



Can modern states and their democratic values secure a fair and good education for all?

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Lokaverkefni til BA-prófs
Háskóli Íslands
Menntavísindasvið



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

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Ritgerð þessi er 10 eininga lokaverkefni til BA-prófs við Uppeldis- og menntunarfræðideild, Menntavísindasviði Háskóla Íslands.

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Prentun: Háskólaprent

Reykjavík, Ísland. 2011

Abstract

Modern societies have become references in term of quality of life, economical power and also educational settings. In this paper, one will be able to find out if modern states and the democratic values that they are carrying, are actually really able to secure a good and fair education for their citizens. Democratic values in education are not as present as one can think. This paper will try to review different perspectives that exist in education such as the connections among educational enterprise and political context, the type of knowledge learnt at school, and the primary objectives of educations in democratic states. Some ideas in order to encourage the implementation of democratic values in education would be suggested.

Keywords: democratic values, education, knowledge, Freire, global, local.

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1. Introduction

Today, in 2011, democratic nations have become synonymous of wealth, economic growth and also great educational opportunities. For instance, nowadays, foreign students keep on pouring from all over the world into western societies schooling systems, seeking out the best educational systems. It is certainly a fact that European and North American educational systems have developed over the centuries strong and efficient programs to educate individuals. MIT and La Sorbonne are names that echo internationally.

Despite an obvious state of educational prosperity, we, as citizens of democracies, are entitled to ask the following question: Do Western states actually fulfill one of the essential democratic requirements: to provide a fair and good education for all? Fervent defenders of democracy might consider this question as ridiculous or even obsolete. Winston Churchill said once: "It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried". These last few words could resume the general attitude adopted by citizens towards a democratic system. In many ways, inhabitants of Western states have accepted their democratic faith. They no longer challenge the political system that they live in. For them democracy is certainly not perfect but compared to other countries, it would do the trick! So, in this context, economic and social disparities are as well accepted as part of a democratic environment. Belonging to a democratic nation can be very challenging and tough sometimes, but it is still better than living under any other political system.

Thus, democratic nations regard their political system as effective. Accordingly, the democratic educational structures are also considered as efficient. School generates educated individuals that can actively participate in the society. But an important question remains unasked: Can democratic nations really secure a fair and good education for its citizens? Theoretically, this question should not even be asked; a democratic system, by definition,

does, of course, generate an ideal educational system. In an/utopian world, one who is born in a democratic context should not worry at all about his education since democracy, is supposed to be the ultimate political system that secures and dispenses a fair and good education for all citizens. However, the reality might be different. If one looks closely at the matter at hand, s/he will be able to notice some impairs in modern schooling systems. One main question could be asked: Does democratic education encourage the development of a critical mind or does it only try to maintain a certain political system? Indeed, democratic schooling could evoke two different streams of ideas. One would be that education should be the tool that will provide the society with educated citizens that will eventually be able to reproduce and sustain the political system in place. In the other hand, education and more specifically, democratic education would be supposed to assist and guide individuals in their self-construction and quest for happiness and awareness/critical mind.

Questions concerning the relationships between democracy and education have been raised throughout human history. In the following paper, I will use a temporal frame in order to scan the different ideas about education and politics, and democracy in particular. The second part will discuss the different points of view about the efficiency of democratic states to secure a fair and good education for all. Indeed, today, the values behind the definition of the word “democracy” have been diluted so that concepts such as ‘freedom to think’, ‘respect for the human nature’ or ‘empathy’ have become unfamiliar to citizens of democratic nations. Did educational systems in modern societies plant a seed in each individual mind that helps to cope with the international political, economical and societal conditions? Can anyone explain why it is so easy to enjoy freedom and its benefits when, in some next-door countries, people are starving to death?

To answer such questions, I decided to investigate the history of education and politics; two concepts highly interrelated. Despite my type of inquiry, in these following pages, I will

not argue against the value of the Western educational system. I will rather examine the roots of this system and analyze its outcomes in parallel with democracy. Indeed, the primary goal of this analysis is not to contest the system in place but to try to understand why it came to exist in such ways and eventually attend to reform it. Indeed, without educated individuals, it is very challenging to create and sustain fair and good societies. But, the main problem today is that western states have abused and finally dry up the word democracy of its original meaning and values behind it. As a result, their educational settings have been damaged and do not necessarily reflect any more great democratic values.

To start this paper, we will first look at some of the influential ideas about the relationship between education and political system. Then, we will take the time to describe some of the great sides of democratic education but also its dark ones. Furthermore, we might take a look at external influences on the individuals and its educational experience. At last, we will conclude with some suggestions that might help to resolve some of the paradoxical situations existing in modern educational systems.

2. Greek thoughts & Relationships between education and democracy.

Ideal education could not exist without an ideal political system and so an ideal political system could not persist without an ideal education. I might be obliged to define what I mean by “ideal”. The concept of “ideal”, as described in the dictionary, suggests the existence of a standard perfection. What is perfection when one is speaking of democracy and education? To grasp the issues at hand, I decided to enquire the work and ideas of major historical philosophers to grasp an understanding of ideal democracy and education and, moreover, their relationships. To do so, it is necessary to analyze, first, Aristotle’s thoughts about the conditions for one individual to acquire the right education. Then, Plato will give us an insight into his thought, notably about the philosopher king. Finally, we will analyze the major ideas of Martin Luther about education and political system.

First of all, major questions and answers about the existing connections with political system and education can be comprehended with the help of Aristotle’s ideas. In Ancient Greece, influential ideas about education and politics were already discussed and developed. One of the main characters in this intellectual enterprise was Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC). He believed strongly that an ideal education passes by a strong relationship and delicate balance between city-state and individuals. Indeed, C.D. Reeve, philosophy professor, first mentioned how Aristotle considered human beings as political animals (Reeve, 1998). Human beings possess a natural ability to create social groups. It is within such a group and, furthermore, depending on the type of political system running inside such a social group that adequate educational settings could exist. Plus, Aristotle mentioned that to acquire full virtue or the capacity that makes one an ideal and happy citizen is only possible when one is educated within the city-state structure. Other virtues, such as courage, could be gained though outside the city-state.

Moreover, virtue depends on the type of city-state that is in place. Once the ideal political system is in place, which will be in this case a democratic one, individuals have all possibilities to develop the ideal characteristics to become “model” citizens; citizens that will respect the political power in place and will also be able to achieve personal and communal happiness and freedom. Aristotle stressed the fact that each individual is born with natural virtues but also that education plays an important role in the proper development of these virtues. Aristotelian virtues are based on the acquirement of knowledge. One who possesses knowledge is probably more apt to take the right decision, not only in an individualistic way but also according to the demands or needs of his environment or social group. Furthermore, knowledge would protect someone from falling into intellectual enslavement. Learning about different topics would benefit an individual and protect his intellectual freedom.

