

https://dspace.org/

Democracy in education or education for democracy?: The limits of participation in South Africa school governance.

Dieltiens, Veerle

2014-03-13
http://hdl.handle.net10539/14136

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Democracy in education or education for democracy?:

The limits of participation in South African school governance

Veerle Dieltiens

Democracy in education or education for democracy?: The limits of participation in South African school governance

Veerle Maria Dieltiens

A Research Report submitted to the Faculty of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Education by Coursework and Research Report.

Johannesburg, June 2000

Degree awarded with distinction on 7 December 2000

Abstract

After years of apartheid's authoritarian hold on schools, the call for greater participation in education has had widespread support and has been articulated by several academics. This call is based on the assumption that if more people were included in school governing bodies, then democracy would be boosted and equality among schools would be ensured. This research report is a response to this argument.

It argues that an inclusive democracy as articulated by deliberative democrats ignores the costs of participation especially where communities have different capacities and unequal resources at their disposal. Instead, a democratic theory of education should recognise the overlap between deliberative and representative forms of democracy. A representative democracy holds education officials accountable to their constituents and to the principles of good education. Educational decisions should reflect public deliberation and should be explained with reasons the public can understand, but they should also be in line with the aims of a liberal education that promises to educate students fluent in democratic principles and conversant in national, and even international discourse.

Correspondingly, an education for democracy need not be geared either at producing active citizens ready for the rigours of participation or at simply graduating students with the know-how on voting procedures. Rather a democratic education should prepare students to engage in democratic processes, to be able to recognise their own interests and those of the broader community. In short, an education that builds the autonomy of students.

Key words

Deliberative democracy

Representative democracy / representation

Participatory democracy / participation

School governance

schooling and education

citizenship

equality

constitutional rights

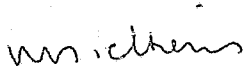
inclusivity

marketisation of education

efficiency and effectiveness of schools

Declaration

I declare that this research is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before any degree or examination in any other university.



30 June 2000

Student No: 9110014A

Acknowledgements

Professor Penny Enslin, without whose expert guidance and rigorous academic expectations this research report would never have been done.

My parents: my father for providing me with a room of my own and plenty of cigarettes in the initial writing of this report; my mother for the time she spent on the parents-teachers association.

And to Tamantha Hammerschlag, who read through the report and made valuable comments and who would hate that I started this sentence with a conjunction.

Contents

Introduction p1

1. Democratic school governance p5

2. Deliberative democracy p8

    2.1 The flaws with pure procedure p12

    2.2 Entrenching inequality p16

3. Representative democracy p23

4. Participatory democracy and representative democracy: two distinct alternatives? p30

5. Democracy and the aims of education p37

6. The purpose of SGBs in post-apartheid education: the South African Schools Act p44

7. Education for participation or education for education p57

Conclusion p63

Bibliography p65

Contents

Introduction p1

1. Democratic school governance.....p5

2. Deliberative democracy.....p8

2.1 The flaws with pure procedure.....p12

2.2 Entrenching inequality.....p16

3. Representative democracy.....p23

4. Participatory democracy and representative democracy: two distinct alternatives?.....p30

5. Democracy and the aims of education.....p37

6. The purpose of SGBs in post-apartheid education: the South African Schools Act p44

7. Education for participation or education for education p57

Conclusion.....p63

Bibliography.....p65

Introduction

The idea that authority over schools should be delegated downwards from state to local levels has had powerful voice since the inception of democracy in South Africa. Indeed, the drive to democratise has touched all institutions and has become a rallying point for legitimising both public and private organisations. Education policy has responded to these trends, firstly by reconsidering the way in which schools are organised, and requiring them to do so along democratic lines and secondly, by insisting that education contribute to the national development of democracy. Layered on this orthodoxy is the assumption that education will support democratization by addressing the problems of inequality and redress in education. In short, democracy must rule education and education must benefit democracy. This fairly simple formulation has widespread appeal and is expressed in the South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA), which insists that parents, educators and learners form a "partnership" with the state to determine the policies and rules that govern schools. SASA also makes clear in its preamble that education policy must "redress past injustices in educational provision" and "set uniform norms and standards" (SASA, 1996, p2).

The idea that boosting participation will lead to greater equality and efficiency in schools is a tall order and yet has popular appeal. Yusuf Sayed and Nazir Carrim, for example, believe that only when participation is more inclusive will the gap between disadvantaged and advantaged schools close (Sayed and Carrim, 1998). As communities pull together to build on common interests, then it follows that schools will benefit and so will democracy. There are a number of assumptions inlaid in this line of thinking: firstly, that participatory democracy is more democratic, and so more desirable, than representative democracy; and secondly, that participatory democracy

will result in improvements (and more specifically, equality) in education. In this report, I challenge both these assumptions.

I will argue that the assumed choice between participatory and representative democracy is a simplistic one. Representation can after all be interpreted as a means of participation and this paper takes the position that the two can co-exist. Nevertheless, where participation and representation blur and which gets privileged in time and place is still up for debate. While participatory democrats clearly stress people's rights to democratic process, representative democrats are often (but not always) more inclined to emphasize liberal rights. In a liberal democracy, liberalism and democracy do not always make comfortable bed fellows. As David Held puts it: "The question is: how can individuals be 'free and equal', enjoy equal opportunities to participate in the framework which governs their lives, without surrendering important issues of individual liberty and distributional questions to the uncertain outcomes of the democratic process?" (Held, 1987, p264).

This report will also look into how these tensions manifest themselves in the South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA). I will argue that the Act gives in to the grey area between representative and participatory governance and is pulled in the tug-of-war between central government's prerogative and local level initiative. The Act hands over a great deal of responsibility to School Governing Bodies (SGBs), which are expected to take the lead in developing the mission statement of the school, lay down its policies and set the standards for the quality of education. Yet, while as Sayed and Carrim note, "participation by citizens in civil society may create the condition for generating a common good" (Sayed and Carrim, 1998, p37), there is no assurance that the outcome

of such democratic processes will not go against sound liberal educational principles.

In addition, participating in school governance does not guarantee that parents' views (or those of others) will be represented at national and provincial levels as they may have little influence over policy made there. In other words it may be better to be effectively represented than to participate. Those who want to influence policy in the school system could do better to be active in politics than in the governance of schools. In fact, the real impetus for transformation in education will most likely come through measures taken by central government rather than through local level initiatives. SGBs function mainly to monitor that government's intentions are implemented, to advise and to oversee financial systems and should not be troubled with the responsibility of levelling the playing fields between schools. Unlike Sayed and Carrim, I doubt whether a more inclusive participatory democracy in schools will result in equity. Rather, what is at issue is to ensure equal participation among different representatives.

Despite legislative attempts to tie participation in with school governance, in Benjamin Barber's words "the fundamental linkage between schooling and community and between education and democracy" (Barber, 1992, p14) still eludes education policy makers. In this paper I argue that this linkage should be made through representative democracy. I unpack the ways in which decisions are made in both participatory democracy and representative democracy and claim that the aims of education (with special reference to South Africa) are best fulfilled by representative democracy. I will argue that education is a "special case" and as such is an inappropriate sphere in which to try to broaden participatory democracy. I also argue that SASA's moves to democratise reflect an increasing marketisation of education (this time in agreement

with Sayed).

Finally, I briefly explore the implications of the debates around participatory governance for classroom practice. But first a look at what is meant by democratic school governance.

Chapter 1 - Democratic school governance

For years South African schools bowed to the directives shot at them from higher up the education hierarchy: heads of schools implemented policies handed down from provincial departments, teachers followed a set syllabus, and pupils, well, obeyed (or disobeyed) the commands of teachers. But with the advent of democracy, schools as public institutions have had to bow to new trends to democratise. The lines of authority previously so clearly top-down have been scrambled, so that those once silent in educational policy making can now have a voice in the direction schools take. Since schools are charged with a public mission - to initiate students into public life, to train them for the job market etc. - it is presumed that the public should have a say in how schools operate, how resources should be used, what the curriculum should read, the school calendar and even what time the school should open and close.

The idea underlining democratic school governance is that if education shapes democracy, democracy must shape education. In other words, the authority over education should rest with the entire body of citizens. This requirement sets a democratic theory of education apart from liberal and conservative theories of education. Conservative theorists, anxious to preserve traditional family values, may want to transfer the authority of schools to parents, in the belief that parents will choose the best educational values for their children. Liberal theorists, on the other hand, would not trust their programme of educating for liberal rights to the discretion of parents. They may turn to a "philosopher-king" (Gutmann, 1987, p11) for guidance on how children should be educated since the best educational practices originate from the intellectual endeavours of the professional. Amy Gutmann criticises both theories. She

cautions that the conservative move to "depoliticize" education is often not backed up with giving parents "democratic authority" to see through policy implementation (Gutmann, 1987, p8). And liberal theories may be "profoundly undemocratic" (Gutmann, 1987, p11) since they defend excluding popular contributions to educational debates.

What a democratic notion of education has over the liberal and conservative theories is democracy. Democracy is the essential ingredient in making sense of who has authority over schools and how that prerogative is carried out. Educational questions will not be left to parents, or professionals, or the "philosopher-king", but will be managed through democratic processes. Such democratic processes would presumably be structured to host many more participants in the educational debate than either liberal or conservative theories allow. Indeed, democratic processes would channel citizens' engagement with each other to come up with an agreement (if not a consensus) on key educational issues.

Democracy is, of course, not as easy a formula as I have glibly stated it here. Like most political terms, 'democracy' does not fit neatly into a single definition. Since it includes a host of indices including elections, institutions for participation, political parties etc. various formulations of democracy exist with some theorists claiming to be the true democrats according to the relative weight they give to particular indices. Participatory democrats, for example, believe they are the "true blue democrats" (Michelman's term, 1997, p312). In the discussion which follows I draw on deliberative democrats as representative of radical participatory democracy. Their contribution to the democracy debate has pushed the boundaries of active citizenship to include participation in both

formal and informal associations and so includes citizens' involvement in education. Deliberative theory assumes, for example, that democracy in education would be strengthened if people take part in making the decisions in their local schools as well as participate in national educational policy discussions. Forums, such as SGBs would provide the space for communities to voice their educational concerns and to deliberate on the schooling needs of their own children. However, I will argue that there are limits to deliberative democracy and that it tends to obscure the inequalities that arise through participation. It also tends to neglect the benefits of representative democracy.

Chapter 2 - Deliberative democracy

If democracy claims to be government for and by the people, then deliberative democracy promises to be an improved version of democracy. Unlike some representative democrats who defer political decisions to a select elite, theorists such as Seyla Benhabib, Joshua Cohen and Jurgen Habermas (in Benhabib, 1996) prefer a more robust democracy that pulls everyone into making political decisions at all levels - from central government down to grassroots organisations. For these theorists, a true democracy must include the deliberation of all citizens in an effort to close the gap between the state and society. In this way democracy touches all sectors of society and not only those specifically defined as government.

Deliberative democrats argue that democracy's justification depends on a neutral process that engages people to participate, to talk and reason over political matters until a collective decision is agreed upon. Ian Budge argues that if people can be trusted to vote for the decision makers then they should also be trusted to make the decisions (Budge, 1993, p144). For Benhabib, collective decisions must result from "processes of collective deliberation conducted rationally and fairly among free and equal individuals" (Benhabib, 1996, p69). It is not enough for citizens to vote periodically to show their approval or disapproval of those making the law, to then expect them to comply with those laws. Everyone must be thought to have formulated the laws if they are to be governed by them. Frank Michelman terms this the "trans-majoritarian demands on democratic law making" (Michelman, 1997, p314).

