Fields and Principles of Democratic Governance of the School

Lili Koridze
Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Abstract

The research question is to identify participant's(school society's) perception of the barriers in implementing democratic governance into Georgian schools. To examine this the research will focus on:

1.   Studying the principles of democratic governance in different schools.
2.   Studying the views of school society to understand their views/perspectives on the importance of introducing democratic governance
3.   Making recommendation for Georgian Schools how to face these barriers of implementing democratic governance in schools

This study was a convenience sample of teachers, students, and parents from six secondary schools located in the Republic of Georgia. The target segment of the Survey were six schools in Western Georgia (3 public and 1 private school in Batumi, 1 private school in Kutaisi, 1 public school in Kobuleti). 105 teachers, 123 students and 112 parents were surveyed.

As this study has shown, the democratic process of school governance has much promise. Because children learn in a social environment, when democratic governance becomes a part of the fabric of the school, it becomes a type of hidden curriculum. Students then can learn more about democracy, because they see it in action and live it through their experiences. By allowing parents to have more say in the educational process, this assures that minority populations are not marginalized or ignored, but they can have a say in the education process as well. When a school director allows the BoT, and through it teachers, parents, and students to have meaningful input into policy decisions, this not only lightens his load, but also increases commitment on the part of all parties concerned. When these groups all participate in the rule- and policy-making process, they will have a higher commitment to making sure that it is a success. It is hoped that the knowledge gained through this study will be valuable in helping Georgian school members to see the areas where there are challenges, and use the recommended approaches in order to improve schools and move them towards democratic governance, which will benefit not only students in school, but society at large as well.

Keywords: Democratic Governance, Relationships, Curriculum, School environment.,

Introduction

The development of the school education system in modern socio-cultural conditions of Georgia is determined by effective management. The implementation of the school's goals depends on the adequate understanding and formation of the functional system of its administration on the one hand, and on the other hand on the introduction and achievements/implementation of the latest scientific-pedagogic technologies of school governance/management. For a significant amount of the recent history of the Republic of Georgia, the people were ruled by the Soviets, who made decisions largely unilaterally. Since Georgia became independent, the governmental system has converted to a democracy, where the citizens have a right to elect leaders who will lead the way that the citizens wish. While there are many debates regarding what "democracy" is, the central premise of this thesis is that "the essence of democracy is popular sovereignty – the people rule" (Berkman & Plutzer, 2005, p. xv). A key responsibility of schools is to teach young people how to become citizens in the world which they will soon be entering as adults. By giving all stakeholders a voice in how schools are run and policies that exist, no single group feels silenced or oppressed (Smith, 2003). By having schools that are run democratically, students can learn first-hand how democracy works, which prepares them to be active, engaged citizens as adults.

The school environment until quite recently in Georgia schools was a top-down autocratic system, in which central government made all of the decisions, and teachers and students were expected to fall into line and do as they are told(Gorgodze, 2016). Dewey (2001) argues that there are certain things that cannot be taught merely by pedagogical means such as speech or lessons, but must be learned through the social environment in which they are learned. He postulates that by having a better environment that is more balanced, this creates a situation where students can better learn the democratic process. Students themselves are keenly aware of who makes the rules, and how they are impacted. Holcomb(2007) quoted one student who said: "since we go here all day and all – we were kind of wondering […] would you think that maybe we are stakeholders too?" (p. 11).

Rather than the opinion that democracy is a notion that is only postulated by a few random theorists, the notion that children have a say in matters regarding their schooling is actually backed by international accords such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, n.d.). In this convention, Article 12.1 states: "the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in

all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (UNICEF, n.d.). Article 29d states that all children are entitled to an education that prepares them for "responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin" (UNICEF, n.d.). Based on both of these statements, it is argued that a school system that does not allow students to participate in decision making or allow them a way to have their voices heard – as is the case in a democratic schooling situation – fails to meet both of these criteria, and is thus an invalid education from an international perspective.

