

**Teaching Democracy Globally, Internationally, and Comparatively:  
The 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Civic Mission of Schools\***

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**Looking backward**, we can see that the 20<sup>th</sup> century was an age of mortal conflict between democracy and its rivals. And, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century democracy was ascendant globally. This worldwide rise of democracy was coterminous with a strong surge of nationalism and nation-state sovereignty. Thus, we have seen the grand growth of democracy within particular sovereign states in every inhabited continent and within various social-cultural contexts. For most people of the world today, democracy is the prevailing source of political legitimacy.

**Looking forward**, we can envision the 21<sup>st</sup> century as an age of global democracy in which there will be coexistence and tension between international and national or state-centered conceptions of democracy. And we can imagine the slow but steady rise to prominence of transnational conceptions and institutions of democracy. If so, then there will be a new civic mission of schools in the United States of America and elsewhere: teaching democracy globally, internationally, and comparatively will become the most important goal of civic education.

**In the past century**, the civic mission of schools, at its best, was an enlightened, open-ended, and thought-provoking education for democracy in a sovereign state, such as the United States of America, France, Japan, or India. The purpose was induction of each new generation

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into the democratic culture of a particular society and country in order to maintain the political and civic order or to improve it on its own terms. At its worst, the civic mission involved heavy-handed and mind-numbing inculcation of uncontested political loyalty to the state and society, democratic or otherwise.

**In this century**, by contrast with the past, we may reasonably speculate that education for citizenship in a democracy will, with each decade, become everywhere more global, international, and comparative in curricular content and processes of teaching and learning. And we ought to think now about how to improve our current curricular frameworks and standards for a world transformed by globally accepted and internationally transcendent principles and processes of democracy. The forward-looking education for democracy, which we should contemplate, involves globalization and internationalization of the curriculum in primary and secondary schools and in university-based programs for the preparation of teachers. If our 21<sup>st</sup>-century civic mission of schools would succeed, we must think about preadult education in schools in tandem with the preparation of teachers in colleges and universities. Unless future teachers are taught democracy globally, internationally, and comparatively, they will not be able to prepare children and adolescents adequately for citizenship in our world as it is becoming and will be.

What does it mean to teach and learn democracy globally, internationally, and comparatively? What exactly is the emerging 21<sup>st</sup>-century transnational and transcultural civic mission of schools? And how do we begin to practice it in the primary and secondary schools and in the education of teachers? I will respond briefly to these questions with five propositions that apply equally to preadult education for democratic citizenship and to civic learning in the preparation of teachers. These five propositions constitute my minimal conceptualization of an

appropriate 21<sup>st</sup>-century civic mission of schools in the United States and in other democracies of our contemporary world.

**Proposition 1: At all levels of preadult education and in programs of teacher preparation, we should teach a global or universal definition of democracy so that students can compare and evaluate regimes according to a common and minimal world standard.**

The first objective of a good education for democratic citizenship is to teach exactly what a democracy is, and what it is not. If students are to become competent citizens of a democracy, they must know how to distinguish and evaluate types of government. The label democracy has too often been used by despotic regimes with mere showcase constitutions that hypocritically claimed to be exemplars of democracy and freedom. The so-called “democracies” or “democratic-republics” of communist countries were and are tragic examples of the bogus use of a political label. Through their civic education, students should develop defensible criteria by which to think critically and comparatively and thereby to evaluate the extent to which their government and other governments of the world do or do not function authentically as democracies.

There is broad international agreement today on a minimal or threshold standard by which to judge whether or not a regime is a democracy. This minimal criterion is the regular occurrence of free, open, fair, and contested elections by which an inclusive citizenry selects its representatives in government. Thus, there is government by consent of the governed in which the people’s representatives are accountable to the people.<sup>1</sup> This definition is today’s minimal global standard for international recognition of a regime as an electoral democracy.

If there is no viable opposition party to contest elections, or if the right to vote or otherwise participate is systematically denied to particular categories of persons for reasons of

race, ethnicity, sexual identity, religion, ideology, and so forth, then there cannot be an authentic electoral democracy. All citizens in a genuine democracy are able to participate fairly, freely, and openly to influence their government by campaigning and voting in public elections and by participating during the periods between regularly scheduled elections to promote personal and group interests and to influence policy decisions by their representatives in government. The people of the polity, including those outside the momentary majority, must have the political rights to freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, and petition for redress of grievances. And most importantly, parties in loyal opposition to the rulers of the moment must have a fair chance to supplant them in the next election.

The acid test or critical rule by which to determine the establishment of an electoral democracy is the orderly transfer of power to govern from one party to another through a legitimate democratic election. If this rule prevails in at least two consecutive elections, then a regime may claim legitimately to be an established electoral democracy.

In 2002, 121 of the world's 192 sovereign states could be recognized as democracies in terms of the minimal global standard for an electoral democracy. The collective populations of these electoral democracies accounted for 64.6% of the world's population (Karatnycky 2002, 7). By contrast, in 1900 there was not even one country in the world that met today's minimal global standard for democracy. In 1950, there were only 22 authentic democracies with 14.3% of the world's population. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, there was a dramatic global trend toward electoral democracy, as communist regimes and other types of autocratic or authoritarian systems withered and died. These data on the worldwide spread of democracy are provided by Freedom House, a greatly respected nongovernmental organization in the United States of America.<sup>2</sup>

The global trend toward electoral or minimal democracy has not immediately brought about an equivalent surge toward personal or private rights to freedom. In 2002, according to the annual Freedom House Survey, 85 of the world's 121 electoral democracies were rated "free," which means that they maintained a high degree of political, personal, and economic freedom.