The challenge for participatory democracy is to realize political decisions even where

pluralism has meant that individuals and groups have disparate, and even conflicting, value systems and political agendas. For example, in a plural society a range of comprehensive doctrines vie over what education should involve. A conservative Jewish teacher may be interested in teaching only the Torah, a Catholic school might want to exclude sex education, while Aids educators would probably insist on instructing students on the use of condoms. With such incompatible opinions on what the normative content of education should be, finding a consensus on public education might not be as easy as a round table talk. But what can be agreed upon, argue the deliberative theorists, are the procedures for making decisions. And so deliberative democracy is strict on the process for democratic decision making. The outcome of those processes is not as important as the fact that people have been able to participate. Benhabib explains: "Proceduralism is a rational answer to persisting value conflicts at the substantive level" (Benhabib, 1996, p73). Habermas designs his approach to participatory democracy - Discourse Ethics - in a way that impinges on the decision making process as little as possible. "Discourse Ethics," he writes, "views the moral point of view as embodied in an intersubjective practice of argumentation that enjoins those involved to an idealizing enlargement of their interpretive perspective" (Habermas, 1991, p117).

Through engaging in such deliberative procedures, political and educational decisions become the shared responsibility of all citizens. Everyone's contribution is considered with equal weight and each has an equal chance to initiate discussion and to set the agenda. There should be no limitation on the topics for debate, no preconditions on what is on and off the agenda, no substantive content that is not up for criticism. If you include substantive content, Habermas warns, you will not get universality (Habermas,

1991, p118). Political will formation comes about after the argumentation and bargaining of a deliberative process and is not based on any preconceived ethical basis. Deliberative democracy promises to adjudicate a fair and peaceful agreement between the clamour of competing positions vying for dominance in the political arena.

Cohen notes that deliberative democracy is more than just a procedure for extending participation in public decision making (Cohen, 1996, p95). Deliberative democracy is substantive in that its outcomes are the result of public reasoning between participants who are equal and reason in ways that others can accept as reasons. Participants' preferences must take into account the common good and they must be able to explain their choices publicly. Since deliberation aspires to collective decision making, the focus of the debate should not turn on self-interested reasoning but on the common good. That way their opinions have more chance of winning over others to their side. As people enter into discussions, their proposals become more coherent and as they hear other points of view, their own interests might shift. People do not go into deliberation to bargain their proposals, but to share their ideas and, through reasoned discourse, come to agreements.

While deliberative democracy aims at power sharing, it also hopes to reconstruct social reality. For Barber, the motor that drives democracy is its "revolutionary spirit" (Barber, 1996, p351), its ability to change the political order and its adherent principles with each new generation. The outcome of deliberation should reflect an interplay of subjective views of education and the historical and cultural frameworks in which they are located.

The decisions that result from deliberation, it is argued, are substantive, normative and ultimately better than the resolutions of representative democracy. We can expect, therefore, that deliberation will lead to better educational decisions. As Iris Young notes, "Because members of different groups have different social perspectives, they are sometimes in a better position than members of other groups to anticipate the probable social consequences of implementing particular social policies. Thus the fair representation of all group perspectives can maximize the chances of making just and wise decisions" (Young, 1995, p211). By collaborating with other comprehensive doctrines, citizens cement their energies in the common purpose of improving the activities of schools and are more likely to recognise the pitfalls in choosing certain directions.

Deliberative democracy blurs the boundaries between school and society, allowing an active citizenship to deliberate on educational questions such as how schools should be organised and what the content of the curriculum should be. Its radical agenda to transform society would insist that these decisions not be a mere compromise between the comprehensive doctrines, but reflect critical debate that moves participants to new, grander ideals. Since citizens deliberate as equals, the educational system they choose would most likely be equally acceptable to all and so work to overcome social inequalities. Sayed and Carrim draw on this line of argument when they insist that only by increasing participation in school governance will South African schools be equal.

Deliberative democrats appear to have uncovered the ideal democracy. Even John Stewart Mill writes, "there is no difficulty in showing that the ideally best form of government is that in which the sovereignty ... is vested in the entire aggregate of the

community" (Mill, 1996, p336). But while deliberative democrats assume they have hit on the most desirable and feasible form of governance, in the discussion that follows I argue that in many ways it may be neither. Procedural processes are fraught with practical obstacles such as limits on time and resources which may work to exclude people from deliberation and so undermine deliberative democracy's claims to equality. Ideal procedures may help deliberative democracy come up trumps on legitimacy, but there is no guarantee that the outcomes of those procedures are good ones. The standards on which to test whether the outcomes are correct or not would have to be worked out independently of public deliberation. And even if it were to work practically in the ideal way theory would have it, deliberative democracy comes up against the problem Michelman terms "self referential" (Michelman, 1997, p314). In other words, for deliberative democrats to explain how decisions were arrived at, they would need to explain what principles made the the process possible -- so they could never escape the need for certain fundamental principles to be in place.

2.1 The flaws with pure procedure

The emphasis on procedure rather than on outcomes defines deliberative democracy. Habermas epitomises this position. He distinguishes discourse theory from a republican view of democracy which is made up of "an association of free and equal consociates" (Habermas, 1996, p21). Here citizens are free to participate in solidarity with others to uncover the common good. As Habermas explains, the republican state guarantees "an inclusive opinion- and will-formation in which free and equal citizens reach an understanding on which goals and norms lie in the equal interest of all" (Habermas, 1996, p22). While Habermas lauds the use of public reason and participation in the republican view of democracy, he criticises its "ethical constriction"

and believes it to be too idealistic (Habermas, 1996, p23). Because people are expected to search for a collective identity, participation is already limited by "a substantive ethical consensus" (Habermas, 1996, p24) before public reasoning has begun.

Habermas promises that the end results of deliberative procedures - like Discourse Ethics - are agreements that have been comprehensively reasoned through. To understand their political commitments, people should have arrived at them with full disclosure and it is only through open debate and discussion that reasonable choices are possible. Habermas fears that when individuals take decisions for self-interested reasons rather than by reasonable argument, the decisions that result lack normative persuasion. Habermas insists that Discourse Ethics secures decisions that are uncompromisingly democratic. Consensus comes only after discussion. Fundamental principles, the way in which basic institutions should be run and even Discourse Ethics itself must result from democratic debate. Habermas argues that to fix any principles before the democratic process has started goes against the principle of legitimacy. Habermas does not question whether consensus is possible or not, but he does think that setting this consensus in stone means that future generations need not enter into a democratic procedure to question those principles and then vote for or against them.

If the procedure was fair, the outcome must be fair too. His is a pragmatic theory of argumentation. If participants are going to use deliberation properly, then they should try to convince people of their point of view using carefully constructed arguments. Habermas suggests that people be able to take on the perspective of others before they try convince them that they are right. Habermas's citizens are constantly involved in questioning, reformulating or reinforcing the principles governing their society.

Habermas seems to have a comprehensive decision making process - after all, people debate through the political agenda and arrive at the end of the process with consensus on decisions Habermas insists have normative clout. But theorists propounding representative democracy are hesitant to allow fundamental (liberal) principles to be put up for public vote. As Held explains, participatory democrats "allow democracy to prevail over all other considerations" (Held, 1987, p263). John Rawls for one is not convinced by Habermas's argument. Rawls warns that Habermas is taking a gamble with procedures. Rawls does not trust constitutional essentials such as rights and liberties to pure procedure. He cautions that these principles must be protected from being quashed by the whim of the majority. Rawls suggests that procedural democracy may be a relapse to utilitarianism (Rawls, 1995, p173), where the majoritarian principle holds that the right of action depends on whether it is the greatest good for the greatest number even if it infringes on a minorities' rights. For liberal theorists, the outcomes of procedures need to be justified, or at least explained, with the hindsight of an independent standard. There is no guarantee that democratic principles result in the best political choices - or as Rawls so delicately puts it - if garbage goes in, garbage goes out (Rawls, 1995, p174). Rawls thinks Habermas needs substantive guidelines to prevent this, ie. he must set limits on the democratic process which Habermas is loathe to do. The question is: is democracy trying to surface the will of the people or trying to get at the best way to govern people? Rawls thinks the answer should weigh in favour of the latter, Habermas the former.

In fact, Rawls censures Habermas's theory as being "incomplete" because Habermas has not said enough about the ins and outs of deliberation. Rawls does not shy away

from insisting that substantive guidelines are not only unavoidable but also necessary. He writes: "any liberal view must be substantive" (Rawls, 1995, p170). Since liberalism is concerned to secure certain rights, Rawls is quite happy to tamper with procedure to ensure those rights are upheld - even if that means he does not get the full-blooded legitimacy Habermas is after. Rawls makes a distinction between legitimacy and justice. While he wants both in his theory of justice, he warns that securing one will not automatically result in the other. Habermas, pinned down by Rawls as a majoritarian, may have secured democratic legitimacy but has a weak hold on justice.

Rawls notes that Habermas cannot get away with a "pure procedure" and claim to put no constraints on the processes. As Rawls notes, "here are five values that offhand seem to be values of procedure - impartiality and equality, openness (no one and no relevant information is excluded) and lack of coercion, and unanimity" (Rawls, 1995, p173). Habermas's deliberation cannot escape following even basic value-laden steps. Michelman recognises the problem as "a recursively or self-referentially structured idea" (Michelman, 1997, p314) in that the process-independent reasoning cannot move forward without looking back at the conditions that make it possible for it to begin. Habermas is stuck in wanting to deny the need for foundations in deliberation and, at the same time, needing foundations to get out of the starting blocks. In Michelman's words, "Presuppositional, then, to a deep-democratic discursive encounter among free and equal persons is a set of institutionally supported norms - one might as well call them rights - that govern the treatment of persons by one another in respects pertinent to participation in public discourse" (Michelman, 1997, p322).

The notion that it is possible to have a pure procedure to make both political and

education decisions is flawed then. Whether it is SGBs or a more general participatory process making educational decisions, their deliberations are necessarily constrained by what may be termed constitutional essentials. To what extent such constitutional essentials constrain their discussions is difficult to say (I pick up this point later) and whether citizens should be involved in continually reformulating those principles will continue to be a haggling point between those theorists siding with Habermas and disciples of Rawls. There are, none the less, deliberative democrats who accept certain preconditions on deliberation. Benhabib, for example, does not think that opening up deliberation means that liberal rights are no longer protected. She writes, "the deliberative model of democracy presupposes a discourse theory of ethics to supply it with the most general moral principles upon which rights claims would be based" (Benhabib, 1996, p73). Benhabib insists that deliberation is constrained by practical rationality and Cohen insists on substantive equality so that participation is not contingent on a person's economic position.

2.2 Entrenching inequality

Cohen's point leads me to the second concern I have with deliberative democracy - the question of equality. Deliberative democracy may seem to be an ideal and coherent theory on paper, but a nagging worry is that it cannot be applied practically. If the right to participation has no practical application, then it amounts to little more than a formal entitlement. Since theory is written with the assumption that it can be practised, these concerns need to be spelt out.