The representatives of the Community of Practice of the Pestalozzi Programme of the Council of Europe in 2014 prepared a Manifesto called "Education for change - Change for Education", which is a message from practitioners to the policy makers that 21st century schools should prepare young people for life in a democratic, sustainable society. So, contemporary schools should reflect all of the above and help to prepare people with the competences needed to participate in such a society; young people need to have strong and well-developed competences, such as innovation and creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, collaborative learning and working. To meet all these aims schools should reflect democratic government, where all school members experience democracy.

Many contemporary academic philosophers and Educational theorists (Dewey, 1916; Rorty,1979; Freire ,1968) argue that children should experience democracy at school. Schools play important roles inpupils' socialization. Despite the arguments for schools being more democratic, according to my research results, some schools in Georgia are still authoritarian. Many Schools in Georgia still face a lot of problems and barriers to implement democratic governance at school. To help find ways to support the development of democratic governance in schools there is a need to identify the barriers and then to explore recommendations for how best to democratize schools.

The research question is to identify participant's(school society's) perception of the barriers in implementing democratic governance into Georgian schools. To examine this the research will focus on:

1. Studying the principles of democratic governance in different schools.
2. Studying the views of school society to understand their views/perspectives on the importance of introducing democratic governance
3. Making recommendation for Georgian Schools how to face these barriers of implementing democratic governance in schools

Methodology of Research
Ontology
In discussing the ontology underlying this research, it is important to understand what ontology is and how it influences research collection and interpretation. As Nicholas and Hathcoat(2014) outline, an ontology is utilized in order to figure out the underlying nature of a particular reality. A realism perspective of ontology contends that reality is something that is independent of the human mind, and is only governed by causal laws and mechanisms. While there are many different approaches to realism, the basic belief is that when events are observed, the reality can be extracted from the direct observation.

Conversely, according to Nicholas and Hathcoat(2014), the relative ontological point of view contends that reality is constructed by those who experience it. This makes the "realities" being observed considerably unique, and derived from personal experience within the milieu of the situation. The experiences that occur in the participants under observation, and their reactions to them, are highly state dependent. In such an approach, the role of the researcher is to explain how the constructed realities are impacting human consciousness.

Due to the fact that the relative ontological perspective is highly consistent with thinking in the field of education, this is the approach that was taken in this study of the subject. Dewey (2001) strongly held that education is a highly social function, and that by taking the uniformed student into the right environment, and shaping them through a process of leading, forming, and molding, they become more like the mature members of their social world. In line with the relative ontological point of view elucidated by Nicholas and Hathcoat(2014), the student is immersed in an educational environment and the student constructs their own reality from their perceptions and experience with that reality.

Mihai et al. (2017) postulate that due to the reality of politics and the political approach to them, it is impossible to boil politics down to a subjective analysis of defined inputs and outputs. A purely scientific or 'objective' look at democracy and school governance would requiring excluding the practices, habits, and affective commitments which are engaged in by individuals, groups, or collective agents. The point that the authors are making is that a true consideration of the political impact of democratic school governance requires an understanding of the underlying perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs of the participants. It is only through analysing the points of view of all of the stakeholders that a picture can be constructed that develops the complex interplay between the participants and the phenomenon of democratic school governance.

Epistemology

Epistemology can be broadly painted as a search for what is true knowledge (Walton & Zhang, 2013). As Walton and Zhang(2013) outline, in the area of scientific inquiry, science is "systematized knowledge derived from observation, study and experimentation carried on in order to determine the nature or principles of what is being studied" (p. 176). The authors note that within the field of science, the search for the truth of a scientific fact is an ongoing process, and frequently can go on continuously until there is a convergence of agreement between those who are researching the particular area of study. The scientific epistemological approach attempts to gather as much data as possible, then to systematically analyse the data to draw out conclusions from the observations or reported information. The surveys that are used in this study form the body of evidence that the scientific inquiry will be utilized to determine a "testable explanation and prediction" of phenomenon being experienced in Georgian schools (Creswell, 2009).

