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DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: THE PEDAGOGY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CIDADANIA DEMOCRÁTICA: A PEDAGOGIA DAS CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS NAS ESCOLAS PÚBLICAS

CIUDADANÍA DEMOCRÁTICA: LA PEDAGOGÍA DE LAS CIENCIAS SOCIALES EN LAS ESCUELAS PÚBLICAS

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Abstract: Curricula are historically formed within systems of ideas that describe styles of reasoning, standards and conceptual differences in school practices and their subjects. Curriculum is a practice of social regulation and the effect of power. The question of what curricular history "is" is also a question of the politics of knowledge in disciplinary work (Antunes, 2007; Apple, 1971; Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1993). This study is a critical discourse analysis of how the concept of citizenship/democracy is taught in public schools through the social sciences curriculum as found in the text of social studies standards and selected textbooks, as well as transcripts of interviews with five social studies teachers of a large public middle school

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in the Southeast United States (Gee and Green, 1998; Hicks, 1995; Luke, 1996; 2004). The researcher described, analyzed, and interpreted documents that included the National and State Social Studies Standards, transcriptions of interviews with five middle school social science teachers, and Geography, Civics and History textbooks used by the school system. The article highlights evidence of our inability to provide a truly democratic citizenship education through three different forums at the public school level: textbooks, standards, and teachers. Moreover, it refers to the importance of the Middle School years and the "in-between" characteristics for moral/social and academic development of students. The types of socially approved knowledge taught in mass educational institutions, such as the public school and the official endorsement of that knowledge, as reflected in social studies standards deserve more attention from researchers and educators to fill a major gap in the literature/analysis of the history of social studies curricula development. The social sciences middle school curriculum would benefit from a focus on its rationale, background needs and organization. It is essential to have educators involved in theory building which will grow out of processing and organizing new information. Teachers and students can commit to coming together and developing frames of reference that we call systems and theories. Each can then be tested for its utility and its power to explain, predict and extend what is known (Antunes, 2007; Apple, 1971; Combs, 1991). As a result of this research, it became clear that the curriculum is a constant work in progress, which through the lens of critical discourse led the researcher to conclude that the establishment of public knowledge is part of the democratic process.

Key Words: Democracy; Citizenship; Pedagogy.

Resumo: Os currículos são historicamente formados dentro de sistemas de ideias que descrevem estilos de raciocínio, padrões e diferenças conceituais nas práticas escolares e com seus alunos. O currículo é uma prática de regulação social e regulador de poder. Quando se pregunta sobre o histórico do currículo, entende-se que também é uma questão da política do conhecimento no trabalho disciplinar (Antunes, 2007, Apple, 1971, Dewey, 1916, Freire, 1993). Este estudo é uma análise crítica do discurso de como o conceito de cidadania/democracia é ensinado nas escolas públicas, através do currículo de ciências sociais, tal qual encontrado no texto de padrões de estudos sociais e livros escolares selecionados, bem como nas transcrições de entrevistas de cinco educadores de estudos sociais de ensino médio em um sistema escolar público no sudoeste estadunidense (Gee e Green, 1998; Hicks, 1995; Luke, 1996, 2004). Esse conteúdo teórico baseia-se na teoria da Pedagogia Crítica, que focaliza como os currículos escolares são criados na formação do estudante-cidadão. O pesquisador descreveu, analisou e interpretou documentos que incluíam os Padrões Nacionais e Estaduais de Estudos Sociais estadunidenses, transcrições de entrevistas com cinco educadores de ciências sociais de ensino médio e livros didáticos de Geografia, Cívica e História estadunidenses utilizados pelo sistema escolar. A pesquisa destaca as evidências de nossa incapacidade de prover uma educação verdadeiramente democrática de cidadania, através de três foros diferentes no nível da escola pública: livros didáticos, padrões de estudos sociais e professores. Além disso, refere-se à importância dos anos do Ensino Médio e das características "intermediárias" para o desenvolvimento moral/social e acadêmico dos alunos. Os tipos de conhecimento socialmente aprovados e praticados em instituições educacionais (como a escola

pública e o endosso oficial desse conhecimento refletido nos padrões de estudos sociais) merecem mais atenção de pesquisadores e educadores para preencher uma lacuna importante na literatura/análise da história de desenvolvimento de currículos de estudos sociais, nesse campo vital de ensino. O currículo de ensino médio de ciências sociais demanda de um foco mais lógico e necessita de uma organização mais qualificada. É essencial ter educadores envolvidos na construção da teoria, que crescerão a partir do processamento e da organização de novas informações. Professores e alunos podem comprometer-se a reunir-se e desenvolver quadros de referência, que se chamam sistemas e teorias. Cada um poderá, então, ser testado para sua utilidade e para seu poder de explicar, prever e estender o que é conhecido (Antunes, 2007, Apple, 1971, Combs, 1991). Entende-se, finalmente, que o resultado dessa pesquisa esclarece que o currículo é um trabalho constante em andamento e que, através da lente do discurso crítico, levou a concluir que o estabelecimento do conhecimento público faz parte do processo social democrático.

