</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1,3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Una misma experiencia puede estar indexada en más de un ámbito temático.
Tras revisar la experiencia de las Ciudades Educadoras, se observa que las prácticas de pedagogía urbana tratan de poner a la ciudad en disposición de educar, implicando al conjunto de la sociedad en la tarea educativa y reafirmando el compromiso de la ciudad con la formación de sus ciudadanos y ciudadanas, a fin de potenciar todos los derechos para toda la ciudadanía, con especial atención a los derechos educativos, sociales, culturales y ambientales. En este sentido, las iniciativas puestas en marcha se relacionan con alguna o varias de las líneas de trabajo que se sugieren a continuación, a modo de una agenda 21 para la política educativa local.

1. Construir una red educativa integrada, capaz de corresponsabilizar a todos los agentes educativos de la comunidad; vinculando a los centros educativos con las restantes instituciones que integran la trama urbana, con miras a coordinar y complementar los recursos educativos y sociales existentes en el municipio, promoviendo la colaboración, unidad y coherencia en las actuaciones que se realicen.

2. Fomentar la mejora de las políticas públicas; mediante el intercambio de experiencias y la potenciación de la transversalidad, el trabajo en red y la planificación estratégica, así como la constitución de observatorios urbanos y la realización de proyectos de investigación en colaboración con las universidades y los organismos públicos de investigación.

3. Dignificar el valor comunitario y social del espacio público para cualificar la vida cotidiana, otorgando a los espacios de la ciudad una función primordial en la tarea de construir la convivencia, mediante su valorización y rehabilitación, tanto en el plano funcional como en el económico, mejorando el diseño del entorno urbanístico, habilitando zonas verdes y calles peatonales, y garantizando la seguridad urbana en todos los entornos de dominio público.

4. Garantizar el acceso en igualdad de condiciones a todo tipo de bienes y servicios públicos disponibles en el entorno, cohesionando los territorios con políticas de proximidad y medidas de descentralización que permitan ofrecer una cobertura universal de los recursos, las infraestructuras y los equipamientos.

5. Orientar a la infancia y la adolescencia para que pueda aprovechar toda la oferta educativa, cultural, deportiva, asistencial y sanitaria existente en la ciudad, articulando además una red de protección de menores que funcione a tiempo completo, garantizando la extensión de la cobertura escolar mediante la puesta en funcionamiento de la etapa de 0 a 3 años y de los programas de actividades extraescolares.

6. Contribuir al desarrollo de los procesos de integración educativa, desde las oficinas de escolarización y los programas habilitados al efecto para combatir el absentismo escolar en el tramo de la escolarización obligatoria; normalizando la situación
escolar del alumnado absentista, a partir del trabajo especializado de las unidades de atención a la infancia y adolescencia.

7. Favorecer el desarrollo de una vida saludable, desde la práctica preventiva de los posibles riesgos asociados a las prácticas perjudiciales para la salud, y, en particular, generando una ocupación del tiempo libre que contribuya a mejorar la calidad de vida, desde claves como la educación afectivo-sexual o la lucha contra el consumo de substancias tóxicas.

8. Motivar la cohesión social y la integración cultural, velando por el desarrollo de las libertades religiosas y ayudando a que se respete el ejercicio de las distintas confesiones, comprometiendo a la sociedad con la defensa a ultranza de la libertad y la igualdad, rechazando toda señal de discriminación por cualquier sinrazón de género, edad, etnia, creencia, orientación sexual y/o cualesquiera otros motivos contrarios a la ley.

9. Contribuir a la formación integral de las personas, potenciando las competencias cívicas y sociales de toda la ciudadanía, a través de la educación en los valores y principios democráticos; favoreciendo las relaciones entre las personas y las comunidades, así como la participación ciudadana y social en la vida pública, con miras a promover la democracia, en su doble componente representativa y participativa.

10. Valorizar el paisaje urbano y el hábitat de la ciudad, preservando las reservas ambientales y el patrimonio natural, fomentando tanto el consumo responsable de los recursos como el adecuado tratamiento de los residuos, poniendo en marcha los proyectos de las Agenda 21 y la participación ciudadana en la gestión ambiental de la ciudad sostenible.

11. Favorecer la conciliación de la vida laboral, familiar y personal, armonizando la gestión de los usos del tiempo en la ciudad, a partir de una mejor adecuación de los horarios institucionales a los ritmos de vida de la ciudadanía; promoviendo a su vez la igualdad de oportunidades en todos los ámbitos de la vida, y, en particular, la igualdad entre hombres y mujeres en los contextos escolares y laborales, así como en la vida doméstica; fomentando la autonomía personal y comprometiendo la corresponsabilidad en las tareas compartidas, desde la educación familiar y el apoyo a las asociaciones y escuelas de madres y padres.

12. Fomentar el derecho a la cultura, impulsando las políticas culturales de protección y promoción del patrimonio cultural, y aquéllas otras de fomento las artes musicales, escénicas, plásticas y audiovisuales; haciendo lo propio con la animación a la lectura y con la promoción del libro y de las bibliotecas; estimulando la creatividad ciudadana y la práctica de unos hábitos culturales que susciten el desarrollo personal y colectivo de las personas y los grupos; siempre con miras a incrementar el sentimiento de pertenencia a la ciudad y a cada una de sus unidades vecinales, con el debido sentido de la responsabilidad hacia el patrimonio material e inmaterial.
13. Promover la construcción de una ciudad inclusiva, eliminando cualquier tipo de barrera que limite o reduzca la autonomía personal y, en consecuencia, vulnere los derechos de accesibilidad universal de las personas con discapacidad; prestando la atención domiciliaria debida a quienes permanecen la mayor parte de su tiempo en el interior de sus viviendas, por distintos motivos de enfermedad o dependencia; desarrollando en su beneficio los programas de servicio a domicilio para un desarrollo normalizado de la vida cotidiana, al tiempo que se introducen alternativas pedagógicas y terapéuticas en las etapas de hospitalización.

14. Ayudar a mejorar el rendimiento académico de los escolares, en el caso de las enseñanzas no universitarias, y ayudar también a las instituciones de Educación Superior a que desempeñen sus funciones de docencia, investigación y extensión universitaria; supliendo las carencias materiales existentes para que todos puedan cursar sus estudios en mejores condiciones, mediante becas y ayudas escolares de comedor y transporte que contribuyan al pleno aprovechamiento de las opciones educativas y culturales reunidas en la ciudad.

15. Promover el diálogo intercultural y la cultura de la paz, asentando el desarrollo de la ciudad en el respeto a la diversidad cultural y en la salvaguarda de los Derechos Humanos; combatiendo los prejuicios y estereotipos sociales de cualquier tipo, brindando en todo momento los debidos soportes de apoyo psicológico y seguridad personal a quienes así lo precisen; y atendiendo a las personas privadas de libertad, desplazadas y en situación de calle.

16. Hacer de la ciudad un proyecto solidario con la justicia social, mediante el hermanamiento de ciudades y los programas de cooperación al desarrollo, emprendiendo de igual modo distintas iniciativas de movilidad, intercambio, apadrinamiento y acogida; e incentivando la creación y multiplicación de las reservas capital social, a través de una cultura de la participación favorecedora del derecho de asociación y de la práctica del voluntariado, que profundice en la creación de redes de ciudadanía con un reconocido liderazgo social.

17. Preparar a los ciudadanos para el mercado de trabajo desde la formación profesional y ocupacional, mejorando sus habilitaciones y competencias para la inserción laboral, ofreciendo servicios de orientación profesional, facilitando tanto la primera transición al empleo como la adquisición y el mantenimiento de nuevas ocupaciones, combatiendo la exclusión social, la inactividad laboral y el desempleo; y, en todo caso, promoviendo el desarrollo económico de la ciudad, mediante la diseminación de la cultura emprendedora y el apoyo a la iniciativa privada, así como descubriendo nuevos yacimientos de empleo que permitan el incremento de la ocupación, y que además contribuyan a la prestación de los servicios necesarios para la ciudad, convirtiéndose así en un verdadero motor de su desarrollo económico.

18. Facilitar la realización de las transiciones a lo largo de la vida, ayudando a las personas mayores a extraer el máximo provecho de su existencia, al contemplar su participación en Universidades Populares que les reporten vida social y cultural, al tiempo que favorezcan su plena alfabetización en los lenguajes necesarios para el
nuevo milenio, abriendo canales de comunicación y diálogo social e intergeneracional para la búsqueda de proyectos comunes entre personas y grupos sociales de distintas edades.

19. Introducir la pedagogía urbana en el currículo escolar, realizando propuestas innovadoras, concebidas desde la perspectiva educativa del trabajo social en la comunidad, que promuevan la práctica simultánea de aprendizaje y servicio, combinando los procesos formativos con la ayuda a la comunidad.

20. Ofrecer redes y servicios de información a la ciudadanía, aprovechando las ventajas de la sociedad red, alfabetizando a la población en el manejo de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación en la ciudad; y prestando además los derechos electrónicos que las Administraciones Públicas deben de garantizar, al tiempo que se reducen las brechas digitales y las inequidades en la distribución de los servicios de acceso y uso de las nuevas, o no tan ‘nuevas’, tecnologías.

21. Favorecer la seguridad urbana, atendiendo a la educación vial de peatones y conductores, facilitando el uso del transporte público, así como de la accesibilidad, la seguridad vial y la movilidad urbana, descongestionando las arterias de la ciudad y reduciendo las tasas de accidentalidad en la vía pública, a partir de la implementación de los carriles bici, los caminos escolares, las redes de transporte público, los estacionamientos compartidos, etc.

**Conclusión**

A pesar de las dificultades identificadas en la experiencia de las Ciudades Educadoras, y aunque sus principios se puedan ver comprometidos en ciertas ocasiones, la pedagogía urbana se orienta, de manera inequívoca, hacia la promoción del aprendizaje ciudadano, avanzando en la coordinación escuela-entorno, y contribuyendo a generar mayor cohesión comunitaria, integración urbana y reanimación cívica de las ciudades.

Los gobiernos locales han de trabajar en una cierta dirección de pedagogía urbana, porque hoy ya no basta con garantizar ciertos derechos y deberes acordes con una vida en democracia; sino que, por muy importantes que estos sean, es necesario adquirir y manejar una ‘competencia social y ciudadana’ o ‘competencia cívica’, que incremente la capacidad de las personas y los grupos sociales para comprender e interpretar sus obligaciones como ciudadanos, conscientes de las tensiones y de los dilemas que esto implica a la hora de emitir juicios sobre los asuntos públicos, de establecer prioridades acerca de los bienes y servicios comunitarios, de adoptar criterios y pautas de acción en función de creencias y principios éticos, etc. En efecto, no parece ser suficiente con tener una ciudadanía formalmente reconocida, siendo igualmente necesario saber en qué consiste el hecho de vivir y convivir junto a otros y aprender a ser un sujeto de derechos y deberes.

En definitiva, el proyecto de ciudadanía democrática que necesitan las ciudades converge en torno a un propósito común: promover una sociedad que edifique mediante una educación que socialice e integre. O, lo que es lo mismo, una Pedagogía que estimule el papel educador de toda sociedad, comprometiéndose en la tarea de incrementar sus posibilidades socializadoras para favorecer el desarrollo integral de las personas y los
grupos sociales, mejorando su calidad de vida tanto como el bienestar de la sociedad en su conjunto; afrontando cuantas situaciones de riesgo inhiban o dificulten la integración social. Y, en consecuencia, proponiendo así una educación de amplias miras, que, por un lado, trabaje para incrementar las posibilidades socializadoras de la educación, en cualquier tiempo y lugar; y, por otro, procure estimular el papel educador de la sociedad en toda su diversidad.

**Referencias Bibliográficas**


Civic Learning and Political Engagement through Participatory Budgeting: The Case of Guelph, Canada

Elizabeth Pinnington and Daniel Schugurensky
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Introduction

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget, usually at the municipal level. This process often involves five stages: diagnosis, deliberation, decision-making, implementation and monitoring. The first experiments of participatory budgeting (PB) were developed in Brazil in 1989. Today, two decades later, over 1,000 towns and cities around the world have adapted several variations of participatory budgeting to their own contexts. In Canada, participatory budgeting is implemented in three communities of similar population size: the Montreal borough of Plateau-Mont-Royal, the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, and the municipality of Guelph. In this chapter we present the civic learning and political engagement experienced by members of the Guelph participatory budget.

Participatory budgeting has been awarded a best practice award at the UN Habitat Conference in 1996. Moreover, a recent international study that examined 57 democratic initiatives for citizen participation between elections using five criteria (selection mechanism, form of involvement, role in decision-making, scale and transferability, and resource implications) ranked participatory budgeting as one of the top three exceptional innovations (Smith 2005). This appraisal is not surprising, as participatory budget is frequently lauded for a variety of positive outcomes that contribute to increase and deepen democratic participation.

Among the most cited positive outcomes are the transparency in decision-making (and the consequent reduction in corruption levels), the trust in co-governance initiatives (overcoming the mistrust generated by traditional consultations), the high level of participation and mobilization of politically marginalized groups (unlike typical participatory democracy experiments that attract predominantly middle class males), the emergence and growth of new associations, a more equitable distribution of resources that favours poorer areas of the city, and the creation of new pluralistic spaces in which citizens can deliberate democratically about issues that affect them. For these reasons, participatory
budgeting is considered a form of empowered participatory governance that mitigates expert decision-making power and control over public process (Abers 2000; Marquetti 2002; Fung and Wright 2003; Santos and Avritzer 2005; Smith 2005; Wampler 2007; Santos 2007).

These outcomes are very important indeed for the project of democratizing democracy, but that the literature on the topic has not paid enough attention yet to one area that is also relevant for this project: the subjective changes (most of them subtle, some evident) experienced by participants. For this reason, our research explores the educational dimension of PB, and particularly the civic and political learning and change experienced by participants. This research agenda is partly inspired by the challenge raised by Jane Mansbridge (1995), when she noted that the claim that participatory democracy has a positive impact on citizenship building through its educative effect (e.g. Pateman 1970) made sense but was not yet supported by empirical data. In this context, we are undertaking an international project to examine changes in democratic and political knowledge, skills, dispositions and practices experienced by ordinary citizens engaged in PB.

During the last decade, Guelph residents have been allocating a small portion of municipal funds, supplemented by agency donations, through a network of neighbourhood associations called Neighbourhood Support Coalition (NSC). Rather than dividing funds equally among groups or having a municipal official make funding projects on their behalf, these residents deliberate and allocate funds based on the needs they hear from one another on a year-to-year basis (Pinnington et al., 2009).

Over a period of 18 months, we carried out in-depth research about the Guelph NSC’s participatory budgeting process through attending monthly NSC meetings, municipal council meetings and municipal committee meetings, reviewing 8 years of institutional documentation, and conducting semi-structured interviews with community participants. The study was guided by two main questions: 1) What changes in civic learning (e.g. democratic knowledge, skills, dispositions and practices) have occurred in residents as a result of being involved in participatory budgeting? 2) Is this learning being transformed into political agency?

**Participatory Budgeting in Guelph, Canada**

Guelph is a city of almost 130,000 people located in Ontario, Canada. Due to the presence of a large university, the mean income and education levels in Guelph are higher than both provincial and national averages. Guelph is also home, however, to various low-income neighborhoods. Over 10% of Guelph households are below the poverty line. Consistent with national trends, single parents and immigrants are most susceptible to living with low-income in Guelph (United Way of Guelph Wellington, 2007). Roughly 15% of residents indicate that English is not their main language spoken at home (City of Guelph, 2008), presenting additional challenges for political legitimacy and access to participation. The Guelph Inclusivity Alliance (2008) reports that over 20% of Guelph residents are first-generation immigrants.
Since 1999, residents of Guelph have used participatory budgeting to allocate small portion of the municipal program budget (roughly 0.1%) combined with donations from other sources. The participatory budget is based in the Neighborhood Support Coalition (NSC), a civil society organization composed of grassroots neighborhood groups run by local residents, the vast majority of whom are volunteers.¹ The NSC began in 1997 with 5 participating groups who decided to collaborate toward improving their service delivery by sharing information and resources. At that time, the NSC existed primarily to reduce negative health and social outcomes related to living in poverty. Over the years, the NSC has collaborated with various institutional partners, some of whom continue to play an important role in the organization, including the City of Guelph and Guelph Wellington Family and Children’s Services.

The Guelph NSC has since grown to 12 participating neighborhood groups from around the city, including neighbourhoods that represent the full range of the socio-economic realities of city residents. The focus of the NSC’s work has also changed, moving toward more broadly defined community building, as outlined in its vision: “A Guelph community of healthy children, strong families and vibrant neighborhoods that embraces diversity, creates opportunities and promotes a high quality of life for all residents” (Guelph NSC, 2006). In 2008, Guelph neighbourhood groups organized over 500 community building events, most at low cost or no cost, including family picnics, clothing closets, after-school programs, back-to-school clothing drives, community kitchens and newcomer welcome programs (Guelph NSC, 2008b).

In the early years (1997-1998), NSC funding was divided equally between participating neighbourhoods. City staff partnering with the Coalition noticed that certain neighbourhoods regularly had a surplus by year-end, while other groups struggled to make ends meet in responding to the volume of community needs. After a year of discussion, the NSC began using participatory budgeting in 1999, when members chose to deliberate and allocate funds by consensus, based on the needs they heard from one another.

Participatory budgeting occurs at the NSC Finance Committee, which is made up of elected representatives from each of the member neighbourhood groups. Agency partners and municipal staff participate in meetings of the Finance Committee, but do not have a decision-making role. They provide information (e.g. about municipal political processes) and facilitate access to low or no-cost resources (e.g. meeting space). The NSC works to reduce barriers to participation in all its committees by providing funds for childcare, eldercare and transportation, as well as food at meetings and translation services in 9 different languages (Lerner and Van Wagner 2006). The Finance Committee meets monthly, year round. Typical agenda items include information sharing, discussion of funding opportunities, deliberations and allocations of small amounts of funds (up to $CAD 1000.00), as well as orientation of new members. Once a year, the Finance Committee deliberates its sum of large cash donations (totaling just over $CAD 200,000 in 2008).

¹ Unless otherwise noted, information on the Guelph NSC is based on City of Guelph, 2008; Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition, 2003, 2006, 2007; semi-structured interviews with NSC members in 2008, and observations of NSC Finance Committee meetings from 2007-08.
Civic Learning and Political Engagement through the NSC Participatory Budget

In Guelph, we undertook a study that combined qualitative and quantitative approaches. We conducted in-depth interviews 12 Guelph residents, ranging in age from 35-71, who had been involved in the NSC participatory budgeting process over at least 2 full cycles (years) through their neighbourhood group. There were 2 male and 10 female participants\(^2\) from 6 different neighbourhood groups. Of the 6 neighbourhoods represented, three have a majority of low-income residents, two have a mixture of low, middle and higher income residents, and one neighbourhood is almost exclusively a higher-income area. In terms of education, 5 participants had completed high school, 1 had a college degree, 5 had an undergraduate degree and 1 had a post-graduate degree. The interviews included several open-ended questions in which we asked participants about their history of civic and political engagement, their involvement in the NSC, their feelings about their participation in the process, their opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of the participatory budgeting, and their learning experiences. In this chapter we report exclusively on the learning aspect.

The open-ended question on learning did not generate much response among participants. This is probably due to the fact that most of the learning acquired through participatory budgeting was informal, unintentional and unconscious, and resulted in tacit knowledge, which can be conceptualized as “all that I know but cannot tell” (Polanyi 1967). To elicit participants’ comments on their learning, we ask them to rank themselves on a scale of 1-5 (1 = low, 5 = high) on a schedule of 46 indicators of civic learning and change in four areas related to democratic participation: skills, knowledge, attitudes/values, and practices. This schedule evolved incrementally, from an original list of 10 indicators, emerging after participants in other cities (e.g. Porto Alegre, Montevideo, Rosario) mentioned additional episodes of learning and change. The schedule was then adapted to the particular context of Guelph and refined in consultation with the NSC.

During the interview, Guelph participants ranked themselves twice for each question, once for before being involved in the NSC participatory budget process and once for after the experience. Every time participants reported a change, they were invited to explain and provide concrete examples. Participants were usually happy to talk about the changes that they experienced through the process and to illustrate them with rich descriptions, stories and anecdotes. We are aware that self-reported changes have limitations, but the fact that we asked participants to elaborate on those changes increases the probability of responses that reflect reality and are not just ‘made up’. Moreover, the stories told by participants helped to deal appropriately with the attribution question, distinguishing whether a particular change was mainly the result of involvement in participatory budgeting or the result of other experiences.

Although we triangulated the data from the questionnaire with interviews, observations and analysis of documents, we recognize that our study still provides

---

\(^2\) There are more female participants than male in the NSC.
incomplete information about the pedagogical impact of participatory budgeting. To get a fuller picture of participants’ learning experiences it would be helpful to complement this type of study with other approaches (ethnographic studies, participatory action research, etc.). Table 16.1 shows the civic and political changes reported by participants through 46 indicators of learning and change. These indicators are organized in four categories (knowledge, skills, attitudes and practices) and ranked as the average increase in self-ranking for participants.

**Table 16.1: Participatory budgeting at the NSC: Civic learning and change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic Learning</th>
<th>Average Change</th>
<th>Before PB</th>
<th>After PB</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(ranked from greatest to least change)</td>
<td>(0=low, 5=high)</td>
<td>(0=low, 5=high)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand participatory budgeting process</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand budget allocation process in City of Guelph</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend community meetings</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiate 'big picture' (Guelph as a whole) with needs of local group</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in collaboration with city staff</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing needs of community members in my area</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposing solutions to problems in our neighbourhood</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal responsibility (conduct needs assessments, deliver appropriate programming, follow-up, evaluate programs in sustainable way)</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know people from other neighbourhoods and organizations</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participate actively in community meetings</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am concerned for the problems of the city</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have confidence in my</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to affect change in my neighbourhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know the needs of community members in other neighbourhood groups</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I became a better citizen</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am getting to know Guelph residents who are different from me</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can negotiate (&quot;give &amp; take,&quot; bargain, build alliances)</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have an interest in community participation</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have confidence in my ability to affect change in my city</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is important for citizens to participate in local government</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work in collaboration with city councilors and the Mayor</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I monitor and keep track of the municipal government</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know who’s in charge of what at City Hall (departments, committees)</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think up solutions to problems in our neighborhood</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel connected to my community</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek information about political and social issues</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make contact with government agencies</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I facilitate or chair meetings</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make collective decisions with other residents</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I monitor, keep track of City budget and related services</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect the time that participatory processes</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
require

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1.50</th>
<th>2.6</th>
<th>3.8</th>
<th>Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand government</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jurisdictions and related</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibilities (wards,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>city, provincial, federal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public speaking</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening carefully to</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I develop and present</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proposals and projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel connected to my</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neighbors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I relate to my neighbors</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(social skills)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork &amp; cooperation</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I coordinate groups</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(leadership skills)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have respect for others</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know why some people</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participate in neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>groups and others do not</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of programs</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a willingness to</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help others (solidarity)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand and interpret</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>official documents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in municipal</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>politicians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote in national elections</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote in provincial elections</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote in municipal elections</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in municipal staff</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion of Civic Learning**

Participants’ reflections about their learning and change in different areas reveal some interesting trends, some of which are consistent with our prior studies in Porto Alegre, Montevideo and Rosario (see Schugurensky 2006 and 2009; Lerner and Schugurensky 2007). In general terms, participants reported positive changes in all but one indicator. In 14 indicators they experienced a change of 2 points or more. While these
indicators represented the four categories of learning and change, among them there were more substantial changes in knowledge and practices (11) than in attitudes and skills (3). Before we elaborate on some of these changes in more depth, we would like to make a few general comments.

First, the changes richly described by interviewees cover a wide range of areas and issues, which we do not have space to describe in individual detail. However, it is clear that, at least according to participants, they increased their knowledge about their community, other communities and the city, are more concerned than before about the problems of their city, and more inclined to do something about these problems. Participants also increased their levels of political efficacy (that is, the feeling that they can affect change), and reported a greater disposition and capacity for public speaking and listening, two important traits for effective participation in democratic deliberations.

Second, the most significant learning curves relate to knowledge of the participatory budgeting and municipal budgeting processes. While not necessarily surprising, these changes confirm that before being involved in PB, residents usually perceived budget processes as complex ‘black boxes’ that were reserved exclusively for experts, doubting their own capacity to participate. However, after some period of involvement, participants reported becoming more familiar with budgeting and started paying more attention to government budgets, which are now seen as crucial documents because, as it is often said, they constitute “policy without rhetoric”

Third, interviewees reported a considerable increase in both attending and actively participating in community meetings. Although on average they were not alien to civic engagement before becoming involved in the NSC, their prior level of participation at community meetings was much lower than the one of the ‘professional citizens’ that attend municipal meetings regularly. In this regard, the participatory budget can act as a catalyst for activating community participation among newcomers to civic and political processes.

Fourth, the lowest levels of change were related to voting practices in government elections, as well as trust in municipal staff and politicians. The minimal changes in voting practices was due to the fact that participants reported a high level of electoral participation before their involvement in participatory budgeting, so there was little room for improvement. Trust in municipal politicians and staff was rated low both before and after involvement in the PB. In the case of trust in city staff, there was actually a decrease in trust over time. At the time we were conducting the interviews there was a turnover of staff assigned to the participatory budgeting initiative, which created several instances of miscommunication and misunderstanding between residents and municipal staff, as well as residents and elected officials. Today, over a year later, the relationships between city staff, municipal politicians and NSC members are more stable, the channels of communication are more clear and transparent, and the level of trust between these actors is growing (see Pinnington 2009).

In addition to these general observations about civic learning through involvement in the Guelph PB, there are some highlights of the learning reported, which we present below.
a) Knowledge of participatory budgeting process.