The basic epistemological approach being used in this study is to determine the current status of the lived experiences of students, teachers, and parents in schools in Georgia, and to determine the level of application of democratic principles in school governance at this time. As such, this research study will seek to determine the current state of truth in Georgian schools from the perspective of students, teachers, and parents. Through analytical methods, reporting of the survey results, and expansion on the ideas by careful extraction of written feedback in the open responses, this will allow a complete picture of the state of democratic school governance in the Georgian community at this time.

Methodology

The methodology of research that was utilized for this study was a mixed-methods approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative data in order to come to a broader understanding of the issue under question. As Creswell (2009) outlines, when qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously and weighted equally, they can be utilized to derive explicit theories from the findings. The quantitative results from the surveys measured the overall opinions, as expressed in the survey instrument, to establish quantitative agreement among the sample groups with the questions postulated. The qualitative data was used to determine themes that emerged from the additional information provided in the free answer area of the surveys. This allowed the researcher to construct a broader thematic perspective of the topic than an approach limited to the quantitative data would. Even though the qualitative data was in the form of numbers, it was transferred into quantitative form as the researcher coded the survey responses, then quantified how many times each of the recurrent themes emerged in the open survey responses. A triangulation process was then followed to compare the results that emerged from the quantitative research to the data from the qualitative research section of the study. By triangulating the data, this helps the validate that the survey given are valid, and that the data underlying this analysis can be depended upon to be accurate. Another value in utilizing the mixed-methods approach is that it gives a deeper perspective on the lived experiences of the various stakeholders in the Georgian school environment. By having both qualitative and quantitative data, a better understanding of the stakeholders and their perception of the school environment can be gathered by their reflection upon their personal lived experiences.

Methods

The current situation shows us that the pedagogical system of school governance is largely characterized by autocratic orientation, causing the destruction of the creative self-government of a teacher and a student as a person. This does not agree with the common requirements of the modern epoch. Modern market priorities require the development of the person's social features such as: reliance on their own capabilities, initiative, creativity, rise of individual freedom and responsibility, and the importance of teachers and students' personal success.

Based on the above-mentioned, there is no doubt that there is a need of obtaining empirical material that will give us a proper view of the students, teachers, parents and Georgian school administration's attitude and practical experience regarding the democratic governance of schools.

In order to obtain such information, two (qualitative and quantitative) surveys have been conducted, which can be divided into two parts, based on the general **objectives** of the survey:

- The first part of the Survey is directly related to the foundation of the School of Democratic Governance in Georgia, which implies the following issues:
  ➢ Whether there is a principle of democratic governance at Georgian schools and how it expressed;
  ➢ If teachers, students and parents participate in the school management;
  ➢ If measures supporting the processes of school democratization and humanization are taken at school;
  ➢ Whether the human rights are taught at school and if they are violated;
  ➢ If there are the students' self-governance and parents/teachers' councils, and how active the school

> community is involved in them;
- ➢ Whether the school is a safe environment where every student is equal and not discriminated;
- ➢ If there are friendly and trust-based relationships at school;
- • The second part of the study deals with the establishment of public attitudes and opinions towards the democratic governance of the school, which includes the following:
- ➢ What the school administration, students, teachers and parents think about transition from democratic autocracy to the democratic governance;
- ➢ What their mood is towards introduction of innovations such as involving students in the formation of school syllabus and curriculums, school management, school rules and laws, in assessing students and teachers.

The survey resulted in the identification of the problems that prevent successful implementation of democratization in secondary schools of Georgia.

Sample

The sample for this study was a convenience sample of teachers, students, and parents from six secondary schools located in the Republic of Georgia. The target segment of the Survey were six schools in Western Georgia (3 public and 1 private school in Batumi, 1 private school in Kutaisi, 1 public school in Kobuleti). 105 teachers, 123 students and 112 parents were surveyed..

As Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, and Nigam(2013) note, convenience sampling is one of the most common forms of sampling utilized. This research approach has advantages in that it is a commonly used sampling method, complex lists of the population elements do not have to be maintained, and it is less expensive. Due to the nature of this study, there were many schools who were unwilling to participate in the research, possibly because they believed that the results might make them look bad. Even though schools that were asked to participate were assured that the information would be anonymous, and no one, except the researcher, would know which schools students, parents, and teachers were reporting on, the schools surveyed were the only ones who consented to allow the surveys. As a result of the sample being a convenience sample, this limits the applicability of the results to this study group, and the data cannot be generalized to a larger population.

Questionnaire Design and Procedures

The students' and parents' questionnaires were adapted from a previous study by the Albanian Ministry of Education and Science (AMoES; 2009).As the AMoES (2009), this questionnaire was designed by a field of experts who were seeking to find ways to improve human rights for children and to increase democratic educational practices in the classroom.Within this study, the original surveys were provided to the parents and students, then after an educational intervention with all three groups (parents, students, and teachers), the surveys were re-administered.The purpose of this study was to determine how effective interventions in the areas of human rights for children and democratic school governance could be.In line with the mixed methods approach recently discussed.Some questions were yes/no questions, seeking to evaluate understanding of specific things, such as if parents and children were aware that there were laws for the protection of children.Other questions were to gauge the strength of agreement with certain statements, such as "teachers have good mastery of their subject" (AMoES; 2001, p. 2).The options on the Likert scale were "very good/well, good/well, poor, and I don't know" (AMoES; 2001, p. 2).As Rahi (2017) notes, Likert-type scales are a common method of measuring personal observations or attitudes.

In the teachers' questionnaire, this was custom-written for this project, and contained 17 open-ended questions.Similar to the focus of the parents' and students' questionnaire, the teachers' questionnaire focused on the protectio n of human rights of children in school, and how democratic governance was being applied in their schools.There was an effort in the teacher surveys to determine how many aspects related to democratic governance, as defined by the MoES, are already being applied at the school (Sharvashidze & Bryant, 2014).There were also questions that were designed to draw out a response from teachers regarding their attitude towards allowing students to have more involvement in planning their own education as well as being involved with lesson or syllabus planning.It was felt that these were important questions, because if the teachers felt that students should not be involved in these areas, they might resist such policy changes (Stevick, 2009).A question was also added to determine how well the current school education environment was doing in preparing students for practical aspects of daily living.Since it has been asserted in the literature that democratic education can do a better job of educating children to be a part of a democratic society, it was felt that it was important to determine how effectively the current education system was already at providing practical education (Holdsworth, 2000).

Data processing

Quantitative Survey was developed by the program SPSS 21 with the help of statistical analysis program.The answers to open questions were brought to a certain number of categories when being processed .As the open

responses to the survey were being analyzed, certain repetitive themes started to emerge. These themes were coded as the major themes of the study, and whenever they were encountered in responses, that response was coded as being related to the specific theme.

Discussion of the Findings
Discussion of the Research Findings
As was noted at the beginning of this study, Georgia is just starting to venture into the area of democratic governance in school, after a long period of central governmental control (Gorgodze, 2016). This study was conducted in an effort to see how far democratic governance is being practiced in the schools, to identify any potential barriers, and to make recommendations as to how Georgian schools can move forward, based on these research findings. These topics will be addressed in the four major areas of school life, democratic governance, relationships, curriculum, and school environment.

1.   Current state of democratic governance in Georgian schools
Democratic Governance. According to the findings from the surveys and interviews, democratic governance in the schools where the surveys were conducted is in its' very early stages. As such, there are areas where democratic governance is working, and some where it is not. For instance, according to the information provided by the teachers, the decision-making process is still being largely dominated by the school director, who is making most of the major decisions regarding school policies. When it comes to pedagogical decisions, the teachers are primarily the ones who make the decisions on how to conduct their classes, including teaching methods and setting of rules. This is generally done without any input from either students or parents.

