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Dewey's Democracy and Citizenship Education: Connecting Theory and Practice in Education Today

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Abstract: John Dewey's idea of democracy as an actively shared, participatory way of life is a significant source of inspiration for social and educational theory. However, its relevance to the issues confronting modern society is not adequately addressed in the literature. Most of the existing work on the subject tends to view Deweyan democracy either as a legacy of the past or as a method of instruction. Consequently, the theoretical gap between the democratic ideals of Dewey and the educational sector, which is influenced by structural, technological, and cultural changes, is barely addressed. This article engages with this gap by critically reconsidering Dewey's democratic philosophy and linking it to the challenges for citizenship education posed by phenomena such as political polarisation, educational centralisation, digital misinformation, and social inequality. This article seeks to find the relevance of Dewey's concept of democracy as an educative process in today's citizenship education without being instrumentalised or applied ahistorically. The study, through a critical-philosophical lens, connects Dewey's concern for participation, communication, and shared inquiry, on the one hand, with present-day educational practices such as project-based learning, service learning, and dialogic pedagogy, on the other. The article holds that Dewey's pedagogical project of turning schools into democratic microcosms remains, from a normative point of view, highly persuasive but, from a practical point of view, very limited given the present global circumstances. What is new about the article is that it situates the concept of Deweyan

democracy as a critical instrument for evaluating modern educational systems influenced by digitalisation, individualism, and civic fragmentation. The article shows that, by focusing on the conflicts between democratic ideals and the realities of the present time, there remains a significant influence of Dewey's ideas on the preparation of active, critically engaged citizens who can maintain democratic life through reflective, gradual social change.

Keywords: Dewey, democracy, education, citizenship, school.

Introduction

Democracy theory from John Dewey is an essential part of our school philosophy. It seeks to understand what education in schools is in the context of the social and political environment of the community, not as a governmental arrangement, but as a way to live together — a moral ideal of communication and collaboration and the permanent reconstruction of experience (Heilbronn et al., 2018). Dewey's ideal of democracy and the democratic operation of education are highly relevant to this time, as the political situation is so polarised that citizens no longer trust the institutions themselves (Sardoč, 2021).

Education becomes, in this sense, a requirement and the very power that drives a democratic society. Hence, education, in its scope, develops the mental habits, attitudes, and capacities required for participation in social decision-making. Dewey's idea of the school as a democratic community in what he referred to as a "classroom" — a common area where the concerns of various people could be put forward, and the practice of democracy could be deepened (Parker, 2017). In fact, though much has come under the light of Dewey's spectrum, the gap between Dewey's conceptualisation of democracy and the education of the new generation of citizens remains quite wide. Most schools undermine participatory, reflective, and experiential learning by prioritising conformity, standardised testing, and content delivery (Riddle et al., 2023).

First and foremost, the focus of Dewey's philosophy on communication, critical questioning, and mutual support among members of society provides a well-grounded conceptual framework for educational responses to contemporary educational issues (Rapoport, 2024). But the inconsistency and superficiality of the use of these ideas in classroom conduct and curriculum creation prevail among the majority of schools. Some educational reforms might position students' involvement in their learning, collaboration between students, or community engagement as core features. Still, these efforts are, in most cases, deprived of the kind of philosophical basis that Dewey considered the core of genuine democratic participation (Waks, 1999).

The scope of Dewey's philosophy is more than just a subject; it is a living example, which, apart from suggesting a teaching method, proposes values such as reflective thought, empathy, openness, and cooperation in solving problems that should be the foundation and come from the content and the practices of citizenship education (Mendes Borges, 2020). Dewey's emphasis on learning through experience in his educational model indicates that teachers must replace old teaching methods with elements such as dialogue, community-based inquiry, and the education system's shared decision-making. If they were introduced into practice systematically, these elements could help students realise that democracy is not only a framework for policies or an abstract ideal or a form of government, but also a social practice that changes and through which citizens interact (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Therefore, it is a question of philosophical insight and institutional determination when someone discusses the implementation of Dewey's ideas in education today. It requires a re-examination of the functioning of schools so that democratic participation through citizenship education is a normal part of everyday school life and not a separate subject in the curriculum. (OECD, 2023).