The greatest amount of learning was indicated around knowledge of participatory budgeting process, as practiced by the NSC (3.08). Most participants said that they knew nothing about participatory budgeting before getting involved with the Coalition. Several expressed having business-oriented experience with budgeting, which they referred to as “sales-focused” and “dictatorial.” One community member, Chuck, describes his learning transition from a business setting to participatory democracy as follows:

Take industry: you know exactly what you’re supposed to do because the boss told you so and if you don’t you’re out. So you know who you’re pleasing...You know how to behave and what’s expected of you and what you can expect of them. But in a democracy like what we’re doing here [NSC] you are never quite sure because now you have to realize that there’s other people who have opinions that are just as valid as yours even though they’re at a 90 degree juxtaposition to yours. And then you have to sit back and say, “Ok, where are we going to go from here?” So it’s a challenge. It’s a different thing.

Like Chuck, other participants expressed that it took them time to learn that there was no ‘boss’ in participatory budgeting, but that all participants were expected to guide the process together. They also learned that participatory budget provides an opportunity to dialogue with people who think differently in a safe space. Some explained that it was useful that discussions were guided by clear principles. For instance, Chloe observed that once individual neighbourhood groups discuss their budgetary needs for the year, they send their representative to the Finance Committee table to negotiate for funds with other groups. “Everyone has key points that they want to maintain, and so it’s a play back and forth in terms of who can get what, defined based on need.”

b) Knowledge of municipal budgeting process.

As a corollary to learning about the participatory budgeting process, participants also indicated a great increase in their knowledge of the municipal budget process (2.67). Laura says, “Working with the neighbourhood groups and getting funding from the City, you have to pay attention to who’s making what decision.” Laura, who grew up in a low-income neighbourhood in Guelph and now does outreach work in the same community, ranked the increase in her knowledge of the municipal budget process from 0-4 through being involved in the NSC’s participatory budget. When asked what changed for her, she replied, “before I wasn’t involved so I didn’t care. I don’t know everything, but I do pay attention much more now.”

Kyle said learning about the municipal budget process helped her understand how to have a greater voice for the needs of residents in her lower-income neighbourhood. “I learned that if I don’t get involved to make the changes I want to see, they’re not going to happen, especially in our neighbourhood. It’s so hard to get anything done, even small things.” Another community member, Marie, echoed Kyle’s statement about political efficacy. “I just sort of took a lot of stuff for granted. I thought somebody else would take care of things. I didn’t think that I could make a big difference.” In 2008, Marie represented

3 Pseudonyms have been used for direct quotes from participants.
the NSC at a series of City Council meetings. Through this level of involvement, she indicates that she gained an appreciation for the challenges of meeting a wide variety of community needs through limited tax-based funds.

I've learned a lot. Once you see both sides it makes you better able to look at things in a realistic way. I think it's really easy to say the neighbourhood groups are really great and you should give them more money, but going to Council I realized that there's tons of other worthy causes in the city. Just because neighbourhood groups are great, doesn't mean they [council] should automatically give us all kinds of money.

Marie would like to see a portion of the City's capital budget be opened to participatory process, as she sees significant benefits for civic learning through this form of participation. "I think having to go through both the participatory and the municipal budget process makes people appreciate things more...because they understand where the money comes from, and who did and didn't get funding." Since the interview, Marie has introduced PB to her workplace at a local health centre, where her supervisor enthusiastically supports the process.

**c) Negotiation skills and consensus decision-making.**

Participants indicated that consensus decision-making in the NSC participatory budget process was a key to their learning. Chuck explains, "You sit around the table and you say, 'Everybody agree?' And you go around and people say 'yeah' 'yeah' 'yeah' and somebody says 'no' and then you talk about some more and keep talking about it until such time as everybody agrees that this is the thing." Reena describes how negotiating the budget by consensus changed her view of conflict between herself and others using their power in competition for the same resources:

I learned that because of consensus, I don't have to agree with you and I have a choice. I can disagree with you and that stops everything, or I can disagree but I will hold my opinion in order for the process to continue. If it's something really drastic that I really feel strong on then I will say "no" but to keep the process moving, I simply don't have an opinion. And that's something I definitely learned from this.

Through working toward consensus, individuals representing diverse neighbourhood groups reported that they made choices based on the balance between their own groups' needs and the needs they heard from other groups. The NSC Terms of Reference indicate that an experienced facilitator, with no ties to neighbourhood groups, facilitate their budget meetings, in order to work toward mitigating power imbalances around the table. Consensus deliberations at the NSC take time. Minutes from NSC budget meetings show that over the years it has often taken several meetings, over a period of months, for participants to come to an agreement about how to allocate funds.

**d) Increased knowledge of realities and needs in diverse neighbourhoods.**

In addition to learning about the participatory budgeting process, NSC members also reflected high degrees of change around knowing the needs of community members in their own neighbourhoods (2.33), in other neighbourhoods (2.11), and though slightly lower, the
needs of city residents different from themselves (racialized, ethnic, religious observances, socio-economic status, abilities, etc.) (1.92). Kara says, “I think my knowledge of [Guelph residents who are different from me] was always fairly high but it was in an intellectual way only. I think through this process my knowledge has moved more into an understanding too.” Echoing Kara’s description of moving from a peripheral knowing to more understanding of Others’ realities, Chuck says that through the participatory budgeting process:

When you have a tremendous amount of people from one ethnic background moving in to one area and you start to see it. You might be driving down the road and you’re aware of it but not necessarily the problems that come with it. So...the NSC is very good because now you’re starting to talk and to see what is going on in other neighbourhoods. And now you know people in that area you can go out and visit. So it’s very good. It becomes enlightening.

Brianna, who describes herself as coming from a higher-income neighbourhood, says that for her, participating in the NSC opened her eyes to socio-economic realities and needs in other parts of the city. Before getting involved in participatory budgeting, she says, “I had very little knowledge. I mean, just from people I would meet in my own neighbourhood, who are pretty much in the same economic level as myself I would say.” After having been her neighbourhood group’s delegate to the NSC Finance Committee, Brianna’s perspective changed. “I really learned a lot about the needs and wants of other communities and how they struggle.” Whereas her neighbourhood group was seeking funds for community barbecues and new furniture for their office, Brianna learned that for other neighbourhood groups “Day care was a big thing. Children’s programs were a big thing.”

e) Learning to prioritize allocation decisions based on dialogue.

While the NSC has a broad mandate, members agree that an unwritten priority is meeting basic needs of children and families in the community (i.e. food, shelter, clothing, human contact and support). In 2008, the NSC expanded to incorporate more member groups from mid to higher-income areas in the city. During this expansion, the Finance Committee worked through many discussions about whether addressing the phenomenon of social isolation in higher income areas was as much of a priority as meeting the basic needs of lower-income families. Through their interviews, residents indicated that the participatory budget process forced them to consider the challenges of negotiating limited resources to meet multiple needs and priorities (2.46). This question was framed in the interview as ‘finding the balance between what is good for your own neighbourhood, and what you hear other neighbourhoods need.’

Participants, especially those who identified as living with the realities of low incomes, reflected that this negotiation process demanded a great deal of patience, as is often the case when marginalized individuals must participate in the learning process of more privileged individuals (Lopes and Thomas, 2006). For example, Kyle said that while she was listening to other community members asking for funds, she was counting the number of children in her neighbourhood who would not get desperately needed programming.
It was really hard. I just had to trust that if we listened to each other, people would start to understand that the needs of each group are really different and that overall the group would allocate funds to the groups that needed funds most. But it was not easy. It involved a lot of soul searching.

At the same time, participants from middle and higher income areas argued that having basic needs met did not mean that residents in higher income areas were connected with community resources or emotionally supported.

Marie observed that the Finance Committee usually ends up allocating the most funds to neighbourhoods with the most unmet basic needs. Marie says, “I think you’re better able to address actual needs with participatory budgeting, as opposed to neighbourhoods that don’t need as much getting a lump sum and neighbourhoods that really do need more getting less.” Marie says she thinks that this more equitable distribution happens through participatory budgeting because “it opens up a discussion that wouldn’t happen otherwise with the [neighbourhood] groups.” Overall, participants reflected that the process of negotiating – listening to and sharing with one another – was a central part of their learning about how need is expressed differently in diverse neighbourhoods in the city, as well as in their reasoning for their final decisions about how to allocate funds.

**Transferring Civic Learning to Political Agency**

In addition to using their learning to inform allocation decisions from year to year, NSC members transferred the skills and knowledge they gained from being involved in the participatory budget process to political engagement on behalf of the NSC. In 2008, the NSC faced a number of struggles. The organization faced a lack of political support from senior municipal administrators (Pinnington 2009), a lack of knowledge of the NSC among city councillors, as well as the challenge of meeting growing demand for programs and services without an equivalent increase in funds. At the same time, the NSC was experiencing growth and needed an increase in funds. Finance Committee members took a series of actions in 2008 to increase political support for the NSC, and to increase the legitimacy of the NSC to the community and municipal government. Each of these actions shows a transfer of the civic learning elements we highlight above to political actions and engagement.

1) **Writing official terms of reference for participatory budgeting.**

Before 2008, NSC Finance Committee members debriefed their annual allocation night through a formal meeting one month after budget deliberations ended, which included discussion of process elements that worked well and suggestions for improvements to future deliberations. Minutes from these debrief meetings were consulted again the following year in preparation for the allocation process. In 2008, NSC members agreed that they needed to write official Terms of Reference for their participatory budget process, for two reasons. First, members wanted a tool to share with new participants who would be deliberating on behalf of their neighbourhoods for the first time, which the NSC would add to their political mentoring process. Second, the legitimacy of the NSC participatory budget came under scrutiny from municipal officials in 2008.
Members decided that one way to increase the legitimacy of their process was to create official Terms of Reference – a communication tool recognizable in the context of municipal governance. As a political strategy, writing Terms of Reference shows a transfer of learning about municipal procedures and working with municipal staff, as well knowing the needs of neighbourhood residents with respect to learning the participatory budgeting process.

2) **Hosting a high-profile community meeting.**

As part of its bid for increased funding in 2009, the NSC wanted to increase its profile in the community, as well as to differentiate its tax-funded work from that of municipal social programming and services. The NSC Finance Committee organized what they called a ‘Fireside Chat’ – a community meeting highlighting NSC contributions to the quality of life of Guelph residents. NSC members deliberated and decided on specific groups they would invite to the meeting, including city council members, municipal officials, community organizations and social service agency partners. Four key city staff and two agency partner staff were key supporters of this meeting.

Both the organization and delivery of the three-hour meeting showed a transfer of skills and knowledge on the part of NSC participants. Members used multiple community networks to create their strategic invitations list and make logistical preparations. Residents researched and made formal presentations about social realities in their communities and how NSC programming was working to meet basic needs and increase inclusion in neighbourhoods. For many NSC participants, the Fireside Chat was a first experience making a formalized presentation to institutional officials about realities in their lives and the work they had done to make positive changes in their neighbourhoods. The meeting was a powerful example of community members naming their own social issues and proposing evidence of concrete solutions they had organized to address these issues, separate from government interventions.

3) **Negotiating relationships with city staff and officials for political and financial support.**

In early 2008, a municipal manager who had worked very closely with the NSC was let go by the City of Guelph. At that time, one community participant commented to researchers that this staffing change would mean that the NSC could not assume municipal support. Rather, the NSC would have to learn how to negotiate with staff who knew little about, or did not agree with the level of municipal support to NSC programming. While NSC members found many council members enthusiastically supportive of their work, senior city staff tried to impose decisions, directions and processes upon the organization many times during the year. Each time, Finance Committee members used their knowledge of municipal process and NSC history to call for more transparent, democratic and participatory approaches to information sharing, problem solving and decision-making, which reflected the values and needs of NSC member groups. In many cases, members who exhibited the most sophisticated institutional knowledge and negotiation skills were individuals who live in lower-income neighbourhoods and are traditionally kept out of municipal decision making because of socialized class norms.
All of this work culminated in a request to council for an increase to NSC funding support in 2009. In December of 2008, Marie (who is quoted earlier in this paper) made her fourth presentation to council in less than a year on behalf of the NSC, exhibiting presentations skills, knowledge of NSC member neighbourhoods and the ability to make concrete proposals to solve problems in neighbourhoods. Marie also presented the ‘business case’ requested by council, using financial reporting mechanisms such as program attendance numbers and budget shortfall statistics to adhere to municipal standards of accountability, though this type of accounting is often a difficult and diminishing translation of the actual work of socially-focused organizations (see Quarter, Mook and Richmond, 2002). Ultimately, the NSC was successful in obtaining a permanent $25,000 increase, which represents a 20% increase in municipal support.

Conclusions

This research shows the relevance and applicability of participatory budgeting in a Canadian context. Whereas in Latin America, participatory budgeting was conceived as a mitigator of extreme poverty and political corruption, in Guelph’s case, the process has increased the capacity of residents to negotiate the complex socio-economic diversity represented among residents. Guelph NSC members show a greater willingness to allocate resources based on recognition of differing needs, as well as a changing understanding of the social, economic and political factors that led to those differing needs. This data also shows that as residents became more aware of political processes, they had greater confidence in their own solutions to local problems, as well as a greater appreciation of the challenge of allocating scarce resources to meet a vast array of competing community needs. Finally, the research shows the transfer of learning to political engagement that can occur as residents gain confidence in their skills and awareness for public decision-making, toward residents defining and proposing nuanced solutions to addressing complex social issues in communities.

While not a panacea to address the democratic deficit, nor a replacement for representative democracy, participatory budgeting has promise as a process for creating democratic space for residents from diverse social locations to interact with each other, as well as to be active participants in negotiating the ever-shifting balance between self-interest and the common good. It is our hope that this research also contributes to expanding the ways in which municipalities understand and recognize the important role played by community organizations and their volunteers in allocating budgets in a more transparent and effective way. This research suggests that it is not only the number of people in programs that make a difference to communities, but that civic learning has the potential to dramatically transform the way residents relate to one another, to their municipal governments, and to public resources.

References


Schools of Democracy: How Ordinary Citizens become Competent in Participatory Budgeting Institutions in Europe

Julien Talpin
University of Paris 8/Saint-Denis

Introduction

In the last decade, many commentators and researchers have raised a preoccupation for the so-called ‘democratic deficit’, expressed in civic disengagement, declining electoral turnouts, decreasing number of political and union activists, limited trust granted to politicians, and so on (Norris 1999; Della Porta 2002). These phenomena are often attributed to the rise of individualism in contemporary societies, and seldom recognized as symptoms of a larger democratic malaise. Rather than “psychologizing” these processes, we consider that the emphasis should be put on their social, political and institutional conditions of emergence. Some recent works have thus analysed citizens’ political behaviours and attitudes in innovative political contexts that offer alternative channels of participation, more inclusive than traditional public arenas (Fung and Wright 2003; Rosenberg 2007). The study of participatory institutions could indeed allow exploring how institutional designs shape individuals’ political choices and behaviour.

According to their promoters, democratic innovations have the potential to re-enchant politics by including large fringes of the population who were previously excluded. State-sponsored initiatives of participation could appear as spaces of political socialization allowing non-politicized individuals to get a first public experience and thus to be able to participate more effectively in the public sphere in the future. While the limited knowledge of the political system, the difficulty to locate candidates and programmes on a left/right spectrum, the instability and incoherence of individual preferences have been largely demonstrated and are accepted by most social scientists (Converse 1964; Bourdieu 1979), existing research also indicates that even the most marginalized actors seem capable of political reasoning in different contexts, and especially in small-group discussions (Gamson 1992; Duchesne and Haegel 2007). While some people are unable or unwilling to talk about politics in public, they can express genuine political arguments in more private or intimate contexts (Eliasoph 1998). The question of the role of the social, institutional and political
context in shaping individuals' political practices should therefore be put at the forefront, to understand how and when individuals can become enlightened citizens.

The idea that individuals can become better citizens by participating actively in the polity has been at the centre of political theory debates from its Greek origins to classical republicanism and civic humanism, before being reformulated by participationist theorists and partly renewed by deliberative democracy (Mansbridge 1999). The aim of this chapter is to analyse the learning processes resulting from civic engagement in participatory democracy institutions. While participants often qualify these experiences as “enriching”, and their initiators define them as “schools of citizenship”, it appears necessary to go beyond actors’ discourses to evaluate the educational impact of participatory engagement.

From a methodological perspective, a diachronic approach appears the most promising to explore processes of change, as the mobilization and acquisition of new skills and competences can only be understood when placed in actors’ broader trajectories, comparing them to their previous habits. This allows to identify how new knowledge and skills are assimilated, rejected or incorporated. Such an approach has already received a great deal of attention in social movements’ scholarship, when studying the biographical consequences of activism (McAdam 1989).

This method differs nevertheless significantly from the positivist approaches that rely primarily on before and after questionnaires research designs (Fishkin et al. 2002; Goodin and Niemeyer 2003; Delli Carpini et. al 2004). While such methods allow isolating the specific impact of deliberation on actors, they present a series of weaknesses. By submitting the same questionnaires to interviewees before and after the experience limits the creative possibilities of deliberation (Dryzek 2005). There is also an epistemological contradiction in collecting private individual opinions while deliberative democracy relies on an exogenous definition of preferences (Offe 1997). Before and after research designs also present the limit of impeding a more subtle analysis of individual learning processes (Ryfe 2005). What makes people change? Is it collective deliberation or the new information processed? Only direct observation of deliberative sequences can allow evaluating whether deliberation took place at all (and thus assessing the impact of the quality of deliberation) and what effects it had on participants. Finally, the longitudinal approach can also help to assess the long terms consequences of deliberative experiences on individual civic practices.

This chapter, is based on an ethnographic study conducted over two years, from December 2004 to September 2006, in three municipal participatory budgeting institutions in Europe: Morsang-sur-Orge, a small suburban city near Paris (France); the 11th district of Rome (the capital of Italy) and Seville, the capital of Andalucia, located in southern Spain. The three cases have been chosen as they offer highly empowered experiences with regards to the choices made by the initiators of the budgeting process. Research methods have been mostly qualitative, being based on both direct observation of participatory budgeting assemblies (the central institution of the process) – 124 public meetings have been observed in total – and 41 life-history interviews conducted with both the PB designers and participants. In order to understand the impact of repeated PB participation, I had to observe and follow actors in situation – to see whether their way of interacting in public evolved through time –, which was done through public meetings observation. It was then necessary to replace these interactions in actors’ biography, hence the dozen life-history interviews conducted for each case-study.

---

1 Research methods have been mostly qualitative, being based on both direct observation of participatory budgeting assemblies (the central institution of the process) – 124 public meetings have been observed in total – and 41 life-history interviews conducted with both the PB designers and participants. In order to understand the impact of repeated PB participation, I had to observe and follow actors in situation – to see whether their way of interacting in public evolved through time –, which was done through public meetings observation. It was then necessary to replace these interactions in actors’ biography, hence the dozen life-history interviews conducted for each case-study.
to European standards. In each case, the municipal council is run by the Left, gathering political coalitions going from the centre-left to the Communists, the latter appearing as the main promoters of the participatory experiences. Furthermore, French, Italian and Spanish communities have relatively similar administrative institutions, which make them easier to compare.

After describing these state-sponsored experiences of participation in detail, I will show the learning process lived by certain participants who appeared radically transformed by their participatory budget experiences.

**Participatory Budgets in Europe: Inclusive and Empowered Institutions**

Participatory Budget (PB) started in Porto Alegre, Brazil, at the end of 1980s, and since then has enjoyed tremendous success due to its positive impact on the social and economic development of the city (Baiocchi 2005). The Porto Alegre PB was even recognized as a good governance practice by the United Nations and by the World Bank. In 2008 there were about 100 PBs in Europe and more than 1,000 around the globe (Sintomer, et al. 2008; Cabanes 2003). A PB can be defined as the institutionalized inclusion of ordinary citizens in the budget cycle of a public administration. The creation of a PB therefore means the regular organization of public assemblies at the neighbourhood, district or city levels, opened to all residents, and in which citizens participate to set up projects that are then integrated within the municipal or regional budget. Part of the annual investment budget (between 2 and 20% in European cases) is thus decided more or less directly by citizens (Talpin 2007). As noted before, this research included three case studies: Morsang-sur-Orge (France), 11th district of Rome (Italy) and Seville (Spain). A brief description of the three locations can be useful to provide the context.

Morsang-sur-Orge is a typical suburban city of 20,000 inhabitants, situated at about 20 km south of Paris. The municipality has been ruled since 1945 by three successive Communist mayors. Despite this historical embeddedness, the Communist Party almost lost the municipal elections in 1995, which caused the municipal administration to innovate. From the beginning, participatory democracy in Morsang was seen as both a response to electoral decline and an answer to “the crisis of representative democracy”. The municipal majority decided to create eight *neighbourhood councils*, which allowed the institutionalization of participation, with public meetings organized every other month. The main innovation was to grant a financial portfolio of about 60,000 euros to each neighbourhood council, to finance local projects. Allocated 480,000 euros per year, neighbourhood councils decide on about 20% of the investment budget of the city (2.7 million euros in 2004). In this sense, they can be considered as empowered participatory institutions. After its re-election in 2001, the municipality decided to go one step further, with the creation of city-wide thematic workshops, focusing on the main areas of competence of the city, from urban planning to schooling policies and environmental issues. Workshops are held a few times a year in order for residents to discuss and propose investment priorities on the different issue areas to the Municipal Council.

The 11th district of the city of Rome, the “Municipio XI”, has developed a participatory budget since 2003, linked to the electoral success of a Left coalition deeply
inspired by the anti-globalization movement, and the Zapatista and Porto Alegre experiences. The Roman PB is essentially based on neighbourhood assemblies, organized regularly to decide on local projects to be financed by the Municipio’s budget. Projects can be presented in the main areas of competence of the Municipio, from urban planning and environmental issues to youth and cultural policies. PB assemblies then follow a yearly cycle. The most important phase, generally between January and May, gathers Working Groups in each neighbourhood to elaborate projects and proposals in the different thematic areas. Proposals are discussed by the citizens, progressively refined and operationalized to make them applicable, and then analyzed by the technical services of the Municipality, who evaluate whether they fit the Municipio’s competences and financial capacities. A final assembly is organised at the end of the process open to all residents, who have to vote to rank the proposals. Apart from “giving the power back to citizens”, one of the main motivations for the municipal majority when initiating a PB was to “increase and interiorize a sense of active participation” and to “offer an opportunity of personal development to the citizens by making individual knowledge common to all citizens.”

The school of democracy frame was therefore in Romans' PB designers' minds from the start.

Seville is a city of 700,000 inhabitants, and embodies the largest experiment of municipal participatory budgeting in Europe so far. It has been ruled since May 2003 by a centre-left municipal majority, through an alliance between the PSOE (the Socialist Party) and Izquierda Unida (the former Communist Party). The Seville PB relies on three administrative levels: the neighbourhood, the district and the city as a whole. The central part of the PB cycle takes place in neighbourhood assemblies. Open to all the residents of the zone over 16 years old, they meet for a few sessions, between April and June, to decide on the proposals and projects to put forward for the zone, the district and the city. Once the list of proposals is established for the different thematic areas under discussion, it is voted on in an open assembly. Zone assemblies also elect delegates, who represent the assembly at the district and city PB councils. District and City PB Councils’ role is to evaluate and rank all the selected proposals of the zone assemblies that affect the district and city as a whole. Their main function is to apply “social justice” criteria, aimed at distributing more public funds to deprived neighbourhoods and marginalized social groups. Apart from promoting social justice, the aim of Seville PB is also explicitly educative, as stated by one of the Autoreglemento's articles: the aim of PB is civic education of citizens though “popular education in processes of co-responsibility where citizens, technicians and political representatives can learn.”

It is clear that these three institutional arrangements offer citizens great opportunities to influence municipal public policies, but to what extent does this have an impact on participants’ civic practices? Does repeated participation in such empowered institutions make actors more enlightened and aware of the public good, as the theory suggests?

---


Learning by Participating in Participatory Budgeting Institutions

The individual impact of PB engagement will be assessed by showing that learning is necessarily a process, requiring repeated interactions over time. The learning process presented here is the product of the observation and comparison of the three PB cases. Even if it touched only few people, those who were affected sometimes changed radically. The self-change process is composed of three steps, summed up in Fig. 1: (1) integration in the institution, acquiring a mastery of its discursive norms; (2) acquisition of new skills and competences; (3) bifurcation of individual trajectories, marked by new civic practices (e.g. adhesion to a political party or an association).
Figure 1. The process of self-change

Mastering the discursive norms to integrate the institution

A necessary condition to the integration in a PB institution is to learn speaking in public. This requires two types of competences: mastering certain rhetorical skills, especially the art of argumentation, and mastering the implicit discursive norms (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003) defining good and bad arguments in a specific context. People have,
first of all, to acquire the self-confidence to speak up and express themselves clearly. As a matter of fact, about 40% of the participants of the PB assemblies I observed remained silent during the meetings. Nevertheless, I saw some people starting to speak after a few months of silent participation. PB discursive style is not exclusive in itself, as participants regularly express personal stories, anecdotes or testimonies. But while more personalized speeches can lead to raising new public problems, they often appear insufficient to convince the audience. Hence, participants also need to learn the art of argumentation, which frequently remains the privilege of those with higher levels of formal education.

Once they feel confident enough to speak up, participants have to learn the mastery of imposed discursive norms. People cannot just say anything that passes through their mind in public; otherwise, they might be harshly sanctioned (Elster 1998; Fearon 1998). Self-interested arguments were directly sanctioned in the PB assemblies I observed, through the attribution of a negative reputation or direct public criticisms and bashing (Talpin 2006). An excerpt from my observation notes (where a newcomer appeared extremely self-centred to the group and created a tense interaction) illustrates this point.

Mazia came for the first time to a PB meeting, and was apparently motivated by a personal trouble: the trees in her street had not been cut down for a long time and their branches created a danger for cars and pedestrians. She wanted to make a proposal on this issue, but was apparently frustrated when she learnt that it was impossible as this was already the last PB session of the year, and no new proposal could be made. The other participants—regulars—invited her to participate anyway, as she would be allowed to vote for any of the proposals concerning the neighbourhood. She answered that she felt incompetent to vote on projects touching on other streets [other than hers] : “I cannot vote on the proposal on street X, as I don’t know it. And this street does not concern me.”

