

GLOBAL DOING DEMOCRACY RESEARCH PROJECT (GDDRP)

(<http://doingdemocracy.ning.com/>)

An international project examining the experiences, perspectives & perceptions of democracy in education to develop a robust & critical education for democracy

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Background

This project was founded in 2008, and the GDDRP website is the main vehicle for collaboration, dissemination and conducting research. The starting-point for the Project is a study that Paul R. Carr conducted with a sample of teacher-education students in Ohio in 2006. The co-directors have both secured grants from the national governments to continue their research in relation to education for democracy, which connects with the global nature of the work undertaken via the GDDRP. Detailed research instruments containing open- and closed-ended questions have been designed, and further refined, for several different groups, and have been contextually adapted for use in diverse jurisdictions. All of the data are contained within the secure data-collection and analysis research hub through Survey Monkey. The research has been conducted in approximately fifteen countries, as of 2013, and new samples are being cultivated in many more countries.

Project title: Educators and education for democracy: Moving beyond “thin” democracy

Project summary

The GDDRP is for the development and replication of research on beliefs, experiences and perspectives in relation to democracy in education. It aims to assist in and with the facilitation of specific research projects.

The debate over democracy in education could be characterized in terms of representative versus participatory democracy, with the former highlighting electoral processes (*thin*), and the latter focusing on more critical engagement and social justice (*thick*). This research project seeks to compare and contrast studies of education-students, teachers, administrators, community members and others in Canada, the US and Australia, as well as other countries, highlighting three themes:

- 1) the predisposition among education-students (future teachers), teachers and others to understand democracy, politics and social change in a *thin* way or *thick* way;
- 2) the potential for university education teachers and classroom teachers to do transformative or *thick* democracy in education; and
- 3) the importance of understanding power and difference in relation to democracy.

The research will lead to the development of a framework for conceptualizing democracy in education, and, importantly, education for democracy, highlighting, in particular, what educators can do to become more critically aware and engaged. It asks the question: “Do our educational systems encourage, support, and cultivate a democratic experience for students?” This relates to contemporary situations and issues, which illuminate options for future developments. The research will also support a more robust and critical assessment of the relevance and potential of education for democracy within a context of globalization, neoliberalization and the increasing utilization of technology, social media and global communication networks.

Objectives:

This project aims to facilitate international collaboration within the academic community while fostering the development of permanent exchange networks. The dissemination of the data, analysis and findings, as well as methodological instruments, will take place through conferences, professional and peer-reviewed journals, books and, in general, the media. We seek to access contributions from teachers, parents, education officials, and government policymakers as well as academics. One tangible outcome from the project has been a book that has documented a number of comparative studies using the same research instrument. Ultimately, the international nature of this Project lends itself to the formulation of instruments, measures and proposals for reform that may address needs and concerns at the international and global levels.

Expected results

This International Research Linkage, especially through the Project's website, will facilitate:

1. Collaborative development through conferences, seminars, lectures and through other public fora on Democracy and Education in Canada, the US and Australia, and elsewhere, with efforts to extend the work to other countries, facilitated through the universities and faculty working on this project.
2. Development of a series of studies for an edited book and other publications through the solicitation of contributions from the identified experts and key people who are involved in this project.
3. Publication of peer-reviewed journal articles to be submitted to top-tier journals.
4. Peer reviewed presentations at American Education Research Association (AERA) Conference, the Canadian Education Association Conference and the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Annual Conference and other conferences.
5. Education policy and program development with engagement with diverse sectors.
6. Development of professional development and consultancy to widen as well as deepen understandings of democracy in school education.
7. Proposals for educational reforms stemming from the research.

Approach for members of the GDDRP

1. Those interested in joining the Global Doing Democracy Research project: Moving beyond "thin" democracy should:

- a. Review the documentation on the Project website, including the published research to-date as well as the research instruments;
 - b. Identify a sample where the research might be replicated;
 - c. Determine how the research instrument might be adapted to be used within that particular context, either with education-students, education faculty, classroom teachers or secondary school students or other groups;
 - d. Develop a plan for the implementation of the research instrument, including developing an analytical model to assess the data;
 - e. Examine other issues, as appropriate, including ethical reviews, consent, collaboration, etc.
2. The Co-directors for the Project (Paul R. Carr & David Zyngier) would be interested in providing support with those developing their projects based on the model proposed in the Global Doing Democracy Research project: Moving beyond "thin" democracy
 3. Ultimately, the Project aims to gather as much data from as many sites as possible in order to undertake critical and comparative analysis on the state of democracy in education. Similarly, the international nature of the Project will enhance its credibility, voice and potential for change in education.