The "fully free" countries included 40.8% of the world's population in 2002. The other 36 of the world's electoral democracies were rated "partly free" because they did not fully protect the private and personal rights of their people.<sup>3</sup> And 48 countries, with 35.4% of the world's population in 2002, had a rating of "not free" because they completely denied to their people basic rights of freedom and civil liberties (Karatnycky 2002, 8). Among the worst-rated countries in 2002 were the remaining communist regimes: China, Cuba, and North Korea. And among the world's freest countries were such formerly Soviet Socialist Republics as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and such post-communist countries as the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland.

The most democratic and free regions of the world today are West and East-Central Europe and the Americas. Among the 35 countries in the Americas, 32 are electoral democracies (91 percent). In addition, 22 states are rated as both democratic and fully free (63 percent) (Karatnycky 2002, 10).

In the fully free democratic countries, protection of individual rights extends beyond minimal protection of political rights to fundamental personal and private rights, such as freedom of conscience, free exercise of religion, unrestricted freedom of association, the secure ownership and use of private property, and security against unwarranted intrusions by government into one's private life. These private rights are not fully guaranteed in the "partly free" electoral democracies. So, there is much more to the content and process of democracy

than is entailed by the minimal electoral standard, which leads directly to my second proposition about the core of an adequate education for citizenship in a democracy.

**Proposition 2: At all levels of preadult education and in programs of teacher preparation, we should teach a short set of six core concepts by which students can think beyond the minimal global standard for an electoral democracy to compare and evaluate political systems more deeply and complexly.**

An advanced or more fully developed conceptualization of democracy in today's world includes electoral and representative democracy in concert with the rule of law/limited government, human rights, citizenship, civil society, and market economy. See Table 1 in the Appendix to this paper to examine a detailed presentation of these six core ideas that constitute a more deep and complex conceptualization of democracy than is provided by the minimal electoral standard.<sup>4</sup>

A polity that embodies the six core concepts in Table 1 is properly labeled a constitutional representative democracy or a constitutional democratic-republic, and it paradoxically provides majority rule with equal protection of the public and private rights of all persons in the polity. Acquisition of the six core concepts as a set, a framework of connected ideas, enables learners to know complexly and deeply what a fully developed democracy in today's world is, and what it is not; to distinguish the advanced form of democracy from other types of government, including less developed democracies; and to evaluate the extent or degree to which their government and other governments of the world are or are not authentic constitutional representative democracies.<sup>5</sup>

**Representative Democracy and Constitutionalism.** Republicanism or representative democracy, the first core concept in the list of six, entails the minimal electoral standard. The second concept of this list, the rule of law or constitutionalism, is the key to the entire set of concepts in Table 1.

Constitutionalism means limited government and the rule of law to prevent the arbitrary use of power, to protect human rights, to regulate democratic procedures in elections and public policy making, and to achieve a community's shared purposes. Constitutionalism in a democracy, therefore, both limits and empowers government of, by, and for the people. Through a constitution to which they have consented, the people grant power to the government to act effectively for the common good. The people also set constitutional limits on the power of their democratic government in order to prevent tyranny and to protect their rights. So, in an authentic constitutional democratic-republic, the people's elected representatives in government are limited by the supreme law of the people's constitution for the primary purposes of protecting equally the rights of everyone in the polity and thereby promoting the common good of the community.

**Human Rights, Constitutionalism, and Democracy.** Through a comparative and international education for democratic citizenship, students should learn the close connection between constitutionalism and human rights in a democracy. (See item 3 in Table 1.) Constitutional limitations on the government's power are necessary to guarantee political rights necessary to the conduct of free, fair, open, and periodic competitive elections by the people of their representatives in government. In a democracy, there must be no possibility for rulers to punish, incarcerate, or destroy their political opponents. Finally, constitutionalism involves limitation on the power of the majority to prevent unjust treatment of individuals in the minority.

An ultimate test of constitutionally guaranteed freedom in any country of the world is the extent to which the least popular groups and individuals are able to exercise and enjoy their rights on equal terms with others in the polity. If there truly is equal protection of human rights, then there really is a fully free constitutional democracy. Otherwise, there may be tyranny of the majority or democratic despotism, but not equal liberty and justice under law (Zakaria 2002, 89-118). Through comparative analysis and appraisal of regimes, students can judge for themselves the extent to which different governments meet the criteria for becoming and being both democratic and free and avoiding majority tyranny, the malady of a democracy that does not have sufficient constitutional limits on the government's exercise of power.

**Citizenship, Constitutionalism, and Democracy.** The source of constitutional authority in a democracy is the people, who are the citizens of the polity. (See item 4 of Table 1.) The citizens agree collectively to consent to the supreme law of a constitution. They consent to limit their collective exercise of power to guarantee the freedom of everyone in the polity. Thus, democracy is limited constitutionally to protect freedom against the threat of majority tyranny.

A primary and continual question in the origin and evolution of a democracy is: who, exactly, are the people? The constitutional answer to this question determines who will or will not be a citizen, a full and equal member of a democratic political and civic community, such as a country or nation-state. So citizenship in a democracy, just like guarantees of human rights, is rooted in constitutionalism.

The status of citizenship involves very important obligations and responsibilities, such as paying taxes, serving in the country's armed forces when called upon, obeying laws enacted by one's representatives in government, demonstrating commitment and loyalty to the democratic political community and state, constructively criticizing the conditions of political and civic life, and participating to improve the quality of political and civic life. Citizenship in a constitutional

representative democracy provides those who share it with common cords of political loyalty and civic identity.

