TEACHING DEMOCRACY FOR POLITICAL ACTION: ON THE AIMS OF DEMOCRACY EDUCATION IN PALESTINE

MAHER Z. HASHWEH

Abstract – *This paper aims to identify and explicate the aims of democracy education, and to reach some agreement on the importance of these aims. It is divided into two parts. In the first theoretical part, a brief review of the works of some scholars who examined education and democracy is conducted in order to identify some of the important aims of democracy education. Subsequently, a classification of the aims of democracy education, emphasising teaching democracy for empowerment and political involvement, is presented. In the second empirical part, a report is presented on using the Delphi technique to reach consensus among key Palestinian educators about the important aims of democracy education in Palestine. It was found that two groups of independently working educators – namely, university professors and school teachers – shared the author's priorities for democracy education.*

Introduction

It is becoming increasingly evident that the establishment of democracy and respect for human rights are crucial for real security and sustainable development in the Arab World. The important role of education in achieving these ends is also gradually realised. It is opportune to incorporate teaching for democracy as an important aim of schooling, and for democracy education curricula to be included along with language, mathematics, religion, science and other school curricula. Civic education courses in some countries, including Palestine, already devote substantial portions to the teaching of the different components of democracy and human rights. In the last decade, it has also become popular for NGOs working in the area to offer workshops on democracy and human rights. This is done, however, without agreement on what we mean exactly by democracy education, and without proper cognisance of the variety of aims for teaching democracy. Only after we reach agreement on the meaning and aims of democracy education can we design the appropriate curriculum and instruction.

Democracy and education in the Arab World

Interest in the relations between democracy and education has a long history in the West mainly due to the nature of the democratic western countries. Dewey (1966) was among the pioneers who explored these relations at the beginning of the 20th century. A century later, interest in these relations is still high, and it has gained global acceptance. In the discussion paper presented to the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century (UNESCO, 1992), education was considered an important tool for democracy, human rights and citizenship. The report asserted, 'there is a perceived need to envision a learning environment where knowledge and respect for democracy, human rights and conscious citizenship will be constant dimensions for life' (p. 11). The report additionally posed many questions. These included:

- What kind of citizens should be educated and for what type of democracies?
- What should be the relationship between schools and communities?
- What should be done to enable young people to learn how to work in teams, to be tolerant and cooperative?

Issues of democracy and education, and the role of education in transitions to democracy have gained significant attention after the collapse of East European regimes. The recent developments in the Middle East have also triggered interest about the role of education in political and social stability and change in the Arab and Moslem countries.

It is interesting at this point to identify the aims for democracy education in western scholarly writings. Some scholars emphasise the development of cognitive aspects – the knowledge and skills necessary to live in a democratic society or to bolster democracy in society. Wood (1990), for example, advocates engaging students with big questions – the real local issues and problems that they face, such as labour problems in areas of high unemployment. Students are engaged with these problems to make sense of the world. They realise that these problems originate from some prior made choices, and are not inevitable. Consequently, students realise that things can, and should, be different. He also calls for developing critical forms of literacy that concern 'the ability to evaluate what is read or heard with respect to the interest being served or the positions taken' (Wood, 1988, p. 178).

Following a review of different ideas about teaching for democracy in the United States, Smyth (1997) concludes that it is important to develop students' critical abilities, and 'to work in ways other than individual ways and to create forms of shared responsibility and community' (p. 1125). Thus, although Smyth emphasises the development of values – such as cooperation in place of competition – his emphasis on the cognitive outcomes of teaching for democracy is still clear. Strike (1993), who comes from a different orientation, nevertheless emphasises cognitive outcomes. He calls for creating a school culture that supports a discursive or deliberating community where all positions are presented and discussed. In such a community, social relations are characterised by equality, autonomy, reciprocity, and high regard for rational means of attaining consensus.

Noddings (1997) points out that in contrast to this emphasis on the cognitive domain – in particular on reasoning, problem solving and critical thinking – the character education movement concentrates on the development of virtues. She draws our attention to the important role of stories in moral development. And this irrespective of whether one takes a conservative orientation that teaches values in a direct manner or a liberal orientation that concentrates on the function of rational discussion in adopting certain values. What is important in Noddings' call for the use of stories is its emphasis on the affective domain rather than just focusing solely on the cognitive domain in democracy education.

In the Arab World, in spite of the big interest in democracy, the relations between democracy and education have still not been widely examined. In studies prior to 1990, scholars criticised the content and pedagogy of Arab education for being incompatible with democracy. Some aspects that hinder the development of democracy were also identified. It needs to be said, however, that these studies did not empirically examine child-rearing practices or school educational practices, and that in many cases these relied solely on personal experience.

Bahlul (1997) reviewed the works of some of these scholars. In terms of content, Bahlul asserts that Arab education emphasises values such as dependence, incompetence, respect for elders, charity, and collective belonging rather than individual autonomy – values that impede the democratisation process. For example, Bahlul discusses what Sharabi (1975) has termed 'the bourgeois-feudal mentality'. This mentality, which promotes the values of dependence and incompetence, inevitably maintains the status quo and the existing hegemonic forces in society. Bahlul also reminds us that Barakat (1984) had considered well-accepted values in Arab societies, such as charity and mercy, as values that rationalise an unjust social order since these values implicitly legitimate social and economic inequality rather than justice and equality.