As she was not directly interested in the proposals that were discussed, she decided to leave the meeting, saying: “At this point, given the fact that there are no problems related to my zone, I’m going.” A man greeted her and encouraged her to come back the following year: “At least you did … not your duty, because it’s not a duty, but something good.” Mazia was obviously upset as she was speaking faster and faster in a rather aggressive tone. She made clear she would not come back as her problem was not taken into account. She thus started to be sanctioned for her parochialism by the other participants. One of the group delegates told her: “Enlarge your horizons. You focus too much on your own street, here we’re not working for our own streets egoistically, but for everybody.” Mazia, feeling attacked answered: “I will enlarge my horizons when I see my problems solved.” Mazia never came back to the assembly.4

Not only should public discourses be oriented towards the common good—as the previous excerpt shows—but they should also not be openly political, as such discourses are criticised for being “mere blah blah” or meaningless talk, and perceived as useless and inefficient to achieve PB projects. PB participants have therefore to express themselves in both a general but pragmatic manner, targeting the public interest as linked to concrete problems and possible solutions and projects. From this perspective the PB discursive rules might narrow down the political horizons of participants, by limiting their proposals to

---

4 Observation notes, Tormarancia Working group meeting n.4, Rome, 28.03.2006.
projects that are seen as feasible. Having learnt the language of the institution, these actors are nevertheless increasingly integrated and can thereafter become regular participants. It has to be stressed, however, that many participants never pass this first step, as the high turnover rates in these institutions show⁵ (see D’Albergo, 2005). Being discursively incompetent, they are doomed to remain at the margins of the institution or of being merely excluded from it.

**Learning new skills and competences from repeated participation**

For those who acquired discursive competence, and who got increasingly integrated in the PB institution, the iteration of interactions with others, especially with already politicised and skilled actors, affected them significantly. In this regard, the learning of three types of skills and competences has been observed in PB institutions: practical know-how, technical skills, and political competence.

**Practical know-how**

PB participation implies the repetition of a certain set of actions, all requiring a specific know-how. The central stage of a PB is the public assembly. Participation therefore allows individuals learning to facilitate a discussion, to help and give self-confidence to the less experienced speakers, to set up an agenda, to mitigate between different interests and sensibilities, and even sometimes to organise a negotiation between seemingly irreducible positions. Repeated participation can also allow the learning of deliberation, as in this neighbourhood assembly where a collective learning process took place through trial and error and imitation:

The first two meetings of the assembly in 2005 had been in many ways disappointing for participants. Gathering about 30 people, the participants had refused splitting into small working groups, against facilitators’ advice. This translated into a very disorganized debate, individuals speaking over others, not listening to each other, moving from one topic to another superficially, the atmosphere sometimes becoming aggressive. These “laissez-faire discussions” (Fung 2004) were been relatively sterile, with few concrete proposals being expressed in the end. At the beginning of the third meeting however, Antonio, one of the delegates with the strongest personality in the assembly, said: “it was a real mess last time, we cannot carry on like that; we have to split”. Everybody agreed.

Participants decided to divide themselves into three working groups, gathering respectively between 8 and 12 people. They subsequently discovered the virtues of small group discussion. Apart from the division in working groups, speaker lists were organized (following facilitators’ advice); proposals were written down and individuals who cut speakers were systematically sanctioned (interrupted).

I followed one of the working groups, where deliberation took place on different proposals to improve the neighbourhood. Arguments were voiced, listened to, answered; eventually counter-arguments were raised, as well. The size of the group allowed a form of trust that permitted counter-arguments to be voiced without being framed or perceived as personal challenges or verbal battles. Arguments were voiced to justify proposals, with participants evoking “the environment”,

---

⁵ The only data are for the Roman case, where turnover rates are extremely high, as in 2004, 68.5% of the participants declared they had not participated to the PB the year before.
“public health”, or “the efficient management of public resources.” People learned, in less than three public meetings, to organize themselves and discuss collectively. They seemed happy about it at the end of the meeting, as many said: “we worked well today!” or “It was a pleasure and an honour to work with you today!”, contrasting with the tense atmosphere of the previous sessions.

It is through trial and error, due to problems faced in situation (shared analysis of the inefficiencies of discursive messiness), thanks to the positive influence of enlightened facilitators stressing the importance of simple organization procedures, that a collective learning mechanism could take place. Far from being a purely cognitive, discursive or rational process, the learning of democracy first requires mastering certain ways of doing, which can only happen in interaction. Even if extremely practical, these skills are decisive for PB participants, and can be reinvested in other public arenas and organizations.

**Technical skills**

Even if PBs are not highly technical institutions—to avoid excluding the individuals with less cultural and formal educational capital—participation can facilitate the learning of technical skills, that were up to this point the privilege of municipal experts. A crucial skill participants gained was an increased understanding of the organization of a public budget (composed of different taxes and sources, requiring an equilibrium, etc.). Furthermore, as PBs often deal with urban planning issues, participants learned some technical skills on how to build a road or a public park, what are the technical and juridical constraints, through discussion. Thanks to this newly acquired knowledge, they are now able, in other contexts, to voice technical arguments against experts. From this perspective, participatory engagement seems capable of reducing the gap between experts and lay citizens in designing public policies.

**Political competence**

Political competence is traditionally defined as the capacity to understand the political system and to locate politicians and ideas on a left/right spectrum (Luskin 1990). To what extent does PB participation fosters individuals' political competence? These participatory arenas are not detached from the local political system, and participation is a way to increase one's knowledge of the political game. Being in regular interactions with elected officials, participants can more easily identify their political orientation (which was far from being the case for most of them at the beginning), and put words and deeds on partisan decisions. They also learn to negotiate with elected officials and to play off the rivalries between parties to get things done. Participants also discover the way the administrative machine works, the distribution of competences among public bodies, as well as the conflicts between different institutions. The speeches made by certain activists can sometimes appear as lectures on the local power relationships or on the way the municipal institution really works, thus embodying a great deal of knowledge for uninformed citizens. Apart from gaining knowledge about the political system, PB participation also allows individuals to increase their level of information on certain political issues. Party members evoke the latest municipal decisions, housing rights advocates tackle the homeless situation in the city, and environmentalists share their

---

knowledge on global warming or urban planning. At a working group meeting, Maurizio, an activist from *Legambiente*, the main Italian environmental organization, made a very didactic intervention on the implications of the Kyoto protocol for the public transportation policies of Italian municipalities:

You know that anyway, the Kyoto protocol has been in application in Italy since yesterday [15.02.2005] and Italy has to decrease its CO2 emissions drastically in the following years [...] 30% of the use of cars in this city regard trips of less than 3 Km, i.e. distances easily reachable by bike. It means we could decrease CO2 emissions by 30% just thanks to bikes! Anyway, ... soon all the metro stations will be equipped with bike parking ... it’s a global trend.

Indeed, through their engagement in PB, participants are constantly acquiring new knowledge on the political system and on a variety of salient public issues. Moreover, as this participant reported, PBs can become a place for individual politicization and can generate stronger feelings of political efficacy:

I discovered a passion for politics. [...] I enjoyed this experience in the PB so much that I wanted to keep on at a higher level. [...] This is new for me, I always voted but I have never been really active in anything. But when the mayor offered me to be on the list for the local elections, I was really honoured, and I said yes, of course.

**The long-term consequences of participation: trajectory bifurcations**

Certainly, many participants, as long as they were sufficiently engaged in PB processes, became more informed and competent after their participatory experience. They have learned technical, political and practical skills and knowledge. However, it is pertinent to ask: to what extent do these newly acquired competences translate into new civic practices, which I call the *bifurcation of individual trajectories*? The findings from this study reveal significant modifications of individual trajectories, with some actors reinvesting the newly acquired competencies in other civil society organizations.

The case of some young Italian students is paradigmatic from this perspective. Disengaged before their PB participation, they actively mobilized to put forward a project of creation of a cultural centre in their neighbourhood. After a year of participation and mobilization inside the PB, the project was approved by the municipality of Roma. A cultural centre opened and was directly managed by the students, who, in the meantime, had created their own association. This confirms findings form previous research (e.g. Baiocchi 2005), that show that PB can boost local civil society by fostering the creation of new associations or reactivating poorly mobilized organizations.

I also observed the growing civic engagement of PB participants, to the extent that some of them eventually became elected officials. Indeed, regular PB participants were often contacted by professional politicians and political parties, and invited to be on the party list for the local elections. The newly acquired competencies of PB participants, as well as the new networks created, embodied resources that attracted the interest of political parties, which are often in search of legitimacy and local connections. A few months after the end of my fieldwork, I became aware that three PB participants became town councillors, and that a dozen had been contacted by a political party but rejected the offer to run for election. PB can, therefore, create an alternative channel of recruitment of
local political elites, alongside political parties, which is the traditional way in which people become involved in electoral politics in Europe.

**Challenges to PB participation and learning**

Despite these encouraging findings, PB participation did not always have positive impacts on individuals. For instance, many participants became increasingly cynical about politics after their PB experience. Many participants felt that the power they were granted was “ridiculous.” Others felt manipulated by politicians, and stopped participating, as evidenced by the high turnover rates. In this regard, two profiles of cynics can be distinguished. First, there is the cynic with a leftist and politicized background, who is disappointed by the reformist approach and the limited mandate of PB. In the words of a participant from Sevilla, “When I started participating in PB I thought we’ll do the revolution, instead I find myself taking care of street cleaning.”

The other type of cynic is the apolitical one, who felt betrayed by a process where elected officials do not always respect their words. As this Morsang resident noted,

> Elected officials are participative as long as citizens make proposals that go in the direction of the municipality, then they say ‘the citizens have decided.’ But when you propose something they don’t agree with...The dice are a bit biased.

Moreover, a disappointing PB experience can sometimes lead from apoliticism to some forms of anti-politics. Due to the intensity of commitment PB requires, in the end only a few participants radically moved from apathy to political engagement, while a majority either never showed up at meetings or stopped participating after a disappointing experience. Overall, then, the findings indicate that PB has significant positive effects on some participants, negligible effects on others, and even negative effects on others. Further research is needed to evaluate more precisely whether the aggregate civic impact of participatory democracy is positive or negative.

**How Do People Learn Democracy?**

Even if many PB participants opted to stop participating, it is worth assessing the sources of the self-change observed for some participants. What was the specific role of PB participation in the learning process? More precisely, what happened in these processes that allowed participants to learn new skills and competences? Did people learn from deliberation? What was the role of their dispositions and previous experiences in this socialization process?

Even if only some provisional answers can be provided here, it can be stressed that the role of deliberation was relatively marginal in the learning process. Contrary to our hypotheses and to the dominant trend in the literature, PB participants were not decisively affected by deliberation, understood as a reasoned exchange of arguments aimed at taking a collective decision. Mutual persuasion leading to preference change hardly ever happened in the public assemblies I observed. Most of the time, people remained either silent or committed to their initial opinions. In a nutshell, the findings from this study suggest that self-change cannot only be attributed to a process of collective deliberation. Public discussion had an impact, in the sense that it allowed the transmission of new information.
and knowledge among individuals. However, at least in the particular case of political knowledge, the learning process usually took the form of oral transmission from more experienced activists to political amateurs.

At the same time, it is important to stress that the learning and self-change that I observed in the three PB processes was far from being merely cognitive. Participants learned new skills and competencies from the interactions in which they were engaged with others in PB institutions. It was mostly the repeated engagement in an interactional setting ruled by certain norms (e.g. commitment to the common good, promotion of concrete projects, exclusion of party politics and ideology) that had an impact on individuals, leading to trajectory bifurcations. Not everybody was affected, and not everyone was affected in the same way. Individual dispositions also had an impact on the potential learning process actors could experience.

From this perspective, a crucial factor to consider is biographical availability (McAdam 1986). One of the conditions for successful learning is repeated and intense participation. The intensity of commitment itself depends on the biographical availability of actors. For example, students and retired people—who have more time—are over-represented in PB institutions. However biographical availability cannot be reduced to free time. Participation also depends on the emotional and political availability of individuals. Some participants mentioned that the void created by children leaving home, a change in a professional career, or an unsatisfied need for commitment had a direct impact on their engagement in PB. The repetition of participation does not only depend on biographical availability, but also of the social and political dispositions of actors. Politicized actors, largely over-represented in PB assemblies, had higher chances to go through a learning process than non-politicised actors did, while the latter were primarily those in need of political socialization. In Rome's 11th district, for example, 40% of PB participants were members of an association, 30% of a union and 20% of a political party (D’Albergo, 2005).

Despite the role of biographical availability and of initial political and social dispositions, it seems that PB institutions can have a decisive learning impact on individuals. In these case studies, most of the participants who were affected by the PB experience were not from the more marginalized fringes of the population, but members of the middle-class. Through PB, they were able to acquire new cognitive, social and political resources which sometimes were reinvested in other public arenas.

In closing, participatory democracy institutions, even though they made part of the population even more cynical about politics, have the potential to create new local political agents and community leaders, active in local state-sponsored initiatives, civil society or even public administrations. Over time, such individual and collective transformations can change the way representative government in contemporary democracies work.

References

---

7 For example, in the Roman case, in 2004, 36% of the participants were over 51 years old.


Participative Democracy in Municipal Governance

Donald W. de Guerre & Andrew S. Trull
Concordia University

Abstract

In August 2005 a team of Concordia researchers were invited by a small Canadian city to assist in improving the effectiveness of their municipal organization. In discussion with City management and consistent with the researchers’ background in the applied social science of Open Systems Theory, it was agreed that sustainable organization and cultural change required that any improvements within the municipal organization would need to be mirrored by improvements in the community that it serves. Consequently, the overall objective is to support organization and cultural change towards: a) citizen engagement, and b) employee empowerment. In this collaborative project, engagement and empowerment are grounded in the principles of ‘participative democracy’ and ‘action research’. This paper provides an overview of Open Systems Theory in practice by describing the action research project and its accomplishments to date. The discussion will be framed by the multiple challenges facing a complex project requiring collaboration with various individuals and groups at all levels of the city staff and local community.
empowerment are grounded in the principles of ‘participative democracy’ and ‘action research’.

From the perspective of Open Systems Theory (OST), action research is the fundamental human characteristic of exploring one’s world by choosing to act in it. OST conceptualizes people as purposeful, perceptual systems directly extracting meaning from their environment (learning) as well as actively altering their environment (planning). People are understood as capable of searching for and creating their desired futures. According this view of people, OST provides a model and process for the development of ‘participative democratic’ organizations and communities based on the principle of people designing and managing the systems in which they live and work. The role of action researcher is to develop collaborative relationships through structured learning/planning environments that build on people’s confidence in their own skills and knowledge allowing them to act as the purposeful, open systems that they are.

This paper provides an overview of open systems theory in practice by describing the action research project and its accomplishments to date, which includes:

**Citizen engagement**
- Engaged over 200 local community members and 40 community organizations in a series of community Search Conferences to bring together local leaders, determine strategic objectives, and plan together on how to achieve those objectives

**Employee empowerment**
- Engaged senior management in a strategic planning process that developed a corporate business strategy and organizational strategy approved by City Council
- Completed an action inquiry process with various city departments to gather data on potential areas for improvement and to begin the process of employee empowerment
• A Directors Working Conference to determine how to implement the organizational change strategy across the organization

The discussion will be framed by the multiple challenges facing such a complex project requiring collaboration with various individuals and groups at all levels of the city staff and local community.

**Context**

The Municipal Corporation employs 1 out of 100 citizens (the sixth largest employer) and is responsible for providing essential services of civic society (transit, public works, parks and recreation, economic development). At the same time, it is the citizens who own the city’s Municipal Corporation. Thus, the Municipal Corporation provides direct services to the people who own it. In this way the Municipal Corporation is, in principle, a democratic organization.

Some of the key contextual factors affecting the city include:

• Globalization impacts such as the increasing cost of energy, shortage of skilled labour, and global climate change

• Unions facing increasing competition from public-private partnerships (P3’s)

• Erosion of public faith in government

• Increasing dependence on business, non-profit and government institutions to provide community services

• Changing values regarding authority and leadership (especially among youth)

• Turbulence of political system (new city council with new vision elected every four years)

• Pressure from taxpayers and industry to increase quality of services and decrease cost

• Multiple levels of management with overlapping responsibilities (Mayor, Council, City Management, Union leadership)

The action research project has been guided by City Management seeking adaptive change to these factors.

**The Open Systems Perspective: Direct Perception and Direct Participative Democracy**

From the open systems perspective, people are understood as open, purposeful systems living in direct contact with the world around them. People are purposeful in that they are constantly influencing and being influenced by their surrounding environment. Since people are purposeful systems they need access to continuous learning and the ability to affect the world around them. Organizations and communities function as eco-niches for people; providing opportunities for learning, innovation and action.
As an eco-niche, the structure of an organization/community is a significant determinant of health and productivity (de Guerre et al 2008). Studies from the workplace (Marmot et al. 1999; Stokols et al. 1996; Vezina et al. 2004) and community (Israel et al. 2006; Kawachi 1999) show that empowerment is an indicator of increased health. Empowerment is defined, broadly, as the exercising of agency; making purposeful choices. Included in the concept of empowerment are the following variables measured in the relevant literature: ‘job control’, ‘decision latitude’, ‘effort-reward balance’, ‘self-efficacy and self-esteem’, ‘involvement in civic and voluntary activities’, and ‘social support’. Recent research demonstrates a significant correlation between empowerment, health and productivity (de Guerre et. al. 2008). In Open Systems terms, this is because people need to affect the world around them in order to be healthy and productive. Each organization and community provides a specific eco-niche with opportunities and constraints for empowerment. The goal of the OST practitioner is to support the development of empowering organizational/community structures.

**Organizational design principles**

Based on insights gained from the Norwegian Industrial Democracy Project (Emery & Thorsud 1969) and the development of Socio-Technical Systems (Trist & Murray 1993), social scientist Fred Emery identified two fundamental design principles underlying the structure of social organizations (Emery 1967). These design principles are determined by the allocation of responsibility for coordination and control of work. In the Design Principle 1 organization (DP1), responsibility for coordination and control is held at least one level above where the work is done. In the Design Principle 2 organization (DP2), responsibility for coordination and control is held at the same level where the work is done. There are only two organizational design principles because people either have responsibility for coordinating and controlling their work (DP2) or they do not (DP1). The absence of organizational structure, Laissez-Faire, arises when there is a general confusion about who is responsible for what (de Guerre 2008). Each of these forms of organization has an impact on people and the degree to which they are empowered to act responsibly. In formal
employing organizations, the design principles are embedded in the legalities of industrial relations and human resource policies. In communities, the design principles are embedded in public systems of governance, as well as in informal relationships among peers.

---

**Design Principle 1**
Responsibility for coordination and control held at least one level above where work is done

**Design Principle 2**
Responsibility for coordination and control of the whole task held by the whole group

*Figure 3. Organizational Design Principles*

The Design Principles shown above underlie both the Municipal Corporation as a formal employing organization, and the political governance system represented by the Mayor and City Council. Both of these systems are currently formal DP1 structures. The contract for organizational change was initiated by City Management, who reports directly to City Council. City Management is also in direct contact with the public and the city’s Unions.
Employee empowerment

Figure 4. Structure of Municipal Corporation and role of City Management.

**Engaging senior management**

The action research project began by engaging senior management in dialogues about organizational structure and its impact on organization effectiveness. The Design Principles were introduced through an educational Participative Design Workshop (PDW) (Emery & Emery 1974; Emery 1993) in which senior management reflected on their current structure and opportunities for positive change. As a result, a corporate business strategy and organizational strategy was developed and approved by City Council. The organizational strategy to deliver on the business strategy was formalized in a Corporate Charter stating:

> We believe that a successful change initiative must, by design, transform our organization from a bureaucratic, top-down structure to a more participative democratic workplace.

In other words, the strategy was to change the organization structure (eco-niche) from Design Principle 1 (DP1) to Design Principle 2 (DP2). Senior Management adapted the role of a Change Management Team (CMT), sponsoring the redesign process. However, while each senior manager formally approved of this change strategy, it became apparent over time that some of these key leaders did not actively support the Charter and consequently, were sending mixed messages to their staff. As in many change efforts, the ambivalence of senior management has been a significant challenge to an effective change process.

**Directors Working Conference**

With the formal approval of the Corporate Charter a four-day Directors Working Conference was arranged to empower and engage middle management to lead the change strategy across the organization. The purpose of the conference was to introduce the concepts of Participative Design, provide tools and skills for managing a DP2 organization, and to reflect on the common challenges and opportunities they face as Directors. The result was the development of a Director’s Forum with the following strategic initiatives:

- Formalize our right to manage in a participative way
- Maintain a Director’s Forum to sustain the participative design initiative
- Empower employees through the participative design process and the delivery of high quality service at best possible cost
- Foster Trust through the engagement of all staff through timely, clear, transparent and consistent messaging delivered early and often
• Develop and implement a results oriented participative planning process that will identify common goals and priorities and appropriate budget allocations to support corporate objectives

• Create metrics to measure our success and reward our collective achievement

The Director’s Forum is currently working on these initiatives. However, like the senior managers, some of the Directors are ambivalent about the organizational strategy, sending mixed messages to each other and their staff. This has slowed the work of the Director’s Forum. Yet, through the leadership of a small, committed group the Director’s Forum continues to promote the charter and participative democracy, and to strategize ways to empower employees in their departments.

Beginning the process of employee empowerment

Along with the engagement of city managers, the action researchers initiated an action inquiry process with various city departments to gather data on potential areas for improvement and to begin the process of employee empowerment. Some of the highlights of the action inquiry process include: participative design by staff of a new multi-million dollar sports facility, development of a youth innovation hub, and a search for the future of the city’s ‘Special Projects’ department.

Participative design by staff of a new sports facility

When a new facility opens it is usually designed and staffed by management who set the goals and performance expectations. Given the new organizational strategy, the immediate need to design, staff and operationalize the new facility was seen as an opportunity to empower staff. Volunteers from across the Facilities Department were invited to a Participative Design Workshop and to take on responsibility for joint management of the new workplace. Facility operators, maintenance workers and bookings agents worked together to design the organizational structure, develop a comprehensive set of measureable goals, and plan for implementation of their new design (including any necessary training, new technology, etc.). After some negotiation with management the new design was implemented. While the major unions in the City had supported the development of the organizational strategy and charter, it was during the Participative Design Workshop that the largest Union in the city became actively involved. Through this participative design process the Union president and local stewards worked with management to consider the implications of self-management in the workplace. It was agreed to allow the new self-managed shift teams to operate for one year without significant change. Through the Participative Design process the new facility has had a smooth startup and is currently working through the first few months of self-management. Both the union and management are pleased and learning that participative democratic organization is effective. The self-managed shift teams are learning how to carry out the whole task without supervision.

Youth Innovation Hub

At the invitation of the City Manager, young staff members were encouraged to meet and create a forum in which to discuss their concerns and opportunities for positive influence in the municipal organization. A small group began to meet and developed a
'youth innovation hub’ with the purpose of exploring common issues and finding ways to influence their work in meaningful ways. To date this group has worked on several projects including:

- Meeting face-to-face rather than relying on email
- Supporting communication and informal networks through the revitalization of the corporate intra-net service.
- Hosting the opening of the new sports facility run by the self-managing team (DP2)

While this group has been offered no formal support or resources (choosing to meet on their own time over lunch), they have shown initiative by creating positive opportunities for change where there is little resistance to do so.

**Search for the future of the Special Projects Department**

The Special Projects Department is responsible for the city’s large development projects and for engaging citizens in community planning. The action researchers were approached by the Department’s senior manager as they were finishing several major projects and unsure of their future role which would need to focus more on community planning and new issues such as sustainability and ‘going green.’ All management and staff in the Department were engaged as equals in a three-day participative strategic planning process. They developed a long-term strategy and a nested series of action plans to take leadership both with the Municipal Organization and the community at large.

**Citizen Engagement**

While discussion thus far has focused on projects to empower city employees, it is crucial that any improvements within the municipal organization would need to be mirrored by improvements in the community that it serves. For this reason the action researchers were asked by city management to work with local, community planning organizations to help engage citizens in taking direct action in their community. The goal was to support citizens in taking action on issues that mattered to them. For senior city managers this meant supporting community action to decrease the dependency on government. As the city staff was being engaged in taking more responsibility for their organization, community members were being engaged to take more responsibility for their community.

An initial Search Conference (Emery 1999) was held in early 2007 to answer the question, “What would our community look like if it were the most desirable place to live, work, learn and play for everyone?” The Search Conference brought together 35 community members (selected by their peers as trusted to take action) to analyze their regional and global environment, reflect on their shared history, and create action groups to achieve their most desirable future. Five action groups were created: Environmentally sustainable economy; Local health care solutions; Vibrant culture and downtown; Safe and diverse neighborhoods; Inclusive business growth and poverty reduction. Each action group has a mandate to engage other community members to work together.
The action groups were invited through a Participative Design Workshop to choose a self-managing organizational structure rather than the usual committee structure for diffusing community action. At this point the group became split on how to organize themselves. Some participants felt that the creation of a new organization would just add another layer of bureaucracy and that the local, community planning organization should take the results and take leadership to ensure implementation. Others felt that any particular partner taking leadership might make it harder to maintain and build on the common ground established during the Search Conference. They met again to finalize their desirable and achievable future statements and to make a choice about organization design. When the groups reported their findings, all groups had selected the democratic organization model. In addition, groups had joined together to create new working groups. They had experienced the flexibility and adaptability of participative democracy.

These action groups have continued to meet and work together over the last 2 years. For example, the ‘Environmentally sustainable economy’ action group sponsored a Search Conference for local energy leaders on the future of the city’s “sustainable energy infrastructure”. The result was the development of six more action groups with newly engaged community members:

- Providing a cooperative business environment that is internationally recognized for research, development and application of renewable energy systems
- Creating city policy to mandate sustainability initiatives and encourage adoption by provincial level of government
- Developing a local carbon offset trading system
- Producing local energy from renewable sources
- Creating a social marketing and community education program with the goal of a 40% reduction in CO2 emissions by 2018

Since the Search Conference participants have been meeting with their provincial Minister of Energy to support these initiatives.

The Search Conference and PDW process was designed to engage direct democratic action. While a lot of creative and engaged energy was dispersed through the process, there has been ambivalence similar to that found in the city’s management. Some participants have been discouraged that their groups have lacked leadership and the process as a whole has become dispersed. City councilors, local business and NGO leaders have struggled to understand their role in enabling community action without trying to control it. Like the work in the municipal organization, the Search process has produced mixed results.

