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Educating for Democracy? The Case of the Lebanese Elementary ESL Classrooms

Samar SINNO
Lebanese University

Abstract: The main purpose of this study is to find out if the elementary schools in Lebanon are educating for democracy. In particular, it aims to determine whether or not the ESL classrooms are preparing young citizens to live in a democratic society in the future. The data was collected from: a) classroom observations, b) analysis of the Lebanese National ESL Curriculum, launched by CERD in 1997, c) social-media conferencing with a focused group of 31 elementary and intermediate ESL teachers, d) a questionnaire addressed to that focused group teachers, and e) five meetings with the trainers. The study targeted grades 1 through 6 of Basic Education in schools in different regions of Lebanon. The research study is qualitative in nature, yet it includes a quantitative aspect to triangulate the data. This design enables the researcher to formulate an informed opinion about teachers' attitudes, behaviors and practices. The Lebanese National ESL Curriculum and the literature on educating for democracy help provide the theoretical framework for the aforementioned variables. Results indicate that democracy prevailed in only very few instances. Recommendations for some instructional practices and teachers' attitudes and behaviors that help sustain a democratic atmosphere in the English language classroom are highlighted.

Keywords: Education for democracy, ESL classes, Basic education, Implicit or hidden curriculum

Introduction

Signed in 1989, *The Taif Agreement* aimed to put an end to the civil war that stormed Lebanon for about 20 years. Among other things, *The Taif Agreement* called for major curricular innovations that hoped to achieve national unity and social justice through promoting democratic values and norms of good citizenry among the Lebanese citizens. To that end, the Agreement stated that the old curricula of 1959 shall be reviewed and developed in a manner that would help strengthen national belonging, fusion, as, well as, social, spiritual and cultural openness (as cited in Shuayb, 2016. p.232).

The formation of democratic citizenry and the creation of a democratic culture are required in a country where social cohesion is brittle, where political parties are steeply divided, where sectarian and religious division is dominant, where regional conflicts and civil wars storm the neighboring Arab countries, and where democracy is ruthlessly and systematically destroyed. Schools are believed to play a pivotal role in preparing young citizens to live in and preserve the norms and values of a democratic society.

That is why as soon as the civil war subsided in Lebanon in the early 1990s, the national Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) launched the *Plan for the Educational Reform* in 1994, *The New Framework for Education in Lebanon* in 1995, and the *National School Curriculum* including the *ESL Curriculum* in 1997 (Decree 10227/97), with the purpose of uniting a torn up society, developing critical thinking skills and nurturing inter- and intra-cultural openness.

The new ESL Content-Based Instruction curriculum became effective in 1998. It observes the principles of educating for democracy. It attempts to develop the use of English for three major purposes: 1) social interaction, 2) academic achievement, and 3) cultural enrichment (CERD, 1997). Those purposes form the pillars of democracy in the English language classroom.

This study aims to find out if a) the implications of teachers' behaviors help maintain a democratic atmosphere in the elementary ESL classrooms, b) ascertain whether or not the instructional practices that teachers implement are congruent with the principles of democracy, c) discover whether or not the behaviors suggested and demonstrated to a focus group of elementary and intermediate ESL teachers in public schools have helped maintain a democratic climate in those classrooms. The research study, thus, revolves around three main questions:

1. To what extent do the instructional practices of teachers in the elementary private and public ESL classrooms reflect the democratic skills proposed by the National ESL Curriculum?
2. To what extent do the behaviors of teachers in the elementary private and public ESL classrooms help in the prevalence of a democratic atmosphere in the ESL classroom?
3. To what extent do the behaviors suggested to the focus group of public school teachers help change teachers' attitudes towards educating for democracy?

Theoretical Background

Definition of Democracy

The concept of democracy has evolved over the centuries. The word originally comes from the Greek words demos (the people) and kratos (rule), but the rule of people has had many interpretations (Biesta, 2007), and so has the concept of democracy. Democracy, according to Dewey, is seen as a means for realizing ends in the domain of human relationships (social and political), on the one hand, and the development of human personality (the individual), on the other hand (Dewey, 1937). Thus, according to him, democracy is a way of life, social and individual besides being a political issue. John Dewey (1937) defined democracy as:

Democracy is much broader than a special political form, a method of conducting government, of making laws and carrying on governmental administration by means of popular suffrage, and elected officers. It is that, of course. But it is something broader and deeper than that. The political and governmental phase of democracy is a means, the best means so far found, for realizing ends that lie in the wide domain of human relationships and the development of human personality. It is, as we often say, though perhaps without appreciating all that is involved in the saying, a way of life, social and individual. The keynote of democracy as a way of life may be expressed as the necessity for the participation of every mature human being in formation of the values that regulate the living of men together: which is necessary from the standpoint of both the general social welfare and the full development of human beings as individuals (p. 457).

