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School and enhancement of self-expression values

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Abstract

Schools as agents of political socialisation are important in the context of building democratic political culture. Hence, it is relevant to research which citizen orientations indicate a well-functioning and stable democracy. Recent studies have revealed that self-expression values have considerable impact on the existence and functioning of democracy. Based on the theoretical examination of self-expression values, the aim of this paper is to demonstrate that self-expression values reflect human dignity. The analysis is substantial since the concept of human dignity is considered a foundation of democratic political culture. Thereby, schools should put a larger emphasis on strengthening human dignity, which is reflected by values that drive democratic performance.

Keywords: School, education, political socialisation, values, democracy, self-expression, human dignity, political culture.

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1. Introduction

Research on political socialisation began in the 1950s because of the studies on political behaviour (Bouche, 2011). In the following 20 years, there was a rise in literature about political socialisation (e.g., Dawson, 1966; Dawson & Prewitt, 1969; Greenstein, 1965; Hyman, 1959; Jaros, 1973; Langton, 1969; Sigel, 1965), followed by mixed periods of stagnation and progress in the field of political socialisation (Wasburn & Adkins Covert, 2017). Bouche (2011) emphasises that the definition of ‘socialisation’ is related to two key terms: (1) The first key term is ‘process’. Socialisation is not something that happens quickly, but a process that needs time and space to develop. (2) The other key term is ‘behaviour’. Socialisation is a slow, gradual process that, over time, manifests in an individual’s observable behaviours, orientations and patterns (Bouche, 2011). When defining political socialisation, the term ‘socialisation’ must be placed in a political context. Hyman (1959) is one of the first people to introduce the term political socialisation. Almond (1960) defines political socialisation as the process of induction into a political culture. Its product is a set of attitudes—cognitions, value standards and feelings—towards the political system, its various roles and role incumbents.

This paper tackles the question of what elements of political culture should be fostered the most in the process of political socialisation. Recent research shows (e.g., Inglehart & Welzel, 2007) that, in a post-industrial society, political orientations are not considered crucial elements of political culture in a democratic system. When talking about democratic political culture in a post-industrial society, social orientations (more specifically, self-expression values) have more relevance than political orientations. According to Babicka-Wirkus (2014), self-expression is especially crucial for adolescents. During this period of human development, expressing oneself freely constitutes a significant predictor of identity development; hence, self-expression is an important factor in the process of reaching maturity. However, because of the already existing literature on the role of schools in the self-expression of adolescents, this paper does not tackle that topic. Rather, it explores the relevance of encouraging self-expression in adolescents for democratic society. More specifically, I focus on the importance of enhancing adolescents’ self-expression values (willingness to sign a petition, tolerance, life satisfaction, social trust, aspirations for personal and political freedoms) which, according to surveys, influence the stability and effectiveness of democracy. Our key research question is: ‘Why it is important to democracy that schools encourage self-expression values?’ While the answer to this question seems to be obvious at first glance, this paper examines the topic from a fresh perspective. The paper concludes that self-expression values are a reflection of human dignity. The latter is considered a foundation of democratic political culture. Hence, as the paper shows, building self-expression values and human dignity are substantial elements in the process of political socialisation. The major contribution of this paper is to illuminate the role of schools as agents of political socialisation by connecting three concepts: democratic political culture, self-expression values and human dignity. Explaining the role of political socialisation, which considers all three mentioned concepts and elucidates the relationship among them, has not yet been done at a scientific level.

To answer the research question, Section 2 and Subsection 2.1 illuminate the meaning of democratic political culture and pursue the idea that human dignity is a foundation of democratic political culture (Kleindienst & Tomsic, 2017). In Subsection 2.2, the author specifies different approaches to understand the influence of political culture on the stability and effectiveness of democracy. The author focuses on the elements that have the greatest influence on the existence and stability of the democratic system: self-expression values. According to recent research (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007), self-expression values are crucial elements of democratic political culture. For this reason, Section 3 explains the idea that human dignity is reflected in self-expression values. Thereby, the author concludes (Section 4) that encouraging human dignity and self-expression values by schools is significantly important for building a democratic political culture. In the conclusion, the author also addresses the dilemma of whether emphasis on self-expression and human dignity might just be terms of rhetoric that perfectly fit the ‘liberal education’ and the democratic context.