A key assumption made by the deliberative theorists is that citizens, as political animals, want to be involved in legislative decision making, not necessarily to secure

education decisions is flawed then. Whether it is SGBs or a more general participatory process making educational decisions, their deliberations are necessarily constrained by what may be termed constitutional essentials. To what extent such constitutional essentials constrain their discussions is difficult to say (I pick up this point later) and whether citizens should be involved in continually reformulating those principles will continue to be a haggling point between those theorists siding with Habermas and disciples of Rawls. There are, none the less, deliberative democrats who accept certain preconditions on deliberation. Benhabib, for example, does not think that opening up deliberation means that liberal rights are no longer protected. She writes, "the deliberative model of democracy presupposes a discourse theory of ethics to supply it with the most general moral principles upon which rights claims would be based" (Benhabib, 1996, p73). Benhabib insists that deliberation is constrained by practical rationality and Cohen insists on substantive equality so that participation is not contingent on a person's economic position.

2.2 Entrenching inequality

Cohen's point leads me to the second concern I have with deliberative democracy - the question of equality. Deliberative democracy may seem to be an ideal and coherent theory on paper, but a nagging worry is that it cannot be applied practically. If the right to participation has no practical application, then it amounts to little more than a formal entitlement. Since theory is written with the assumption that it can be practised, these concerns need to be spelt out.

A key assumption made by the deliberative theorists is that citizens, as political animals, want to be involved in legislative decision making, not necessarily to secure

their own interests but because they are concerned with the common good. If this assumption were to be proved false, then the deliberative democrats would have a hard time ensuring everyone exercised their positive rights without having to use coercive measures - and so risk veering to undemocratic acts. Judging from prevailing levels of participation, the participatory democrats' faith in people voluntarily entering political discussions is optimistic. As Geraint Parry and George Moyser's study shows, in the UK very few people currently engage in party political campaigning or in direct action (Parry and Moyser, 1994, p50). The demands deliberation makes on people's time may be too high and undermine its promise of inclusivity. Whether activity levels would increase substantially if participatory democracy were the norm is moot. However, a host of problems surge up if participation was voluntary and not everyone joined in - mainly around who chooses to join and who is excluded.

Participation in a democracy is expected to take place through a network of organisations, clubs and other public groups, in what Benhabib calls "a plurality of modes of association" (Benhabib, 1996, p73). Obviously, participation in a single political forum as in the original Greek city states is impossible today given the size of the deliberative body. The "modes of association" would include voluntary societies, trade unions, political parties, smaller pressure groups and presumably school governing bodies, which together would add up to deliberative democratic decision making. These political and social institutions must function democratically and embody notions of the public good, and importantly, egalitarianism. Young suggests that groups are important mobilising structures for oppressed people to have a public voice (Young, 1995, p183).

But participation in the wide array of public groups and associations may be "insufficiently representative" note Parry and Moyser (Parry and Moyser, 1994, p53). If participatory democrats are to leave citizens to organise themselves into pressure groups on a voluntary basis, then socio-economic biases may work to muddy the degree of representativeness of these groups. Parry and Moyser alert us to this problem: "The propensity of all groups towards oligarchy means that they are not necessarily representative of those whom they purport to represent" (Parry and Moyser, 1994, p53). If this were to happen, clearly the very project of participatory democracy would be undermined. The dilemma for participatory democrats is not only how to encourage participation by everyone, but how to ensure that those participating do so on an equal footing. Citizens entering into deliberation from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds may find that they are handicapped in the deliberation. As Held has warned: "Liberals failed to explore systematically the ways asymmetries of power and resources impinge upon the meaning of liberty and equality in daily relations" (Held, 1987, p254). Participatory democracy could simply backlash on the premise that participants are equal and in fact cement inequalities. Experiences in the United Kingdom prove that disadvantaged groups tend to under-participate while individuals who are compartatively better-off participate more and are so able to better protect their interests (Parry and Moyser, 1994, p54). Parry and Moyser note that, "Decentralisation can protect autonomous spheres of action for well-entrenched, well-resourced groups" (Parry and Moyser, 1994, p56). Deliberative democrats would need to overcome these problems by finding mechanisms to ensure that participatory structures are accountable to the citizens.

SGBs in South Africa stumble into this problem. Because the parents, teachers and

students involved in SGBs are drawn from the immediate school community, it follows that they reflect the socio-economic make-up of that community. So well-off schools will likely be led by middle-class parents and poorer schools will probably draw from a pool of working class parents. Each of these SGBs may strive to safeguard the interests of their particular school and, if successful, middle-class schools will keep up their standards while poorer schools will have to work harder to do the best they can with fewer resources. At a local level, SGBs may be said to function well if the schools are running smoothly, but the national picture is very different. Education will remain unequal. Equality in education cannot be realised before disparities in resources, expertise and capacity are sorted out. On a smaller, but nevertheless important note, the election of representatives onto SGBs may also mirror power relations within the community so that elites dominate or men fill the committee positions. In my experience of elections of the SGB at Immaculata High School in Johannesburg, men inevitably made up the majority even though women were the main actors in the school.

But not only may deliberative democracy teeter into oligarchic structures of deliberation, it may also add fuel to feminists' concerns that women's participation is neglected. Penny Enslin points out that an 'active' form of participation tends to focus on public activities, neglecting the unequal relations in the private and the restraints domestic obligations put on women's public participation. Yet, she argues that "focusing one's activities in the private is not necessarily a minimal form of citizenship in the sense of declining to show an interest in public affairs" (Enslin, 2000, p5). If deliberative democrats are to take women's participation seriously (and they do), then relations within the household need to be, in Anne Phillips's term, "reordered" (Enslin,

2000, p6) so that women are measured as equals to their husbands, partners or fathers. But this may not go far enough to boost women's public participation. While women confined to the household have rigorous (maximal) demands to make of the state (from maternity benefits to day care), their participation in the public sphere may remain minimal. If women are to have a more vocal public/political voice, then, Enslin contends, we need to reconsider the importance of representative governance. For Phillips, this means actively intervening in the democratic process to improve the representation of women in government. She writes, "The more fundamental question is whether exclusion from decision making is dealt with by including a range of opportunities for different groups of citizens to participate in the policy process, or by guaranteeing their presence in elected assemblies" (Phillips, 1995, p181).

The difficulties with gendered participation point to a problematic assumption underpinning deliberative democracy - that communities are thought to be homogenous and stable. Deliberation tends to be idealistic. Conflicts in opinion, it is argued, can be resolved simply by getting "public conversation" (Benhabib, 1996, p73) to swell. Citizens come together to reason over public matters and, through the force of a stronger argument, search out a common good. But as Young points out, "the model of deliberative democracy tends to assume that deliberation is both culturally neutral and universal" (Young, 1996, p123). Deliberative democrats fail to take into account the dynamics of power and competition inherent in political deliberation. Reasoned forms of argumentation rest on a rhetorical style that is dispassionate, articulate and controlled, a style which Young argues privileges the well-educated, the middle class and men. Furthermore, the inclination to ignore power relations within and between communities creates the false impression that there is "unity" (Young, 1996, p125)

amongst citizens, either as a precondition for, or as a consequence of, deliberation. Even if we were to believe that there was sufficient common ground prior to deliberation (which is highly unlikely in any case), the idea of unity as a precondition for deliberation seems to cancel out the need to deliberate in the first place. As Young points out, when a unified vision of the common good is the hoped for outcome of deliberation, then that vision will probably mirror the interests of a privileged group. Attempts to gloss over deep running differences between people could work to exclude people. Young notes, "When discussion participants aim at unity, the appeal to a common good in which they are all supposed to leave behind their particular experience and interests, the perspectives of the privileged are likely to dominate the definition of that common good" (Young, 1996, p126). Young tries to get around this in her communicative theory of deliberation which includes more forms of argumentation including greeting, rhetoric and storytelling.

This report has so far tried to pin point the limits to deliberative democracy. I have suggested that deliberative democracy requires certain economic and social preconditions before it can even get started. Citizens must want to get involved and have the time and resources to effectively deliberate. Without these conditions, the implications of deliberative democracy on educational matters are worrying. My concern is that demands for greater participation by parents and the broader community in South African schools may simply add a greater number of voices to decision making without interrogating the costs of such increased participation. There may be costs in increasing inequality in society; for example, where wealthier groups are able to effectively use deliberative procedures to hold on to their privileges. And deliberative democracy may even have moral costs. As George Kateb warns, "The

political procedures and arrangements of deliberative democracy, in its most modern form, the Rousseauist, requires a social and economic context that wars on psychological and spiritual complexity, on the extensions and display of human faculties, on the illimitable annexations of human experience" (Kateb, 1981, p372). Just as deliberative democracy tries to free up space in the political arena, it will also be necessary to set up complex rules and procedures to guard against powerful interest groups dominating the process. There needs to be active intervention, by a central government perhaps, to ensure disadvantaged and excluded groups are brought into the discussions. Even then, if it were to function ideally, deliberative democracy cannot escape the need to have in place non-negotiable principles.

Yet there is still much appeal to deliberative democracy. Deliberative democracy pushes the notion of citizenship beyond one that is merely a legal appendage. Citizens have a political life. They are expected to contribute to political debates, testing and refining their own positions. Deliberative democracy recognises the diversity of opinions and promotes a strong civil society to keep government bureaucracy in check. So while recognising that there are flaws with deliberative procedures, I am still keen to hold on to a democratic theory of education. In the discussion which follows, I argue that representative democracy provides a good counter-weight to the excesses of deliberative democracy and that it patches up its weaknesses. However, representative democracy is not simply a second best alternative to fall back on given the practical difficulties with deliberative processes. Like Alan Hamlin and Geoffrey Brennan's "first best theory of representation," I contend that "indirect democracy offers the prospect of improved political performance" (Hamlin and Brennan, 1999, p112). We need to reconsider the importance of representative democracy.

Chapter 3 - Representative democracy

For deliberative democrats opening up the political system to allow for more inclusivity increases the legitimacy of the decisions that result. Indeed, legitimacy is a "public good" (Benhabib, 1996, p67) which motivates deliberative democracy. The more inclusive democracy is, the argument goes, the more legitimate it is. Deliberative democracy may be a backlash to Joseph Schumpeter's notion of representative government as political competition between elites (Schumpeter, 1970), but as I will argue, representative democracy need not be as narrow as Schumpeter defines it. Representative democracy is sufficiently democratic to meet the requirement of legitimacy.

Within the category of representative government, divergent theories on democracy vie to be accommodated. Hanna Pitkin sets some broad parameters within which to locate a representative government. She writes, "representing means acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them. The representative must act independently ... the represented must also be capable of independent action and judgment," (Pitkin, 1996, p418). This definition both points to the complexities of representation but also highlights its essential features. A representative government, as its name suggests, must have representatives who "stand in" or "act" on behalf of constituencies. But it is in the different interpretations of what the relationship between represented and representative is that the various definitions of representative government arise. The relationship between the two depends on what Pitkin lists as: "what is represented; the nature of the interests, welfare or wishes; the relative capacities of representative and constituents; and the nature of the issues with which the

representative must deal" (Pitkin, 1996, p418).

Theorists who feel that the constituencies' interests are objectively identifiable or that the representative knows best, will not see any reason for parliamentarians to have much contact with their constituencies. On the other extreme, lie those theorists for whom representative government means greater links between politicians and their constituencies. Representative government lies between these two extremes. Pitkin labels the two extreme positions "the mandate-independence controversy" (Pitkin, 1996, p421). In short, can representative government include both representatives as independent decision makers and as microphones for their constituencies?