Traditional definitions of democracy often limit their scope to defining a specific political regime or government. However, the 20th century definitions offer a wider and more extensive definition. These definitions view democracy as embracing two critical concepts, mainly, individual freedom and social justice (Osborne, 2001). According to Osborne, John Dewey was a pioneer in educational reform for adding a social attribute to democracy in education. Dewey (1938) was the first psychologist who viewed democracy as a *social process* that is dependent upon three democratic dispositions: 1) all citizens are moral *equals*; 2) all citizens are *capable of intelligent judgment and action*, with key importance being placed on *reflection* and the need to *decide for themselves what to believe*; and 3) all citizens are able to *work together on a day-to-day basis to settle conflicts and solve problems* (as cited in MacMath, 2008).

Dewey's views paved the way for the 21st Century definition of democracy education. A new concept, namely citizenship education has been advocated to complement democracy education. Citizenship education has added a social dimension to the concept of democracy education. UNESCO in 1998 described the mission of citizenship education as *educating children, from early childhood, to become clear-thinking and enlightened citizens who participate in decisions concerning society*.

Vinterek (2010) elaborates on what democracy is and classifies it into 4 categories. According to her, democracy can be a concept, a skill, a set of values, or a stance. Thus, we can know about the concept without abiding by its values or without activating the skills that would enable us to participate in the democratic process or to take a democratic stance. As a value, democracy is not restricted to one value, but it is the total of different norms or values. Some of the values that are related to the concept of democracy are: freedom, equality, social justice, social cohesion, tolerance, respect, communication and cooperation. Giving voice and considering different opinions are democratic skills. The stance aspect of democracy is neither a skill nor a concept. It can

be considered as democratic sentiments shown in practice by abilities like being open-minded; take another person's perspective and decision-making with others. Different stances call for different actions.

Democracy in the ESL Classroom

Dewey's (1915) progressive, democratic views—expressed in many of his books, such as *Schools of Tomorrow* (1915) and *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (1916)—have led to a change in the traditional methods of teaching and consequently in the English language practices. The anti-democratic traditional practices focused on delivering knowledge and viewed the teacher as an authoritarian figure in the classroom. In ESL methodology, there has been a call for a shift from a teacher-centered classroom toward a student-centered one. Strategies that provide students with opportunities to interact and communicate with each other were encouraged to replace those that emphasized the rote-memorization of decontextualized vocabulary words and of grammatical forms and rules. In fact, the advent of cooperative learning has transformed the way we teach and learn in modern educational environment (Tran, 2013), for it "…is the heart of problem-based learning" (Johnson & Johnson and Smith, 1998). However, despite the effectiveness of cooperative learning, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), in general, had its drawbacks. Consequently, a new approach was advocated in the 1990s— Content-Based Instruction (CBI). CBI, without ignoring cooperative learning structures, aimed at incorporating academic content in language learning (cited in Lain, 2016). Thus, CBI adopts the principles of constructivism (Lain, 2016) and allows for more sophisticated and in-depth communication (Krogh & Cho, 2012).

Democracy requires citizens who are independent, autonomous, tolerant, flexible, open-minded, positive and inquisitive thinkers; citizens who care for the well-being of their fellow citizens, as well as their environment; citizens who do not wait for others to think on their behalf; citizens who dare ask challenging questions; citizens who are not led around *like cattle* (*The Brothers Karamazov*, Fyodor Dostoevsky, *1880*), but rather as citizens who have equal rights, who are respected, and who are treated as humans. Dewey (1938) emphasized the ideas of practicing democracy in the schools, of promoting student-centered learning based on experience and inquiry, of developing community, and of nurturing communication. Vinterek (2010) concurs with Dewey:

Democracy in its broader meaning is seen as … connected with the culture of the communication. Without somebody expressing their thoughts in an environment where there are people willing to listen in an honest and respectful way, democracy will not come to life. Talking is as important as listening. To be able to form one's own opinion and make choices, one has to have knowledge of different standpoints or alternatives. When people share different views, this becomes possible. Education has to be conducted in an atmosphere of tolerance and respect, encouraging people's self-esteem in order to promote willingness and the ability to express one's thoughts as well as a willingness to listen to others. Here, these elements will be called signs of democracy since they can give signals of democratic life in the classroom. The signs are viewed as ways to create democracy as well as part of democracy itself. …this can form a culture of democracy (p.371).