Aristotle does not only advocate for spiritual and intellectual training. He also encourages people to train physically. “It promotes the actions of free people” (Reeve, 1998: p. 54). Indeed, according to Aristotle, training the body and maintaining a healthy shape benefit the soul and the global balance of the individual. Ideal education according to Aristotle gathers the full abilities of human being. Acquire knowledge, being in shape physically, being attentive to your emotions are the essential keys for one to become the ideal citizen. Aristotle’s approach of education has influenced tremendously modern views about the alternatives on how to educate individuals. His theory has this particularity to embrace all aspects of the being, from intellectual to physical perspectives, without forgetting the emotional side. This following quote is often attributed to Aristotle even though I could not find the original source. “Educating the mind without educating the heart, is no education at all”. Aristotelian education perspectives are resumed in this last quote.

Two essential ideas are mentioned above: virtue and model citizen. Based on his perception of human beings, Aristotle gave us a kind of hope concerning the abilities of

everyone no matter their background to possess virtues by nature. In the matter concerning us, it becomes quite interesting when Aristotle also refers to education as a tool to cultivate and eventually improve those virtues. In other words, education was already, over two thousands years ago, a major instrument to influence personal and social behavior of populations in accordance with the needs of the society and the personal needs of individuals. “Being educated in a way that suits the constitution does not mean doing whatever pleases the oligarchs or those who want democracy. It means doing the things that will enable the former to govern oligarchically and the latter to govern themselves democratically” (Aristotle, 1310a19). Aristotle’s writings have tremendously influenced modern educational thoughts and politics for that matter. His idea about respecting the human nature should have influenced deeply the future means of developing fair and good schooling systems. History has proved us differently. Aristotelian ideas were left in the corner of the room for a while. Platonic ideas seem to be more adequate for the plans of future societies.

Greek philosopher, prior to Aristotle, Plato had also his personal opinions about education and politics. Plato dealt with the sensitive side of the human nature; the side that every individual tries to moderate or it might just take over one’s self: Power. Indeed, Plato with his King-philosopher seemed to have influenced modern educational institutions and *à fortiori* politics. Without a doubt, Plato considered the philosopher as a truth keeper. Only him had the possibility to know the difference between right and wrong and so had the duty to lead the society and deal with political matters. Moreover, for Plato, the goal of education is to identify and guide a gifted few to the truth and to sort and socialize those less intellectually gifted into minor roles in life (Johnson & Reed, 2008). When Aristotle accentuated his ideas around the respect of human nature and virtues, Plato, before him, had put an emphasis on the fact that only few shared a similar destiny to reach the “universal” truth, and therefore only few should share the political power.

One could comprehend these two concepts as following: individuals are born equals (democratic values/abstract idea) but few of them will have the opportunity to realize themselves (modern world reality/ concrete). One idea remained shared between both philosophers; the fact that only citizens, woman and man, were entitled to receive an education. Others, slaves or non-citizens of the city-state were denied the access to knowledge. To resume, two of the greatest, influential Greek minds helped to shape earlier forms of educational settings, behavioral and societal ideas where only few chosen ones could profit from it. Such acknowledgment somehow reminds me of the situation of our modern societies. Modern nations wish deeply to educate their citizens within the respect of human nature (Aristotle concept), but often end up selecting few individuals who will have more chance to succeed compare to others (Plato concept). We will come back to it later in this paper.

Thus, education in Ancient Greece selected its students via their social backgrounds and abilities. One could imagine that such situation kept on going for centuries. It is only, around the Sixteen Century that reforms started to appear in the educational environment. Therefore, we will once again travel in time and analyze the theory of one major character in the history of education: Martin Luther.

3. Martin Luther & his Reform.

In the 16th Century, a wave of different approaches towards education spread from Germany through Europe. Similar to Plato's ideas about truth's keeper, educated individuals at the time were only few chosen ones, mostly clergy's members. They will study the Holy Scriptures and teach it to the masses. Knowledge was the property of the few. Indeed, in Europe, religion and mostly Christianity had major influences in people's daily life. Most people were illiterate and so their belief in God could rarely be shaken up. Martin Luther and the reformation would progressively change the religious, educational and social environment by facilitating the access to knowledge to the commoners.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) was a German priest and professor of Theology who lived during the rise of humanism. Humanism was the intellectual and literary phase of the Renaissance (Gerlach, 1983). Furthermore, the goals and intentions of the Renaissance movement and humanism were the emancipation of man as a human, rational being (Blayney, 1957). In Germany, Luther felt critical towards the church and its singular views about Faith, but also its increasing corruption. His intellectual revolt against the church took up the form of the Ninety-five Theses where he attacked the Church and the Pope. I will not proceed into more details concerning the battle between Luther and the church. This short summary allows me to jump to a more relevant point about Luther and his contribution to education. With the impulse of Luther and other major figures of humanism such as Erasmus, the Bible was translated from Latin into the language of the people. By giving the possibilities to common people to access divinity writings, the humanist movement and Luther democratized the access to knowledge. Of course, it was not some unselfish act because Luther did so in order to serve his church and strengthen the connection between worshippers and God. But his engagement in educating the mass led to the conversion of monasteries into schools.

According to him, educating the masses (from children to grandparents) will profit the church.

By doing so, in my opinion, Martin Luther did not only break the “ownership” of knowledge by the Clergy and few selected ones but also gave the society, the opportunity to judge by itself the countenance of the Holy book and so, eventually, to make up their own minds about it. As Hillerbrand suggests it, Luther left some cultural legacy, such as the emphasis on vernacular language (Hillerbrand, 2011). Consequently, Martin Luther contributed in his manner to make knowledge available to all. Moreover, Martin Luther encouraged the studies of art, literature and cultural and societal aspects of the Greek and Roman world. According to him, an educated society is capable to secure the wealth, strength, and religious stability in one nation. Indeed, Martin Luther was working and acting in order to serve his god. All his propositions concerning the reform of the educational system were planned according to some religious objectives. In one of his letter "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools" (1524), Martin Luther proposed an educational system that would benefit all members of the society, including boys and girls, wealthy and poor (Faber, 1998). As I mentioned earlier, despite of working for a religious organization and desiring to spread the gospel, Martin Luther had given a chance to all children to access education and by doing so revolutionize the way that Knowledge was “distributed”. Being born noble or rich was not anymore “a sine qua none” condition to get an education.

