

Students' and Teachers' Understanding of the Concept of Democracy in the State of Jammu & Kashmir, India

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Abstract

The purpose of this research study is to comprehend secondary school students' and teachers' sentiments concerning democracy in the state of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K). The key intention was to explore how school education plays a major role in infusing the ideas and values of democracy among students and teachers of J&K. To scrutinise the understanding of this concept, an exploratory study has been conducted. A total of 512 students and 84 teachers from 10 schools in 5 different districts of J&K have been selected as samples by using purposive/ convenience sampling method. The researcher applied a self-developed questionnaire with semi-structured interviews, focused group discussions and classroom observation as a part of the required field work. The findings of the study indicate that conceptualisation of the term 'democracy' amongst students is most commonly associated with some facets of liberal democracy through a general focus on elections and voting, majority rule and individual civil liberties. An aspect of consciously idealistic conception of democracy has been also found. Democracy is understood as a utopia that maintains equality, liberty, unity, and the constitutional rights. Overall, democracy, in reasonable terms, appears more common than what we might have initially presumed. Moreover, although the evidence is mixed, it appears that interpretations are more prevalent based on ideas of freedom and liberty. One central implication of the study will be fruitful to present curriculum and pedagogical practices to develop democratic classroom processes which can help to heal conflict hit society and instil hope for better future.

Keywords: Concept of Democracy; Democratic Theory; Democracy Education.

Backdrop of the Study

The state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) which is also known as 'heaven on earth' is due to its extraordinary characteristics. For a state that is often labeled as "disturbed" the continuous disruption of peace comes through violent insurgent activities of the separatist groups like stone-pelting and killing of innocent people (Andrabi, 2017). In the past three decades (approx.), there has also been seen an increased radicalization among the youth in J&K. Thus, it becomes imperative that the students are provided with a kind of education which can help them in understanding the significance of peace. They should be shown a path which they can follow so that they become more socially responsible and work towards restoration of the harmony in the state by raising their voices against the separatist activities and curbing the separatist tendencies in the valley (EFSAS, 2018). The above said can take place by creating conducive conditions for learning and promoting education, knowledge, skills and an attitude needed to bring about behavioural change that will enable adolescents, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural and help

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to resolve conflict peacefully. The primary focus of this study has been to help - directly or indirectly, the educators in promoting the kind of education which will thereby play a pivotal role in making the state of J&K a peaceful and democratic state to live in (Malik & Majid, 2016). The term 'democracy' plays a significant role in this respect and its need is widely felt in a state like J&K. It helps in understanding the concept of justice, liberty, fraternity, equality along with the notion of active participation, self-governance, associative living, civic duties and responsibilities etc. (Sarwar et al., 2010; Daher, 2012; Broom, 2017). How people view, understand, and experience the concept of 'democracy' impacts their ability to interact with others in their communities. The term 'democracy' hence, is not only regarded as a form of government, but it is also considered as a way of life (Fuchs & Roller, 2018). In a democratic system, all citizens are entitled to their basic rights and efficiently follow their duties. Democracies always demand people's participation at the maximum level (Dundar, 2012; Tonga's, 2014). A democratic environment makes it possible for people to have access to liberty, equality and justice and grow in an environment where they can improve themselves (Mohanty 1986; Mathe, 2016).

Education plays a significant role in promotion of democracy. It also helps in democratic living, strengthening the spirit of nationalism, upholding peace and harmony. (Dewey, 1996; Dalton et al., 2007; Thogersen, 2011). Education plays an important role in upgrading and polishing of the knowledge of students and in helping them develop their own philosophical, sociological and psychological ideas and values which they use later. These values get engrained in the students and they then carry forward it to the next generation who emulate their teachers and look up to them as their guides and role models (Arora, 2013; Kus & Cetin, 2014; Munck, 2016). It also has the role of preparing citizens to think critically and act democratically. Teaching democracy relates reflection, action, community and politics of each other; it includes democratic processes of participation in decision making (Couto, 1998). Hence, the additional key intention of the study has been to explore how education plays a major role in instilling the ideas and values of democracy among students who can later become the harbingers of these values for their future generations. How it helps the young students to be critical and responsible citizens and what role has education played and presently playing in strengthening their bonds with the state/ nation?