**Discussion**

It is clear that participative democratic processes produce high learning, energy and enthusiasm. In participative democratic structures like a Search Conference or a Participative Design Workshop, participants work creatively and effectively together. In the PDW, union, management and staff have collaborated in ways they have not previously
been able to. In the Search Conference, community leaders who are often in competition with each other for scarce resources find common ground and forge new collaborative relationships. From these experiences it seems that participative democracy works. However, success seems to create its own resistance as other parts of the larger system tend to interfere. For example, funding was cut for some community agencies involved in the community Search Conference. The political system, as a DP1 structure, poses additional challenges.

Some suggest that the “participatory worldview” presents a fundamental paradigm shift for modern civilization (Reason & Bradbury 2001). In Kuhn’s (1962) terms, such a paradigm shift will not occur without resistance from established communities of thought. There is currently a significant swell of interest in participatory processes, as exemplified by the demand for learning organizations and community engagement. Yet this swell of interest is balanced by long-held ways of doing things in top-down hierarchical systems. Consequently, at present, while we know what to do, and how to do it, we have a lot to learn about diffusion and sustainability of participative democratic approaches to creating new models of municipal governance that both empower employees and engage citizens.

References


Citizenship, Globalization and Migration: Implications for Global Citizenship Education

Katherine Daly
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Abstract

The need to extend our understanding beyond the traditional concept of national citizenship is becoming increasingly apparent in the context of a globalizing world. The increased speed and ease with which people are moving across national boundaries challenge our former notions of citizenship, rooted in the nation-state and geography, and begin to reveal them as somewhat antiquated. Our attempts to reformulate our understanding of citizenship are finding expression in the discourse about ‘global citizenship’, which extends the concept of citizenship beyond the reach of state authorities, removing obstacles to inclusion and emphasizing actions based on a critical understanding of the connections among people from different regions. Unfortunately, definitions of what constitutes ‘global citizenship’ remain hazy. Within their definitions of global citizenship, authors often make assumptions that lead to the inclusion of some people and the exclusion of others (Lagos 2002; Reimers 2006). This paper argues that the current definition is created for people from Northern countries with significant economic resources and therefore excludes migrant populations and their communities of origin despite the very ‘global’ character of these populations.
Introduction

A review of the literature on global citizenship reveals a need to refine the definition of ‘global citizenship’ and to reveal the underlying assumptions of the current conception in order to create an inclusive framework. This paper argues that the definition of global citizenship must be divided into three distinct yet interconnected categories: the transformative global citizen, the conservative global citizen, and the migrant global citizen. Each of these will be discussed in detail below. The paper will examine the inequalities and contradictions contained within these three categories and examine the marginalized position of the migrant global citizens vis-à-vis their counterparts.

The paper then proposes a set of questions for future research. First, can the concept of global citizenship be used to the advantage of diaspora communities and their communities of origin? Could it provide an entry point for migrant peoples to demand their full rights and organize themselves to transform their own circumstances and to challenge inequality more broadly? This paper will address the important theoretical issues surrounding the concept of global citizenship as an alternative to traditional notions of citizenship and its current relationship to migrant peoples. It then attempts to broaden the discussion to ask the question of how migrant populations can reclaim this new thinking about citizenship to redress the inequality and exclusion that they experience.

There can be no doubt that globalization is having a profound impact on concepts of citizenship. Increased migration, as a prominent expression of a globalizing world, challenges traditional notions of citizenship and reveals a need for a re-conceptualization of the concept. The emerging notion of ‘global citizenship’ is an important step in the process toward redefining citizenship, and represents an attempt to understand our position in a globalizing world. Despite increasing efforts at conceptualizing global citizenship, the definition of what constitutes a ‘global citizen’ remains hazy at best. Within their definitions of global citizenship authors often make assumptions that lead to the incorporation of non-transformative characteristics (Lagos 2002; Reimers 2006). Furthermore, the current literature about global citizenship focuses its analysis on people of a certain economic status and assumes a certain level of privilege in the potential global citizen. The present formulation of ‘global citizenship’ excludes the majority of people in the world who do not hold such economic or social power. For the purposes of this paper, the term ‘minority world’ applies to those people who enjoy a large degree of freedom to make myriad choices based on their economic power and privilege. ‘Majority world’ applies to people whose freedom is constricted by a lack of access to economic resources and power. It is not a geographical distinction. This paper argues that the current definition is created for people from the minority world with significant economic resources and therefore excludes migrant populations and their communities of origin despite the very ‘global’ character of these populations.

The need to further refine the definition of global citizenship becomes apparent when one considers that the present definition includes the migrant labourer working illegally in the United States, the labour activist working in Mexico and Canada and the CEO of a large transnational corporation who conducts business on five continents and in seven different languages. A review of the literature confirms this necessity. As previously
mentioned, this paper argues that the definition of global citizenship must be divided into three distinct yet interconnected categories. The first, the ‘transformative global citizen’, applies to a person who has developed a critical analysis of global structures and engages in self-criticism in order to affect these structures and seek out alternatives. The second, ‘the conservative global citizen’, is a person who has a wide range of intercultural skills and experiences but has not developed a critical consciousness and simply uses these skills to engage more effectively in the neoliberal global economy. The third category, the ‘migrant global citizen’, denotes a person whose citizenship is split or multiple because of the impacts of forced or voluntary migration and who has a wealth of intercultural abilities but may not be given the space to practice them as a result of the social and economic exclusion that they experience. This paper will explore these three categories using Schugurensky’s framework of citizenship as status, identity, civic virtues and agency as outlined in Citizenship and Citizenship Education: Canada in an International Context. Status refers to the legally defined rights and responsibilities granted to people by a political community, which usually is the nation-state (Schugurensky 2005). Identity is concerned with meaning and belonging. It refers to the feeling that one belongs to a certain community and not to another (Schugurensky 2005). Civic virtues are defined as “the values, attitudes and behaviors that are expected of ‘good citizens’” (4). Agency is the ability of a citizen to take action and to exert power, that is, to become an agent of change. In the discussion of civic virtues and agency, this paper will also use Khane and Westheimer’s idea of the three types of citizen. The personally responsible citizen is someone who works only to control their own actions and to be a ‘good person’ who respects the rights of others. The participatory citizen works to change the situation of people with less power than themselves through taking an active role in their community and participating in larger scale efforts. The social justice-oriented citizen works to change larger structures of power in order to solve the root cause of social injustice (In Schugurensky 2005).

The Transformative Global Citizen

The transformative global citizen is a desirable category. Nonetheless, there is a need to deconstruct the literature and its assumptions in order to extract the non-transformative aspects of the current definition and explore who is included and excluded by this conception of global citizenship.

The transformative global citizen describes someone whose identity as a global citizen causes them to challenge the prevailing structures of inequality and to seek out alternatives for themselves and their societies. By Schugurensky’s definition of status, the transformative global citizen has none. They are, most likely, a citizen of a state but this has relatively little effect on their status as a global citizen. Even if a non-profit organization who educates for global citizens, such as Oxfam, were to declare someone a global citizen and give her a document saying as much, they would still have no authority to demand any responsibilities from her or to award her any rights. In his article, Global Citizenship - Toward a Definition, Lagos (2002) refers to ‘associative status’. ‘Associative status’ describes the personal choices of the individual as well as how they identify themselves. A global citizen makes certain lifestyle choices, including who they associate with, what activities they are involved in and what kinds of consumer choices they make (Lagos 2002).
As Lagos writes, “Since there is no global bureaucracy to give sanction and protect global citizens...global citizenship remains the purview of individuals to live, work and play within trans-national norms and status that defy national boundaries and sovereignty” (4). It is my contention that Lagos has confused status and identity and that “associative status” is actually referring to the identity of transformative global citizens.

The 'status' of the transformative global citizen is completely contingent on the identity of the individual. To be a transformative global citizen one must self-identify as such and be recognized by other people as a global citizen. Because no larger body can grant someone transformative global citizenship, it must be self-assigned and then accepted by a larger community. This being said, one cannot become a transformative global citizen by simply claiming to be one. Being a transformative global citizen is largely contingent on the civic virtues and agency that one exhibits as a result of this chosen identity.

One of the most discussed aspects of global citizenship in current literature is the civic virtues that one must exhibit. A civic virtue that is repeated in the literature is the ability to reflect critically on one’s own society. Lynn Davies (2006) affirms that “It would seem obvious that global citizenship education is not about learning about other countries, but a means to reflect critically on one’s own” (7). In Basile’s (n.d.) examination of a school focused on promoting global citizenship, she quotes one student who says that their service-learning experiences gave them a, “framework and a lens to look back at my home country and at myself...through acting with and alongside the Mexican people, I was able to view many global problems in a much more three dimensional way” (362). The efforts at global education directed at this student allowed her to see her own society through critical eyes as well as make connections between her own actions, those of her government and the impacts on a global scale.

Oxfam’s curriculum package emphasizes the civic virtues of awareness of global issues and their connections to local issues (Oxfam 2006). There is a common theme through much of the literature that indicates that transformative global citizens should recognize the interconnectedness of all people and places. Global citizens should have an understanding that their individual decisions have a rippling effect on the world. For example, their decision to treat people of other ethnicities with respect has an effect on themselves, their friends, their schools, and the wider systems that operate in the world. Likewise, a decision to be disrespectful of someone because of their ethnicity is tied into larger systems and impacts the community around them. The view that the world is interconnected and that one must recognize the effects of their actions on much larger systems is a transformative view. For instance, if all of the children who participated in global citizenship education began to make the consumer choices advocated by these programs, such as buying only fair trade goods, their impact on the larger systems of the global economy would be significant. This perspective directly contradicts what Joanna Macy calls the Cartesian worldview, which holds that the world can be understood as parts that can stand alone and that are not necessarily integral to the whole. Viewing the world as a series of interconnected and interdependent systems contradicts this worldview (Macy 1998). This understanding is being promoted in the curriculum documents for global citizenship, which shows a step toward changing how students approach the world.
While the civic virtues of the transformative global citizen are emphasized, it is also recognized that understanding is not enough to make a global citizen. There needs to be an emphasis on agency. Khane and Westheimer’s social justice-oriented citizen is promoted in the literature (In Schugurensky 2005). The Oxfam global citizenship curriculum indicates that a global citizen should feel “outrage by social injustice” (Oxfam 2006). Oxfam (2006) further expects that a global citizen “participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from the local to the global, [and] is willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place...” (3). These characteristics indicate that transformative global citizens should feel a high level of agency to make changes not just at the level of individual choice but at the level of structural transformation. Oxfam’s assertion that a global citizen should feel outrage at social injustice indicates a form of caring that inspires a commitment to act against injustice. Lynn Davies (2006) echoes Oxfam’s emphasis on agency in her analysis of various definitions when she says, “empathy is not enough: there must be ‘outrage’, so that motivations for change are high” (4).

There is also a parallel discussion within the literature about the need for personally responsible transformative global citizens. Basile includes students who “take responsibility for their actions” as one of the three main components global citizenship education (Basile n.d.), and Oxfam also enumerates this value in its curriculum (Oxfam 2006). There appears to be agreement amongst theorists that there is a need to foster agency within potential global citizens and that these attempts to transform structures that promote inequality and environmental degradation are a key feature of global citizenship.

While the need to incite action in transformative global citizens is generally recognized as a very important aspect of global citizenship in the literature, there is also recognition of the difficulties associated with implementing this aspect. Marcia Mackenzie (2006), in her study of global citizenship education practice, points to the difficulty of impelling students to act on knowledge gained through global citizenship education. She explains that students often expressed a phenomenon that she calls inactive caring, whereby “several students indicated that they have ‘grown to care’ for others ‘less fortunate’ through the class, and a few talk of wanting to find careers that enable them to help others. However, the caring expressed in students’ comments typically does not carry with it a sense of being able to make any substantial change in the world...” This would indicate that the students’ caring as a result of global citizenship does not always translate into a high degree of internal political efficacy.

Mündel (2002) also indicates that agency is difficult to foster through educational experiences but suggests that it is the most important outcome of service learning experiences. He explains that despite the myriad obstacles to developing participatory and praxical learning methods, they were of utmost importance because “[students are] able to articulate and realize alternatives to the status quo ... [and] they acquired new skills, attitudes, and understandings that would enable then to become active citizens...” (86).

Daniel Schugurensky echoes Mündel’s emphasis on participation when he argues that agency can be encouraged through participatory democratic processes. Participatory democracy is “an associational space that allows for inclusive processes of deliberation and which are bound to real and substantive decisions” (Schugurensky 2005, 607). According
to Schugurensky (2005), participation in democratic decision-making leads to the possible application of democratic principles in other arenas of peoples’ lives, and to anticipate challenges to future participatory experiments. In other words, participatory democratic practices create a sense of agency for those who contribute to them. Could the principles of participatory democracy be incorporated into programs aimed at global citizenship in order to foster agency?

When exploring the question of agency with regard to the transformative global citizen it is important to recognize that thus far the literature has implicitly focused its attention on minority world students. This creates a tension between the goals of transformative global citizenship and its actual conceptualization. It is important to recognize that the ability to choose whether or not to become a global citizen is a product of privilege that few enjoy. As will be discussed below, the migrant global citizen enjoys no such choice. In the current literature there is little room left for people who have the civic virtue of awareness of the interconnectedness of the world but have little external political efficacy to have agency over these circumstances. Indeed, a community who is being displaced by the mining interests of a Canadian company would have a high level of awareness about how global processes affect local circumstances but may find that they have limited agency. Should they then be excluded from the definition of a global citizen because they do not have the requisite privilege to fulfill the agency requirements of transformative global citizenship?

The above-mentioned tensions must be recognized and addressed in the programs and curriculum aiming to create transformative global citizens. Future conceptualizations of global citizenship must also take into account the exclusive nature of past definitions and work to redress this inequality in order to make theory match with its own goals. When these contradictions are properly addressed, the concept of the transformative global citizen can serve as a useful tool in ‘de-normalizing’ privilege and compelling young people use their privilege to redress structural inequalities. The transformative global citizen could also apply to majority world citizens if these tendencies are recognized and addressed to appeal to people without significant privilege or economic power.

The Conservative Global Citizen

The conservative global citizen is a necessary category within the discussion of global citizenship because it allows the conservative or non-transformative assumptions of previous definition to be extracted and examined as a separate set of values. In previous definitions, conservative and transformative characteristics were assumed to fit together into one definition of global citizenship. It is my contention that these previous definitions have confused the definition of global citizenship by making these assumptions, and have made practical implementation more difficult and produced mixed results at best. By creating this category these assumptions are made clear and are more easily challenged.

The conservative global citizen describes a person who has a wealth of intercultural experience and competency but has not developed the critical consciousness necessary to use these skills to challenge global structures of inequality. The conservative global citizen does not hold any official status as a global citizen. Just as with the transformative global
citizen, their identity is individually assigned and depends upon the lifestyle decisions of
the individual. In terms of identity, the conservative global citizen would self-identify as a
global citizen but the criteria by which they judge their global citizenship would be different
from that of the previous category.

The conservative global citizen’s identity is very connected to their civic virtues, just
as in the case of the transformative global citizen. The image of Khane and Westheimer’s
personally responsible citizen would apply to the conservative global citizen (Schugurensky
2005). This citizen would see all people as responsible for their own well being, and so
would feel the need to ambitiously seek out skills and abilities that would allow them to
flourish in a globalizing economy. This viewpoint would also limit their ability to structure
reasons for the problems that other people confront, especially people living in situations of
poverty.

Kymlicka (2003) describes the contradiction of the locally intercultural citizen
versus the globally intercultural citizen. He claims that people who engage globally do so
because their interactions with ‘far away’ groups is less fraught with tension or resentment
whereas interactions with historically disenfranchised groups in one’s own country can be
an uncomfortable or even painful experience on both sides. I would argue that the
conservative global citizen would be less likely to interact with different groups locally
because they would present a great challenge to their status quo views. The transformative
citizen would be more likely to be curious about and engage with groups in their own
country despite the challenges. It is important, in fact, for the transformative citizen to
engage with groups from their own country as a way of making firmer connections between
local and global phenomena. For example, the conservative global citizen may feel very
comfortable engaging with Tanzanians in Tanzania, but would not seek out the Tanzanian
immigrant population in Canada and try to work out the uncomfortable issues of race and
class discrimination. On the other hand, a transformative global citizen may actively seek
work or volunteer opportunities that would allow them confront those tensions. Kymlicka
(2003) also states that the globally intercultural citizen engages with other cultures to
achieve some personal pleasure or gain. This is clear in the advertising of many
‘voluntourism’ experiences where people pay large sums of money to take a vacation to a
poor community. For instance, the I-to-I ‘voluntourism’ company’s website says,
“Travelling abroad is a great way to experience new cultures and meet extraordinary
people, but it also presents a great opportunity to learn a little something that will set you
well and truly on the road to success” (I-to-I 2007, 1). I would argue that this describes the
motivations of the conservative global citizen but not necessarily those of the
transformative or migrant global citizen.

In terms of agency, the conservative global citizen would have a high level of external
efficacy due to the privilege and power inherent in the definition, as expressed through
their ability to travel extensively. Their intercultural skills would further afford them
greater privilege than most people and they would acquire these skills in order to compete
more effectively in a neoliberal globalizing economy. The conservative global citizen would
likely not engage in transformative activities or seek alternatives to the neoliberal
worldview as a result of their intercultural experiences. Instead they would use the
competencies they developed through their intercultural experiences to participate more
effectively in the neoliberal globalization project and increase their own personal gain in the form of prestige and accumulation of wealth. While this personal gain may be a side effect of the other two categories of global citizens, it is not the main intention when seeking to understand other worldviews but rather a by-product of the learning that the transformative global citizen undergoes. The conservative global citizen would not take a critical or self-reflexive approach to their intercultural experiences and would instead use their knowledge of the wider world to justify the status quo.

### The Migrant Global Citizen

A review of the literature describing global citizenship quickly reveals a substantial hole in the conceptualization of the definition. While not explicit, statements such as, “This is not the first time in the history of our civilization that society has been ‘internationalized’ but never has it been easier for average citizen to express herself in this globalized fashion – by the clothes she wears, soda she drinks, music she listens to (e.g. ‘world music’) and vacation land she visits” (Lagos 2002, 7) indicate that the notion of global citizenship applies most readily to people living with significant economic and social privilege. Most people worldwide do not have easy access to basic necessities, let alone the opportunity make ‘internationalized’ choices about the music they listen to or the vacation spots they choose. This oversight shows that the present conceptualization of global citizenship is inadequate. Economic and environmental pressures, created by a globalizing world economy, have in turn created a situation where many people from the majority world are finding it necessary to ‘internationalize’ their citizenship.

With this fact in mind, it is necessary to create a category of global citizen that encompasses people who blur the definition of global and national citizenship by holding multiple citizenships, or living and working in countries where they hold no official status. For instance conservative estimates suggest there are 7 million illegal migrants in the United States (Frieden 2003). In this case, status and identity can often contradict each other. The fact that multiple identities and statuses exist simultaneously can create a global citizen. This category would describe migrant workers who hold citizenship status in one country but work for a majority of the year in another. An example of these people would be the Mexican workers who live in Canada for six to eight months of the year in order to harvest summer crops. Another would be ‘guest workers’ in Europe who hold one national citizenship but live and work in another European country without ever taking on formal citizenship there. The identities of these workers often neither match their citizenship or their status. Lagos uses the example of a Spaniard living in Germany who has no intention of returning to Spain. Even though her status is that of a Spaniard her identity may be shaped more by her life in Germany. Similarly, a woman who is of Japanese descent and holds Japanese citizenship but was born in Brazil and also has Brazilian citizenship but currently lives in Peru and is married to a Peruvian certainly blurs the lines of citizenship and could easily be considered a global citizen. People who hold these various citizenships and loyalties certainly confuse the notions of nationality and suggest that this phenomenon may be more like global citizenship than simply multiple citizenships.

The civic virtues of the migrant global citizen are not very clear in the literature. It seems that these people are mainly considered in terms of their multiple statuses and
identities. This also points to the issue of education. It appears that for the previous two categories there is a significant amount of research and effort going into developing curriculum for these citizens. Conversely, it would appear that the migrant global citizen is not ‘created’ through education but rather through circumstance. They are either compelled to migrate because of a lack of economic power and privilege, or choose to hold multiple citizenships - a luxury provided for by privilege. With either example, there is simply no education about the civic virtues that this category should exhibit.

Khane and Westheimer’s conception of the personally responsible citizen fits best for what is expected of these citizens (In Schugurensky 2005). They are responsible for their own actions, regardless of which location they are in. In the case of migrant workers, they are responsible for providing for themselves and their families regardless of the lengths that they must go in order to do so. For many people that fall into this category, especially those who lack or have tenuous legal status (e.g. a tourist visa that must be renewed every few months), the opportunity to exercise their rights as a social justice-oriented citizen could be limited through social or political controls. For example, one may not be able to speak about injustice in a ‘host’ community because they are not considered as ‘belonging’ and therefore do not have the right to criticize the values of the community. Furthermore, they may be restricted legally, as is the case in El Salvador where it is illegal for foreigners to participate in protest or lobbying.

The migrant global citizen’s agency can vary depending on their status and their location. A Mexican migrant worker in Canada may have more agency in Canada, despite the fact that they do not have legal status, whereas their agency may be limited in Mexico where they enjoy full legal citizenship. The opposite could also be true. Location could have a significant impact on the migrant worker’s internal efficacy, in that they may have more social capital in Mexico as compared to Canada. Again, the concept of the personally responsible citizen comes into play in that the migrant global citizen may feel a large amount of responsibility to use their multiple statuses to improve their own or their families position, but there is little discussion in the literature about the need for the migrant global citizen to use their status to increase social justice. Being a migrant global citizen certainly does not preclude someone from being a social justice-oriented person, but it is not a prerequisite in order to be considered a migrant global citizen. The agency of the migrant global citizen seems to be somewhat limited in that they do not choose to become global citizens but rather the circumstances by which they acquire global citizenship are thrust upon them.

The category of the migrant global citizenship is important to include in the wider definition of global citizenship. It is a phenomenon that is being brought about by globalization that needs to be explained in academia and it is (as of yet) the only appearance of a place for majority world citizens to be considered for global citizenship.

The Significance of these Categories for Global Citizenship Education

When considering program and curriculum design to educate for global citizenship it is necessary to take into account differing viewpoints about how to go about creating global citizens. Different approaches to education can produce different kinds of global citizens.
Reimers (2006) writes, “Globalization is one of the most important changes taking place in societies around the world today and yet it is unclear that schools have realigned their purposes to prepare students to be competent citizens in an age of globalization” (3) Using this approach, a conservative global citizen would likely be produced. On the other hand, if one is aware that “...new global policymaking processes in education, which are often linked more to the interests of global capitalism than to the needs of particular societies...may lead to the reproduction of social inequalities in and through education” (Rizvi and Lingard 2000, 3) it is possible to overcome these challenges to promote transformative global citizenship. If the overall thrust of the education system is to create skilled workers for a globalizing world economy, it is difficult not to incorporate these perspectives into programs aimed at creating global citizens. Mündel (2002) asserts that service-learning programs aimed at creating global citizens will not necessarily produce critical, transformative global citizens. He further argues that the transformative effect of service learning experiences can be greatly influenced through program design. Kymlicka (2003) also contends that assumptions and stereotypes can simply be reinforced with a lack of reflection.

It should be noted that these categories are difficult to outline with concrete boundaries. They are complex and interconnected. Often global citizens who would identify as transformative may find that they receive personal and professional benefits for their intercultural abilities. The migrant global citizen could take on the civic virtues and agency of a transformative or a conservative global citizen. The conservative global citizen may hold several citizenships or find themselves travelling 360 days of the year, in which case they would also be considered a migrant global citizen. This is perhaps an obstacle in developing any kind of categorization for individuals as they are generally complex and have layered aspects to their personalities and lives. The categories are nonetheless useful from an educational standpoint in that they provide a framework for practitioners to plan curriculum and programming. When one is developing a curriculum package for a world studies class, it is helpful to have a clear idea of the kinds of characteristics and understanding that they are trying to foster in the learners. Being aware of the tensions in each of these categories and between them is an important part of being able to use them effectively. The conscientious educator can use these as a broad framework to guide the development of curriculum while still recognizing and problematizing the challenges that categorization presents. Global citizenship is a concept that is full of underlying assumptions and tensions. In order to make it into a useful concept for educators, theorist must refine which global citizen they are discussing, and analyze the tensions within and between these categories. Educators must take a critical and self-reflexive stance to teaching global citizenship in order to effectively teach global citizens to be self-critical.

References


North-South City-to-City Cooperation in the field of Sustainable Development and Local Agenda 21: Transformative Citizenship Learning through International Partnerships

Ulrike Devers-Kanoglu
University of Cologne

Introduction

Based on an introduction to the concept of North-South City-to-City Cooperation (C2C), I am going to discuss how activities in such a context can contribute to extending citizenship learning beyond a local context and, how C2C may contribute to transformative learning. These reflections are rooted in a study that pays special attention to the learning processes as well as to the learning outcomes occurring through C2C. As this study is still in progress, it is not intended to deliver final results but to draw attention to this promising field of learning and discuss the challenges as well as the chances for transformative learning and extending citizenship learning to a global scale and to thereby nurture a critical, caring and engaged world citizenry.

North-South City-to-City Cooperation

The concept of municipal partnerships has developed different features and characteristics while rapidly growing as a practice in the 20th century (UN-HABITAT & WACLAC 2003). In the following, I would like to define C2C in accordance with a definition provided by UN-HABITAT & WACLAC (2003, 8):

‘City-to-City Cooperation’ - neatly if inelegantly shortened to ‘C2C’ - thus becomes an umbrella term to cover all possible forms of relationship between local authorities at any level in two or more countries which are collaborating on matters of mutual interest, whether with or without external support.