A strict representative democracy limiting governance to representatives, is for Schumpeter, not only a sufficient definition of democracy but the singular practical arrangement. Modern democracies, because of the sheer number of people and the complexity of government, require representatives to take control of governing without necessarily consulting citizens. For Schumpeter, this means that not only is democracy confined to the political arena, but individual participation is restricted to voting for representatives. He postulates, "suppose we ... make the deciding of issues by the electorate secondary to the election of men who are to do the deciding" (Schumpeter, 1970, p40). Schumpeter maintains that attempts to seek a common will are unrealistic and contends that voters act only in electing a leadership. This liberal view of democracy distinguishes between the state as a public administrator and civil society as a network of private individuals. In a liberal democracy free and equal individuals show their preference in policies by voting for particular parties which compete for political dominance.

This elitist approach to democracy bars people from political decision making and therefore from securing their interests beyond election time. While it may be an efficient system, it scarcely gives citizens much of a handle to make sure that their representatives are truly acting in the represented's interests. Leaders may only need to take popular concerns into account around election times, while ignoring them during their term in office. As Budge complains, "The existence of a legislative buffer and infrequent elections in conjunction with a competitive party system puts a positive premium on deceiving and manipulating the public," (Budge, 1993, p144). Governments may work to implement popular policies in the run-up to elections, but reverse them when the election is won. Schumpeter's representative democracy is cynical about whether individuals actually know what their interests are, dismissing any appeal they might have in influencing political policy. Budge would reject such a definition of representative democracy as, "hardly in the middle of a continuum between pure democracy and authoritarianism but tilted to the latter, allowing popular reactions only a little chink to let themselves, possibly, be felt" (Budge, 1993, p144).

Such a representative democracy does not go far enough to take into account the multiplicity of values in society. It merely aggregates votes and bases political decision making on a majoritarian principle. Minority view points are then swallowed up. Government's role is lean. A constitution would require it to protect individuals' negative rights (rights from non-interference) so that society is free to regulate itself according to market forces. Habermas criticizes this approach to representative democracy as, "not so much the input of rational political will-formation but the output of sensible and effective administrative accomplishments" (Habermas, 1996, p27). The

liberal citizen is too restricted politically.

But to define representative democracy in the strictly narrow sense that Schumpeter does, may be too rigid and it ignores the fact that political decisions are never objectively obvious but are value laden judgments. Liberal democrats try to define a much more substantive role for representatives. Representatives are voted in on the promise that they will pursue the interests of their contituencies' and respond to their wishes. A representative should be an envoy of the people who voted him/her into office. Since they have no expert knowledge on what the correct political answers are, representatives need to defer to the represented for guidance before making resolutions. The media, grassroots organisations, local branches of political parties and pressure groups all function to let representatives know what their constituencies interests are. Mechanisms must exist for individuals to express their needs and wants and they should be confident that the government will respond to their wishes. Structures for accountability and transparency, the recall of representatives seen to be ignoring a constituency's mandate and other mechanisms act as a means of holding representative democracy to its ideal. Although citizens may not directly exercise legislative power, they do have access to the halls of power and can influence the political debate. The represented need not sit back passively in between elections and silently comply with government's edicts. Representatives must account for their actions and be able to explain how legislation was arrived at. Pitkin insists that representatives not use manipulative tactics or propaganda to rally support for their policies (Pitkin, 1996, p430). In the final analysis, representative government is one where its subjects have control over what it does, that they are able to initiate government action and that government responds to demands made on it by its citizens (Pitkin, 1996, p430).

For Mill, good representative government must make sure that sovereignty is in the hands of the citizenship, even if a leadership core has the mandate to make daily administrative and political decisions. He insists, "the whole people, or some numerous portion of them, exercise through deputies periodically elected by themselves, the ultimate controlling power, which in every constitution must reside somewhere," (Mill, 1996, p342). People are free and equal and they can expect that their political interests are seen to by elected representatives. What Mill does not insist on is that representative democracy ends with representatives. He defends two principles: firstly that your interests are best protected if you stand up for them yourself and secondly, that prosperity is promoted in proportion to the energy people put into promoting it (Mill, 1996, p336). Thus participation in political decision making is encouraged. In fact Mill believes there is a danger when people are not active and instead nurse their grievances and resentments. Mill has two reasons for why representative government works best: firstly, it is efficient and promises good management, and secondly, representative government is educative - it improves the membership of society (Mill, 1996, part 2). Mill contrasts the work of the bureaucracy with representative government. While a bureaucracy may have the skills and expertise to administer laws it is not accountable to public scrutiny.

One of the advantages representative democracy has over its deliberative counterpart is that there is a clearer institutional framework for decisions to be made. Representatives finally have the responsibility to make sure the policies they effect are the best ones. Their decisions are guided by the interests of their constituents and by a constitution. The institutional framework of representative democracy tries to balance the coercive

power of the state with the liberal concern to safeguard individuals rights and liberties. As Kateb explains "representative democracy is committed to respecting the boundaries of the individual, and the related separateness of society and state; yet it establishes a mutual moral permeability between public and non-public" (Kateb, 1981, p312). Since citizens can reasonably expect the state to be run by representatives of their interests, they might more willingly consent to its measures. Representative democracy gives government a legitimate mandate to take decisions which may be unpopular but necessary - such as taxation. They can also take steps to make fundamental changes in social, economic and even educational conditions to advance equality in society.

Since educational policies in the past have tended to violate principles of justice, the efficiency of representative government to legislate on equal access and provision of education is essential in redressing apartheid education. Citizens can judge the effects of their representatives' decisions on constitutional principles and can alert government of any dissatisfaction through democratic channels (or by voting their representatives out at elections). So local pressure can influence national policy. Participation in school governing bodies alone does not effect change on national policies. Representative democracy helps link local concerns with national policy considerations

One of the challenges for representative democracy is balancing the interests of local constituencies with the welfare of the nation. Representatives may be elected on the vote of local constituencies, but since they sit on national structures should they be more concerned with the national welfare than for the interests of their constituencies? On the allocation of resources in education, for example, a representative might be faced with whether to shift money from wealthier schools to poorer schools and so

uplift education on a national scale. A representative from a well-off area might be tempted to argue against such a move. One solution to the dilemma is to argue for either of the alternatives - ie national or local. The utilitarian principle may kick in in favour of serving national interests - so that the benefits of the majority over-ride local interests. On the other hand, a strict reading of representation might insist on representatives standing firm on local level interests and the national position being made up of the majority convergence of local interests. But Pitkin thinks the choice between local and national interests is simplistic. "Politics entails the reconciliation of conflicting claims, each usually with some justice on its side," she writes, "the harmony of final-objective-interests must be *created*" (Pitkin, 1996, p423).

Chapter 4 - Participatory democracy and representative democracy: two distinct alternatives?

So far in the discussion I have treated representative and participatory democracy as two distinct alternatives - or perhaps better described as two different poles on a continuum, following on McLaughlin's model of maximal and minimal citizenship. A minimal notion of citizenship, according to McLaughlin, rests on a legal framework, advancing citizens' formal, technical rights. Political involvement is kept restricted, obliging citizens only to fill in ballot papers at election time. Participatory democracy, on the other hand, expects much more from citizenship and so lies on the other end of the continuum where a maximal approach to citizenship demands a bolder, more in-depth, substantial account of citizenship. McLaughlin writes that, "maximal conceptions require a considerable degree of explicit understanding of democratic principles, values and procedures on the part of the citizen, together with the dispositions and capacities required for participation in democratic citizenship generously conceived" (McLaughlin, 1992, p237). Through the lenses of maximal and minimal conceptions of democracy we are able to distinguish the different emphases in democracy, their strengths and their weaknesses. So while a minimal interpretation of democracy entrusts the state with the powers to make laws, it fails to account for the extensive rights people have to self-determination. A maximal interpretation hands over sovereignty to citizens but does not adequately consider what checks should be in place to circumscribe popular decision making. But somewhere along this continuum, the two conceptions of democracy must come together at a point where they overlap. At this point they need not be seen as two distinct alternatives.

Under the umbrella of liberal democracy, there are many basic principles that participatory and representative democracy share. Both are concerned, for instance, with ensuring that sovereignty is in the hands of the general populace so that people are safe from the arbitrary enforcement of coercive power. The state can only be considered legitimate if people have consented to the principles which shape the institutions that regulate their interactions. As Held explains: "The idea of democracy derives its power and significance from the idea of self-determination, that is, from the notion that members of a political community should be able to choose freely the conditions of their association" (Held, 1995, p145). Deliberative democrats still fall within the ambit of liberal theory - individual contributions to law making are lauded - rather than some supra-group. Both representative and participatory democracies want citizens to interact on political matters freely and equally. And both are concerned that when the democratic procedures are in place, the outcome is one everybody (or at least a majority) accepts.

It must be possible to achieve these aims by combining participatory and representative democracy - building on their respective strengths and addressing their weaknesses. Held suggests using "the principle of autonomy" as the overarching concept which expresses the idea that "people should be self-determining and the idea that democratic government should be limited government" (Held, 1995, p147). It is a concept that strikes at the core of liberal democracy and tries to function as a bridge between liberalism's commitment to allowing individuals to determine their own actions and democracy's aim at finding a common purpose. The "principle of autonomy" could find practical application through political representation seen as "a mediating assembly" (Brennan and Hamlin, 1999, p109) between citizens and decision makers. It is defining

the role of representatives, then, that is crucial in tying the "autonomy" of individuals with the "autonomy" of government.

Many deliberative democrats have been wary of surrendering political power to representatives, fearing that this simply creates an elite who alone deliberate on matters of government. But recent additions to deliberative theories have, in response to criticisms that it is not feasible, begun taking on board institutional aspects of representative government. Gutmann and Thompson, for example, argue that there should be space for greater deliberation between representatives and their constituencies, and by extension to other institutions such as the constitutional courts (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996, p128). It is a move that while bringing on board representatives into deliberative theories, also puts a high premium on their involvement. Since representatives are expected to join the public deliberation, they are also expected to give reasons for their views in the same way citizens are. Or as Gutmann and Thompson put it: "In a deliberative democracy representatives are expected to justify their actions in moral terms" (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996, p129). This immediately forces representatives to be publicly accountable. No representative can act without first deliberating with their constituents and their final decisions must be explained with reasons everyone can agree on.

Deliberation ties politicians more closely to the people they profess to represent and so begins to deal with the problem of exclusion, for example, of women from political structures. As Mendus has pointed out, democratic theory has an embedded gender bias which plasters over differences in an attempt to make everyone equal but in the end continues to privilege men (Mendus, 1996, p409). So women have not had their

particular interests treated with political importance. An obvious way around this problem is to ensure that our parliament is representative of the broader society in socio-economic, race and gender terms. Already the proportion of women in the South African legislature increased dramatically from 3% to over 27% in the post-apartheid government (Budlender et al, 1999, p30). A greater presence of women in political structures may bend decisions in favour of women's concerns - such as for equality in education and child care. But of course numbers on their own do not ensure that those in parliament act in the interests of those they stand in for - which is where deliberation and mechanisms of accountability come in. If women are able to deliberate with their representatives, then policy should be better at reflecting their concerns addressing their needs. Individuals should also have the security of being able to challenge the decisions of their representatives. Such accountability would be welcomed by representative democrats such as Mill who worried of "the danger of [representative government] being under the influence of interests not identical with the general welfare of the community" (Mill, 1996, p351).