The 16th Century gave us the premises of thoughts about democratic education, an education accessible for all without discrimination based on wealth or rank. If one combined the ideas of Aristotle, Plato and Martin Luther works, one could have had the possibility to define and apply fair and good educational settings. Of course, History taught us differently. Even with Martin Luther insights and the rise of humanist philosophers during “le Siècle des

Lumières”, education was still perceived as, maybe, a luxury that European states could not afford or did not want to afford. It is only around the 1850’s and more concretely in the beginning of the Twentieth Century that education becomes a major issue in the agenda of politics. As we will see next, politics are the key elements in securing fair and good educational programs for individuals. John Dewey, American philosopher and educationalist, will play a major role via his writings.

4. Dewey's Educational ideal & Democracy.

“So obvious, indeed, is the necessity of teaching and learning for the continued existence of a society that we may seem to be dwelling unduly on a truism” (Dewey, 1916). As many before him, Dewey had grasped the importance of education in its *role of facilitator of continuum*. The main difference with his predecessors might lay in the timing of his writings and the emphasis on the need for society to challenge intellectually all its citizens. Indeed, one has to notice that Dewey's works emerged in a time where humanist ideas, individualism and most of all the conception of human rights were getting more and more recognized and heard through modern societies. *Education and Democracy* (Dewey, 1916) has this particularity to approach the importance of equality among citizens as a necessity for a society to transcend itself. Thus, as Dewey pointed out, social classes differences could cause the asphyxia of one nation. In one side, the poor class would work to produce an item that they have no intellectual connection with. They would be treated as labor force, reduced to mere servants of attaining pleasure and avoiding pain (Dewey, 1916). On the other side of the spectrum, the higher social classes would, over time, isolate themselves from the rest of the population. This lack of interactions with others would á fortiori produce a sterile culture. Their wealth would transform into luxurious ways of living, their art would become self-absorbed to only represent their own world, their manners fastidious rather than humane (Dewey, 1916).

Dewey's thoughts about the consequences of an unequal nation seemed rather accurate. According to him, only intellectual and cultural exchanges and social blend can allow one nation to expand. Individuals need to feel apart of common aspirations. Being merely an agent of production or the wealthiest man in the room has its limits. To secure the development of a healthy society, each citizen has to be an active actor, who knows his purpose, can exchange

ideas with others, no matter his social background. If knowledge and experiences are shared from up to bottom, only so, a nation has the right to call itself democratic. “A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (Dewey, 1916). Therefore, fair and good education can only be developed in a society that cares for all its members and where it exists a sense of exchange between social classes. Dewey did suggest that multiculturalism was one of the keys of successful governmental models. Of course, multiculturalism is a term that appear after Dewey’s time but he, somehow foreseen it, by acknowledging the importance of relationships and exchanges between different social and cultural communities. One could say that educating children, according to Dewey, is a process of passing knowledge, culture but also experiences.

As we discovered above, education and politic institutions are closely related. We found out that democracy might be an ideal political model to foster a fair and good education. Some questions still remain. Even though, some of the greatest minds have set up philosophical, political and social requirements for effective education, why modern educational models only reach few of its expectations?

5. Modern democracies and the existing duality in terms of education.

The educational objectives of modern societies are in many ways difficult to grasp. At the end of the 19th Century, a humanist momentum spread over Europe. For instance, in France, with the impulse of Jules Ferry, school became compulsory, secular and free of charge. Every child had the opportunity to get an education and eventually grow to be an active citizen in the society. Through this paper, we have observed how education is depending of political systems. In the beginning of the 20th Century, those two concepts became inseparable. Moreover, education muted as a tool for democratic nations and democratic values were converted into powerful and influential instruments in education.

According to the ideas gathered above, schools could be described as a factory where a specific product is developed for a specific aim. Western states need a set of educated citizens to survive and expand. Within the educational system, modern governments have found a secured tool to “convert” individuals to its purposes. I tried to gather different points about the interactions between democratic states and their educational settings.

Some characteristics about education within democratic frames:

- Bring up individuals within universal and shared values, and respect of cultural and social backgrounds.
- Explain and confirm that democracy is the ultimate political regime
- Provide educated individuals, ready to serve the economy and so, at the same time, preserve the democratic system

Some characteristics that democratic states supply to their educational structures:

- Secure access to education for all citizens
- Provide schools with necessary teachers, materials and infrastructures
- Offer a future for successful students (in theory!)
- ...

Based on these small comparisons, commitment to democracy on behalf of individuals and authorities might be thought to secure a fair and good education for all. But, some important points remain in the shadow.

One of the most important one would be the initial role of education in our societies: Is it to provide intellectual or physical labor to the economy or is it to develop and guide individuals in their search for knowledge and ultimately, happiness? To some, this question could seem naïve or even irrelevant since for many politicians and citizens, the goals of education is to instruct individuals within democratic frames that will later contribute to the society. But, one has to remember that with the post Second World War economical boom, and the rise of capitalism, the economy started to influence tremendously modern democracies and their educational system.

“And there is no doubt that since the rise of modernity, social and educational policy has been shaped by capital’s need for accumulation and profit...”

(Oliver, 2000. P.3)

Indeed, capitalist economy and democratic states were going to create slowly a world where productivity, specialization and globalization will become key concepts. Furthermore, in my opinion, the above question is essential if one wants to fully understand today’s state of the world. Indeed, democracy and education are not only tools or concepts. There are ideals and inspirations for societies. Unfortunately, democracy might have lost its original meaning and purpose to become only the strong arm of politicians and companies’ directors.

Capitalist economies and the race for profit have created societies that are tied to an idea of economic well being rather than the social well being of the citizens. This is where the duality of modern nations probably raises. In one corner, democratic systems have the particularity to symbolize social and humanist ideals. France and its “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity” slogan is a typical example of this dualism. French influences around the world in terms of culture, humanist concepts and economical power have created a distorted image of

the French reality. That brings us to the other side of the coin: the modern economies and its ravage through civilizations. Economy has become the first tool of any nations to describe its well-being. GDP or Gross Domestic Product is the main reference when it comes to evaluate the rank of a nation among others. France is ranked 5th in the world according the US department of State. In most common minds, France with a voice spreading democratic ideals all over the world and a solid economy must be equipped with a great educational system that can benefit all individuals. In theory, it might have been possible but unfortunately, in reality, this is not the case.