Contrastingly, contemporary debates within citizenship education are also about how well schools are equipped to realise this aim of democracy in the rapidly moving social and political times. This complex situation, amid new multiculturalities, political upheavals, and the spread of diversity in the societies we live in, has led the education community and political authority structures to re-evaluate traditional practices of citizenship. The challenge of promoting inclusive citizenship adds another dimension: the intensification of ethnic and cultural friction, competition, and struggle for national identity (as curricula and pedagogical practice are reorganised) (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Such tensions correspond neatly with Dewey's worries about the "risk of collapse" in the democracy, arising from the collapse of communication between different groups in diverse societies (Dewey, 2016).

In addition, Biesta (2006, 2023) perceives the ethical and political dimensions of citizenship education, claiming that citizenship education needs to cultivate responsibility and action, as well as the capacity to relate to difference in an ethically relevant manner for others, which goes beyond cognitive learning. His observations of the current education system reflect a trend toward measurement and accountability-based education, which may detract from the democratic aspect of education. Kalmes (2024) points to a tension between the democratic ideals espoused by Dewey and the realities of reform, noting that neoliberal reforms would be seen as curtailing the depth of curricula and citizenship education, and that this development tends toward privatisation, in contrast to Dewey's values.

Likewise, the concept of citizenship is undergoing changes driven primarily by supranational influences and new communication channels, which, in turn, produce new dimensions of citizenship learning (Rapoport, 2024; Vázquez, 2014). In addition, the spread and interrelation of citizenship with globalisation lead to global consciousness, intercultural competence, and digital literacy, which, in general terms, align with Dewey's belief that experience cannot be separated from the social context and interaction. In effect, these transformations demand new pedagogical methods to equip students with the skills to navigate a complex world of interdependence and contested dimensions of citizenship (Midtgarden, 2012). This is why the complex and changing issues of citizenship education have led us to reevaluate the role and pedagogical approaches of schools in responding to challenges in light of Dewey's ongoing insights. His focus on education as a means of shaping students' experiences, thus preparing them for a more engaged democracy and encouraging greater civic participation, remains the theoretical reference point for most scholars and teachers today (Levinson, 2010).

In accordance with Dewey's democratic thought, this paper finally reflects on the implications of citizenship education theory and practice in the present day. It demonstrates how recent innovations solve the problems of today - pluralism, political division, digital transformation, educational equality, etc. - in diverse ways. The study, through integrating Dewey's theory with the later scholarship and exact applications to the real world, investigates the extent to which this argument can serve as a tool in developing a vision of citizenship education that considers the widening gap between democratic values and the formal schooling system, which is typical of modern democracies. In such democracies, civic education is both an ideological and a practical process.

Methodological Framework

The present paper adopts a pluralistic philosophical methodology that embraces four different spheres: interpretive, analytical, normative, and critical. The interpretive aspect helps to understand Dewey's writings in-depth and his ideas about democracy as an educational and social practice (Dewey, 2016). Analytical clarification serves to sharpen the key ideas that were mentioned in the paper, namely experience, inquiry, communication, and development, so as not to give an anachronistic or instrumental reading of Dewey's educational thought (Biesta, 2020). Through normative analysis, the ethical and democratic issues in Dewey's theory are evaluated. Besides this, the critical component sees his ideas in

relation to the present-day systemic factors that determine education, e.g., standardisation, digital mediation and political fragmentation (Westheimer et al., 2004).

Their direct link to democracy, education, and public life was the deciding factor in selecting Dewey's primary texts. Among others, these key works comprise *Democracy and Education* (1916), *The Public and Its Problems* (2016), *Experience and Education* (1938), and a selection of essays on experience and inquiry (Heilbronn et al., 2018). These materials were analysed using thematic coding, with less emphasis on the arguments of the individual works and more on recurring philosophical motifs. In addition, ample attention was paid to the historical background to preserve the authenticity of Dewey's realism and to facilitate the interpretive synthesis of concepts developed at different times into a coherent framework (Sant et al., 2018).

The bridging of educational theory from Dewey to modern-day educational challenges is achieved through a reconstruction grounded in today's educational problems. The authors debate citizenship education, digital participation, and pluralism through Dewey's ideas, thereby facilitating the use of his concepts as heuristic tools rather than prescriptive dogmas. In that sense, communication and collaborative inquiry, which Dewey emphasised, could be considered tools for coping with issues such as political polarisation and the decline of citizen trust (Kahne et al., 2016).

