

ФИЛОСОФИЯ

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*e-mail: t.abyllov@abaiuniversity.edu.kz*POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF
DEMOCRACY

Abstract. The main goal of this work is to explore the possible connection between social phenomena such as education and democratic institutions from the perspective of political philosophy. To fully understand this topic, in the first part we will examine the theoretical basis and provide comprehensive definitions of key terms such as “democracy,” “liberal state,” and “school.” Thus, we argue that democracy is not a natural form of human association, but rather a unique invention of the human mind, and that schools are the ideal institution for spreading democratic values, as this organization allows for the inclusion of large numbers of people. In the second part, we argue that the task of schools is not only to teach children the necessary practical skills and knowledge that will prepare them to compete in a market economy, but also to make them citizens of a democratic society. Therefore, a democratic state must grant schools greater autonomy, which will be reflected not only in the curriculum but also in school management. In this sense, the article contributes to ongoing debates about the role of education in shaping active citizenship and promoting pluralism. The conclusions may serve as a basis for future research on the intersection of political philosophy, pedagogy, and democratic practice.

Key Words: Philosophy, democracy, civic education, social institutions, pluralism, political literacy.

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Саяси философия және демократияның тәрбиелік негіздері

Аңдатпа. Бұл жұмыстың негізгі мақсаты – саяси философия тұрғысынан білім мен демократиялық институттар сияқты әлеуметтік құбылыстар арасындағы ықтимал байланысты зерттеу. Тақырыпты толық түсіну үшін, бірінші бөлімде “демократия,” “либе -

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ралды мемлекет” және “мектеп” сияқты негізгі ұғымдарға анықтама бере отырып, тақырыптың теориялық негізін қарастырамыз. Осылайша, біз демократияның адамдар қауымдастығының табиғи түрі емес, адам санасының қайталанбас өнертабысы, ал мектептер демократиялық құндылықтарды таратуда басты рөл атқаратын институт екенін көрсетеміз, себебі бұл ұйым көптеген адамдарды қамтуға мүмкіндік береді. Екінші бөлімде біз мектептің міндеті балаларға нарықтық экономика жағдайында бәсекеге дайындайтын қажетті практикалық дағдылар мен білімдерді үйрету ғана емес, сонымен қатар оларды демократиялық қоғамның азаматы етіп шығару екенін дәлелдейміз. Сондықтан демократиялық мемлекет мектептерге белгілі бір автономия беруі керек, бұл тек оқу бағдарламасында ғана емес, мектепті басқаруда да көрініс табуы керек. Осы тұрғыдан алғанда, мақала белсенді азаматтықты қалыптастыру мен плюрализмді ілгерілетудегі білімнің рөлі туралы қазіргі пікірталастарға үлес қосады. Жасалған қорытындылар саяси философия, педагогика және демократиялық тәжірибенің тоғысындағы болашақ зерттеулерге негіз бола алады.

Кілт сөздер: Философия, демократия, азаматтық білім, әлеуметтік институттар, плюрализм, саяси сауаттылық.

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Политическая философия и образовательные основы демократии

Аннотация. Основная цель данной работы заключается в изучении возможной связи между такими социальными явлениями, как образование и демократические институты, с точки зрения политической философии. Чтобы полностью понять эту тему, в первой части мы рассмотрим теоретические основы и дадим определения ключевых терминов, таких как «демократия», «либеральное государство» и «школа». Таким образом, мы утверждаем, что демократия не является естественной формой человеческого объединения, а скорее уникальным изобретением человеческого разума, и что школы являются идеальным институтом для распространения демократических ценностей, поскольку эта организация позволяет включать в себя большое количество людей. Во второй части мы утверждаем, что задача школ заключается не только в том, чтобы научить детей необходимым практическим навыкам и знаниям, которые подготовят их к конкуренции в рыночной экономике, но и в том, чтобы сделать их гражданами демократического общества. Поэтому демократическое государство должно предоставить школам определенную автономию, что найдет отражение не только в учебной программе, но и в управлении школами. В этом смысле статья вносит вклад в продолжающиеся дискуссии о роли образования в формировании активного гражданства и продвижении плюрализма. Сделанные выводы могут послужить основой для будущих исследований на пересечении политической философии, педагогики и демократической практики.