With regard to educational methods, Bahlul asserts that Arab education emphasises rote learning and punishment at the expense of rational dialogue, and that these methods contradict those that are required for democracy. He further refers to Sharabi's assertion that Arab education gives a lot of importance to recitation and corporal punishment, both of which emphasise power relations and de-emphasise deep understanding. This leads students to accept the status quo, which consequently hinders democratic change.

In contrast, Giackaman (1997) contends:

> 'Modern education encourages the abilities to analyze, make connections, deduce, and provide evidence to defend one's position or point of view. It tries to convince, as far as possible, through dialogue and rational debate. These characteristics assume the existence of more than one point of view about specific issues, and, therefore, the need to resort to evidence and support to convince the other party. If there were only one point of view about most issues there would be no need for proof, displaying of evidence, and seeking to convince others, and the requisite skills and abilities related to these needs. These characteristics of modern education are of the same type of characteristics needed for democracy education.' (p. 8)

Reading Giackaman and Bahlul, one can identify interest in the development of both democratic values and attitudes. These include, for instance, open-mindedness and accepting defeat in the democratic game on one hand, and cognitive skills such as analysis, evaluation, and critical thinking on the other hand. Following his review, Bahlul calls for changes in both curriculum content and delivery. In terms of content, he calls for the introduction of the principles and values associated with democracy, including freedom, equality and respect of basic human rights. In terms of pedagogy, he calls for adopting methods that facilitate freedom and independence in research, thinking and expression. His intention is to inhibit close-mindedness and fanaticism, and to encourage students to open up to the world and the 'other'.

Since 1990, a number of Arab researchers have conducted detailed empirical studies of child rearing and schooling practices. This research body shows that child rearing practices are affected by society and culture, and that these practices also affect society and culture by contributing to stability. According to Watfa (1996, 1999a, 1999b), the culture of authoritarianism is reflected in, and simultaneously maintains, relations between the old and young, between teachers and students, and between home and classroom practices. Watfa contends further that the pertinent literature in the Arab World reveals how the embedded authoritarianism is largely related to the patriarchal structure of Arab society. His point is that Arab culture, which emphasises the need for the young to obey their elders, expects schools to train students to become obedient and submissive by incorporating these values in teacher-student relations. Al-Naqib (1993) similarly concludes that the role of Arab education is to teach students blind obedience, thereby facilitating the acceptance of the prevailing values and ideology. A number of studies have shown that such a patriarchal relation affects negatively students' learning outcomes (see, for example, Haidar's [1996] study which reports on the effects of a hierarchal relation on students' scientific attitudes).

Although, in the last two decades, there have been a significant number of research initiatives that examine the relationship between democracy and education in the Arab World, there is still lack of detailed specifications regarding possible and desirable aims, (and student learning outcomes), of teaching for democracy. What one encounters is either complete lack of specification of aims or specification of aims that emphasise certain domains, such as knowledge or cognitive skills and abilities, while neglecting other domains, such as attitudes or action. But the highlighting of the full range of possible aims allows educators to consciously identify priorities and to pursue certain aims at the expense of others.

A classification of the aims of democracy education

Table 1 provides a classification of the aims of democracy education. In reality, although the aims are presented here under four domains for analytical and functional purposes, they cannot be totally separated. For knowledge and skills, or products and process, are interrelated, and so are attitudes and actions. While the first two domains can be mapped to the cognitive domain in Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, the third is related to Bloom's affective domain. The classification can also be seen as bridging the gap between knowledge, understanding and abilities in the first two domains and the action and performance aims identified in the fourth domain. However, no hierarchy in these domains is assumed. For instance, understanding (in the first domain) aids application (in the second) that facilitates in turn deeper understanding. Again, knowledge and understanding guide action and performance, but performance also helps to realise the limits of principles and theories, thus promoting understanding.

The first domain 'knowledge and understanding' has eight aims. It is important for a student who has studied about democracy to understand the content or substantive structure of democratic thought. This includes the concepts of freedom, equality and human rights, and the basic components of democracy such as the rule of law, the legislative process, and citizenship (Aim 1.1). It is also important for students to identify the characteristics of democratic political systems, such as the separation of powers and the presence of mechanisms for monitoring the performance of each branch of power (Aim 1.2). This enables students to evaluate their local system. Additionally, it is valuable that they understand basic philosophical concepts related to democracy, such as political power, religion and politics, rationality, and the nature of knowledge (Aim 1.3).

TABLE 1: A classification of the aims of democracy education

1. Knowledge and Understanding

1.1 Knowing facts, concepts, principles, and theories of democratic thought.
1.2 Knowing the characteristics of democratic political systems.
1.3 Understanding the philosophical concepts and principles related to democracy.
1.4 Realising the limitations of democratic thought and practices.
1.5 Historical orientation: becoming cognizant of the background and development of democracy.
1.6 Understanding the interrelations between democracy, society and economics.
1.7 Knowing the characteristics of the local society and political system, and the important current socio-political problems.
1.8 Knowing the alternatives for democratic practices and for augmenting democracy in the local society.