France as most of developed countries has let the market and quick financial profit control its growth and so its educational system is suffering. Suffering, not in the sense that it does not successfully provide educated and active citizens, but the system fails to incorporate every individual. The ones who do not fit the educational structure would be left on the sidewalk. But most importantly, like many other European countries, France has let the economy dictate its objectives in term of education. An educated man became synonymous of a successful entrepreneur that is not necessarily “equipped” with the original Aristotelian virtues. Empathy, compassion and respect of the human nature are words that are prohibited in the financial spheres for instance. Educated men, in modern societies, are the ones who are competitive, flexible and ambitious, as the market should be.

We just found out how the economy is tied to the political system, and can influence educational settings. Despite democratic ideals underlying all major nations constitutions, we have realized that democratic requirements in education are often difficult to apply and sustain. The stress caused by economical but also social and cultural inputs can dramatically distort the original educational aims in one democratic context. In the next part, we will observe more precisely the economical and social influences on schooling systems.

6. The case of the United States of America.

The US has a relatively long-standing democratic tradition. In this chapter, we would try to find out if democratic ideas are implanted in the American educational system. Does the greatest democracy on Earth actually implant its democratic beliefs into its own system or is it only a big farce? Again, I must remind the reader that I am not spitting on democratic systems and their educational methods. I am myself a product of this system. I rather put myself in a critical minded position in order to find out why despite of several critics, this system is still considered as an ideal.

Kozol, American educator and activist, has pointed out the deficiency of the American schooling system. In *The Shame of the Nation*, he recorded, while teaching since the beginning of the Sixties, the damages caused by a society driven by profit. I would like to emphasize that his observations are valid as well for many other developed nations such as France or England. Thus, this chase for profit or capitalist economy has created different levels or social classes. To resume, individuals getting good incomes will settle in one neighborhood. Schools in this part of the town would be provided with decent infrastructures, books, experienced teachers since the taxpayers of this district have the money to finance it. In other communities, with lower incomes, schools and students will dramatically suffer from the lack of financial resources of the neighborhood's members. This is when democratic ideals and its "education for all" claims meet the harshness of economical realities. It seems that money has become a main agent contributing to decent schooling systems. Historical, social and cultural aspects of the US can also explain these inequalities at school.

As Kozol described in his writings, in the Sixties, the Civil Rights Movement was pushing for equal rights among Blacks and Whites. Beyond social and cultural issues, this movement dealt with the core of democratic ideals, which is the equal access to education and

decent standard of living for all citizens, no matter the social, economical and cultural background. This movement and successful outcomes gave hope for a certain democratic reality to actually exist. However, centuries of segregation had already constitutes major social, economical and cultural barriers between White and Black communities. Later on, such questions of cultural and social backgrounds will fade away, replaced by economical segregation. Indeed, Kozol points out how the economical situation of families affects the education of their children. Moreover, economical disparities generate spatial segregations. People with poor incomes would only socialize with their counterparts. Children would find themselves in the same school and so until they eventually graduate. In Chicago, by the academic year of 2000-2001, 87 percent of public school enrolment was Black or Hispanic; less than 10 percent of the children in the school were white (Kozol, 2005). Based on such data, it is easy to imagine the animosity rising from such social disparities.

As Dewey mentioned once, the schoolyard is a micro version of our societies. If cultural and social diversities are absent at school, it becomes very difficult to think or imagine a fair and good society.

“What saddens me the most...is simply that these children have no knowledge of the other world in which I’ve lived most of my life and that the children in that other world have not the slightest notion as to who these children are and will not likely ever know them...”

(Kozol, 2005)

This is precisely where the school fails to meet its democratic requirements. Despite a democratic cloud floating above each modern society, educational settings, confronted to the pressure and the exigency of the economy, have struggled to secure a fair and good education for all its pupils. Let us scan the consequences of an education enslaved to the economy.

7. When economy becomes the main Teacher in the classroom.

As we have been discussing these last pages, the economy aka “The Market” seems to have taken over the destiny of our societies so that education is now very tied to it and dependent on it. First to assure good educational settings, governments need a prosper economy to finance it. If the state is experiencing some economical crisis like nowadays, the first sectors that will suffer from it would be the educational one along with the health system. Furthermore than the close relationship between the two, one can almost sense how the school has developed following the same principles than the economical market or more exactly the factory. Indeed, as Julia Steiny, journalist and educational consultant, mentioned in her article, at the dawn of the 20th century, educators were faced with a huge influx of children from foreign-immigrant families and families coming to the cities from farmlands. Educators turned to America’s signature dynamo at the time, the factory, after which they modeled America’s comprehensive secondary schools (Steiny, 2007).

If one investigates the roots of this comment, quite a few sources will confirm this idea.

“Our schools are, in a sense, factories, in which the raw materials – children – are to be shaped and fashioned into products... The specifications for manufacturing come from the demands of 20th century civilization, and it is the business of the school to build its pupils according to the specifications laid down.”

(Ellwood Cubberley, 1898)

Superintendent of school in San Diego, Cubberley developed a schooling administration model based on the industrialization method. This controversial character conceptualized school as production units that will strive to maximize efficiency and product. In changing concept of education (1909), Cubberley had written essential ideas concerning public schooling in America. He will use surveys in order to respond individually to the needs of

each school. Schools, before Cubberley inputs, did not have a proper administrative structure and principals or teachers were too often untrained. By taking away school from political pressure and armed it with qualified workers, Cubberley tried to improve schooling policies. His methods and “factory” views on education have influences modern schooling to some extend.

To grasp the full aspect of factory like education, I will recommend the reader to watch a conference that Robinson gave some time ago. Indeed, Sir Ken Robinson in one of his public talks gave us a better insight into the theory of the school system built as a factory. As he mentioned, schools are organized in factory lines. Ringing bells are part of the daily life of pupils. Separate facilities exist such as the sport hall, science, literature or music classes. In some schools, separation might even happen among genders. The school has specialized itself in different subjects. Robinson also notices how we still educate children by batches; pupils are put in class according to their age group (1st grade, 2nd grade and so on). He brilliantly remarks that “ the date of manufacture” or date of birth seems to be the most important common ingredient among students. But, obviously, some children of similar age perform better in math for instance, while some others are better in languages. Robinson is trying to wake up the public and professionals in education by describing a schooling system that might fit more the needs of the market than the pupils needs.

Robinson’s critics are joining the societal opinion about school. Every parent had, at least once, the following discourse to their progeniture: “If you are doing well at school, you will have the possibility to go to university and so if you are still doing well, you will probably get a good job! Come on Honey, get on with it!” Regrettably, this reasoning is quite universal. Every parent wishes that their children would be good students because it will secure them a better future. Furthermore, this perception of schooling damaged the original purpose of school or at least the Aristotle’s concept of it, namely, encourage the development

of a critical mind, develop respect towards others and empathy and more important become a life long learner.