Palavras-chave: Democracia, Cidadania; Pedagogia.

Resumen: Históricamente los currículos se constituyen dentro de sistemas de ideas que describen estilos de razonamiento, patrones y diferencias conceptuales en las prácticas escolares y con los alumnos. El currículo es una práctica de regulación social y regulador de poder. Cuando se pregunta sobre la historia del currículo, se entiende que también es una cuestión de la política del conocimiento en el trabajo disciplinar (Antunes, 2007; Apple, 1971; Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1993). Este estudio es un análisis crítico del discurso de cómo se enseña el concepto de

ciudadanía/democracia en las escuelas públicas a través del currículo de ciencias sociales, tal como se encuentra en el texto de modelos de estudios sociales y libros escolares seleccionados, así como en las transcripciones de entrevistas de cinco profesores de estudios sociales de enseñanza secundaria en un sistema escolar público en el sudoeste estadounidense (Gee y Green, 1998; Hicks, 1995; Luke, 1996, 2004). Ese contenido teórico se basa en la teoría de la Pedagogía Crítica, que enfoca la forma en la que se crean los currículos escolares en la formación del estudiante-ciudadano. El investigador describió, analizó e interpretó documentos que incluían los Modelos Nacionales y Estatales de Estudios Sociales estadounidenses, transcripciones de entrevistas con cinco educadores de ciencias sociales de enseñanza secundaria y libros didácticos de Geografía, Educación Cívica e Historia estadunidenses utilizados por el sistema escolar. La investigación destaca las evidencias de nuestra incapacidad de proveer una educación verdaderamente democrática de ciudadanía a través de tres distintos foros a nivel de la escuela pública: libros didácticos, modelos de estudios sociales y profesores. Además, se refiere a la importancia de los años de la Enseñanza Secundaria y de las características "intermediarias" para el desarrollo moral/social y académico de los alumnos. Los tipos de conocimiento socialmente aprobados y practicados en instituciones educacionales (como la escuela pública y el endoso oficial de ese conocimiento reflejado en los patrones de estudios sociales) merecen más atención por parte de investigadores y educadores para llenar un vacío importante en la literatura/análisis de la historia del desarrollo de currículos de estudios sociales, en ese campo vital de la enseñanza. El currículo de enseñanza secundaria de ciencias sociales demanda un foco más lógico y necesita una organización más cualificada. Es esencial

que haya educadores involucrados en la construcción de la teoría, que crecerán a partir del procesamiento y de la organización de nuevas informaciones. Profesores y alumnos pueden comprometerse a reunirse y desarrollar cuadros de referencia, que se pueden denominar sistemas y teorías. En ese caso, cada uno podrá ser examinado para comprobar su utilidad y su poder de explicar, prever y extender lo que es conocido (Antunes, 2007; Apple, 1971; Combs, 1991). Por último, se entiende que el resultado de esta investigación esclarece que el currículo es un trabajo en marcha constante y que a través del prisma del discurso crítico, llevó a concluir que el establecimiento del conocimiento público forma parte del proceso social democrático.

Palabras clave: Democracia; Ciudadanía; Pedagogía.

INTRODUCTION

Each new generation must understand the principles and institutions that support a democratic society, and school plays a pivotal role in making that happen. Public schools have an obligation to serve this public mission of democratic citizenship. Pedagogy has special responsibilities in democratic societies because all the decision-making underlying public institutions is subject to ongoing review. Each new political party that holds majority power can change the laws and priorities, undo checks and balances previously implemented, and allow values of liberty and tolerance to fade. Education is essential because it gives each new generation an understanding of the principles and institutions that support a democratic society.

The vital task of preparing students to become citizens in a democracy is highly complex. Social studies curricula encompass a wide range of potential content. This content engages students in a comprehensive process of confronting multiple dilemmas, and encourages them to *speculate, think critically, and make personal and civic decisions* based on information from multiple perspectives (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Antunes, 2007; Chomsky, 2000; Corrazza, 2004; Freire, 1993;

Pace, 2008; Tupper, 2009). A powerful and rigorous curriculum provides strategies and activities that engage students with significant ideas, and encourage them to connect what they are learning to their prior knowledge and to current issues. Such curricula encourage the student to think critically and creatively about what they are learning, and to apply that learning to authentic situations throughout their lives. It molds students into competent and responsible citizens that are informed and thoughtful, that participate in their communities exhibiting moral and civic virtues (Banks, 1993a; 2008; Chomsky, 2000; Corrazza, 2004; Pace, 2008).