2. Democratic Political Culture

The term democratic political culture originally related to the concept of ‘civic culture’ developed by Almond and Verba (1963). Civic culture is pluralistic; it is based on communication and persuasion, consensus and diversity, and permits change but moderates it. With reference to Almond and Verba’s contribution, it can be stated that the composition of political culture is the key to the stability and effectiveness of the democratic system (Almond & Verba, 1963). Democratic institutions, principles, norms cannot be neutral, but they depend on what democratic citizens cherish and what they accept and reject (Murphy, 2007). For the purpose of this article, democratic political culture is defined as those elements of political culture which are the most substantial for the stability and effectiveness of democracy.

2.1. The foundation of democratic political culture

The foundation of democratic political culture lies in the concept of human dignity (Kleindienst and Tomsic, 2017). Human dignity is currently receiving exceptional levels of attention at the scientific level (Capps, 2009; McCrudden et al., 2013; Rosen, 2012; Schroeder & Bani-Sadr, 2017; Sieh & McGregor, 2017; Waldron, 2012). Despite numerous attempts to agree on a definition, human dignity remains vague and open to further discussion in several areas. This paper does not elaborate on the definition of human dignity. Instead, the point is made that the concept of human dignity consists of two dimensions, initial and realised dignity. This idea has emerged more markedly in recent years and so has to be taken into consideration when discussing topics that relate to human dignity (Schroeder, 2010; Sensen, 2011; Formosa & Mackenzie, 2014; Neuhauser & Stoecker, 2014). The main advantage of this theoretical model is that it can be used widely, with some adjustments, in different cultural contexts and circumstances. Therefore, both these fundamental dimensions of human dignity will be presented here (The rest of this section partly summarises the author’s idea of the concept of human dignity, which is more comprehensively elaborated in a recent article (Kleindienst, 2017).

Initial dignity, the first dimension of human dignity, relates to a person’s respectable status or the status of an absolute human intrinsic value. It indicates the dimension of human dignity that belongs to a human being due to the mere fact they are placed within a group of human beings. It stems from human nature as such and distinguishes human beings from members of other species. In this way, it constitutes a kind of metaphysical element that is inseparably linked to humans and, as such, exists in any space and time (and is therefore universal). Given that all human beings are endowed with initial dignity as human beings, it can be concluded that initial dignity is what constitutes the essence of a human being. It could also be said that initial dignity is what makes up a human being, which is why it is referred to as a constitutive element of man or personal identity. The inseparability of this element and members of the human species is what makes humans exceptional and gives them a special value. The interpretation of initial dignity can be illustrated with characteristics specified by Formosa and Mackenzie (2014) when they discussed the status of dignity. This is a permanent and stable form of dignity that does not contain different levels. It simply exists within human beings and its scope cannot be measured; it belongs to everyone to exactly the same extent—the extent that makes humans exceptional and excellent. Being human therefore means being a carrier of initial dignity, which implies that it is his/her inalienable humanity that brings respect to an individual. The need to respect a human being suggests that a person should be considered as an objective and never as a means. This thinking finds deep roots in Kant’s (2002) theory.

Realised dignity, the second dimension of human dignity, relates to the extent to which human dignity is realised/implemented in the case of a particular individual. This means that while every human being is born with initial dignity, he does not necessarily and simultaneously enjoy realised dignity. In contrast to initial dignity, realised dignity is in fact precarious and unstable and may only be temporary. It can have different levels, so that someone can have a higher or lower level of realised dignity than a fellow human being (Formosa and Mackenzie, 2014). In stating that someone has lost

their dignity, the dignity being referred to is realised dignity. Similarly, dignified behaviour also refers to realised dignity and characterises behaviour corresponding to a subject endowed with initial dignity (Sensen, 2011). Realised dignity consists of two elements that are both necessary to fully encapsulate it:

- person's relation to oneself (self-respect) and
- person's relation to a fellow human being (and vice versa).

2.2. Approaches to democratic political culture

Current scholars identify three competing approaches to democratic political culture (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007):

- The legitimacy approach: Advocates of this approach argue that the effective functioning of the democratic political system requires legitimacy. The latter is achieved by support for the democratic system as such and trust in political institutions (Klingemann, 1999; Mishler & Rose, 2001; Newton & Norris, 2000; Norris, 1999; Seligson, 2002).
- Communitarian approach or the social capital approach: Advocates of this approach emphasise that social capital is crucial for the effectiveness of democracy. Thereby, this approach considers values that consolidate the social ties between the citizens, community loyalty, membership in volunteer organisations, mutual trust and community bonds as decisive for enabling democracy to flourish (Etzioni, 1996; Putnam, 1993, 1995; Rothstein, 2000).
- Human development approach: This approach emphasises that changing of values is the main driving force for effective democracy. According to this approach, the most relevant are self-expression values that are based on human freedom, human choice and emancipation. Therefore, for the stability of democracy, not all community values are crucial but only those values that are focused on human choice and freedom. What society needs for the greater effectiveness of democracy is not citizens' obedience but a greater emancipatory nature (see Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Welzel, 2007; Welzel, 2013; Welzel & Dalton, 2014).