Citizenship is connected variously to a popularly ratified constitution in different democracies of our world. Democratic countries can be judged more or less free depending on how extensively and equally the rights and responsibilities of citizenship are distributed among the people of the polity. Thus, students involved in education for democratic citizenship need to study comparatively and internationally what citizenship is in different countries, how it is acquired or lost in various political systems, what rights and responsibilities are entailed by it, how it is connected to the institutions of particular nation-states, especially their own, and how it is exercised similarly and differently throughout the world.

**Civil Society, Constitutionalism, and Democracy.** Civic participation, a right and responsibility of democratic citizenship, is exercised through the voluntary associations of civil society, which is a country's network of freely formed associations. (See item 5 of Table 1.) Distinct from the formal governmental institutions of the state, private civil associations may act independently or cooperatively with state agencies to promote the common good. But they may also act as an independent social force to check or limit an abusive or undesired exercise of the state's power. Civil society can be a countervailing force against the state to oppose despotism and protect the civil liberties and rights of individuals and groups.

Apart from the state, but subject to the rule of law in a constitution, civil society is a public domain that private individuals create and operate to strengthen their communities and advance their personal and collective interests. Examples of nongovernmental organizations that constitute civil society are free labor unions, religious communities, human-rights advocacy groups, environmental protection organizations, support groups providing social welfare services to needy people, independent newspaper and magazine publishing houses, independent and

private schools, and professional associations. An individual of a free country may belong to many civil society organizations at once and throughout a lifetime.

Civil society organizations in pursuit of the common good are a manifestation of community solidarity or communitarianism. As such, civil society provides protection from anomie and radical individualism. And it is both a buffer and conduit between the state and the citizen, which protects human rights against state-based despotism and provides channels for organized expression of community needs or grievances. Finally, civil society organizations provide rich and varied opportunities for civic participation that enable citizens to learn democracy by doing it and to develop social capital (resources and competencies) that make a democracy functional and sustainable (Putnam 1993).

Students should be taught to distinguish democratic from nondemocratic governments by using as a criterion the idea of civil society. The vitality of civil society is a gauge of the strength and prospects of democracy in any country of the world. By contrast, genuine civil society organizations cannot exist in a totalitarian regime, which attempts to control the people through an unlimited one-party government. Thus, if students would comparatively know, analyze, and appraise democracy in their country or elsewhere, they must be able to comprehend the idea of civil society, to assess the activities of civil society organizations, and to connect their knowledge of civil society to other core concepts, such as constitutionalism, human rights, and citizenship. (See Table 1.)

**Market Economy, Constitutionalism, and Democracy.** A dynamic civil society interacts with a market economy, a form of capitalism which involves competition and freedom of exchange at the marketplace. The market is the free and open space where buyers and sellers choose to exchange goods and services. Market-based capitalism involves private ownership and use for profit of the means of production, distribution, and exchange of goods and services.

(See item 6 of Table 1.) Both the market economy and the civil society are free and open systems through which information, ideas, and products are exchanged for personal gain and the public good.

Economic competition and exchange at the market, like other social interactions of a constitutional representative democracy, are regulated by the state through the rule of law, which provides the order and stability necessary to guarantee individual rights to life, liberty, property, equality of opportunity, and so forth. So, freedom of economic and social activity in an authentic democracy is the consequence of constitutionalism.

According to an eminent political scientist, Robert Dahl, “[D]emocracy has existed *only* in countries with predominately market-capitalist economies and never (or at most briefly) in countries with predominately nonmarket economies” (1998, 166-167). A freely functioning market checks concentrations of power in government that could be exercised against human rights. In tandem with a free and open civil society, capitalism and the market enable development and maintenance of plural sources of power to counteract the power of the state and safeguard the people’s freedoms of expression, assembly, association, and so forth.

A centrally directed command economy, the antithesis of the market economy, substitutes the directives of government officials with virtually unlimited state power for the free choices and competition of the marketplace. Through their total control of the production and distribution of goods and services (wealth and the means to acquire wealth), the government officials in command of the economy have power to control totally the inhabitants in their realm. There are no effective limits on their power to abuse individuals at odds with the state or to deprive unpopular persons of their rights to liberty, to equality of opportunity, and to life.

Education for democratic citizenship should emphasize the necessary connection of capitalism and a market economy to civil society. Students should learn that there can be no

advanced or fully free democracy without civil society, and there can be no civil society without a market economy. Further, they should understand that both a market economy and civil society depend upon constitutionalism. There cannot be an authentically free society and free economy without constitutionally based regulation for the common good. Finally, education for democratic citizenship should involve students in comparative and international studies of relationships between constitutional governments, civil societies, and market economies.

A perennial global issue in all constitutional democracies of our world pertains to how much and what kind of legal regulation there should be. Fundamental rights of individuals will be at risk if there is too much regulation or too little regulation by the constitutional government. Achieving the appropriate mixture of liberty and order, freedom and regulation, is a challenge faced by citizens of every democracy. Thus, comparative analyses of issues about the extent and kind of governmental economic and social regulations in different democratic countries should be part of education for democratic citizenship. And, comparative analysis of constitutional and institutional designs to protect freedom while maintaining public order should be in the core curriculum, which leads directly to the third proposition in my statement of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century civic mission for schools.

**Proposition 3: At all levels of preadult education and in programs of teacher preparation, we should use the set of six core concepts on the meaning and practice of democracy to structure comparative and international inquiry about constitutions, governmental institutions, human rights, and participation in the democracies of our world.**

The six core concepts in Table 1 are common themes or attributes of all genuine democracies. However, the constitutional designs and institutional structures of different

countries are variations on the common core concepts or themes. They are alternative ways to put the common themes or concepts into practice. For example, the separation and sharing of power in government is a common characteristic of constitutionalism in all democracies of our world. However, there are alternative ways to practice this necessary attribute of democratic constitutional design.

