

Perspectives of Secondary School Teachers and Students on Incultation of Democratic Values in Public Schools: A Qualitative Analysis

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Abstract

The study aims to understand participants' perspectives on the prevailing conditions and practices of inculcating democratic values and how these values can be instilled among secondary school students. A qualitative research design was employed to execute this study and a purposive sampling technique was used to select twelve study participants including seven secondary school teachers and five students from the Sahiwal division of the Province of Punjab, Pakistan. An interview guide was constructed to conduct in-depth interviews with these participants which lasted for 53 minutes on average. After data gathering, thematic analysis was performed on the interview transcripts following six steps of the analysis i.e., familiarization, coding, categorizing, generating themes, reviewing themes, and writing up for the analysis. The emerging themes include perceptions of democratic values, inculcation of democratic values, democratic principles of schools, and challenges and issues of inculcation. The themes revealed that the situation regarding inculcation of democratic values among school students was not encouraging although teachers were struggling with many limitations. It is recommended to address the challenges and issues related to curriculum, school environment, school administration, class size, teachers' and parents' training, and promoting democratic literacy among the parents. The study has implications for promoting democracy in the school and society for the larger interest of the county.

Keywords: Democratic values, secondary schools, school teachers, school improvement, democratic society, citizenship, school environment

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Introduction

Democracy, in Dewey's view, is a way of life that is related to people's perceptions, presumptions, and experiences. Democracy is an active, dynamic, and ever-evolving idea because no one can live alone and advance alone; instead, they must coexist with others effectively and graciously (Dewey, 1930). Democratic values among students in school include values of respect, equality, fairness, freedom, security, responsibility, honesty, tolerance, searching for effectiveness, self-efficacy improvement and perfection. For children to grow up to be responsible citizens who will defend and promote democracy and democratic values, teachers should teach them about democracy and democratic ideals. Democracy needs to be a major element throughout the entire educational process (Subba, 2014). A school needs a defined vision and strategy while creating a democratic values education program to maintain the integrity of the school. It facilitates goal-oriented thinking and efforts to establish a conducive environment in the organization (Singh, 2018).

Schools are playing a bigger role in training students for civic engagement. The only organization that can teach democratic values practically to every young student is school. Schools are the perfect settings for teaching students about citizenship and providing them with opportunities to get involved in the school community. Secondly, schools act as places where students may interact, hold debates, and work together on problems that are essential to their growth as citizens. (Sampermans, 2021). No matter what subject educators teach, teachers play a critical part in this difficult undertaking because they decide what will be taught and how it will be taught in terms of democratic value education. Before examining how teachers fulfill this role and foster democratic values and practices in their schools and classrooms, first and foremost, it is important to understand the types of democratic principles that teachers should uphold because this has a big impact on their democratic practices and decisions at school (Topkaya & Yavuz, 2011).

The roots of injustice that exist in schools are likely present in the community as well and the democratic educators are aware of this. At the very least, students are aware that chances created by democratic experiences inside of school can too quickly be washed away by life outside of school. To be democratic professionals; instructors must work with students to promote democracy and to instill democratic values and beliefs in students (Anderson & Cohen, 2018). Co-curricular activities, curriculum objectives, and lesson plans all contribute to fostering democratic values and principles in students. The suggestions given by Kailikia (2020) would be very helpful in educating the policymakers, educators, students, and other stakeholders in education on how well school education instills democratic principles in their students. The current ineffective

placement of social studies teachers through pre-service and in-service training harms the advancement of democratic values in social studies classrooms. The conclusion of the study by Bafaneli and Setibi (2015) shows that the location of schools may not have an impact on the development of democratic values and ideas.

The role of schools in inculcating democratic values revealed that teachers struggled to understand the curriculum on these topics, had trouble instilling genuine democratic values due to political involvement, received insufficient support from the education department, and lacked of educational framework to help teachers teach democratic values, principles and concepts. The research suggested, among other things, that regulations be set up so that students may teach democratic ideas without fear or favor (Dzavo et al., 2020). The provincial and federal ministries in Pakistan ought to monitor the instillation of democratic ideals in schools and offer help within a defined framework.