This paper advocates human development approach because Inglehart's (Inglehart 1977, 1990; Inglehart & Welzel, 2007) studies show that the values of citizens in democracies have begun to change and that they are no longer compatible with the model of loyal citizens. There is an increasing importance of social orientations (particularly self-expression values (Inglehart, 1977) and emancipatory values) in transforming allegiant citizens into dissatisfied, critical and assertive citizens (Klingemann, 1999; Norris, 1999; Welzel & Dalton, 2014). These studies show that political orientations are not necessarily a predictor of a successful and stable democracy. Rather, social orientations have stronger impact on stability and success of democracy. Dalton and Shin (2014) explain that since the pioneering work of Almond and Verba (1963), the world has undergone many transformations. Modernisation and globalisation forces have changed the socioeconomic situation of people and exposed them to foreign cultures, ideas and products. The forces of political democratisation and economic liberalisation have expanded the spectrum of civil and political freedoms that people can enjoy. These structural and institutional changes have undoubtedly transformed modern political culture, in particular, by transforming people's way of life, their interactions, and their way of thinking and engaging in politics (Dalton & Shin, 2014). Hence, this paper maintains the relevance of the human development theory and revised version of modernisation (Inglehart, 1997, 2000; Inglehart & Welzel, 2007). Although there are some critics of Inglehart's theory, this theory represents an important scientific contribution, especially in terms of the size and comprehensiveness of the empirical database; the fact the research continued over several decades; and the use of a coherent and powerful theoretical concept not to mention the interesting empirical results (Haller, 2002). In spite of some weaknesses of the research, as Kirbis (2011) argues, Inglehart and Welzel's instrument of democratic political culture continues to be the most predictive variable of

institutional and effective democracy. At the present time, it is the most appropriate measurement of a democratic political culture.

Inglehart and Welzel (2007; see also Barnes et al., 1979; Inglehart, 1977, 1990, 1997; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Norris & Inglehart, 2011; Welzel & Dalton, 2014) emphasise that, during the past half century, socioeconomic development has been changing people's formative conditions profoundly and rapidly. Economic growth, rising levels of education, increased flows and accessibility of information, mass communication and increased diversity of human interactions have influenced people's material, cognitive and social conditions, making them materially, intellectually and socially more independent. The assurance of material goods, a higher degree of existential security and an increase in people's autonomy led to people setting post-materialist goals as their priority. Previously, people gave lower priority to post-materialist goals, as the prevalent values had been associated with survival and striving for material goods. After the change of values emerged, there appeared a shift of cultural emphasis from collective discipline to individual liberty, from group conformity to human diversity and from state authority to individual autonomy, which were accompanied by a rise in post-materialist or so-called self-expression values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007). As early as 1971, Inglehart (1997) had identified the phenomenon of post-materialism as a new perspective in politics. The needs of people for their self-expression, participation in social associations and the promotion of their own autonomy have become increasingly important. Thus, socioeconomic development brought the objective possibilities for people's lives to be based on autonomous choices and provided them with a wider range of possibilities for self-realisation, self-creativity and intellectual independence (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007). This infers that self-expression values began to have considerable meaning. The following section will try to uncover their essence.

3. Self-expression values

3.1. Understanding of self-expression values in the democratic context

The issue of self-expression can be found in scientific literature relatively often, for example, in relation to communication (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002; Razzino et al., 2003), political culture (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007; Welzel, 2013; Welzel & Dalton, 2014), contexts of various cultures, for example, European culture, American culture, Asian culture (Kim & Ko, 2007; Kim & Sherman, 2007) and motivation (McCall, 1963; Kovac, 2016). This section elaborates on the meaning of self-expression in a democratic context or, more specifically, in the context of a democratic political culture. The particular interest of this paper is on whether the rise in the values of self-expression affects democracy and what it brings to the democratic system. Furthermore, an effort will be made to identify any common links between the values of self-expression (as a part of a democratic political culture) and human dignity. Scientific literature seldom refers to the connection between self-expression and human dignity. When this issue is found in the literature (Highfield, 2013; Stetson, 1998; Varga, 2016), it is typically not sufficiently analysed and explained, and it is often associated only with realised dignity (in the sense that self-expression raises the level of realised dignity).