The American model of constitutional representative democracy distributes power among three coordinate branches of government: the legislative, executive, and judicial departments. Each branch has constitutional means to check the actions of the other branches to prevent any of the three coordinate branches from continually dominating or controlling the others. These constitutional checks involve practical overlapping and sharing of powers among three distinct branches of the government, each with a particular function.

Of course, the American model is merely one way to separate, distribute, and share power in constitutional government. There are other workable structures, such as those associated with various forms of the parliamentary type of constitutional democracy. The parliamentary democracies usually exemplify legislative primacy vis-à-vis the executive functions of government. However, they also tend to have a separate and truly independent judiciary, usually including a constitutional court with the power of constitutional review, which is roughly similar to the judicial review of the American system. For example, the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are parliamentary democracies with constitutional courts that exercise the power of constitutional review.<sup>6</sup>

A notable worldwide trend in constitutionalism has been the distribution to an independent judiciary of the power to declare legislative and executive acts unconstitutional (Tate and Vallinder, 1995). This is a critical constitutional means to stop the legislative and executive powers from being used to violate human rights or subvert democracy. A bill of rights

in a constitution may eloquently declare lofty words about rights to life, liberty, property, and various forms of social security. But these rights will be practically useless unless there is governmental machinery to enforce them against acts of despotism or neglect.

The constitutional courts of parliamentary democracies only respond to constitutional questions. Issues that pertain strictly to statutory interpretation, apart from the constitutionality of a law, usually are resolved by other courts, without action by the constitutional court. Unlike the American judiciary, these constitutional courts may provide opinions about the constitutionality of an act apart from the adversary process whereby a real case involving the act at issue is brought before the court by a prosecutor or someone filing suit against another party. Thus, these constitutional courts may render advisory opinions, which is not done by the American judiciary (Favoreu 1990). The essence of constitutional review by the constitutional courts, however, is the same as judicial review in the United States.

Another fundamental aspect of comparative constitutionalism in education for democracy pertains to different kinds of constitutional guarantees for human rights. In the United States of America, there has been a long-standing tradition of inherent or “unalienable” natural rights. Thus, in the American political tradition the constitutional government is expected to be the guarantor and protector of God-given rights possessed equally by each person prior to the establishment of the government. Indeed, the 1776 Declaration of Independence proclaims that “governments are instituted among men to secure these rights.” So, in the United States, there has been a long-standing tradition against the idea that rights are granted by the government.<sup>7</sup>

By contrast, the tradition of legal positivism prevails in the constitutions of many democracies in the world. In the Constitution of Latvia, for example, Article 89, states that rights are recognized and guaranteed only “in accordance with this Constitution, laws and international agreements binding upon Latvia” (Flanz and Ludwikowski 2002, 74).

The idea of negative constitutionalism is embedded in the Constitution of the United States. Thus, there are provisions in this Constitution that specifically prohibit the government from denying or abusing the natural rights of individuals. Negative constitutionalism is exemplified by Amendments 1-10 of the U.S. Constitution, which are commonly called the Bill of Rights. These amendments are directed against the power of government to stop it from depriving an individual of her or his civil liberties. Amendment I of the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights, for example, says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances" (Center for Civic Education 1997, 27).

Restrictions on the power of government to protect rights to liberty can be found in the constitution of every state in the world that is committed to constitutional democracy. For example, the kinds of rights guaranteed in the U.S. Bill of Rights can be found in the constitutions of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. So, all democratic countries practice negative constitutionalism as a means to guarantee certain human rights.

By contrast with the U.S. Constitution, however, the constitutions of Estonia and Lithuania also exemplify positive constitutionalism in regard to human rights; this means that the government is constitutionally directed to act affirmatively to provide certain social and economic rights to individuals. For example, the 1992 Constitution of Lithuania says in Article 41, "Citizens who demonstrate suitable progress should be guaranteed education at establishments of higher education free of charge." And in Articles 52 and 53 there are guarantees of rights to social, economic, and medical benefits: "The state shall guarantee the right of citizens to old age and disability pension, as well as to social assistance in the event of unemployment, sickness, widowhood, loss of the breadwinner. . . . The state shall take care of

people's health, and shall guarantee medical aid to citizens free of charge at state medical facilities. . . ." (Flanz and Ludwikowski, 2002, 127, 130).

Unlike the United States Constitution, positive constitutionalism in regard to rights is found in most constitutions of the world's democracies. In some constitutions, the guarantees of social, economic, cultural, and environmental rights are very great in number and broad in scope to the point of empowering the government to very amply intrude into the private lives of citizens and the operations of the civil society and economy to redistribute resources or otherwise promote social and economic equality of the citizenry.

In the United States, social and economic rights are not constitutionalized. Rather, social and economic rights are provided more or less through the legislative process. Thus, they may be expanded or narrowed or even eliminated through the enactment of laws. But they are not guaranteed by the Constitution.

Education for democratic citizenship should include lessons that require students to examine, compare, and evaluate human rights claims on government, which exemplify both negative and positive constitutionalism. And these lessons should involve comparative analysis and appraisal by students about alternative viewpoints concerning negative and positive constitutionalism and the extent to which social and economic rights should be guaranteed by a constitutional democracy. Through these lessons students should comprehend that availability of resources enables or limits a government's capacity to guarantee certain social and economic rights. Further, they should examine the possible threats to liberty that come from empowering a government beyond certain limits, even in the cause of equality, justice, and the common good. Insufficient limitations on the exercise of positive constitutionalism could lead directly to the possibility of despotism or even totalitarianism of the kind exercised by the discredited and defunct government of the Soviet Union.