   Relationships. The relationships within the school are starting to show signs of democratic governance, but significant work must be done to improve the overall relationships. For example, the management style of the school directors is still a top-down management style, where the school director makes the major policy decisions and hands them down to the teachers. Teachers are operating in a vacuum, not building relationships with either the students or the parents, where they would feel comfortable making suggestions or proposing changes. Even though there is student government in place in the schools, according to the responses from the students, it is really just present for show, and has little or no power or ability to influence any meaningful school policies.

   Curriculum. According to the survey data, based on the curriculum that is handed down from the state, the teachers determine how the curriculum will be delivered in the classroom and how the lesson plans will be constructed. Parents and students are not consulted and do not have any input into this process. The school director has basically ceded the right to make decisions in the area of pedagogy and curriculum to the teachers. The teachers exercise this authority through a pedagogy council and through their own course planning.

   School Environment. As was brought out in the introduction, children have a right to be in an environment where they are safe from harm(Wright et al., 2009). Based on the responses from the students to these questions, it is clear that the school environment is safe and that there is very little violence or fear of violence. According to the survey data, the percentage of respondents who felt that there was a high level of violation of children's human rights was extremely low (3.6%).

2. Current attitudes about democratic governance in Georgian schools
Democratic Governance. The attitudes regarding democratic governance in the schools show that while democratic governance has not advanced much in these schools, some would like it to, and some are either indifferent or feel it is not needed. For example, several teachers indicated that they felt that democratic governance included everyone having an equal say, and they directed this towards the school director, indicating that they should have a larger share in school policy making decisions. Regarding making decisions on policies that affect the school, 78.6% of students indicated they were rarely or never consulted. The free responses regarding student governance indicated that it was ineffective, generally powerless, and some felt that it really was not even needed at school. While many of the parents were aware of Parent's Councils, they felt they generally worked well. When asked regarding being involved with decision making regarding pedagogical decisions, like how best to teach their children, or more input into course content, most parents deferred to the teachers' judgment, feeling they were more qualified to answer these questions.

   Relationships. In general the parents had good relationships with teachers, and not much negativity was noted. Parents largely feel that the teachers feel positively about their children, and are doing a good job. Teachers expressed concerns about the relationships with parents, and noted that they are not as involved as they should be. They feel that parents should be more involved and that this will positively impact their children. Teachers were generally accepting about student governance, but limited that support to basic things like Olympiads, outings, and student-run events.

   Curriculum. As mentioned in the previous section, parents generally deferred pedagogical questions to teachers, which includes curriculum involvement. Students were asked if they felt that they could contribute to curriculum development, and they were excited about the prospect of being included in such decisions, and

indicated that they felt that they could be successful in making a positive contribution. The teacher attitude towards students being involved in curriculum or policy matters covered a wide range. Some felt that older students (not the primary grades) had the maturity to contribute to such decisions, but others felt that the school would be in chaos because the students lacked the maturity to make such decisions.

School Environment. Overall, students were generally positive about the school environment, feeling that it is safe and that they are properly treated. Most of the students did not have any idea regarding their ability or right to have input into major school decisions. While parents had positive views towards the Parents' Council, they lacked much specific knowledge about what it did. Teachers were generally positive about the school environment, but some felt that they should have a larger role in overall policy making decisions

3.   Perceived obstacles to democratic governance in Georgian schools

Democratic Governance. The obstacles to democratic governance in the schools appear, from the survey data, to indicate that the management of the schools, from the top down, is still locked in an autocratic top-down leadership format. This could indicate a lack of proper training in the upper school leadership. While teachers are generally satisfied, their lack of trust in students and negative attitudes towards parents could affect their willingness to allow either to have a serious involvement in shared decision making.