Formal education happens in schools, where a different kind of learning happens. In a school, the students get the basic idea of society and their surroundings and are able to clarify their ideas with their teacher and mates (Vinterek, 2010; Weasel, 2017; Feu et al., 2017). Therefore, a school becomes an important place for learning about democracy. In schools, democracy is taught to students through activities and readings. This is the place which gives the idea of society and how basic theories work in society (Grossman, 2008). School is the place where students place their doubts on the concepts of society and with the help of teachers they try to decode it. (NCF, 2005; Jacob & Power, 2016; Al-Zubi, 2017). The school environment and classroom culture helps in teaching democratic knowledge, attitudes, values, and behaviours (Doganay, 2010). Students cannot acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills to successfully become conscious citizens without the simultaneous democratization of schools and school systems (Zyngier, 2012). Hence, the school environment, the classroom culture and practices play a significant role in shaping the notion of 'democracy' among students. The classroom culture and practices accomplished by a teacher also signifies teacher's conceptualisation of the concept of 'democracy' in true sense.

The social science curriculum also plays a significant role in this respect. Social science has been carrying the responsibility to nurture the young students as responsible, committed and critically aware citizens for the

nation (Jain, 2005). Social science not only helps us to understand social pursuits from different angles but also teaches us to look at the world with a broader vision so that sensitive thinking and compassion towards society can be developed (Batra, 2010). Ergo, the focus of the study has also been to look at the social science curriculum of schools and explore how it can help the students and teachers in learning and in becoming more critical, democratic, reflective and committed citizens.

Based on the identified needs, the study focused on the below mentioned specific objectives:

1. To analyse school education program for the promotion of democracy among students and teachers of J&K.
2. To make the concept of democratic institutions understood among students and teachers of J&K.
3. To study the conceptual understanding of democratic values among students and teachers of J&K.
4. To understand whether schools encourage and promote student's autonomy and participation in the decision making process at school level.

In the paragraphs that follow, we discuss how we framed this study conceptually, theoretically and methodologically.

The Notion of Democracy

Etymologically, the word 'democracy' is derived from two Greek words 'demos' which means 'the people' and 'kratos' which means 'the rule', giving the word 'democracy' its true meaning "rule of the people". However, the term democracy has roots in the 'Magna Carta', England's "Great Charter" of 1215 that was the first document to challenge the authority of the king, subjecting him to the rule of law and protecting his people from feudal abuse.

A more general definition, from the Cambridge English Dictionary, states that democracy is 'the belief in freedom and equality between people or it is a system of government based on this belief, in which power is either held by elected representatives or directed by the people themselves.' Another general definition of democracy, from the Collins English Dictionary, emphasizes the social and political nature of the term, 'the practice or spirit of social equality.'

However, the most general definition of democracy, which is a term explored not only in the political arena, but also in every zone of society and everyday life, is that it is "a system focused on the rule of the people" (Dogan, 2005). Democracy makes sense in a system as long as it is based on political justice and freedom of the citizen. Democracy can be described in this form as a structure, a way of governance and existence, where a person can freely decide, as a political being, how to determine his/her place in society; and a way of life (Gokce, 2009).

Individual and group activity, both play a crucial role in defining democracy as a way of life. Democratic principles are also a top priority in interpersonal relations, relations between individual entities and organizational policies (Kincal, 2004). Even Dewey (1996) points out that democracy is a way of life based on experiences of communicating with people and therefore, allows people to communicate. In this way, it removes class differences and biases that may impede the establishment of contact between individuals. It is for the same reason that people's actions in democracies should be taken into account. As can

be understood from the above statements, democracy is basically a people created mechanism that organizes relationships between individuals, groups, and organizations, as well as the organization of government bodies.