But holding representatives accountable does not allay another of Mill's concerns - that if the executive branch of government is not given enough power to carry out its duties by the "sovereign assembly", then the representative government will be unable to "preserve order and allow the progress of people" (Mill, 1996, p350). While deliberative procedures hold representative democracy accountable to the principle of individual autonomy, deliberation does not say enough about the autonomy of the state. Representatives must finally be able to stand back from deliberation to enact and enforce laws that are good for the country as a whole. As Warren notes, given the pressures of time and resources "authority stands in for participation in deliberative

decision making, for most decisions, most of the time" (Warren, 1996, p55). Representatives are often mandated to take decisions especially where deliberation is limited because of the scale and complexity of the debate or where deliberation involves "specialized discourses" (Warren, 1996, p46). In a representative democracy, deliberation must finally authorize representatives to act.

Deliberative processes, therefore, grant representative government moral authority to make decisions, but as Bohman explains, they do not necessarily hand representatives the epistemic standards with which to judge the outcomes of deliberative procedures. He writes: "if deliberative democracy establishes its moral credentials of legitimacy via an ideal procedure, it cannot underwrite its epistemic claims; if it establishes its epistemic claims, they can only be underwritten by standards that are not only procedure independent, but also independent of deliberation" (Bohman, 1998, p131). If deliberative procedures are not simply to slip into utilitarianism, then representatives must be able to draw on standards that help them recognise whether the outcomes of deliberation are the best among the alternatives. In other words, representatives should have some autonomy from deliberative outcomes when making decisions. They must take cognisance of the constitutional constraints on the majority will. They will need to be aware of how their decisions will impact on those not immediately part of the deliberation of their constituents - such as those outside the national boundaries or future generations (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996, p130). Where specialised knowledge is needed, they can draw on experts before coming to a decision. Finally, however, representatives will still have to be able to explain their decisions to those they represent.

I have argued that the way in which we make political and educational decisions cannot simply be left to either deliberative procedures or to representatives. Trying to split the two ignores the dynamic relationship between representatives and represented. Deliberative processes give voice to citizens but at the same time are guided by procedural values such as equality and moral respect and their outcomes are curbed by substantive liberal principles. This should appease the constitutionalists, since the outcome of deliberation can be tested against a list of liberal standards and it appeases the proceduralists, since it accommodates collective deliberation. Checks and balances on representatives to make sure they stay in line with the interests of their constituents should quell the fears of deliberative democrats worried that representative government is an elitist political construct.

Although deliberative democrats have tried to create as much space as possible for direct forms of democracy, deliberative democracy is not necessarily inimical to representative forms of governance. Representative democracy can be seen as a way of dealing with complex systems of government and the practical difficulties of having everyone in the country vote every day. Yet it retains as its essential characteristic the ideal that sovereign power is held by the general population. As Phillips notes, representative democracy "has to include both accountability and relative autonomy, otherwise we are reduced to mere aggregation of initial preferences and interests" (Phillips, 1995, p160). Representative government is an elaborate structure and a complex web of acts that is made up of more than the single vote or political demonstration. Participation in representative democracy need not be restricted to voting for representatives. Procedures exist for individuals to have their interests heard and responded to and it is quite possible for deliberation to take place within the

parameters of representative governance. As Held argues, "the process of deliberation is, accordingly, compatible with voting at the decisive stage of collective decision-making and with the procedures and mechanisms of majority rule" (Held, 1995, p155).

This has been my central thesis, that effective democracy is neither a strict representative formulation nor simply a deliberative process. Yet the call for greater participation in educational decisions and for an education that encourages active citizenship still resounds. As Gutmann argues, "Local public schools play a legitimate role in reflecting and responding to the more particular collective preferences of face-to-face communities, a purpose that few other political institutions can serve as effectively in our society" (Gutmann, 1987, p75). Schools are integral to our communities. They are geographically spaced in residential areas and recruit their students mainly from the surrounding neighbourhood, and so appear to provide the perfect vehicle for participatory democracy. However, in the chapters that follow I argue that the tendency to locate deliberation in individual schools and to empower school governing bodies to act on such a deliberated mandate is a disservice to public education. Firstly, participation in education policy making should be aimed at effecting change at a national rather than at a local level. Using SGBs as a platform for addressing local educational concerns may result in communities looking inwardly at what their immediate needs are, and holding onto resources and privileges to the detriment of poorer educational institutions. Secondly, just as I have argued that there are constitutional limits to participation in a democracy, here I argue that there are certain fundamental principles that a liberal education must adhere to. These essential educational elements can be agreed to even in a plural society, in the same way that Rawls's "overlapping consensus" explains how constitutional principles are arrived at.

Chapter 5 - Democracy and the aims of education

Education is regarded as a powerful force in shaping social relations, in defining our culture and in inculcating values in our children. So it can be expected that various comprehensive doctrines would want to shape the way schools function and to influence education - in a battle perhaps for the minds and souls of the future generation. Given South Africa's complex plural society and the disparities in education, realising a consensus on the role of education in our society and of democracy in education seems tenuous. How then can we get consensus on the form and content of education given the plurality of views lobbying to influence education?

For participatory democrats the answer is to allow people through deliberation to come to an agreement. In other words, citizens should engage in a public process of debate to resolve key educational questions, from the values and content of the curriculum through to whether there should be corporal punishment in schools.

When SGBs are able to consult extensively with their communities and then act on those deliberations, participatory democracy may argue that decision making has been effectively decentralised. Besides the obvious benefit of legitimising educational decisions, participation in school governance has many positive spin-offs. Dimmock explains: "At the heart of the restructuring process is the act of shifting decision making responsibility closer to that level of the organisation charged with service implementation and delivery," (Dimmock, 1993 p287). Since it is assumed schools have a firm grounding in the realities of their particular community, it might be argued that they know best what the needs of their students are and so the school and parents

should be making the educational decisions rather than distant government officials. This would allow for a more flexible curriculum that would vary from region to region adapting to local interests. Decentralisation would also mean that parents have greater control over their schools and would be able to set standards, admission criteria, rules and regulations. Because the community has been involved in generating a school's policy, they may feel a sense of ownership over the school and so support its progress. Dimmock argues that while many of the aims of decentralising are valuable in themselves, on their own they do not mean much if they are not at the service of quality education. Dimmock maintains that the link between decentralisation and improved educational quality should be encouraged. He writes, "a school community heavily committed to improved learning for all students would have a values orientation which would reflect its culture, resource allocation priorities, and professional development activities," (Dimmock, 1993 p293).

However, acknowledging that there may be benefits for schools from some forms of democratization, this does not automatically assume that participation should be extended to education. What I want to do here is to distinguish between schooling and education. While there seems, at first glance, to be a perfect match between schooling and education since schools promise to educate and education is the function of schools, these apparently synonymous terms are different. Schooling refers to the institutions and activities of schools. The rules and the procedures that regulate school activities may or may not foster education. As Wally Morrow notes, "Schooling might or might not contribute to education, some schooling might indeed be profoundly anti-educative and Departments of Education are parts of the bureaucratic structure for the administration of schooling, not sources of wisdom about education" (Morrow, 1989,

p11). In other words schools are structures of authority that manage students; they do not necessarily educate them. Education, therefore, must mean more than a rite of passage through the customs and the routines that engineer the way people learn. It promises to do more than school children into the values of a particular community or society. For Peters, education "consists essentially in the initiation of others into a public world picked out by the language and concepts of a people and in encouraging others to join in exploring realms marked out by more differentiated forms of awareness" (Peters, 1996, p52). For liberal educators, then, education has definite aims and foundations which are essential to its definition. Education is outward looking - it equips students with the skills for public life and with the knowledge to apply themselves to, in Peter's words, "worthwhile activities" (Peters, 1996, p54).

Participatory school governance may help mould schools to facilitate education, as I have suggested above, but it cannot at a local level renegotiate the aims and meaning of education. In addition, public education has national, not only local, responsibilities. As Barber comments: "Public schools are not merely schools *for* the public, but schools of publicness: institutions where we learn what it means to *be* a public and start down the road toward common national and civic identity," (Barber, 1997, p22). An education for citizenship should confer on students an understanding of their shared political rights and privileges, a political identity that umbrellas their differing social, economic and religious identities. While education must take these different identities into consideration, in a liberal democracy it must also render an equal education for everyone and cultivate a sense of citizenship that prepares students for democratic participation. South Africa has inherited a political geography that divides communities. If local communities were asked to decide on the educational programme

for their schools, they might choose a curriculum that suits their particular social or economic interests. Such a policy would not capture the educational ideal for students to recognise their roles as citizens in a much broader social and political environment.

Another problem with inviting participation of people in drawing up educational policy is the worry that education will turn into a market place product to be bargained over. Education will be justified on the basis that it has economic value, that it proved useful in some way or that it included job related skills. Neo-liberal theorists might applaud such an approach. Tooley, for example, argues that schools should provide educational opportunities and not education. Schools should be allowed to set the curriculum to suit individual preferences and the diverse needs of society (Tooley, 1999, p107) sparking a proliferation of educational opportunities amongst which parents can pick and choose. But as Peters warns, an instrumental argument that relies on justifying activities because they are what people "want" or because they produce "pleasure and pain", is in danger of being dismissed as a naturalist argument. Peters writes: "For it cannot be argued in general that if people on the whole want something and continue to pursue it, this is equivalent to showing that it is worthwhile" (Peters, 1996, p146). Education must do more than simply appease the felt needs of society or the job economy. Education has a moral responsibility to ensure that youngsters are prepared for public life, where they can contribute to epistemic and moral debates on political and social issues. Herbst contends that an economic rationalist justification for education belies crass consumerism and he insists that, "the consumer's ethos does not serve its exponents well. By undermining the human personality, it deprives people of the power of happiness" (Herbst, 1973, p73). If people simply become educated to serve the interests of society, Herbst cautions that they then become merely means to an

end. The value of education should be seen as intrinsic and for Herbst should empower people to "work" as opposed to "labour" (Herbst, 1973, p74). In other words, education should give everyone access to knowledge and build their critical thinking skills, even if society or the economy would prefer schools to roll out students fit for modest labouring tasks.

The arguments of Herbst and Peters alert us to some of the fundamental features of liberal education and its defining characteristics. These principles are drawn from the lore of liberalism and, perhaps, from the accumulated experience of professional teachers. They are not arrived at through deliberative processes and citizens are not invited to reformulate them through public debate. Yet, in a liberal, democratic society these principles should have, in Rawls's terminology, an "overlapping consensus" (Rawls, 1993). Rawls argues that it is possible to draw out from a variety of comprehensive doctrines a "free-standing" political doctrine despite a plurality of "comprehensive doctrines". So while there are divergent "comprehensive doctrines" they share basic political principles or at least are able to come to an agreement on fundamental political values. Although Rawls's "overlapping consensus" is an attempt to find a political home for his theory of justice, the idea is a useful defence of foundations in education. He explains: "It is a view for the basic structures that formulates its values independent of non-political values and of any specific relationship to them" (Rawls, 1993, p320). Just as conflicting doctrines should be able to agree on the political theory of justice, so they should be able to find common ground on key educational questions, even if their reasons for doing so are different. But the political theory of justice is not a compromise position between competing doctrines. The consensus arrived at has normative value since the principles can be

expected to have the moral backing of all reasonable comprehensive doctrines. Since governments base their decisions on the constitutional precepts, citizens are confident that their rights are protected and the decisions are just.