Today, in the beginning of the 21st Century, school does not rhyme anymore with concepts such as seeking the truth, seeking for knowledge in order to access ultimate happiness. School has transformed into an institution that one must attend to if one wants to get all the chances to be successful later in life. Moreover, such misplaced conception has tremendous repercussions on students who do not do as good at school. As Julia Steiny puts *it*, our factory-model schools generate many dropouts. All individuals who do not fit the system are left on the side without any remedy. Explicitly, to improve efficiency, schools sorted students into “tracks,” grouped according to their economic prospects — college, general, vocational. The final product at the end of the line was an educated student, which in today’s terms means a student with acceptable test scores (Steiny, 2007). Thus, one can find two dangerous ideas here. The first one would be that not every one stands similar chances in front of the modern/factory schooling system. Second, the meaning of educated individual is based on grades and diplomas obtained during his school career, not the ability of critical thinking or the ability to feel empathy for others.

We just saw the power of the economy over school and its dramatic consequences. Not only, school does not respond to its ideal conception of encouraging and developing critical thinking, self-esteem and the taste for learning. It pre packaged students minds in order to respond the market’s needs; it pre supposed that being educated means to own diplomas and more devastating, left on the side of the road numbers of students that did not meet the necessary requirements. Of course, democratic nations growth depends of its educated citizens. But, educated according to a collection of diplomas is not the same as being educated according to Aristotelian virtues for instance. I guess it is no surprise that educated people can be responsible for a nation bankruptcy like it happens two years and half ago in Iceland. I

must remind the reader, one more time that I consider the actual schooling system effective in many ways. This system still offers the possibility, virtually for anyone to become successful and has generated many rightly educated adults.

After analyzing the effect of the economy on the school, we will put ourselves in the following frame of mind. The school system in democratic states might be filled with impairs but it still produces a great number of rightly educated citizens. Now, we would examine the knowledge and savoir-faire learnt at school. Are these good and educated citizens really good? Or is it the pressure and influences of many years of schooling that make me think that it is true goodness when it is not?

8. Democracy's meanings and selective knowledge.

The word democracy comes from the Greek and is often translated as “rule by the people”. Indeed, democracy is a political system that is supposed to provide the tools for individuals to govern themselves in a fair, just and good way. Guttman et al. have accurately defined the role of democracy and more specifically deliberative democracy; it affirms the need to justify decisions made by citizens and their representatives (Guttman et al., 2004). Today, most democratic concepts aim to resolve moral disagreement by demonstrating that alternative theories and principles should be rejected (Guttman et al., 2004). Thus, one democratic theory should rule the others. Politics have dried out the meaning of democracy little by little, decades after decades. Justifications for political decisions are not necessary any more.

Today, promoted by the globalization and harmful cultural simplification, democracy means more or less the opposite of tyranny and dictatorship. They have diminished the original meaning of the word. Nowadays, Aristotelian virtues and the respect of the human nature are too rarely included in a democracy's definition. It is one thing that politics have managed to diminish the value of such an essential political concept. But, the harm could have huge repercussions since individuals, themselves citizens of democratic nations and responsible for the survival of an eventual democratic legacy, seem to have adopted this simple definition. As Guttman and al. suggested, the electoral process is modeled on the analogy of the market (Guttman et al., 2004).

“Like producers, politicians and parties formulate their positions and devise their strategies in response to the demands of voters who, like consumers, express their preferences by choosing among competitive products (the candidates and their parties).”

(Guttman et al., 2004, p.14)

So in a way, democratic settings like educational ones have also assimilated some of the market characteristics. Political settings could be compared to a constant exchanges between offers and demands. In this dangerous context, even the individuals living in democratic nations do not really question the political power. Democracy is taken for granted. How could one explain this terrible drift?

As mentioned earlier, educational settings have influenced the way that individuals perceive the world they live in. More precisely, knowledge transmission and the type of knowledge acquired at school might be one of the main reasons for such a distortion of a key concept. Basically, this false acculturation could have been rooted in the way knowledge has been transmitted. Strong relationships between economy and education have influenced methods and outcomes in the process of shaping citizens. But more importantly, the type of knowledge dispensed at schools in all modern societies, has been filtered and selected in order to benefit governments and social systems in place. This type of statement can sound harsh and even for some, unfounded, but let us try to scan the type of knowledge dispensed at school.

If one analyzes the structures of educational settings around the world, one could notice certain uniformity. Almost all students receive a similar type of knowledge, similar views about the world. Thus, this global knowledge affects the students' perception of the world. For instance, it is made clear, in the classroom, that the Western world has the best technology, schools, economic systems and social structures, while the rest of the world is, in many ways, still struggling to get off from poverty, trying to cope with a limited access to education and most importantly trying to create a society similar to Western one. This form of global and uniformed knowledge resembles to powerful global institutions such the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund or the World Trade organization. These institutions

establish, monitor, maintain, and enforce global regimes that further Northern and Western goals (Puchala, 2005).

School, along with the media and governments, has kept on passing these general ideas to generations and generations of pupils. But this is precisely when school has failed to be democratic. Schooling systems have slowly built these hierarchical views of the world and, naturally, hierarchical conception knowledge. Western knowledge, thanks to science and the universal recognition of western philosophers, has become the main reference. Other forms of knowledge, such as local ones, are not taken any longer into consideration. I once read an article about floral species in Indonesia. The world scientist community recognized that there was only a certain amount of different species in this particular region even though the local Indonesian community had classified many more species. The international scientific community did not include the local perspective. Therefore, it is probably safe to say that the future publications about Indonesian floral system will not include local information and expertise. The international scientific community carries the truth.

The western truth is based on scientific inquiries and experiences while the local knowledge could be qualified as serious since it does not refer to scientific methods. To a certain degree, western knowledge is asphyxiating the local knowledge and with it, the democratic idea of knowledge and education. The disastrous impact of the hegemony of the Western knowledge takes place when one type of idea, result or even truth is taught to the pupils. Therefore, a democratic education cannot exist with a unilateral type of knowledge. The knowledge dispensed in modern societies is often not broad enough to be considered popular, in the sense close to the people. It is hierarchical, academic, specialized and appeals to few members of the society. Let us step out of the duality between education/knowledge and democratic values. One has to remember that a democratic education should bring up individuals into responsible citizens, who will influence in positive matters the future of our

civilizations. In these last lines, the reader had the opportunity to discover the rise of a unique knowledge. It is crucial to point out that this global knowledge can really damaged future outcomes for our societies. In an article, Andrew Robinson, political theorist, exposes the characteristics of local and global knowledge. Robinson, first, supports my argument presented above that the relationship between humanity and phenomena such as nature, space and power is differently constructed in different perspectives, or ways of seeing. The difficulty is that these ways of seeing are today arranged in an unequal hierarchy in which Northern or rich-world ways of seeing predominate over local perspectives of various kinds (Robinson, 2010). According to him, Global knowledge is often in fact a ‘global-local’, meaning that it is a type of local knowledge which is wrongly proclaimed to apply everywhere and to everyone (Robinson, 2010).