A basic human right in a constitutional representative democracy is political participation, which is a means for citizens to influence public decisions and resolve public issues. In a democracy, voting in public elections is the typical type of political participation. But involvement in the activities of a political party, in the work of a political interest group, or in a public protest movement are other common forms of participation by citizens in a democracy.

Political participation in an autocratic or totalitarian regime may be extensive, but it is by command of the state. By contrast, political participation in a constitutional democracy is uncoerced by the state and its rulers, and it is limited legitimately only by the rule of law, which is anchored in the consent of the people.

Education for democracy should include comparative analysis of the extent and types of political participation in democratic and nondemocratic systems. For example, students should learn how citizens participate in political parties and how participation in voting and elections varies in a two-party system, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, by contrast with a multi-party system, such as India and Italy. The key point, however, is to note that like other generic characteristics of democracy, there is variation on the common theme of participation by citizens in the different democracies of the world. But there is an authentic democracy only when there is relatively unfettered freedom of citizens to participate in elections and between elections to influence decisions of the government. Through comparative and international inquiries, students of democracy should compare and assess the extent and methods of participation as a means to influence government in their country and in other countries.

However, if students would be engaged most productively in comparative lessons about constitutions, institutions, human rights, and participation, then they need a core curriculum that conjoins interactively the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that constitute competent

citizenship in any authentic democracy of our contemporary world. This educational imperative points to the fourth proposition in my statement of a compelling 21<sup>st</sup>-century civic mission of schools.

**Proposition 4: At all levels of preadult education and in programs of teacher preparation, we should provide a global, international, and comparative education for democracy in terms of four connected and interactive components or categories: civic knowledge, cognitive civic skills, participatory civic skills, and civic dispositions.<sup>8</sup>**

The four components of education for democracy are congruent with teaching and learning the six core concepts by which we define, compare, and evaluate democratic and nondemocratic governments. (See Table 2 in the Appendix to this paper.)<sup>9</sup> Civic knowledge, however, is primary. Content not process should be the foundation of the curriculum.<sup>10</sup>

Good comparative, international, and global education for democracy is anchored in civic knowledge. It emphasizes deep and abiding comprehension of the six concepts in Table 1 about the meaning and practice of democracy. These concepts should be learned in common by all students because they are widely accepted as the distinguishing categories and characteristics by which we judge whether a government is more or less democratic. As students mature, they should encounter and use the same interconnected core concepts in cycles of increasing depth and complexity and in relationship to an ever-broader scope of information. Mastery of this kind of common knowledge enables citizens to communicate and act together for common civic and political purposes. So common comprehension of core knowledge is the basis for the formation and maintenance of a civic community or democratic civil society.

Basic knowledge of democracy, its principles, practices, issues, and history, must be applied effectively to civic and political life if it would be learned thoroughly and used

constructively. Thus, a central facet of education for citizenship in a democracy must be the process by which students develop cognitive civic skills in the second component of Table 2. Cognitive civic skills enable citizens to identify, describe, organize, interpret, explain, compare, and evaluate information and ideas in order to make sense of their political and civic experiences.

The third component of Table 2 treats participatory civic skills, which enable citizens to influence public policy decisions and to hold accountable their representatives in government. In combination with cognitive civic skills, participatory civic skills are tools of citizenship whereby individuals, whether acting alone or in groups, can participate effectively to promote personal and common interests in response to public issues.

The fourth and final component of education for citizenship in a democracy pertains to civic dispositions, which are universal traits of character necessary to the preservation and improvement of a constitutional representative democracy. If citizens would enjoy the privileges and rights of their polity, they must take responsibility for them by promoting the common good and participating constructively in the political and civic life of the community. This kind of responsible citizenship depends upon the development and practice of traits such as self-restraint, civility, honesty, trust, courage, compassion, tolerance, temperance, fortitude, respect for the worth and dignity of individuals, and subordination of personal interests to promote the common good.

Effective education for citizenship in a democracy connects the four components in Table 2, which interrelate civic knowledge, cognitive civic skills, participatory civic skills, and civic dispositions. Effective teaching and learning of civic knowledge, for example, requires that it be connected to civic skills and dispositions in various kinds of activities. Elevation of one component over the other – for example, civic knowledge over skills or vice-versa – is a

pedagogical flaw that impedes civic learning. Thus, teachers should conjoin core content and processes by which skills and dispositions are developed among students.

Core content, however, is the indispensable foundation of an effective education for democracy (Torney-Purta et al. 2001). Individuals who have a deep and abiding comprehension of the prevailing principles of democracy, the big ideas that define democratic government and citizenship, are more likely than others to exhibit several desirable dispositions of democratic citizenship, such as a propensity to vote and otherwise participate in political and civic life, political tolerance, political interest, and concern for the common good (Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996). Students who comprehend core concepts tend to be more adept in their use of such cognitive skills as organization and interpretation of information, and they are more likely than others to know and retain information about current political institutions, personalities, and events.

Effective teachers of democracy do not stress discrete or unconnected information. Rather, they focus on integrated ideas of enduring importance; that is, they teach the framework of core concepts that enables the learners to know what democracy is and what it is not, to assess the extent to which their regime and other political systems in the world are more or less democratic, and to think comparatively, internationally, and globally about the various democratic and nondemocratic systems of the past and present. This kind of deep conceptual understanding of democracy is the key to my fifth and final statement about an appropriate 21<sup>st</sup>-century civic mission of schools, which pertains to the global appeal of democracy.