The last decade of the twentieth century, and in particular, the first decade of the twenty-first century have seen a marginalization of the social studies curriculum, instruction, and assessment at all grade levels in the United States (Engel, 2000; Hursh, 2004; Pace, 2007; Stanley, 2004; Tupper, 2009). Throughout the nation, in departments of education and in schools, education for citizenship has taken a back seat to education for career.

Linguistic, intellectual, and vocational training of young people in public school curricula in a democratic society is simply not enough. Young people in such a society must be encouraged to develop social intelligence, social attitudes and values. This is only possible if they are taught to be critically minded toward social movements, tendencies, and institutions. Arguably, there is a connection between schooling and the development and maintenance of a democratic society (Hursh, 2004; Miller, 1988; Miller, 1992; Reiman, 1992; Tupper, 2009; Wille, 2000). Curricula that invite students to consider multiple perspectives, engage students in their own learning, and encourage thoughtful discussion are believed to advance the principles of democracy (Carr, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). While planning the creation of the University of Virginia in 1800, Thomas Jefferson emphasized that the vitality of a democracy depends upon the education and participation of its citizens (Peterson, 1960). The need for an informed citizenry was the very impetus for the creation of free public education in the United States (Brodie, 1998). If the nation is to develop fully the readiness of its citizenry to carry forward its democratic traditions, it must support progress toward attainment of the vision of powerful social studies teaching and learning (McLaughlin, 1988; Pace, 2007). The fundamental historic reason why Thomas Jefferson and other founders of the United States called for public schooling was that the education of all in the republic was pivotal for the achievement and

maintenance of the democratic form of government proposed at the time. This purpose has been of utmost importance in subsequent efforts to establish a truly free and democratic system of public schools (Butts, 1980).

Historically, the founding fathers believed that one of the most important duties of a citizen was to prioritize the needs of society over one's own selfish desires (Chiodo and Martin 2005). Since the creation of public schools in the United States, education has been identified with democracy. For Thomas Jefferson and others, staying informed and participating in political life were essential qualities of being a good citizen (Dagger, 1997). For Jefferson, 'information is the currency of democracy' (Meacham, 2012). For the nation's founding fathers, teaching citizenship was perceived as an important part of moral development. They believed that the success of the nation depended on the character, self-reliance, and responsibility of the citizens. Citizenship was associated with virtue (Meacham, 2012; Pangle and Pangle, 2000).

Practically throughout their existence, public schools in the United States have 'attempted' to enlighten her citizenry by providing public school student with 'some knowledge of how the government works through social studies classes. For example, teaching students how a bill becomes a law has, over time, become a 'staple' of civic education. An alternative version of democratic education is created not only though basic studies of government processes, but also through the active engagement of students in the school community (Chiodo and Martin 2005). Democratic education in public schools should strive to enlighten its citizenry about the history and the effects of discrimination in our society. At present, the curriculum mentions the history of slavery, segregation and gender discrimination; however, our practice is still slow.

Following up on the forefathers' view, a more contemporary view of citizenship was expressed by the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS). In 1968, J.E. Morgan wrote, "Effective citizenship by individuals continues to require the same four essential elements: knowledge, thought, commitment, and action" (p.12). These four essential elements were further developed in two other NCSS publications, *The Essentials of Social Studies* (NCSS, 1991) and the *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (NCSS, 1994). The later publication provided ten curricular standards for the study of the ideals, principles and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic, for students to know, analyze and use (Chiodo and Martin, 2005).

Education and teaching should focus on full participation in all communities. We must incorporate and use the arts, history, geography and literature. Schools should allow teachers to explore political issues, and curriculum with knowledge of their history. Curriculum must provide the concept of what it means to be a democratic citizen.

The goal of civic education for public schools in the United States is to deal with ALL students in such a way as to provoke and enable them to play their parts as participant citizens (Khane and Westheimer, 2003; Butts, 1980; Oldenquist, 1980). One essential way that schools can be more democratic and encouraging of civic life is to offer students and teachers the possibility of dialogical interaction based on a value system that, while not ignoring social realities, will expose the ideological traps of a system that has converted even adults into different citizens (Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 1997a; Slater et al., 2002).

Curriculum presents a vision of the social studies teaching and learning needed to achieve the levels of civic efficacy that a nation requires of its citizenry. It does not simply outline a particular scope and sequence. The emphasis is on principles of teaching and learning that have enduring applicability across grade levels, social studies core content areas, and scope and sequence arrangements (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Antunes, 2007; Corrazza, 2001; Prado, 1997).