Method

The current research is mainly a qualitative study relying on 1) 5760 hours of extensive classroom observations, and 2) WhatsApp messages between the researcher and the teachers of the focus group, 3) meetings with the instructors of the practicum course (trainers), and 4) a quantitative tool—a 27-item, 5-point Likert scale questionnaire addressed to the focus group before they started their in-service training at the Faculty of Education at the Lebanese University.

Participants and Procedure

Classroom Observations

The implicit or hidden curriculum gives a school its own identity or what Fullan (1991) calls *the school culture.* This culture is usually cultivated by and transmitted through the subjective realities of a school. According to Fullan, all the human beings within and outside the school boundaries (the surrounding community members) make up the subjective realities of a school. A school culture, if stated at all, usually appears in the form of principles and mottos of the explicit or the objective reality of a curriculum. To help understand this schools' culture or hidden curriculum, a researcher needs to rely on extensive classroom observations and school visits.

And since this study aims to research teachers' behaviors and instructional skills and the implications of those behaviors and skills, classroom observations seem to be the most reliable means for revealing those implications.

Since all the public and private schools in Lebanon implemented the same national ESL curriculum, the researcher decided to conduct the research in both sectors. The underlying urge was to examine whether or not the teachers of both sectors share similar behaviors and instructional strategies since the Lebanese people tend to believe that students in the private schools get better care, better treatment, better foreign language proficiency and better education.

The researcher had the consent of the principles in the public and private schools to allow the pre-service students majoring in ESL elementary education to observe classes as part of their practicum training at the Faculty of Education, Branch One, at the Lebanese University. One hundred elementary ESL teachers (50 in the public schools and 50 in the private schools) were observed in 40 ESL elementary schools in 20 public and 20 private schools located in diverse regions of Lebanon over a period of two years. Each university student, majoring in the teaching of English to elementary pupils, had to go to one public and one private school and to observe one elementary class twice a week over a period of two years. Data was collected from a total of 5760 hours of observations. Those observations focused on: 1) several behaviors and the implications of those behaviors that constitute the hidden or the implicit curriculum, and 2) some of the instructional strategies and objectives that are required for educating for democracy in the English language classroom. It is worthy of note that the observations focused on particular behaviors and instructional strategies or skills, since targeting all would be beyond the scope of one research study.

Focus Group

A WhatsApp focus group of 31 ESL public school teachers of grades 1-9 of Basic Education were chosen as the focus group. Those teachers had to concurrently attend a 25 week in-service training program at the Faculty of Education at the Lebanese University in Beirut, and teach in their schools that are located in different regions of Lebanon. During their in-service training they had to take the following 3 courses in English: a) an ESL Methodology Course—a core course, b) a language course, and c) a practicum course and two general education courses in Arabic. As part of the requirements of the practicum course, certified trainers had to observe them at their respective schools after coordinating with the professor of the core course—in this case, the researcher.

The age range of the focus group was between 32 and 40. They had a teaching experience ranging from 12 to 18 years as part-time teachers of English as a Second Language in the public schools. Prior to their training, they all had passed the English language and Literature Test at the Civil Service—a governmental institution responsible for devising and administering tests in all fields for recruiting the purpose of recruiting the successful testees in the public sector. The focus group English language proficiency level ranged between the high intermediate and superior, as their results in the Civil Service Test indicated. After their training at the Faculty of Education, they became full-time / tenured teachers at the public sector.

The focus group was initiated by the researcher (the group admin) at the beginning of their in-service training at the Faculty of Education for the purpose of communicating with the researcher and with each other. It formed a platform for free expression of their needs and ideas, as well as, for writing their comments and concerns on new strategies, techniques and behaviors. The WhatsApp communication lasted for a period of 32 weeks. It should be noted that the focus group did not include teachers from the private sector since the training program at the Faculty of Education, at that time, was restricted to the public sector.

Focus Group Questionnaire

A questionnaire including 27 Likert-Scale Items was piloted to 6 elementary teachers: 3 in a private school and 3 in a public school. It was also validated by 2 ESL Professors at the same Faculty. After confirming the validity of that questionnaire, it was distributed to the Focus Group Teachers on the first day of the Methodology Course. Some of the items aimed to find out how teachers behave when:

- A students needs to communicate a personal problem or need
- A student is reluctant to give an answer or gives an incorrect response
- A student gives a correct but brief answer
- A student misbehaves

Other items aimed to find out whether or not the teacher:

- Treats the students equally
- Asks for clarification, elaboration, and justification
- Provides opportunities for reflection
- Gives effective feedback

It should be noted that the researcher did not feel it appropriate or ethical to include any item in the questionnaire on abuse, particularly verbal or physical abuse. However, 5 items (items: 2-6) indirectly addressed the issue of emotional abuse. Teachers were asked to describe how they dealt with disruptive students (losing one's temper, kicking out of class, collective punishment).