According to Obiagu et al., (2023), freedom is an essential democratic value. The foundation of democracy is the belief that everyone has the right to freedom and shouldn't be subjected to restrictions, slavery, or deprivation unless it is necessary by law. The idea of academic freedom and liberty protects the right to freedom of expression of students at school. Democratic values are unaffected by place of residence, core or extended family, worldviews, levels of religiosity, and gender, and democratic values are not significantly correlated with parental education, income status, the number of siblings, or levels of religiosity while the current study revealed that the locality of school has an impact on the development of democratic values (Akar & İnel, 2017)

Similarly, Tuhuteru (2023) revealed the role of issues in schools, one of which is the education of citizenship in school, to more effectively implement the teaching of democratic values. Instilling democratic principles is one of the subjects' goals of the study. Democratic ideals are instilled to train students and such citizens who know their rights and responsibilities, enabling them to solve issues fairly and to value unity. Students need to participate in democratic educational settings for future democratic societies to benefit from these types of classroom experiences. Studies showed that students who participate in cooperative learning in democratic classrooms develop empathy and a sense of pleasure from working together. Therefore, teaching for democracy encourages students to take responsibility for their education and engage them in society (Ferguson-Patrick, 2020).

There is quick advancement in higher education in Pakistan, and it has attracted numerous students to schools at the secondary school level. Higher education is growing in this way but unfortunately, our young students particularly those who are studying at the secondary level lack awareness about democratic values such as justice, freedom,

equality, security, etc. They are not given democratic and moral education so that's why they are not trained ethically with integrity. Pakistan's national constitution and school curriculum both include democratic ideas, but its schools are plagued by socioeconomic inequities.

Most schools in Pakistan are unable to give equivalent opportunities to the students to participate in school activities and programs; talented students are given more opportunities to read the lesson and perform in the class rather than weak students on a routine basis. Hence fewer opportunities are provided for the weak students to present themselves in the classroom as well as school programs. There is a need to analyze this situation and make efforts to inculcate democratic values among school students to provide a safe and democratic school environment in the country. This study attempts to explore what are the perspectives of secondary school teachers and students on the inculcation of democratic values among school students at the secondary level.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

- investigate students' and teachers' understanding of prevailing practices of inculcating democratic values in secondary schools.
- determine teachers' perspectives on issues and challenges faced while instilling democratic values among secondary school students.
- analyze teachers' perspectives on how democratic values can be inculcated among secondary school students.

Research Questions

The was conducted to seek the answer to the main question of the research how schools inculcate democratic values among school students. This question was explored through the following subsidiary research questions:

1. What is secondary school students' and teachers' understanding of prevailing practices of inculcating democratic values?
2. How do the teachers perceive issues and challenges while instilling democratic values among secondary school students?
3. What are teachers' perspectives on the strategies for inculcating democratic values among secondary school students?

Research Methodology

A qualitative research design was used to find out the answers to the research questions. To gain insight into the phenomenon of inculcation of democratic values, a qualitative research design was considered that allowed in-depth interviews with the participants of the study to explore the solution to a problem that requires profound understanding. A qualitative study employing interviews is considered appropriate for seeking insight into a social and educational problem (Phillips & Johnson, 2022). It was also noted from the previous studies, that most of the research studies were conducted using quantitative research approaches (Akar et al., 2017; Dzavo et al., 2020; Ferguson-Patrick, 2022) that justified the researchers to chose a qualitative framework to explore the phenomenon through the lese of qualitative tools.

Participants of the Study

The population is comprised of all male, and female students and teachers of District Okara who have been working in secondary schools at least for five years. The researchers used a purposive sampling technique also known as judgmental sampling. In this type of sampling, the purpose of the study is taken into account when selecting the sample members (Bhardwaj, 2019). The purposive or judgmental sampling technique is the best technique to discover and understand the phenomenon under study (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The researchers focus on those participants who are willing to share their perspectives to obtain the essential data and locate them purposively (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Consequently, five students from secondary school and seven secondary school teachers comprised the sample who were approached for the interviews.