2. Intellectual and Social Skills

2.1 Application: using democratic thought and knowledge about democratic systems in understanding and analysing reality.
2.2 Higher cognitive skills I: analysing, connecting, deducing and defending positions in order to debate and convince in a rational manner.
2.3 Higher cognitive skills II: making justified moral decisions and judgments.
2.4 Analytic/critical skills: critical analysis of texts, positions, and opinions to identify implicit assumptions and hidden interests, and distinguishing between knowledge and opinion.
2.5 Synthetic/creative skills: solving non-routine socio-political problems innovatively.
2.6 Using information resources in problem-solving and autonomous learning.
2.7 Effectively communicating with others in oral and written form.
2.8 Cooperatively working with others, and organising them for action.

3. Attitudes and Interests

3.1 Showing positive attitudes towards democracy and democrats.
3.2 Accepting democracy as a political system and as a way of life.
3.3 Enjoying political activity.
3.4 Embracing democratic values and attitudes.
3.5 Developing a positive sense of self-efficacy.

4. Action and Performance

4.1 Demonstrating democratic behaviour or practices in daily and political life.
4.2 Participating in building a just and democratic society.

The key point is that democracy presumes that knowledge cannot be proven true, and that knowledge is only provisionally accepted and subject to change in the future. The consequent understanding that nobody owns irrefutable knowledge calls for open-mindedness and the willingness to engage in dialogue with others in order to reach consensus. Other important philosophical concepts and principles including justice, individual freedom, and consequentionalist and non-consequentionalist ethical theories that help students realise the ethical bases of democracy and democratic systems.

Deep understanding of democracy also entails a realisation of the limits of democratic thought and its various applications in different political systems (Aim 1.4). For instance, it is important to be cognizant of the relation, in many Western countries, between the economic status of a citizen and his or her ability to undertake an election campaign for public office, or the substantial influence of some special-interest groups on the media and on the political decision-taking process. A deep understanding of democracy would not be complete without knowledge of the social, economic and ideational conditions that influence the development of democratic regimes and that accompany the development of democracy (Aim 1.5), and without understanding the interrelations between democracy, society and economics (Aim 1.6). This last aspect includes studying the effects of the prevalent culture, including norms and values, the nature and structure of society, and the degree of economic development of a country on democracy, as well as the social, economic and ethical implications of democracy.

While the first six aims of the 'knowledge and understanding' domain concentrate on the development of a deep understanding of democracy and cognisance of the means of developing democracy, the last two aims of this domain are meant to help students relate democracy to the characteristics of the local society. Aim 1.7 allows the student to realise the characteristics of the local society and political system, and to identify the important current socio-cultural problems in his or her society. On the other hand, Aim 1.8 introduces the student to the alternatives for democratic action and for augmenting democracy in the local society. These eight aims form a solid intellectual platform for the student to use in developing his or her intellectual skills, democratic attitudes and practices (i.e., the other three domains).

The second domain is concerned with developing students' intellectual and social skills and abilities. The idea here is to help them use what they have learned about democracy to understand and analyse reality, to take defensible moral and political positions and judgments, to participate in deliberations and argumentations, to critically analyse public written texts and oral discourse, to solve personal and societal democracy-related problems, to become autonomous learners and problem-solvers, to communicate effectively, and to work with others and to organise others for action. Aim 2.1 emphasises the need for learning for transfer – that is, to use knowledge about democracy in private and public life. The next two aims emphasise the higher order cognitive skills necessary for democratic and moral practice. These include analysing, making connections and deductions, and arguing and deliberating – all of which are necessary skills in decision-making and in defending the decisions taken. It is also important that future citizens, in order to be in a better position to cope with the rhetoric or demagogy of politicians, are critical thinkers who can analyse the opinions and allegations of others (Aim 2.4).

Aims 2.5 and 2.6 highlight the need for the democratic citizen to solve problems individually and in collaboration with others, and to use different information resources to solve these problems and to learn autonomously. Citizen participation in decision-making requires educated and well-informed persons who are aware of all relevant information about a certain issue or who can gather the required information on their own. The last two aims in this domain are concerned with the social skills of effective communication and collaboration. This builds on the understanding that political democratic action is most frequently a long-term collaborative effort rather than a short-term individual undertaking.

The third domain identifies the attitudes and interests needed for democratic practice. The first two aims identify the need for students to hold positive attitudes toward democracy and to personally accept democracy as a political system and a way of life. These aims basically focus on the essential attitudes that should be promoted in programmes of democracy education. A student with such attitudes will support democracy without necessarily becoming politically active or engaged in political life. It is also important for citizens to enjoy, or at least not to hate, social/political activity (Aim 3.3 – see also Aims 3.4 and 3.5 for their importance in developing a politically active citizen). In fact, many prominent figures in political and public life enjoy their work. In particular, they value working with others, struggling to solve certain issues, and showing solidarity with specific sectors of society. The activities themselves, which need not necessarily be means to important aims held by these activists, become internally motivating or satisfying.