The researcher's approach to making practical judgments is based on a reflexive pragmatic model. First of all, philosophical ideas are clearly expressed in terms of democratic objectives, then traced back to pedagogical principles, and finally connected to institutional practices such as curriculum design, classroom discussion, and community engagement. Thus, the analysis at several levels steers away from direct policy recommendations and instead offers criteria for evaluating educational practices in terms of democratic development and participatory capacity (Hess & McAvoy, 2014).

Theoretical Foundations: Dewey's Democracy

For Dewey, democracy was a "way of coexisting," a life based on participation, communication, and inquiry (Dewey, 1916, 2016), along with being a government. The central feature of Dewey's democratic philosophy is his belief that democracy benefits when community develops among its members, with reflective, cooperative, and communicative habits. In his influential work *Democracy and Education* (1916), he sees education as the way to accomplish the goals of democracy. Here, learning is not education done abstractly, but education as an experience through which students can think at their own pace, engage with the world socially, and reach an agreement. Dewey (1938) also says that learning has to be meaningful – that is, it should involve participation in real-life experiences, including authentic democratic problems, so that children learn the skill of doing things in ways that contribute to social responsibility. Dewey's focus on experience and interaction parallels his criticism of classical, authoritarian models of education that emphasise passive knowledge acquisition.

Democratic education was perceived as a participatory, dialogic, and collaborative effort in which students collaborate in research and decision-making. This attests to the ideal of education as the classroom and school community represent microcosms of democratic life, where students and teachers negotiate alternative viewpoints and achieve mutual respect (Dewey, 1938; Hess & McAvoy, 2014). Dewey's democracy occupies the space of the public sphere, where the community discusses and solves problems collectively. According to him in *The Public and Its Problems* (2016), for any democracy to flourish, a well-informed citizenry must participate to solve social issues. This requires infrastructure enabling dialogue and citizen participation, relevant to current work on education to empower students to take an active part in democratic governance (Regenspan, 2017; Levinson, 2010).

Dewey's democratic outlook has a significant impact on citizenship education, as seen in citizenship education (Hess, 2009). As noted by Westheimer & Kahne (2004), the types of citizenship education are influenced by Dewey's progressive thought. The best example of how Dewey's theories align with participatory citizenship is found in his emphasis on the abilities and dispositions needed to become involved in social activity, as in his emphasis on the skills and dispositions to serve actively in the life of the community. On this basis, Biesta (2006) situates democratic and citizenship education within the wider political and ethical practice of ethical and political activity in the promotion of global openness, highlighting the transformative role of education as a tool for eliminating structural inequalities and building social justice beyond existing governance structures, as well as the established power and the social order. On the other hand, this is in harmony with Dewey's theory, which anticipates contemporary challenges in preparing students for citizenship, such as social fragmentation and cultural pluralism.

Dewey's educational philosophy aligns with the communicative exchange that not only supports pluralism but also enables students to recognise and appreciate differences and to work toward the final consummation of democratic values (Banks, 2017; Culp, 2025). Texts from recent years recognising this pledge insist that the school community, mainly the teachers, should create classroom environments that foster respect for dissenting opinions and critical discourse on the most pressing topics (Hess, 2009). As a result, teachers have become more than mere conveyors of knowledge; they are now facilitators of research and study, role models for experiential learning, and guides leading the younger generation towards democratic citizenship (Smith et al., 2024; Parker, 2017). This position is part of the broader goal of education as a collective democratic institution, where students learn the practice of decision-making and community care. Citizenship education, according to Dewey, necessitates students and teachers who are not only informed but also active and engaged in inquiry, collaboration, and social responsibility through participatory and experiential learning. These thoughts are still alive today and serve as a source of both intellectual and practical reforms aligned with the new demands of citizenship education in socially and politically complex contexts (Wagner & Kössler, 2022).

