EDC1300 – Perspectives in Education

Collaborative Group Reflection – Module Two

# Should education be directed toward a Democratic Society, or Harmonious society?

On-Line Collaborative Group 39

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# The Philosophical Question: Justification of Development

Should education be directed toward a Democratic Society, or Harmonious society?

This philosophical question was formed after the group brought forward various suggestions to explore. Inspired by the appropriate course readings introduced within Module Two (2013), and differing viewpoints on education’s purpose, the suggestions were then merged together to create the resulting philosophical question (see Appendix).

The group discussed several theorists relevant to the question, whose theories concentrated on important educational purpose. Confucius's philosophy of education centred on benevolent and ethical behaviour, which would lead to a harmonious life (Gutek, 2011a). Meanwhile, Dewey held a strong belief in educations’ purpose of preparing students to be responsible citizens in modern democratic society, embedding those democratic principles into his classroom practice (Module Two, 2013, p. 5).

Concerns were raised by group members as to whether the goal of democracy is really what students need from education, or whether it is more for political reasons than general wellbeing. Some members of the group strongly advocated harmony as a more essential goal for today's youth. It was also suggested in relation to peace-keeping measures that democracy and harmony don't seem to co-exist simultaneously, only in intentions rather than practices.

These views were directly related to concerns regarding personal philosophies and each individual’s future teaching practice. Therefore, as the philosophical question did not have a right or wrong answer, it thus initiated great discussion among the group.

# Capturing the Inquiry Process

For the Module Two collaboration, communication between group members was through email, online forums and Blackboard Collaborate sessions. Over various sessions the group formed the question, “Should education be aimed at a Democratic society or a Harmonious Society?” As a group, questions were raised as to which would make a better society and the majority decision was a harmonious society would be more advantageous.

Links were made between theorist John Dewey (Johnson & Reed, 2008) and his positive take on a democratic society, which sparked a debate as to whether or not living in a democratic society could be beneficial for the individual. As a group it was decided that although there would be many benefits arising from a democratic society, that the individual may not have the full opportunities available to fully realise their capacities.

Other theorists were mentioned such as Confucius (Ozmon & Craver, 2008), helping to define harmony. It was decided that this definition would change due to different peoples’ perspectives, but in general being just, having basic human kindness, and respect for elders, were of highest importance.

The group challenged one another through debate and dissecting each question posed. Together the ideas of each side of the question were explored and the entire group gained a stronger understanding of what it means to live in a democratic society.

# Reflection: Learning and Conclusions

The group’s philosophical question opened up discussions around democracy and harmony, prompting an investigation to gain better understanding of the topic. Following further enquiries into the key terms, it was agreed that there was integrated meaning between the two concepts.

In discussing Dewey’s theory of democratic learning (Johnson & Reed, 2008), this concept provoked various view on effectiveness of this concept for modern cultures and societies. Some members believed that democracy would lead to harmony in society by offering equality in education, while others believed that the freedoms of choice and speech provided by democracy led to a disharmonious society.

By also investigating Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s extensive work, the group discussed the link between education and politics, through the theorist’s work which influenced progressive regimes of education (Gutek, 2011b). Rousseau’s child-centred approach encouraged permissiveness in education, with a strong emphasis on environmental factors, allowing students freedom to express themselves.

The concept of harmony inspired differing viewpoints, becoming understood by the group to be a relative term, depending on the opinion of the observer. According to Confucian philosophy (Gutek, 2011a), harmony is achieved through a ritualised hierarchical society, which appears to conflict with modern democratic ideals.

With such contentious terms, the group agreed that the question depended mostly on interpretation, concluding that both democracy and harmony are desirable in education, but need to exist together cooperatively in order to work for the wellbeing of all society.

# Improvement on the Inquiry Process

As a group the question was agreed to be sufficiently philosophical, discussing aspects such as the role of technology and the possibility that society may provide too much freedom to young children to the detriment of that society. The group discussed how harmonious and democratic societies work today and that both structure and freedom were necessary for society to be harmonious.

The group felt there was improvement on the last inquiry with more consistency in meetings despite practical placement obligations. The group members changed roles in this inquiry, working with other members on documenting specific sections of the inquiry process. Throughout the inquiry the group did query the philosophical nature of the question, however decided to continue as it meant a deeper and critical inquiry.

To improve the steps of inquiry the group could develop an agenda of what needs to be discussed during the blackboard meetings, which will allow the group the opportunity to research and have information ready to share and discuss. The process of inquiry and the philosophical question that emerged from discussions enabled the group to debate the topic which differed from the first enquiry when the members of the group shared similar views.

