



Democracy and Education

Aims, Structures, Content and Classroom Practices

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“A democratic society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder”.



—Dewey, Democracy and Education

“Democracy in/of Education”

deals with...

- **The social, economic, political, cultural, etc. aims or purposes of education**
- **The explicit and implicit (hidden?) objectives and content of curricula**
- **The roles, rights and responsibilities of the players (teachers, students, parents, etc.)**
- **Prevailing classroom behavioral patterns**
 - **AND the relationship of each of the above to the principles of democracies and the roles/responsibilities of citizens in democracies**

Levels of Democracy and Education

- Administrative/Structural: Aims (explicit, implicit) governance and control, finance, accreditation and quality control, etc.
- Content: Curricular, examinations, textbooks and materials, etc.
- Classroom Practices: Expected and accepted behaviors, student-teacher relations; teacher autonomy; student responsibilities, etc.

Dewey on the Aims of Education

“It is the aim of progressive education to take part in correcting unfair privilege and unfair deprivation, not to perpetuate them”

“the very idea of education is the freeing of individual capacity in a progressive growth directed to social aims”

Administrative and Structural Considerations

- Governance and Finance
- Examinations, Curricula
- Accreditation and Licensing Procedures (Quality Control)
- Accountability

Governance and Finance

U.S. System

Governance: municipal level (primary-secondary); state or institution (university)

Finance: municipal (property taxes) at primary-secondary (~90% public); university level (mixed- 20% municipal; 40% state; 40% private). Federal financial aid programs. Bulk of funding from non-public resources at tertiary level

Turkish System

Governance: National (primary-secondary-tertiary)

Finance: National for primary-secondary and tertiary. Bulk of funding from national budget. Minimal finance from alumni, investment or corporate interests

Implications of Governance and Finance Systems

In U.S., local control of primary-secondary systems is very powerful (school boards elected and control policy); University level education is municipal, state and/or institution based and often sensitive to labor market demands (corporate/industry sponsors)

In Turkey, education is controlled and financed largely at the national level, leaving individuals/families with little say over policy. Labor market considerations (driven by corporate funding) less evident

Examinations and Curricula

U.S. System

Curriculum: Primary-Secondary under State DOE; university under institutional control (regulated by accreditation bodies)

Matriculation and University Entrance Exams: State level for secondary school graduation or non-existent. Educational Testing Service (private) for university entrance (optional)

Turkish System

Curriculum: Primary-Secondary-Tertiary under national control (universities have some autonomy)

Matriculation and University Entrance Exams: National control (**ÖSS (student selection exam)**) (ÖSYM-Student Selection and Placement Center)

Accreditation and Licensing

U.S. System

Accreditation in hands of regional accreditation associations (NGOs) and professional organizations (e.g. the American Medical Association).

Licensing (primary and secondary only): State and/or municipal

Turkish System

Accreditation: Council on Higher Education (YÖK), a national body appointed by the president

Licensing: A national affair, primarily dependent on university degree qualifications at all levels

Accountability

In US, educational institutions are accountable to...

- voters, parents, community leaders (at primary-secondary level)
- Corporations and alumni (at university level)
- Tax payers/voters (at state level for universities)

In Turkey, educational institutions are accountable to

- Ministry of Education (primary-secondary)
- YÖK (tertiary)
- Tax payers/voters (at national level)

Dewey on Curricula in Democracies

“A curriculum which acknowledges the social responsibilities of education must present situations where problems are relevant to the problems of living together, and where observation and information are calculated to develop social insight and interest”

Curricular Approaches

- Content-centered approaches: Focus on the “what” of the legal and political systems found in democratic societies
- Attitude-centered approaches: Focus on the development of “democratically inclined/minded citizens”
- Skills-centered approach: Focus on equipping youth with the requisite abilities (e.g. critical thinking skills) needed for life in democracies
- Eclectic approaches: Combination of the above

Democracy at the Classroom Level

- Classroom Behavioral Patterns
- Student-Teacher Relations
- Teacher Roles and Responsibilities
- Student Roles and Responsibilities

The Classroom Dynamic

Progressive Education in the U.S. is characterized by

- Collaborative learning (but individual achievement)
- Open-ended questioning
- Student questions
- Critical thinking
- Justifying/grounding opinions
- Critiquing work of others
- Application of knowledge

Turkish Educational system is characterized by

- Factual orientation (marked by closed-ended questioning and memorization)
- Teacher fronted classrooms with teacher maintaining control
- Emphasis on theory
- Little questioning of “authorities” or critiquing published scholarship
- Minimal Student-student interaction for non-social purposes

Teacher Roles

U.S. System

- Coaching learner growth
- Diagnosing learner weaknesses
- Prescribing learning tasks that address individual weaknesses while capitalizing on strengths
- Monitoring classroom behavior and student output (continuous assessment)

Turkish system

- Teacher as “gatekeeper of the discipline”
- Focus on “correctness” and ensuring errors are attended to early and consistently
- Administering nationally mandated curricula (reflected in the approved course books) and preparing learners for exams

Student Responsibilities and Roles

U.S. System

- Learner autonomy is commonplace (especially at tertiary level- 2:1 ratio of out of class:in class work)
- Student Choice: (at university level, in terms of field of study, courses, institution for study, etc.)
- Student mobility and flexibility (field of study selected at university level in year 2, change possible)
- Openness: entry-exit any time, any age

Turkish System

- Learning more of an emulating “authorities and experts” process
- Choice of field of study is partly individually driven and partly communally and socially determined
- Minimal mobility between institutions, faculties, departments. Field of study determined before university entrance
- Little by way of continuing education

Implications for “Democracy”

Through greater student autonomy, mobility and choice and the emphasis on critiquing/critical thinking and collaborative learning, classroom dynamics prepare American youth for some of the demands of life in an open, democratic society

At the classroom level, the Turkish educational system socializes youth into a relatively rigid hierarchy with pre-determined rules, decisions made externally by “authorities” and a more obedient and respectful (less rebellious) populace

Education for Democracy– a glimpse at other sources

- All school/university courses, regardless of discipline
- Student/Youth organizations, unions, clubs, etc.
- Family and family norms
- The mass media
- The community, religious organizations, civic organizations, local government (and how they, through their structures and programs, manifest the principles of democracy)

The “Democratization” of Education could mean...

- Compulsory, free schooling up to a certain level
- Equal access to quality educational experiences for all (regardless of social-economic status, religion, race, physical and mental handicaps, etc)
- The development of curriculum (and corresponding exams) which reflect the ethno-cultural make-up of the communities served (in terms of content and process)

The “Democratization of education” could mean...

- Increased demands on educational establishments beyond their financial means and extant infrastructures (e.g. over-crowded classrooms, employment of unqualified teachers, no books, etc)
- The triumph of the “lowest common denominator” effect in which, to accommodate all,
 - Curricula are watered-down (simplified or reduced in terms of cognitive demand)
 - Examination standards are lowered
 - Entrance criteria (for universities) are lowered or eliminated