While I have argued that there are certain values intrinsic to a liberal democratic education, I do not want to suggest that this means that parents and community members should not be involved in education nor that policy making should be left to technocrats in government. There remains a scepticism to handing over control of the educational agenda to a remote elite or even to a "philosopher-king". There is still much to be debated over and opinions to be heard. Gutmann makes a useful distinction between the "beliefs and practices *particular*" to a community and those "*essential* to any democratic society" (Gutmann, 1987, p72). The former may well be in the domain of school governing bodies but their licence to recommend a curriculum is constrained by the those values essential to democracy. In turn representatives in government are also constrained when making educational policy by the constitutional imperatives. But they are also constrained in their duty to take into account the interests of their constituents who may lobby government through participatory mechanisms.

The ideals of participatory democrats to open wide the gates of deliberation, I have argued, must be tempered by the logic of fundamental rights. For schools to hold fast to good education, they must be guided by good educational principles - and the consensus on what these principles are, is buried in the prescripts of liberal democracy as much as through public debates. Perhaps, as Barber has noted: "Democracy is less the enabler of education than education is the enabler of democracy" (Barber, 1992, p14).

Yet in South Africa the push to democratise schools has popular appeal. This report now turns to unpack the way in which policy has tried to shift authority over education to give School Governing Bodies a greater stake in the running of schools. It questions whether the approach to decentralisation taken in the South African Schools Act of 1996 matches its aims. I argue that the Schools Act illustrates the tension between a commitment to providing equal education for all and the commitment to awarding SGBs greater leverage over the functioning of schools. It is fundamentally a tension between central government's promise to redress past inequalities and their promise to see through democracy in schools.

Chapter 6 - The purpose of SGBs in post-apartheid education: The South African Schools Act

The debate on how democracy should work in education in South Africa is not new. The push for decentralisation in schools has come from both the progressive anti-apartheid movements and the National Party when it was still in power (as Sayed has pointed out, 1999, p142). In the mid-80s, at a time when schools had become centres of resistance, the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (as part of the United Democratic Front alliance) called for decentralisation in its rallying cry for "People's Education". As part of the broader resistance against apartheid, People's Education drew on the demands for democratic governance to insist on the same for schools. This found practical application in the formation of Parent, Teacher and Student Associations (PTSAs) through which communities were encouraged to take charge of schools and to further the educational aims of the school within the community. PTSAs became an important instrument to try to re-establish control over schools at a time when class boycotts and rebellion severely disrupted any schooling. So decentralisation was a mechanism to regulate education on a local level when national regulations no longer had the power or the authority to do so. PTSAs also added to the structures standing up to apartheid. People's Education was a determined attempt to encourage democratic participation. The school itself was to be a democratic institution. Morrow writes that this position had a "passionate support for liberation" (Morrow, 1989, p119).

Ironic then that the National Party embraced a decentralisation policy for schools in the nineties. Its motives for doing so were however different. The National Party's

Education Renewal Strategy argued that decentralisation would result in better service delivery and greater efficiency. Karlsson et al identify two other reasons for the National Party granting governing bodies greater autonomy. Financial constraints meant (white) parents would have to fork out more for school fees to help supplement state coffers and secondly, the change was "an attempt to ensure that white communities could continue to control their schools rather than allowing them to fall into the hands of a democratically-elected government, which was foreseen in the near future" (Karlsson et al, 1999, p7).

So when that democratically elected government did take over the reins of education it had two very different traditions of decentralising schools to draw on - on the one hand the liberation movements wanted democratic education to sweep away years of authoritarian control of schools and on the other hand, the apartheid government wanted to democratise schools so that parents could hold onto them as cultural/racial enclaves. While the government was committed to democratising schools in its policy statements, it had to do this in line with the principles set out in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and its Reconstruction and Development Programme. For example, the Constitution obliged the state to make sure that no one was discriminated against on grounds of race, gender or sexual orientation etc. and the state was also mandated to pass laws promoting affirmative action in education (Department of Education, 1995, p37). This meant that national government was bound to open up access to education and training opportunities to all, redress past inequalities, redeploy the state's resources according to the principle of equity and make education and training financially sustainable.

So the government was pulled two ways: on the one hand the new government needed to have a strong hand to implement policies of redress and equality quickly, while on the other hand maintaining a commitment to a democratic ideal which would see greater participation but also complicate and slow the process down. The national government had been elected to fulfill a mandate promised in its election manifesto, and so could legitimately draft legislation that had bearing on a national level. Local level governance was expected to be in line with the provincial and national vision for education. But if grassroots organisations were permitted to participate in governance on a local level, they could be in a position to undermine national government's attempts to implement legislation. Given that schools are located within communities that continue to be divided by race and class, if schools were handed authority over such areas as the employment of teachers, admission criteria and school fees, the more advantaged communities may have used this control to keep the status quo. Since the government had pledged to transform education, giving schools too much rein may have endangered central government's ability to see through it's promise to redress past educational inequalities. So the traditions of mass participation inherited from the anti-apartheid struggle were not necessarily suitable models for democratic education after apartheid.

Nevertheless, the South African Schools Act (SASA) remained committed to decentralisation. Devolving decision making to school level was to build on the anti-apartheid discourse which promised grassroots control and participatory governance. As Mkabela and Luthuli, explain, "In South Africa democracy is still in its formative stages, therefore schools should be role models for good governance by their own exemplary standards" (Mkabela and Luthuli, 1997, p63). Decentralisation would also

improve service delivery to schools. Plus decentralisation was internationally in vogue. But along with the promises to democratise, the Act also contracts in its preamble to: "redress past injustices in educational provision" and to "set uniform norms and standards". So the goal in democratising schools should be able to support the commitment to press for greater equality (in terms of race, gender and class) and to provide equal education for all.

When SASA was published in November 1996, it set in place the structures for greater participation in schools - but also kept a rein on the authority of those structures. The institutional arrangement for decentralisation is situated in School Governing Bodies (SGBs) which are comprised of parents (who make up the majority), teachers, students and "stakeholders". In other words, SASA made provision for *representation* of these different constituencies on SGBs. It does not insist on SGBs deliberating with schools communities more braodly.

SGBs have real power in the running of schools. They are charged with writing up the school's mission statement, setting the level of school fees, deciding when the school should open and close, and even (under section 21) deciding on what subject choices to offer and which textbooks to use. The authority of SGBs is constrained, however, and SGBs do not have the wide ranging powers to deliberate on or prescribe all educational decisions in the school. Although SGBs are permitted to determine a school's admissions policy, they are circumscribed to keep within the national policies and are not to unfairly discriminate against learners. SGBs do not have the authority to determine the language policy at schools and the government had to rule on admissions policies to prevent schools from discriminating against students.

From the above, two separate lines of authority over schools can be distinguished: one from national government, the other from within schools themselves. What is clearly discernible is that while there has been a devolution of decision making to SGBs, the Ministry of Education still takes the lead in producing policy. Although SGBs influence or interpret policy at school level, they are not the structures through which to lobby government to change national policy. Heinz Klug notes that in South Africa there is confusion over the nature of civil society and conceptions of how democratic participation is to take place. He identifies two interpretations of civil society's role in democratic policy formation: on the one hand civil society is made up of voluntary associations that lobby government from the outside and on the other "existing associations such as trade unions and civic associations" seek a role for themselves within the democratic process, (Klug, 1995, p223). It seems to me that SGBs fall into the latter category - their role is within the existing policy processes. In other words, SGBs interpret government policy on a local level, they make their decisions based on the opportunities afforded by SASA, but they are not the appropriate structures for advocating new policy. The procedures to do that lie outside of schools.

SGBs then may be interpreted as agents of government policy. As Sayed puts it, "the policy of educational decentralisation is an attempt by the state to operate at a distance. In operating at a distance, the state portrays itself as being one with the people" (Sayed, 1999, p143). SGBs have the responsibility to ensure education is happening in their schools, but do not have decision making powers in educational matters. It is unclear just how autonomous SGBs are in relation to the state. Would they, for example, be obliged to implement state policies even where they disagree with the state (Sayed and

Carrim, 1998, p31)? Blame for the failure to provide quality education could unfairly be placed on SGBs, not on central government.

An immediate retort would be to insist that SGBs become suitable lobbying structures - that they become structures for participation. In what way would they need to change? As a start, participation would need to be opened to the wider community to allow for greater deliberation from a variety of perspectives. Participation in SGBs is not quite as broad based as perhaps participatory democrats such as Habermas envisage such associations. Membership is limited to parents, teachers, students and those who are defined to have a stake in the school.

Sayed and Carrim hold that despite representation from parents, teachers and students, school-governing bodies are still not representative enough. They argue that there are four competing notions of participation (Sayed and Carrim, 1998, p32) in educational policy discourses but that they all limit inclusion in some way. So, while policy may insist on community participation, it simultaneously circumscribes community representatives to those who have "expertise" or can claim to be "stakeholders" in schools. Similarly, the concept of "weighted participation" ranks the value of people's participation so that parents and even the state's role in regulating SGBs is considered more significant than the votes of other members. Sayed and Carrim warn that such qualified participation undermines moves to truly transform education and to ensure equality among schools. The term "stakeholder", they contend, means that only those who have skills useful to the governing body qualify to be included. A single, childless person with no skills to contribute to the school does not automatically have a place on an SGB. They argue that policy should swop the word "stakeholder" with its

conditional implications with the more broadly inclusive term "community". Only with true representation of everyone in a community can SGBs be said to add to participatory democracy. Sayed and Carrim conclude, "Whilst democracy and participation remain noble ideals, without the engagement with and concretization of them in actual settings where they are expected to be in effect, it is possible, we contend, that they have the opposite effect of promoting privilege and exclusion, rather than democratizing the educational system or facilitating more inclusiveness or empowering the disadvantaged" (Sayed and Carrim, 1998, p35).

Sayed and Carrim's proposal is an argument for schools to have substantive autonomy. In other words, schools should have the power to determine their own rules and programmes. But it is unclear just how much control SGBs should have over classroom activities and what protection teachers have from arbitrary interference from parents or "the community" in what they teach. Given Sayed and Carrim's emphasis on democratic involvement, teachers would presumably have to explain their choice of curriculum to SGBs or follow a syllabus set by the SGB. This seems to undermine teachers' professional practice, their autonomy to determine the educational needs of their students in a national and global context. For example, if a SGB were to be dominated by conservative religious interests, they might want to prevent a teacher from teaching evolution, thus limiting them from, in Peter's words, "exploring realms marked out by more differentiated forms of awareness" (Peters, 1996, p52). Teachers have a professional accountability to look after the educational needs of their students and so are not only accountable to SGBs.

The role of teachers brings into sharp relief the limits of substantive autonomy of

schools. The vision of autonomous, free-standing schools controlled by SGBs, however representative, does not necessarily articulate easily with national educational or constitutional demands. As publicly funded institutions, schools relate to national policy processes and are accountable to the public more broadly defined than the immediate communities they are located in. But should schools articulate their democratic accountability through the structures of representative democracy or through SGBs? Sayed and Carrim seem to answer on behalf of the latter. They assume that representative democracy "seriously constrain[s] the extent of inclusiveness that is possible," (Sayed and Carrim, 1998, p37). But as I have argued, participatory [in this report deliberative] democracy must be matched with representative democracy in order to link local level concerns with national policy initiatives. For there to be real power sharing in education, citizens should be able to deliberate and intervene in national decision making. The political space to do this exists in the wide range of community based organisations and social movements and education-based forums, such as the Congress of South African Students, which are autonomous of government but create an intermediate link between civil society and state. Democratic involvement in SGBs encourages participation but does not necessarily provide a platform for parents and the broader community to speak out on national policy development. In other words, democratising governing bodies is necessary, but not sufficient, to claim democratic control of education.