This definition is very broad and I will, therefore, further specify, what kind of C2C is of special relevance to my own research. My research is focused on C2C between Northern and Southern municipalities that intend to promote sustainable development, e.g. in processes of Local Agenda 21, where local governments set up an action plan for sustainable development on a local level, together with their citizens. Due to that, they may
work to enable participation and collaboration among various individuals and groups within the municipality. They may also encourage cooperation with partners internationally, which can include municipal governments and administrations, civil society organizations, educational institutions, etc. These partnerships are often committed to exchange and aim at mutual learning in the field of sustainable development. In the ideal case, they include different formal, non-formal and informal settings for individuals to participate, cooperate and learn. As a consequence, C2C as a site for learning proves to be very complex, since there are at least two possible sites for collaborative interaction and learning:¹

‘Intra-municipal’ cooperation

Intra-municipal cooperation refers to interaction amongst different individuals and groups within the municipality (see Fig. 1):

Figure 1: Intra-municipal cooperation as a site for informal learning (Devers-Kanoglu, 2009a & 2009b)

Partnership tasks and activities aiming at successful cooperation with the partner municipality may encourage cooperation and interaction amongst different stakeholders on a local level as well. Learning resulting from intra-municipal cooperation is likely to be strongly embedded in local conditions (e.g. knowledge or skills for successful performance within the municipality). It can be assumed that to a greater or lesser extent, intra-municipal cooperation can be found in each of the partnering municipalities.

¹ In the following outline of C2C as a site for learning I closely refer to Devers-Kanoglu 2007, Devers-Kanoglu 2009a and Devers-Kanoglu 2009b.
‘Inter-municipal’ cooperation

Inter-municipal cooperation refers to interactions and partnerships between different municipalities, and related groups and individuals (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2: Inter-municipal cooperation as a site for informal learning (Devers-Kanoglu 2007; Devers-Kanoglu 2009a & Devers-Kanoglu 2009b).

While some fundamental similarities within the municipality are likely to affect the conditions of intra-municipal cooperation, inter-municipal cooperation adds a special feature: the difference between groups and individuals coming from diverse organizational and cultural backgrounds. This may foster a conscious and critical reflection on what has traditionally not been questioned. Hence, further processes of learning and transformation can be initiated.

In the following, I outline the implications of C2C as a setting for citizenship learning in local democracy and discuss the opportunities that exist to transcend a solely local orientation in order to nurture a critical, caring and engaged world citizenry. I will start by introducing participation at a local level as a relevant setting for citizenship learning and then broaden the scope to discuss inter-municipal cooperation structures.

Transcending Citizenship Learning in C2C

Although it may sound like a cliché, it is no less true that one of the best ways to learn democracy is by doing it, and one of the best ways to develop effective civic and political skills is by observing them in the real world and exercising them. (Schugurensky 2004, 614)

Processes of participation, characterized through “inclusive processes of deliberation that are bound to real and substantive decisions” (Schugurensky 2004, 607), hold remarkable pedagogical potentials, especially with regard to citizenship learning. One of the most prominent spheres of political action and participation is the local level, as highlighted in the Agenda 21, a programme of action on sustainable development that has

“Because so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives. [...] As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development” (UNCED 1992, chapter 28).

Local authorities have been prompted to undertake “a consultative process with their populations” in order to “achieve a consensus on a 'Local Agenda 21' for the community” (UNCED 1992, chapter 28) and to thereby support the implementation of the Agenda 21 on a local level. By 2005 approximately 2,600 German municipalities (20.4%) had adopted a Local Agenda 21 (Agenda Transfer 2005).

But the importance of the local level has been noted elsewhere as well. As early as in the middle of the 19th century, J.S. Mill (1963) identified special opportunities for ‘learning democracy’ through participation at the local level, since,

“the issues dealt with at this level directly affect the individuals and their everyday life, and also because it is at this level where ordinary citizens stand a better chance of being elected by their peers to serve on a local body or committee” (Schugurensky 2004, 608).

Furthermore, it can be assumed that if “citizens become more enlightened, empowered and confident, they become ready to go beyond their circle and become more active in other spheres” (Schugurensky 2004, 610). These spheres can be locally bound, but they can also transcend to broader political dimensions:

“It is possible that after a taste of self-governing, some participants may still be interested only in local affairs and not in other levels of governance. However, the new political learning can assist them to be better able to assess the performance of national representatives, to weigh the impact of decisions taken by national representatives on their own lives and their immediate surroundings, and to take decisions of national and international scope when the opportunity arises” (Schugurensky 2004, 610).

There is evidence that suggests that C2C could contribute to transcend ‘doing democracy’ on a local level. While the structure as well as the content of intra-municipal cooperation maintains a focus on local democracy, processes of inter-municipal cooperation tend to extend the focus beyond the local level, as outlined in Table 1.
Table 1: C2C as a site for citizenship learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intra-municipal cooperation</th>
<th>Inter-municipal cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>Similar to processes of Local Agenda 21:</td>
<td>Cooperation amongst different groups and individuals acting on a local level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperation amongst different groups and individuals acting on a local level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Similar to processes of Local Agenda 21:</td>
<td>Processing of issues transcending the local level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Processing of issues relevant to the local level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, C2C implies two potential sites for citizenship learning: *intra*-municipal cooperation and *inter*-municipal cooperation. On the one hand, the former offers ‘traditional’ citizenship learning through interaction at a local level within one’s own group as well as with members of other groups that are engaged in C2C. The issues that groups deal with in *intra*-municipal cooperation are likely to be related to local problems (e.g. public relations, or fundraising). Furthermore, the knowledge, and skills that are needed and that will be developed are likely to be rooted in the local context. However, *intra*-municipal cooperation can also be a starting point for broadening the perspective beyond the local level. On the other hand, *inter*-municipal cooperation already contains elements that encourage participants to transcend the structures and local level democracy through their interactions with groups and individuals from the partner municipality and through sharing experiences that pertain to another municipality’s context. These interactions gain a special quality from the different perspectives involved and may contribute to nurture global citizenship learning.

**Transformative Learning in the Context of C2C**

Due to rising problems on a global scale, there is a need to radically transform the way we live. Therefore, citizenship learning could benefit from transformative approaches, and C2C offers significant possibilities to foster transformative learning. Hence, I will first
introduce the concept of transformative learning and then, based on literature in related fields of study, describe several ways to incorporate it into C2C.

According to Schugurensky (2000, 6), transformative learning “refers to learning experiences that lead us to challenge our assumptions and values, and to radically change our existing prior knowledge and approaches.” It can be described as a process through which,

“we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (Mezirow 2000, 8-9).

Received and taken-for-granted frames of reference “are composed of assimilated cultural codes, social norms, ideologies, and language games” (Mezirow 1998, 70) and,

“include fixed interpersonal relationships, political orientations, cultural bias, ideologies, schemata, stereotyped attitudes and practices, occupational habits of mind, religious doctrine, moral-ethical norms, psychological preferences and schema, paradigms in science and mathematics, frames in linguistics and social sciences, and aesthetic values and standards” (Mezirow 2003b, 59).

They can be perceived as “the way the culture shapes the way we learn. We are embedded in these sets of assumptions and expectations.” (Mezirow 1998, 70) Through frames of reference, expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings are shaped and delimited (Mezirow 1997).

It can be assumed, that transformative learning as described above can be fostered through the special contexts provided in C2C. Frames of reference can be perturbed due to irritation arising from intra- as well as inter-municipal cooperation, and interactions between different cultures, subcultures and organizations, that are an inherent aspect of inter-municipal cooperation can foster transformative learning and push people to transcend a mere local orientation. The richness of learning, which arises from irritation and difference has been highlighted by various authors that will be discussed below.

Working and/or living in another culture may be one catalyst for transformative learning. A study conducted by Taylor (1994) supports this assumption. His study is based on interviews with interculturally competent individuals, selected along predefined criteria, one of which was that they have lived and worked in a host culture for a minimum of two years. The findings of his study highlight that, “cultural disequilibrium acts as a catalyst in becoming interculturally competent and that an outcome of competency is a change to a more inclusive and integrated world view” (Taylor 1994, 172).

In a highly instructive study, Wilson & Johnson (2007) describe options for ‘deep/transformational learning’² in ‘practitioner-to-practitioner partnerships’ between officers from Northern and Southern municipalities, where “professionally equivalent

---

² In order to qualify this statement, it has to be added that they are concerned with different types of learning of which ‘deep/transformational learning’ is only one (Wilson, 2007, 256).
officers from the partner authorities share knowledge and ideas on a collegial basis” (Wilson & Johnson 2007, 257). In these partnerships, the tension between similarity and difference plays an important role: “The first assumption is that there is sufficient professional similarity between officers that it is possible to establish a basis for genuine dialogue. Such a basis is likely to be informed by trust. The second is that practitioners are also sufficiently different, whether in professional knowledge or practice, or in context and social histories, that they have something to share in their dialogue. Difference can therefore both provide the source and act as an incentive for joint knowledge construction” (Wilson 2007, 254). Amongst other learning outcomes, they note that participants in these partnerships redefine the definition of problems and innovate regarding solutions. They further redefine their conceptualizations of public engagement (Wilson 2007).

A different perspective is adopted by Franz (2005). In her study, it is diversity in intra-organizational and cross-professional partnerships that may become the catalyst for transformative learning. She identifies the importance of “fundamental difference between partners bridged by a common purpose. In transforming partnerships, partners differed in personality, work styles, and/or worldviews.” (Franz 2005, 261) With regard to transformative learning within these partnerships she reveals that, “Partners who were transformed from their partnership experience reported (a) gaining a more holistic view of their work, (b) gaining a better understanding of processes around them, (c) personal development, and (d) the alleviation of professional isolation.” (Franz 2005, 261)

The potential of ‘dialogue meetings’ in a municipal context has been described by Wilhelmson (2006). Aiming at a diminishment of mutual interdependencies and creating “opportunities for free and open communication among people with different perspectives” (Wilhelmson 2006, 245), she conducted such meetings with parents, politicians, staff members, administrators, and managers on the topic of municipal childcare and related experiences of the participants. The discussions took place in small groups composed of members with different backgrounds that did not know each other before. Based on the need to “investigate the phenomenon labelled dialogue, or discourse, in transformation theory” and “to better understand how to use it as a pedagogical tool in nonformal adult education” (Wilhelmson 2006, 244), her paper discusses “the prospects, in a municipal context, of fostering a dialogue-competent behaviour that can support learning in discourse” (Wilhelmson 2006, 244). She analyses Mezirow’s (2003a) suggestion that, “in sharing one another’s narratives, small groups of learners may foster critical self reflection” (Wilhelmson, 2006, 243). Dialogue between diverse groups can provoke people to “compare their ways of interpreting common experience with the ways of others and to identify and critically assess their own taken-for-granted frame of reference” (Mezirow 2003a, 74). Even though in Wilhelmson’s (2006) study the participants consisted of different groups at the local level, her findings are highly instructive for my own research. For example, the importance of difference and irritation resulting from that or when referring to intra-municipal cooperation and beyond.

With regard to the importance of irritation Wilhelmson describes a similar tension to the ones identified by Wilson & Johnson (2007). In order to reach “a new transcending perspective within which new ways of understanding could be developed” (Wilhelmson 2006, 251) there is a need for “feelings of safety and disequilibrium ... to be present at the
same time, combined with the necessity to reach a common understanding.” Given the right circumstances, new collective perspectives could be developed, and the individual participant could transcend “his or her own perspective in a direction that [is] more shared” (Wilhelmson 2006, 252). It is very likely that the different ‘modes of perspective change’ that Wilhelmson (2006, 251) found in her study can also be found in C2C. These ‘modes of perspective change’ include ‘broadening within a perspective’, ‘shifting between perspectives’ and ‘transcending of perspectives’. In C2C it is likely that different opinions will meet, that a state of disequilibrium will occur, and that due to shared intentions there will be a strong will to overcome stalemate situations. Furthermore, there are chances for experiencing the partner municipality, its people and its culture in different ways. This can be extremely helpful to recognize that one’s own perspective is only one amongst many and to reach beyond restrictive local and cultural limitations.

Another useful conclusion can be drawn from Wilhelmson’s (2006) study with regard to communication, dialogue and possibilities for transformative learning in intra-municipal cooperation and beyond. “Persons who have superior or subordinate positions in civic life may face various difficulties when they try to go beyond their own perspectives in small-group communication” (Wilhelmson 2006, 254). Therefore, she highlights the need for cultivating dialogue competence. “With some training in dialogue competence, group members are more likely to experience transformative learning, individually and collectively” (Wilhelmson 2006, 254). Furthermore, she describes chances to support symmetrical communication through adult education. Given the fact that participants support one another in developing dialogue competence in symmetrical communication, she concludes that “a dialogue meeting can become a greenhouse in which dialogue-competent behaviour is practiced and fostered and thus serve as a learning environment for a combination of staff members, politicians, and citizens in a municipality” (Wilhelmson 2006, 254).

Furthermore, C2C offers possibilities for taking cultural action. According to Mezirow (1998, 71) every learner “who acts upon his or her transformative insights with others to effect changes in previously taken-for-granted frames of reference” practices cultural action. In order to change social frames of reference, one needs to find “others who share your reflective insights with whom to act to effect cultural changes – in families, communities, workplaces, and on a national or global scale” (Mezirow 1998, 71). This doesn’t necessarily have to be the case in C2C, but the context lends itself to critical reflection. Conventional understanding and action can be critically analysed, and reflections can be validated and acted upon within the groups and in the intra- or inter-municipal networks and maybe beyond that.

Concluding Remarks

Given the potential that C2C has to transcend citizenship learning and to foster transformative learning further research is strongly needed to verify what can really be learned in the C2C setting and how this learning takes place (Devers-Kanoglu 2009b). Challenges to C2C’s role in citizenship learning and transformative learning also need to be taken into account in future research. I would highlight one aspect that seems to be of special relevance to the issues in this paper. It refers to the observation that even though
transformative learning takes place, transformation always remains somehow limited and therefore it would be highly interesting to investigate the depth of transformation and the contexts in which it occurs. For example, thanks to experiences with the inter-municipal partners, C2C participants might become aware of and start to question underlying structures that influence their everyday and/or working life. For instance, Wilson & Johnson (2007, 262) describe UK officers who re-thought their public engagement activities and “[moved] from an ‘educating’ to a ‘working with’ conceptualisation of public engagement.” A different example of transformation may be the partnership context itself: here, transformative learning could possibly challenge unequal power relations that result from cultural bias, stereotypes and ideology. While the former example describes transformative learning related to the context of origin, the latter refers to transformative learning related to the new context, which is arising from partnership practice. Both mark different transformation processes that have different impacts on the individual as well as on the quality of the partnership. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to investigate whether it is possible to detect specific patterns of transformative learning in C2C: Is transformative learning in C2C more likely to apply to contexts of origin, since these are the contexts that are mainly challenged by irritation resulting from difference between the respective partners? In contrast, does the partnership context constitute a new framing which will not be challenged so easily since it hides ‘old’ frames of reference? Or is it the other way around and interaction between the respective partners will challenge or even change frames of reference or, from a constructivist view, jointly create new knowledge (Wilson & Johnson, 2007) within the partnership context and therefore have a liberating effect? Paying further attention to these questions is important for the learning processes of individual actors as well as for successful partnership activities based on mutual understanding and trust. Critical reflection on such issues based on research and fostered by adult education can play a vital role for transformative citizenship learning and enhancing partnership practice.

In conclusion, C2C seems to be a highly promising context for transformative learning as well as for citizenship learning, because it is within this context that it may be possible to transcend a narrow focus on personal or group needs and work toward a critical, caring and engaged world citizenry. But, this paper shows that further research is needed in order to contribute to a conceptualization of the field and to acknowledge the possibilities as well as the challenges in C2C.

References


The Globalisation of Citizenship: Exploring the Relevance of ‘Citizenship’ for Young People

Samantha Ratnam
University of Melbourne

Abstract

Young people globally are growing up in times made more uncertain by increasingly interdependent events. Climate change, global food shortages and war are all issues that touch the lives of young people across borders, nationalities and cultures. While many of these events concern young people, they also unite youth beyond traditional boundaries. In Australia, a partnership between schools, universities and an International Development Organisation (Plan Australia) was established to facilitate ‘Global Connections’ and a dialogue between young people in Australia and Indonesia. The initiative was designed to create opportunities for meaningful participation, raise awareness, and empower participants with the skills for active global citizenship. Participants work as a group to communicate information about themselves, their community and issues of concern with their peer group overseas. Schools have embraced this initiative as a practical way of meeting the new “civics and citizenship” curriculum requirement that arose from growing concerns that young people were disengaged from civic life (e.g. Mellor’s civics deficit thesis). Contrastings assertions that young people are disengaged and disinterested, the ‘Global Connections’ initiative is revealing that young people do care, and when presented with opportunities to participate and direct their own enquiry, they are engaged in issues that have historically been the domain of issue-based advocacy campaigns. So what can this tell us about global citizenship? Using ‘Global Connections’ as an example, this paper will explore the current citizenship debate and will argue that global citizenship can be relevant to young people. While debates (in Australia and similarly in many post-industrialised countries) have raged over the need to define the values of ‘National Citizenship’, this presentation will argue that the globalisation of identity possibly has greater implications for the role young people play in their local and global communities and ultimately their relationship to a ‘citizenship’ identity.
Young people globally are growing up in times made more uncertain by increasingly interdependent events. Climate change, global food shortages and war are all issues that touch the lives of young people across borders, nationalities and cultures. While many of these events concern young people, they also unite youth beyond traditional boundaries.

In Australia, a partnership between schools, universities and an International Development Organisation (Plan Australia) was established to create ‘Global Connections’ and dialogue between young people in Australia and Indonesia. This program was designed to create opportunities for meaningful participation, raise awareness, and empower participants with the skills for active global citizenship. As part of this initiative, participants work as groups to communicate information about themselves, their community, and issues of concern with a partner peer-group overseas.

Schools have embraced this initiative as a practical way of meeting new requirements for 'civics and citizenship' education as well as to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in their increasingly globalised communities. Much of this imperative to incorporate formal ‘citizenship’ studies into mainstream curriculum has arisen from growing concerns that young people are disengaged from civic life (e.g. Mellor’s 2001 civics deficit thesis). However, in contrast to assertions that young people are disengaged and disinterested, the ‘Global Connections’ initiative is revealing that many young people care, and when presented with opportunities to participate and direct their own enquiry, are engaged with issues concerning the lives of their peers both locally and internationally.

So what can this tell us about global citizenship? Can young people learn citizenship? Can they learn ‘democracy’? Do young people see citizenship as relevant to their lives? When formal schooling curriculum demands that young people learn ‘citizenship’, what citizenship does this refer to? Using ‘Global Connections’ as an example, this paper will explore the current citizenship in debate in Australia and will focus particularly on the relevance of global citizenship education for young people.

**Citizenship**

Citizenship is currently a contested concept and will likely remain so in societies characterised by intense modernisation (or change). In this era where individuals belong to multiple communities simultaneously, citizenship can shape itself in various forms and can change over time. For young people, citizenship is less clear. Where citizenship is described as the relationship between the individual and state, the process by which young people develop this relationship is less well understood.

Much of the literature exploring citizenship pivots on Marshall’s work (in the 1960’s) that characterised citizenship as being expressed in terms of social, political and legal rights (Turner 1999). However, theoretical conceptualisations of citizenship remain disparate and often conflicting. Citizenship has alternatively been described in terms of the individual’s access to welfare (Coffey 2004) and rights and responsibilities (Manning 2004), as well as in terms of participation in community (or civic) life. Lagos (2002) contends that
citizenship speaks of the individual with a “distinct relationship” to the state along with the “social status and power these relationships imply”. Other conceptualisations of citizenship can be both broad and theoretical. Weekley (1999) describes citizenship as the “assignment of belonging to one state”. Alternatively, citizenship can be understood in terms of equality, social justice, nationhood, community and economic, social and moral terms, as well as status that can be “extended, given, restricted and withheld” (Coffey 2004).

**Youth Citizenship**

“The teenage and early adult years are important. It is a stage where people begin to construct themselves through nuance and complexity, through difference and similarity’ (Willis 1990, 7-8)

Youth is characterised by rapid change, one of the most significant being the articulation of identity. ‘Who am I?’ becomes an important question as the individual negotiates new relationships with parents, friends, school and with their broader community connections. Identity is composed of multiple sub-identities – of which, cultural identity becomes one that determines the individual’s relationship to their perception of self as ‘citizen’, or citizenship identity.

The citizenship of young people (or youth citizenship) is often described in contrasting terms. Where ‘youth’ is defined in terms of age, the diversity within this group adds complexity to any attempt to understand their citizenship (Manning and Ryan 2004) In Australia, attaining the age of 18 brings a new legal status as an ‘adult’ that grants a variety of rights, including the formal right to participate in the democratic process through voting. The implication that young people under this age do not share the same formal citizenship rights as adults is theorized in various ways. Hall et al. (1999) claim that citizenship has emerged as a mechanism through which to understand and assess the movement of young people into adult status. Manning and Ryan (2004) argue that the formal citizenship status of those under 18 is defined by the rights to protection by the State, while those individuals over 18 claim citizenship both in terms of rights and responsibilities.

The theoretical positioning of young people as citizens or pre-citizens contrasts perceptions that young people have about their own citizenship. Manning and Ryan’s (2004) survey of young people’s citizenship, particularly their perception of citizenship, revealed a significant gap between theoretical and personal perceptions of what citizenship means to young people (Manning and Ryan, 2004). Their survey revealed that young people perceived their citizenship in five broad categories: national identity, formal legal status, participation, rights and duties and belonging to a group.

The following diagram compiled from Manning and Ryan’s findings (2004) contrasts the explicit messages about Citizenship from each major source of citizenship discourse – Government Policy, Theory (Literature), Citizenship Education Programs and Youth Perceptions.
In contrast to youth perceptions of citizenship, this illustration of how citizenship is expressed within citizenship education, national policy and theory reveals inconsistencies between the messages young people are receiving about citizenship and their constructions of it. This raises further questions about why these gaps emerge and how to build consistency for young people in this process.

**Globalization of Citizenship**

“The term citizenship historically has implied nationality but no single nation holds sway over a global citizen. Her activities are transnational and her commitment is to the human issues, not the nation state.” (De Bryant 2004, 4)

Young people inarguably live in a rapidly globalising world. They are faced with many more opportunities to experience diversity either through communication technology or through diversity within their own communities. Employment and education pathways increasingly necessitate young people to bring with them greater global awareness, the ability to communicate across diversity, and an understanding of the intersection of local and global affairs.

The curriculum objectives of secondary and tertiary education institutions in Australia are increasingly emphasising the explicit need for their students to develop competence as ‘global citizens’. Curriculum and program content consequently focus more attention on civics education. However, while these institutions and programs aim to equip their students with the knowledge and skills to be ‘better global citizens’, the nature of this citizenship is rarely defined. By name, global citizenship implies the internationalisation or globalisation of citizenship. In practice, applying the dominant elements of globalisation to

---

*Diagram 1: Adapted from Manning and Ryan (2004)*
dominant theories of citizenship results in a form of global citizenship that is characterised by global rights and responsibilities, global legal, political or social status, or global participation. However, this theoretical transposition is not that simple.

Global Citizenship diverges from traditional notions of citizenship in terms of accountability and authority. Where citizenship is borne of a relationship between the individual and state (or governing authority), the absence of a global authority in the realms of global citizenship distinguishes it from national citizenship (Lagos 2002). Further complexities are foreseen by Lagos (2002) in regards to lifting the citizen concept to the global sphere due to the inability to formally recognise legal membership and rights and duties. He argues consequently that global citizenship is defined more appropriately as an "associational status" than a legal sanction.

Beyond describing a single identity or a particular set of characteristics, global citizenship can be viewed categorically. Falk (1994) argues that global citizens can be global reformers, global business people, global environmental managers, politically conscious regionalists, or trans-national activists. The latter of these categories has drawn considerable interest in global citizenship discourse with claims that grassroots activism founded the global citizenship movement. Expressions of concern over global issues, as witnessed in the anti-globalisation (S11) and anti-war protest movements, mobilised large groups of young people (in the main) to speak collectively with unexpected levels of interest and commitment. While protest and demonstration have been methods employed in various periods throughout history, the rise of this form of collective participation has permeated debate about the essence of global citizenship. The visibility of this manifestation of global citizenship fuelled commentary about the extent to which global citizenship is about social change, global ethics, and collective responsibilities that transcend national concerns. The ‘new global citizen’ has increasingly become synonymous with the ‘global participant’ actively engaged in global efforts such as business, environmentalism and concerns for global problems (Lagos 2002).

Global citizenship can also be understood in terms of lifestyle, opportunity and choice. Through this particular lens, the individual chooses where they wish to live and work and is no longer compelled to stay in place in which they were born (Steenbergen 1994). This has further implications in terms of its impact on the changing boundaries of ‘belonging’. Where citizenship for some implies a sense of belonging – usually tied to the dominant national cultural identity – from this perspective, global citizenship (in an idealised sense) offers individuals the choice of where to belong. However, these changing boundaries do not translate directly into increased inclusion of people and communities. Weekly (1999) argues that the impact of globalisation to integrate more people into the global economy has resulted in the dislocation of people from their physical places and their cultural identities, and has diminished their quality of life. As such, globalisation demands that new forms of inclusion be created to respond to the increase in cultural differences within nation states.

As notions of ‘exclusive citizenship’ (Weekley, 1999) and ‘national sovereignty’ are eroded, Manning and Ryan (2004) argue that a form of ‘national supranational citizenship’ is being created. The implications of these changes for institutional structures is discussed
by Franck (1999) and Falk (1994) who see global citizenship necessitating new institutional relationships to be developed.

**Citizenship Education**

“Youth global citizenship can be assessed by the degree to which a young person manifests a set of specific characteristics in the domains of identity (affective domain), political and economic beliefs and practices, and social and cultural beliefs, experiences and practices. These are expressed in degrees (of global citizenship): Getting started, moving along, and global citizen.” (Chambre et. al. 2006, 8)

While citizenship is contested in a broad sense, there are practical imperatives for its definition, meaning and implications to be understood. In Australia, the importance of this defining process has been observed in recent national narratives around citizenship and national values. Like many communities managing increasing cultural diversity, these debates grew from heightened fear of terrorism and new border protection policies that focussed attention on certain cultural and religious groups. These conversations culminated in national policy agenda to define ‘Australian values’. The explicit purpose of articulating these values was to develop a citizenship test – a formal process through which new citizens have to demonstrate a basic understanding of the ‘Australian way of life’, and accept these values.