Further, it can be stated that democracy, which typically upholds the principles such as peace, tolerance and the ethos of living together, is a system that also retains values such as justice, involvement in decision-making, human value, the rule of law, freedom of thought, accountability, loyalty, compassion, pluralism and equal opportunities (Yesil, 2002). It is a democratic process in which people have a voice in political power; and it guarantees values such as: justice, fairness, openness, and exchange of ideas. It is a democratic way of life that assures and protects people with the greatest equality (Buyukkaragoz, 1995).

The literature in this area also revealed that there is a variety in understanding democracy. There is a subjective quality of democracy (Fuchs & Roller, 2018). There is a normative concept of democracy (Broom, 2017). There is also a 'thin' conception of democracy with voting and elections as central to democracy (Zyngier, 2011). However, in the idealistic conception, democracy is found as a utopia that is based on the descriptions like perfect equality, liberty, unity, respect, voting, human rights and freedom, self-government of public, rights and responsibilities, justice and all Constitutional rights (Kubow, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on three political concepts that are predominant in the philosophy of democracy: **liberal democracy**, **participatory democracy** and **deliberative democracy**. All these three dimensions offer different views on the role of the citizen in a democracy and on the state-citizen relationship.

The liberal view of democracy focuses on individual citizens and their interests instead of the 'common good'. Citizens mainly act as voters, and politicians are their leaders, defending their positions, vying for votes (Schumpeter, 1994). The value of individual rights, meant to protect the independence of the person, is strongly interwoven with this individualistic understanding of politics. Behrouzi (2005) argued that this definition of democracy misrepresents the "true" idea of democracy as "rule by the people." He used the term "audience democracy" to demonstrate that the role of electorate is mainly "reactive"; it is left to respond to questions pre-defined by 'political advertising' through opinion polls, mass media and legislators. This criticism is reflective of several claims in modern democratic philosophy against competitive principles of democracy.

Participatory democracy is the second core concept in the philosophy of democracy. Behrouzi (2005) saw the mission of "rescuing the true significance of democracy" as the most important aspect of the participatory democracy movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The central idea was that free and fair election was not enough: a true democracy requires higher levels of citizen participation and decision-making power. Rasch (2004) argued that in a participatory perspective, democracy must be seen as a goal in itself by contributing to its member's self-realization. The idea that active participation will help create truly democratic citizens was essential in Pateman's (1970) work on participation in local and micro processes in workplaces, and in Dewey's (1916) insistence on increased participation opportunities. Dewey (1916) also challenged the idea of majority rule, questioning how a plurality becomes a majority and the antecedent processes.

Third, from the early 1990s, the idea of deliberative democracy began to develop. In the notion that decision-making processes require deliberation, theories of deliberative democracy emerged from participatory democracy. Deliberative democratic processes are considered to turn the interests and views of individuals into “positions that are morally and rationally justified and convergent” (Behrouzi, 2005). According to Behrouzi (2005), the main driving force behind these transformations are the power of reason, the morals of the participants and the consideration of the common good, as well as the idea that decision-making is first and foremost consensus-building (Habermas, 1995).

Based on the work, on addressing the quality of democracy, Munck (2016) discussed an expanded and minimal definition of democracy, which was meant to unite the two perspectives. His minimal definition was “electoral democracy”, while his expanded definition suggested that democracy includes political freedom, political equality, decision-making by governments, and the political social environment.

Democracy and Education

According to Franklin D. Roosevelt, **“Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.”** Dewey (1916) also emphasized on the role of schools in developing citizens that have proper knowledge and skills necessary to act for the common good in a democracy. He supported the idea of citizen preparation for a successful democracy and related democracy with education with a suggestion to ensure qualitative democracy; we must empower the youth with knowledge of their rights and duties, as well as make them responsible towards social and economic issues in society. In this way, education is the prime instrument in the creation and development of a democratic society. In the same vein, Arora, (2013) described democracy as **‘an experiment in living’** emphasizing that education is not merely a preparation for living, but it is living itself. There is a close relationship between education and democracy, as education helps in the preservation and growth of a democracy.