Ключевые слова: Философия, демократия, гражданское образование, социальные институты, плюрализм, политическая грамотность.

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Siyaset Felsefesi ve Demokrasinin Eğitsel Temelleri

Özet. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, siyaset felsefesi açısından eğitim ve demokratik kurumlar gibi toplumsal olgular arasındaki muhtemel ilişkiyi incelemektir. Konuyu tam olarak anlamak için ilk bölümde teorik temeller ele alınacak ve “demokrasi”, “liberal devlet” ve “okul” gibi anahtar kavramların tanımları verilecektir. Böylece, demokrasinin insan topluluklarının doğal bir biçimi değil, bilakis insan aklının özgün bir icadı olduğunu; okulların ise çok sayıda bireyi kapsayabilen bir örgütlenme yapısına sahip olduklarından, demokratik değerlerin yayılması için ideal bir kurum olduğunu savunuyoruz. İkinci bölümde ise, okulların görevinin yalnızca çocuklara piyasa ekonomisinde rekabete hazırlayacak gerekli pratik beceri ve bilgileri öğretmekten ibaret olmadığını, aynı zamanda onları demokratik bir toplumun vatandaşı haline getirmek olduğunu ileri sürüyoruz. Bu nedenle demokratik devlet, okullara yalnızca müfredatta değil, aynı zamanda okul yönetiminde de yansıma bulacak belirli bir özerklik sağlamalıdır. Bu bağlamda makale, eğitimin aktif vatandaşlığı şekillendirme ve çoğulculuğu teşvik etmedeki rolüne dair devam eden tartışmalara katkıda bulunmaktadır. Ulaşılan sonuçlar, siyaset felsefesi, pedagoji ve demokratik pratik arasındaki kesişime yönelik gelecekteki araştırmalara temel teşkil edebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Felsefe, demokrasi, vatandaşlık eğitimi, toplumsal kurumlar, çoğulculuk, siyasal okuryazarlık.

Introduction

The purpose of this work is to explore the relationship between democracy and education, based on the premise that a democratic society can only be formed if there is an educational system that prioritizes democracy and is itself democratic. From the perspective of political philosophy, the central thesis is that democratic education strengthens democracy by promoting individual tolerance and enabling people to better understand the political context, as well as by contributing to the preservation of social institutions.

This paper seeks to answer the following questions: What is the role of education in transmitting democratic values, and is this achievable? How should successful democratic education be organized? What is the relationship between democratic education and social institutions? In the first section, we will briefly review the definitions of democracy, modern education, and liberal society, placing these concepts in the broader context of political philosophy. We will then discuss the importance of democratic education for the proper functioning of social institutions.

There are many different formulations of democracy in the scientific community. Nevertheless, it is possible to combine all the theories around a few fundamental issues. These common issues include the protection and guarantee of human rights, free participation in the decision-making process, fair and equitable cooperation between individuals and groups, and the provision of decision-making tools based on current and accurate information (Harber & Mncube, 2012: 105).

One of the most famous definitions of democracy is the one made by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg speech during the American Civil War: “Democracy is the government of the people, for the people and by the people” (Lincoln, 1863). This definition reveals the essence of democracy. Thus, democracy is based on the idea that all members should make decisions that fully affect the society of that community, and that every member of society should have equal rights to participate in those decisions.

It is argued that democracy is not a natural form of bringing people together, but an extraordinary and rare invention of the human mind. If we take into account the fact that people are not born with democratic principles, then education can be a key factor in the development of these principles (Cook & Westheimer, 2006: 348).