**Proposition 5: At all levels of preadult education and in programs of teacher preparation, we should examine the broadly accepted assumptions about the relative worth of democracy in comparison with alternative types of government.**

In using the six core concepts to comprehend, compare, and evaluate political systems, students should learn that democracy is generally assumed to be the best type of government; but it is not Utopia. It involves neither the pursuit nor promise of perfection. Further, students should recognize the inevitable disparities in every democracy between ideals and realities. These disparities, however, do not invalidate democracy. Rather, they should challenge students to become citizens committed to reducing the gap between ideals and realities in their polity.

Through comparative analysis of political systems of the past and present, students will learn that democracies have tended to be less imperfect than other types of government. Thus, they might conclude that democratic governments are better than nondemocratic types, because they are the least imperfect. Despite its flaws, democracy in practice has been better than other types of government in protecting human rights, promoting international peace, and fostering economic growth and widespread prosperity. These tangible advantages should be addressed prominently in education for democracy. Thus, students would learn not only what democracy is and how to do it; they would also learn why democracy is good in comparison to alternative types of government.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, values associated with democracy have become accepted universally. Human rights to civil liberty and legal equality are desired by people throughout the world. It seems that people everywhere, if given a choice, will choose democracy and the human rights that a constitutional democracy protects better than alternative forms of government.

Freedom in democracy is strongly associated with economic well being. For example, the fully free democracies in the annual Freedom House survey “account today for \$26.8 trillion

of the world's annual gross domestic product (GDP), which represents 86 percent of global economic activity." By contrast, the despotic and autocratic regimes of the world produced in 2002 only "\$2.2 trillion in economic output, representing 7 percent of the globe's GDP" (Karatnycky et al. 2002, 17). It seems that the free economic and social systems of a well-developed democracy can deliver the goods of wealth and prosperity. By contrast, the oppressive command economy of a totalitarian system is woefully unproductive.

Economic productivity and wealth also seem to be strong indicators of a sustainable democracy. According to a statistical study of democratic countries in the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, any democracy that had a per capita income of more than \$6,000 (in today's dollars) was sustainable. So, economic productivity through a market economy is a key to the durability of a democracy (Zakaria 2003, 69-70).

The prosperity and freedom in a constitutional democracy seem to encourage international peace. Political scientists and historians have gathered an impressive body of evidence to support the conclusion that "democracies rarely fight each other" (Russett 1993, 135). So a world dominated by democratic and free countries is likely to be a relatively peaceful world.

The positive characteristics and consequences of democracy should be a prominent part of a comparative, international, and global education for democracy. And the best case for democracy is made when we teach our students to compare and contrast it with the despotic and totalitarian alternatives to democracy. Totalitarianism, for example, is the antithesis of constitutional representative democracy. The state and its ruling party command (usually in the name of the people) all aspects of economic, social, and political life. The single party state suppresses alternative sources of power such as civil society organizations and market-based economic activity; it prevents or controls political, social, and economic pluralism; and it

controls the media of communication and education. There is a constitution, but there is not constitutionalism in the government, society, and economy. At its best the totalitarian state provides minimal economic and social security for the masses, but the cost is gross insecurity for the individual's rights to liberty and due process of law. And the productivity of a command economy is deplorable. So, at its best, the totalitarian regime is an undesirable alternative to an authentic constitutional, representative, and free democracy.<sup>11</sup>

By teaching the compelling global justifications for democracy, we develop public support needed to sustain it; and the survival of democracy anywhere depends upon wide and deep support among the people. Fortunately, there is ample evidence of strong popular support among most of the world's democracies. For example, a recently conducted international survey revealed that more than 80% of the people in the fully free democracies express "support for democracy as an ideal form of government" (Klingemann 1999, 45). In particular, the popular support for democracy in the U.S.A. was 88%, in Estonia 85%, in Latvia 79%, and in Lithuania 86%. Among the democratic countries of Latin America, the mean expression of popular support for the ideals of democracy was 86% (Klingemann 1999, 45-48).

Positive responses among citizens of democratic countries decline sharply, however, when regime performance is judged in terms of the ideals or principles of democracy. For example, only 25% of citizens in the U.S.A. judged regime performance favorably; in Estonia it was 22%, in Latvia 16%, and in Lithuania 17%. Among the democracies of Latin America, the mean expression of approval for regime performance was 23%. So, citizens of the world's genuine democracies tend to be highly supportive of what a democracy is supposed to be and greatly disappointed in how it is practiced (Klingemann 1999, 49-50).

The good news in these data is that democracy is clearly and overwhelmingly the preferred political system of the world's diverse peoples. The bad news is the low evaluations of

democratic regime performance in terms of the ideals of democracy. Even the bad news, however, has good overtones. Citizens of the world's democracies are ready and willing to think critically about regime performance. This trend can be healthy if it brings about constitutional and institutional reforms to strengthen the best practices of a democratic government (Norris 1999, 270).

A properly conceived and conducted 21<sup>st</sup>-century civic mission in schools can contribute mightily to both the maintenance and improvement of democratic regimes by educating each new generation to understand and use the core concepts by which we define democracy as an ideal type. Thus, citizens would develop competence to think critically in terms of core concepts about the performance of their government, so that the best of it can be retained and the rest of it improved. Finally, through this kind of civic education, students may learn that constitutional representative democracy lives or dies in the minds and hearts of citizens. Its success or failure depends ultimately on the knowledge, skills, habits, and actions of citizens and on the political, social, and economic conditions they create, and not merely on the cleverness or elegance of constitutional design or institutional structures.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have argued that a good education for democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond must be conceived and conducted comparatively, internationally, and globally. My conceptualization of an appropriate 21<sup>st</sup>-century civic mission in schools consists of five related propositions. By way of conclusion, I list them summarily to prompt critical review and reasonable response to them.