Relationships. For democratic governance to work, there has to be an atmosphere of trust between the various relationships. The teachers appear to only be willing to allow students very limited input. The same situation is present regarding upper school management where polices are made at the top and pushed down to teachers. Parents appear to lack an understanding for the need to have a deeper and more engaged relationship with the teachers and the school.

Curriculum. Currently the teachers are given almost complete control over the curriculum. It appears through the responses that they feel that this area is "theirs" and would likely be resistant to allowing either students or parents to have more input. They do not have enough trust in the students to allow them a larger role in this area.

School Environment. This is an area where the limited democratic governance is most clear. There is limited training or education regarding human rights at the school, and virtually no sense of shared mission between teachers, parents, and students. For Georgian schools to be truly democratic, this will have to change.

Major Findings

Top-Down School Management

One of the major problems that exists in the Georgian schools surveyed is that they have not yet moved to complete democratic governance. School directors, who have up until now had a monopoly on school policy decisions, may feel threatened by having teachers, parents, or students have input into their decision-making process, seeing it as an unnecessary ceding of power (Mestry & Naidoo, 2009). One German school faced challenges in changing their school from one where teachers held power over the students to a school where reciprocal communication is used (Torney-Purta & Barber, 2005). In the same study, Torney-Purta and Barber (2005) note that experienced educators suggested that power should be ceded to students gradually, as they have less experience.

Sharvashidze and Bryant(2014) note that despite large political and social changes, schools in Georgia have been run similar to the old Soviet system in centralized and autocratic ways for a long time, and there is significant resistance to changing that. Additionally, members of the Boards of Trustees (BoT), namely teachers, parents, and community members have been acculturated to having authorities make major decisions, and may not find it easy to step up and demonstrate indivdiual initiative. One BoT noted that the principal failed to ask the BoT whenever they made hiring decisions, even though the law says they have to. As a result, the school was full of the principal's relatives. The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) provides assistance in executing changes to schools largely through the Educational Resource Centre (ERC) Staff. Under Georgian law, BoT's comprised of parents, teachers, and a student representative are supposed to exercise oversight in the schools, but most BoTs are relatively ineffective. The authors note that if the ERC members (who have a vote on the BoT were to provide more guidance in the BoTs, or even show up to meetings, they could do much to aid BoTs to exercise more meaningful leadership.

Resistance to Losing Control

In the survey, a major theme was that teachers did not want to lose control. Teachers largely have full control over curriculum and classroom teaching. While it is true that democratic governance means that they would have to allow parents to have meaningful input, ceding a small amount of control, teachers would gain control in that they would have a larger voice in policy decisions. Teachers may utilize their unions to resist such changes, because they are responsible for protecting what they perceive to be the interests of their members (Bush, 2007; Gurova et al., 2015). Such teachers may see the loss of complete control over curriculum as a worse outcome that is not outweighed by the benefits they will receive. Again, the MoES needs to take a strong lead in this area and encourage schools to follow the legally mandated structure. In this area as well, the MoES can provide

support through the ERC staff.

Lack of Trust

There is clearly a lack of trust on the part of the teachers both in the parents and in the students. Regarding the parents, common complaints are that parents do not show up to school, or that they minimally participate in their child's education. The survey showed clearly that many teachers do not believe that their students have the skills needed to have meaningful input into policy decisions or curriculum decisions. Cerna(2014) noted that in exchange performance (when two parties have to contribute to an effort), that even if the relationship is imperfect, trust can be the "glue" that can hold the relationship together. The author also noted that trust can allow the partners in the exchange to over come any challenges or conflicts created by the change. While instituting these changes will not be easy, once again, the MoES can provide support through the ERC staff and the BoT.