Economic prosperity brought a rise in self-expression values (which may be brought up in a democratic as well as authoritarian society), whose emancipatory nature enabled the emergence and development of democracy. Self-expression values stimulate human emancipation from authority in a post-industrial society. This is because a post-industrialised society provides greater economic security, intellectual autonomy and social independence to people, so they are less inclined to accept authority (both religious and secular authority). People in such societies grow into more or less self-governing beings and in so doing begin to reject external authorities (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007). This is probably associated with the 'the enlightenment effect', as termed by Welzel and Alvarez (2014; see also Welzel, 2013). This effect relates to an emancipatory transformation that brings a more liberal understanding of what democracy means and a more critical assessment of how democratic their society actually is.

When speaking about the values of self-expression values (emancipatory values), for the purpose of this paper, special emphasis is placed on the values that consist of the following variables: willingness to sign a petition, tolerance of homosexuality, life satisfaction, social trust, post-material orientation or aspirations for personal and political freedoms. Numerous other research indicate that these values have the greatest influence on the stability and effectiveness of the democratic system (see Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Welzel, 2007; Kirbis, 2011; Welzel, 2013). Our selection of self-expression values relies on Inglehart and Welzel (2007), which implies that only self-expression values with positive connotation and non-discriminatory nature foster stability and efficiency of democratic system. In contrast, other self-expression values, for example, values with negative connotation or discriminatory nature do not have positive influence on stability and efficiency of democracy. Additionally, Inglehart and Welzel (2007) state that the non-discriminatory nature of self-expression is making democratic citizens more humanistic but not more egocentric. In fact, self-expression values within the democratic context encourage humanistic norms, as they emphasise not only autonomy and respect for oneself but for others as well. Consequently, they encourage movements for the rights of children, women, gays and lesbians, handicapped people, ethnic minorities, and so on. At the same time, as the individual starts to enjoy increased emancipation from authority in the post-industrial society, this does not turn him into an egocentric (nonhuman) creature. Rather, he maintains a humanistic character when he tends to realise not only his need for self-expression and autonomous decision-making but also when he acknowledges and intensively protects and fights for the rights of the other people.

3.2. *The essence of self-expression values and human dignity*

The essence of the values of self-expression is that they are based on emphasizing human free choice and autonomous decision-making, and therefore they stimulate the aspirations for (democratic) civil and political freedoms (Inglehart & Welzel, 2007). Welzel (2013) has identified an increasing tendency to empower citizens, which appears simultaneously with their aspirations for the exercise of both civil and political freedoms. In this regard, Welzel (2013) sees liberal democracy as a legal component of empowerment, which entitles people with rights that enable them to exercise and realise their (democratic) civil and political freedoms. The latter two constitute democracy, which leads to the conclusion that the rise in the values of self-expression can activate the social force to create democratic institutions. This inspires citizens to develop the need for a responsible government, which helps to establish new or preserve already existing democratic institutions that maximise human choice. According to Inglehart and Welzel (2007), human choice and the right to autonomous decisions lie precisely at the heart of democracy. It could even be said that, due to the (post-industrial) affinity of citizens for self-expression, autonomy and freedom of choice, the development of democratic mechanisms is necessary in such a case. In contrast, according to Inglehart and Welzel (2007), diminishing human autonomy and free choice can work in the opposite direction in the sense that it brings retrogression towards authoritarian and xenophobic societies.

When deliberating on the human choice and autonomous decisions, the basic starting point is to identify their origin. What is the reason for human beings being endowed with freedom of choice and the right to autonomous decisions? What is the purpose of providing these? This leads to the idea that the human being has a special, invaluable value that needs to be respected, while ensuring that freedom of choice and autonomous decision-making are relevant building blocks for achieving respect for this precious value. A further consideration is the reason why this particular value that dictates respect belongs to the human being. Which unique characteristic does a man possess in himself that can be identified with special worth? What belongs exclusively to human beings and characterises them as special? These questions return us to a topic discussed in Subsection 3.2 that a person has a special and unique worth because he is endowed with initial human dignity. The self-expression values are therefore based on freedom of choice and autonomous decision-making, but, in looking more profoundly, they are the result of the fact that a person is endowed with initial human dignity. Since

every human being has initial dignity on exactly the same level, freedom of choice and the right to autonomous decision-making must be guaranteed to all the people to the exact same extent. This means that it can be concluded that self-expression values are a reflection of initial human dignity. As for realised dignity, respect and consistent realisation of self-expression values, which from a theoretical point of view reflects initial human dignity, in practice fosters realised dignity, that is, the level of realisation of human dignity in the case of each individual. To summarise, while self-expression values reflect the initial human dignity that originally inspires them, satisfactory respect and realisation of self-expression values can lead to a higher degree of realised dignity.