One of the claims Sayed and Carrim make is that only by increasing participation in SGBs will disadvantaged communities be empowered (Sayed and Carrim, 1998, p37). However, participation on its own does not guarantee that disadvantaged communities are able to effectively change their conditions or recognise the blockages to policy

transformation. Without capacity and resources, such communities may be stuck in a cycle of making demands without effectively being able to change the policy to their advantage. This may result in privileging those SGBs or members of SGBs eloquent in expressing the discourse of policy and sidelining disadvantaged communities still further. So despite the popularity participatory democracy is enjoying at the moment, as a way of making decisions in an educational context it misses the objective of ensuring equal education for all South Africans.

Greater representation on SGBs may improve democracy at a local level, but it does not solve national educational problems such as how to address discrepancies in educational provision. Intervention from central government may be more effective in closing the gap between the former traditionally well resourced white schools and their poorly resourced black counterparts. Equity between schools cannot be realised before disparities of resources, expertise and capacity are sorted out. SGBs in more wealthy schools are unlikely to hand over their resources to disadvantaged schools, but a representative government may push through redistributive laws, spending more on under-resourced schools. A representative government's policies have the backing of the majority.

Decentralisation is also no guarantee that schools will provide quality education. It is a tall order to require SGBs to be the locus for transforming education, especially where they lack the skills and resources. Passing on the responsibility for education to the local level simply diverts attention away from the officials elected to do the job. Participation cannot guarantee equality, neither will it help turn around the dismal matric results of the past few years.

So unlike Sayed and Carrim, I doubt whether participatory democracy in schools will get us equality. Theirs is a political equality - it does not necessarily guarantee greater educational equality. The irony is that decentralisation, in fact, seems to work against educational equality. This is especially visible in the way that financial aspects of education funding have been decentralised. As the Act reads at present, SGBs are tasked with many of administrative functions of the school, but the real muscle SGBs have is their power to raise additional funds over and above government funding.

The right of SGBs to raise user or school fees gives parents the corresponding right to keep a check on the quality of education provided by the school. With extra money in the kitty, schools can spend more on textbooks, sports equipment, scientific gadgetry and other resources over and above teachers' salaries which use up the bulk of a school's budget. SGBs would have greater autonomy to specify their educational programmes, make personnel decisions and respond to parents' demands. Since schools could no longer rely on capturing all the school going children in their immediate neighbourhood, they would need to market themselves and so improve on their service delivery. Parents able to afford higher user fees will be able to direct those funds to schools providing quality education. This libertarian position views schools as products on the market place which compete to attract students and the funds they bring with them. Parents invest in a school financially because they approve of its quality and so schools have to maintain high standards to keep attracting parental buying power.

The logic behind decentralising the financial aspects of education seems to be to pull

more resources into the education system to supplement limited government funds. But as Sayed shows, the policy may simply be the marketisation of educational provision and he warns that "the long-term tendency of such an approach is the creation of a two-tier system of public schooling stratified into well-resourced schools and a majority of marginalised, state reliant schools" (Sayed, 1999, p145). The market works by remunerating schools that are doing well and punishing those that are floundering, and so only increases the divide between well resourced schools and poorer schools located mainly in the townships and in the rural areas (especially in the old homelands). This should dismay liberal educators concerned with opening up access to equal education for all students. While a minority of schools boast science laboratories, libraries and manicured sports fields, many others struggle through the school day without basic sanitation facilities or even water and electricity. If these schools were to compete in the market place, parents who are able to afford it, would steer their money into those schools that already promised outstanding education leaving under resourced schools to battle on without a budget. Monies raised through user fees are not banked by the Ministry of Education for distribution among schools, but remain with the school that raised them.

Not only will schools be competing with each other on the market, they will also be competing with other goods. The market degrades education into a commodity competing for resources with more attractive goods which may have immediate benefits. Winch warns that there will be parents who are seduced into spending their money on such commodities rather than on investing in the distant benefits of education (Winch, 1998, p434). For poor parents, the benefits of education may be very distant indeed when there are more pressing priorities such as food and clothing. The

emphasis on using markets as a way of empowering parents to make choices on educational provision shifts democratic control of schools from citizens to consumers. This is more than mere semantics. While citizens have equal rights to respond to education policy through constitutional procedures, consumers make educational choices based on the value of resources at their command. Ranson comments that, "the market ... places public policy and collective welfare beyond the reach of public deliberation, choice and action - in other words, democracy" (Ranson. 1996, p221). In South Africa, where redress and quality education for all is an ideal of the democratically elected government, taking a gamble with market forces to determine the quality of education would be a gamble not worth taking. The government has admittedly tried to put brakes on the excesses of market mechanisms by insisting that parents unable to pay user fees be exempted from payment. Nevertheless, using the market as a means to democratise education fails the policy promises made to redress past injustices.

A more effective method of levelling the ground between South African schools is perhaps to apply Rawls's "theory of justice" (Rawls, 1996). Rawls provides two principles of justice: first, everyone has an equal right to the protection of fundamental liberties; and secondly, social and economic inequalities must meet two conditions: they must be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged and they must be attached to positions open to all under conditions of fair opportunity. The Difference Principle, as the latter principle is called, will work to address increasing disparities between people by determining the mechanisms for distributing benefits to society. In the educational sector, this would mean none of the better resourced schools would be able to get an increase in their allocations without a corresponding increase in the size of the budgets

allocated to poorer schools. These principles make up a hypothetical social contract. If people were to stand behind a "veil of ignorance", denied knowledge of their social standing, morals etc, Rawls argues that they would recognise his two principles as the just way to regulate the structure of society. Rawls believes that his principles of justice have universal appeal and when enshrined in a constitution, they restrain political authority, curbing government's power to ensure that they act fairly.

Rawls's theory of justice reminds us that the distribution of public funds need not be left to market mechanisms but can be controlled by publicly recognised principles. Whether or not we agree with Rawls's two principles of justice, the idea that democratically legitimate principles of distribution are possible is important to a democratic theory of education. As Gutmann writes, "The primary aim of a democratic theory of education is not to offer solutions to all the problems plaguing our educational institutions, but to consider ways of resolving those problems that are compatible with a commitment to democratic values" (Gutmann, 1987, p11).

Chapter 7 - Education for participation or education for representation?

The call for democracy in education is often closely followed with a call for an education for democracy. If democracy is to work effectively, then it must be possible to initiate children into the values and mechanisms that drive democratic governance. As Walker explains, "One critical dimension of the applicability of procedures concerns their learnability, and the conditions required for them to be taught and learned" (Walker, 1988, p12).

Just as the push for participatory democracy has popular appeal, so it is often assumed that an education for democracy should respond to the needs of participation. Such an education - flowing from McLaughlin's maximal notion of citizenship - would require a rigorous education to prepare youngsters to get democratically involved. As McLaughin explains, "the citizen must have a consciousness of him or her self as a member of a living community with a shared democratic culture involving obligations and responsibilities as well as rights, a sense of the common good, fraternity and so on" (McLaughlin, 1992, p236). It is also correspondingly assumed that representative democracy requires a much less meticulous democratic education. Participatory democrats are cynical of any educational contribution that could be made by representative democracy. It is assumed, on a strict reading of representative government, that since policies are formulated and implemented by politicians only an elite expected to go into government need to be politically educated. The rest would simply have to understand how the mechanisms work for voting representatives in.

In this chapter I will argue that an education for active citizenship must be considered within the framework of representative democracy. The lessons on public participation are as pertinent for representation as they are for participatory democracy, but representative democracy adds to the idea of an active citizenship the notion of exclusion and ways to deal with it. I will argue that education for democracy must address the social relations in society that prevent people from participating and at the same time provide students with the skills to recognise their interests and the know-how to use representative structures to air those interests. So students who have no desire to participate or who, through lack of resources or time, are unable to participate still benefit from an education for active citizenship.

An education that promotes the active participation of citizens in public policy making is demanding on classroom practices. Dewey for example, for whom democracy is "a way of life", highlights "freed intelligence" (Dewey, 1970, p14) as central to democratic education, a requirement which seems to test the capacity of teachers and students. Besides needing the communication skills with which to articulate reasons in a public debate, students must first be able to locate their interests within the common good and recognise their responsibility to the democratic culture (McLaughlin, 1992, p236). Schools could usefully use Cohen's deliberative democratic theory as an educational methodology that gets students to talk through their interests, crediting them for moving from self-interested motives to recognising interests common to all. As Mill argues, one of the educational benefits which citizens derive from participation is that, "he is called upon ... to weigh interests not his own; to be guided, in case of conflicting claims, by another rule than his private partialities" (Mill, 1996, p341). In other words, to become democratically educated, students must be able to engage with

others and understand their own positions as subjective. Morrow notes, "education for democratic participation is education which attempts to develop rationality," (Morrow, 1989, p117). This calls for students to reason through debates, view political problems from a variety of angles and make independent moral judgements.

Crucial then to a democratic education is the notion of autonomy. Held explains that autonomy "connotes the capacity of human beings to reason self-consciously, to be self-reflective and to be self-determining," (Held, 1995, p151). Students have developed autonomy when they can argue through their own opinions and are able to choose a notion of the good life for themselves. As Peters writes, 'It is almost a platitude of democratic thinking that the aim of education is to develop the potentialities of each individual or to enable the individual to realise himself" (Peters, 1996, p55). But unlike the typically liberal idea of freedom which pushes an individual's right to self-determination, autonomy places individuals within a public, political culture of a democratic society. Students need to learn to reason through their political judgments with the recognition of its impacts on the public culture. Gutmann explains: "A democratic state of education constrains choice among good lives not only out of necessity but out of a concern for civic virtue" (Gutmann, 1987, p42). As I have argued, democracy depends on certain principles being in place: equality and freedom for example. Gutmann argues that learning the value of these principles means more than simply being able to recognise them or to recite the difference between good and bad ways of life. She wants children to "feel the force of right reason" (Gutmann, 1987, p43) so that the moral values attached to the good life become part of their sensibilities. At the same time students must learn to critically evaluate competing notions of the good life.

Mill's ideas on the importance of freedom of thought and expression for the self-development of individuals may have relevance to democratic classroom practice. As Mill himself explains, "If the cultivation of the understanding consists on one thing more than another, it is surely in learning the grounds of one's own opinion" (Mill, 1996, p116). True understanding is premised not on being able to imitate the basic tenets of the position, but to be able to defend the stand taken against attack and falsification. The only way to have faith in the opinions you hold is to hear objections to your arguments and then be able to answer each satisfactorily. As students debate their ideas with others, they simultaneously construct knowledge and get a better understanding of the concepts they are learning. Mill is keen to encourage a free flow of speech that has positive results in keeping people informed, deepening awareness and strengthening understanding (Mill, 1996, p119). The more talk in the classroom, the greater the range of topics learnt and the depth involved. Each opinion should therefore be allowed to be aired and discussed.