Citizenship Education: Dewey's Influence

Civic education is one of the mainstays of modern educational systems that aim to equip students with the knowledge and skills to understand and participate in democracy (Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2020). Still, the conceptualising and practising of citizenship education are by far the most debated and ambiguous issues, mirroring the political, social, and cultural changes occurring worldwide (Culp, 2025). Civic education is about making available to students the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitude that will transform them into adults who can significantly impact democratic frameworks and the society at large (Banks, 2017; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

The main objective of citizenship education is to foster the development of citizens who will not only be knowledgeable but also responsible and willing to participate in a society that is becoming increasingly multicultural. Numerous theoretical frameworks debate issues in citizenship education, and the main differences among them concern goals and student expectations. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) characterize the three kinds of the citizen — the morally responsible one, the participatory one, and the justice-oriented one: the morally responsible citizen who obeys the law and carries out the civic duties; the participatory citizen who is genuinely engaged in the civic life by, for instance, joining public activities; and the justice-oriented citizen who protests against social unfairness and becomes a leader of the revolutionary social movements. However, even though this taxonomy still exerts considerable influence in the domain, it reflects Dewey's democratic ideals in a way that considers participation and critical thinking not only as educational goals but also as levels of accomplishment (Regenspan, 2017).

Nonetheless, the realisation of these ideals remains far from settled; citizenship education must find a way to address diverse social and political situations (Banks, 2017). The matter of political education becomes even more complicated as factors such as international migration and globalisation further complicate the content. At present, students are not only exposed to social and political diversity but also to opposing identities, with differences in nationality, views of belonging, and other aspects (Rapoport, 2024). The civic education of today should not be centred solely on loyalty to one nation or ethnicity, but should also include elements such as global consciousness, interculturality, and unity (Vázquez, 2014).

A very critical issue in citizenship education is the contradiction between the school's duties towards the curriculum and assessment systems and its commitment to initiating critical student participation (Biesta, 2006). As per Biesta (2023), the present "age of measurement" has been characterised by standardised tests and quantifiable outcomes and has often ignored the more subtle and relational aspects of democratic learning, discretion, participation, moral judgment, etc. The main focus of these things is democratic learning, which gets neglected by the prevailing trend. This focus is at risk of diminishing and even ignoring the democratic potential of citizenship education, as it supports conformity and rote learning rather than the transformative values put forward by Dewey (Kalmes, 2024; Biesta, 2006). Apart from the challenges posed by existing structures, schools are also affected by ideological splits and social fragmentation, which hinder them from helping students develop the skills of authentic conversation and discourse (White et al., 2023).

For educators, this means ensuring that discussion areas that are safe, like schools, do not become places of argument and heated debate (Hess & McAvoy, 2014). Such teaching methods align with Dewey's educational theories of experiential and inquiry-based learning, but teachers still need to be well-prepared, and schools should provide the necessary support (Smith et al., 2024). In addition to inequality in students' access to quality civic education, this is a factor that lowers the democratic quality of students' civic education. Levinson (2010) highlights the enormous differences in children's chances of acquiring political skills and attitudes, which are largely linked to social, economic, racial, or geographic identity and location. These inequalities contradict the principles of equal democratic participation and highlight the necessity of a structural education policy to reduce disparities in access and to provide all students with proper preparation for a democratic future (OECD, 2023).

Digital technologies and the rise of social media must also be taken into consideration, as they offer new ways for civic learning, but also carry the risks of misinformation and civic disengagement (Apple, 2018; Sefton-Green, 2020). An effective citizenship education should integrate knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, and active participation. Experiential education revolves around learning through doing, involves more student-led activities, and encourages student participation in the community by enrolling in social service programs to connect theory with practice (Dowling Fink et al., 2025; Culp, 2025). These methods prepare the younger generation to critically evaluate social issues, to comprehend others' perspectives and behaviours, and to cooperate, which aligns with Dewey's concept of education as a necessary condition for democratic life (Levinson, 2010).

Contemporary Applications and Innovations

Dewey's democratic education has been a source of numerous contemporary applications and new pedagogies in political education in recent years. The main aim is to implement Dewey's idea of promoting involvement, reflection, and active participation in schools or other learning environments, a procedure through which youngsters will learn to participate effectively and be responsible members of a democratic society (Westerlund et al., 2020). The new method, through project-based education, service-learning, dialogic discussion, and digital technology, represents a form of civic education that is more in line with contemporary life or with Dewey's view (Culp, 2025; Apple, 2018).

One of the innovative projects students can be involved in is project-based learning (PBL), in which students take a leading role in identifying real issues in their neighbourhoods. PBL follows an experiential learning pattern that is collaborative and problem-solving-oriented, and it also involves continuous engagement in the classroom, as suggested by Dewey's (1938) work. Social projects based on local or global issues not only teach students citizenship and critical intelligence but also how to become active in democratic action. Besides learning academically in this way, it fosters a natural sense of agency and responsibility and aligns with Dewey's principle that education is a preparation for citizenship (Dowling Fink et al., 2025).

