Call for Chapters

Topic: Teaching for Democracy in an Age of Economic Disparity

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Notification of Acceptance: November 14, 2014

Introduction

Preparing students to participate in democracy is one of the central charges of today's schools. Indeed, some scholars have argued that it is "the most basic purpose of America's schools…to teach children the moral and intellectual responsibilities of living and working in a democracy" (Soder, 1996). Thomas Jefferson argued that education was "essentially necessary" to ensure that the people were prepared to participate in government, and to guard against the corruptions of wealth, privilege, and the degeneracies of human weakness inherent in all human constructs (Jefferson, 1954 [1784]). Today we recognize that education is a fundamental safeguard against tyranny, both in the U.S. and abroad. But how we frame democratic education is fluid and constantly renegotiated based on the needs of the people and the circumstances in which they find themselves (Torres, 1998).

Currently, much of what constitutes democratic education takes place in civics classes, in which students learn about the functions of government, and their potential roles within it as citizens. Throughout the social studies curriculum, students are pressed to think critically, to learn the tools and dispositions of social discourse around controversial issues, as well as ways and means to involve themselves in the mainstream political process. Although this preparation is essential, it may serve to reinforce the political malaise that is apparent among many of the nation's citizens. The political landscape has shifted in recent years; in particular, the message we provide to students that their voices matter has been challenged publically in the United States.

Two issues of note have reinforced the extent to which the corruptions of wealth that worried Jefferson are alive and well in the American political system. First, the Supreme Court's decisions in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission* which struck down provisions meant to limit political campaign contributions effectively equated money with free speech. Second, Louisiana representative Vance McAllister recently outlined the ways in which such contributions are treated as a quid pro quo in the decision making of elected representatives (MacNeil, 2014). Together, these two issues raise not only the specter of corruption in American politics, but more importantly they

bolster the substantive claim that money is speech in America, and that there is, therefore, no equality of voice among the citizenry. Such a conclusion is made even more troubling by the growing socio-economic inequality in America, an issue receiving renewed attention since Thomas Picketty's (2014) book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* was published earlier this year.

These concerns raise the issue for educators who see democracy as the core pursuit of education that the ways in which we approach democracy education in the United States may be inappropriate for preparing future citizens to secure a democratic voice in ways that seek to foster the republican (i.e. *res publica*) notion of the common good (Paine, 2011). On one hand, the message that we provide to students that their voices matter in the political system—and equally so—becomes worse than a platitude; it becomes a lie. On the other hand, the opposite message, that their voices are meaningless without money to back them can be seen as nothing less than poisonous to the very democracy we wish to bolster with education. Between the lie and the toxin, must lay an honest antidote. Thus, we are left with two central questions: First, what role does education play in democracy today? That is to say, how can we use democracy education to drive democratic aims that meaningfully democratize citizen participation and the ways in which the nation is governed? And, more importantly, how do we prepare students to engage effectively in a democratic system that is fundamentally imbalanced by economic inequality?

The text will draw from the theoretical constructs well established in the social studies citizenship literature. Among these core constructs includes the notion that schools and education constitute one of the "pillars of democracy" that is meant to provide students with the skills and knowledge to ensure a vibrant democratic republic (Carl Kaestle, as cited in Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 28). But how exactly we prepare students depends upon what kind of citizen we believe will be best equipped to do so effectively (e.g., Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) in the current climate. At present, it is clear that the social studies community wants students who have both a rich understanding about the democratic system in which they live and are actively engaged in that system (Parker, 2008), and have teachers capable of engaging them in the process of critical transformation (Giroux, 2009) such that they are able to take part "in the deliberations over the common good" (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 40). In short we want students teachers to learn how to engage in ways have the potential to meaningfully improve democracy in America.

Objective

The proposed volume is unique in that it will provide a space for scholars and practitioners to reconsider how we prepare students to engage in a democratic society as well as the state and nature of democratic education as a whole. In doing so, this text will seek to draw from thoughtful scholars in the social studies as well as from related fields who can shed new light on the challenges of democratic education in the twenty-first century. In doing so, this volume is intended to help practitioners reconsider their practices in attending to education for

democracy. We welcome scholars and practitioners who approach this issue from a variety of directions and theoretical or philosophical perspectives.

Recommended Topics

Setting the Context

This section will include three chapters, each with a specific role in helping to situate the reader to the problem.

Chapter 1: Setting the Educational Context for the State of Democracy Education in America

Chapter 2: Setting the Context of Economic Inequality in the U.S.

Chapter 3: Setting the Legal & Political Context that Compounds Inequality of Voice

Envisioning Democracy

This section would attend to notions of what a more participatory democratic America might realistically look like, as well as the kinds of capacities students of today will need in order to realize these visions. This section will be more philosophically oriented

Pressing Concerns Related to the Nexus between Democracy Education and Economic Disparity

This section would include chapters from scholars which bring to light specific concerns related to democracy education in an age of economic disparity, and relating to the social, political, and juridical issues related the state of American democracy. These issues may attend to structural or curricular issues and their relationship to democratic education (or the ways in which such education may be lacking).

Promising Practices: Three sections, one for each Elementary, Middle Level, and Secondary Classrooms

These sections will include chapters based on research and practice in which illustrate how teachers' sought to engage their students in democratic practices that empowered students as democratic actors and provided them with the tools they need in order to be successful within the current social, economic, and political climate.

Promising Practices in Teacher Training

This section will include chapters based on research and practice in preparing preservice teachers, or providing training to in-service teachers, to engage in effective practices that empowered students as democratic actors and provided them with the tools they need in order to be successful within the current social, economic, and political climate.

Calls to Action

In this section, scholars will ask readers to consider elements that are most often left out of the curriculum that practitioners and scholars should consider more deeply. Some examples might include, developing capacities at movement building, fostering solidarity, developing students' legal aptitudes, recasting democracy education as a form of social justice, etc.

Submission Procedure

Scholars and practitioners are invited to submit on or before September 30, 2014, a 400-600 word proposal clearly explaining the central argument and outlining the content of the proposed chapter, including implications for teacher practice, and providing a rationale that connects the proposal to the theme and purposes of the book. Please indicate the section (or sections, if multiple proposals are submitted) for which you are proposing your chapter and a brief biography and list of your relevant publications. Authors of accepted proposals will be notified by November 14, 2014 about the status of their proposals and sent chapter guidelines. Full chapters are expected to be submitted by April 3, 2015. All submitted chapters will be reviewed on a double-blind review basis. Contributors may also be requested to serve as reviewers for this project. Feel free to send a quick email noting your interest in advance of your submission.

Publisher

A publisher will be secured once abstracts have been considered and accepted.

Inquiries

If you have questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Cory Wright-Maley at (403) 254-3129, or by e-mail at cory.wrightmaley@stmu.ca.

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