Aim 3.3 emphasises the need for the student to adopt democratic values and attitudes, such as respect for the opinions of others and open-mindedness. Open-mindedness, or the disposition to listen carefully to others and to change one's opinion when there is a need to do so, is related to one's epistemological beliefs (an issue previously discussed under Aim 1.3). There are differences between individuals with regard to the degree to which they adopt certain values or beliefs. According to psychologists who have studied moral development, when certain ethical values and beliefs become part of the individual's personal identity, that individual tends to act or behave in a manner that is harmonious with these values and beliefs (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont & Stephens, 2003). Consequently, one of the aims of democracy education is to assist the student to incorporate ethical beliefs into his or her personal identity**.** Erickson (1968) contends that adolescent students are primarily concerned with the crisis of identifying and developing their identities. This aim is thus particularly important for democracy education during the period of adolescence, even if it is known that people also remain concerned with the dilemma of identity formation in later years.

Some researchers have investigated the presence and development of a political or civic identity. Some studies (e.g., McAdam, 1988; Colby et al., 2003) have found that politically active college students remain active only when this activity becomes part of their political identity, that is, their sense and views of themselves and who they are. But others, in spite of their political activity during college years, do no continue to be politically active because political interests and activities do not become part of their political identity.

The last aim in this domain concentrates on the significance of developing students' sense of self-efficacy so that they come to believe in their ability to participate in social and political activity and in their capacity to influence and change their environment. Closely related to this is the concept of empowerment, that is, providing the learner with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to make decisions and to take responsibility for them. Some studies have shown that individuals who have a positive conception of fate control are more active than others, for these individuals believe that the future is affected by what the human being does at present (see Rowe, 1983). Ramsey (1993) reviewed some studies that show that a student's behaviour toward the environment is influenced by fate control and other factors such as the valuation by the student of his or her abilities and effectiveness or self-efficacy. Analogically, it seems that the teaching of concepts and principles of democracy or of higher-order and critical thinking skills is not sufficient to develop in students the tendency to participate effectively in political life and to work to consolidate democracy in society. Indeed, the acquiring of the proper attitudes and interests is also vitally important. In particular, developing the students' confidence in their ability to influence their social and physical environment, or their capability to make a difference, helps bridge the gap between intellectual understanding and democratic practices.

In this area, psychologists have differentiated between personal- or self-efficacy (i.e., the valuation of one's ability to affect one's own personal situation and future) and political efficacy (i.e., the valuation of one's ability to influence the political process). Bandura (1997) has shown that an individual's sense of self-efficacy and political-efficacy are related, even if the correlation is weak, and that an individual's political-efficacy is more predictive of political behaviour than self-efficacy. It seems that many persons feel that they can control their personal life but that they do not have any political influence. This can lead to feelings of frustration and a sceptic outlook toward the political process and the political institutions in one's country.

The fourth and final domain is concerned with action and practice. The final aim of democratic education is not merely to develop a student who is well educated about democracy, or even a student who is a critical thinker. The aim should be instead to develop future citizens who are well empowered for political participation and who act, individually and collaboratively, in a democratic manner to develop and bolster democracy in society. Aim 4.1, which is related to behaving in a democratic manner in a democratic society, is about being a 'good citizen'. Aim 4.2, however, is more radical. It involves challenging and changing the status quo in order to build a more *just* and *democratic* society. This might include challenging the authorities, getting into conflicts and actively opposing existing policies and social-economic structures.

Empirical validation: a Delphi study

The aims of democracy education presented above, which also reflect the author's own philosophy and point of view, were identified by means of a review of scholarly writings about democracy and education. The next step was to investigate: (i) the extent to which other Palestinian educators share the author's priorities; and (ii) how much consensus there is among them about these priorities. To answer these two questions, a two-stage Delphi study was conducted.

The Delphi technique

The Delphi technique is a procedure to reach consensus among a group of experts without face-to-face interactions. Each participant usually first answers a questionnaire, and then responds to subsequent ones after receiving feedback on the opinions expressed by the other participants on previous questionnaires. In each subsequent questionnaire, the participant is encouraged to re-evaluate each item in the questionnaire, for example to re-rate its importance, in the light of the average rating that the item received on the previous one. The method's main advantage is its efficiency. It makes it possible to reach consensus among a group of experts, separated geographically, without bringing them into the same place. The method also allows the participant to express his or her opinion anonymously, thus reducing the pressure to conform to others' opinions. This affords the participant the chance to reflect critically on his or her opinion, to rationally consider the issue at leisure, and to provide reasoned written responses. The method has been used since the 1960s for identifying aims and priorities in a variety of areas of educational research, including teacher education (e.g., Cyphert & Gant, 1970), school educational planning (e.g., Rasp, 1974), and research in science education (e.g., Butts, Capie, Fuller, May, Okey & Yeany, 1978) and the science curriculum (e.g., Hausesler, Frey, Hoffman, Rost & Spada, 1980; Osborn, Collins, Ratcliffe, Millar & Duschl, 2003).