Trainers' Meetings:

As part of the requirements of the Methodology Course, the researcher had to hold a monthly meeting with the trainers who regularly observed the in-service teachers in their respective schools. A total of five coordinating meetings were held. Those meetings were initiated two weeks before the classroom visits were supposed to begin. The purposes of those meetings were a) to discuss with the trainers the objectives of the classroom visits, b) to inform the trainers of the salient behaviors and strategies focused upon in the course, and finally c) to discuss with the researcher the outcomes of the classroom visits, that is, to detect if there were any noticeable changes in behaviors and techniques or not.

Results and Discussion

Results related to research question 1: To what extent do the instructional practices of teachers in the elementary private and public ESL classrooms reflect the democratic skills proposed by the National ESL Curriculum?

To answer this research question, the researcher selected the essential questioning and communication skills strategies that are believed to develop the necessary democracy skills and enhance academic achievement. Educating for democracy in the ESL classroom entails that we no more view learners as passive recipients or empty vessels that have to be filled with information (Rodriguez, 2012), but rather as intelligent and inquisitive-thinking human beings with potentials waiting to be triggered and fostered. To that end, the following instructional strategies were researched:

Intended instructional strategies:

- Ask critical and inquisitive thinking questions.
- Apply the principle of equitable distribution.
- Apply the strategies of prompting, probing and think-time.
- Provide opportunities for reflecting, for effective interaction (student-teacher, student-student), for problem-solving, decision-making, and discussing or debating.

The first thing focused on during the observations was the type of questions (basic or higher level questions), the amount of each type, and the frequency of questions posed in a session, irrespective of the type. The data collected revealed that the vast majority of the observed teachers in both sectors focused mainly on basic level comprehension questions. Most of the teachers (86%, item 10) assured that they focus mainly on detail questions because their target is comprehension. The observations also indicated that teachers spent their time in explaining rather than asking questions. The principle of frequency which requires that teachers ask lots of questions to enable students to think, decide and determine things for themselves was not apparent.

The second thing focused on during the observations was equitable distribution which has to guarantee that not the same students answer all of the questions since that would prevent other students from becoming attentive or active participants (Eggan & Kauchak, 2001). Equitable distribution was rarely observed in both sectors. It was also observed that teachers differentiated between the high-achieving and the low-achieving students. Critical thinking questions were addressed to high achievers, while the low achievers were asked detail questions (88%: items 24 & 25). The justification put forward by the focus group was that low achievers need to have their self-confidence boosted, and one way of doing that is through providing a correct answer that is stated in a text when

asked a detail question. Most of the teachers (83%: item 18) also admitted that after explaining the lesson, they are usually left with little time to ask questions.

Furthermore, the vast majority of the teachers stated that they either moved to another student (84%, items: 13 & 16), or they themselves provided the answer (81%, items12 & 15), or allowed call-outs (91%: item 23) since some students are so excited to show that they are knowledgeable, smart and quick and teachers do not want to kill that enthusiasm as the data collected from the other sources also confirmed. It should be noted that teachers were not aware that a call-out, in particular, is not only a source of nuisance to some, but in most of the cases, the answer given is incomprehensible to many, particularly the low achievers. Eggan & Kauchak, (2001) had a similar finding: they asserted that equitable distribution, though powerful for both learning and motivation, is unfortunately not practiced in classrooms.

The third point that observers focused on was prompting. A prompt is a teacher question or directive that elicits a student response after the student has failed to answer or has given an incorrect or incomplete answer (Eggan and Kauchak, 2001). In all the elementary classes observed, whether in public or private schools, the situation was the same. The prompting technique was observed in rare cases. When a wrong answer was provided, the teachers either called on another student (usually the high achiever) to give a correct answer or they would themselves provide it as pointed up above. Only very few teachers of the focus group (7%: items: 14, 19, 20. 21 & 22) rephrased the question or gave a clue to the answer, because time pressure deters from applying the technique of prompting, as they affirmed in their WhatsApp messages.

Classroom observations also attempted to find out whether or not the teachers implemented probing. Probing is applied to encourage students to delve in depth the response given. That is, teachers ask students to clarify, elaborate on, or justify the answer. Probing was used mainly in grades 5 &6 where students were asked to justify by selecting evidence in the text that would support the given answer (justify the conclusion they reached). But in none of the classes did the teachers ask for clarification or personal interpretation or elaboration. The questionnaire revealed that 88.5% of the teachers (items 9 & 11) did not ask students for any elaboration or clarification; only 7% did ask for elaboration. While, 91% of the teachers stated that they asked for justification since it is one of the required objectives (item 17).

