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Concept of Democracy & Political Education

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ABSTRACT :

There is an increasingly complex array of global crises facing young people in contemporary societies, including climate change and ecological collapse, increasing inequality, rising authoritarianism and the de-democratisation and privatisation of public institutions. As such, it is imperative to consider the ways in which curriculum can move beyond questions regarding the knowledge, skills and attitudes being taught in classrooms, to broader questions of how curriculum can work towards more democratic futures for all young people.

Keywords:- Nature, Democracy , Equality, Law, Modern

INTRODUCTION :

Democracy: Meaning and Nature A Democratic society is the one, where the citizens elect their representatives and give them the power to govern; where the citizens are entitled to their basic rights and efficiently follow their duties and the ideals of liberty, equality, justice and fraternity are given prime importance. Countries throughout the world are realizing and adopting the basic tenets of democracy, the democratic ones are taking steps to protect and preserve the democracy and the non-democratic countries such as Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, have been going through a revolution, so as to adopt a democratic system of governance. With the changes in times and changing needs, the nature of democracy has also undergone a change. With the establishment of large Nation states, democracy has changed from a direct democracy to one which given more emphasis to deliberations. Decisions are based on consensus and public awareness and opinion are vital for decision making. With the growing number of forums for exchange of ideas and values more and more people to a great extent are getting a chance to connect and interact on significant issues central to a democratic society. Modern democracies also face many challenges, including the ability to sustain themselves, particularly in the midst of crises. In order to sustain and strengthen a democracy, it is imperative to have dynamic, —active citizensl. Democracy cannot come into existence without citizens' participation. Citizens' involvement depends heavily on resources, motivations, and social contacts. Citizens cannot fulfill these ambitious tasks adequately, without specific competences; that is, citizens need to have a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and valuesl at their disposal enabling them to become an active citizen (Hoskins, Barber, Nijlen et al,2011). 2 In a democratic environment people are expected to participate in the societal affairs at the maximum level and Participation always comes through awareness and with the skills to participate. The protection of a democracy required participation in action in other words, it is believed that a democracy cannot exist without active and conscious citizens. An active citizen is one who is able to exercise his/her social and political rights and influence the decision making process. To be a conscious citizen means to understand the social and political reality, to critically develop one's own opinions and to analytically understand political processes in the modern democratic systems (Wojik,2009). For the success of a democracy, it is significant that an individual is accustomed with a democratic way of life. There are several agencies which play a role in making a citizen active and conscious. The family, school and society for instance, have the ability to lay the foundation for this democratic way of life. They can help individuals realize the significance of democratic values and also educate them about their role in a democratic state. Consequently, there is a close relationship between education and democracy, as education helps in the preservation and growth of a democracy. Democracy is a state of things, where ordinary people manage their own affairs, by agreement among themselves. A democratic society needs fully mature human beings and the purpose of education is to nurture the growth of young human beings with complete maturity in individual and social developmentl (Kumar,1993). With political efficacy and education, young human beings are transformed into fully mature individuals, who are ready to shape the politics and governance of our country. To make young people get acquainted with their roles as future citizens there is a need to make them acquire the capacity to understand the public culture and institutions (Rawls, 1993, pp. 199-200 as quoted by Frazer 1999). Several Political theorists emphasize that _in order to make children who are future leaders, capable of participating in collective decision making and collectively shaping their democratic society there is a need to make them both knowledgeable and articulate' (Gutmann, 1987, as quoted by Frazer 1999). They should be willing to respect differences and should identify the values and virtues such as freedom, equality and nondiscrimination which are central to a democracy. Citizens acquire the skills related to moral and critical appraisal, and become capable of making decisions and judgments, through reflective participation, based on human rights and social responsibilities. They are required to critically understand how a democracy functions and what their roles in a democratic state are. To achieve this aim of understanding governmental and political processes, the concept of —Political Educationl came into being. The discipline of Political Education deals with the power relations prevalent in the society. It is the conferring and procuring of knowledge about the power bearers and also about those whose actions are regulated by the ones in power. In other words, through Political Education, an individual gets mindful