Service learning, as another example, is a significant step toward integrating democratic practice with theory. By adding community service to structured reflection, service learning makes the connection between classroom lessons and political participation, thereby strengthening the bond between education and democracy. At the institutional level, such initiatives give students a chance to engage with the issues societies face, gain empathy, and realise their place in a bigger, more just society. The cycle of work-action-reflection exemplifies Dewey's idea that learning is a back-and-forth process of action and reflection, influenced by significant experiences (Dewey, 1938).

Dialogic pedagogy — derived from Dewey's philosophy of dialogue and democratic discourse—which, along with other methods, brings citizenship education closer to the present era of social complexity. The main benefit of this educational innovation is the support of the development of students' abilities to critically discuss disagreements and complex issues, including those difficult and controversial topics that are hard to overlook in politics. This innovative pedagogy's goal is to develop students' abilities to participate in political dialogue on contested and complex, controversial, and difficult issues (Hess & McAvoy, 2014).

In addition, the development of digital media has enlarged the scope of political education and has created both opportunities and challenges for educators. Better technology-supported learning environments foster the development of broader perspectives and more possibilities for collaborative student participation, which may extend beyond traditional classroom boundaries (Apple, 2018; Sefton-Green, 2020). Apart from that, the internet and social media provide students with digital activism and social movement activities. Nevertheless, even though this digital society is growing, there is a likewise increasing demand for digital literacy in education so that educators can evaluate and handle risks like misinformation and "echo chambers, and at the same time, teachers can educate their students to be thoughtful and ethical digital citizens (Vázquez, 2014).

The continued influence of Dewey in one major field, teacher education, remains visible today. Training teachers to handle democratic classrooms is very much like training them to cope with disagreements, engage in inclusive dialogue, and empower students (Smith et al., 2024), as well as to support student participation (Parker, 2017). Innovative teacher education programs emphasise experiential learning, reflective practice, and local engagement, which are integral to Dewey's concept of teaching as mentoring. These programs take into consideration that maintaining such teaching methods to guarantee a lasting democratic form of education requires leadership capable of putting theory into practice, a need present across a broad range of educational contexts (Ellsworth, 2016).

Moreover, the integration of democracy and preschool education aims to educate young children in a democratic manner to facilitate the development of their political attitudes in the crucial first years of their lives (OECD, 2023). Programs that emphasise social inclusion, cooperation, mutual support of others and respect for diversity in learning social inclusion programs help in laying the base for the skills that are necessary for student participation, while at the same time incorporating Dewey's broader view of education as a whole that influences and shapes social identity as a tool of society itself (Culp, 2025).

Discussion

John Dewey's vision of democracy as a lifestyle provides an influential interpretive framework for addressing the issue of citizenship education. Instead of limiting democracy to being solely institutional or procedural, Dewey sees it as the daily practice of communication, shared inquiry, and collective problem solving (Dewey, 2016, 1938). His theory can be used very effectively in present-day classrooms influenced by digitalisation, political polarisation, civic disengagement, and increasing global interconnectedness. Dewey's requirement that democratic habits be learned through participation is a response to educators' difficulty in fostering critical judgment and responsibility in environments abundant with misinformation, algorithmic filtering, and fragmented public discourse (Kahne et al., 2016). In this sense, digital citizenship should not be considered an introduction to the current curricula but rather a field in which Deweyan principles of inquiry, reflection, and communication take on new significance (Heilbronn et al., 2018).

Another area where polarisation effects can be seen and where Dewey's ideas are still relevant is his perception of disagreement as a potential teaching tool, rather than a threat to social cohesion, thus leaving the classrooms as places for deliberation where different views can be examined through the reasoned dialogue (Dowling Fink et al., 2025). Present-day studies in deliberative democratic education show that structured discussions of controversial issues lead to better political understanding, greater trust in others, and improved skills in political participation, especially in pluralistic societies grappling with ideological divisions (Hess & McAvoy, 2014). Dewey's method is thus a normative alternative to depoliticised schooling approaches that claim to be neutral by refraining from conflict, thereby inadvertently supporting civic apathy and disengagement.