Results and discussion

Historical Context and Theoretical Foundations in Political Philosophy

The question of the role of education in shaping a democratic society is not new; such topics have been discussed since the days of ancient philosophy. One of the first people to think about this was Aristotle. In his book *The Politics*, he writes:

But of all the safeguards that we hear spoken of as helping to maintain constitutional continuity, the most important, but most neglected today, is education, that is, educating citizens for the way of living that belongs to the Constitution in each case. It is useless to have the most beneficial rules of a society fully agreed upon by all who are members of the politeia, if individuals are not going to be trained and have their habits formed for that politeia, that is to live democratically if the laws of the society are democratic, oligarchically if they are oligarchic. (Aristotle, 1962: 215-216).

It is important to note here that a liberal society with democratic state institutions is a prerequisite for the ideas and proposals that will be discussed in this work. Without these conditions, it is impossible to imagine the introduction of innovations in education, since the state mainly funds schools. Any state, in turn, wants to extend its *status quo* in various ways, so schools are an important part of any state's policy.

Democratisation, in turn, has its own prerequisites, without which it is impossible to implement it. Leftwich argues that until certain socio-economic and political conditions are created that relate to the understanding of "modern" society, democracy will not take root. Prerequisites such as industrialisation, urbanisation, bureaucratisation, specialisation of social structures, the value of individualism, and political stability are the social basis of political democratisation. He believes that attempts to introduce democracy, as he says, in "fragile" countries where corruption, patrimonialism and nepotism flourish, will have negative consequences and hinder development (Harber & Mncube, 2012: 107).

As for schools, if we start to investigate the origins of modern schools, we will see that they mostly come from Europe, at least in terms of teaching methods. In Europe at the end of the 19th century, schools were a tool for managing social and political processes. The rapidly developing working class was at that time the primary opponent of the state. The growing industrialisation and urbanisation of large cities contributed to the self-organisation of workers. As Andy Grenn argues, the task of education at that time was not to teach the skills necessary for the industrial sector but to train people in the loyalty, discipline and attitudes necessary to confront the raging social problems. Correspondingly, Toffler outlines the situation in the following way:

Mass education was the ingenious machine constructed by industrialism to produce the kind of adults it needed ... the solution was an educational system that, in its very structure, simulated this new world ... the regimentation, lack of individualisation, the rigid systems of seating, grouping, grading and marking, the authoritarian style of the teacher – are precisely those that made mass public education so effective as an instrument of adaptation for its time and place. (Harber & Mncube, 2012: 114)

Thus, the authoritarian model of education, which was formed to manage socio-political processes, later spread to the colonies of European states, where it was used to control the local population in the interests of the colonialists. In this way, the European model of education has taken root in many countries and remains dominant in most cases.

Further, it will be helpful to define a liberal state to have a complete understanding of the topic. Meira Levinson offers five main characteristics of a liberal state. First, the state must have a complex of social, judicial and legal institutions. A liberal state is a democratic one, where the Constitution would play the role of a deterrent to the power of the state itself. Secondly, in a liberal state, fundamental rights are protected by the Constitution.

The main ones are freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of religion, freedom to own property, freedom from reprisals by anyone, including the state, as well as the freedom to

do what one wants within the framework of the law and in accordance with the Millian harm principle. The third characteristic is related to the diversity of the population. In general, the population of many modern states is diverse in terms of ethnic, religious, cultural, and social composition.

However, what distinguishes a liberal state and society from an illiberal one is its attitude towards social pluralism. A liberal society treats all citizens with tolerance and respect, regardless of any differences. The fourth characteristic of a liberal state is the ideal of equal opportunities for all. Finally, when adopting laws and regulations, the state should not proceed only from the interests of one group of the population. Any policy and jurisdiction, at least in theory, must be approved by all groups of citizens. Also, the state must be economically and politically stable (Levinson, 1999: 41-42).

