EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: THEORY AND TEACHING PRACTICE

Session 1: Modelling democratic attitudes and behaviours in classroom and school.

Title Session 1: Using Hellison's model as a framework for democratic learning within Physical Education

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Effective programming that builds upon democratic education values and principles can foster Positive Youth Development (PYD), and prepare young children not only to adapt but also to be able to take action against oppressive circumstances of their everyday realities. PYD is a strength-based approach to youth development, which posits that all children have the potential for positive change if they accrue optimal experiences during their involvement in organized activities. By perceiving PYD as a way to view children's progress and holistic development - and not only as a new psychological model – the proponents of the model suggest that competence, confidence, character, caring/compassion, and connection should be the desired outcomes of any program designed for children, starting from the primary school age. The above characteristics are fundamental and usually develop as a function of interactions between the child and its social-contextual environment.

Particularly, *Competence* refers to children's ability to act with poise and economy in a specific domain, *Confidence* represents their sense of positive self-worth, *Character* means respect for socio-cultural rules, *Caring/Compassion* refers to feelings of empathy for others, while *Connection* describes all those positive bonds that children can develop with other children/adults and institutions.

We realize therefore that when children are given opportunities to participate in activities that promote the above *Cs* they are empowered with the potential to lead a healthy, satisfying, and productive life, and gain the confidence to think, know and act according to their needs and abilities.

In recent years, educational scholars from the field of Physical Education (PE) and Sport adopt the idea of designing PYD programs to address children's holistic developmental needs, avoiding short-term interventions or narrow solutions that focus on deficit reduction (e.g., minimizing unhealthy behaviors and reducing obesity percentages). The main advantage of PYD programs is that they can be integrated into the lives of children at multiple levels, and ecological systems.

According to **the Ecological Systems Theor**y (Bronfenbrenner 1995), human development and behavior come as the materialization of person–context interactions within four nested systems: 1) the Microsystem, 2) the Mesosystem, 3) the Exosystem, and 4) the Macrosystem (Figure 1).

As parts of a PYD program, the above systems include:

(i)   the physical domain, the location, the program of activities and the participants in the PYD program (microsystem),

(ii)   the interrelationships between two or more microsystems involved in the nurturing of the developing person (i.e. the coach's and the child's) (mesosystem),

(iii)   the situations that affect the context within which the developing person takes action (i.e. interaction between coach and parents), (exosystem),

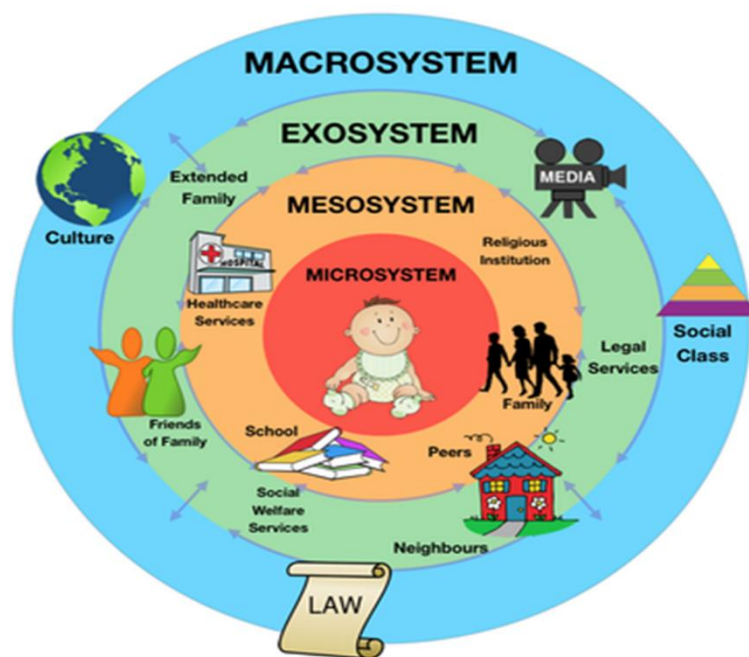(iv)   the cultural and social forces that act upon the development of the child (macrosystem).

Figure 1. *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1995)*

As the above systems interact with each other, children's engagement and motivation change accordingly, affecting in this way their resilience to maximize the benefits of their educational, social, and emotional development. The connections between PYD programs and children learning outcomes could be further strengthened by the implementation of PE curriculum models, which are based on democratic education values and promote these across the above systems of human development.