of the essential structure of the government and the people in power and also about the power structures operating in the society, where he or she is living. Political Education provides people with an understanding of the complex character of power existing in their world so that they can constitute and participate in a shared common life (Esquith, 1985). With the help of Political Education, an individual not only gets to know about his/her rights but, also, becomes aware of the duties that are supposed to be fulfilled, as a citizen of the country. Political Education helps in making people aware of the various laws, which they need to, comply with and also about the repercussions of not obeying them. This serves an important purpose in any community; the actions of the individuals get controlled and they learn how to act appropriately in the public arena and also in their private sphere

Democracy and Political Education :

Geraint Parry in the article *Constructive and Reconstructive Political Education* (1999) explained the views of Sartori on Political Education who elaborated that ‘a democracy consists not in the rule of the people but in the people selecting who is to rule’ (Sartori, 1987). Political Education helps in developing the competency to select the rulers in a democracy and it can also concentrate on the political representatives, enabling them to comprehend and analyze the flood of expert scientific information they face (Sartori, 1987).⁴ It is described as an activity, the main goal of which is to help the largest number of citizens, who understand political processes, independently and critically and shape their own opinions. Political Education aims at achieving this as it intends to prepare individuals to explore the social and political dimensions in their lives, at a time when they are undergoing a transitional phase and changing from dependent children to independent young adults, who are prepared for participatory citizenship. Elizabeth Frazer in the *Idea of Political Education* (1999) has also highlighted that Political Education is not just learning about our rights of citizenship but also about our obligations and duties. Every political system operates in a given society, which has its own political culture, distinct from that of other countries. The political system, for its maintenance and growth, requires certain knowledge, skills and values from its people. The process of Political Education gives knowledge, tries to create skills and inculcates values congenial to the working of the political system. Thus, with Political Education the citizens in a democracy are able to contribute towards building a better political system with a good understanding of the needs and issues or problems related to governance and political matters.

Sources of Political Education in a Democracy

Political Education is imparted through a number of sources or agencies such as formal and well as non-formal educational programs and institutions, through participation in political processes and also with the help of Media. These agencies help in making citizens understand their democratic roles.

Political Participation as a means of Political Education

Various Political Philosophers such as Rousseau, Locke and Mill have laid emphasis on Political or civic participation to gain experience and thereby get educated about the Political processes and power relations. Participation in voluntary organizations also plays an educational role. In the work of Harold Enwistle titled *Political Education in a Democracy* (2014) the relationship between adults' political participation and their Political Education is discussed. Enwistle has stated that the participation of adults in Voluntary associations is considered to be an ideal training ground for politicians. Individuals acquire political wisdom and the mastery of the techniques of government through the practice of politics itself. Enwistle quoted the example of Greek democracy to substantiate this point. The students of Greek democracy emphasized that to be a member of the Athenian state was itself a Political Education. Zimmern argued that the whole climate of life in Athens, not just its social and political institutions but even its architecture, was conducive to the Political Education of her citizens. (Enwistle, 2014). Alexis De Tocqueville also stressed the educational role of political associations in America: which were 'large free schools, where all the members of the community went to learn the general theory of association' (Vol II, p. 116). Similarly the historians of democracy in Britain have also stressed the importance of membership of associations such as the early Methodist Church in training laymen for the responsible government of their religious societies and of contemporary non-religious associations (see Wearmouth as quoted by Enwistle, 2014). The associations such as Trade Unions, Friendly Societies and Consumers' Cooperatives made a contribution towards the Political Education of working men. Oakeshott has also stressed the importance of practice of politics in acquiring political competence. He has linked Political Education to learning how to participate in a conversation: In the words of Oakeshott —there will always remain some kind of a mystery about how a tradition of political behavior is learned, and moreover the only certainty is that there is no point at which learning can be said to begin. The politics of a community are not less individual (and not more so) than its language, and they are learned and practiced in the same manner. As in acquiring our native language we do not have to learn the alphabets and grammar first and then the words in use in a similar fashion acquiring Political Education is also not so structured. The greater part—perhaps the most important part of our Political Education is acquired by us in a haphazard way while finding our way about the world into which we are born, and there is no other way of acquiring it (p. 17; and see Crick, 1969, p. 6 as quoted by Enwistle, 2014). So political wisdom to a vast degree is acquired, incidentally, through political activity itself. Debi Roker, Katie Player and John Coleman presented a research titled *Young People's Voluntary and Campaigning Activities as Sources of Political Education* (1999) which shows how important participation in voluntary associations and political campaigns is in shaping young people's political identities (Frazer, 1999). This study highlighted how the young people's participation in society, and their community experiences can promote political literacy and contribute to Political Education. In their research one of the participants (a 15 year old female) expressed that her involvement with Amnesty International made her have faith in her ability to contribute towards society. Several other participants stated that taking part in campaigns made them believe in collective action and getting their voices heard. Further, this research also significantly highlighted that campaigning activities lead to development of political affiliation, ideological development and voting intent. This also leads to generation of socio-political thinking and awareness. These young people acquired skills and knowledge about how to gather information of a particular issue, whom to contact locally or nationally for particular issues, how to argue and present a case about any particular issue, collective working in groups, knowledge of procedures such as procedures such as the local Council meetings, policies of political parties and other organizations. This study also clearly highlighted through its result that young people Political