A more radical take on education for participation draws on an idea of Mill's which contends that only by participating in decision making will students become democratically educated. By including students in the teaching programme, for example, and by allowing them to have a say in what gets taught, students become *participants* in their own learning rather than the subjects of an authoritative teacher/text. It is expected that students develop rationality if they participate in such joint decision making, and democratically speaking, since there are no moral experts on what should get taught, it is a student's right to make an input into the curriculum. Morrow explains that "in participating, and probably only in such a context, we learn

what it is to make judgments, and we discover the ways in which other judgements fail either to be impartial ... or to be independent" (Morrow, 1989, p127). But this idea cannot be taken too far. The link between participation and education is conjecture. Children are not born citizens - they do not carry a knowledge of their rights and responsibilities - and so we cannot expect that they are competent to take part in decision making processes before they have grasped the values and morals linked to democracy. Classroom practices may promote democratic citizens but they cannot themselves be democratic.

The lessons from education for active citizenship seem to have as much relevance for representative as for participatory democracy. As I have argued, if the separation between representative and participatory democracy is a false one, then the lessons learnt for participation are just as important for a successful representative democracy. Representative democracy, as I have defined it, entails more than slipping votes into a ballot box and electing deputies to an assembly. Such a democracy requires that representatives acknowledge and respond to the interests of the community and it also stretches beyond parliament to include political structures at a local level, allowing for more participation than a very narrow sense of representative government would allow. If, as Mill insists, sovereignty in a representative democracy finally resides in the hands of the people, then democratic education cannot be a tool for government to manipulate its citizenry. Instead, it becomes a way of helping citizens to get to grips with decision making and the political procedures involved in having their interests translated into political acts. Enslin argues that even citizens who do no more than vote would be better citizens if they were educated on McLaughlin's maximal conception of citizenship. She writes, "One can envisage an educated but not very active citizen who

is maximally informed and responsible, while taking a modest, minimal role in public affairs" (Enslin, 2000, p9). And David Estlund argues that even the single act of voting can demand more from individuals than a show of preference. If votes are interpreted as common-interest statements that are "aggregable, advocative and active", then they can be thought of as democratic acts (Estlund, 1996, p405). Representative government does, therefore, make claims on educational institutions expecting them to prepare students for democratic activity. Schools need to make sure that their students are able to participate in a representative democracy: that they are literate, that they are able to communicate their interests effectively to representatives and can reason through opposing arguments.

Employing representation as a guiding framework for democratic education goes one step further than participatory ideals in dealing with the social relations and processes of exclusion. As I have argued earlier, until there is real equality in society - between men and women, rich and poor - participation can work to cement privilege. Representation offers students who have maximal political demands but who are uninterested or unable to participate with the means to have their interests responded to. They may use their political knowledge to make informed choices at election time or challenge representatives who renege on election promises. Familiarity with the Constitution and Bills of Rights would also help to hold representatives accountable. Representative democracy, therefore, makes educational demands in ensuring not only that students know how its institutions work, but more importantly, that they can engage with the democratic processes and have their interests met.

Conclusion

With the advent of democracy and the euphoria that came with it, educational theorists have tended to push open the gates to participation in schools and in education policy making as widely as possible. The more people were able to participate, the logic went, the more democratic the educational system was to be. Democracy was lauded, not only as an end in itself but as a means to solving educational problems - including disparities in public education. In this research report I have attempted to challenge these suppositions.

I have argued that participatory democracy, as articulated by deliberative theorists, carries certain costs. Increasing participation in school governance will not necessarily result in equality between schools and their learners. This is a simplistic equation which does not take into account the role of the state or the dynamics of participation or the need for constitutional limits on popular demands. Besides, the outcomes of participation (ie equality) cannot be forecast otherwise there would be no need for participation in the first place. Instead of trying to increase participation, I have argued that if it is equality in education we are after, then it would be better to channel these demands through a representative government. Representative government after all includes mechanisms for participation. And unlike local level initiatives, representative government has the capacity to drive through policy that has an impact on a national scale. If parents, teachers and students want to see transformation in education, then it may be better for them to participate in lobbying the national government rather than to expect those changes to come through sitting on a school governing body. At a national level citizens can argue, for example, for a greater share of the budget to go to

addressing equality in education.

A democratic theory of education entails more than simply who is included in decision making. There are complex layers of constitutional limits and democratic procedures outside single institutions which help guide the structure, funding and curriculum of schools. A democratic theory of education should balance, in Phillips's terms, a "politics of presence" with a "politics of ideas" (Phillips, 1995, p4). In other words, while there must be means for people to engage democratically, their contributions should take place within a broader dialogue of representative democracy.

This report has also argued that an education for democracy need not be either maximal or minimal. In the final analysis, a democratic education should make sure that everyone is able to participate equally in representative political decision making processes.

Bibliography

Arneson, Richard J; "Democratic rights at national and workplace levels," in David Copp, Jean Hampton and John Roemer (eds), *The Idea of Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 1993

Barber, Benjamin; "Public Schooling: Education for democracy," in John Goodlad and Timothy McMannor (eds) *The Public Purpose of Education and Schooling*, Jossey-Bass, California, 1997

Benhabib, Seyla; "Toward a deliberative model of democratic legitimacy," in Seyla Benhabib (ed) *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the boundaries*, Princeton University Press, 1996

Bohman, James; "Survey Article: The coming of age of deliberative democracy," *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol 6 No 4, December 1998

Brennan, Geoffrey and Hamlin, Alan; "On Political Representation," *British Journal of Political Science*, 29, 1999

Budge, Ian; "Direct Democracy: Setting Appropriate Terms of Debate," in David Held (ed) *Prospects for Democracy*, Polity Press, 1993

Budlender, Debbie; Goldman, Tanya; Samuels, Tanya; Pigou Piers; Valji, Nahla; *Participation of Women in the Legislative Process*, European Union Parliamentary Support Programme, South Africa, 1999

Callan, Eamonn; *Creating Citizens: Political Education and Liberal Democracy*, Clarendon Press, Oxford/New York, 1997

Cohen, Joshua; "Procedure and substance in deliberative democracy," in Seyla Benhabib (ed) *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the boundaries*, Princeton University Press, 1996

Department of Education; *Report of the Committee to Review the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools*, Pretoria, August 1995

Department of Education; *South African Schools Act*, Number 86, Pretoria, Government Printers, 1996

Dewey, J; "Democracy as a way of life," in Henry S Kariel (ed) *Frontiers of Democratic Theory*, Random House, 1970

Dimmock, Clive; *School-based Management and School Effectiveness*, Routledge, London, 1993

Education Policy Unit (Natal); *Democratic Governance of Public Schooling in South Africa*, Education Policy Unit (Natal), Durban, 1998

Enslin, Penny; *Education for active citizenship: a feminist reconsideration*, Annual Meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, Oxford, April 2000

Estlund, David M; "Democracy Without Preference," in Robert M. Stewart, *Readings in Social and Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996

Gutmann, Amy; *Democratic Education*, Princeton University Press, Princeton/New Jersey, 1987

Gutmann, Amy and Thompson, Dennis; *Democracy and Disagreement*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1996

Habermas, Jurgen; "Reconciliation Through the Public Use of Reason: Remarks on John Rawls's Political Liberalism," *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol 92, No 3, March 1995

Habermas, Jurgen; "Three normative models of democracy," in Seyla Benhabib (ed) *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the boundaries*, Princeton University Press, 1996

Held, David; *Models of Democracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987

Held, David; *Democracy and the Global Order: from the modern state to cosmopolitan governance*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995

Herbst, P; "Work, Labour and University Education," in RS Peters (ed) *The Philosophy of Education*, Oxford University Press, 1973

Karlsson, Jenni; McPherson, Gregory; Pampallis, John; "A critical examination of the development of school governance policy and its implications for achieving equity," Education Policy Unit, University Of Natal, Durban, 1999

Kateb, George: "The Moral Distinctiveness of Representative Democracy," *Ethics*, Vol 91, No 3, 1981

Klug, Heinz; "Extending democracy in South Africa," in Erik Olin Wright (ed), *Associations and Democracy*, Verso, London, 1995

Maree, LM; *Education under a new Constitution: An Introduction*, Via Afrika, 1995

Mkabela, NQ and Luthuli, PC; *Towards an African Philosophy of Education*, Kagiso, Pretoria, 1997

McLaughlin, TH; "Citizenship, diversity and education: a philosophical perspective," *Journal of Moral Education*, Vol 21, No. 3, 1992

Mendus, Susan; "Losing the Faith: Feminism and Democracy," in Robert M. Stewart, *Readings in Social and Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996

Michelman, Frank; "How can the people ever make the law? A Critique of Deliberative Democracy," *The Modern Schoolman*, Vol 74, May 1997

Mill, John Stewart; from "Considerations on Representative Government," in Robert M. Stewart, *Readings in Social and Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996

Mill, John Stewart; from "On Liberty," in Robert M. Stewart, *Readings in Social and Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996

Morrow, Wally; *Chains of Thought*, Southern, Johannesburg, 1989

Mouffe, Chantal; "Democracy, Power and the 'Political'," in Seyla Benhabib (ed) *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the boundaries*, Princeton University Press, 1996

Parry, Geraint and Moyser, George; "More Participation, More Democracy?," in David Beetham (ed) *Defining and Measuring Democracy*, Sage, London, 1994

Peters, RS; *Ethics and Education*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1996

Phillips, Anne; *The Politics of Presence*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995

Pitkin, Hanna; "Political Representation," in Robert M. Stewart, *Readings in Social and Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996

Ranson, Stewart; "Markets or democracy for education," *British Journal of Educational Studies*, XXXXI (4), 1993

Rawls, John; "The domain of the political and overlapping consensus," in David Copp, Jean Hampton and John E. Roemer (eds), *The Idea of Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993

Rawls, John; "Reply to Habermas," *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol 92, No 3, March 1995

Rawls, John; "Distributive Justice," in Robert M. Stewart, *Readings in Social and Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996

Sayed, Yusuf; "Discources of the Policy of Educational Decentralisation in South Africa since 1994: an examination of the South African Schools Act," *Compare*, Vol. 29 No. 2, 1999

Sayed, Yusuf and Carrim, Nazir; "Inclusiveness and participation in discourses of education in South Africa," *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Vol 2, No 1, 1998

Schumpeter, Joseph; "Democracy as elite competition," in Henry S Kariel (ed) *Frontiers of Democratic Theory*, Random House, 1970

Tooley, James; "The neo-liberal critique of state intervention in education: a reply to Winch," *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol 32, No 2, 1998

Walker, James C; "Education for Democracy: The Representative/Participatory Dualism," in Paul H Hirst and Patricia White (eds) *Philosophy of Education: Major Themes in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol III, Society and Education, London and New York, 1988

Warren, Mark E.; "Deliberative Democracy and Authority," *American Political Science Review*, Vol 90, No 1, March 1996

Winch, Christopher; "Markets, Educational Opportunities and Education: Reply to Tooley," *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, No 32, No 3, 1998

Young, Iris; "Social Groups in Associative Democracy," in Erik Olin Wright (ed), *Associations and Democracy*, Verso, London, 1995

Young, Iris; "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib (ed) in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the boundaries*, Princeton University Press, 1996

Author Dieltiens V *
Name of thesis Democracy In Education Or Education For Democracy? The Limits Of Participation In South African School Governance Dieltiens V * 2000

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg Library website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the Library website.