METHODOLOGY

This article presents a Critical Discourse analysis of how the concept of citizenship/democracy is taught in a Large Public School System [hereafter referred to as LPSS] in the Southeastern United States, through the use of standards, selected textbooks, and its educators. The purpose of this qualitative research was to analyze how democracy is taught in the LPSS in the middle school years. The data collection used three sources: 1) a literature review; 2) examination of texts [selected LPSS social science textbooks and state/national standards]; and 3) unstructured interviews with five randomly selected middle school social science educators.

This multi-layered qualitative study (Grumet, 1988) provided a textual analysis of LPSS textbooks and social studies standards, as well as unstructured

interviews/conversations with educators who lived out the discourse generated by the texts (Behar, 2003). Through these unstructured interviews/conversations, an analysis was conducted of the educators who work with that language, and how they interpret what they teach. The interview transcripts were also analyzed. The unstructured interview/conversation allowed the participants to define the curriculum from their own perspectives (Gutierrez, 2008; Lederman, 2011; Patton, 2002; Rubin and Rubin, 2005, Wanat, 2008). In the interviews, the author encouraged the educators to discuss their pedagogical logic (reasoning) and actions. The researcher also looked for any challenges or constraints that the educators may have faced (Gutierrez, et al. 1995; Rubin and Rubin, 2005, Wanat, 2008).

RESEARCH DESIGN/PROCEDURES

Discourse analysis is a way of understanding social interactions. The researcher acknowledges his or her own bias and position on the issue, known as reflexivity (Keller, 2005). The researcher begins with a research question (s) [and not a hypothesis in the formal sense] that is aimed at a theoretical position. For the purpose of this research, curricula was analyzed and then deconstructed. This involved attempting to identify features in the curricula, such as particular repetitive discourses; symbols; themes found (Harris, 1988b; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Keller, 2005; Popkewitz, 1997). By looking at the curricula, the researcher asked whether a number of recurring themes could be abstracted about what was being taught and how. Thematic analysis is about trying to identify meaningful categories in a body of data. A discourse is a particular theme within the curricula, especially those that relate to identities [here read democracy and citizenry]. The aim of this research was to understand the power relationship in the creation of curriculum, by answering the following questions:

1. How is the knowledge and knowing of democracy and citizenry constructed in LPSS Middle School Social Studies?

2. What is advocated by LPSS social studies middle school curriculum?

a. Do the identified values and knowledge of democracy exist in the curriculum?

b. What are teachers' beliefs regarding social studies curricula?

c. What are teachers' beliefs relating to democratic citizenship in middle schools?

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

It is through school that curriculum links the individual citizen to his/her culture and society. In the United States, society has defined school as the official/sanctioned social institution for developing a way of teaching individual citizens what it means to be 'American', and to function within the parameters of this society. It is the public school curricula that serve as the connector between the academic and 'practical' creation of knowledge about curriculum itself.

Educating future citizens through the social sciences remains a crucial part of the middle school curriculum. As proposed by NCSS, the goal of the social sciences curriculum at the middle school level is to enable students to think critically and participate effectively as citizens of the United States; it should require students to learn to ask viable questions and make reasonable, independent decisions based on multiple perspectives. Although the findings of this study show that social studies of public school curricula have not achieved this, the responsibility must be accepted for the development of a more critical perspective in public school classrooms, and introduce students to perspectives and issues that will enable them to achieve a more democratic and participatory view.

DISCUSSION: HOW KNOWLEDGE OF DEMOCRACY IS CONSTRUCTED

The purpose of social science education is to create questions and encourage critical analysis. Based on my interpretation, knowledge of democracy and citizenry was not constructed in LPSS Middle School Social Studies. One thing was clear: the curricula did not offer any opportunities for students and educators to participate in or question what they were taught, in this important phase of their academic and social development. Clearly, middle school is not being used as the principal period for constructing a basic understanding of democracy in public schools. This lack of guidance and social and academic development directly affects the fabric of our own democratic institution. The LPSS social studies middle school curriculum advocated a simplistic or "thin" concept of citizenry and democracy; a concept of democracy was mainly focused on dates and names. Values and knowledge of democracy were not identified in the curriculum.

Confirmation of the findings.