Of interest to this discussion is the underlying assumption of a dominant community identity that could be understood in terms of values. The conversation about defining ‘Australian values’ and thereby ‘Australian citizenship’ has continued to pressure a clearer articulation of what this means. This task is challenged by a lack of coherence in national narratives around citizenship, yet has heightened the emphasis on what it means to ‘belong’, to have a national identity, and how that translates into the cultural practices of life.

The introduction of ‘civics and citizenship’ education programs in Australian schools has been met with varying levels of success. Most of these programs explicitly aim to address the gaps in civics knowledge, the perceived apathy of young people to political processes, and the attempt to re-engage young people in community life. A lack of systematic evaluation of these programs makes reporting on their effectiveness problematic. However, using one example of global citizenship education – the **Global Connections** program, I would like to explore how citizenship education can be relevant to young people and discuss some of the challenges facing its implementation.

**Global Connections**

The **Global Connections** program connects groups of young people in Australia with young people in Indonesia who exchange communication pieces in the form of letters, posters and film. It aims to support participants to increase their awareness of global issues, provide opportunities for learning through direct communication with young people in culturally diverse contexts, and facilitate the development of skills for participation and ‘active global citizenship’. Groups develop, send and receive these communication pieces
through which they introduce themselves, discuss community and global issues, and prepare to take collective action on issues of importance to them. The broad structure of the program offers some direction to participants, while allowing participants to create their learning agenda and direct their own enquiry. Groups in Australia are facilitated by undergraduate university students who participate as volunteers or interns. The program is coordinated by Plan Australia – an international development organisation that delivers it as part of its broader global education strategy. *Global Connections* is now the focus of an Australian Research Council linkage-grant project that will investigate the experiences of youth participation and citizenship and explore models of NGO, school, and community partnership. Of particular interest to this research investigation is how this model of global education is positioned in relation to other forms of citizenship education. This will be discussed further through a comparison of the central principles of *Global Connections* with some of the central tenets of global citizenship currently being explored theoretically.

**Citizenship, Identity, and Belonging**

“One could defend national identity as the springboard for global participation since we tend to view the world through our own cultural lens” (De Bryant, 2004)

Citizenship and identity can share an integral connection that describes the relationship between the individual, the nation-state, or place of belonging. Turner (1999) argues that citizenship confers a particular cultural identity on individuals and groups, and nationally can describe a sense of collective identity. Hall et. al. (1996) contend that it is difficult to separate the construction of identity from the physical locality in which it occurs. However, citizenship can also have a more local and immediate meaning (beyond national and international meaning).

The *Global Connections* program seeks to offer a broader view of global citizenship that engages young people critically in their own identity development around citizenship. This is pursued initially through discussions of similarity and difference between participants and their peer groups overseas (in either Australia or Indonesia). Participants are guided by facilitators to think about how similar or different they are to their international peers. They are also asked to think critically about their own sense connection to the global community. This allows groups to understand the diversity within their own peer and local communities as well as issues of broader global diversity.

While popular notions of citizenship position the individual as 'static' in their relationship to the State (or national community), *Global Connections* asks young people to think reflectively about the intersection of their lives with their ideas about citizenship. It attempts to allow participants to position themselves (initially as similar or different) to their global peers and begin their own exploration of how they relate to a global community. Participants are encouraged to think about their own connections to the world and their experiences of diversity, and discuss their understanding of global issues in this process. In contrast to impositions of idealised citizenship, *Global Connections* participants exist as active agents as they begin their process of building an identity as a global citizen.
Manning and Ryan’s 2004 survey of youth citizenship identified significant gaps between political articulations of citizenship and young people’s perceptions of what this means for their lives. Survey respondents identified a sense of belonging to a group as sharing a close association to their perceptions of citizenship. The task of ‘belonging’ in this sense is a complex one. In some ways it implies the need for the individual to define their national identity, assess the match between this identity and broader narratives, and develop a connection to some form of a collective identity.

However, achieving a state of ‘belonging’ is complex task; one that many young people struggle to find among the myriad of other tasks of adolescence. In practice, there are a number of layers in this process that warrant attention. The potential of *Global Connections* to reduce barriers in relationships that were formed through perceived difference was revealed through evaluations of the program (Wierenga 2006) which found that through involvement in the program, participants successively reported feeling more similar to their peers overseas. This was achieved through communication around interests and hobbies, life goals and dreams, and discussion of issues faced by young people within their communities both locally and internationally.

However, citizenship education can play a crucial role here. *Global Connections*, for example, asks participants to work as a group to communicate a collective ‘identity’ (of their group) to their partner peer-group in Indonesia. Groups in Indonesia complete a similar exercise resulting in the exchange of these introductory ‘communication pieces’. The process additionally requires discussion within groups about the nature of their collective identity and consensus on representing their group as school students, members of their local community, or choosing to portray their nationality. Most frequently, groups represent themselves as a national group with exchanges around geographical, vocational, educational and social characteristics that constitute their national sense of community.

Following these general forms of introduction, participants begin revealing more personal examples of their lives in subsequent communication. This allows for diversity within the larger groups to be explored and communicated. Interestingly, when asked to communicate an ‘introduction’ to their group, participants often focus on the homogenous characteristics of their national groups despite the diversity among social and cultural lives of group members.

Exploring their identities as Global Citizens requires participants to transcend perceptions of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (self and other) to broader conceptualisations of ‘us’ or self. This becomes a significant aspect of this type of global citizenship education. Without exploring questions around identity such as ‘where do I belong’ and ‘what do we have in common’, participants are unable to recognise similarity between themselves and their international peers and strengthen their identification with a global community of young people.

**Rights, Responsibilities, and Status**

With recent national narratives around citizenship placing significant emphasis on the ‘rights and responsibilities’ of citizens, it is unsurprising that many young people view
this as central to their own understanding of citizenship. Moving into the realms of global citizenship, the concerning aspect of these perceptions of citizenship for educators is the boundary associated with citizenship responsibilities. **Global Connections** encourages participants to communicate with each other about issues of concern within their communities. What has been observed is a genuine sense of reciprocal concern by participants with an associated desire to act for social change. This is not dissimilar to what has been observed in terms of global activism where young people have taken leadership roles in advocating for global social change.

A notable aspect of this process is the task of transforming local issues into global issues. Young people have led this process of learning more about the issues they have understood to be local in their impact, but global in their development. Presented with the opportunity to think critically and question openly, participants continue to reciprocate interest and action. However, what is clear from program evaluations is that young people do express a sense of disempowerment or disconnection from influencing change.

**Participation**

Perhaps the most critically important feature of **Global Connections** in increasing the relevance of citizenship to young people is its focus on participation. The program has been established on principles of ‘youth participation’ and ‘youth-led learning’. This is practiced through the inclusion of youth facilitators, interactive methods for group activities and participant directed learning.

With growing criticisms of young people’s perceived lack of engagement with political processes and civic life, young people are increasingly labelled as apathetic to these processes of community life. Civics and citizenship curricula similarly position young people as passive learners and assumes that with the provision of text based information, young people should learn enough to foster their participation. In practice, young people require new forms of engagement in this learning process. Interactive citizenship programs (such as **Global Connections**) position young people as active learners, wanting to engage and willing and enthusiastic to participate given genuine opportunities to do so.

I would argue that this is where **Global Connections** differentiates itself fundamentally from more traditional models of citizenship education – in its positioning of young people as active learners. It assumes that young people will interact with information that is relevant to their lives also and recognizes that young people bring their own life experiences to their construction of their identity as citizens.

**Conclusion**

Young people deal with increasing complexity in their lives. Their sense of belonging, willingness to participate, and interest in civic life compete with the multiplicity of other demands on their attention and time. However, a number of subtle processes shape young people’s perceptions of their citizenship in everyday life. In the Australian context, the challenge for citizenship education is to increase its relevance to the interests and perceptions of young people. Moreover, greater consistency in the language of ‘citizenship’
is needed to ensure that young people can engage with these conversations. The Global Connections program is intended to both reveal what young people find relevant and respond to their interest in active participatory citizenship processes. One of the critical aspects of its design of interest to this research project is its positioning of young people in relation to sources of knowledge and formal structures, and the assumptions it makes regarding their interest in participation. Where much of the youth citizenship debate has been concerned with attempts to understand the perceived apathy of young people, this program and research will investigate how young people actively engage with alternative forms of citizenship education, how their sense of belong is shaped through direct communication, and how their identities as global citizens are formed.

References


Between Citizen Paralysis and Praxis: Toward a Critical Pedagogy for Confronting Global Violence

Adam Davidson-Harden
Queen’s University

Abstract

This paper argues that to be effective methods of confronting global violence, contemporary critical pedagogies for citizenship must take into account the theoretical distance between citizen ‘paralysis and praxis’. This distance, the author posits, comprises the path between individual reactions of helplessness and overwhelming to disturbing global and local issues, and experiential or praxis-based educational opportunities that can help citizens transcend such feelings toward confronting and changing a violent world. To explore these themes, an interdisciplinary approach is taken that fuses insights from the psychology of stress and coping with a framework of peace education, and education for citizenship conceived as praxis responding to disturbing trends of global violence. This draws on the traditions of positive peace and a complex conception of violence rooted in Johan Galtung’s work. A core argument is offered in the form of a provocation to educators dealing with citizenship, peace or global issues to be attentive to inviting participants to consider paths for their own forms of ‘peace praxis’ that comprise the best hope for transcending individual reactions of helplessness in the face of global violence.

A society which is mobile, which is full of channels for the distribution of a change occurring anywhere, must see to it that its members are educated to personal initiative and adaptability. Otherwise, they will be overwhelmed by the changes in which they are caught and whose significance or connections they do not perceive. The result will be a confusion in which a few will appropriate to themselves the results of the blind and externally directed activities of others. (Dewey, 1916)
[People] are disturbed not by things but by the view they take of things. (Epictetus, Enchiridion)

Introduction

The emancipatory ideal of a full, rich human life nurtured by a wide range of individual freedoms is a core seam that weaves through the quilt of enlightenment thought, further interpreted and extended today by thinkers and educators inspired by critical theory and pedagogy. The story of this quilt in Western societies is one of the discovery of new ways of thinking and the re-discovery of old ways, as well as the continued development of philosophies of education and democracy challenging entrenched, ossified and authoritarian forms that restrict the scope of individual freedom and one’s capability to participate in the ‘rule of the people’ that democracy promises. In Dewey, a champion was found for the conception of education as fundamentally integrated and synonymous with all experience and the fate of the democratic ideal. Persistently aware of the tenuous nature of this ideal and its hold on contemporary societies, Dewey vociferously criticized more elitist and aristocratic conceptions of (less substantially democratic) politics1, while consistently arguing for the potential for a holistically-conceived education to contribute a solid foundation for democratic society based on broad individual freedoms and equality of educational opportunity. Education, he hoped, was the principal vehicle whereby the egalitarian impulse democracy represents could help break down barriers between people in the forms of discrimination based on race, class, and gender, or further, sexual orientation, ability and age.

Freire (1970; 1973), foremost among later critical pedagogues, extended the link between democracy, education and experience further by suggesting and operationalizing the idea that education conceived as praxis (thought-action-reflection) is a liberating force that can enable the ‘objectified’, disenfranchised and illiterate person to become ‘conscientized’: a ‘subject’ and conscious shaper of their own political and social worlds. In this sense, becoming able to both ‘read the word and the world’ holds up the transformative possibility of taking initiative and responsibility for shaping economic, political and social worlds that move away from violence. With Freire, the global ramifications of education as experience and as critical praxis (thought-action-reflection) come into full relief. The scope of violence and attendant de-humanization (in his terms) characterizing the world as we find it today, along with its severe inequalities and disproportionate suffering along polarized lines of class, race and gender, remains a palpable challenge to the notion that human civilization may indeed be described as ‘civilized’ or ‘human’, if we accept the idealistic and egalitarian values that these terms are historically imbued with. A history of colonial oppression and attendant systemic racism pointedly resonates in these terms as well, as though betraying the contradiction of their idealism with enduring violent realities. The eurocentrism of the Western philosophy that undergirds the same revolutionary Enlightenment ideals that promise change, freedom and democracy is a similar reminder of the historicity of these ideals, embedded as they are in Western thought. At the same time, Marx and later critical theorists have shown us how the modern age has witnessed the usurpation of the ‘rational’ impetus of Enlightenment ideals by the economic forces that

1 Such as those reflected in the thought of Walter Lippmann or Alexander Hamilton.
have propelled industrial capitalism, along with its attendant problems and prospects in the form of growing and magnified global inequalities, entrenched poverty\(^2\), and now, imminent ecological disaster\(^3\). Contemporary economics, dominated as it is in the policy arena by neoliberalism, continues to 'externalize' the myriad negative social and ecological consequences of unrestrained capitalist development into the new century. Indeed, the concept of freedom itself remains a centrepiece in the ongoing neoliberal attempt to redefine all areas of the social according to the image of the market, through the logics of 'free trade'\(^4\), 'economic freedom', and the general conflation of capitalism with democracy. Meanwhile, during the ascendance of neoliberalism as a dominant economic and social policy paradigm, problems of within- and between-country inequality have been proven to be getting worse (Milanovic 2005; UNU-WIDER 2006)\(^5\), along with a host of other destructive ecological and social impacts.\(^6\)

The challenge of these global problems, and the task of nurturing the individual citizen along their own path of confronting and reacting to them, is of crucial significance, and a matter which this paper seeks to explore. I will argue that to be effective methods of confronting such problems, contemporary critical pedagogies for citizenship must take into account the theoretical distance between citizen 'paralysis and praxis'. This distance, I will posit, can be understood by discerning the difference between a pattern of individual

\(^2\) It is sobering to remember that the world stands poised to fail in the achievement of even the relatively modest development goals set out in the 'Millenium Development Goals' (UN 2005).

\(^3\) See Monbiot (2007) and Flannery (2005) for one introduction to immanent and imminent global ecological catastrophe.

\(^4\) McMurtry (1999, p. 43-44) provides a capable critique of the neoliberal perversion of the original meaning of classical economists such as Adam Smith, whose vision of 'free trade' did not incorporate predominant and transnational corporate actors not beholden to any democratic oversight.

\(^5\) This study, done by the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER, affiliated with the United Nations University) confirmed – used comprehensive household survey methods, and found that 2% of the world’s wealthy own more than half of all global household wealth, and that the richest 1% on their own hold 40% of global assets, while the poorer half of the global adult population owns not even 1% of household wealth. This picture of a massive global gap between rich and poor is complemented by a broader perspective that takes into account the lack of progress in ameliorating inequality since the 1970s. Developing countries have 80 percent of the world’s people but share in only a fifth of global GDP. Meanwhile, global GDP has increased in the past 30 years from $3 trillion to $30 trillion. The richest 20 percent of the world’s people control 82 percent of world export trade and 68 percent of world foreign direct investment, while the bottom poorest 20 percent share barely more than 1 percent of these categories. Continuing a two century trend, the same 20 percent of the world’s richest people in OECD countries in 1997 had 74 times the income of the poorest 20 percent, up from a 30: 1 ration in 1960. Astonishingly, the world’s richest 200 people’s net worth increased to $1 trillion from $440 billion between 1994 and 1998, and the assets of the world’s three richest people totalled to an excess of the GNP of the world’s 43 poorest or ‘least-developed’ countries combined. This information is adapted from the United Nations Development Programme’s Human Development Report (1999, p. 25-37).

\(^6\) Proponents of neoliberalism trumpet the necessity for economic growth as a kind of social and political panacea that will cure all ills. Recent transformations of this discourse have begun to incorporate the notion of ‘pro-poor’ or ‘sustainable’ economic growth as a footnote, but in this author’s view the core prescription of aggregate economic growth above any other concern holds as a fundamental tenet of neoliberal social and economic policy and practice, which remains hegemonic today.
reactions of feeling helpless and overwhelmed in the face of disturbing global and local issues on the one hand, and experiential or praxis-based educational opportunities on the other, that can help citizens transcend such feelings toward confronting and changing a violent world. To help me explore these ideas, I will first set the context for the arguments to be offered in contemporary peace studies. Next, the psychology of individual stress and coping will be explored as a way to understand the challenge for educators to consider how to enhance critical pedagogies for citizenship and peace through attentiveness to how individuals respond to disturbing patterns of global violence.

Global Violence and its Dilemma for Critical Pedagogy and Citizenship

In contemporary critical peace studies, the conception of violence has evolved to include forms of violence beyond direct individual/group physical or emotional harm. Galtung’s ‘triangular’ conception includes direct, structural and cultural violence to capture complexities in the ‘subjects and objects’, or causes and effects, of what I sum up here as ‘global violence’ (2004; 1969; Galtung et al 2002), whether measured in human deprivation and death, or ecological degradation. In Galtung’s terms, direct violence corresponds to the most common conception of violence we tend to employ on an everyday basis: physical, emotional or psychological violence perpetrated by an individual or group on another individual or group. Structural violence, Galtung’s first great innovation (1969), broadens an understanding of violence away from the obvious, direct sort to patterns of the degradation of human and other life that may have roots in or fuel policy and social institutions (here we can think of deaths from malnutrition, illiteracy, or a host of other potential examples, open to interpretation). Finally, cultural violence (Galtung 1990) is comprised of any cultural form (text, media, talk, iconography, art) that represents any kind of direct or structural violence as inevitable, normal, or legitimate. When one broadens the scope to humanity’s relationship to Gaia7 and other life forms on this planet, the scope of discernible ‘global violence’ is tremendous and palpable – from extinctions of species due to human-induced climate change, to persistent global hunger and deaths from malnutrition and preventable disease, lack of access to freshwater, education, and health care, the HIV/AIDS pandemic – whether globally or locally, the reality of a ‘violent world’ in many senses is now, more than ever, instantaneously available to a global ‘cognoscenti’ with access to that great glut of information which is the internet. Further, thanks again to critical theory and perspectives, though such matters are always hotly contested and debated, we are aware that most of the global violence evident in the world today has structural roots in policy and practice that helps to sustain and exacerbate it. Neoliberalism, as the world’s still-dominant and pre-eminant economic ideology, promotes raw economic growth and a perversely stunted conception of related economic ‘freedom’ as an end above all others, rationalizing, for example, international debt regimes that continue to reinforce and exacerbate poverty in the world’s most indebted and vulnerable countries (Bond 2004; Soederberg 2004; Chossudovsky 2003; Davidson-Harden 2007)8.

7 Gaia is James Lovelock’s conception of the planet we live on as one great, self-regulating being which is as much alive as any of the constituent species and ecosystems that comprise her (Lovelock 2000).
8 Despite a rhetorical change in tone from the Bretton Woods Institutions, for example, they still most enthusiastically promote and require implementation of core neoliberal macroeconomic recipes that were at the heart of pre-‘poverty reduction’ structural adjustment days (McKinley 2004; World Development
International trade regimes pushed by powerful corporate lobbies and pliant governments further promote and legislate the primacy of profit over people and planet, as witnessed in the World Trade Organization’s agenda of ‘trade liberalization’ and commodification of all reaches of life, including life itself (Shiva 2005). Warmongering in the pursuit of profit continues apace, as the scramble for dwindling and increasingly precious fossil fuel resources powerfully undergirds geopolitics and conflict in oil-rich areas such as the Middle East and Central Asia, with the Iraq wars and the current conflict in Afghanistan highlighting these trends well. Transnational corporations plunder the most vulnerable countries’ valuable resources with virtually complete impunity, with egregious examples evident in the extractive industries, while corporations, governments and multilateral trade and financial institutions and bodies resist calls for more regulation according to ecological or human rights standards (Bond 2006; Rights and Accountability in Development 2004; Renner 2004).

Thankfully, given the overwhelming examples of global violence that prevail in the world as we find it today, all is not a ‘bad news’ story. Led in most cases by civil society activists and citizen-driven social and peace movements (the latter captured well in the term ‘the global justice movement’9), the violent impact of continuing neoliberalism and militarism is perhaps more visible and exposed than ever before, given the capacity of information technologies to help spread the word and the picture. In the academic sphere, a wide variety of work based in critical theory and pedagogy and inspired by a variety of currents of thought – integrating a concern with interrogating militarism and the global capitalist economy, to poverty and ecological justice – continues to interrogate the full panoply of global violence and its structural roots (McLaren 2005; McLaren & Farahmandpur 2005; Giroux 2004). Transnational corporations and their global and local roles have been a recurring object for critical inquiry and analysis, both in their position as central economic protagonists in a profoundly unequal world, as well as for their push to commodify and re-figure further areas of society and nature as subject to rules of a globalized market, characterized by unequal actors, misery for the many, and power for the few. Notably, the drive to sustain middle and upper-class lives in consumer societies in the north, based as these are on an abundance of both cheap and expensive consumer commodities designed to make our lives comfortable, as well as uninterrupted and artificially cheap abundant supplies of energy, has facilitated the explosive rise of corporate actors, as well as attendant neoliberal economic agendas trumpeted by the modern states that act to ‘underwrite’ global capitalist expansion and its actors, often through military force. One may think of global oil corporations (not least in dominant economic states such as the U.S. and China) and their role in supporting richer northern citizens’ lifestyles in this way, along with global conditions hastening potentially irreversible global climate change (Monbiot 2007).


9 Of course this is a widely debated and used term. I understand global justice movements as comprising citizen-driven social and peace movements that are linked by common concerns of opposing the violence engendered by capitalism (and sometimes capitalism itself), militarism, different forms of interpersonal and systemic oppression based on identity and social class, and ecological destruction, while promoting alternative visions and politics based on principles of positive peace, nonviolence, diversity, democracy, pluralism and cultural self-determination.
However, the public work of global justice movements in confronting global violence is not always obvious to the individual who encounters knowledge of such violence, or the connections may not be clear (mediated as they are for many by the vicissitudes and biases of the corporate media). Indeed, with the issues so hotly debated and the facts at times so purposefully distorted by those that wish to discredit global justice movements and their criticism, I was not surprised in the slightest to find a bias in one official Ontario ‘civics’ textbook for a required high school course that portrays WTO protesters as predominantly violent and without merit (Davidson-Harden 2003). Even if one has the privilege of learning about global violence from the safe vantage point of a university classroom, one may easily feel helpless and overwhelmed in the face of knowledge or even partial awareness of the scope of global violence today. With all of the wonderful clarion calls for revamped conceptions of citizen responsibility in the face of such violence – whether social or ecological – it is possible that the promise of such calls to new forms of citizen agency, as well as the many insights of critical theory, pedagogy and analysis, may fall short when it comes to the possibility that in spite of it all, you or I may feel individually helpless and overwhelmed at the potential tasks before us.

The ‘changes in which we are caught’, to echo Dewey’s words quoted at the outset of this article, I submit, are reflected in the persistent reproduction and extension of global violence visible today and across time, impacting both relationships between humans and between us and Gaia (Lovelock 2000), as well as different species on this planet. Not only our potential ignorance, but even our awareness – however incomplete or complete it may be – of different forms of global and local violence, can act as a significant frustrator of our capacity to react, adapt and constructively deal with, or ameliorate global violence. Individually, personally, if we react to global violence through – quite natural and expectable – feelings of helplessness and overwhelming, then even the most resourceful among us are prone to inaction, not for lack of awareness, perhaps, but for lack of hope and confidence, and belief that we can, indeed make a difference.

The Psychology of Stress and Coping: How do Citizens ‘Cope’ with Global Violence?

---

10 I am conscious of the fact that I write this article from the standpoint of privilege in several ways. I am myself the beneficiary of a life of relative privilege and affluence. I hope that this article can have an audience in both privileged and under-privileged audiences, voices and pedagogical spaces. That said, in the spirit of ‘full disclosure’ I write and theorize from my own experience (pedagogy in a public university in Ontario, Canada), which is necessarily distinct from other contexts in the participants’ backgrounds, including our relative privilege and affluence as a group or global demographic, if you will.

11 See Lister (1997), Pettus (1997), and Knijn (2006) for innovative and passionate feminist calls for such re-framing of citizenship; Sears and Hughes (1996a, 1996b) for formative Canadian perspectives on how to better understand the role of education for citizenship toward such a task; Arneil (2005) for a contemporary view of the dilemmas of limited social citizenship as a ‘shared fate; and Latta & Garside (2005) as well as Dobson (2003) for perspectives on the necessity for articulating and enacting an ecological citizenship.
To help explicate this point of view, I enlist the work of psychologists who have explored how individuals react, or cope, with forms of stress. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) are two psychologists who in their work redefine what it means to look at helplessness and its effect on mental health. Toward characterizing reactions to forms of stress as patterns of coping behaviour, these researchers use a framework that looks at how individuals deal with sets of events encountered in the course of everyday life, and our responses to them, as a way of analyzing responses to stressful events. This section will not pretend to offer a comprehensive introduction to their contributions, which is best obtained through their work itself. It will introduce key conceptions in their approach toward linking it with the matter of global violence and our responses to these trends, as well as implications for education, citizenship and democracy in this regard.

The authors offer several layers to understanding how we appraise stressful events, though they are not described in order of importance or sequence and are seen by Lazarus and Folkman as interleaving and co-dependent, even potentially simultaneous steps individuals take in responding to stress. ‘Primary appraisal’ is a tool to describe an initial reaction to events along different lines. The operative question at hand with respect to primary appraisal would be something like “what is at stake here?” By appraising events as we encounter them, in Lazarus’ and Folkman’s terms, we categorize events and outcomes (whether explicitly or tacitly) as relating to our personal well-being in three different ways. An event can be perceived as irrelevant, meaning that it is judged to be of no impact on our well-being whatsoever. Or, it can be judged as ‘benign-positive’, that is to say, as having an effect of either preserving or enhancing our well-being. Finally, through primary appraisal, an event or outcome could be judged as stressful. Within this third category of stressful appraisals, the authors suggest that there are three potential sub-categories of reaction involving distinct emotional repercussions. The first of these is ‘harm/loss’, implying that damage or constriction of our well-being has occurred. The second stressful reaction is to perceive a stressful event or outcome as a threat, whereby we anticipate that some harm or loss will befall us in the future or as a result of the event.

