

Democratic Education and Related Theories

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Abstract: Democracy is a fairly new concept in human history. The new management model created with the demands of the society as a result of the pressures of the traditional authorities has also affected the social life. In addition, democracy, which permeates all institutions of social life, has also been an important element that shapes education. After the democratization of societies started, the democratic education model aimed to raise people suitable for this situation. For this, educational processes were designed within the framework of this understanding, starting from the philosophy of education, to lectures and assessment and evaluation. John Dewey, who had a great influence in the first half of the 20th century, pioneered the democratic education model. Within the framework of his ideas, democratic education was shaped and has been continuously developed over 100 years and has been designed to meet the needs of societies.

Keywords: Democracy, Democratic Education, John Dewey

1. Introduction

Meeting the needs of modern societies is basically possible by raising people suitable for the modern age. The shaping of societies within the framework of this understanding after the industrial revolution caused the education models to change to a great extent. These changes have removed the old authoritarian and teacher-centered education model. Instead, student-centered modern education systems have emerged. This education system has evolved into a democratic understanding aiming to solve social problems as well.

2. Democracy

The word democracy is derived from the Greek word "demos" meaning people. Democracy means the rule of these people. In the modern context, democracy can be defined as "the rule of the people, by the people, for the people". The fact that people were ruled by certain groups until modern times and that these governments degenerated over time paved the way for the emergence of democracy. One of the important historical developments that prepared democracy is the enlightenment movements that started in the 17th century (Heywood, 2015).

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This understanding of enlightenment, which was initiated by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant and stated that people should take their own destiny into their own hands, developed over time and caused great social and political changes, especially with the 1789 French Revolution. Although these changes started in the social sphere, they had profound effects on all other areas of life. One of these effects has been on education. The establishment of democracy in societies was the result of quite a long effort. It can be said that the beginning of these processes was the result of the pressures of the states on the people. As people felt the pressure from the state, they sought more rights and as a result, they saw that the most valid way was to change the regimes. Thus, the democratization tendencies have gained momentum.

Although the concept of democracy was used as a pejorative concept in the 19th century, it later turned into a concept that people cannot give up. In fact, these changes that emerged in the political arena have significantly affected the social structure of societies. After this effect spread to the social field, it started to spread to all his institutions (Azmanova, 2020). In this context, democratization in education is the product of the same processes.

It is seen that individuals come to the fore in the processes of establishing democracy. In fact, one of the indispensable principles of liberalism, which is one of the leading ideas of democracy, is individualism. The development of these understandings necessitated placing individuals at the focal point. Therefore, everything in democratization societies has been human-oriented. In this context, democratizing education systems also abandoned the role of the authoritarian teacher in the traditional understanding, instead adopting a student-centered approach. The fact that education is student-oriented has brought many innovations (Kurki, 2010).

3. Democratic Education

The internalization of democracy in societies is a troublesome process that takes a lot of time. These processes also result in the democratization of all social institutions over time. Although democratization processes started as a political process, their continuity is possible with social movements. At this point, education has an indispensable role because it is possible to raise democratic individuals through education. Democratic systems, which are decided with the common participation of everyone and mostly reject the authorities, wanted to spread these thoughts in all areas of life. The application of this to education has led to the emergence of a symbiotic relationship. That is, democratization in society results in democratization of education, and democratization of education results in a more democratic society. In this context, democratization processes and education are concepts that are intertwined, especially in the modern world (Biesta, 2015).

At this point, democratic education can be considered from different perspectives. The first of these is the adoption of concepts such as freedom, equality, pluralism, human rights, and respect for the rights of others, required by democracy, through education, which can be achieved at the end of democratic education processes. The second is the application of democratic practices within the lessons and the adoption of a student-centered understanding. Thus, the traditional authoritarian teacher roles have also undergone major changes (Doğan, 2004).

It is possible to include other concepts in democratic education led by Liberalism. Before the enlightenment, people's constant dependence on authority and their unquestioning fulfillment of orders from these authorities were completely rejected in the later period. The education system applied by people in accordance with the lifestyle of ancient period was mostly based on memorization. Therefore, there was no such thing as individual creativity of people. Also, people accepted many dogmatic ideas without questioning (Gutmann, 1999). On the other hand, both the demands of the contemporary society and the content of modern sciences compel critical thinking. At this point, people have to get rid of dogmatic thoughts and adopt critical thinking. In addition, people's problem-solving skills must be very well developed. In order for all these to happen effectively, people need to receive the participatory and democratic education required by modern Ages. Thus, people will acquire the abilities required by the modern Age.

