Promoting students' ownership of their own education through critical dialogue and democratic self-governance

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Abstract

We define genuine education as students' active leisurely pursuit of critical examination of the self, life, society and the world. It is driven by the person's interests, inquiries, needs, tensions, and puzzlements. Thus, it is based on the students' ownership of their own education, rather than on the society's needs and impositions on the students. Hence, genuine education cannot be forced on the students, but rather the students need to be supported and guided to find and pursue their own education as their existential need. We view genuine education as students' authorship based on the students' learning activism. In our opinion, the primary condition for the students' ownership of their education is the students' freedom to participate in making decisions about their education. In our paper, we discuss pedagogical experimentation aimed at promoting learning activism and ownership of their own education through critical dialogue and democratic self-governance.

However, to our surprise, we found out that merely engaging students in decision making about their own education does not work for many students. After several years of practicing the Open Syllabus pedagogical regime in our undergraduate and graduate classes, we have experienced and abstracted two major mutually related problems: a problem of "culture" and a problem of "self-failure." The issue of "culture" involved a tension between building a new democratic educational culture while practicing it. We also found that our undergraduate and graduate education students do not follow their own freely chosen educational commitments, and thus they feel betrayed by themselves. Analyzing students' reflections on the self-failures, we found that they felt pressured by life and institutional survival and necessities. Because of that, they did not have the luxury of prioritizing their own educational self-commitments. In response to this and other concerns, we developed a hybrid pedagogical regime, called Opening Syllabus. We focus on tensions within this new, hybrid pedagogical regime, by analyzing students' reflections and contributions in class.

Keywords

critical dialogue, ontologic dialogic pedagogy, democratic self-governance,
Democratic governance of schools. Council of Europe Publishing Editions du Conseil de l'Europe. Democratic governance of schools. Elisabeth Bäckman and Bernard Trafford. Council of Europe Publishing. (c) Management and day-to-day Leadership recognises and issues/routines recognise promotes shared ownership and the rights of those affected responsibility of all stakeholders. by decisions: execution of decisions respects ethical. dimension and human dignity. Active participation. Promoting students’ ownership of their own education through critical dialogue and democratic self-governance. Article. Full-text available. We define genuine education as students’ active leisurely pursuit of critical examination of the self, life, society and the world. It is driven by the person’s interests, inquiries, needs, tensions, and puzzlements. Thus, it is based on the students’ ownership of their own education, rather than on the society’s needs and impositions on the students. Hence, genuine education cannot be forced on the students, but rather the students need to be supported and guided to find and pursue their own education as their existential need. We view genuine education as students’ authorship based on the st... There are two pillars of democratic education: Self-determined learning. A learning community based on equality and mutual respect. Apple (1995) discusses that democratic education means that children and teachers engage in collaborative planning, reaching decisions that are in the interest of both their aspirations and desires. Democratic approach says that students and teachers should go hand-in-hand. They should participate in not only teaching practice but also the curriculum. Democratic education is about opening doors of opportunity and opening minds as students make their own pathways into the world. Beane & Apple (1995) explain by research that young people are more interested to learn through experience.