Education got enhanced by undertaking voluntary and campaigning activities as these acted as a valuable source for development of their politically relevant skills, understanding, knowledge and awareness (Coleman,1999). 8 Claudia SECCI in her article: A modern Political Education. Nonviolent perspectives stated that —Political Education develops through exercise and experimentation, through the joining of Dewey’s pedagogical principle of —learning by doing and forms of —community participation. (Luigina Mortari, op. cit., pp. 55-57 as cited by SECCI,2016) —A major part of Political Education grows out of an individual’s consciousness of his capability in solving life problems that have a social resonance and since the human condition is a plural one, in its essence – as Hannah Arendt argued – there can be no separation between politics and life. Participation alone can conquer or at least reduce the gap between masses and political class and this for two reasons: First, the debate upon issues takes the place of the bare parliamentary mandate; Second: political exercise produces politics —recovery in the sense that it embodies the essential values of its human core. (SECCI, 2016).

Political Education and Student Activism

Education is a process and an experience which nurtures and brings out the best in a human being. The significance being given to Education and the diversification in the field of education is a phenomenon which is progressing with the passage of time. As human society developed, it was also realized that human beings are required to acquire the knowledge of certain skills, values and dispositions to become a member of the society. Human beings were also required to make their individual contribution for the growth and maintenance of the societal set up. With this realization, came the understanding that Education plays a key role in making individuals fit to become a member of the society and we need to structure and restructure the system of education as per the changing societal needs. Thus, various disciplines were born and flourished while making individuals develop their theoretical knowledge and also practical experiences in different domains. For instance, the knowledge of sciences helped in development of a scientific temper and instilling a technical lens among the learners. The study of history made individuals aware about the past events and they learnt important lessons from them. Similarly, the subject of Economics helped the learners in procuring knowledge about the economic processes and activities which could be helpful in having a better earning capacity and a better quality of life. Language studies developed for better communication and exchange of ideas and Researches in various subjects became rampant which led to opening up of new fields and disciplines. As we know that a certain level of check is required to be imposed on the activities of individuals so as to prevent them from going against the social norms and harming the social fabric. In order to develop among individuals, the understanding to differentiate between the right and wrong deeds, the subject of religious and moral education gained ground, so as to make individuals morally correct and prevent them from causing harm to others. Similarly, in order to make them acquire basic knowledge of the rights, and duties being a citizen of a country the subject of Civics came to the fore. This also helped in strengthening the citizens’ trust and loyalty for the power holders by providing them with the basic idea about governance. Later on, it was realized that the citizens are required to be more critical, sensitive, interrogative, deliberative, and transformative citizens (NCF, 2005) and they need to acquire more systematic and diversified knowledge of the system of governance for which the subject of Politics or Political sciences was considered to be relevant. The larger aim of Civics and Political Science was to prepare responsible citizens. Later on, a separate discipline of ‘citizenship education’ gained popularity. It was intended to develop citizens, who not only participate in the political process of the country, but, are also proactive and