4. Student-Centered Education

It is possible to find the effects of many different philosophical movements in the intellectual foundations of democratic education. The reflection of social change processes on education is clearly seen in the development of democratic education. We can see the reflections of many social and political movements on education in democratic education models. Besides all these philosophical movements, it can be said that the most important innovation brought by democratic education to the modern age is student-centered education (Conner & Lofthouse, 2003). Especially in the first half of the 20th century, student-centered education, shaped by the ideas of John Dewey, is a reflection of the criticism directed towards traditional education at one point. The idea that traditional teacher-centered authoritarian education does not meet the needs of the modern age has led to the formation of this idea. In this context, there is a restructuring of education. For this, he changed the traditional, oppressive and rote-based education method and adopted democratic and student-centered education led by the liberal understanding that is identified with the modern West. After John Dewey's ideas were accepted in the American education system, they began to spread all over the world (Guttek, 1992). Where traditional education and student-centered education are compared, the following differences can be seen.

Table 1: Differences between traditional and student-centered education

Practice	Traditional Education	Student-Centered Education
Classroom Activity	Tutorial	Interactive
The Role of the Teacher	Informative	Participatory, encouraging and motivational
Student Role ,	Listener, always Student	Participant, responsible
Course Focus	Information	Relationships
Knowledge Gain	Remembering and Memorizing, Accumulation of Knowledge	Inquiry and discovery,
Indicator of Success	By time, quantity	By process, performance, quality
Measurement and Evaluation	General, According to Norms	Individual, by criteria and development
Use of Technology	Repetition and practice	Communication, participation, access to information

(Vural, 2005)

It is clearly seen that the student-centered education approach wants to reveal the human model required by the enlightenment processes. For this reason, it has been accepted as a basic principle that all aspects of people should be handled in education. While in traditional education, the student is viewed only as an object to which knowledge is transferred, in modern education, the student is placed in the center and his cognitive, psychological, social, and moral development is evaluated as a whole. It is believed that the structuring that will enable the development of the student in all these areas should take place within the school (Hannafin & Land, 1997). In order to realize student-centered education, it is necessary to make changes in all fields related to education. First of all, the needs of student-centered education should be met, from the philosophical foundations of education to curriculum development. In addition, the use of materials for the lesson, the planning of the lesson, measurement and evaluation should be designed according to the new approach (Hoidn & Reusser, 2020).

The school is a very important element in student-centered education and this school will also be the center of the natural and social environment and will be intertwined with real life. The school will interact with the community. Thus, the school is also an institution that will lead the democratic transformation of society. In this context, while the school is at the center of the society, the student will be at the center of education (Dewey, 1907).

There should be some pragmatic aspects of the knowledge that the student will acquire in the school. That is, course contents should reflect situations that are possible in real life. Only the theoretical presentation of the course content will not bring any pragmatic benefit for the student but will also reduce the student's desire to learn. On the other hand, when the information given to the student is related to real life, learning will take place much faster (Hansen, 2012).

The student-centered education approach also has reflections on business life. Accordingly, there should be organic bond between school and work life. However, this bond emerges not in the form of preparing

the student for any profession, but in the sense of the relationship between the student's daily life and business life. The function of the school is to present these connections in front of the student and to raise the awareness of the student on this issue (Dewey, 2013).

One of the most important approaches that student-centered education has brought to modern societies is the active learning approach. Accordingly, the student should go beyond the traditional understanding of education and should not act as a simple information-receiver. The student is an entity that demands knowledge, is interested in knowledge, and reaches knowledge through his own activity and effort. At this point, the student's own effort and way of thinking is very important. This is the first step of active learning. The active participation of the student in the processes and learning in this way will give him a different dynamism. The teacher, who was the authority in the traditional context, was also the source of knowledge. Therefore, the student could instantly reach the teacher, who was a ready source of information. However, in modern education, knowledge is not ready in front of the student. First, there is a situation such as the student's access to information as a result of psychological preparation and mental efforts. For this, knowledge is a process of restructuring and interpretation. Thus, the way of thinking of people and the methods of accessing information are also changing (Brown, 2008).