In most Delphi studies, a group of experts is identified, usually composed of a number of subgroups that are however all treated as one group. That is, all participants receive feedback for the previous questionnaire using all the participants' responses. For example, the Osborne et al. (2003) study identified 25 expert science educators from five subgroups: (i) scientists; (ii) historians, philosophers, and sociologists of science; (iii) those working to improve the public understanding of science; (iv) science education academics; and (v) science teachers. Participants in each subgroup received the same feedback provided to the other subgroups: It consisted of mean ratings of all the participants' responses. The first round is usually an open-ended questionnaire, which is followed by two (and, in rare cases, three) rounds. The minimum number of Delphi participants is recommended to be 10 (Cochran, 1983; cited in Osborne et al., 2003). The participants are usually identified as experts according to certain criteria defined by the researcher, and no effort is made to select a representative sample.

Methodology

In the present study, two groups of 'experts' were chosen. The first group was composed of 21 faculty members in a Palestinian university in the central area of the West Bank. The criteria used for choosing them were that they held degrees in a democracy-related social science or humanities field, and that they were interested in democracy education. The second group was composed of 107 grade nine school teachers of civic education in the Educational Directorate of Ramallah in the central West Bank. The different 'sample' sizes for the two groups reflects the respective sizes of the pools form which they were drawn – that is, university faculty members in one university versus grade nine school teachers in a central West Bank directorate. All 21 university educators (henceforth called 'professors') and 85 school teachers (henceforth called 'teachers'), that is about 79%, answered the questionnaire distributed in Round 1 of the study. The professors held doctorate degrees in philosophy, cultural studies, history, political science, sociology, law and education. Seventy three percent of the teachers held bachelor degrees, 5% held masters degrees, and 22% held a two-year course education diplomas. Sixty three percent of the teachers had majored in history or a combination of history and another social science, 16% in geography, and about 21% in other specialisations ranging form the natural sciences to Islamic religious studies.

In Round 1, a close-ended questionnaire, consisting of 23 items, was used. The items, which represented the aims classified in Table 1, were presented to the participants in an unordered manner and without the classifying categories. The participants were asked to rate each aim in relation to its perceived importance within a democracy education curriculum at secondary school level. The following five-point Likert scale was used: 5 – very important; 4 – important; 3 – moderately important; 2 – slightly important; and 1 – unimportant. Unlike many other Delphi studies that start with an open-ended questionnaire from which the items of the second round questionnaire are inductively constructed, in this study we started with a closed-ended questionnaire because the aims had already been identified and the purpose of the study was to validate these aims.

In Round 2, the participants were provided with the items of the original questionnaire with three adjacent columns. In the first column, the participant was reminded of his or her previous rating. In the second column, the Round 1 mean rating for the item was provided. The participant was asked to re-rate the item in column three, given the feedback provided in column two. Unlike other Delphi studies, the two groups were treated as two separate samples. That is, the participants in each group were provided with the means calculated for their particular group. This decision reflected the author's interest in reaching consensus within each group and then comparing the results for the two groups. Nineteen professors (90.5%) and 73 teachers (85.9%) returned the Round 2 questionnaire. The reliability of this questionnaire (coefficient α) was .89 for the teachers' group, .80 for the professors' group, and .87 for the combined (collapsed) sample of professors and teachers.

Results

Main findings

The mean score, the standard deviation and the mode for each aim or item in the questionnaire were calculated using the data of the 1-5 response categories collected in Rounds 1 and 2. The results, sorted in descending order according to the means in Round 2, are presented in Table 2. These results are based on calculations from the two subgroups (i.e., professors and teachers) taken as one group. The two categories were collapsed for this part of the analysis because,

TABLE 2: Aims of democracy education by mean (M), standard deviation (SD) and mode as ranked by Palestinian educators according to perceived importance

Aim	**Round 2**			**Round 1**		
	M	*SD*	mode	*M*	*SD*	mode
2.8 Working cooperatively with others	4.54	.65	5	4.31	.85	5
1.7 Characteristics of local society	4.49	.73	5	4.31	.84	5
1.1 Concepts and theories of democratic thought	4.45	.65	5	4.38	.75	5
2.2 Cognitive skills I: deliberating publicly	4.45	.80	5	4.26	.94	5
4.1 Exhibiting democratic practices	4.43	.88	5	4.44	.89	5
1.2 Characteristics of democratic political systems	4.37	.67	5	4.27	.78	5
4.2 Participating in building a just and democratic society	4.28	.98	5	4.20	.96	5
2.5 Synthetic/creative skills: innovative problem-solving	4.27	.81	5	4.16	.91	5
2.3 Making justified moral decisions and judgments	4.24	.78	4	4.22	.98	5
1.6 Interrelations between democracy, society and economics	4.24	.71	4	4.10	.83	4
2.6 Using resources in problem-solving and learning	4.24	.86	5	4.16	.97	5
2.7 Effectively communicating with others	4.21	.83	4	4.12	.82	4
1.8 Alternatives for democratic practices in local community	4.16	.85	4	4.15	.86	4
2.4 Analytic/critical skills: critical analysis of texts and discourse	4.13	.91	4	4.06	.95	4
3.2 Accepting democracy as a system and a way of life	4.09	1.15	5	4.19	1.13	5
3.5 Developing a positive sense of self-efficacy	4.09	.72	4	3.97	.86	4
1.4 Limitations of democratic thought and practices	3.98	.82	4	3.89	.92	4
3.4 Embracing democratic values and attitudes	3.98	1.18	5	3.98	1.13	5
2.1 Application: using democratic thought to understand and analyse reality	3.96	.93	4	3.99	1.00	5
3.1 Showing positive attitudes toward democracy	3.93	.96	4	3.98	.93	4
1.3 Philosophical concepts and principles related to democracy	3.93	.91	4	3.87	.98	4
1.5 Historical orientation: development of democracy	3.77	1.00	4	3.66	.97	4
3.3 Enjoying political activity	3.63	1.01	4	3.64	1.00	4