Proposition 1: At all levels of preadult education and in programs of teacher preparation, we should teach a global or universal definition of democracy so that students can compare and evaluate regimes according to a common and minimal world standard.

Proposition 2: At all levels of preadult education and in programs of teacher preparation, we should teach a short set of six core concepts by which students can think beyond the minimal global standard for an electoral democracy to compare and evaluate political systems more deeply and complexly.

Proposition 3: At all levels of preadult education and in programs of teacher preparation, we should use the set of six core concepts on the meaning and practice of democracy to structure comparative and international inquiry about constitutions, governmental institutions, human rights, and participation in the democracies of our world.

Proposition 4: At all levels of preadult education and in programs of teacher preparation, we should provide a global, international, and comparative education for democracy in terms of four connected and interactive components or categories: civic knowledge, cognitive civic skills, participatory civic skills, and civic dispositions.

Proposition 5: At all levels of preadult education and in programs of teacher preparation, we should examine the broadly accepted assumptions about the relative worth of democracy in comparison with alternative types of government.

If we would sustain and enhance democracy throughout the world, then citizens of each new generation must be taught what it is, how to do it, how to improve it, and why it is good, or at least better than the alternatives. My five propositions about a good 21<sup>st</sup>-century civic mission in schools might provoke you to think and act effectively to improve education for democracy throughout the world. If so, my mission in writing this paper will be fulfilled.

## APPENDIX

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**Table 1**  
**Concepts at the Core of a Global Education for Democracy**

1. REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY (REPUBLICANISM)
    - a. Popular sovereignty (government by consent of the governed, the people)
    - b. Representation and accountability in a government of, by, and for the people
    - c. Free, fair, and competitive elections of representatives in government
    - d. Comprehensive eligibility to participate freely to vote and campaign in elections
    - e. Inclusive and free political participation for personal and common interests
    - f. Majority rule of the people for the common good
  2. RULE OF LAW (CONSTITUTIONALISM)
    - a. Rule of law in the government, society, and economy
    - b. A government limited and empowered to secure human rights and maintain order
    - c. Equality, liberty, and justice under law
    - d. Separation and sharing of powers as a means to limited government
    - e. An independent judiciary, power of judicial/constitutional review
    - f. Negative and positive constitutionalism
  3. HUMAN RIGHTS (LIBERALISM)
    - a. Natural rights/constitutional rights to liberty, equality, and justice
    - b. Political or public rights
    - c. Personal or private rights
    - d. Economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights
    - e. Rights associated with negative and positive constitutionalism
    - f. Individual and collective rights
  4. CITIZENSHIP (CIVISM)
    - a. Membership in a people based on legal qualifications of citizenship
    - b. Rights, responsibilities, and roles of citizenship
    - c. Civic identity
    - d. Citizenship in a unitary, federal, confederal, or consociational system
    - e. Means and ends of political and civic participation
  5. CIVIL SOCIETY (COMMUNITARIANISM)
    - a. Voluntary membership in nongovernmental organizations or civil associations
    - b. Freedom of association, assembly, and social choice
    - c. Pluralism, multiple and overlapping group memberships and identities
    - d. Social regulation for the common good (rule of law, traditions, morals)
    - e. Civic participation for personal interests and the common good
    - f. Free and open social system
  6. MARKET ECONOMY (CAPITALISM)
    - a. Freedom of exchange and economic choice through the market
    - b. Protection of private property rights
    - c. Freedom to own and use property for personal gain and the public good
    - d. Economic regulation for the common good (rule of law, traditions, morals)
    - e. Free and open economic system
-

## APPENDIX

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**Table 2**  
**Components of a Global Education for Democracy**

1. GLOBAL AND INTERNATIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF DEMOCRACY  
(CIVIC KNOWLEDGE)
    - a. Universal concepts and principles on the substance of democracy
    - b. Perennial issues about the meaning and uses of core ideas
    - c. Landmark decisions about public policy and constitutional interpretation
    - d. Constitutions and institutions of representative democratic government
    - e. Practices of democratic citizenship and the roles of citizens
    - f. History of democracy in particular states and throughout the world
  
  2. UNIVERSAL INTELLECTUAL SKILLS OF CITIZENSHIP IN A DEMOCRACY  
(COGNITIVE CIVIC SKILLS)
    - a. Identifying and describing information about political and civic life
    - b. Analyzing and explaining information about political and civic life
    - c. Synthesizing and explaining information about political and civic life
    - d. Evaluating, taking, and defending positions on public events and issues
    - e. Thinking critically about conditions of political and civic life
    - f. Thinking constructively about how to improve political and civic life
    - g. Thinking comparatively, internationally, and globally about democracy
  
  3. UNIVERSAL PARTICIPATORY SKILLS OF CITIZENSHIP IN A DEMOCRACY  
(PARTICIPATORY CIVIC SKILLS)
    - a. Interacting with other citizens to promote personal and common interests
    - b. Monitoring public events and issues
    - c. Deliberating and making decisions about public policy issues
    - d. Influencing policy decisions on public issues
    - e. Implementing policy decision on public issues
    - f. Taking action to improve political and civic life locally, nationally, and globally
  