Likewise, Mohanty (1986) described democracy and education to bear a reciprocal relation, but it was the democratic thought that takes the lead in introducing democratic education. Democracy lays the foundation for education and education is essential for the perpetuation of democracy and for achieving the ends of democratic civilization. He also stated that if we want to provide democratic education, the entire educational system: philosophy, organization, methodology, management and so on, have to be geared to the desired objectives and oriented to the principles of democracy, this is called a democratization of education. In his words **“democratization means equality of educational opportunity, high productivity, maximization of good qualities, realization of democratic principles and precepts into practices.”**

Thinkers, such as J.S Mill, John Dewey, Karl Manheim have also expressed conditions under which democracy can be expected to function effectively, some of which relates to qualities of the mind and character that are supposedly necessary for democratic citizens. Education helps in instilling these qualities of mind and character, enabling a democratic citizen to work for the preservation and promotion of a democratic society. Mill viewed education not as a matter of just schools, colleges and universities, though these are, of course, important as institutions where educative influence is concentrated and focused on clearly formulated goals. He contends that, along with these, the home, the local community, at work and at

leisure, all are potent educators. He reinforces the relevance of an 'educative democracy', for the protection of a democratic setup, where in the individual learns about democratic ideals, not only in educational institutions, but in its total environment and in the totality of people's lives. The extent, to which it achieves this, becomes the principal criterion of its status as a democracy (Garforth, 1980). Mosher R.L. et al. (1994) have suggested in, **Education for Democracy and Full Human** that "we believe in the intellectual development of the students that helps and ensures the civic and political participation of all citizens in a democracy."

In India, we have been valuing democracy since independence. The Constitution framers emphasized the significance of India's democratic ideals for the wellbeing of its citizens and this focus on the development of active, democratic citizenship, is visible in the aims of several education policies and commissions set up from time to time (Dushi, 2010). University Education Commission (1948-49) outlined one major aim of education, that is to train the learners for democracy. Similarly, Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) took note of the country's changing circumstances in the post-independence period and reaffirmed that educational priorities would concentrate on the development of democratic citizenship. The Commission also stated that education, which is national in character, must develop in its citizen's habits, attitudes and qualities of character and equip them to cope with life situations, in the changing economic structure. Equally, in the Kothari Commission (1964-66), emphasis has been laid on national integration and making children understand, through education, that democracy is not only a form of government, but is a way of life. For the success of the democracy, citizens are required to be well versed with not only the rights to which they are entitled but also with their duties. The major policy measures of National Policy on Education (1986) also referred to education as enshrined in the Constitution to establish ideals of democracy, communism and secularism. The NPE recommended that all students under the national education system should have access to education of comparable quality; it further sought to have a common educational framework including a common core under the National Curriculum Framework core. The POA (Programme of Action 1992) also updated the NPE 1986 and further proposed a variety of methods in which overall education can enrich the roots of the socio-political system.

Methodology of the Study

Research Design

Keeping in view the objectives, the investigators conducted an exploratory study by selecting qualitative approach for the study. However, the investigators selected this approach in order to capture the enthusiasm, concerns, perspectives and opinions of both- students and teachers in their own words.

Population and Sample

Although the population of the present study are the secondary school students and teachers in the state of J&K, however, the target population is restricted only to secondary schools of five districts of J&K: Jammu, Udhampur, Srinagar, Baramulla, and Budgam. After selection of five districts the researchers purposively selected ten secondary schools (two from each district) as the research site of the study. Then all the available teachers in the identified schools and students of classes IX to XII were taken as sample. A total of 84 teachers and 512 students formed the sample of the study. The details about the sample are given in the following table.