as will be shown in detail later on, there were almost no differences between the two groups.

The mode for each aim, even in Round 1, was ≥ 4. This indicated that the educators viewed the aims as either important or very important. Fifteen aims (65%) in Round 1 and 16 aims (70%) in Round 2 had a mean ≥ 4. There was relatively high consensus about the importance of these aims among the respondents: In Rounds 1 and 2, 19 aims (82%) had a standard deviation < 1. Another way to measure the consensus about the importance of a certain aim is to calculate the percentage of respondents who rate that aim as at least 'important' (i.e., mean ≥ 4). Table 3 shows these percentages for each aim in both rounds.

TABLE 3: Percentage of respondents rating each aim at least as 'important' in Round 1 and in Round 2

		At least 'important' (Percentage)	
	Aim	**Round 2**	**Round 1**
2.8	Working cooperatively with others	93.5	84.9
1.1	Concepts and theories of democratic thought	93.5	87.7
1.7	Characteristics of local society	92.4	84.0
4.1	Exhibiting democratic practices	91.3	84.9
1.2	Characteristics of democratic political systems	91.3	84.0
2.2	Cognitive skills I: deliberating publicly	89.1	80.2
1.6	Interrelations between democracy, society and economics	89.1	76.4
2.5	Synthetic/creative skills: innovative problem-solving	87.0	77.4
1.8	Alternatives for democratic practices in local community	87.0	83.0
4.2	Participating in building a just and democratic society	85.9	82.1
2.6	Using resources in problem-solving and learning	85.9	81.1
2.3	Making justified moral decisions and judgments	84.8	79.2
2.7	Effectively communicating with others	84.8	80.2
3.2	Accepting democracy as a system and a way of life	82.6	76.4
3.5	Developing a positive sense of self-efficacy	82.6	73.6
2.4	Analytic/critical skills: critical analysis of texts and discourse	81.5	76.4
1.4	Limitations of democratic thought and practices	77.2	69.8
2.1	Application: using democratic thought to understand and analyse reality	77.2	70.8
3.4	Embracing democratic values and attitudes	76.1	73.6
3.1	Showing positive attitudes toward democracy	72.8	76.4
1.3	Philosophical concepts and principles related to democracy	67.4	65.1
1.5	Historical orientation: development of democracy	67.4	59.4
3.3	Enjoying political activity	63.0	58.5

For this Delphi Study, it was decided to define consensus as a minimum of two thirds of the participants (66.7%) rating the aim as ≥ 4 on the Likert scale. Eventually, only one aim (i.e., Aim 3.3 – Enjoying political activity) fell below this criterion. Two other aims just passed the criterion. These were the aims related to gaining a historical orientation about democracy (i.e., Aim 1.5) and understanding the philosophical concepts and principles underlying democracy (i.e., Aim 1.3).

Research questions

Coming back to the two questions asked at the beginning of this Delphi Study, the analysis of the present data indicates that:

(i) The respondents, composed of Palestinian school teachers and university professors, rated the aims of democracy education proposed in the first part of this paper as either important or very important. This shows that they shared the author's priorities about the aims of teaching democracy in Palestinian schools.

(ii) There was consensus about the importance of 22 out of the 23 proposed aims. Consequently, the Delphi study served to validate the proposed aims of democracy education.

It was moreover deemed interesting to investigate whether there were differences between the priorities of the professors and the school teachers. This is discussed in the following section.

Variance between subgroups

Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations for each aim in Round 2. A *t*-test for differences between means was conducted for each aim. Significant differences were found for only two out of the 23 aims. While the professors rated Aim 3.3 (i.e., Enjoying political activity) as moderately important with a mean of 3.1, the teachers rated it close to 'important' with a mean of 3.8 ($p < .01$). The professors probably viewed this aim either as not important or else as difficult to achieve at this level of education. In contrast, the professors viewed the development of critical thinking abilities as more important than the teachers (means of 4.6 and 4.0 respectively, $p < .05$), who still viewed this aim as important. In conclusion, when comparing the ratings of each aim given by teachers and professors, very little differences were found between the two groups. There were in fact no significant differences on 91% of the aims.

