

## DEVELOPING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP SKILLS THROUGH EDUCATION GROUNDED IN DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVES

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### Abstract

This article analyzes the role of education based on democratic values in shaping global citizenship competencies. It explores the theoretical foundations and historical roots of democratic education, as well as its contemporary practices within education systems. The paper highlights the democratization process of education and its role in developing civic responsibility and critical thinking skills. It emphasizes the importance of democratic education in fostering citizenship competencies and outlines the necessary conditions for the effective implementation of this process.

**Keywords:** Democracy, education, citizenship competencies, democratic education, critical thinking, civic responsibility, democratization of education, global citizenship.

### Introduction

In the 21st century, the development of education systems aimed at nurturing democratic values is a critical factor for both individual and social progress in a global society. Education serves not only to impart knowledge but also to cultivate cultural, moral, and political awareness, helping individuals understand their roles and civic responsibilities in society. As such, education is a key instrument for developing global citizenship competencies.

The concept of democracy and its role in education has been studied since antiquity in philosophy and pedagogy. From the social education ideas of Plato and Aristotle to the democratic education theories of J. Rousseau and contemporary educators, democratic principles have become central to modern educational processes.

This article examines the role and significance of education based on democratic values in shaping citizenship competencies. It further analyzes democratization processes within modern education systems and the integration of human rights and equality principles in education.

### Methods

This research adopts a qualitative, theoretical analysis combined with a descriptive case study methodology. Key theoretical frameworks on democracy and education were reviewed, drawing from primary philosophical sources and contemporary policy documents, including the Council of Europe's Charter on Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education. Additionally, the study employs a case study of the Summerhill School to illustrate practical implementation of democratic education principles. Data were collected from academic literature, policy documents, and historical records to analyze educational practices that embody democratic values and their outcomes on citizenship competencies.



## Discussion

Democracy, as a social and political concept, has historically been studied as a fundamental form of social relations. Its reflection in education systems contributes to the formation of equal rights, freedoms, and civic responsibility among individuals.

According to the Council of Europe, “the most effective way to teach democracy is in a democratic environment.” The Council’s Charter on Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education defines “democratic citizenship education” as a comprehensive process involving education, preparation, enlightenment, information dissemination, practical training, and activities.[1] This process equips learners with knowledge, skills, and understanding, develops their attitudes and behaviors, and expands their ability to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, appreciate diversity, and actively participate in democratic life, ultimately promoting democracy and the rule of law.

The renewal of education systems through democratization arises from societal needs and the changing demands placed on individuals by society. “Democratic education requirements involve training qualified specialists in higher education institutions, who form a complex set of necessary conditions for the harmonious development of the individual in a democratizing environment.” Central to such systems are democratic values instilled progressively from early childhood, primarily knowledge about human rights, the right to choose, and the right to equality.[2]

This approach results in the formation of individuals with the most active civic positions and the highest political competence. One of the main objectives is “not only to provide learners with knowledge, understanding, and skills but also to develop their readiness to act in society to promote human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.”

The history of democratic education is grounded in humanistic relationships and free communication between teachers and learners, dating back to antiquity. The educational ideas of Plato and Aristotle laid the foundation for the schools of Ancient Greece. Later, the ideas of educational accessibility and humanistic education were developed by Francis Bacon, John Locke, Michel Foucault, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and others.

For example, Rousseau’s *Emile, or On Education* presents education not as coercion by the teacher but as the discovery of useful knowledge through personal experience. Rousseau describes the physical, moral, and intellectual development stages of a child, viewing education as mentorship where the teacher facilitates independent and open thinking rather than imposing rules. He advocates giving children freedom of choice rather than forcing them to learn.[]

I. Berlin’s ideas align with Rousseau’s, emphasizing that education enables people to understand the essence of freedom. Berlin divides freedom into “negative” (freedom from external interference and coercion) and “positive” (the ability to set limits to negative freedom). Thus, individual development and education progress along the path of positive freedom.[2]

Michel Foucault conceptualizes education philosophy as a general theory of modern human development within social relations. He describes it as a system of knowledge-power intertwined with control mechanisms at all societal levels, observable in institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons, and barracks. Foucault considers the education system a dominant form of discourse in society, playing a key role in the appropriation of discourse and ranking social subjects. Despite declared democracy, Foucault asserts that the education system does not



guarantee that all voices are equally heard in the public domain. This critique applies primarily to modern school and university models with specialized and in-depth study areas.[4]

The main principles of democratic education are equality, freedom, respect, and civic responsibility. The Council of Europe's human rights and democracy education documents emphasize incorporating these principles into education systems.

A significant 20th-century achievement in democratic education is the Summerhill School, renowned worldwide for its unique democratic governance and personal choice freedom. Founded in 1921 by English educator Alexander Neill, Summerhill respects students' personal freedoms and autonomy in managing their educational processes. Unlike traditional schools, Summerhill students plan their own time, choose whether or not to attend classes, and participate equally in school governance.

Summerhill's democratic governance is carried out through school meetings where students and teachers have equal voting rights. Important school issues, including rules, discipline, and activities, are discussed and decided collectively. This democratic system fosters responsibility, free expression, and active social participation skills in students.

One of Summerhill's core principles is children's personal freedom of choice, allowing students to pursue education aligned with their interests and needs, thereby increasing motivation and supporting personal development. Neill emphasized that "children should not be forced to learn but should choose to acquire knowledge voluntarily." This approach makes education more humane and flexible, preparing students to make independent decisions in their personal and social lives.[5]

### Results

Findings confirm that education grounded in democratic principles significantly contributes to developing global citizenship competencies, including critical thinking, civic responsibility, and respect for diversity. Theoretical foundations and historical insights underscore the importance of freedom and equality as cornerstones of democratic education. Practical application, as demonstrated by Summerhill, reveals that democratic governance and learner autonomy enhance motivation and personal development, preparing individuals to engage effectively in democratic societies.

However, challenges remain in translating democratic ideals into educational practice broadly. Foucault's perspective reminds educators to critically assess power relations and strive for inclusivity within democratic frameworks. Effective democratization of education requires systemic reforms, teacher training, and policy support to embed human rights and democratic values consistently.

### Conclusion

This study suggests that integrating democratic principles into education systems is essential for nurturing global citizenship skills critical for the complex demands of contemporary society. Future research should explore diverse educational contexts and longitudinal impacts on citizenship development.



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