In the analysis of the texts and curricula, and the interviews and perspectives of the educators, together with my personal experience as an educator, the following themes were highlighted:

> Teachers believe that Social studies is about facts and dates, bearing little relationship to everyday life in society.
>
> Students are taught how to synthesize, they are taught to read, but not to question.
>
> Important concepts in social sciences are not explained in the texts, or covered by the curriculum, and this affects not only the teacher's ability to explain but also the students' ability to understand the information, and to connect it to the concepts previously learned.
>
> The curriculum does not help middle school students to develop critical thinking abilities, reasoning skills, or any other form of analytical thought process.
>
> The texts generally support the status quo and concentrate mainly on the positive elements of our history and the concept of democracy. The textbooks largely support mainstream values with little evidence of working for social change and addressing inequality. The textbooks were considered extremely factual [Thin Democracy] with little to no critical thinking; thus reinforcing results found in previous textbook analyses.
>
> Curriculum was perceived as extremely factual [Thin Democracy]; and not multidisciplinary or multicultural. Participant educators looked more to previous and personal experience than to any set curriculum for guidance.

Teachers and Standards.

Standards emphasize content above the human quality of how the information is being transmitted. The history of standards has been a history of trying to "teacher proof" the right information (Nelson, 1978, p. 68). All the standards are premised on the notion that teachers need direction. It should be expected that each set of standards has had teachers involved in its writing or development - unfortunately, this is not always the case. Furthermore, it is important to reiterate that standards should be provided as directions, not as suggestions. Essentially teachers are being told something that they already know and practice. There may be teachers who are not familiar with the content or with the various standards. For those teachers, the standards do not offer any classroom assistance. The standards are viewed as imposed from above; they ignore the more localized generation of standards created by the community, with the involvement of all of those who are directly concerned. Standards that reflect the involvement of local citizens are non-existent.

At the National level, through the NCSS, the standards are adopted through a process that expects input from members of the professional organization, but rarely are teachers asked to be active participants in the process, unless they are members of a professional organization and are actively traveling to meetings, or hold elected positions. Teachers should know their students and their region, as this will help them determine the direction the school's curriculum should take. Such standards involve social and local control and an acknowledgement that teachers are useful and prepared. Since engaging in this research project, there has been a major shift with respect to the standards that are to be addressed. The Southern State in question has decided to adopt the Common Core Standards, and these standards are expected to be implemented this academic year, with major modifications to the social sciences curriculum in the near future. Through this research, it became clear that the curriculum is a constant work in progress, which through the lens of critical discourse, led me to conclude that the establishment of public knowledge is part of the democratic process.

JOSEPH SCHWAB – CURRICULUM AS LIFE AND THE MILIEUS

Based on the results of my research, together with my professional experience, there is no doubt that no other scholar represents Thomas Jefferson's dream of a strong social political curriculum better than Joseph Schwab. Joseph Schwab (1970) combined the Tylerian world of perspective curriculum with the reconceptualist's notion of curriculum as a 'socio-political text'. Although it was Schwab himself who stated that the field of curriculum studies was 'moribund', he also offered 'life' for the field, with his deliberations (Roby, 2008). Although his curricular methods are closely related to the rationale proposed by Tyler (1949) [the temporal – past/present; the personal /social interaction, the contextual – situation/place], Schwab differed from Tyler in that he did not precisely define curricular objectives. For Schwab, the role of the curriculum is not technical but a guide that promotes full participatory democracy through the deliberative process. Curriculum is 'lived'; it is 'experienced' and not read. He allowed curriculum to be 'messy', as Roby (2008) called it, an "indeterminate process" (p.85). Joseph Schwab brought the many aspects of education as a field of study into an overall view, instead of limiting education to one specialty or field of expertise. He envisioned a curriculum – a base of teaching - that is developed

alongside the progression of government and society. Thus, education becomes practical, in constant growth and development.

Schwab's four categories for curriculum are:

1) Subject matter: the development of cognitive processes for the growth of the self, and the service to others (namely, citizenship). It is more than the knowledge offered by the disciplines;

2) Learners: knowing the students; their abilities and needs as well as the need for a critical curriculum (namely, Critical Pedagogy);

3) Milieus: the contexts from which the students come from, their communities and how they identify themselves culturally (namely, social democracy);

4) Teachers: agents of education (namely, Freire's pedagogy for freedom & Craig's contested classroom space).

These agents are essential to the cause, and it is important for them to understand their own strengths and limitations. Teachers should be the true curriculum makers. The educator should remember these four categories as he/she facilitates what Schwab referred to as deliberation. The educational curriculum should offer instructional pathways for the educators to consider the values they want to offer to their students (Schwab, 1978).