TABLE 4: Round 2 means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for each aim by subgroup

	Teachers		**Professors**	
Aim	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
1.1 Concepts and theories of democratic thought	4.480	.669	4.316	.582
1.2 Characteristics of democratic political systems	4.356	.714	4.421	.507
1.3 Philosophical concepts and principles related to democracy	3.890	.891	4.105	.994
1.4 Limitations of democratic thought and practices	3.904	.819	4.263	.806
1.5 Historical orientation: development of democracy	3.795	.985	3.684	1.108
1.6 Interrelations between democracy, society and economics	4.233	.736	4.263	.653
1.7 Characteristics of local society	4.452	.782	4.632	.496
1.8 Alternatives for democratic practices in local community	4.206	.833	4.000	.943
2.1 Application: using democratic thought to understand and analyse reality	3.863	.918	4.316	.946
2.2 Cognitive skills I: deliberating publicly	4.425	.848	4.526	.612
2.3 Making justified moral decisions and judgments	4.247	.760	4.222	.878
2.4 Analytic/critical skills: critical analysis of texts and discourse	4.014	.920	4.579	.769
2.5 Synthetic/creative skills: innovative problem-solving	4.343	.837	4.000	.667
2.6 Using resources in problem-solving and learning	4.260	.866	4.158	.898
2.7 Effectively communicating with others	4.274	.804	3.947	.911
2.8 Working cooperatively with others	4.589	.642	4.368	.684
3.1 Showing positive attitudes toward democracy	4.000	.850	3.684	1.336
3.2 Accepting democracy as a system and a way of life	4.137	1.071	3.895	1.449
3.3 Enjoying political activity	3.781	.932	3.053	1.129
3.4 Embracing democratic values and attitudes	4.000	1.130	3.895	1.410
3.5 Developing a positive sense of self-efficacy	4.069	.733	4.158	.688
4.1 Exhibiting democratic practices	4.452	.867	4.368	.955
4.2 Participating in building a just and democratic society	4.384	.922	3.895	1.150

TABLE 5: Round 2 means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for the aims by domain and subgroup

	Teachers (*n* = 73)		**Professors** (*n* = 19)	
Domain	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Practice	4.42	.77	4.13	1.01
Skills	4.25	.57	4.26	.47
Knowledge	4.16	.49	4.21	.52
Attitudes	4.00	.64	3.74	.85

To examine the variance at the domain level, the means and standard deviations of the two subgroups were calculated for each of the four domains (see Table 5). Application of the *t*-test for differences between means for each domain revealed that the teachers and professors did not view the importance of each domain in a significantly different manner. In summary, the examination of the variances between the two subgroups at the domain level revealed no differences between them, while the examination at the particular aim level revealed no differences in 91% of the cases. Two conclusions could be drawn. Firstly, the fact that the two groups of educators did not differ significantly in their priorities for democracy education, and the fact that these priorities – which corresponded with those of the author as presented in this study – validated the aims of democracy education offered in this paper. Secondly, the fact that the two subgroups did not differ significantly in their priorities allows us, as was done in the previous section, to collapse the two subgroups and analyse the data for one sample only.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to identify and classify the priorities of democracy education for Palestine. It was argued that the final goals of democracy education should extend beyond providing the students with deep understanding of democratic concepts and principles, or helping them to acquire democracy-related intellectual and social skills, or even developing their attitudes and interests in democracy, even if these aims are all important. The final aim of democracy education should be the development of good citizens who are engaged in the political life in a democracy, and who participate in building a just and democratic society where this does not exist. It was to that end that the classification of the aims of democracy education was proposed. The present study revealed that two independently working groups of Palestinian educators shared the author's priorities. Consensus was achieved for all aims except for one related to the enjoyment of political and democratic activities. The educators perhaps viewed this aim as not appropriate for all students, but only for the few who will become political activists in the future. And, perhaps, they are right. The importance of this study is that it starts a dialogue and initiates serious thinking about our priorities for democracy education. Issues about pedagogy and resource development are important, but these require careful studies in the future and are only subsequent to identifying our priorities. It is moreover hoped that the present study contributes to a dialogue about democracy education beyond Palestine – particularly, in the Arab World and in our Mediterranean region. It would, for instance, be interesting to learn to what extent other educators in the region agree with these aims, and if the present framework has neglected important aims or approaches to democracy education.

One particular finding, however, still merits some discussion. There is a need to explain the early consensus achieved within both groups, the agreement between the two groups in spite of the fact that they represent two different sectors of educators (i.e., university professors and school teachers), and finally the agreement of both groups with the author. One probable reason for this agreement is the fact that almost all aims in the taxonomy were derived inductively from the literature on democracy education. That is, the taxonomy included aims that previous scholars working in this field of study found important. One consequently should not be surprised that Palestinian educators also found them important. The present taxonomy merely organised these aims and allowed a view of the whole rather than the parts.

A second factor that could explain this agreement is the peculiar context of Palestine. Palestinians in the Israeli occupied territories have lived since 1967 under foreign military rule. This made any democratic participation for them impossible. Yet, they have witnessed democracy in Israel, the state that occupies them, and the recent transitions to democracy in many countries. This has made democracy an important ideal for them. The recent internal violence and lawlessness in the occupied territories have made the democratic ideal even more essential to the majority of Palestinians. Indeed, the rule of law, accountability, and civil liberties have become more appreciated and desired in a situation in which they are absent. Consequently, the aims of democracy education presented to the educators in this study were deemed important.