Other things noted during the observations were the kind of interaction that took place in those classrooms: teacher-student, student-student or student-teacher. The data collected revealed the expected: teacher-student interaction was dominant in all classes, except when students were engaged in group work. Group work was limited to upper grade levels. But even when students worked in groups of 4 – 5, one or two of the students imposed their ideas and did much of the talking. Reflecting or giving students time to think about what they had learnt was observed in rare cases in the upper elementary grades. Despite its importance, the focus group teachers (78%: item 7) admit that they get entangled in the process of reaching the objectives of the lesson and thus they rarely have time to apply it.

Discussing and debating current local or global issues was one of the things that observers looked for. Classroom observations of the lower elementary classes depicted no evidence of discussions and debates. However teachers asked students to give their personal opinion on several things. At the upper elementary classes, only once or twice per year were students engaged in whole class discussions of a theme presented in the reading textbooks. Debates however, never took place. The teachers of the focus group, as well, assured that they sometimes engage students in group work discussions that dealt with issues presented in the reading textbook, but debates, in their opinion should be postponed to intermediate and secondary levels. According to them, the maturity level of those students would have been raised by then, and so they would be able to plausibly debate abstract concepts or social issues.

Results related to research question 2: To what extent do the behaviors of the teachers in the elementary private and public ESL classrooms help in the prevalence of a democratic atmosphere in the ESL classroom?
To answer this research question, the researcher prepared a list of the most important behaviors that could foster and maintain a democratic atmosphere in the ESL classroom. Educating for democracy subsumes that teachers show their students that they *care* for them, *empathize* with their mishaps and *tolerate* their misdeeds (Eggan & Kauchak, 2001). In addition, educating for democracy entails that teachers should try to enhance the positive behaviors and avoid the negative ones.

Positive Behavior:

- **Empathizing**: students need to feel that the teacher cares for them as human beings, not just care for their studies and scholastic achievement. Empathizing means that the teacher is willing to spare a few seconds of her time (whether inside or outside of the classroom) to listen to their personal needs or worries or to help with an assignment.

- **Equality**: Students are to be viewed and treated as equals. There should not be any differential treatment. Thus teachers should not treat some students more favorably than others. Pertinent to the concept of equality is teachers' expectations of students' academic progress, as well as, the feedback they provide to students (Eggan and Kauchak, 2001).

    - *High-expectations*: Students' potentials are to be appreciated no matter how little those potentials are. Teachers need to have positive and high expectations of both high and low achieving students. They need to expect students, particularly the low-achievers, to improve and to progress.
    - *Feedback*: All students are entitled to receive good feedback. Good or effective feedback is specific and immediate, has a positive emotional tone, depends on performance, and provides helpful information.

Negative behaviors:

- **Disrespect**: Students are to be treated with respect and the same behavior needs to be exhibited by students when communicating with the teacher, their friends or other staff members. If respect is to prevail the following things need to be avoided:

    - *Humiliation*: Students are not to be humiliated. Ridicule and humiliation demean and smear students' self-esteem and self-confidence that are important for maximizing language acquisition.
    - *Threatened*: Students should feel safe and secure. They should not be threatened. Teachers need to provide and maintain a low-anxiety climate in the classroom (Krashen, 1987; 1988).
    - *Abuse*: Students are not to be abused under any circumstance. Verbal, emotional and / or physical abuse should be prohibited from all schools' premises.

Results of teachers' behaviors

Before discussing the teachers' behaviors, the researcher would like to point out to a fact that the vast majority of the teachers have a pleasant personality that is easily accepted by young learners. Only in very rare cases the teachers whether in the public or the private schools did not greet students with a warm smile which is necessary for establishing a sense of acceptance, love and mutual trust at the beginning of every session. All of those teachers showed the warm feelings of love and care towards their students. Most of the students rushed to hug the teacher or stay close to her. The vast majority, it seems, felt safe and secure in the presence of their teacher, and they tried their best to please her. In most of the times, those teachers contributed to the prevalence of a positive climate. They engaged students in games, in chanting songs, in acting, in story-telling and in activities that give students the opportunity to laugh out loud and move or walk thus enabling students to be relaxed and anxious free. Examples of such activities are solving riddles, role-playing, and group competitions. Those instructional methods motivated the young learners and enabled them to learn while feeling relaxed. Classroom observations revealed that most of the teachers were keen to have everyone succeed and improve his/her ESL proficiency level.