Within these first two sub-categories, the authors further suggest that where individuals attach strong commitments – represented in beliefs, values or goals – relative to our appraisal of harm/loss or threat in the case of a particular stressful event, the perception of harm/loss or threat will be all the more acute. This comprises an interesting point to return to: essentially, Lazarus and Folkman argue that the more we care about a specific outcome/event/source of stress, the more vulnerable we may be to any appraisal of threat associated with it. A third sub-category is reserved for the possibility that we may perceive the event or outcome as a challenge, which implies that we believe there is some potential for gain and either a preservation or enhancement of well-being that can result from the situation. Within the third mechanism of primary appraisal, that of the perception of stress, the first two sub-categories of reactions involve negative emotions, whereas the final sub-category of perceiving a challenge involves positive emotions. In the language of Lazarus’ and Folkman’s analysis, the difference between perceiving stressful events as either threats or challenges is critical, because it can lead us to respond in either ‘maladaptive’ ways – leading to a vicious cycle of negative emotions and further appraisals
of harm/loss or threat, or in ‘adaptive’ ways of functioning, whereby we choose – again explicitly or tacitly – to ‘meet’ a challenge and be the better for it.

Next in the authors’ framework comes the notion of the secondary appraisal. This layer of reaction involves factors that relate to each individual’s method of ‘coping’ with the stress that we perceive or ‘appraise’ in our lives. The operative question underlying secondary appraisal might be “what, if anything, can be done about it?” Within a framework of ‘coping strategies’, it is suggested that there are two principal sets of expectations that every individual brings to an appraisal or means of responding to forms of stress. The ‘outcome expectancy’ represents what our expectation is that whatever option we take in response to the perceived stress will be effective in addressing that stress at no cost to our personal well-being. Second, the ‘efficacy expectation’ represents what level of belief we have in our effectively being able to carry out such an option, and is a conception related to earlier psychological work, in particular that of Bandura (1982). The context for secondary appraisals subsequently fits into the larger interplay between what psychologists understand as ‘person’ and ‘situation’ factors, where the former represent the commitments (e.g., to objectives, persons, or ideals) and beliefs (which may be culturally shared, or involve religious or political dimensions, for example) we bring to the task of appraisal of stressful events and outcomes. ‘Situation factors’ represent how we perceive the events at hand in terms of their novelty to us, our perception of their predictability or unpredictability, their temporal character (in terms of imminence, variable duration, and uncertainty concerning timing), or their ambiguity (concerning our lack of clarity over the perceived cause of stress, or lack of clarity concerning stressful information or events). Ambiguity itself can be conceived or perceived as a source of threat. These two poles reflect the larger concern of psychological inquiry to balance analytical perspectives that focus on the relationship of the person to their environment. In Lazarus’ and Folkman’s terms, the individual interplay between person and situation factors represents a “specific transaction” informing stress (1984, 83). The notion of personal control, partially reframed by the authors in the terms of appraisal, re-enters their model here in many ways, not least through the role of individual perceptions or “belief in one’s ability to control an event” that may be perceived as stressful (1984, 77). Where stressful outcomes or events are seen to be outside one’s control or influence, we will tend to essentially avoid sources of stress through multiple ways, whereas if we perceive ourselves as capable of influencing such outcomes or events, we will tend to gravitate toward engagement or positive forms of coping.

To further emphasize the fluid nature of interpenetrating categories of appraisals of harm/loss, threat or challenge, the conception of ‘reappraisal’ is offered, which represents the fact that individuals may ‘appraise’ a potential source of stress multiple times, even in ways that are contradictory. The choice of the individual in making many distinct appraisals lends strength to the conceptual model, as it draws attention to the fact that individuals have critical agency and autonomy in forming and re-forming their attitude to events in one’s life, mirroring the quote from Epictetus that began this article. We are not beholden to deterministic, automatic responses or traits ingrained on our consciousness as though carved in stone, rather, we constantly choose how to perceive the world around us, and these myriad choices impact our attitudes, our propensity for coping positively with
stress, and even our overall health. Reappraisals, the authors suggest, may also be effected ‘defensively’ in the case of reactions that lead to more negative forms of coping with stress, a point I return to below.

The authors also suggest that due to existing individual patterns of appraisal as well as commitments or beliefs, it is possible to interpret for each individual a level of ‘psychological vulnerability’ to both perceptions of harm/loss and threat as well as negative or destructive ways of dealing with stress, analogous to how a previous pattern of physical injury or physical stress leads to a physical vulnerability. In addition, an understanding of the level of individual responses to forms of stress can be observed, Lazarus and Folkman suggest, through looking at the patterns individuals establish for positive or healthy ways of dealing with stress aimed at confronting and dealing with various forms of stress they encounter.

It is this last point explored by Lazarus and Folkman that pertains most directly to the task at hand here in connecting how individuals react and respond to perceptions of global violence and potential feelings of helplessness in light of this violence. Through the framework of coping with stress, the authors outline categories to describe the principal means by which we tend to cope with stresses in our lives that we perceive as threats or challenges. These means are centered around two poles of coping strategies, those of ‘emotion-focused coping’, and ‘problem-focused coping’, also referred to as negative and positive coping strategies. The first category is meant to reflect means of coping by which we attempt to distance ourselves from the perceived stress by negating it through forms of avoidance, in the form of minimization, distancing, selective attention, or distraction. It also represents a type of coping used when sources of threat or challenge are seen to be less controllable or susceptible to our influence. The latter category in contrast refers to behavioural and cognitive strategies we employ to work toward ‘solving’ the perceived stress, and represents coping strategies that reflect our belief that we can influence or exert some control in relation to the source of threat or challenge. By working toward changing our behaviour to deal with a problem, for instance, through taking active steps to confront a problem in our daily life in different ways, or through transforming our way of thinking about a problem (i.e., through cognitive strategies), we work toward a more constructive way of dealing with perceived threats and/or challenges in our lives. The notion of levels and perceptions of personal control or influence remains a consistent thread between the psychological literature on helplessness and that on coping and stress.

Lazarus and Folkman stress\(^{12}\) that coping is defined in their model not as an ingrained and constant ‘trait’ to be ascribed to individuals, but rather as a process undertaken by individuals in response to various forms of stress: “The dynamics and change that characterize coping as a process are not random; they are a function of continuous appraisals and reappraisals of the shifting person-environment relationship” (1984, 142). To return to the influence of our perceptions of control or influence over sources of stress, the authors note that forms of emotion-focused coping tend to act as ways for individuals to regulate “emotional responses to the [perceived] problem” (‘nothing can

\(^{12}\) Pun intended.
be done’), whereas forms of problem-focused coping lend themselves to devising and enacting plans to manage or alter “the problem causing distress” (where we perceive conditions as amenable to change and ourselves as capable of effecting change) (1984, 150).

They also suggest that there are important potential sources of constraints on individual ‘coping resources’ that also may influence our capacity to choose either positive or negative coping strategies. A range of these are identified: personal health and energy, positive beliefs, problem-solving skills, social skills, social support and material resources are all factors that provide a groundwork for us to be able to choose and sustain positive coping strategies. Among these, they identify social support as one of the most critical and a key toward positive coping, although the authors acknowledge that the mere presence of a social network of support will not guarantee positive coping choices and strategies.

With the brief introduction to Lazarus’ and Folkman’s work accomplished, it is possible to make some links between their framework and the matter of how we may respond to or ‘appraise’ global violence. I have already suggested that it seems a natural response to appraise global violence in our world as something overwhelming, out of our reach, and beyond our influence. This type of observation harks back to the idea of locus of control offered first by Rotter (1966). The tendency to think of yourself as unable to impact global violence would lend itself to a belief that such violence is beyond our control, the ‘external locus of control’, whereas a contrasting belief in one’s ability to impact global violence reflects a more ‘internal locus of control’. Lazarus and Folkman, however, go beyond Rotter in the sense that their idea of stress and coping relates to a process rather than a trait. That is, by focusing on individual processes of appraisal in various contexts and situations, this particular model does not seek to say anything definitive about entrenched individual traits or ingrained psychological profiles per se, but calls attention rather to individualized appraisal processes that are always in flux and open to reinterpretation, reappraisal, and choice.

We can consider the pedagogical and experiential dilemma of learning about global hunger as one way of probing different potential responses to global violence. Whether we come across global hunger, for example, through a video/sound bite in a 30 second commercial fundraising to combat hunger in a poor country, or in a university classroom dedicated to exploring critical issues of global significance, what matters in the end is our appraisal of this particular form of violence. Do we see it as beyond our reach? Are we overwhelmed by it? Do we feel helpless in the face of it? My sense is that we feel all of these things, even most of the time, in such a context. The experience, the personal world from which I write is one of relatively great privilege on a global scale. With my material needs attended to, my educational opportunities and desires sated, and nurtured by an upbringing of plenty and love, free of suffering or hardship, I live in a society whose consumer market is structured around my tastes and whims. Countless devices of convenience make everyday life easier; there are endless forms of entertainment on offer for those who can pay for them (from television to theatre and music, art, reading) and at every turn I am reminded that I am a potential customer of whatever pleasing goods are just around the corner. Into the middle of my place, my life in this narcissistic culture drops a decontextualized awareness or glimpse of global violence. What is global hunger and
starvation to me, living in a world, a society predicated on comfort and plenty for those who can afford it? How we appraise the information offered to us – including in the context of either short-lived fits and starts or through in-depth exposure (e.g., television commercials vs. university courses) – will shape the type of coping strategy we use to deal with the ‘stress’ of its status to us as a potential harm, loss, or challenge. I have suggested that the culture I am immersed in is really essentially built upon avoidance and comfort (for those who can afford it). I find myself continually enticed, persuaded and pushed to think of my own comfort above all other concerns. Yet the reality of global hunger, perceived and understood even if incompletely and insufficiently, may still bother me, if I care. If it does, if I conceive of global hunger as a source of stress, as it were, I can appraise it as source of harm, loss, or threat, or as a challenge. At this point we are faced with a series of choices relevant to our appraisals, and Lazarus and Folkman admit these can even be partially unconscious. One series of choices would have us deny or distance ourselves from the problem. We may resort to an easy path of comfort and avoidance – and subsequently a resort to some of the many various options for negative (emotion-focused) coping available to us. We can indulge in wishful thinking (“our governments will surely fix this problem; I don’t need to worry about it”). With respect to the tactic of distancing, anyone can admit that it is relatively easy to distance the problem of starvation and undernourishment in the global south. One might say that itinerant television commercials even reinforce the easiness or applicability of this reaction. The tactic of ‘selective attention’ is an interesting one to raise at this point. I would submit that there is likely a fine line between choosing a tactic like selective attention (as a negative coping strategy) and the appraisal of a violent trend like global hunger as a challenge, where the latter category implies a choice on our part to believe we can have an impact through our own behaviour by confronting whatever violence we identify in the world around us (leading to positive coping strategies, or confronting the problem). Dwelling on global hunger as an example a bit more helps explain this suspicion on my part (although by now you can offer up your own examples rooted in a wider variety of topics related to global violence: militarism/wars, poverty, ecological degradation, etc.).

Consider the 30 second commercial highlighting starvation or undernourishment in, for example, a sub-Saharan African country. The roots of hunger lie in both international trade patterns, the behaviour or large economically advantaged producers in the north who profit from these schemes, and the persistent constraints such dynamics pose for the development of food self-sufficiency in hunger-challenged countries. If I watch this

---

13 According to statistics from the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO 2006), sub-Saharan Africa as a region accounts for fully 1/4 of all the world’s chronically hungry people, with 1/3 of the region’s citizens hungry - the highest such proportion by region in the world.

14 While countries of the global south have been coerced through debt conditionality to structure their economies to be dependent on exports of key commodities (including crops such as coffee and cocoa in Africa), food self-sufficiency and local food security have languished, at the expense of local farmers and citizens reliant on agriculture to survive, while transnational corporations have reaped by far the lion’s share of the economic benefits of neoliberalized trade in agricultural commodities. Meanwhile, under-nourishment and starvation takes the lives of 18 500 children under the age of 5 per day in sub-Saharan Africa alone, and 6 million children the same age die yearly across the world (Madeley 2004). For another recent book offering powerful and critical analysis of the political economy of global hunger as structural violence, see Patel (2008).
commercial, am moved, and pick up the phone to make a donation to an organization that pledges to be involved in relieving hunger through aid, how am I impacting the problem? For if my $50, or even $50 000 donation goes toward alleviating the symptoms of a specific group of people who suffer directly from hunger as structural violence, what is done (or is not done) about the deeper, ‘structural’ causes and patterns causing the violence of hunger? In a cruel twist of irony, many have argued that food aid actually sustains hunger through being too limited for broad application, and for its effect of undercutting local food economies in the neediest countries. In addition, a 2007 report from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) found that as much as one third of global food aid budgets in richer countries are lost through shipping and processing. Often food aid in richer countries is tied to national regulations stipulating that a defined percentage of such aid must be purchased in the rich country itself, reinforcing the same dynamics of food dumping and price deflation that continue to undercut local food economies in the global south. In this way, picking up the phone and donating, and thus alleviating our conscience and sating our desire to pay global hunger some attention straddles the line between selective distancing (negative coping) and some form of engagement (positive coping). The difference between the two is founded in ambiguity around the factors that influence global hunger, and so our access to information to make an informed choice about how to ‘cope’ with such an issue critically shapes our choice of coping strategies. We might feel like we are engaging in the problem, that we can do something about it, but in fact by simply picking up the phone and making a donation we are arguably doing more to alleviate our own consciences, to comfort ourselves, than we are to actually confront the complex problem that is global hunger. Lessening our ambiguity concerning the problem of hunger, educating ourselves and finding out more, is a crucial step in making the difference between negative and positive coping.

Ambiguity hurts, in a way. The very staggering complexity and scope of a problem like global hunger poses a formidable source of ambiguity in and of itself to all of us. It is far easier, and far more comforting, to simply trust in whomever is at the other end of that phone line to take our money and go and ‘fix the problem’ – out of sight, out of mind. Ambiguity itself is stressful; a potential source of harm, loss or threat. Faced with this, we may choose an easy path to cope with it, through a beguiling and simplistic path of action, in this case one I describe as a tactic of selective attention (the donation above). Confronted with ambiguity in our lack of knowledge and understanding of global hunger, we can choose in this sense not to distance ourselves from what we perceive or avoid it completely, but to ‘make the problem go away’ in our minds through an easy outlet. When the ambiguity of our lack of understanding of the issue is not confronted, or when we perceive it as too harmful or difficult to deal with, we can ‘make it go away’ by deferring to a simpler explanation that requires no effort from us to understand (bowing to the commercial). I describe this as beguiling, however, because given the complexity of the issue of global hunger, we are deluding ourselves to think that global hunger will be alleviated or solved through donations of food aid, to take but one example.

---

15 See http://www.globalpolicy.org/socecon/hunger/relief/index.htm for a variety of articles reviewing these controversies and others. See also specifically Mittal (2005).
This is not to say that financial resources of various kinds – support for a broad scale of civil society organization (CSO)\textsuperscript{16} work focused on relief being one – are much needed to confront the structural violence of hunger (and countless other problems) in the global south. But there is no easy solution. Indeed, given the entrenched position of some of the protagonists of global hunger (transnational agriculture corporations, the WTO, government policy regimes), the task of confronting this particular form of global violence is a monumental one rooted in policy change and pressure. Moving to food economies in the global south that are founded on self-sufficiency in food production first is no small task, but no impossible one either. Such a change could be thought of in terms of changing individual minds and building momentum to change policy. Paths toward engagement in this direction might be pursued through electoral (party) politics, education, or different forms of nonviolent activism. I smile as I write this in realizing that the task of contributing to such momentum – of engaging in this direction to confront the structural violence of hunger – can be seen as overwhelming in and of itself, once again. We are continually confronted by a range in our choice of coping strategies and appraisals of the stresses of global violence that we meet with in our lives.

A former student of mine – someone with a long history of social activism and engagement – put the matter in interesting terms. She suggested that ‘in the absence of a clear path’ to follow to engage and confront violence, we will tend to feel more helpless in the face of it. This kind of eloquent observation evokes the idea of ambiguity well. I might add to this in saying that even where we may perceive a clear path, without confronting our ambiguity around the source of global violence, we risk minimizing the problem, thinking wishfully that it is not pervasive or deserving of concerted attention. If we want the ambiguity, or the source of global violence to ‘go away’ for us - if it is deemed too stressful by us to deal with (i.e., if we see it through the lenses of harm, loss or threat), then we will make it do so. In fact this is all too easy to accomplish, and all the more important to avoid, considering the scope of violence in our world and the necessity for engagement to confront it.

**Taking Up the Challenge: Critical Pedagogies of Praxis as Tools for ‘Re-humanization’ and Effective Global Social and Ecological Citizenship**

In the face of repugnant relations of violence, all of us choose – in various ways or even in combination, depending on the circumstances or issue at hand – methods of avoidance or engagement. In an attempt to better understand the nature of this type of choice in specific contexts, different researchers have explored the idea in questionnaire-

\textsuperscript{16} I prefer the term CSO to ‘non-governmental organization’ (NGO). CSOs represent a vast cross-section of society; the reader should not presume that I am giving blanket endorsement to all CSOs. Since the work of organizations in this field is diverse and represents many different actors and interests, it remains up to the individual to research particular CSOs and make their own judgments. Corporations of various kinds, for example, have been known to set up ‘shill’ organizations to promote essentially violent causes, from denial of climate change to promotion of Big Tobacco and biotechnology. CSOs have also been shown at times to fuel conflict either directly or indirectly in developing countries; for one source of research and links on this topic visit http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/services/cds/themes/aid.html. The question of CSOs in general is far broader than I can treat here. For one book that broaches this topic in a thoughtful way, see Swift (1999).
based research looking at, for instance, how university students or pre-university young people report they react to concerns I would typify as relations of violence, although little research has used such a framework explicitly (one example will be discussed in a moment). Research done in Australia (Frydenberg & Rowley 1998) with university students used Lazarus’ and Folkman’s idea of emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies to analyze how participants reported that they coped with a range of issues – from those pertaining to poverty, to the environment and human rights, for example – in terms of ‘personal’ and ‘global’ levels. In all cases where participants in the study indicated they used coping strategies, the researchers found that these were applied to personal concerns as opposed to global concerns. In other words, where problems were perceived to have a direct impact on the individual self, they were deemed to be more ‘controllable’ or susceptible to influence by individuals, consistent with Lazarus’ and Folkman’s framework. Additionally, and of interest here, the study reported a trend in the use of a negative or ‘emotion-focused’ coping strategy of ‘wishful thinking’ when it came to global issues. In the U.K., another more recent study (Ellis 2004) that looked at respondents’ views of their responsibility for ensuring human rights for others found that though a majority of participants favoured the idea of human rights, they expressed a sense of helplessness when it came to doing anything about it. In addition, other participants reported deflecting responsibility for human rights away from themselves and particularly onto government or intergovernmental bodies (“shouldn’t the UN do that?”). 

Susan Opotow, a professor of peace and conflict studies at the University of Massachusetts, attempts to explain the lack of will or motivation, or commitment to act to remediate relations of violence through the notion of ‘moral exclusion’ (Opotow 2001; Opotow et al 2005). Premising her point of view on the basis of the existence of structural violence based on Galtung’s work, Opotow argues that the reason for a lack of motivation and commitment to act to confront structural violence lies primarily in the fact that we as individuals, at various levels, ‘exclude’ others who suffer from relations of violence from our own ‘moral communities’, and deem them consequently unfit for the same standards we uphold for ourselves. In these terms, moral exclusion entails a narrow ‘scope for justice’ as a sense of justice is not extended to those who are outside of our moral communities. For this author, what is called for is a fundamentally educational project of ‘moral inclusion’ that emphasizes exposure to relations of violence in our world:

Peace education should be designed to recognize, challenge, and change the thinking that has supported oppressive societal structures and, as we argue, moral exclusion. It should reveal conditions that trigger violence, ideological rivalries, and national policies that maintain arms races, military systems, and inequitable economic priorities. (Opotow et al, 2005 305)

I am in agreement with these principles, and have attempted to adopt them in my own teaching17. I strive to make the educational spaces I am a part of ‘morally inclusive’ when it comes to exploring relations of violence in our world. I even attempt to expand the envelope further to include ‘ecologically inclusive’ thinking, incorporating a consideration

---

17 At the time of writing I am into my third year of offering critical courses relating to peace and conflict in a Global Studies department.
of ecology, the limits to growth and negative environmental impacts into my own approach to peace studies and relations of violence. However, as we have explored here, despite the arguments and reasons put forward for the idea of moral exclusion, and despite best efforts to invite others to consider the world from a ‘morally inclusive’ standpoint, we are still left with the nagging question “but what can I do”? We may not feel like we can do much, or anything at all, to remediate problems that we perceive as beyond our reach or capabilities. We may also tell ourselves that the problem we perceive is beyond our responsibility, whether we feel helpless or not in the face of it. Additionally, there is an important, yet subtle distinction to be made in the case of helplessness when perceiving or learning about relations of violence. Whereas a ‘moral exclusion’ perspective lends to the notion that there is substantial intent involved in ‘explaining away’ relations of violence as they are perceived, a perspective taking helplessness into account acknowledges that in the absence of any sense that we can do anything about such problems, we are left with the sole recourse of avoidance and comfort. As alluded to earlier, in the case of the culture and society that I live in, there are literally a myriad of sources of comfort that exist to help ‘make the problem go away’. One might say that the entire first-world way of life, energy-intensive, overconsumptive and wasteful, is fundamentally premised on comfort mechanisms. Ironically, convenient roads of avoidance, through comfort, lead back to a context of violence, especially in a context where the objects of our consumption, from the food we find on our supermarket shelves to the products in our superstores, more often than not is traceable to relations of violence when scrutinized for such linkages.

Simply knowing about relations of violence can be a painful act, and the tendency to helplessness and even avoidance can be said to be natural and eminently understandable. Similarly, when faced with the choice to ‘care’ about what we perceive in this sense, we are faced with additional pain. Both are stressful processes. Coming to terms with the idea that one cares about a situation involving relations of violence entails coping with these ‘pressure-points’ and making the equally difficult decision to deal with the problem. ‘Positive coping’, in Lazarus’ and Folkman’s terms, requires courage, determination, persistence and strength of will. Understood in different terms, the choice to care and to act through engagement in this sense represents a commitment to forms of what Gandhi called tapasya, or self-sacrifice. Citizen agency is not easy; too often a term like ‘citizen engagement’ or ‘citizen agency’ is repeated as banal and analytical, when the visceral experience of involving oneself emotionally and psychologically in confronting global violence involves real leaps of courage and hope. Giving time and energy toward engagement requires us to ‘step outside the box’ of our everyday lives; it enacts something of the ‘pedagogy of love’ that Freire alluded to late in his life. However, it also presents the best prospects for personal and social transformation. If we ‘know’ and ‘care’ about relations of violence in our world and make the difficult choice to cope in a positive way, doing so can embody a new form of being we live out in response to the violence we encounter. Taking the challenge to act at this point comprises a powerful form of engagement in the face of our own feelings of helplessness.

Education, I believe, can act as a critical sort of ‘immunization’ from helplessness in the face of global violence along the lines that Seligman and related psychologists hoped behavioural interventions could immunize individuals from forms of depression and
anxiety. If this sounds too absolute or ambitious, then to borrow the terms of Lazarus and Folkman, I believe in the potential of education to embody crucial positive coping strategies in the face of oftentimes-painful learning about violence in our world, as well as to encourage the growth of psychological ‘resilience’ in our reactions to various relations of violence. Specifically, learning consciously based in experience or praxis, after Dewey and Freire, holds the best chance of strengthening the individual citizen against the descent into spiraling feelings of helplessness when confronted by violence in our world. Educational thinkers and researchers embracing critical pedagogy use the term ‘pedagogy of praxis’ to reflect a participatory, experiential approach to education, synonymous with both Dewey’s conception of education-as-experience and Freire’s notions of ‘conscientization’ and praxis (as thought/action/reflection) (Schugurensky 2000; Gadotti & Milton 1996). Schugurensky (2000) argues that the experience of participatory democracy comprises an optimal setting for the learning of democracy, demonstrated through an analysis of the comprehensive implementation of participatory budgeting processes in Porto Alegre, Brazil (the city that engendered the first World Social Fora). To complement Freire’s conception that as individuals are ‘objectified’ by oppressive social relations they are also ‘de-humanized’, I offer that critical pedagogies of praxis to confront global violence offer an educational project of ‘re-humanization’.

As a complement to formal educational settings, in informal ones (whether popular, ecological, human rights, labour, or adult education) there are a myriad of possibilities to integrate experiential opportunities into pedagogical spaces related to confronting forms of global and local violence. I will leave you to ponder your own paths in this regard, and those you may help set for others, if you are an educator. In my own teaching, an optional ‘peace praxis’ component in certain undergraduate university courses I have offered has helped lead to some powerfully transformative experiences for some of my students. Critical pedagogies of praxis have the potential to assist in the nurturing of citizens prepared to face head-on and transform relations of violence that persist today, and even those with deep structural roots and powerful supporters. As educators concerned with nurturing and deepening democracy and peace often in contexts where these lack substance, we ignore the understandable reality of individual reactions of helplessness to global and local violence at our peril. In order to effectively foster and nurture social and ecological citizenship, exhortations and critiques must be the beginning of wisdom, and not the end of it. Action cannot be construed as an end to enlightenment’s means. Rather, the two are in symbiosis toward the goal of transforming global violence toward peace, while citizens’ perceptions of themselves and their worlds make the difference between their paralysis or praxis.

References


18 I can’t treat this experience in proper depth here; I will leave that task for a subsequent article. As a start, consider Kai Brand-Jacobsen’s work (2004) as one springboard that I have myself used to prompt participants in pedagogical spaces to consider their own forms of ‘peace praxis’.


