



Democratic Education in Kindergartens as Perceived by Teachers in Public and Private Schools

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the differences in preschool teachers' views regarding democratic education in public and private kindergartens. The population of this study consists of kindergarten's teachers in public and private preschools in Menofya Governorate , Egypt. In the selection of sampling, the numbers of public and private preschools, and preschool teachers(all were females) .200 preschool teachers (100 teachers from public schools and 100 from private schools)were surveyed. All the teachers hold state teaching certificates; that is they were specialized in preschool education. Scale for Democratic Behaviour in kindergarten's Classroom developed in particular for this study. showed that there were no differences in preschool teachers' views regarding democratic education in public and private kindergartens.

Keywords: Democratic education, kindergartens, teachers in public and private schools

Introduction

Democracy is regarded as a 'way of life' interrelated with the perceptions and assumptions, common experiences of individuals and it is about living together. It is a form of life and government based on human rights and freedoms where the majority has the right to make policies and the minority has the right to participate and criticize (Gömleksiz, 1988). According to Tortop (1992), the basic principle of democracy is to be respectful and tolerant of different opinions. Democracy is based on faith in the dignity and worth of every single individual as a human being. The object of a democratic education is, therefore, the full, all-round development of every individual's personality. i.e. an education to initiate the students into the many-sided art of living in a community. It is obvious, however, that an individual cannot live and develop alone. ... No education is worth the name which does not inculcate the qualities necessary for living graciously, harmoniously and efficiently with one's fellow men (Dipty Subba, 2014).

According to Dewey (1916; cited in Kiroglu, 2013), "a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experiences". In other words, unlike certain perceptions, democracy is not just about going to the ballots. It is about the internalization of such concepts as tolerance, rights, justice, fairness, respect of differences, participation, honesty, cooperation, freedom, responsibility, collaboration, and peace by the individual as an active member of society.

Democratic classrooms are the optimal environment where students can best learn and live these values. Students learn how to make decisions autonomously, how to lead, how to tolerate different opinions, and how to collaborate with and respect the rights of others in the classroom (Kiroglu,, 2013).

Osler and Starkey (2006) and Print, Ornstrom, and Nielsen (2002) hold that the teaching-learning setting in a democratic classroom requires the teacher to open subjects for debate and let the students freely express their views. Kiroglu, (2013) demonstrated that democratic classroom is one where values like equality, freedom, justice, and participation prevail. Another characteristic of democratic teachers, as claimed by Kiroglu, (2013) is that they treat all their students fairly and equally. If a teacher discriminates against their students on the basis of language, religion, creed,

gender, socio-economic status, attire, and other points; is partial in giving out rewards and punishments; does not let everyone have an equal say; and is knowingly unfriendly towards certain students, then that teacher cannot be said to be fair or equalitarian – or, consequently, democratic. Another significant token of a democratic classroom is that all students feel free. This is not a feeling that the students can experience by themselves; the person who is to help them experience it is the teacher who has internalized democracy.

The more a teacher understands democracy and incorporates it in the classroom the more it will be understood by students. Kesici states, “The teacher is the key factor in the process of building a democratic classroom”. (Dipty Subba, 2014, P.38). Dipty Subba(2014)states that teachers should use appropriate teaching methods so that students can easily express themselves and their thoughts and ideas. A democratic teacher also needs to be fair, applying rules uniformly and listening to student explanations for misbehavior before making decisions.

He (2014)also ascertains that the teacher's role should be transformed from a traditional didactic, authoritarian one to a facilitating, personal role. Schools can and should play a major role in preparing citizens to play their democratic roles in adult life. For democratic teaching to succeed in schools it must be conceptualized and practiced as a dialogue between students and the teacher.

Early childhood is the most important stage in man's life. It is the stage of developing abilities, talents and future tendencies. It is the stage of determining the main dimensions of personality development, morals and human relations traits. Consequently this stage is the main base for child education and preparation for life in the future. At the age of between 4-6 is of utmost importance in personality, health, education and abilities formation. Enrolment in the kindergarten is a strong indicator for success in the following education stages. The optimal investment in Egypt is investment in children. The extent of investment in children in a country is an indicator of its priority. Children in Egypt represent the major population category. Consequently their welfare reflects the country's welfare in the future. Children shape the future of Egypt and its way to progress and development. No investment in education is a big loss. Today's poor children are tomorrow's poor parents, which leads to continuous poor generations. This results in decrease in development rates in the country (UNESCO, 2015).

To achieve comprehensive care for the Egyptian child law number 12/1996 concerning child protection was issued. Its executive regulations were issued by a decree of the prime minister to distinguish between the role of the nursery school and that of the kindergarten. The law included the nursery school under the child social care, supervised by the ministry of social affairs, and the kindergarten under the child education as it is considered an effective educational system that achieves comprehensive child development in the pre-school stage. At the beginning of the year 2000 the second document for the Egyptian child care and protection was issued. It stated that the second document should be well used for the good of our children as part of our national developmental plans in education, health, cultural and social development. Preparation for a third document started in January 2011, but the revolution at that time hindered it (UNESCO, 2015).

The purpose of this study was to find out the differences in kindergartens teachers' views regarding democratic education in public and private kindergartens. The following questions can be considered.