Finally, the identification and validation of the aims of democracy education provided in this study have important implications for education in Palestine. Identifying the full range of important aims allows educators, when designing different democracy education programmes, to provide balance in their aims between the different domains – namely, cognitive, affective, and performance or action. Additionally, the identification and classification of aims helps in the analysis and evaluation of existing programmes, curricula and instruction. It guides programme and student evaluation, and also provides a common language to discuss democracy education programmes. In short, classification of aims, as Shulman (2002) asserts in another context, provides a framework, or a middle-range theory, that guides development, analysis, assessment and evaluation in democracy education.

Maher Z. Hashweh *lectures in the Department of Education and Psychology at Birzeit University, Birzeit, Palestine. Address for correspondence: P.O. Box 14, Birzeit, West Bank (via Israel). E-mail: mhashweh@birzeit.edu*

References

Al-Naqib, K. H. (1993) The educational dilemma and the silent revolution: a study in the sociology of culture (in Arabic), *Al-Mustaqbal Al-'Arabi*, Vol. 16(174), pp. 61-74.

Bahlul, R. (1997) *Education and Democracy* (in Arabic). Ramallah: Muwatin.

Bandura, A. (1997) *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. New York: Freeman & Company.

Barakat, H. (1984) *Contemporary Arab Society* (in Arabic). Beirut: Centre for the Study of Arab Unity.

Butts, D., Capie, W., Fuller, E., May, D., Okey, J., & Yeany, R. (1978) Priorities for research in science education: a Delphi study, *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, Vol. 15(2), pp. 109-114.

Colby, A., Ehrlich, T., Beaumont, E., & Stephens, J. (2003) *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cyphert, F., & Gant, W. (1970) The Delphi technique: a tool for collecting opinions in teacher education, *The Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 21(3), pp. 417-425.

Dewey, J. (1996) *Democracy and Education*. New York: The Free Press.

Erickson, E. H. (1968) *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: Norton.

Giackaman G. (1997) Foreword. In R. Bahlul *Education and Democracy* (in Arabic). Ramallah: Muwatin.

Haidar, A. L. (1996) Patriarchal relations and their effects on scientific attitudes of secondary school students in Yemen (in Arabic), *Al-Mustaqbal Al-'Arabi*, Vol. 19(214), pp. 86-106.

Hausesler, P., Frey, K., Hoffman, L., Rost, J., & Spada, H. (1980) *Education in Physics for Today and Tomorrow*. Kiel: IPN.

McAdam, D. (1988) *freedom summer*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Noddings, N. (1997) Character education and community. In A. Molnar (ed.) *The Construction of Children's Character (Ninety-sixth Yearbook of NSSE, Part II)*. Chicago: The National Society for the Study of Education.

Osborn, J., Collins, S., Ratcliffe, M., Millar, R., & Duschl, R. (2003) What 'ideas-about-science' should be taught in school science? A Delphi study of the expert community, *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, Vol. 40(7), pp. 692-720.

Ramsey, J. (1993) The science education reform movement: implications for social responsibility, *Science Education*, Vol. 77(2), pp. 235-258.

Rasp, A. (1974) Delphi: a strategy for decision implementation, *Educational Planning*, Vol. 1(2), pp. 42-47.

Rowe, M. (1983) Science education: a framework for decision-makers, *Daedalus*, Vol. 112(2), pp. 123-142.

Sharabi, H. (1975) *An Introduction to the Study of Arab Society* (in Arabic). Jerusalem: Salah Eddin Publications.

Shulman, L. S. (2002) Making differences: a table of learning, *Change*, Vol. 34(6), pp. 36-44.

Smyth, J. (1997) Teaching and social policy: images of teaching for democratic change. In B. Biddle, T. Good & I. Goodson (eds.) *International Handbook of Teachers and Teaching, Vol. II*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Strike, K. (1993) Professionalism, democracy, and discursive communities: normative reflections on restructuring, *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 30(2), pp. 255-275.

UNESCO (1992) *Education and Learning for the Twenty-First Century*. Discussion Paper for the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century.

Watfa, A. (1996) The social backgrounds of educational interactions in Arab universities: the University of Damascus as an exemplar (in Arabic), *Al-Mustaqbal Al-'Arabi,* Vol. 19(214), pp. 74-85.

Watfa, A. (1999a) Manifestations of authoritarianism in contemporary Arab culture and education (in Arabic), *Al-Mustaqbal Al-'Arabi*, Vol. 22(247), pp. 54-71.

Watfa, A. (1999b) *Structure of Power and Problems of Educational Authoritarianism in the Arab World* (in Arabic). Beirut: Centre for the Study of Arab Unity.

Wood, G. (1988) Democracy and the curriculum. In L. Beyer & M. Apple (eds.) *The Curriculum: Problems, Politics and Possibilities*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Wood, G. (1990) Teachers as curriculum workers. In J. Sears & D. Marshall (eds.) *Teaching and Thinking about Curriculum*. New York: Teachers College Press.