Since education is a factor that determines the basic judgments of the whole society, it is necessary to look for the roots of the solutions to the social and political problems of the societies in education. For this, education should be designed according to the needs of modern society, and individuals should be trained within the framework of this understanding. Different societies have produced different solutions to their problems. The problem-solving logic of modern society, on the other hand, is to create a person with developed reflective thinking skills in terms of educational activities. Democratic education is a must for a person to grow up in this way. Therefore, starting from schools, children's upbringing in a democratic environment will be the basis for solving the problems that will arise in the following years. The human type that will emerge through education must have acquired reflective thinking. In this way, a person will learn to solve problems and deal with difficulties that emerge on their way. Thanks to reflective thinking, people can have the capacity to notice problems much earlier, to control and solve problems when necessary. For this, reflective thinking should be combined with cultural norms and given in schools, and it should be transformed into a cultural norm (Miettinen, 2000).

5. Democratic Education Approaches

The emergence of the democratic education model is the result of great social and political changes, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries. The facts that form the basis of these changes are the enlightenment movements that started in the 17th century and the great economic model changes such as industrial revolution that emerged after it. The great changes that have occurred in the last few centuries have shaped the world of ideas of people to a great extent and have led to the formation of a completely different mindset from the people of the Middle Ages. As a result of all these, democratic education has emerged as a necessity. In this context, several theories have emerged that necessitate democratic education.

6. Progressivism

Progressivist thought is an approach advocated by John Dewey in the field of education and pioneered democratic education. In this context, it has been accepted that human history is in a continuous progress and changes accordingly. In accordance with these changes, the old methods need to be changed and redesigned according to the advancing world. For this reason, in the new education model, the importance of knowledge gained through experience has been emphasized as opposed to rote learning in traditional societies. Knowledge is a tool in the creation of a democratic society, but this tool is as important as the goal to be achieved. Therefore, the way knowledge is acquired must also change for the modern progressive society (Cremin, 1959).

The application of this idea to education is to create learning situations for selected problems and develop solutions accordingly. When the topics are selected according to the interests and interests of the students and put in front of the students, the practical processing of them will give good results (Radu, 2011).

It is necessary to adopt an education model suitable for social life, whose basic characteristic is to change and transform. Therefore, the aim of education is to train individuals to adapt to changing conditions. For this, the democratic education outlined above is essential.

7. Reconstruction

According to this understanding, in order for people to keep up with the developments and changes in which they are constantly experiencing, they have to make some choices in their struggle for existence. Accordingly, new values should be built instead of obsolete values. It was later seen that when a progressive logic is constantly constructed, this is not practically possible. The idea of reconstruction was put forward to fill the gaps of progressive thought. Thus, it is more appropriate to restructure and reshape according to needs, instead of progress that will be much more difficult for people (Kumar, 2009).

The education aspect of this idea is that education, which is the basis of people's lives, is restructured according to changing conditions and redesigned to meet the needs. Since it is impossible to make a continuous linear progress, educational activities should also be created within the framework of a restructuring approach. The main purpose of applying this idea in education is to seek solutions to social and political problems that arise in society and to ensure the sustainability of these solutions (Hansen, 2012).

8. Conclusion

The democratic education model has been designed according to the needs of modern people. Post-Enlightenment movements have led people to an understanding that will determine their own destiny, and then other social, political, and economic developments have brought a completely different world to human beings in the modern age. It is only possible for modern people to keep up with the social life and to have the skills expected from them with the democratic education model. In accordance with this model, people will adopt reflective thinking and produce practical solutions to concrete problems. The formation of this human type will take place in the long run through democratic education. Different alternatives can be put forward to solve the problems of modern people. As a matter of fact, people produce some solutions

for the problems of the societies they live in. The democratic education model, on the other hand, aims to raise the type of people who will produce these solutions. This person, indeed, can be educated by adopting democracy by receiving democratic education in the process. In addition, this understanding, which is gained through education, will turn into a cultural form after a point and become a norm. Thus, the type of human that modern society needs will be trained.

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