For Schwab the process of deliberation was to be a natural method that others involved in the process could readily understand. The role of the curriculum is not to prescribe but to advise. The curriculum becomes a moral undertaking rather than a rigorous following of a prescribed blueprint. Curricular development is messy and depends on the voices of the many who participate – students, teachers, curriculum specialist, parents, and others involved in the process of a democratic education (Pinar et, al., 1995; Reid, 1978; Roby, 2008; Walker, 1975). The broadness of the base for dealing with this messy educational curriculum rests on the coordination of the use of his categories subject matter, learner, milieu and of course, teachers. Unfortunately, these categories still remain underused. The innovations have been only partial, relying on one category at the expense of the others. There has been no systematic exploitation of Schwab's complete vision for education (Craig, 2003; Roby, 2008).

Joseph Schwab rejects the "tragic view of educational failures" (Roby, 2008, p. 88). He views them as opportunities for improvement. Schwab was a believer in reform as an invitation for dialogue. Schwab's optimistic view, mentioned

by scholars such as Craig (2005) and Roby (2008), provides room for dialogue, collaboration and improvement of our public education system. This optimistic view is crucial to the ongoing "life" of education and curriculum. Schwab's vision of curriculum has been used throughout this research. It is within this framework that the concluding remarks are provided.

Reinforcing Schwab's concept of curriculum, there is a dualistic characteristic of the curriculum, in that it exists as a body of knowledge both about itself and about the practical curriculum of the school (Hewitt, 2006). As a body of knowledge, it includes formal knowledge, special terminology and ways of thinking, creating tools for curriculum work. This is the kind of knowledge that comes from scholarly research of those in academia. Here, curriculum and its formation become academic subject matters. As the curriculum of the school, it becomes a matter of practice; it is based the experience of the educator, the student, the classroom, and what occurs in society.

Reinforcing and understanding the practical is to truly understand the curriculum; to come to know the curriculum as a body of knowledge and professional practice. Hewitt defines curriculum as both acculturated knowledge and a body of work that flows from both curriculum as practice and as a field of study (2006, p. 5). Using this formulation, curricula then becomes a perspective. It is a mental activity that collects frames of references and allows those in education - most specifically, teachers, to personally make sense of things. Together, multiple references will become generally understood by the collective and used in a society that can lead to a common point of view. The concepts of citizenship and democracy, together with their presentation in the studies of American History, Civics, and Geography, can become a perfect example of social purposes served by the curriculum.

DISCUSSION: TEACHERS' BELIEFS REGARDING SOCIAL SCIENCE CURRICULA AND DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL - THE "IN-BETWEEN" YEARS

The middle school movement began in the early 1960s. Its purpose was to fill the gap in the educational and social needs of students in the "in-between" years i.e. between elementary and high school. It was designed to act as a social and academic bridge, for the promotion of continuous educational progress

for all students (Alexander and George, 1981; Powell, 2011; Russell, 1997, Wiles et. al, 2006). In the United States, middle schools are in the middle of the K-12 educational ladder and include a sixth through eighth grade configuration. The middle school years include programming concepts intended to create a school experience that is aligned with the social development of early adolescents.

During the early developmental years, parents and teachers are significant agents of socialization. It is during the middle school years however, that the student becomes more resistant to changing their attitudes. The beliefs they choose to hold must meet with the approval of their significant peers and the mass media. It is safe to say that the idea of citizenship is not foremost in their minds. It is precisely because of this that the middle school social studies curriculum is so crucial. It is in the in-between years that middle school students examine the values that they have already begun to acquire in their developmental years. It is during this period that they begin to develop a more mature value system, in a more rational manner (Powell, 2011). If they are to make a democratic contribution as citizens, their values must be grounded on reason. It is during these years that democratic curriculum gets 'messy' [borrowing from Schwab]. The middle school social studies curriculum needs to provide critical thinking; the student must feel comfortable and apt to question his previous beliefs and future knowledge. It is during these middle school years that students should begin to get directly involved in their decision-making process (Apple and Beane, 1995).

All the educators interviewed believe that the middle school years were the optimal years for the development of democratic thought and citizenry; thus reinforcing the literature review. For these educators, middle school is still a place students can be nurtured to grow. It is still a place where they can learn a lot and be excited to learn, and most are still easily amused. The educators interviewed further stated that the minds of middle school students are not already "set" and do not present to too much bias. They believe that as educators, they can best assist the students in forming their thought processes. All those interviewed mentioned the high level of energy the students still possessed when motivated. Finally, all the educators mentioned that middle school students, in the beginning, feel "stuck" in that in-betweenness between elementary and high school. The students arrive in their classrooms with low expectations, and see the middle schools years merely as a necessary transition to high school.