However, despite those positive characteristics that help foster a democratic climate in the classrooms, democracy was not apparent in most of the other behaviors observed. To begin with, empathy or the willingness to spend time with a student and listen to him talk about a personal problem is an important behavior contributing towards democracy and personality development. Empathy was rarely practiced during class time. Some of the teachers simply silenced a few of the students and told them openly that they were not telling the truth. The majority of the teachers (88%: items 1 & 8), as table 1 depicts, stated that they do not have the time to empathize with their students. On the social media group, those teachers admitted that most of the time, they do not let the students share with them or with the class matters that are irrelevant to a lesson's topic. They avoid listening to their students' stories, because that behavior might get contagious, and most of the stories

would be simply made up. It seems that teachers, during class time, have to rush to finish the curriculum and hence cannot afford to listen to what students have to tell them about their personal lives. Besides, teachers are overworked and worn out; they have to rush from one class to the other, or to meetings, whether with the coordinators, the principal, or the parents. They do not have additional time to spend with students who need help with an assignment or who need to communicate a personal matter.

Another issue that was focused on during the class observations was abuse. Many teachers in public and private schools mistreated some of the students, usually the lazy and the careless, though they put the blame on the mothers. Verbal abuse was evident in those teachers' oral communicative behavior. They called those students names and used oral expressions to ridicule them for not being able to answer the questions or not being able to recite things they were supposed to memorize or for not paying attention. They also abused them emotionally for they often yelled at them. Emotional abuse was also apparent through making demeaning facial grimaces in the class. In public and private schools, some teachers, particularly in grades 1 and 2 resorted to physical abuse. Those teachers slapped, hit or spanked few of their students for either misbehaving, for being inattentive, or for showing signs of laziness. Some of them used thick rods or rulers, not just their bare hands to hit the students. Thus elementary teachers showed no tolerance towards some students; they tended to lose their temper and resort to verbal, emotional or even physical abuse. Responses to the questionnaire revealed that 86% (item 2) of the teachers lose their temper in class when students misbehave or when students show signs of laziness, while only 9% (item 3) mentioned that they could control their temper. 72% (items 4 & 5) affirmed that they kick the disrupting student(s) out, while 68% (item 6) admitted that they resort to collective punishment. Those teachers definitely subject students to all kinds of emotional abuse.

Another behavior looked for was equality in treatment. Inequality in treatment dominated the scene in both the private and the public schools. Teachers, in general, did not exhibit the same kind of treatment to all. They favored some—the cute-looking, the neat and the 'intelligent' ones. The favored students got more attention, more smiles, more positive feedback and more emotional support than the other ones. Teachers had higher expectations of the favored ones or the high achievers. They showed those students all the care, warmth, love, and tolerance that a young learner seeks. Teachers were more open-minded and flexible with the favored students. The data obtained in the early stages of the social media conferences, as well as, through the questionnaire indicated that most of the teachers (87.8% item: 26) unintentionally found themselves favoring the high- achieving students. And 84% (item 27) of the teachers unintentionally found themselves intolerant towards lazy and/or careless students. The researcher thus concludes that equality as a behavior necessary for democracy was in most of the cases not practiced by the teachers. Such a behavior on the part of the teacher definitely lowers the self-confidence of the unloved students and that. In turn, would negatively influence their academic achievement.

The researcher thus concludes that most of the observed behaviors of the ESL elementary teachers in the public and private schools are not conducive to educating for democracy. It seems that a lot has still to be done to improve the status quo in both sectors, if the goal is to spread the values of democracy and good citizenry.

Table 1 below (page 10) depicts the responses of the focus group regarding their behaviors and questioning skills. Those behaviors are believed to help develop some of the values of democracy, such as caring for the students and respecting them. The instructional skills inquired about focused on the questioning techniques that are said to help develop critical thinking. Instructional strategies that enable students to learn how to cooperate and accept others' views were also asked about. It should be noted that the percentages provided have been rounded. The percentages indicate that teachers care most about their students' cognitive development more than their emotional or social development.