Table 1 Sampling Description						
District	No. of Schools	No. of Teachers	No. of Students	No. of Classroom Observation	No. of FGDs with Students	No. of Interviews with Teachers
Jammu Region						
Jammu	02	6+7=13	30+46=76	02	02 (One in each School)	02 (One in each School)
Udhampur	02	6+8=14	39+60=99	02	02 (One in each School)	02 (One in each School)
Kashmir Region						
Srinagar	02	8+10=18	36+28=64	02	02 (One in each School)	02 (One in each School)
Baramulla	02	9+10=19	46+137=183	02	02 (One in each School)	02 (One in each School)
Budgam	02	8+12=20	36+54=90	02	02 (One in each School)	02 (One in each School)
Total	10	84	512	10	10	10

Tools Used

In order to obtain detailed information from the respondents (teachers & students) regarding the concept of democracy, the following tools were developed and used by the investigators.

Classroom Observation

A classroom observation schedule was prepared with the intention to observe classroom culture: classroom characteristics, content and interpretation, teaching-learning process, specific pedagogic techniques used by the teachers and to note student-teacher interactions. Moreover, the underlying reason behind the development of this tool was to make a triangulation and cross-validation of data with the questionnaire, interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

Questionnaire for Students

A questionnaire was developed for students. The student questionnaire comprised of twenty-one multiple choice items, where the students were given full freedom to choose more than one option as their answer. Further the questionnaire was divided under two broad themes such as understanding on the concept of democracy which included fourteen items and the role of the teacher and school which included seven items.

The underlying reason behind the development of this tool was to capture rich data related to the concept of democracy along with its practices in classrooms, schools and in the society.

Questionnaire for Teachers

A questionnaire was also prepared for teachers. The teacher questionnaire was divided under three broad sections - the first section had ten multiple choice items, where the teachers were also given full freedom to choose more than one option as their answer. The second section had twenty-three statements which were given in five-point rating scale starting from Always (A) to Never (N). Finally, the last section constituted of sixteen statements which were also given in a five-point rating scale starting from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SDA). The underlying reason behind the development of these tools was also to capture as rich data as possible related to the concept of democracy along with its practices in classrooms, schools and in society.

Focus Group Discussion with Students

FGD as a tool was developed for students. The tool was developed with the key intention to find out students' perception about the concept of democracy along with discussion about their own experiences in classroom, school and in community.

Interview Schedule for the Teachers

The researchers developed a semi-structured interview schedule, by taking help and opinions of the experts and peer group to collect in-depth data from the teachers about their own experiences in classroom, school, and in community in relation to the concept of democracy.

Findings of the study

Social Science Textbooks in J&K

A detailed chapter wise analysis of the Social Science textbooks from classes 6th to 10th was done which revealed that political science text books for classes 6th to 8th were very general in nature and content, nothing specific existed in the books to teach any concept substantially. The books only talked about what existed in the surroundings. The books 'Social and Political Life' did not represent the political life of society, adequately. More stress was given on social life and a sociological outlook; the researchers feel that it is inappropriate that the appreciation of democracy is not given its due importance. It mostly talked about and over emphasized the caste system and women rights, but there were other issues, which needed to be addressed but were not listed. In the same vein, the political science textbooks for class 9th and 10th were positive in developing democratic and citizenship skills. They give space to the concept of democracy. Overall books are theory oriented and need a revamping in terms of practical learning of democracy.

The current books of social science can only sensitize students about different issues, but do not help to give them any practical knowledge about the same. For instance, in **Social and Political Life**, the books were full of social issues, but nothing related to political awareness was mentioned in the text. There are some chapters, where there are no linkages with the previous chapters. Thus, students may not be able to make much sense out of these chapters. Hence, continuity along with linkages with previous chapters should be taken into account. In addition to above, it is also essential that the review of the textbooks should be done

from time to time, so that the upcoming concerns can be added and perspectives which were left out could be given due space. The Social Science books also need to be revised, with reference to the political perspective.