Robinson’s article shows how global knowledge, further than imposing its views and forms over the world, is mostly written in books, when the local knowledge is used and practiced in daily life’s routines. To resume, local knowledge has a deep connection with the people and the environment while the global knowledge seems to be untouchable by its individuals and mostly regards nature as a substitute to human needs. So, citizens of modern democracies will not only be educated in a unilateral way but will have more chance to harm and abuse their natural environment instead of creating fair and sustainable practices. Thus, if education became undemocratic, the consequences would not only be noticeable on the degree of awareness of students or citizens, but also on the ecological systems. A sustainable society sharing democratic virtues with all its members needs a sustainable education.

This first part of this paper has dealt with education and the degree of democratic implementations. Over the course of human history, we have noticed how education and political system and so societal conditions, share common destinies. Not later than yesterday, I was discussing with a friend about my bachelor thesis subject. I was trying to make him

understand my vision of modern education and the historical explanations for such a result. I could feel that some of my arguments did not really convince him. Furthermore, he was more impatient to hear about the solutions that I could propose to solve the problem in hands. This is when I realized that there is no point in arguing for a better, fair and democratic education if I do not suggest some ideas to create this ideal education.

In the next few pages, I will point out a couple of ideas for democratic states to actively implement democratic values in their educational systems. First, I will refer to Kant and his views on enlightenment. His ideas and work have certainly shade some light on individuals' natural tendency to be immature. Kant would provide us with some reflections about freedom of thoughts. Then, we will consider Løvlie's article and the existence of a paradoxical situation in the classroom. Løvlie will help us to gather some solutions concerning the independence of the student. After the analysis to reach critical thinking and learning independence, I will describe a school model that could promote democratic values, based on Jane Roland Martin writings.

But let us considerate first the importance of critical thinking and autonomous thinking, which is essential if one would strive for democratic education.

9. Enlightenment & Pedagogical paradox.

As we found out before, one of the essential keys of democratic education is to guide individuals to become long life learners and independent thinkers. In our modern societies, independent thinking is too often reduced to its minimum. Indeed, modern societies are now constituted of experts that encourage individuals to rely on their services. One relies on school to educate his children; one relies on politics to assure a decent future for the society; one relies on doctors for his health and so on. It would not be such a problem to rely on others' expertness if it was infallible. In the case of education, we experienced how the school system is not necessarily designed in the best interest of pupils. This is when Kant and his theory of enlightenment come handy.

According to Kant, enlightenment is “ man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity” (Kant, 1784). Kant's immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another (Kant, 1784). Kant noticed that many individuals, in their adulthood, were remaining dependent of others. Laziness and cowardice are Kant's reasons for such behavior. Therefore, this passiveness became sort of a second nature but more important, it could allow others to establish themselves as their guardians (Kant, 1784). This manner of thinking blocks individuals from true freedom and helps prejudices or inequalities to last. Kant realized the political power and its existing pressure that reign over the society. He adequately mentions that enlightenment should come from the power in place since the unthinking masses have no rights or even no intellectual desire to contest their actual position. So, the government should encourage Kant's definition of enlightenment and release the human race from immaturity. Thus, everyone would have the free opportunity to use his own reason in all matters of conscience (Kant, 1784). Kant's ideas are still relevant today. We have seen how western states struggle to assure the existence of democratic values within the

educational settings. Kant, not only offers some solutions, but also denote that the struggle to attain a democratic environment subsist in every sphere of the society. Adults, educated or not, might still be prisoner of their own immaturity.

Democratic education could encourage individuals to free themselves from this mental enslavement. Modern educational settings, in most cases, offer the tools to students to develop a critical mind. But, as Løvlie points out, some paradox in the classroom and teaching methods remain and work against the possibility to create a schooling environment where democratic values could spread. However, Løvlie had the intellectual awareness to isolate and identify this paradox. In doing so, he might have given an extra chance for critical minded teaching and á fortiori democratic qualities to rise again in the classroom.

According to Løvlie, a pedagogical paradox has taken place in the classroom. For instance, this paradox appears when it is fact that pupils are capable of autonomous moral judgment but the teacher is the one who determines how this autonomy should be practiced (Løvlie). This modern way of educating children, asking them to use their imagination within the limits of the teacher imagination, has created a real contradiction in teaching methods. Løvlie also recognized that pupils, until they reach adulthood, would not be able to fully be autonomous. Pupils are not regarded as fully responsible persons in society (Løvlie). However, acknowledging the existence of such paradox gives the opportunity for teachers, school owners and parents to reflect on possibilities to improve education. Despite the annoyance marked by teachers when confronted to the topic of pedagogical paradox, Løvlie might just have find a critical point in modern education that needs some attention. As he mentioned, the paradox is a nuisance for those with a definite goal in mind, but a reminder for those who want to learn from it (Løvlie).

Løvlie's approach does not condemn the actual teaching practice. In the contrary, he tries to wake up the teachers and make them conscious of classrooms realities. Indeed,

autonomy is not something one could touch or evaluate accurately like language or mathematical skills. However, it is an essential concept to cultivate in the classroom. Similar to schools' curriculum objectives, autonomy is an abstract ideal that if it were reached at some point, would probably lose its force. At school, some goals are meant to be finite such as literacy or being able to count. At the other end of the spectrum, one could find autonomy, empathy and self-esteem. These abstract concepts cannot be taught directly to the child. It is the responsibility of the teacher to nurture it in his classroom. Løvlie, via his article, points out a major pedagogical paradox but also expresses the desire that teachers recognize it and eventually become enlightened educators. Such educators would be able to create a real democratic environment in their classrooms. As Kant ferociously advocated, teaching should always care about the pupil's freedom and dignity (Løvlie).

Kant's enlightenment and Løvlie's pedagogical paradox brought us some interesting ideas about pupils' education within a democratic environment. Even though it could help the democratic enterprise in the classroom, these ideas stay relatively abstract. In the next pages, we will consider the approach of Jane Roland Martin. Her schoolhome and ideas are more concrete and could be effective to create and sustain democratic values within educational environments.