Moreover, Dewey's theory provides significant tools for examining the structures that dominate education. Cultures of high-stakes testing, performance metrics, and accountability regimes tend to prioritise efficiency and measurability, often at the cost of experiential learning and democratic agency (Biesta, 2023). According to Dewey, such systems limit the goals of education by placing democratic growth under the instrumental outcomes. The fragmentation of the curriculum further weakens citizenship education by allowing civic content to be taught only as a separate subject, disconnected from students' real-life experience, thus reducing opportunities for deep and long-term inquiry into social issues (Rosales, 2012). Dewey saw the importance of experience being continuous, and his idea runs counter to those different arrangements, as the latter favour integrative curricula that help students connect knowledge with action and reflection in the social context (Barišić, 2018).

The study of present-day theories also helps us see that Dewey's insights not only remain valid but have also been further developed. One development is deliberative democratic education, which draws on Dewey's ideas about dialogue and public reasoning and focuses on developing the communicative skills necessary for democratic participation (Parker, 2017). Action civics, another model, goes further with its experiential learning concept by making students the direct actors in democratic processes, thus supporting the idea of citizenship, which is acquired through practice rather than mere transmission (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). All these models are quite consistent with Dewey's assertion that education should prepare the learners not only to comprehend democracy but also to put it into practice. At the same time, global citizenship education is adding aspects beyond Dewey's original framework, first by focusing on transnational interdependence, global justice, and ethical responsibility that go beyond the nation-state (Sant et al., 2018). Although Dewey foresaw connected publics, his work is less helpful in addressing global power imbalances and postcolonial issues (Rosales, 2012).

One more reason to implement Deweyan democracy is the civic apathy common among young people. The crucial point of Dewey's notion of meaningful participation is a counterweight to educational models that treat citizenship as a mere branch of abstract knowledge or formal compliance. A body of

research on experiential and service-oriented pedagogies attests that students' civic development will be much more successful when learning is linked to real-world issues and community engagement (Culp, 2025). But at the same time, the ability to put these approaches into practice is not equally distributed, and this is another example of the structural inequalities that exist in the education systems (Barišić, 2018).

These inequalities highlight an important shortcoming of Dewey's theory. Although he was aware of the social factors that influence democratic life, in his work, he usually assumes that the communities are relatively cohesive and that structural injustice is gradually disappearing. Disparities in socioeconomic, racial, and geographic factors continue to shape the quality of access to citizenship education, thereby making the democratic ideal of equal participation even more difficult to realise (Levinson, 2010). Therefore, addressing these issues requires concerted efforts in policy and institutional changes that go beyond Dewey's original concepts and draw on insights from critical and justice-oriented perspectives (Midtgarden, 2012).

Furthermore, the introduction of digital technologies has resulted in additional contradictions. On the one hand, they expand the possibilities for participation and expression; on the other hand, they increase the risks of misinformation, surveillance, and exclusion (Apple, 2018). Dewey's concern with communication remains valid, but certain adjustments should be made to accommodate platform governance and digital power relations. Education in citizenship based on Deweyan principles, thus, calls for an equally strong critical digital literacy so that students can behave responsibly and ethically in the digital world and make well-thought-out contributions to the online public sphere (Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2020).

Hence, the issue of teacher agency is a major element in resolving those problems. The educational and institutional facilitating aspects of democratic dialogue, handling controversial issues, and promoting the participation of the different groups of people are there for teachers to realise. Still, the performativity pressures and political constraints that oppose them are, very often, the cause of limiting teachers' autonomy (Smith et al., 2024). Consequently, their ability to carry out, in practice, the democratic education they teach is restricted. The existence of this contradiction demonstrates the broader problem of determining how to implement Dewey's ideal within the local conditions of schools, which are shaped by diverse priorities and competing forces (Riddle et al., 2023).

In summation, this dialogue indicates that Dewey's democratic philosophy is still relevant and important, but at the same time has some necessary limitations. His theory can be used as an effective critique instrument for modern educational systems, and at the same time, it provides principled guidance for citizenship education in complex civic landscapes (Sardoč, 2021). Nevertheless, its employment demands critical and careful adjustment from users, who should be aware of the factors of globalisation, inequality, digital mediation, and political contestation (Regenspan, 2017). Consequently, the subsequent work in this field of study should be heavily focused on the research of the context-dependent performance of the Deweyan principles that facilitate democratic knowledge, skills, and attitudes, while remaining sensitive to the conditions of the modern education system.