It is at this moment that we, as educators, have a chance to change their perceptions. During these optimal years, middle school educators (and more specifically, social science instructors) can demonstrate that this in-betweenness is not a fallacy but a stepping stone; a bridge between what the student has already acquired and what he/she can add to his/her knowledge in the future. Here, middle school educators are able to pass the responsibility of knowledge acquirement. We can motivate our students to accept their learning responsibilities and spend extra time on acquiring social knowledge. It is an awkward age, and these students are looking for nurture, attention, and care. It is here, in the middle school years, that we as educators have been given the chance to form, reform, and educate the student-citizen.

It is in the middle school that the student-citizen has the chance to develop a strong sense of ethics that will guide the student-citizen in problem solving and decision making. It is in the middle level years, in this in-betweeness, that students reach a level of mental maturity that allows them to be analytical; to question, and to hypothesize. They must be involved in their education in more meaningful ways, as they are capable of not only learning but achieving levels seldom realized. It is here that the social science educator has the moral and professional obligation to go beyond the text, beyond the classroom lecture, and develop intellectual stimulation for moral, ethics, and citizenry.

FUTURE RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The middle school has been labeled "the weak link in American education" by those who take the view that the main responsibility of middle school is to prepare students for advanced high school courses (Lounsbury, 2009). Our educational system continues to provide specific generalized "thin" content, in a feeble attempt to mass-produce high quality results. For over a century, decision-makers well beyond the classroom have continued to provide curricular guidelines, in the hope that enforced uniformity will produce 'excellence'.

The middle school" in-between concept" is a philosophy of education with a belief in human experience. John Lounsburry (2009) in his "*A Middle School Manifesto*" argues that the concept of the middle school is a direct reflection of two prime foundations," the nature and needs of young adolescents, and the accepted principles of learning, both undergirded by a commitment to our

democratic way of life" (p.32). Powell (2011) refuted the concept of middle school as the weak link of American education. Lounsburry (2009) does not believe that middle school has failed, and argues that "Far from having failed, middle grades education is ripe for a great leap forward" (p.17). Dickinson (2001) further stated, "There is nothing wrong with the middle school concept... The concept is as valid today as it was in either of its previous iterations at the turn of the 20th century or in the early 1960s" (p. 3-4).

Reinforcing Joseph Schwab's rejection of the tragic view of educational failure, viewing it as an opportunity to do better, a true middle school curriculum has not been fully practiced. It has been difficult to implement it fully, and even then, it is only practiced partially. To fully implement it, scholars and educators will have to oppose the traditional and established school procedures of "thin democracy" and mass-produced narrow curricula. There is a timelessness about these ideals. They may be changed, postponed, opposed and even neglected, but they will never be defeated.

Future research must help educators and decision-makers grasp a broader, more democratic vision of what constitutes an 'education', with its many dynamics and intricacies. It is much more than simply passing on information, testing and grading. As educators, we must seize that window of opportunity that the middle school years provide for our young citizenry. In these in-between years, young people are vulnerable but malleable; however, the window will not stay open for long, we must act by the time our citizens reach high school – or the window of opportunity will have closed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have a problem in public education in the United States of America. Public schools in the United States developed without a master plan. The elementary, secondary and university levels all developed quite independently from each other. There was no sequential order; elementary school was not the first to start; universities opened before middle schools even existed (Kliebard, 1986; Lounbury, 2009). The public school system in the United States of America is still a work in progress.

Historically, public schools sought to shape the social and character education of students just as much as promoting the development of skills knowledge.

Over time, the attention given by public educators to mold good persons and citizens diminished. The personal-social development of the student-citizen has lost intentionality and become null on the part of the public school curricula. The public, government and many in the education profession have become resigned to the fact that the acquisition of knowledge is simply measured by tests and mass-education.

This research, based on the works of pioneers and reformers such as Thomas Jefferson, Harold Rugg, John Dewey, Joseph Schwab, and Paulo Freire, urges educators to reclaim the public school curriculum. We have weathered the storm, the republic has survived, and it is now time to provide for its citizenry. It is time to lead the way to restoring pride in public school education to its place of prominence in the United States of America. We keep attempting to reformulate curriculum and the answer has been available since the times of Jefferson. When are we going to listen? This research is important because it provides evidence of failure in three different forums: textbooks/standards/teachers. Moreover, it refers to the importance of the Middle School years and its characteristic of in-betweenness. Significant research has been conducted on the beginning of the learning process (early childhood) and its end (High School or university). Authors have recently begun to focus on middle school and its importance. This is my contribution to the field.

Social sciences at middle school level desperately need a new perspective within the curriculum; one that will give students and teachers a sense of being themselves their creators. Middle School educators are in the best position to lead the way in developing such a curriculum. These are the individuals that are reminded daily of the developmental, social and cultural differences among their students. Despite the in-between, messy conglomerate of students that comprises what we call the middle school, it is here that the re-socialization of the student citizen occurs.