The School Environment and Classroom Culture

The study would remain incomplete unless we discuss the role of school environment and classroom culture in the promotion of the notion of ‘democracy.’ In response to this, observation was done and the observation schedule was characterized under three heads viz. classroom characteristics, content of study and its interpretation, the teaching methodology or classroom process. The first dimension ‘classroom characteristics’ was studied under two interrelated categories: physical characteristics and psycho-human characteristics. Physical characteristics refer to the apparently non-human aspects, which include the infrastructure, availability of resources, and the surroundings. It was observed that very few classrooms are fully endowed with satisfactory physical environment. Only schools which were situated in city areas or at the centre of the cities were found fully endowed with satisfactory physical environment in the classrooms, otherwise in other schools the size of the classroom was not according to the strength of students, rather it was found fully crowded and there was no scope for organising any activity. The picture is more appalling in case of schools situated in grey areas of that district. In response to the sitting arrangements, it was also observed that the classroom environment was not democratic in nature because high performance students were found in the first or second row of the class. Further in connection to sitting arrangements, boys and girls in every school were also found sitting separately. Nowhere boys and girls were observed sitting together in the classroom. This is an indicator of the perception of gender inequality among students and teachers of the schools. None of the classrooms were found suitable for Children with Special Needs (CWSN). Only three schools out of ten had provision of ramp. Hence, in connection to classroom characteristics, we can say that there is much scope for improvement. Regarding psycho-human characteristics, relations among students and relations among student-teachers is found satisfactory in many cases. In addition, it was found that the role of teacher has been shifted from authoritative to that of a facilitator. During observation, it was also noticed that teachers were listening to the students’ views and encouraging them for expression and group responsibilities.

In connection to the second dimension ‘content and interpretation’, it was found that very few teachers were able to connect topic with local examples and situations. They were often found sticking to the textbook; as a result, students were also not able to relate many concepts to their daily life. Similarly, it was also observed that teachers ignored and avoided discussion on a debatable concept. The same kinds of responses were received when teachers were provided statement to rate whether they involve their students in discussions about socio-political issues or issues that ought to be perceived as controversial. Less than one quarter of sampled teachers reported that they do so. In connection to use of learning models, it was observed that most of the classes were in lecture method and reading from the textbook. In history classes, teachers used more of a standard lecture, with some questions going back and forth. In other classes teachers were found teaching the lesson directly from the textbook. They felt the pressure to get through the syllabus and to stick to the assigned material. Consequently, not even in a single classroom was it found where the teacher was using a unique learning model.

In context to the third and most important dimension ‘the teaching methodology’, it was observed, that remarkable changes have been occurring in the teaching learning process, although most of the classes were

found in lecture mode but still the idea of respect, freedom, equity and equality were quite visible in the classrooms. With specific reference to the use of language in classroom it was observed that the teacher used language keeping in mind the nature and diversity of the classroom, as many times it was found, along with Hindi, teachers were also using local language to clarify the concepts. In this way, they try to take into consideration the needs of all students while teaching. However, similar situation was not found when it came to cognitive ability recognition. It's a matter of irony that in most of the classes, teachers were not acknowledging diversity and individual differences. Further, most of the teachers said that they valued class discussion, dialogue and debate as key teaching methods, but mostly discussion was more of a Socratic exchange. No formal debates were observed in any of the classes. Debate only happened occasionally and spontaneously when learners disagreed on certain issues. Teachers kept a tight rein on discussion, and sometimes even suppressed it entirely. During discussion, teachers came up with their own reasons why debate was occasionally inappropriate. First, they suggested they had such a packed syllabus resulting in very little time for discussion and debate. Second, debates tend to get heated very quickly. This could happen along racial lines, which teachers sought to avoid. Third, the formal rules of debate, such as taking turns, using points and counterpoints, are not taught, resulting in the situation to spiral out of control. Fourth, teachers sometimes feel that learners do not have enough background and facts to have a productive debate. In connection to use of ICT to make teaching-learning process more alive and effective, it was observed that all sampled schools were not adequately and evenly equipped with peripheral hardware. Overall picture on availability of computers and peripheral hardware in all schools was not sufficient for unlimited as well as multiple uses by the students and teachers. None of the sampled schools had hardware facilities for differently abled children. Further, access to computer by teachers was primarily provided in the dedicated computer room/computer lab. None of the sampled schools has access to computer facilities in the classroom.