Designing Interview Guide

In-depth interviews were used as a tool to collect data from the participants. An Interview is used as a tool to uncover useful, complex, and rich information from the participants. Qualitative researchers are increasingly realizing that an interview is not a passive instrument of data collection but rather an active exchange of ideas between two or more individuals that produce effective results related to the study (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Therefore, in-depth interviews were conducted by the researchers for data collection. The questions related to the inculcation of democratic values among school students were designed and validated through expert opinion. The first section of the interview guided was consisted of demographic information of the participants such as gender, locality, age, class, teaching level, teachers' academic and professional qualifications, and their experiences in the school. Seven interview questions were formulated in the second part of the interview guide related to the research questions of the study. On average, each interview lasted for 53 minutes which was transcribed and analyzed.

Analysis of Interview Transcripts

Qualitative data collection requires several explanations because a huge number of shreds of evidence is collected. For the analysis of interview transcripts, a thematic analysis was used by the researcher. Thematic analysis is applied to texts like transcripts of the interviews and focus group discussions for the identification of themes related to the study. It explains the data in detail via interpretation and gives systematic content related to the results (Boyatzis, 1998). In this study, the researchers have performed six steps of the analysis consisting of familiarization, coding, categorizing, generating themes, reviewing themes, and writing up for analysis. As a result of the analysis, the following themes emerged.

Results of the Study

The following four themes were generated from codes, keeping in mind study objectives and research questions.

- Perceptions of Democratic Values
- Inculcation of Democratic Values
- Democratic Principles of Schools
- Challenges and Issues of Inculcation

Perceptions of Democratic Values

Most of the teacher participants stated that democratic values promote equality, freedom of ideas, justice, element of respect, and citizenship in students. This is possible only when teachers are giving students opportunities to create these values through practicing them. A male SST participant having teaching experience of 14 years from a rural area high school stated that

Democratic values vary from school to school. The prevailing democratic values in school are the value of equality, freedom of ideas, responsibility, respect for elders, justice, and especially the security of students. The school has to let students think independently and involve them in the decision-making process that will enable them to solve their issues.

A male teacher participant having 11 years of experience teaching at high school elaborated that

In a democratic classroom, students learn to resolve disagreements through respectful dialogue, and compromise. Through interaction with a range of

opinions and ideas, students develop tolerance and understanding for others, even when they disagree.

A few teachers reflected that students exercise leadership and decision-making skills in democratic settings. They acquire the ability to take responsibility, accept accountability, and make decisions that take into account the requirements and views of others. Students get an understanding of their rights, liberties, and obligations via democratic values. They are taught the value of respecting others' rights, following the law, and working for the common good. They learn the logic behind why they should speak up to promote virtue in school and society. It is encouraged for students to participate in conversations, ask questions, and express their opinions with teachers and students. One male SST participant from an urban area high school reflected that

Students have to be given justice if any student makes a mistake, he has to be given punishment, and if any student does good, he must be appreciated for his actions.

Democratic ideas that are promoted in schools by teachers are those that facilitate student participation in decision-making and free expression. Democratic values play a vital role in students' overall development. These are such principles which are supporting students' inequality, decision-making, active participation, and freedom in speaking and democratic discussion. In short, all values that give equal opportunities, justice, and freedom of expression of ideas to students in school are known as democratic values.

Some of the students were of the view that in school teachers should address issues of inequality and justice. Teacher deals with the issues of students with wisdom and tolerance that they face in the school. Strict actions should be taken by teachers to resolve student issues regarding inequality and injustice to promote a democratic environment. Secondly, students let speak what they want to speak, give them opportunities for open discussion, let them make their decisions, and teach them to do so. Democratic values and principles are important to create a supportive and welcoming learning environment where each student's voice is acknowledged and respected. In schools, teachers place a higher priority on other educational objectives like academic achievement or classroom management, making it difficult for students to pay attention to democratic values. A 17-year-old male student participant, studying in an urban area high school elaborated that

A teacher must give respect while teaching to students so that they might be respected. I've seen that at my school, a teacher prioritizes a student who comes to his house for home tuition over other students who cannot afford it or students who go to another instructor for tuition.