Principles and Practices of Democratic Education

It is believed that mass public education is important for the emergence of a modern nation-state, for the formation of a modern worker and family, and in general for a modern state economy. Formal education indirectly contributes to the development of democracy by teaching citizens basic bureaucratic, organisational knowledge and behaviour, based on which democratic values can later arise. This means that knowledge and experience of specific democratic values and practices should also be incorporated into this process to strengthen the country's democratic political culture (Harber & Mncube, 2012: 109).

Schools are an ideal place to teach democratic education, as no other social institution offers such opportunities to reach a large number of young people permanently. However, at the same time, the influence of parents on the formation of the child has always been significant, especially during the preschool years. However, modern economic realities often force both parents to work. Therefore, the need for civic education in schools has recently increased. Parents are increasingly relying on schools to ensure that their children not only acquire a set of knowledge but also learn democratic values, such as mutual respect and tolerance, which will benefit them in the future in public life.

As with all issues related to education, there is no single universally accepted answer to the question of what a democratic education should be. Everything depends on the tasks that a democratic education sets for itself. Moreover, since teachers and school administrators think differently, the methods of completing tasks differ from each other. One group believes that the best way to teach democracy is to study the functional structure of government, the history of democratic institutions, and the trials that democratic societies have undergone to protect and strengthen the democratic order. Another group believes that students should be more involved in social projects so that academic knowledge can be applied. At the same time, some believe that educational institutions themselves should be democratically organised. Otherwise, it would be hypocritical to teach democracy in undemocratic, traditional schools (Cook & Westheimer, 2006: 350).

Suppose states are interested in further strengthening democratic institutions. In that case, schools must become democratically organised, and the first task of such schools is to openly declare their commitment to the values of democratic education in their official documents, such as the school's mission statement. In their structures, schools should foster the practice of sharing power over decision-making with key participants in the educational process, including the administration, pupils, and parents. In practice, this will result in a specific transfer of power from the school administration to the rest, particularly the students. In such a situation, a freely elected council will be needed, where everyone, including students, will be represented. Additionally, a governing body will be established, with representation from all parties (Harber & Mncube, 2012: 111).

Accordingly, the culture of democratic schools should be founded on democratic relationships that foster mutual trust and respect. All types of punishments should be excluded.

Instead, students should be taught peer mediation. At the class level, students should have the right to discuss and propose ideas related to the discipline and curriculum. This requires that everyone, including the school administration and students, must at least have the skills of representation, organisation, planning, and conflict resolution (Harber & Mncube, 2012: 111).

It is argued that democratic states need educated citizens in order for their political and social institutions to be stable. Democratic education entails equipping citizens with the necessary knowledge and skills to utilise opportunities and exercise their rights effectively. In particular, participation in the process of democratic governance. One of the primary democratic skills is the ability to engage in discussions about political issues. This enables one to assess the social situation and hold representatives accountable, while also maintaining mutual respect during disagreements. The most important aspect of the deliberation is reciprocity, which implies a willingness to adopt laws and regulations that oblige all citizens. Therefore, reciprocity between free and equal people is one of the main goals of democratic education (Gutmann & Ben-Porath, 2015: 1-2).

Democratic schools are those that seek to educate children in the spirit of the democratic ideal of civic equality. All citizens should be treated as equals, regardless of their race, gender, religious affiliation, or social status. Students should be aware of their rights and prepared to assume the responsibilities of a citizen, including respecting the rights of others (Gutmann & Ben-Porath, 2015: 5).

As noted at the beginning, modern democracies are mostly multi-ethnic and multi-religious. Given this fact, one of the primary tasks of training is to foster tolerance and mutual respect among students. However, it is not always easy to do this, especially when there are children from different cultural backgrounds in the class. There are two approaches to solving this issue. The first is the inclusion of historical events and cultural contributions from various groups in society. The second approach requires tolerance for historical intolerance. That is, tolerance can replace the introduction of a single belief system for all students, regardless of their beliefs. At the same time, tolerance allows citizens to express their opinions and learn about others freely (Gutmann & Ben-Porath, 2015: 6)

Mutual respect implies tolerance of differences and public acceptance of them, so it is of practical importance in cases where people can solve the problem of differences on a peaceful basis. In other words, this personality trait contributes to the peaceful life of people with different views by agreeing to disagree. Therefore, by teaching children to respect each other in school, you introduce the concepts of moral pluralism, which is a necessary value of a democratic society. Children should learn different worldviews because it is impossible to instil respect for what they know nothing about.