In addition to these three dimensions, certain items were also included in the observation schedule to study positive component of democracy like equality, respect for others, freedom, collective wellbeing, rights and responsibilities, rule of law & peace, and democratic practices. In addition to the component '**equality**' it was revealed that majority of teachers concentrate on equality as most of the time they were found encouraging their students to develop attitudes for collaborative problem solving, providing equal chance to all students in all scholastic and co-scholastic activities and also allowing their students to learn co-operatively in groups with other students. In response to the component 'respect for others', it was found that teachers also emphasized on it, as they were seen encouraging their students to understand divergent viewpoints of other peers and appreciate each other's talent.

Regarding '**freedom**' it was found that teachers were acknowledging the existence of basic freedom in their classroom such as, freedom of thought, freedom of speech etc. Further, they also believe in giving proper space and scope to students for active participation and allowing students to ask questions. In response to the component of 'collective wellbeing' it was observed that majority of teachers encouraged students to be engaged in group activities so as to realize their rights and responsibilities in a group. But when it comes to community work it was found that students rarely took part in community work to help people in community.

In response to the component '**rule of laws and peace**' it was revealed that in cent per cent of school students learn to abide by and respect the laws, learn about the need and ways to protect the environment and promotion of human rights. In response to the component 'rights and responsibilities' it was found that most of the teachers were aware about their rights and responsibilities and also giving importance

to it as they were emphasizing on democratic behaviour along with values and skills such as justice, liberty, equality, responsibility, tolerance, problem-solving, and respect towards others. In response to the component ‘**democratic practices**’ it was unveiled that in some points teachers are quite democratic by nature as they use appropriate language in the classroom keeping in mind the nature and diversity of the classroom. They also acknowledge individual differences and act as a facilitators but somehow when they were asked the same question in a different way during interview, a huge variance was found in their opinions, for instance, many teachers stated ensuring discipline and freedom and/or paying attention to all in classroom is always a big challenge for a teacher as a lot of diversity exists in the classroom. They also stated that, sometimes, as per the need of the situation, the teachers had to act authoritatively to maintain discipline. So it can be concluded that almost all schools are democratic in nature as the notion of equality, freedom, responsibility, values etc. is found in every school, but although insignificant in number but still we can’t deny that the notion of authoritative approach and hierarchy is still prevailing in schools which should not be present.

Students’ and Teachers’ Understanding of the Concept of Democracy

In the study it is evident that students from Jammu region as well as from Kashmir region have a general understanding regarding the term democracy. The understanding is mostly found based on bookish knowledge and the way they were taught, as most of them reported democracy means all citizen have an equal say, all citizens can vote, freedom to all, and it is a form of government in which people elect their representatives. Both students and teachers, in this study, also strongly identified with some facets of liberal democracy, such as majority rule by voting, but they also brought up elements of participatory and deliberative views of democracy, such as other forms of involvement or participation and the importance of debate and discussion. An aspect of consciously idealistic conception of democracy was also found. Democracy is understood as a utopia that maintains perfect equality, liberty, unity, and all Constitutional rights.

A second feature of conceptualization was a strong focus on individual rights including human rights, and this was found as the second most common way for respondents to describe democracy. Both students and teachers strongly believe in equality, liberty, welfare of all people along with free elections and ensuring social justice as the essential elements of a democracy. They also reported freedom, responsibility, equality, respect towards others and rightful conduct of all, comes under democratic behaviour. Similarly, the chief component of a functioning democracy suggested by both, students and teachers, are protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, free and fair elections, ensuring equality for a democratic and civil society. They also suggested that they want to value democracy as it protects human rights, ensures equality, justice, liberty, and maintains law and order irrespective of caste, creed, colour, sex and religion and leads to a peaceful life. It was found from their responses that “we need democracy”. It should not only be limited to classroom, rather it should be in co-curricular activities, in school, in home, in society, in job sector and in and overall in the entire nation. In the umbrella understanding, democracy in reasonable terms appears more common than what we might have initially presumed. Although the evidence is mixed, it appears that interpretations are more prevalent, based on the ideas of freedom and liberty.