Conclusion

The interplay between Dewey's democratic principles and modern citizenship education was the paper's central focus, and a case was made for a close link between learning and action. Dewey's conception of democratic practice as an experiential, participatory way of life provides a far more potent and illuminating means to comprehend the aims and methods of political education (Waks, 1999).

Experience, reflection, and inquiry, according to his belief, should be the sources of education. That, according to him, was the way to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions for life in a

democratic society (Dewey, 1916). Our education can be equally active, critical, and reflexive as the life we lead; thus, it cannot be denied that contemporary paradigms of political education not only recognise but also extend Dewey's ideas in such a way that research-based pedagogies — project-based learning, service learning, and dialogue—are involved. These methods depict schools as democratic ecosystems where educated youth learn to navigate complex social situations and are encouraged to become leaders of their communities. Nevertheless, institutional and political inconsistencies, such as the standardisation of learning, accountability structures, and polarisation, have been the main hindrances to the realisation of Dewey's ideas in citizenship education (Culp, 2025).

The internet has transformed political education into a medium which is in dire need of a pedagogical approach that not only promotes critical media literacy but also ethical digital participation. The realisation of Dewey's dream is contingent upon the educators' preparation and the support they receive from others. Teachers will have to be ready for the challenge of producing students who will then be given the real freedom to participate in democratic dialogues, resolve conflicts, and establish educational settings that are open to all, and this is one of the means of achieving this goal. The acquisition of democratic skills, youth, and staff needs to be a continuous effort, and an unfailing support for a democratic system and the mainstay of political life (Ellsworth, 2016).

From our perspective, this means that citizenship education should be non-passive; it should be an active, transformative process that addresses the new social, political, and technological realities. In this framework, the democratic values of education, according to Dewey (1916), might well serve as the solid ground for students' development. This ground would make them conscious, critical, and responsible citizens, thereby making the democratic future easier to come by. Meanwhile, citizenship education serves as a vehicle for the transformation and reconstruction of democracy and for the revival of its resilience through experiential and participatory learning and reflective inquiry. Research and policy of tomorrow should thus be directed not only at supporting but also at energising practices of education based on Dewey, so that school systems can confront challenges such as social inequality and digital life. These obligations are indispensable in unleashing the democratic potential of education, both as a transformative public good and the foundation of a sustainable, productive political life.

Suggestions for Future Research

Research on Dewey's concepts of democracy and citizenship education should reveal numerous interconnected ways that not only support the theory but also enable practical educational application. First of all, such analyses must be conducted on the philosophies of different democratic theories to compare and re-evaluate Dewey's realism of democracy in light of these theories, which can be dialogical, competitive, and critical models, among others. For instance, unlike Mansfield & Winthrop (2000), Dewey worries less about the tyranny of the majority and more about the development of communicative habits. Moreover, contrary to Rawls' institutional liberalism (Rawls, 1999), Dewey is considered to have focused less on fixed principles and more on experimentation. Such a study can reveal how far Dewey's democracy is capable of addressing problems such as polarisation and democratic fragility, since it transcends the theories of democratic education recently discussed (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Biesta, 2020).

Second, empirical studies need to focus on schools and classes where Dewey's educational principles are intentionally put into practice. Different methodological studies, including longitudinal ones, can explore how student inquiry-based pedagogy, dialogic learning, and community involvement can contribute to students' political action and democratic dispositions. Existing studies have shown that the roles of structured discussion and experiential learning are significant; however, further evidence is required to explicitly establish a link between these activities and the democratic goals of Dewey (Hess & McAvoy, 2014).

Third, philosophical inquiry should delve into Dewey's potential alignment with digital citizenship frameworks. Given that political participation is becoming more and more digitally mediated, scholars need to determine whether the factors emphasised by Dewey, such as communication, audience formation, and experiential learning, can bring about democratic participation in a scenario dominated by algorithms, platform governance, and online discourse (Kahne et al., 2016).

Lastly, normative inquiry should take on the issue of democratic education in culturally diverse or divided societies. Dewey's focus on collaborative inquiry is one feature that can help generate mutual understanding in such societies. However, its appropriateness in settings with strong moral and political disagreement remains uncertain. Taking a critical stance towards global and pluralistic citizenship education might help revise Dewey's method for balancing unity and cultural diversity within the Democratic tradition (Sant et al., 2018).

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