Promotion of democratic values across different ecological systems

   A. Families

According to social learning concepts and theories, the internalization of democratic ideals and values takes place in several socializing environments during the process of a child's development. As a proxy for relations in society, families socialize children into those virtues and values that would afterwards foster/hinder their civic identity. Especially parents and/or caregivers are role models in this process.

Therefore, it would be interesting to consider how can families have an impact on children's adoption of democratic values.

Below are some points that must be taken into consideration:

1. Parents teach their children what it means to respect or not respect the rights of others.
2. Parents' daily behavior shows what it means/feels to be right or wrong (e.g. through decision making and compromise).
3. Parental provision of choice, especially when the child's perspective is taken into consideration, is a model behavior for the development of social tolerance and acceptance of other people's point of view.
4. Parents' openness and reasoning behind policies and choices, has been found to foster children's knowledge about and engagement in social practices.
5. Parental warmth has been shown to predict children's development of prosocial behaviors and generativity towards others.
6. Parental controlling tactics (e.g. behaviors that make children experience guilt and/or anxiety), are associated with children counter-democratic behaviors and attitudes.
7. Parental aggression, authoritarian outlook and punitive behaviors negatively affect children's pre-democratic socialization
8. Parents who teach their children that a non-combative conflict resolution is preferable when clashes of opinions emerge, model a learning for concern for others. The latter is a fundamental concept for democratic learning and socialization.

B. *Schools and teachers*

A school climate that is centered around democratic values can promote active citizenship, learning and social interaction among children. Many studies have shown that schools and teachers, who employ practices that emphasize on individual and group success, fairness of interactions and support, increase the likelihood of children becoming active in terms of positive relationship building and risk behavior avoidance.

On the other hand, knowledge presented in schools that is related to students' personal context is likely to end up in learning achievement and progress, as many studies have shown that students tend to forget 80% of what they learn, if this is unrelated to their daily life and needs.

*What are the **characteristics of a democratic school climate**?*

- o Opportunities that promote perspective taking

- o Sharing and interaction between students to enhance higher levels of trust.

- o Student participation in defining the school rules and making decisions about things that affect their daily lives

- o Fair teaching and disciplinary practices (e.g. equal grading)

- o Promotion of a system of values and beliefs centered on the common good

- o Focus on relational goals instead of achieving personal goals

- o Equality of opportunities to foster social relationships with others

- o Community building and sustainment practices

- o Activities that create higher levels of belonging

- o Developing in students a respect for moral commitment, group solidarity and social responsibility.

- o Promoting a non-authoritarian individualism

- o Maintaining a balance between group cooperation and social awareness.

- o Development of choices and acting on those with an understanding of situational constraints.

Teachers can use the below mentioned pedagogical practices to create the circumstances for the establishment for a democratic school climate

1. ***Heterogeneous class settings.*** Breakdown of student framing and hierarchical roles, and adoption of peer learning practices (i.e. students acting as individual or group leaders for other students).

2. ***Small group classes***. Students evaluating and testing each other's work. Group work that provides opportunities for social responsibility and group solidarity.

3. ***Apprenticeship in teaching***. Leading discussions through which students can develop a close working relationship with teachers and peers.

According to Bandura's (1986) theory of observational learning, individuals develop attitudes and behaviors through interactions with other people in social contexts, or by observing the consequences associated with other people's behavior and actions.

As such, when children are exposed to the above characteristics and processes of a democratic school climate and feel that they are treated fairly, they tend to consider authority (i.e. teachers, administrators, etc.) as more trustworthy. In this way, they learn how to value relational goals and act in ways that prioritize the maintenance of good relationships with others. Further, they have more chances to contribute to the improvement of the school community, and sustain their motivation to participate in educational programs and group activities at different ecological systems.

C. The hidden curriculum

The hidden curriculum refers to values and concepts that are taught consciously and/or are omitted unconsciously. It also refers to messages, regularities, relations, norms and language forms that tacitly shape the content of daily lessons and subject matters. Through the hidden curriculum, students internalize cultural and societal norms and ideological underpinnings, with this process having important long-term implications for their future roles in society.

What are the processes through which children experience the hidden curriculum?

1. ***The teacher's behavior.*** If the teacher is strict and dominant and does not give opportunities for personal choice and expression, then children develop low self-esteem and self-confidence.

2. ***Classroom organization***. The physical organization of classrooms, as well as the daily routines and structure used during teacher-student interactions are aspects of the hidden curriculum that are experienced by primary school children. At this age, students are still discovering which behaviors are deemed acceptable and which are not and in this way they may test the limits of the hidden curriculum.