According to Highfield (2013), a sense of one's own dignity is rooted in one's uniqueness and the power of self-creation and self-determination by means of self-expression. The individual is irreplaceable and nobody can tell him how to realise his own uniqueness or judge his choice of ways of self-expression. He has every right to celebrate his own utterly unique being in ways he experiences as fulfilling (Highfield, 2013). It is necessary to add to Highfield's theory that an individual cannot realise himself if this causes harm to his fellow man and the entire community. Therefore, the choice of self-expression cannot be completely free if there is also a desire to maintain the satisfactory functioning of a democratic community. As Dworkin (2011) says, an individual must learn to create his life in a valuable way. This is particularly important if we take into account the fundamental principles of democracy that emphasise not only the self-realisation of each individual but also the drive for the common good within society. By promoting realised dignity and at the same time recognition and acknowledgment of initial dignity, the democratic state strives to fulfil the people's demands for their freedom of choice, autonomy and self-expression, thus allowing them to pursue their self-realisation. Here again, it can be emphasised that human dignity is the inherent property of every human being, regardless of the society and culture that a person lives in. However, the interpretation of realised dignity (i.e., the way human dignity is realised) depends on the context of a particular culture.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, I return to the initial research question: 'Why it is important to democracy that schools encourage self-expression values?' Our paper shows that self-expression values are actually a reflection of (initial) human dignity and that self-expression values foster realised dignity. Initial and realised dignity together comprise a concept of human dignity that is a foundation of democracy. Therefore, encouraging self-expression values by schools could not only impact the effectiveness and stability of democracy, but it could also raise the level of realised dignity. Additionally, by teaching adolescents about the existence and meaning of initial dignity, schools could potentially contribute to developing the self-expression values of adolescents. However, in the educational process, there is a lack of direct theorisation about human dignity and its integration into the curriculum. As a result, students during their education may not be faced with the questions of what is human?; What is human dignity?; Could human dignity be described as something that belongs to every human being or is it something that is culturally relative and socially conditioned?

Here, I come to several questions. Why it is important to educate children about human dignity in a democratic society? What is the benefit of teaching children about human dignity for an individual and democratic society? It is common to stress the relevance of human rights and human dignity as one of the main goals of liberal education. Is this just a rhetorical phrase used by politicians and media that must be raised because we live in a democratic society? In other words, what can the internalisation of human dignity bring in the context of a democratic society? I refer to Deresiewicz (2015) who stresses the relevance of real education—one that addresses students as complete human beings and not only future specialists. This enables them to build a self. According to Deresiewicz (2015), liberal education's ultimate purpose is to help individuals reflect in the widest and deepest sense for the sake of citizenship, for the sake of living well with others and above all, for the sake of building a self that is strong and creative and free. Moreover, schools must teach adolescents to live well in Dworkin's sense. Dworkin (2011) says that survival is not a condition of living well. Instead, living well means

striving to create a good life only subject to certain constraints essential to human dignity. The individual must strive to 'live well' in a critical sense: he or she must recognise that he or she has a responsibility to live well and believe that living well means creating a life that is not simply pleasurable but good in a critical way. To this end, individuals are responsible for identifying what counts as success in their own lives. It must be emphasised that success cannot be related to satisfaction and enjoyment in a hedonistic sense. Achieving success and living well is possible when individuals develop a critical attitude; when they realise that what they make of their lives is important and that they have a personal responsibility to create value (Dworkin, 2011). Individuals in a post-industrial society have overcome traditional patterns of thought, and they are more eager to express and improve themselves than they were in the past. They are better able to identify and follow their preferences and choose their own ways to pursue success in their lives. Therefore, it is important that schools orient adolescents in the post-industrial society and encourage them to 'live well' for the sake of sustaining democracy, while allowing them to be free to create themselves.

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