For democracy and a democratic environment, teachers should conduct mock elections to give students hands-on experience with voting, campaigning, and decision-making. Therefore, a teacher should make every effort to understand this idea in his young students. One of the male secondary school student participants of a rural area high school reflected that

Our public high schools lack morals, therefore if a teacher wishes to work in a democratic environment, parents of students and other political activities won't allow it. Parents approach teachers to ask them to give more attention to their children over other students. In this way, it's not easier for teachers to instill democratic values among students.

Some of the student participants stated that democratic values in our school develop leadership skills in students. They learn to respect others and lead with integrity with a commitment to fairness and justice. They understand that their opinions count and that they have the power to improve their school environment and communities. This helped them to change things in school in a positive way. All democratic values are significant, but because they are connected and mutually reinforcing, it is challenging to choose one in particular that instructors should emphasize more than others. Students viewed that they wanted the administration of the school and the instructors to respect their choices and suggestions if they came from them. If they made a decision, the administration of the school should not treat it with disrespect because of their decision or expression of thoughts.

Inculcation of Democratic Values

Democratic values are taught in educational institutions by teachers depending on the political system and culture of a society and school. Once society, school, culture, and tradition accept and practice democracy and democratic values, along with the political system, it will affect every aspect of people and students in school. Important democratic values in school are values of freedom, equality, justice, and respect for human dignity. So, teachers should practice it with students to promote democratic values in school. Democratic values also support different curricular, extracurricular, and classroom activities. A male teacher participant having 14 years of teaching experience at a high school reflected that

I as a teacher serve as a role model for my students by demonstrating democratic values in interaction with students. This includes actively listening to students, respecting their opinions, and fostering a participatory classroom environment. Students learn mostly from their teachers if a teacher is their role model and

possesses democratic values in his method of teaching, this will increase their understanding of democratic values.

Some teachers were of the view that to inculcate democratic values in their students every day, the teachers should deliver lectures to their students. They guide them to work cooperatively, respect each other, and try to give each student a chance to participate in activities that also advance justice among students. However, it's not easy for them to do so. But they are trying their best and encouraging their students to do their work on time to make them responsible and active citizens. One of the SST teacher participants stated "I always try to create a supportive environment for my students where every student feels safe and confident to express his ideas and it also increases their participation in assignments". Another male SST participant having 14 years of teaching experience and serving in an urban area high school stated that

I try to engage students in such classroom activities where every student can participate and give his own opinion about the topic being studied, and students' viewpoints are appreciated to increase students' confidence.

Some of the teachers were of the view that they organize debates and dialogues on topics including democracy, human rights, social issues, and current events. Encourage students to express their viewpoints, listen actively, and dispute politely; this strategy will teach them about democratic principles. Sometimes they used to organize classroom discussions on various topics in school that enable students to talk about their rights and engage them in respectful debates. On the other hand, one of the female teacher participants from an urban area high school revealed that

I provide students the chance to actively engage in decisions that are made in the classroom or at school. This can involve engaging them in setting classroom rules, choosing topics for study, or involving them in different projects to work with one another. I engage dull and weak students in such topics in which they have an interest and they want to talk on these topics in this way they also get a chance to express their views about it and involve them in classroom activities.

Democratic Principles of School

All democratic values at school are very crucial for students for their development in academic and professional life. Any community, school, institute of higher learning, or country ought to be built on democratic principles. Students readily communicate their views because the freedom of speech; as a result, leadership qualities are developed in them that give them self-assurance. Because it becomes more difficult for the learner to comprehend the subject if he does not ask his question and keep it in his mind. One of the male SST teachers working in an urban area high school stated that

All values have their importance at their place but equality and academic freedom of expressing ideas are very vital to inculcate in students. If a student does not know how to respect others his all education is meaningless. Students also must be appreciated and respected to inculcate democratic values. When student is treated fairly, they are more likely to participate in their studies and take their education seriously.