responsible towards social and economic issues in society. It is either taught as a separate discipline or its elements are embedded in the curriculum of Civics or Political Science. (Arora, 2013). Citizenship Education has its roots in the subject of Politics and many a times the term ‘Political Education’ is used for Citizenship Education. Political Education is a discipline which deals with the power relations prevalent in the society. It is the conferring and procuring of knowledge about the power bearers and also about those whose actions are regulated by the ones in power. In other words, through Political Education, an individual gets mindful of the essential structure of the government and the people in power and also about the power structures operating in the society, where he or she is living. Political Education provides people with an understanding of the complex character of power existing in their world so that they can constitute and participate in a shared common life (Esquith, 1985). With the help of Political Education, an individual not only gets to know about his/her rights but, also, becomes aware of the duties that are supposed to be fulfilled, as a citizen of the country. Political Education helps in making people aware of the various laws, which they need to, comply with and also about the repercussions of not obeying them. This serves an important purpose in any community, the actions of the individuals get controlled and they learn how to act appropriately in the public arena and also in their private sphere. Elizabeth Frazer, in the Idea of Political Education (1999) highlighted that Political Education is not just learning about our rights of citizenship but also about our obligations and duties. Several Political theorists and actors had come together in arguing that with the dominance of liberalism and social democracy more weightage was being given to availing of human, political and social rights, which has thereby resulted in eclipsing the duties of the rights bearers (Frazer,1999) So, a re-emphasis on the duties and obligations in addition to the rights of citizenship is quintessential. In order to achieve this a system of civic or citizenship education is required in which young people learn about their duties-to vote, to obey the duly passed laws of the polity, to cooperate, to contribute to the provision of public goods as well as their rights (to privacy, to free speech, to welfare, to due process in law, etc.) To make young people get acquainted with their roles as future citizens there is a need to make them acquire the capacity to understand the public culture and institutions (Rawls, 1993, pp. 199-200 as quoted by Frazer 1999). Several Political theorists emphasize that ‘in order to make children who are future citizens, capable of participating in collective decision making and collectively shaping their democratic society there is a need to make them both knowledgeable and articulate’ (Gutmann, 1987, as quoted by Frazer 1999). They should be willing to respect differences and should identify the values and virtues such as freedom, equality and nondiscrimination which are central to a democracy. Political Education aims at achieving this as it intends to prepare individuals to explore the social and political dimensions in their lives, at a time when they are undergoing a transitional phase and changing from dependent children to independent young adults, who are prepared for participatory citizenship. Geraint Parry in the article Constructive and Reconstructive Political Education (1999) explained the views of Sartori on Political Education who elaborated that ‘a democracy consists not in the rule of the people but in the people selecting who is to rule’ (Sartori, 1987, passim). Political Education helps in developing the competency to select the rulers in a democracy and it can also concentrate on the political representatives, enabling them to comprehend and analyze the flood of expert scientific information they face (Sartori, 1987, p. 110). 43 Modern democracies face many challenges, including the ability to sustain themselves, particularly in the midst of crises. In order to sustain and strengthen a