  4. UNIVERSAL OR GLOBAL DISPOSITIONS OF CITIZENSHIP IN A DEMOCRACY  
(CIVIC DISPOSITIONS)
    - a. Affirming the common and equal humanity, dignity, and worth of each person
    - b. Respecting, protecting, and exercising rights possessed equally by each person
    - c. Participating responsibly in the political and civic life of the community
    - d. Practicing self-restraint, personally and institutionally
    - e. Exemplifying the morality of democratic citizenship
    - f. Promoting the common good locally, nationally, and globally
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## Notes

1. Two widely accepted minimal definitions of democracy are provided by a highly respected political scientist, Samuel Huntington and a venerable institution, Freedom House, which has conducted since 1978 an annual authoritative survey of political rights and civil liberties throughout the world. Huntington says a political system is “democratic to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote” (1991, 7). And Freedom House puts forward this base-line criterion for democracy: “At a minimum, a democracy is a political system in which the people choose their authoritative leaders freely from among competing groups and individuals who were not designated by the government” (Karatnycky et al. 2002, 722). A preeminent political scientist, Robert Dahl, agrees generally with the preceding definitions. He says that at a minimum, “Democracy provides opportunities for effective participation, equality in voting, gaining enlightened understanding, exercising control over the agenda, [and] inclusion of adults” (1998, 38).

2. See the website of Freedom House to find statistics and commentary about the status of democracy and liberty in the world in different places and periods of world history: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>. Freedom House is a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization that studies and promotes democracy and freedom around the world. Through its widely respected annual global survey, Freedom House tracks the progress of democracy throughout the world.

3. In 2002, there were 59 countries in the “partly free” category. Only 36 of these “partly free” countries met the minimal standard for an electoral democracy. The other 23 countries in this “partly free” category did not qualify for the rating of an electoral democracy in 2002. In 2002, 23.8% of the world’s people lived in “partly free” countries.

4. The set of six core concepts on democracy is an ideal type by which to compare and appraise the performance of a polity as more or less democratic and free. This set of ideals is not practiced perfectly anywhere in the world. However, the model is a useful set of standards by which to distinguish democracy from nondemocracy and to assess the extent in which a country is more or less a democracy. The six core concepts in this ideal type model are discussed amply and worthily in the following works: Robert A. Dahl, *On Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Sanford Lakoff, *Democracy: History, Theory, Practice* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Paul Rahe, *Republics, Ancient and Modern* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Press, 1987); and Alain Touraine, *What is Democracy?* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997). See also the articles in Seymour Martin Lipset, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Democracy*, Four Volumes (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1995).

5. A previous formulation of this list of core concepts on citizenship in a democracy (Table 1) was developed by John J. Patrick and published in 1999. The current rendition of this list includes minor revisions. This list of core concepts was developed from an extensive review of literature on the theory and practice of democracy. A systematic discussion of each concept, its relationship to other concepts in this set, and the application of the set to civic education can be found in the first chapter of *Principles and Practices of Education for Democratic Citizenship: International Perspectives and Projects* (Patrick 1999, 1-40). Each concept in this list and its connections to other basic ideas in democratic theory can also be found, among much broader treatments of democratic ideas, in such widely recognized standard works on civic

education for democracy as *Civitas: A Framework for Civic Education* (Center for Civic Education 1991), *National Standards for Civics and Government* (Center for Civic Education 1994), and *An International Framework for Education in Democracy* (Center for Civic Education 2003). So, the core concepts in Table 1 can justifiably be presented as a generally acceptable and minimally essential set of ideas by which to construct the knowledge component of civic education in elementary and secondary schools as well as in civics-centered programs for teacher education.

6. I use the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to provide examples of comparative institutions and practices of democracy. I do this because of my familiarity with these three political systems. Since 1993, I have worked extensively in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as a partner in projects on education for democracy.

7. The natural law and natural rights tradition in the United States of America assumes that all people equally possess the same natural rights, which come from their Creator. These God-given rights are inherent in all members of the human species and thus are universal and immutable. This idea is deeply rooted in Western civilization. See John P. Coons and Patrick M. Brennan, *By Nature Equal: The Anatomy of a Western Insight*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

8. In recent years, there has been general agreement among civic educators about the four fundamental categories or components of education for citizenship in a democracy, which are (1) civic knowledge, (2) cognitive civic skills, (3) participatory civic skills, and (4) civic dispositions. These four categories, for example, were the interrelated components of the framework for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in Civics. This framework will be used again to guide the next NAEP in civics (NAEP Civics Consensus Project 1996, 17-19).

9. I emphasize the interrelationships and interactions among the four components.

Although it is convenient to depict the components statically in a four-tiered illustration (Table 2), I insist they be viewed and contemplated dynamically to emphasize continuous interactions of the categories in development and implementation of curriculum and instruction. As you respond to this discussion of the four-component model (Table 2), use your imagination to transcend the linear depiction of categories to visualize and ponder the complex and continuous connections of the components in use.

10. Research-based warrants for emphasis on deep conceptual understanding in civic education can be found in the recent IEA Civic Education Study conducted in 28 countries by Judith Torney-Purta and others, in the work on enlightened civic engagement among adults by Norman Nie and others (*Education and Democratic Citizenship in America*), and in the investigations of Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter on *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters*.

11. The enduring model of totalitarianism was constructed by Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski (1964). According to Abbott Gleason, this model or ideal type conceptualization is important because it states “what Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and the Soviet Union had in common.” In particular, the model emphasizes “a centrally directed economy” as a key characteristic of totalitarianism (Gleason 1995, 124-125).

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