Most of the participants revealed that students must be given all democratic values like equality, freedom of expression, justice, and respect for individuals but they wanted equality as the top priority because when there is equality among school students all other democratic values will also flourish at school and in classrooms. Secondly, teachers were of the view that students must be given a chance to speak because it would make students strong and confident to fight for their rights in their lives.

Challenges and Issues of Incultation

Democratic ideas are instilled in secondary students allowing everything in the classroom to proceed systematically and regularly. Additionally, this makes it much simpler for the department head to work more productively for school improvement. Teaching democratic values to students in secondary schools is not an easy undertaking. Therefore, teachers have to foster democratic values in secondary school students through efforts and plans. Teachers confronted a variety of difficulties while trying to teach and transform democratic values to students. Secondary school teachers play a key role in helping students accept democratic ideas and values. However, they frequently encounter several challenges and issues while practicing democratic values in this procedure. An SST teacher participant from a rural area high school having 6 years of experience stated that

Most students cannot even read what is written in the book in public schools so it becomes difficult for me to give them an equal chance to read. Much of my time is wasted in this process so I have to select a student who could deliver it in front of the class at his best to save time. However, I try to overcome this barrier by giving them time in my free periods or the next day.

Some teachers described that they always try to promote a democratic environment in school but sometimes it becomes impossible for them to create a democratic environment among students in school because, in public schools, the teachers are not the final authority, as we select students to participate in extracurricular activities, the school administration may substitute them with others based on their personal preferences. So, we have to change this concept and the student that is deserved must be given opportunities and must be rewarded accordingly. Secondly, there are not enough

materials and resources that help us to promote democratic values. A male teacher participant from an urban area high school elaborated that

There are a lot of issues, I faced while inculcating democratic values among secondary school students, like overcrowded classrooms, voice issues, and environment-related problems. The task of inculcating democratic values among students cannot be done by doing it 2-3 times a month. It should be a routine for the student so that it becomes their habit and part of their personality. It should be a daily activity of teachers to teach students about democratic values and try to relate them to their subject to teach students.

On the other hand, a female SST teacher participant who was teaching in a rural area high school reflected that

Most of parents due to their illiteracy do not like that their students participate in co-curricular activities in rural areas as these activities are just a waste of time. So, it becomes challenging for me to develop democratic values in students. Counseling of such parents is necessary. There were also many other challenges that I had to face like lack of resources, missing teachers, unavailability of internet, etc.

Practicing democratic values among students is challenging for teachers in school. Most teachers are facing a lot of issues like limited time, fewer resources, issues of student behavior, overcrowded classrooms, parents' illiteracy, lack of knowledge of students about their rights, lack of training of teachers to spread democratic values, student behavior, and environmental issues faced by teachers in school to develop democratic values and ideas in students.

Findings

Study findings showed that democratic values in schools promote students' engagement and participation in different school activities and tasks. Teachers viewed that democratic values allow every student a chance to participate and express his opinion to make them empowered. Teachers are the change agents in school they are in school, responsible for inculcating democratic values among students. Most of the teacher participants stated that they are working on democratic values like equality, freedom of expression, justice; respect for each other, tolerance, independent decision-making, and security among the students. Hence some teachers treat students differently by keeping in mind students' family, financial resources, and background. Teachers and schools play an important role in inculcating democratic values among school students.

Democratic values are influenced by the school's locality. In rural areas, school teachers view that parents of students request us to just teach them books and not let them in other activities like co-curricular and extracurricular activities. But in urban areas most parents are literate they know about the importance of co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Findings showed that teacher participants are trying their best to promote democratic values in students.

The key findings of the study revealed that students viewed democratic values are equality, justice, freedom of expression, application of law, support and develop learning environment, leadership skills, engagement and participation of students are taught in school by their teachers. Democratic values allow every student a chance to participate and express his opinion in school. It was also found that there is not an encouraging democratic environment in the district. Some secondary school teachers in classrooms place a greater emphasis on the obedience of students rather than their participation in activities and free speech.