In response to the term association of freedom to life, it varies in both the regions. Students of Jammu region stated they were living their life as per their wish whereas Kashmiri students stated they only read freedom in their books. In their daily life there is no freedom as they are not allowed to go outside in the

evening, they are not allowed to go to market alone and likely many more such instances were prevalent. In response to elections, both students and teachers suggested there is a need of election for several reasons: to make peaceful and fair elections, to elect right kind of leaders, to understand people's needs and to fulfil it, to stop disputes and to raise our voices against any kind of injustice. Elections and voting were mentioned as a benchmark of democracy. Similarly, in response to the role of political parties in a democracy, it was suggested that political parties should work for fulfilment of needs of the citizens; they should be involved in public affairs. But however respondents from both regions think that political parties create division in the society on the basis of caste, class, religion and gender. Both students and teachers are found mistrustful of and disillusioned by politics as well as by political parties.

In response to the meaning of rights, it was found that students were quite aware about different kinds of fundamental rights granted by the Constitution of India- like right to equality, right to life, right to education, right to freedom, right to freedom of religion, and right against exploitation. However, they were found to be unaware about the newly added right, 'right to privacy.' Students in this study were found to be against the gender stereotype, when they were asked, what if education is meant only for girls? They strongly opposed the statement and suggested it is wrong and unjust. They also reported that they all are living in a democratic country and everyone is equal in a democratic nation. Further, participants did talk about challenges that are faced by our democracy today like economic domination, violence, diversity in the society, corruption, demand of separate state, incompetent political leadership, unemployment, fight among people who adhere to religion blindly, caste, language, and role of money at the time of elections.

Conclusion

In this study, we have tried to assess the understanding of the concept of democracy by the students and teachers in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The study found a variety in the understanding of the concept of democracy. There we found subjective qualities of democracy, normative concepts of democracy and idealistic concept of democracy. The study also strongly identified with some facets of liberal democracy along with participatory and deliberative views of democracy. Largely, democracy in reasonable terms appears more common than what we might have initially presumed. Hence, a realistic approach is needed for policy makers to concentrate more on policies related to bringing about education for democracy. Despite frequent theoretical shifts, emphasis should be on practical things which enhance learning of democracy.

As school plays a strategic role in the promotion of democracy, principals should also foster a healthy work environment in schools so that understanding of democracy can be realized. Schools should ensure freedom, discipline, encourage group activities, and include students in decision making process to become more democratic. Similarly, teachers should encourage freedom of expression, group responsibility, individual differences, respect to all religion, maintain eye contact with students, take care of language or medium of instruction, promote gender equality, and diversity in the classroom to make the classroom more democratic while teaching. Schools should also organize group activities, discussions, debates, symposiums, seminars and many more because such kind of activities are for the development of democratic thinking among students. The central implications of the study will be fruitful to introduce curriculum and pedagogical practices to develop democratic classroom processes which can help to heal conflict hit society and instill hope for better future.

Recently, the Indian government has also abolished both the Articles: Article 370 and Article 35A, which gave special status to the state of J&K. Both Articles acted as a hindrance to the holistic development of the state affecting every sector. Its impact imposes a sense of exclusivity and separation from the rest of the country, which has led to conflict, religious extremism, and violence for more than 70 years. We are expecting, the abolition of both these Articles, to bring a blanket development of the state of J&K in every sphere.

Acknowledgements: This paper is based on the research project report entitled *A Study of the Concepts of Citizenship and Democracy among the Students and Teachers of the State of Jammu & Kashmir*, A research project funded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). Authors are thankful to ICSSR for providing funds to facilitate the research.

Competing interests: There are no potential competing interests with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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