10. Jane Roland Martin & her schoolhome.

In 1992, Jane Roland Martin, professor emerita of philosophy at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, published a book entitled “The Schoolhome”. At the time, the American school system was undergoing major troubles. Teachers were not any longer prepared to face classrooms, which were becoming more and more challenging each year. Students’ social backgrounds and homes’ situations were negatively affecting their behaviors and performances at school. Martin decided to tackle this major crisis with a new approach to educate pupils that will reunite home values and school objectives. She found inspiration in Montessori’s writings and developed her own ideas that would fit the needs of the American schooling system. First, we will scan through the main ideas of Martin and then we will discover how her new perspective on education could benefit the newly challenged American society and schooling system.

First of all, Martin, as Montessori a hundred years ago, realized how school and home are really much interrelated when it comes to educate pupils. “It is a fact too seldom remembered that school and home are partners in the education of a nation’s young” (Martin, 1992). Martin, accurately, points out how parental structures have evolved since the 1960’s. Such social evolution has influenced the way that children were brought up. Indeed, two parents household with a father working and a mother taking care of the children was no longer representative of the American society. Single mother or two parents going out from the household to work had become the norm. Based on these observations, Martin realized that the educational enterprise had to take a new turn in order to respond the new needs of students. To do so, she started to develop some ideas, draw from the work of Montessori.

In the beginning of the 20’s Century, Montessori, Italian educator, started to rethink the role of school. School was no longer responding to the needs of the children since many of

them did not grow up in a standard family structure. Broken homes and the economic struggle that parents were facing, were affecting more and more the performance of pupils at school. Montessori decided to implant school in the home environment, precisely the building where children were living. She called it “Casa dei Bambini”. Her main objective was to bring together in one environment the educational purposes of school and home. This safe, secure and nurturing environment would provide all the necessary conditions for pupils to develop into educated and responsible adults. As Martin noticed, this type of school constituted a functional equivalent of home. Love and respect to one another, caring about the nature and educational objectives were major concerns in the casa dei bambini. Therefore, Montessori children’s home school did tremendously influence the work and ideas of Jane Roland Martin since they had positive effects on youth’s development.

Martin’s thoughts about education are strictly designed to meet the child’s well being. Indeed, her first objective, as Montessori, is to provide pupils with the environment and emotional inputs that the home is no longer able to supply. Thus, Martin is more concerned with the ability of pupils to become responsible and caring adults than test performers. Her 3 Cs theory, namely care, concern and connection are, according to her, the crucial keys for a successful education (Martin, 1992). That is when Martin’s ideas reach all its relevance. In the 90’s, American society had become so inflicted by individualism and capitalism that it created a mini society of pupils that did not have any more the necessary basic inputs from the household, or even from the surrounding adult world, to be able to grow up into caring, empathic and educated individuals. School kept on her single role of knowledge provider, without considering the new rising needs of the pupils. Martin had understood the necessity for school to reinvent itself and become a safe and nurturing environment for all children.

She understood that school would have to take up this new role if one could have any hopes to create a better society. Breeding good test performers is not the main school

objective for Jane Roland Martin. As she observed, pupils are processed as raw material and teachers are shaping it. Testing and modeling students into specialist in one area of expertise was at the time the main goal of education according to the objectives of the American schooling system. Martin disagreed strongly with this unilateral view. As she mentioned, school has to turn its gaze from the “big” economic picture to the local level (Martin, 1992). Educating children while attending their primary needs that too often modern household can no longer display, is the key to success for a future societies.

Jane Martin Roland describes key concepts that might benefit pupils and the society in the long run. However, some great challenges remain. Contrary to Montessori’s time, American pupils possess great social and cultural disparities. Such disparities might challenge greatly a teacher, which main role would be to bring together a variety of different students. How to successfully break social and cultural barriers among students? According to Martin, the development of skills conversation might help to create and consolidate relationships among pupils. Again, the 3 Cs, entirely part of the classroom’s atmosphere, are supposed to generate the adequate environment for pupils to connect.

Jane Roland Martin truly understood the necessity to create a safe and nurturing environment in the classroom. Her ideas strive to educate and bring up (home education) individuals that will eventually become educated, empathic and caring adults. She also brilliantly perceived the interconnections between home, school and society. This is probably the most interesting idea about Martin. It seems, via her writings, that if school succeeded to provide and transmit the 3 Cs to pupils, it would, *á fortiori*, affect positively the society as a whole. Her vision might be considered utopian in some aspects but I must admit that without utopia or a little zest of dream, education would not have dramatically changed over the course of the History. Most importantly, Martin fully grasped the importance of home education and all the universal values that an ideal household could provide to children.

Considering the evolution of families' structures, societal and cultural modifications, she rightly suggested to change the role of school.

Jane Roland Martin has fully understood the necessity to reunite the home values and schooling objectives within teaching methods and school environment. It is obvious that modern societies and the world in general are suffering from the lack of attention that pupils are often victims at home. Busy working schedules and fast pace way of living have affected most of the households and so the home education of children. If one has the hope to experience true democratic values in the classroom, Martin's work should serve as an inspiration for educators and policies makers.

If I were seating in your position, reader, I would probably wonder why it is so important to implement democratic values into education. Why I am so obsessed with democratic education? Well, to make it short, the world today is probably enduring the most difficult challenges that it had to face so far. Human kind has imposed his will over natural environments. We will probably pay the consequences in a near future, namely the scarcity of human resources. Moreover, the world could be divided into two categories: one world that relatively enjoys all good things that nature and human technology can provide; and another world that struggling to feed itself, to get freedom and fully enjoy what life can supply. Being part of this split world and wishing the same living conditions that I may enjoy for all my fellow beings, I strongly believe that a democratic education can and will eventually eradicate economical and social disparities on a global scale. In this last part, we will look at the ideas of an influential educator called Paulo Freire.

11. Democratic education & people's empowerment.

It is surely interesting to write the last part of this essay using the work of a non-westerner! Paulo Freire, born in Brazil, was one of the first internationally recognized educational thinkers who fully appreciated the relationship among education, politics, imperialism, and liberation (McLaren, 1999). Freire's approach differs from the western way of "banking" teaching. According to Freire, students have become containers to be filled by the teacher. The more information the student can memorize from class the better the teacher is. Freire's education methods reunite body and mind. The student should process the knowledge learnt in the classroom in order to figure out ways to apply it in his own environment.