Children should be taught to respect democratic institutions, the Constitution and the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, which in turn form the basis of a democratic state. For children to become active participants in a democratic society, it is essential to instil democratic habits, such as participating in solving social problems, voting in elections, understanding their rights, and protecting them. Children should be allowed from school years to study political history and the main events that took place in the political arena of the past, as well as modern political trends and parties. It is necessary to organise various discussions on topics related to the fundamental values of democracy, such as freedom, equality of opportunities, the structure of the state, and so on. Thus, the student will have “political literacy” and the ability to understand the socio-political processes of society.

The lack of political literacy among citizens can lead to various social problems. For example, Murphy writes that people often perceive their fellow citizens with different political views as enemies rather than as political opponents in society. He believed that conflicts between political adversaries are an integral part of the democratic process in any liberal society. However, unfortunately, people sometimes confuse the concept of a political adversary with the concept of a moral enemy:

What is happening is that nowadays the political is played out in the moral register. In other words, it still consists of we/they discrimination, but we/they, instead of being defined with political categories, is now established in moral terms. In place of a struggle between ‘right and left’ we are faced with a struggle between ‘right and wrong. (Mouffe, 2005: 5)

In order to prevent this kind of discord between citizens, it is important to create classes free from any prejudice, where students will discuss existing political and social issues and express their opinions. An American philosopher, John Dewey, argues that a pluralistic society can exist peacefully and be maintained only through appropriate education. Education is not a result, but a process, and life itself. Therefore, the content of education should take into account human nature and the environment, relying on the active involvement of students in the process. In addition, the educational program should include real problems; in this sense, all possible lessons that reflect social issues should be considered (Erdem & Eđmir, 2020: 165).

Dewey describes a democratic state as a society where citizens resolve life’s problems through face-to-face relationships. This description is a good example for schools to create the right environment. In schools, students with the same desires, goals and values will learn to live together and find unity in their thoughts and actions, which will make it possible for individual development through group activities. He believes that traditional methods cannot implement the culture of democracy; for the acquisition of democratic values, students need to study the phenomenon of democracy in practice. Schools have a responsibility to instil a culture of community and cooperation in their students, and schools themselves must model democratic values (Erdem & Eđmir, 2020: 166).

Conclusion

Thus, it has become clear that, like any other state, a democratic state needs appropriate education that reflects democratic values for the stable functioning of socio-political institutions, since today’s schoolchildren are tomorrow’s social agents and citizens. In this case, the task of schools is not only to teach children the necessary practical skills and knowledge that will prepare them for competition in a market economy, but also to help them become citizens of a democratic society. In this sense, it is extremely important to instill in them central ideas of political philosophy, such as a sense of reciprocity, which is expressed in a willingness to engage in dialogue and cooperation, as well as in the acceptance of common laws and rules.

In addition, a democratic state must give schools greater autonomy, which should be reflected not only in the curriculum but also in school management. When developing the strategy and content of the school curriculum, the opinions of students should be taken into account and they should be involved in some decision-making processes. Otherwise, it is illogical to expect children to think and behave democratically, as democratic values are instilled at an early age.

Given all of the above, since moral and political pluralism is an integral part of a democratic society, it is necessary to teach children tolerance for different opinions. Therefore, instilling political literacy in children is also a priority of democratic education. This will raise citizens’ awareness of the political system and help them better understand the social processes taking place, as well as improve the situation with moral tolerance, which is a crucial issue in political philosophy as a whole.

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