It was also found that school educational activities play a crucial role in inculcating democratic values in students like co-curricular and extracurricular activities like games and participation in different projects, classroom activities, annual day, sports day, school assembly, farewell day and different competitions of naat, discussion and debates. All these school activities promote democratic values and principles, and teachers are working to improve them. Teachers include democratic education into their curriculum by instructing students on the foundations and operation of democratic values as well as citizens' rights and obligations. Findings also revealed that developing goals jointly by teachers, students and principals in school inculcate democratic values in students. Student participants also stated that some of their teachers are trying to inculcate democratic values in them by presenting themselves as a role model to students, respecting each other, supporting their students to share their views, inviting guest speakers, and arranging field trips for them.

Further findings of the study revealed that teachers want to promote equality, justice, citizenship and freedom of academic ideas, tolerance, independent decision-making in their students. Teacher participants were of the view that every value has importance at its place. They prefer equality of all other values as when teachers will deal with all students equally all other democratic values will also be promoted in students. When students are treated fairly, they are more likely to participate in their studies and take their education seriously.

Many teacher participants view the challenges and issues in the inculcation of democratic values that they are facing at schools. Study findings revealed that there was limited time in the classroom for a teacher to implement and practice democratic values. A lot of time is spent explaining the topic and enabling students to understand it. Further findings showed that most parents due to their illiteracy do not like that their students participate in co-curricular activities in rural areas as these activities are just a waste of time. Counseling of such parents is necessary as these activities promote democratic values among students. There are also many other challenges and issues that teachers have to face like lack of resources and teachers at school, unavailability of the internet, students' behavior-related issues, overcrowded classrooms, students' lack of interest in learning, parents' illiteracy, lack of knowledge, lack of training of teachers to spread democratic values and environmental issues in school to develop democratic values and ideas in students.

Conclusion

It can be inferred that there is not an encouraging situation regarding a democratic environment in public high schools. Knowledge of the importance of instruction and the inculcating of democratic values in school education is deteriorating at the present moment. The main emphasis should always be on instilling democratic values among students. Most of the teacher participants are working in school on democratic values like equality, academic freedom, justice; respect for each other, tolerance, independent decision-making, and security to promote them among students. Further, it was concluded that equality should always be on top among democratic values. Educational activities play a crucial role in inculcating democratic values among students like curricular, co-curricular and extra-co-curricular activities, school assemblies, annual day, sports day, farewell day, games and participation in different projects, classroom activities, competitions, discussions and debates. To instill democratic values in students, teachers are facing several issues like limited time, fewer resources, students' behavior-related problems, overcrowded classrooms, parents' illiteracy, lack of knowledge, lack of training to spread democratic values and environmental issues in the schools. The inculcation of democratic values may significantly contribute to shaping the practices of school administration that may influence the academic culture of the school and hence the personalities of the students. The policy makers can gain insights from such studies that may allow them reflect democratic values and practices in future policies.

Recommendations

Textbooks and syllabi of high schools must be evaluated and reviewed with the purpose of inculcation and promotion of democratic values among students. Seminars and workshops should be planned to help the teachers manage their teaching and be able to promote democratic values such as justice, freedom, dignity and equity among students. Similarly, a period can be arranged in class in a week regarding awareness of democratic values among students. It is also suggested that various festivals, competitions, games, and other events of a similar nature can be planned in tehsils, districts, divisions, provinces, and at the national level. Because these activities will help to inculcate democratic values among students. These activities are also very important for students' health. Teachers should assign learning assignments or activities that encourage students to actively engage in the learning process to make learning more meaningful for the inculcation and promotion of democratic principles. Learning how to solve problems can assist students acquire key life skills. Schools should have access to pertinent learning resources to provide students with the skills, knowledge, experiences, attitudes, and values they need to meet the demands of a democratic school and society. High school classes should be smaller than the current maximum of 40 students, down to 35, so that teachers may focus more on each student individually and employ effective teaching techniques that will help to advance democratic ideas. Schools should develop plans to inculcate and promote democratic values. Such actions might include forming clubs devoted to democratic values and bringing a range of outside speakers to give a lecture to the entire student body, including parents on democratic values.

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