democracy, it is imperative to have dynamic, —active citizens. Democracy cannot come into existence without citizens' participation. Citizens' involvement depends heavily on resources, motivations, and social contacts. Citizens cannot fulfill these ambitious tasks adequately, without specific competences; that is, citizens need to have —... a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values at their disposal enabling them to become an active citizen. (Hoskins, Barber, Nijlen et al., 2011). through Political Education, Citizens acquire the skills related to moral and critical appraisal, and become capable of making decisions and judgments, through reflective participation, based on human rights and social responsibilities. Derek Heater and Judith A. Gillispie in their work *Political Education in Flux* (1983) defined Political Education as "the development of competencies in thinking about and acting in political arenas". Mainstream Political Education teaches how the governmental institutions work according to the Constitution. Political Education is concerned with values, the information about political issues, institutions and personalities is very important (Gillispie, 1983). Political Education, is, thereby, significant for each individual as it empowers them to utilize their abilities well in a changing, complex society. It encourages them to comprehend the rights and responsibilities of the individual in society, and the workings and nature of democracy. Political Education helps individuals in getting acquainted with the ideas, concepts, attitudes and values, fundamental to citizenship, to develop the moral and critical faculties of the youth. Iris Young while explaining his communicative democracy model which emphasizes on the relevance of fostering relations of solidarity in pluralistic societies stated that "Political Education opens up the possibility of self-transformation with the help of interactions with others with divergent views" (Jackson, 2019). Geraint Parry in the article *Constructive and Reconstructive Political Education* (1999) proposed putting the discipline of Political Education into two broad categories which he termed as constructive and reconstructive. While explaining the constructive category of Political Education in his work he had quoted the notion of —education as reproduction as explained by the influential work of Bourdieu who spoke about the role of education in bringing about cultural reproduction and Passeron 1990. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; also Gutmann, 1987). Geraint Parry explained that although the immediate objective of the discipline of Political Education is the training of the ruling elites and the advancement of the economy but beyond this, political thinkers also make use of Political Education for redress and reproduction. He stated that, pedagogic authorities have a wider role in protecting or sustaining the social values as compared to the wielders of political power as education has the ability to "reproduce conditions in which the reproducers were reproduced" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 32; also J. S. Mill, 1984, p. 218). In explaining the reconstructive category of Political Education, he stated, that political philosophers such as Rousseau consider education to be a tool for changes and redress and a means to alter the shortcomings and failings of the past and present generation of the adults. A constructive ideal of Political Education is achieved by moderate, non-radical reforms and the reconstructive ideals need a qualitative transformation in the current socio-economic or civic fabric of a country's state (Thompson, 1970). So, remodeled education aims to bring about qualitative and subjective changes in the psyche of people so as to have a change in political ethos and conduct. On the other hand the constructive or 're-directive' approach involves a less thorough shift, although it may bring about a noteworthy political change. Constructive theories believe that human nature and interests are basically given and the task of education is in general to redirect the goals and activities of future leaders towards what are supposed to be the national priorities. The Reconstructive theories try to produce 'new' persons, transforming their priorities and ways of understanding of the world. Constructive theories encapsulate pioneer utilitarian, conservatives such as Oakshott and modern democratic realists. Some of the reconstructive theorists are communitarians, such as Rousseau and participatory democrats, including J. S. Mill. Conservative educational thought takes a constructivist approach to learning. Michael Oakshott, its most famous proponent, gave his famous debut lecture on 'Political Education' at the London School of Economics in 1951. In this lecture Oakshott defined Political Education as "learning how to participate in a dialogue and coming to comprehend a culture." (Oakshott, 1989) This tradition is largely unique to a given society, and the dialogue it fosters leads to the formation of ties between a society's past and present, as well as its present and future. The acquisition of a language, which consists of learning terms in usage, is compared to understanding the tradition. Similarly, Political Education is "monitoring and replicating the conduct of our elders," effectively acquiring their political lexicon. (Oakshott, 1989). It necessitates a thorough examination as to how community has perceived customs and traditions and the 'legends' it has created and maintained - not to expose its flaws, but to comprehend its biases' (Oakshott, 1989).

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