It has long been posited that the goal of public education in the United States is to produce enlightened citizens; this must be the moral and civic obligation of the social studies curricula. The future curriculum developers/educators for middle school social studies must consider what we have already learned about young adolescents, and their learning and teaching. Future strategies must be based on a humanistic view of the students.

At present, neither teachers nor administrators speak with one voice with regard to what is important to know and promote. Often, we do not even have a voice on these issues. We do know that effective teachers have positive beliefs about themselves, are confident that their students are able, and have teaching purposes that are consistent and in agreement of their practices (Brown, 1999; Combs, 1991; Phipps, 2010). When will they speak out?

The social sciences middle school curriculum must focus on its rationale, background needs and organization. Every science, regardless of whether it is physical or social, is evolutionary by nature. As the future unfolds, so too must the social sciences middle school curriculum. Borrowing from Brown (1999), educators (should they have a voice) must be involved in theory building which will grow out of processing and organizing new information. Teachers and students must come together and develop those frames of reference that we call systems and theories. Each must be tested for its utility and its power to explain, predict and extend what is known (Antunes, 2007; Apple, 1971; Combs, 1991). For Brown (1999), that is how intelligence is constructed. The goal of citizenship and the other espoused goals of social science are identical to the goals that have been articulated for the education of the United States, yet none is directly confronted or developmentally reflected in our textbooks and curricula.

It is through the development of this curriculum that middle school social science can nurture citizens to become interested in the lifelong learning process of a democratic education. For over a century, that there has been a social sciences component in the public school curriculum, scientists have compiled hundreds of thousands of observations about the history, politics and nature of the educational science. As researchers, we continue to collect, measure, reproduce and evaluate data according to what we do in the classrooms and how we teach the curriculum. In the social sciences, we must consider not only the nature of the curriculum but also all aspects involved in it: educators, decision-makers and in particular, the students themselves. We cannot only investigate what is presently known; we must use what we know to expand our concept of what we can become (Bruner, 1966). It is crucial that middle school students learn to use what they know in order to make what they will need in the future.

It is imperative to understand that the concept of democratic public schools is not intended only for the student. Adults, including professional educators, have

the right to experience a democratic way of life in schools. Teachers and other educators have a right to assist in creating their own programs for professional development, based upon their perceptions of issues in their classroom and professional lives. They have the right to have their voices heard in creating the curriculum; after all, it is they who will pass it on to the students. Moreover, teachers must control their own professional fields. Apple and Beane (1995, p. 3), ask a fundamental question in our quest for betterment: "could it be that the century-long struggle for democratic purposes and practices in education and schooling never occurred?" Many of our most trusted and powerful ideas about democratic schooling are the hard won gains from courageous efforts to make our schools more democratic – from Jefferson, Mann, and Rugg through to more contemporary thinkers, like Schwab and Freire.

Looking at the literature and the contested definition of social sciences, we must highlight the importance of citizenship and democracy in our changing democracy. With the increasing diversity of society, it is the social sciences that holds society together. The concerns raised in Harold Rugg's era of 1920-1940s immigration and minorities, and the national trend towards a diverse citizenry and mass education, are the same concerns as those of the Post-September 11th, 2001 era. Public schools in the United States of America are about nation-making and nation building.

Carole Hahn (2001) reminds us that in democracies "citizen participation is about more than voting and following current events; it requires the engagement of citizens to improve society" (p.19). But more than engagement is needed. Tupper (2009) argues that if society is to truly improve, then we must be aware that a democratic disparity exists and we must be mindful of how this disparity informs our student-citizens in society. Students, educators and decision-makers must take account of their privileged position, and question how these informed experiences of citizenship and democratic engagement occur. Apple and Beane (1995) wisely remind us that we are the beneficiaries of those efforts, and we have an obligation to carry on the dream of public schools for a democratic society. The public schools are essential for democracy. We must discuss, we must continue investigating what works in schools, what should be done, learn and teach more about the role of public schools in expanding the democratic way of life of this republic.

This research is important because it provides evidence of failure in three different forums: textbooks/standards/teachers. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of the Middle School years and its in-between characteristics. Significant research has been carried out on the beginning of the learning process (early childhood) and its end (High School or university). A few authors have recently begun to examine middle school and its importance.

It has long been posited that the goal of public education in the United States is to produce enlightened citizens; it must be the moral and civic obligation of the social studies curricula. The future curriculum developers/educators for middle school social studies must consider what we have already learned about young adolescents, their learning and teaching. Future strategies must be based on a humanistic view of the students.

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