Democratic Accountability in Education for Development
Canadian INGOs and Claims of Participatory Legitimacy

Gary W. J. Pluim
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto

INGOs and Calls for a Clearer Legitimacy

Over the past decade, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) working in education for development have been called upon to be clearer about how they claim legitimacy, an imperative described broadly as “their right to do what they do and say what they say” (Edwards 2002, 58). Critics are increasingly demanding “a clear view of how organizational legitimacy is claimed and maintained” (Edwards, 58) that goes beyond proving some simple level of numerical representation (Van Rooy 2000, 314). It has been said that “NGOs must become much more sophisticated about ... how they substantiate their claims to legitimacy,” (Edwards, 59) and that the “search for an applicable concept of legitimacy is urgent, because NGOs are becoming increasingly important at an international level, and are having an impact on the lives of an ever-growing number of people” (Vedder 2007, 7).

These calls are being made amidst changing tides in public opinion on INGOs and their work in education. After many years of relatively unscrutinized praise and a recent

---

1 For the purposes of this paper I refer to INGOs as NGOs that work internationally, and NGOs as a broader term for “self-governing, private, not-for-profit organizations that are geared to improving the quality of life of disadvantaged people” (see Anna Vakil, “Confronting the classification problem: Toward a taxonomy of NGOs” in World Development, 25(12), 2060, 1997.


3 Over the last century NGOs have been typically posited as alternative signs of hope, largely escaping scrutiny and criticism (Hilhorst 2003). They have been praised for their contributions to democracy (Scholte 2005), to human rights (Smillie 1999), and to ensuring development at a grass roots level (Aall 2000).
surge in their numbers and clout INGOs have been subject to increasing criticism. Beginning roughly thirty-five years ago, critiques of INGOs emanated from various perspectives. Some saw these organizations as detrimental at the local level, as not respecting and honouring the diversity, uniqueness and cultural identity of a given society, and of ensuring their “continued conquest and occupation of the South” through an ironic process that allows “NGOs [to] govern from below” (Nekhweveha 1999, 492). INGOs have been criticized as pawns of a global hegemony, reinforcing neo-liberalization (Archer 1994), neo-imperialism (Tickly 2004) and neo-colonialism (Gary 1994). They have been charged as being unhelpful (Muskin 1999), overly taxing on themselves and their communities (Rose, 2003) ineffective (Najam 1998) and not able to “add much to the deal” (Riddell & Bebbington 1995). Such analyses set a stage for a response to critiques through more clearly articulated, sophisticated, relevant and appropriate claims of legitimacy.

In this article I propose that INGOs prioritize the need to uphold and examine the claims of “participatory legitimacy”, an assertion that requires a deep understanding of local conditions and operations, an anti-colonial perspective, and the demonstration of genuine participation of beneficiary citizens. In exploring the concept of participatory legitimacy this paper examines participatory concepts that apply to education delivery, synthesizes considerations for international actors that facilitate community participation, and analyzes four selected cases of Canadian INGOs pursuing participatory approaches in their education programming: The Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE); Oxfam Canada (Oxfam), Free the Children (Free), and Save the Children Canada (Save). This paper concludes with several thoughts on the challenges for INGOs in their claiming of participatory legitimacy and recommends directions for future research and practice.

Participatory Legitimacy in International Education: A Deeper Measure of Accountability

The merits of participatory practices are well documented in the literature on democracy (Fung & Wright 1999; Hatcher 2002; Smith 2005) and connected to numerous favourable outcomes. Participatory approaches in public spheres lead to more effective problem solving (Fung & Wright 1999) and better results in international programming. Strong correlations “between various indicators of ‘ownership’ and the satisfactoriness of outcomes have also been noted (Hudock 2000), and where ownership was high, projects achieved good results and where it was low, programmes were ineffective.” Participatory processes lead to fairer, more equitable outcomes, and, ultimately better quality citizens.

---

4 Various scholars cite how NGOs are no longer the “underdogs in the world of runaway capitalists and irresponsible governments” (Van Rooy 306), “ignored by governments, companies and international financial institutions” (see Barbara Rugendyke 2005 13), NGOs have indeed “arrived” (Sogge et al. 1996), and are increasingly “able to push around even the largest governments” (Matthews 1997 53).

5 The term “participatory legitimacy” has been used in other disciplines (i.e., Solum 2005 uses it as framework in civic dispute resolution) however it is not cited in the broad arena of international development and foreign involvement in education.

6 These findings were retrieved from a World Bank Evaluation Department study in 1992.

7 For evidence on this assertion see J. S. Mill, Considerations on Representative Government (New York:
Further, the notion that ordinary citizens are unequipped to participate in fora designed for their own governance is contentious at best, and unsupported, at least. In fact, “evidence suggests that if a diverse range of citizens is brought together they have the capacity and skills to deliberate and make recommendations on complex public policy issues” (Smith 2005).

In education settings, participatory legitimacy can be claimed through the achievement of numerous important objectives. Based on Graham Smith’s findings from 57 global democratic innovations and Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright’s work on “empowered deliberative democracy”, ten participatory criteria can be synthesized. My proposition is that in a participative process in education for development INGOs should strive to:

1. Facilitate access, increasing the diversity of participation, bringing together citizens with different experiences and viewpoints.
2. Involve a pragmatic orientation to their work, geared to solving concrete problems in education.
3. Increase participation of formerly marginalized groups.
4. Increase the participation of citizens in the most meaningful and the final decisions.
5. Maintain a bottom-up orientation.
6. Devolve power to those for whom decisions have the most effect.
7. Increase information to all concerned on education policies, programs and curriculum.
8. Encourage a continuous, deliberative process of debate and discussion.
10. Transform higher levels of government into more democratic institutions themselves.

The participatory democracy process should also be sensitive to challenges and barriers to participation such as poor execution, hidden agendas, resistances within the system, and lack of lack of resources, will, information, direction, creativity or trust to ensure successful outcomes. Ultimately the result of a participatory process should be reflective of citizens’ opinions, deliberations and judgements (Smith 2005).

The involvement of foreign actors in education adds further complexities as “international work demands a different kind of legitimacy (Van Rooy 2000). Canadian

---

Prometheus Books), 1991; and Fung and Wright. This notion of a better citizen is highly subjective but implies an increased ability for an individual to deliberate and make public decisions.

⁸ Fung and Wright refer to a recombinant type of decentralization that rejects democratic centralism which disrespects local circumstances, and rigid decentralization which disempowers groups in units that are too small to have enough broad-based expertise.
INGOs involved in education for development, beyond being accountable to the objectives of participatory democracy outlined above, need to have an understanding of several factors specific to international circumstances. First, INGOs should be well versed in anti-colonial critiques of international involvement in former colonies, recognizing claims that education reproduces existing structural inequities in a cross-national context, described thoroughly in theories of education dependency and cultural imperialism (Carnoy 1974). Second, a deep local understanding is critical to ensure cultural and political appropriateness of the involvement, ultimately critical to ensure program success (Farrell 1994). In Kenya, for example, shifts towards participatory democracy has been plagued with problems due to ethnic and class divisions that are more powerful than formal political structures (Ngwga 2003). Third, a sense of the local operating structure is imperative to ensure that the processes and/or innovations are suitable and transferable from elsewhere, and that resources are available to support the activities (Smith 2005).

Participatory Legitimacy of Selected Canadian INGOs in Education for Development

There are reasons to suggest that Canadian INGOs would posit a great opportunity to engage in participatory processes in education for development. As external, non-governmental organizations, citizens may bring to them a higher level of trust, thereby feeling less suspicious about fairness in their processes (Smith 2005). A Canadian-labelled INGO may bring a heightened degree of trust due to the historical role that Canada has played as a peacekeeper, as well as Canada’s favourable status as a less-imposing economic power9 and a traditionally high-ranker on the Human Development Index.10 On the other hand, the authority of non-state actors such as INGOs is limited in transnational settings. Typically, governments consider it their right to regulate the INGOs’ role in education; to control the work of INGOs through government registration; to define the terms of intervention; and to enforce standards on education-related issues (Miller-Grandvaux et al. n.d.). Local citizens, generally astute on who holds the power in their society, will commit to INGO activities only to the degree that they believe that the INGO is capable of delivering results for them. INGOs should be aware and upfront about their power and role in education processes, and clear on whether they intend to provide communities with opportunities for consultation, deliberation, or co-governance (Smith 2005).

In which ways do Canadian INGOs seek to engage the participation of citizens in the education projects that they facilitate? To better understand this landscape I have gathered data from four Canadian INGOs to offer some insight into these practices. These four INGOs all have a mandate to address education, which I paraphrase here11:

---

9 These points are highly subjective but a compelling case might be made for each.


11 See each organizational website for a full version of each INGOs mission, their programs in education, and their general approach.
“If you can read and write, you can learn to do, and be, anything. That’s the idea behind CODE” (CODE, 2009).

“Oxfam helps people to access basic health care, clean water, sanitation and education for all” (Oxfam 2009).

“Free the Children: Children helping children through education” (Free the Children 2009).

“Save the Children Canada believes that providing relevant and appropriate education and life skills for children is one of the most effective ways to break the cycle of poverty” (CODE 2009).

The upcoming cases illustrate aspects and degrees to which INGOs engage citizens in education programming. In these four cases each INGO strives for democratic accountability in the communities in which they work through a variety of approaches and activities. I include here a several normative statements, detailed explanations, internal and external project analyses, and publicity that captures the participative process that these INGOs seek. I use these sources with recognition of their different audiences and purposes, and maintain a critical eye on the respective intents of each text. The documents are from multiple cited sources which include websites, internal reports, press releases, news articles, personal interviews, independent evaluations, and journal articles.

Canadian Organization for Development in Education

CODE describes itself having a bottom-up approach in the way it works “with local organizations throughout the developing world to empower children to learn. In so doing, we deliver an essential, sustainable development solution that endures” (CODE 2009). CODE appreciates the need to understand local conditions. One director at CODE stated that what is important in their work is “putting people first: the local individuals, experts, communities, at all levels. They know best. They can navigate linguistic challenges, cultural traditions. They have a better way of negotiating what is viable within the local context than a Canadian or American can gain in a two or three year contract” (personal communications with CODE Development Director February 13, 2008).

CODE relies on a partnership model that involves close relations between CODE in Canada and several key partner organizations abroad. For example, CODE’s fifteen-year partnership with a Civil-Society Organization (CSO) in Mozambique is one way they ensure an awareness of local conditions. “Associação Progresso has a deep understanding of the socio-cultural context of the provinces where it works due to its broad membership, provincial offices and long term involvement in the region. This deep understanding allows Progresso to design its initiatives based on specifics of each province, and experiment with innovations that build on the different socio-cultural characteristics of each group” (Maddox 2008). In this partnership, CODE facilitates the work of Progresso by providing “project management, administrative, technical support and ... networks of professional organizations committed to education and literacy. CODE provides expertise in the selection, production, and distribution of learning materials, the teaching of reading, institutional strengthening, capacity building and gender equity” (Maddox 2008). Progresso, in turn, strengthens its outreach and implementation in cascade teacher training,
library development, and adult literacy in local languages in highly participatory processes: “The close and active participation of the education system and Progresso’s membership in both provinces, allowed this initiative to build on the specifics of each province, and the needs of the different socio-cultural groups found within them (Maddox 2008).

The participation of Progresso’s members is indicative of a high rate of involvement in all stages of the education process. “Progresso’s large membership base ... and the numerous long term supporters in the rural communities reached, are also involved in the design and monitoring of these initiatives. In this context, all the levels and individuals involved in the process have ownership for the results ... and share its achievements” (Maddox 2008). This widespread participation in Progresso’s work is suggestive of a “new, coordinated decentralization”. One CODE director describes how in such an initiative “there’s a whole web of relationships that contribute. They all continue to nurture the program. It keeps them at the table; formal and informal relationships” (personal communications February 13, 2008). The vision for these networks is to ultimately affect the direction of the national education systems. “The architecture of CSOs is effectively designed to be a vehicle for the people due to the grass roots, community based mechanisms used in programming. The trust CSOs develop with the people allows them to collect and share information on the reality on the ground. This information must be used to direct national planning” (Maddox 2008). If these vehicles are successful, Progresso’s grass-roots participatory processes are in-line to influence democratic structures at the national level.

Oxfam Canada

“Oxfam Canada works with people to secure their basic human rights, combining support to long-term development and humanitarian responses with research, advocacy and campaigning against the root causes of poverty and injustice” (Oxfam 2009) and ensures participation of those most marginalized in its education work “by working together in solidarity” (Oxfam 2009) Oxfam has noted a highly participatory link to their reasoning to support education: “We selected education because it is a key ingredient to breaking the cycle of poverty, because it saves lives, it improves the livelihoods of poor people, and it gives people a voice – vital for democratic and accountable government” (Burdon 2004).

A good example of Oxfam Canada’s work in education was with the Ghana Education Campaign (GEC) in 1997. Oxfam saw its role in this coalition as providing a variety of means of support for local CSOs. They ensured access (“At local levels, work has been done to promote community involvement in the provision of education –in terms of the demand for access, quality, and increase local accountability...); they provided information to the different CSOs involved (“We also provided advice and views on research areas and strategy, trying to share good practice learnt from other parts of the world”); they engaged in deliberative discussions with the CSOs (“Expert staff visited to work closely with the GEC on areas of research and analysis...”); and they facilitated a certain recombination that inspired sharing of information between local and global levels (“We helped the GEC make links to other civil society groups working on education in other countries, and to the Global Campaign”; “Advocacy capacity building workshops were organized to share experiences
Democratic Accountability in Education for Development

Pluim

Oxfam recognizes some of the barriers to participatory practices in international relations. "Frequently civil society organisations perceive efforts at partnership or participation as superficial consultation... Frequently civil society is consulted on poverty and social policies, rather than on macroeconomic areas, market reform, or budgets. Yet CSOs have growing expertise and valuable contributions to make in these influential policy areas" (Burdon 2004, 61). This awareness, and the pragmatic orientation of Oxfam's facilitation of the GEC, has precipitated the reality that "many of the members of the Coalition are involved in the delivery of education throughout Ghana," (Burdon 2004, 59) and perhaps even a transfer of impact to the state: "At the national level there has been close engagement [with the GEC] with the Ministry of Education on sector design..." (Burdon 2004, 60). In summary, the “Ghana Education Campaign shows how much can be done through...coalition-building... [and] it also highlights the fact that partnerships in such national programmes would be strengthened by the inclusion of all society groups in macroeconomic decision-making fora.” (Helmich et al. 2004, 16)

Free the Children

Free the Children relies on their structural “adopt-a-village” approach in which primary education is the first step towards better health, improved social services, and alternative income strategies. International Free the Children volunteers participate in the building of schools abroad. In this way, “Free the Children schools provide girls and boys the opportunity to complete five years of primary education, or the minimum required for basic literacy. By providing children with the opportunity to learn in a safe and comfortable environment, Free the Children is helping them to fully develop their talents and skills. This, in turn, allows them to make positive contributions to their communities” (personal communications with Free the Children Field Director March 1, 2009).

The approach that Free the Children uses with communities is highly relational. A director I spoke with at Free the Children said that “We really pride ourselves on the relationships that we have with the communities. We’re very tight knit.... We live life within the community [and].... that is certainly a strength [of Free the Children]” (personal communications 2009). These relationships encourage a bottom-up approach to their education projects. Said this director, “My role is ... strategic thinking, but the ideas come from the community. That is one of the ways that we try to ensure as much as possible that everything is done in partnership with the community. When it comes to re-designing a program, the ideas come from the community” (personal communications 2009).

Free the Children, through their on-the-ground staff in rural communities around the world, adopt a pragmatic, results-oriented participatory approach. A director at Free the Children spoke of how they organize big community meetings to make plans for education projects.

We've developed three things that we're doing to increase the quality of education. One of them is a series of strategic education stakeholders meetings in where we gather together different groups of people ... because Free the Children firmly believes in partnerships with the communities.... At these stakeholder meetings we
sit together first with the leadership of each of these schools that Free the Children works with ... – the headmaster, the deputy head teacher, and a female teacher – and we ask them, "How do we deal with quality of education issues in the classroom? Then we say, "Okay, how do you need to improve? What are the problems that are holding us back in the quality of education?" Then we say, "We have to think of a solution." That’s our first step – the needs of the school. The second step is with the parents’ committee .... We do a brainstorm [of those same three questions, and then move on to] the third set of meetings [in which] we meet with the teaching staff .... Then, we bring everybody together, from all the community area and we say, "Everybody here seems to agree that we could do better with the quality of education. Everybody here has their own reason [why]. Now, let’s come up with a solution" (personal communications 2009).

A consciousness of access for more marginalized population segments remains a foremost consideration in the programming discourse at Free the Children. "Any way in which we can think to further involve the community, we do. We constantly monitor and evaluate ourselves on that because ... one of our pillars is that we try to maintain that gender balance...; sometimes gender, sometimes resources, sometimes ideas - however or whatever ways we can maintain an equal partnership and that authenticity, that's one of our top priorities" (personal communications 2009).

Save the Children Canada

Save is forthright about its aims to involve some of the most typically excluded population segments12. “We include children in the development of our programs. Save the Children firmly believes that children and young people must be active participants in the design and implementation of programs and policies that impact on their lives, as they are best placed to tell the world about their needs” (Save the Children 2009). A central approach in Save’s work is ensuring access to beneficiaries in their processes. “In all our programmes, we encourage children and their families to participate in research, planning and decision-making, and we find solutions together. These contributions are invaluable in ensuring our activities meet children’s needs. We firmly believe that children should be active members of society and have a right to be involved in matters concerning their well-being” (Save the Children 2009).

Save relies on a “Child-Centered Education Framework” that “puts the child at the centre of all of Save the Children Canada’s education work” (Save the Children Canada 2007, 2). Save especially targets the participation of marginalized children including those “who face particular barriers to education including indigenous children, working children, rural children, girl children, children with disabilities, displaced children, and children affected by violence and conflict” (Save the Children Canada 2007, 3). The ways in which Save facilitates participation of these youth encourages participation from the bottom-up (“the formation of student groups, student councils and child rights clubs”); involvement in meaningful and final decisions (“the participation in the design of school program and activities”); and chances for deep deliberation (“involving children themselves in meaningful advocacy for better access to education”) (Save the Children Canada 2007, 4). Beyond children, Save empowers community members through “community involvement

---

12 Indeed it seems to me ironic that children are some of the most excluded participants in education planning.
in management and monitoring of schools”, “monitoring of education budgets and expenditures” and “linking community groups with civil society networks” (Save the Children Canada 2007, 5).

One of Save’s most recognized contributions to education for development was the establishment of community schools (CS) in four countries in sub-Saharan Africa\(^{13}\), intended to address the needs of children who would not otherwise attend school. The CS systems in each country are adapted to suit each government’s standards, the capacity of the social system (Miller-Grandvaux et al. n.d.) and the local conditions such as in Mali, where the language of instruction at the community schools is Bambara, the local language. Save’s philosophy is to devolve its power to community level. “The ‘community management’ aspect included the local population’s ensuring the school’s construction (Save the Children purchases roof, door, and window materials and school equipment), the composition and regular operation of a CS management committee, and the payment (just $6.00 minimum monthly) of the two teachers (one for the morning session and one for the afternoon session)” (Muskin 1999, 40). The CS have been said to encourage a greater overall bottom-up participation in education in these countries. “Community schools have transformed the way citizens relate to education as their demands coalesce into pressure on the State for better education services. Fundamentally, the vehicle of community schools has helped create a civil society lobby for education” (Miller-Grandvaux et al. n.d., 7).

Nevertheless, these schools have faced much criticism for their problems in ensuring participation. First, the structure in which Save created to devolve power to the community was not entirely functional. “When Save encouraged communities to take ownership of their community schools, they did to such an extent that they opposed Save’s plans to move their children out of the schools after four years so that others could attend” (Miller-Grandvaux et al. n.d., 7). In Mali, it was not possible to satisfy the demand by communities for CS with materials and support provided by Save (Muskin 1999, 40). Second, the diverse base of participation and support of the CS that might have been expected has not been realized. “In Guinea and Mali, teachers’ union representatives view NGOs as attempting to undo the public education system. They said that NGOs have no legitimacy to work in education and, by extension, in education policy. Although NGO and union representatives attend some of the same meetings, they have no relations, which leads to misperceptions and distrust” (Miller-Grandvaux et al. n.d., 16). Third, a sharing of information to those most affected by the decisions was not entirely successful. “Although community representatives and local officials understand the role that NGOs play in local decisions, they viewed national-level policy as distant and were not aware of what NGOs did on a national level. Interestingly, NGOs are seeking changes ostensibly on behalf of these local stakeholders, but these stakeholders are not engaged in or even aware of their efforts at the national level” (Miller-Grandvaux et al. n.d., 16). Finally, the academic achievement of students at CS in Mali was in subject areas that mattered little community members and the parents of these students (Muskin 1999).

\(^{13}\) Save the Children community schools are in Mali, Malawi, Guinea and Ethiopia.
Observations, Analysis, and Directions Forward

Canadian INGOs involved in education for development strive to engage in participatory practices through complex circumstances in their efforts to make more sophisticated claims of legitimacy. Normatively, the Canadian INGOs examined here demonstrate a great propensity towards citizen participation. Bottom-up approaches are commonly cited; there is a general acknowledgement to understand local conditions and embrace national culture for education curricula in aspects such as history, language, and conventions, and the four INGOs studied make efforts to provide access to diverse and marginalized participants. In practice, however, some problems were apparent. There were cases where the INGOs could not assure that beneficiaries were fully informed, were supported with relevant expertise, or were ultimately empowered. Further, it seems hard (or unlikely) to get an accurate picture that illuminates that all groups were included; that there was participation by the most affected in the most important matters; and that there was significant depth in the deliberation in these issues. These characteristics bear resemblance to the comments of an external, USAID-commissioned review of the role of NGOs in basic education in Africa which questioned, “to what extent do the participatory processes that NGOs advocate truly engage the public in policy deliberations? Do the different mechanisms put in place really communicate the preference of community members and civil society to decision makers – or are these positions really those of the NGOs that are sponsoring efforts to create the mechanisms?” (Miller-Grandvaux et al. n.d., 16). In this research I was particularly surprised not to see more far-reaching, creative or sophisticated participatory innovations being embraced by these INGOs. While there were examples of open, limited-scale meetings, exceptional innovations such as randomly selected citizens’ assemblies, direct initiative and popular referendum, or even participatory involvement in education budgets (Smith 2005, 11) were barely, if at all, being used. When I began this research paper I was much more hopeful to find interesting, exciting and progressive examples of participatory activities in which Canadian INGOs were promoting.

In moving forward we should look for both internal and external solutions. For INGOs to effectively claim participatory legitimacy they will need to increase their commitment to beneficiary participation. First, an increase in INGO resources towards deliberate democratic processes will be necessary, as participatory activities are inherently expensive. As noted for other democratic innovations, “effective participation does not come cheap – dedicated resources are needed; Many deliberative innovations have relatively large resource implications” (Smith 2005, 11). Second, a heightened awareness of the importance of accountability and transparency is necessary, as marginalized citizens can be particularly suspicious and weary of public processes affecting their lives (Smith 2005, 11). Third, a call is imminent for a deeper engagement in the whole participatory processes and the taking risks to be becoming more “creative and imaginative in designing and combining approaches to citizen participation. Standard techniques for eliciting public opinion on services and policies can be used in highly creative and innovative ways” (Smith 2005, 11).
Finally, INGO pursuit of participatory legitimacy should be supported by the broader education for development arena. It has been argued that “in a world of increasing NGO voices, donors should give special preference to those which have proven and effective ties with development beneficiaries” (Hudock 2000, 14-15). Indeed, INGOs that can make strong claims for participatory legitimacy should be rewarded. Mechanisms to scrutinize participatory development should focus on an accountability to and participation by beneficiaries above accountability to donors. “Donor agencies need to reform their own institutions. In particular they must modify financial reporting and other requirements put in place to ensure fiscal accountability, so that these conditions strengthen ties between and development accountability to beneficiaries and to NGOs, rather than reorient NGOs to focus on donors” (Hudock 2000, 14-15). Through more sophisticated ways of engaging beneficiaries, donors can “change the type of information they gather from NGOs and development beneficiaries as well as the way in which they gather it. Donors can implement evaluation and monitor programmes that are participatory … and rely on indicators for success designed by development beneficiaries and negotiated between all stakeholders at the beginning of the project” (Hudock 2000, 18). Invariably, donors, governments, stakeholders, and citizens alike must insist that INGOs claim legitimacy through authentic and accountable participation of the people with whom they work.

References


Hudock, Ann C. NGOs’ seat at the donor table: Enjoying the food or serving the dinner? *IDS bulletin*, 31(3), 2000.


Nekhwevha, F. No matter how long the night, the day is sure to come: Culture and educational transformation in post-colonial Namibia and post-apartheid South Africa. *International Review of Education*, 45(5-6), 491-506, 1999.


Democratic Accountability in Education for Development


Riddell, R. C. & Bebbington, A. J. *Developing Country NGOs and Donor Governments* Report to the Overseas Development Administration, London: Overseas Development Institute, January.


---

1 A special thanks to Clemens Zobel, who helped us in revising the final version of our presentation, and to Rafael Brito Cazarin, who worked on data interpretation and graphs.

2 Member of the Board of Trustees of the In Loco Association.

3 Researcher at the Social Studies Centre, Coimbra University.

4 Made up of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and by the Ecologist Party - the Green Party (PEV)

5 The party in Government with a total majority of seats.

6 Main opposition party that has fought for governing the country against the PS since the 1974 Democratic Revolution. There has been a constant alternation of power between these two political forces.
4. The party represented in Parliament situated further to the right on the national political spectrum.

* The party in Government with a total majority of seats.

The party represented in Parliament situated further to the right on the national political spectrum.

** The party represented in Parliament situated further to the right on the national political spectrum.

vi Main opposition party that has fought for governing the country against the PS since the 1974 Democratic Revolution. There has been a constant alternation of power between these two political forces

www.op-portugal.org

x FAL is the Local Authorities Forum for Social Inclusion (born in Porto Alegre as a parallel event of the World Social Forum, and then grown up as an international network). UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) is the International Association of world mayors and governors, born in 2004 by merging other previous existing and scattered associations (IULA; Metropolis, and so on).

“*The panorama of OPs in Europe*” in “A Training Course on Participatory Budgeting in Europe – a non-conventional approach”, The Centre for Social Studies, Coimbra University 22nd and 23rd June 2007. See also: Sintomer/Allegretti, 2009 (forthcoming)