3. ***Textbook and material used in classrooms***. Discrimination issues (e.g. ethnicity, gender, sexuality, achievement, disability, etc.) can easily adapt to hidden curriculum messages at school, in cases when instructional material is used

inadvertently or with a lack of awareness by the teacher (i.e. boys are academically stronger and deserve less attention in mathematics than girls, students-at-risk need differential treatment/material in order to succeed, etc.).

The messages that students receive through the hidden curriculum influence their self-perception, their school achievement in school, their socioemotional learning, and finally the ways they choose to engage in democratic processes. Therefore, potential influences of the hidden curriculum may affect:

o Student Perceptions of Personal Success (negative influence)

Through the hidden curriculum, students experience themselves being on an ability track, which is representative of their assumed potential for progress and success (e.g. high vs low achievers, boys vs girls, low-class vs upper-class, etc.).

o Student engagement in democratic issues (negative influence)

The censoring of academic content and ideas, along with the lack of opportunities for discussion and dialogue, make students unable to develop their own views on important issues and minimizes the chances of their becoming active citizens.

o Student achievement (positive influence)

When teachers manage to align their own values, and their students' identities they can leverage the concept of hidden curriculum, and thus help students to internalize positive values and skills and avoid the detrimental ones.

o Socioemotional development (negative influence)

The standardization of information and the regimentation of thought and behavior can discourage and alienate students, and make them respond with disaffection towards schooling.

The Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) curriculum model

Hellison's model of Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility model (TPSR) (Hellison, 1985, 1995, 2003, 2011) is both as a curriculum and an instructional model that is used for promoting responsibility values and life skills within Physical Education (PE) (Metzler, 2005). The underlying concept of the model is that children learn how to behave efficiently in social contexts when they learn what it means to be responsible both for their own and others'

well-being. The TPSR model uses various strategies to achieve this within physical activity, sport and leisure settings.

As a point of reference for evaluating each child's progress, the TPSR model suggests five levels of responsibility:

(1) **Respect for the rights and feelings of others**. Students control their anger and manage to resolve conflicts peacefully.

(2) **Self-motivation**. Students try hard and persist in the presence of difficulties

(3) **Self-direction**. Students make choices and work towards the achievement of their goals.

(4) **Caring**. Students put others' needs before your own and act by prioritizing group welfare.

(5) **Transfer 'outside the gym'**. The previous levels of responsibility are transferred into other settings (Hellison, 2011).

The above levels along with a strong teacher–student relationship and the promotion of responsibility-transfer outside PE and sport settings, represent foundational concepts of any TPSR-based programme (Hellison, 2003). Teachers can design TPSR based lesson plans with adaptations to their contextual circumstances and daily realities by incorporating those teaching strategies that suit their needs.

Particularly, the instructional strategies that can be used are:

- On-task interaction with and between students
- Gradual Reinforcement of children's successes
- Time for reflection and decoding of lesson experience
- Time for experiential learning within physical and motor activities
- Opportunities for the transfer of learning outside the classroom

The above strategies are based on the underlying philosophy of the TPSR model and particularly on the following value orientation and characteristics:

- o Students should be treated as whole people, with socio-emotional needs and physical-intellectual interests.

o   Students are individuals with unique struggles and strengths and thus should be given a voice and opportunities for decision-making,

o   Students can show their full potential when they interact and learn within a psychologically and emotionally safe learning environment.

o   Students will be empowered when they experience a personal connection and a close pedagogical relationship with their teacher.

o   Students perform efficiently when they are given as much responsibility as they are able to handle.

o   Fitness, sport, games, and movement activities are the most suitable contexts for educating students in the above values.

What are the outcomes of the implementation of TPSR based programs on students' learning and development?

Behavioral outcomes

😊 Reduction in aggressive and disruptive behavior

😊 Self-control and a decrement in behaviors related to poor sportsmanship

😊 Positive student conflict resolution

😊 Enhancements in lesson enjoyment

Social outcomes

😊 Relatedness and personal responsibility

😊 Off-task social behaviors in desirable directions.

Emotional outcomes

😊 Understanding of feelings and problems

😊 Willingness to talk about feelings

😊 Self-confidence and self-esteem

😊 Personal feedback and self-control processes

Psychological outcomes

😃 Self-efficacy for enlisting social resources

😃 Self-efficacy for self-regulated learning

Educational outcomes

😃 Positive results on tardiness and conduct.

😃 Goal-setting, and leadership skills

😃 Clear progression throughout different levels.

How these outcomes can be connected with principles and values of democratic learning?

❑ youth leadership development (character)

❑ acquisition of positive behaviors (confidence)

❑ individual competence

❑ social caring & connection