Similar to Dewey's ideas, students should be able to practice in concrete ways the knowledge that they received at school. In some other words, school knowledge has to be relevant for students and give the necessary tools to be able to appreciate their positions in the society and eventually change it. Learning would not be only about reproducing the acquired knowledge but also creating new perspectives of understanding, and so influence the positive transformation of social or economical environments. In essence, Freire's work is about hope (McLaren, 1999). He writes: "Hope is natural, possible, and necessary impetus in the context of our unfinishedness...without it, instead of history we would have pure determinism." Freire and his critical pedagogy is about negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state (McLaren, 1999).

At this point, I think it is unnecessary to remind the reader that Freire's conception of education is based on democratic values. But most importantly, Freire has strived for

reforming education in order to positively affect the socio-economical realities. Injustice and inequalities among individuals could only be reduced if pupils are educated according to Freire's pedagogy.

Furthermore, love is fully integrated into Freirean educational thoughts. Without love for humanity, the dialogue between teacher and students might become irrelevant and so the educational process. Freire stresses the requirement of loving the world, life, and people because love is the foundation for dialogue. Plus, love is an act of courage and not cowardice. Love, in a way, preserves justice and fairness. The Freirean love could be compared with Eros. According to Rollo May, American psychologist, Eros is a state of being, a form of desire that provides the condition of possibility for seeking union with our highest potentialities. Eros can be associated to qualities such as passion, knowledge, questioning, community, empathy, and a vision of the good. Liberal societies have oppressed the concept of Eros (Burch, 1999).

This devaluation carries severe consequences for educating democratic citizens. Students' perceptions of democracy could be reduced to the banal act of voting. Pupils would have the tendency to not contest the knowledge acquired in class and so on. As Burch mentioned, if Eros deserts the classroom, students would become only bodies sitting in the classroom without any real intellectual or physical connections among each other.

“In this classroom, people are guarded, mistrustful, cautiously watching their flank for filaments of incoming joy.”

(Burch, 1999).

Freire and Burch have a lot in common and their efforts are concentrated on practicing educational methods that will restore Eros as the chore.

Moreover, concerning the matter in hand, Eros is rooted in the concept of democracy. As Horkheimer & Adorno mentioned,

“If fear and destructiveness are the major emotional sources of fascism, Eros belongs mainly to democracy”

(Burch, 1999)

Freire has understood the power of Eros but also the necessity to integrate it in the classroom's environment. Again, his educational objectives travel beyond a good grade or the recognition of good teaching. Education, precisely democratic education, represents the biggest chance for humanity to resolve its present socio-economical and political problems. Eros as a part of educational settings should be seen as an historical antidote to violence. If people come to know and value Eros, first discursively and then experientially, its unique qualities make it especially difficult to de-humanize the other and use the radical rejection of otherness to build a “superior identity” as liberal nations have the tendency to do (Burch, 1999).

Freire, Burch, and other educators have given education another dimension. Traditional ways of educating individuals have probably reached its limits. It does no longer suffice to teach pupils a standard curriculum and judges their abilities according to their grades. Freire and his critical pedagogy have put the student back in the centre of the educational paradigm. It is with him and his ability to convey the knowledge learnt in the classroom into concrete actions within his environment that one could expect to see a brighter future. Finally, Freire's legacy represents hope for all generations of pupils, no matter their cultural, social or economical backgrounds. The ability to feel hope even in the darkest moments is one of the greatest qualities of human kind. Freire has managed to reintroduce it in his pedagogical vision. With hope, one can stop to accept his faith and start striving for a better future. With hope, one can start challenging the knowledge “prescribed” at school. To summarize, with hope and the power of Eros, one must dare to learn how to dare in order to say no to the bureaucratization of the mind to which we are exposed everyday (Freire).

12. Conclusions

I started this essay wondering about the existence of democratic values in educational settings and the modern states' ability to secure and sustain such values. We had to travel back to some critical periods in history to find out the strong relationships between politics and education. We found out how education has always been reserved to a certain type of population. In Aristotle times, only citizens of the city-state had access to education. Woman and slaves were left on the sidewalk. Today, education remains also a luxury. Even though tremendous progress have been made such as laws for compulsory schooling for all, numerous inhabitants of the world do not get the chance to go to school. Furthermore, we learnt that educational settings, in some angles, are sort of working against democratic ideals, and institutions.

Indeed, education could be described as a fortune cookie. One cannot know the outcomes of one's education beforehand. One could have a teacher that will nurture his critical mind and encourage him in positive manners. On the other side of the spectrum, one could end up in a classroom that will not allow the student to be himself, and autonomous, where the teacher would only push him to get good grades, or ditch him for lack of performances. Besides the palpable random in educational process, it exists also a clear uniformity in the type of knowledge that one can learn at school. As I described above, the western knowledge has took over all other forms of local knowledge. It has imposed its own vision to the rest of the world, and unfortunately to actual students. Knowledge's uniformity has the power to cast out not only some other relevant form of information, but also mainly the views of others actors of the society.

In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft already noticed the negative influences on the society that most of published written works were done by male authors. In *A Vindication of the Rights of*

Woman, she explicitly described one category of the population cannot expect to represent the entire group, or worst when this category misrepresent the values and identities of others. Thus, in the present day, the oppression of local knowledge could have disastrous repercussions on humanity.

“It is often connected with forms of learning and social practice which emphasize learning by doing or which encourage an inquisitive and experimental approach to the world. It is thus learned and reproduced in very different ways from the processes, which transmit global knowledge. The ecological significance of local knowledge is strong. Systems based in local knowledge tend overall to be more sustainable than global systems, and local knowledge can produce highly detailed local ecological awareness.”

(Robinson, 2010)

My thoughts have evolved since I started writing about the representation of democratic values in modern educational systems. I still feel that modern states have to do all they can to implement and secure democratic values into their educational system. Pupils deserve the chance to grow as educated and critical-minded individuals. Furthermore, while writing this thesis, I have come to the conclusion that democratic states must deliver full democratic education to their citizens if they expect that the physical world, as we know it now, remains the same. Fostering educated, critical-minded, empathic and independent individuals would allow the development of social communities that would work together, respect each other knowledge's, and respect natural environments. Today, western educational settings are reducing, or even condemning chances for Humanity to create a better world. Standard schooling settings still try to standardize children, encourage individualism instead of cooperation, and hamper creativity. As long as education will not empower individuals and provide democratic tools and knowledge to the pupils, our societies would remain unequal,

unfair and filled with despair. Paulo Freire is one of the most inspiring writers that I had the chance to read. So, I would like to conclude this paper with some of his words.

“We must dare to learn how to dare in order to say no to the bureaucratization of the mind to which we are exposed every day.”

Paulo Freire.

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