- 1- Are there differences between public and private kindergarten's teachers in Freedom factor?
- 2- Are there differences between public and private kindergarten's teachers in Equality factor?
- 3- Are there differences between public and private kindergarten's teachers in Justice factor?
- 4- Are there differences between public and private kindergarten's teachers in Participation factor?

Method

Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of kindergarten's teachers in public and private kindergartens in Menofya Governorate, Egypt. In the selection of sampling, the numbers of public and private kindergartens, and kindergarten teachers (all were females). 200 kindergarten teachers (100 teachers from public schools and 100 from private schools) were surveyed. All the teachers hold state teaching certificates; that is they were specialized in preschool education .

Instrument

Scale for Democratic Behavior in kindergarten's Classroom(developed in particular for this study) . Following review of the literature on democratic behaviors in the classroom, a 20- item scale was developed for teachers. A three-step Likert scale was used to reveal the extent to which preschool teachers' behaviors were democratic in the kindergarten's classroom. The Cronbach α internal consistency factor of the scale was found to be 0.91. The sub-scales of the research scale are described below.

Freedom. This subscale had the following items:" I friendly listen to what the child say in the classroom" , " I give the child the freedom to choose his toys", " I avoid annoying the children" , " I approach the children with love", and " I respect the freedom of the children" .

Equality. This subscale had the following items:" I trait my children fairly", " I share work with my children", " I tolerate differences in the classroom" , " I am not annoyed with sex differences ", and " I am not annoyed with individual differences between and among children" .

Justice. This subscale had the following items:" I am a model for democracy" , " I treat all alike" , " I discuss things with my children that concern them" , " I am fair in giving rewards " , and " I don't differentiate between children on any basis " .

Participation. This subscale had the following items: 'I encourage children to participate", " I ask children to be active " , " I use different interesting methods to help children to be active " , " I facilitate the transfer of democratic values to real life" , and " I always talk about and tell children about democracy " .

Data Analysis

T- test was employed to estimate the differences between teachers from public and private preschools. The SPSS 16.0 statistical package program was used in the analysis of the research data.

Results

The t-test results for preschool teachers' views on the freedom factor of the scale are given in Table 1. Table 1 shows T. test results for the differences in preschool teachers' views on the Freedom Factor. The table shows that (t) vale was (.565). This value is not significant.

Table 1. The t-Test Results for preschool teachers' views on the Freedom Factor

Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	T	Sig.
Private	100	13.83	1.25	.565	Not
Public	100	13.73	1.24		Significant

* private refers to private school teachers - public refers to public school teachers

The t-test results for preschool teachers' views on the Equality factor of the scale are given in Table 2. Table 2 shows T. test results for the differences in preschool teachers' views on the Equality Factor. The table shows that (t) vale was (.829). This value is not significant.

Table 2. The t-Test Results for preschool teachers' views on the Equality Factor

Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	T	Sig.
Private	100	14.01	1.20	.829	Not
Public	100	13.87	1.18		Significant

The t-test results for preschool teachers' views on the Justice factor of the scale are given in Table 3. Table 3 shows T. test results for the differences in preschool teachers' views on the Justice Factor. The table shows that (t) vale was (.310). This value is not significant.

Table 3. The t-Test Results for preschool teachers' views on the Justice Factor

Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	T	Sig.
Private	100	14.11	1.17	.310	Not
Public	100	14.06	1.06		Significant

The t-test results for preschool teachers' views on the Participation factor of the scale are given in Table 4. Table 4 shows T. test results for the differences in preschool teachers' views on the Participation Factor. The table shows that (t) vale was (.319). This value is not significant.

Table 4. The t-Test Results for preschool teachers' views on the Participation Factor

Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	T	Sig.
Private	100	14.17	1.13	.319	Not
Public	100	14.12	1.07		Significant

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study to find out the differences in preschool teachers' views regarding democratic education in public and private kindergartens. As indicated, Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 showed that there were no differences in preschool

teachers' views regarding democratic education in public and private kindergartens. This highlighted the important roles played by Kindergarten Colleges in Egypt. From my own experience, teachers in kindergartens spare no effort to promote the spirit of democracy among children in the classroom, where they give all children an equal opportunity to express and participate in activities in the classroom. They already discuss things with their children that concern them. As indicated by psychological and educational theories, the first six years of a child's life has great impact on the development of the individual's personality and his entire. Hence teachers should be well- prepared for the democratic life, and this is transformed by dependency to their children. As indicated by Kiroglu (2013), the significance of the role of the teacher is undeniable, especially in learning democracy, which is the acquisition of attitudes and behaviors that require practice and a role model. As indicated by Matusova, (1997), democratic classrooms are the optimal environment where students can best learn and live these values. Students learn how to make decisions autonomously, how to lead, how to tolerate different opinions, and how to collaborate with and respect the rights of others in the classroom .The results of this study confirmed, as indicated by other researchers (e.g. Kesici, 2008; Shechtman, 2002; Knight, 2001) that democratic classroom is one where values like equality, freedom, justice, and participation prevail.

Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of this study is that it did not take into consideration children's views of teacher's democratic behaviour; that is: Is My Teacher Democratic? Küçükahmet (1989) found a positive correlation between teachers being democratic and students turning out democratic. So, future research should take into consideration teachers' democratic behaviour from their children's views.

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