**References**

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*Module Two – The purposes of education*. (2013). Retrieved August 12, 2013, from <http://usqstudydesk.usq.edu.au/m2/mod/resource/view.php?id=132934>

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**Appendix**

**EDC1300 – OLCLG 39 – MODULE 2 GROUP REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT**

**PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION – MIND MAP OF CONCEPTION**

⇩ The questions that we started with, inspired by the readings. ⇩

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Are there disadvantages when educating children from a family with a low socioeconomic status? | Are people educated purely for future employment? | Who are the people who develop curriculums or frameworks and what gives them the right to tell us what to and what not to teach? | Do we give children too much freedom in education today? |
| By encouraging positive freedom, do we encourage too much independence? | How much of "white" education are we forcing indigenous Australians to take on? | Does a child's upbringing from parents affect their education? |  |

⇩⇩⇩ What aspects are we interested in exploring further? ⇩⇩⇩

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| If you think of kids on the streets with no job, no hope, no care- Did too much freedom help them find their path or overwhelm them with too much choice? | What impact do families have on children? Positive and negative impacts. | Should we explore the Aborginal/Indigenous culture particularly in regards to education? | Should we further discuss theorists who suggest submissive societies are "best"? |
| Is the Montessori learning method too structured for children to play and learn naturally? | Is too much freedom in education a good thing? |  |  |

⇩ ⇩ ⇩

⇩⇩ Merging our interests into one question. ⇩⇩

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Is harmony simple or is it too scarce and unattainable in our modern world? | Is education for democracy or for harmony? |
| Should education be aimed at a democratic or harmonious society? |  |

⇩ The final question, after fine-tuning: ⇩

Should education be directed toward a Democratic society or Harmonious society?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Exemplary** (3.5-4) | **More than Satisfactory** (3- 3.4) | **Satisfactory (**2.5 -2.9) | **Emergent** (2 – 2.4) | **Unsatisfactory (**0-1.9) |
| **Justify the Development of the Question****3.5/4** | Philosophical question **development** **explained and justified** to show how **ideas** extended and connect to theorists | Philosophical question **development** **explained** to show how **ideas** extended and connect to theorists | Philosophical question **development** **described** to show how ideas **further t**hinking, and **describes** connection to theorists | Philosophical question **identified** that shows whatthinking has occurredand **connection to theorists** | Philosophical question **not** identified and ideas are not connecting thinking or to theorists. |
| **Process of Inquiry****3.5/4** | **Explain** and **justify** how group member ideas engaged with others **Explain** relevance of discussions to theorists**Explain** and **justify** the direction of inquiry and new insights that emerged**Explain** how ideas were challenged. | **Explain** how group member ideas engaged with others **Explain** relevance of discussions to theorists**Explain** direction of inquiry and new insights that emerged**Explain** how ideas were challenged. | **Discuss** how group member ideas engaged with others**Describe** relevance of discussions to theorists**Describe** direction of inquiry and insights that emerged**Describe** how ideas were challenged. | **Outline** how group member ideas engaged with others**Outline** relevance of discussions to theorists**Identified** direction of inquiry, an outline only of insights**Outline** how ideas challenged | How group members engaged with others **not** **outlined** No outline ofRelevance of discussion to theoristsNo outline of direction of neither inquiry nor insights gained.How ideas were shared not outlined |
| **Group Reflection on what you have learned****3.5/4** | **Explain** and **justify** understandings of theorists and concepts**Explain** and **Interpret** community of inquiry conclusions | **Explain** understandings of theorists and concepts**Explain** and **Interpret** community of inquiry conclusions | **Describe** understanding of theorists and concepts**Describe** community of inquiry conclusions and reason for conclusions drawn. | **Outline** understanding of theorists and concepts**Outline** community of inquiry conclusions.2 | Understanding of theorists and concepts **not** **outlined**Community of inquiry conclusions **not** **outlined** |
|  | 3 | 2.5 | 2 | 1.5 | 0-1 |
| **Improvements****3/3** | **Explain** and **justify** improvements to inquiry process | **Explain** improvements to inquiry process | **Discuss** improvements to inquiry process. | **Outline** improvements to inquiry process. | Improvement to inquiry not discussed. |

**Mark: 13.5/15**

**Comments:**

Dear Group members:

Good work on the whole on your second collaborative inquiry. There are a few points to consider for future inquiries:

* Your reflection is very clear and indicates that you worked well together as a group.
* You have indicated further questions which could lead to greater depth of inquiry.
* The examples of other questions considered were helpful.
* Your mind map usefully illustrated some of your thinking.

Yvonne F. November 2013