Table 1. Focus group questionnaire

Statements	never/rarely	sometimes	often/always
1. I listen to the problems and needs of each student.	89%	7 %	4%
2. Some students make me lose my temper.	5%	9%	86%
3. I control my temper when a student's behavior is rude.	84%	7%	9%
4. When a student disrupts the class I kick him/her out.	18%	8%	74%
5. To control the class, I kick some students out of class.	24%	6%	70%
6. To control the class, I apply collective punishment.	68%	10%	22%
7. I give my students time to reflect on what was learnt.	78%	8%	14%
8. I let students communicate their personal problems.	87%	7%	7%
9. I'd be satisfied with the correct answer, so I move on to ask another question.	3%	8%	89%
10. I focus on detail questions to ensure that students have comprehended the text.	5%	9%	86%
11. I ask a student elaborate more on the correct answer he/she gave.	88%	7%	5%
12. When a student gives a wrong answer, I correct it for him/her.	7%	12%	82%
13. When a student gives a wrong answer, I ask a high achiever to answer it.	5%	11%	84%
14. When a student gives a wrong answer, I give him clues to give another answer.	89%	4%	7%
15. When a student is hesitant to give an answer, I myself provide the answer.	6%	14%	80%
16. When a student is hesitant to give an answer, I ask a high achiever to give the answer.	5%	11%	84%
17. I ask the student to justify the answer he/she gave.	3%	12%	91%
18. Time pressure deters me from asking a lot of questions in the session.	5%	12%	83%
19. I rephrase the question when a student gives a wrong answer.	88%	6%	6%
20. I rephrase the question when a student is hesitant to give an answer.	80%	12%	8%
21. I give a clue to the answer when a student looks perplexed.	80%	13%	7%
22. I give a clue to the answer when a student gives a wrong answer.	90%	4%	6%
23. High achievers tend to call out the answers.	4%	5%	91%
24. To boost the low-achievers' self-esteem, I ask them details questions that do not require critical thinking.	3%	8%	89%
25. In order not to embarrass the low-achievers, I reserve the critical thinking questions to high-achievers.	4%	9%	87%
26. I unintentionally find myself more tolerant with the high-achieving students.	3%	10%	87%
27. I unintentionally find myself intolerant towards lazy and/or careless students.	2%	14%	84%

Results related to research question 3: To what extent do the behaviors suggested to the focus group of public school teachers help change teachers' attitudes towards educating for democracy?

A change in attitudes, behaviors and instructional practices is contingent on a change in beliefs and conceptions. But changing one's beliefs is not an easy endeavor, particularly that a human being, by nature, resists changes. It takes time to change ones' conceptions and beliefs and consequently to change ones' practices and behaviors. Teachers need to find meaning in the changes before attempting to adopt them (as beliefs) and implement them (as practices). Even then, initial implementation takes over three years before considering that the changes has become part of the teachers' beliefs and consequently behaviors or practices (Fullan, 1982, 1991).

Analysis of the teachers' statements on the WhatsApp and the feedback obtained from the trainers indicate that there were slight changes in teachers' beliefs and assumed practices. They claimed to occasionally specify time to listen more and to empathize more. When trainers were asked about that they confirmed that teachers occasionally attempted to listen for a couple of seconds to the student who came up to them and they comforted the child by patting him or her on the shoulder. But, in general, they were confined by the demands of the syllabus.

As to differential treatment, the majority of the teachers did not deny that they still favored some over others, though they have become aware of the drawbacks of differential treatment. Upon consulting the matter with the trainers, they reported that teachers praised, gave more positive feedback and encouraged most of the students. But they remained to have higher expectations of the high achievers. And that justifies their intolerant behavior towards the low-achievers, as some of the teachers admitted.

Most of the teachers also admitted that, occasionally, they lost their temper and that they had to kick out the disrupting students, though less often than before. As to collective punishment they assured that they no more applied it. Such behaviors, of course, were not observed by the trainers, since all students tend to behave themselves in the presence of a superior adult or an outsider.

With regard to the instructional practices needed for developing students' democracy skills, teachers claimed to have incorporated a few changes. They stated that they prepared more of the higher level questions and made sure to ask as many of them as possible, as time and syllabus pressure would allow them to. .

The reason behind those behavioral changes could be attributed to the fact that the researcher addressed the personal meaning of the proposed changes (Fullan, 1982; Sleiman, 1991). That is, teachers had to identify the problems; among them were the low self-esteem and low achievement of some students, on the one hand, and the aggressiveness of others, on the other hand. Once problems were identified and discussed, teachers felt a need to changing the status quo, so they were ready to suggest solutions or to listen to, negotiate, and accept any proposed solutions. Explanation and demonstration of the possible solutions (the intended changes) were then demonstrated by the researcher. The next step was engaging the teachers in micro-teaching activities, as part of the requirements of the course, where they would be able to prepare, present and then discuss the possible advantages of using them in class.

Conclusion

The present study closely investigated the behaviors and some of the practices of 100 ESL elementary teachers in 20 public and 20 private schools in various regions of Lebanon. The research relied on qualitative data, mainly, classroom observations, WhatsApp messages, and trainers' meetings. A quantitative tool, 5-point Likert scale was also administered. The researcher's aim was to find out whether or not a sample of teachers in Lebanon were cultivating the values and skills necessary for preparing young citizens to live in a democratic society.

The collected data indicated that the observed ESL elementary teachers in both the private and public schools, in general, have a loving and amicable personality and quite often expressed an attitude of warmth towards their students. All of the teachers were dedicated, conscientious and concerned about the academic progress of their students, but most of their behaviors and practices do not prepare young citizens to exercise democracy or to live in a democratic society in the future.

The findings, though, clearly indicated that the teachers' questioning practices were not conducive to educating for democracy. The principle of frequency which requires that teachers ask lots of questions to enable students to think, decide and determine things for themselves was rare. Much of classroom time was spent on explanation where the teacher explained rather than raised questions. When teachers attempted to check whether or not the students comprehended the concepts, they asked basic level (detail) questions in addition to higher level (critical thinking) questions, yet the ratio of critical thinking questions was much less. The findings also indicated that the strategies of prompting and probing which are necessary if our target is educating for democracy were rarely used. Moreover, although cooperative learning was sometimes used in the upper elementary grades, yet the more aggressive, usually the high achievers domineered and did most of the work, and hence democracy was violated.

The data obtained from classroom observations also indicated that the implications of teachers' behaviors were incongruent with the values of democracy that are to be instilled through education.
First of all, inequality prevailed. All the ESL teachers in grades 1 through 6 discriminated among students of public and private schools. Differential treatment was apparent in their attitudes towards some of those students. Teachers did not try to listen to or empathize with the students they did not favor. They expected the high-achieving (favored) students not only to keep their standard but to progress and excel, while they expected the low achievers to fail or to barely succeed. Differential treatment was also obvious in their questioning techniques. Teachers not only asked the high-achievers the critical thinking questions but they also gave them more wait- or think-time and turned to them for help when a low-achiever did not give an answer or gave an incorrect one. Teachers also gave them the opportunity to call out the answer.

The findings of this research also pointed out to a behavior that greatly counteracts educating for democracy. It was disrespect in all its forms: ridicule, humiliation, as well as, verbal, emotional and physical abuse. The values of democracy are violated. Democracy cannot, one day, become a rule of conduct if young citizens are not prepared to respect one-self and others, to tolerate differences, to accept and appreciate others, and to learn how to treat others well.

To conclude, results indicate that democracy prevailed in only very few instances in the ESL elementary schools. The researcher, in her attempt to reach a plausible interpretation for the status quo, concurs with Biesta (2007) who argues that before expecting democracy to be fostered at schools, it has to be first practiced in society at large. In the vast majority of the schools in Lebanon, as the observers, the focus group and the trainers admitted, teachers are treated as followers who are expected to be submissive to the restraints of the authority.

What school can do- or at least should try to do-is to make democratic action possible. This involves creating conditions for children and students to be subjects and to experience what it is and means to be a subject. The learning related to this is not something that comes before democratic subjectivity. It rather follows from having been or not having been a subject…. Because subjectivity is no longer something that only occurs or is created in schools, the approach to democratic education that follows from my considerations puts the question about the responsibility for democratic education back where it actually belong, namely, in society at large. I argue that it is an illusion to think that schools alone can produce democratic citizens. In so far as action and subjectivity are possible in schools and society, schools can perform the more modest and more realistic task of helping children and students to learn about and reflect upon the fragile conditions under which all people can be a subject. A society in which individuals are not able or not allowed to act, cannot expect from its schools to produce democratic citizens for it. I therefore conclude that schools can neither create nor save democracy-they can only support societies in which action and subjectivity are real possibilities (p.740).

Recommendations

Based on the interpretation of the results and the deciphered conclusions, the researcher suggests that the curriculum be revised so that the amount of themes to be covered and competencies and objectives to be reached becomes reasonable and feasible for both teachers and students. Also, teachers and students should not be seen as living on an island that is separated from their surrounding community. They are influenced by the school's and society's cultures. Thus teachers need to be treated, by their superiors, as intelligent, creative thinkers who have good heads on their shoulders. Principals, academic councilors, and coordinators should not expect teachers to merely follow directives and set lesson plans. Teachers need to be treated as equals and thus be involved in the process of making decisions, choosing among alternatives and voicing out their opinion. Above all, teachers need to be viewed by members of a school and of a society as individuals worthy of respect and appreciation. We cannot expect teachers to promote the values of democracy (equality, respect, tolerance and justice) if they live and work in an authoritarian society in and outside the school boundaries. Once those are rectified, instructional strategies (such as the effective questioning techniques and appropriate classroom interaction) would become more in accord with the skills of democracy. In-service training workshops, clinical supervision and coaching would definitely help change some of the teachers' instructional strategies. But beliefs and conceptions require changes at much broader scales: religious, political, and social.

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Author Information

Samar Sinno
Branch One, Lebanese University,
Faculty of Education
Unesco Area, Beirut, Lebanon
Contact E-mail: samarsinno@yahoo.com