Parental Apathy

Another concern raised by the teachers is that of parental apathy. Parents seem to have a largely hands-off attitude and defer to teachers on most matters. The teachers interpret this as a form of apathy. Parents are not necessarily universally apathetic. For example, Mintrom(2001) notes how many parents are seeing education as their child's opportunity to improve their lot in life. As a result, they are taking more action in their child's life. Vieno et al. (2005) posit that to successfully engage parents, the school will need to engage in a strategy that encourages supportive and respectful interactions between parents, students, and teachers. Bush (2007) explains that if initiatives to establish truly democratic structures are engaged in, there must be careful planning, and good communication with parents. School directors can take a leadership position in encouraging parents, students, and teachers to work together in developing better democratic governance systems. This may be challenging, because school directors may lack the leadership competence to do this effectively (Magno, 2009).

Because of the long history in Georgia of autocratic control, change is not necessarily going to be easy (Bryant & Khatiashvili, 2011; Gorgodze, 2016). Full support from the MoES, the ERCs, good leadership by the school directors, and teacher support will be necessary for the needed changes to take place in the school environment. By the MoES providing needed support through the ERCs, as selected parents in the BoT gain confidence, they can be groomed to become change champions and encourage other parents to join in the governance process, helping other parents learn how to take initiative in forming schools that will be suitable for their children(Noe, 2010).

Implications for Education in Georgia

As Bryant and Khatiashvili(2011) and Gorgodze(2016) both point out, changing the school structure from its' current autocratic system into a democratic arrangement will not be easy. It is going to require the support of all of the players in the educational system, including the MoES, ERC, school directors, and teachers. However, the evidence shows that when school governance is conducted in a democratic way, this can improve educational outcomes and help students to learn how to be a good civic participants(Hawkes, 2017; Holdsworth, 2000; Mykhaylyshyn & Yakymiv, 2017). This study provided a valuable window into the feelings and thoughts of parents, students, and teachers in several Georgian schools where democratic school governance has been attempted. It has shown areas where the approach has had minimal success, and has exposed areas that still need work. If teachers can work together with the MoES, their school directors, the parents, and students, maybe schools can begin to change into the type of democratic institutions that he MoES has envisioned they should be(Sørensen & Torfing, 2009).

Limitations of the Study

As was mentioned at the outset, this study was conducted using a convenience sample of six schools in one region of Georgia. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to a larger population. If a future study is done, it may utilize a random design, or survey more schools. The power of the study is in the exposing of ideas, thoughts, and opinions at the level of parents, students, and teachers at six different types of schools. A larger study might be able to give more comprehensive findings that would support or expand upon the data in this study.

Conclusion

As this study has shown, the democratic process of school governance has much promise. Because children learn in a social environment, when democratic governance becomes a part of the fabric of the school, it becomes a type of hidden curriculum. Students then can learn more about democracy, because they see it in action and live it through their experiences. By allowing parents to have more say in the educational process, this assures that minority populations are not marginalized or ignored, but they can have a say in the education process as well. When a school director allows the BoT, and through it teachers, parents, and students to have meaningful input into policy decisions, this not only lightens his load, but also increases commitment on the part

of all parties concerned. When these groups all participate in the rule- and policy-making process, they will have a higher commitment to making sure that it is a success. It is hoped that the knowledge gained through this study will be valuable in helping Georgian school members to see the areas where there are challenges, and use the recommended approaches in order to improve schools and move them towards democratic governance, which will benefit not only students in school, but society at large as well.

References

Acharya, A. S., Prakash, A., Saxena, P., & Nigam, A. (2013). Sampling: Why and how of it? *Indian J Med Spec*, *4*(2), 330–333. https://doi.org/10.7713/ijms.2013.0032

Altinyelken, H. K. (2015). Democratising Turkey through student-centred pedagogy: opportunities and pitfalls. *Comp Educ*, *51*(4), 484–501. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2015.1081794

Amnesty International. (2012). *Becoming a human rights friendly school: A guide for schools*.

Berkman, M. B., & Plutzer, E. (2005). *Ten thousand democracies: Politics and policies in America's school districts*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Bernard, J. (2012). *A place to learn: Lessons from research on learning environments*. Montreal, Quebec: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Blase, J., Blase, J., Anderson, G. L., & Dungan, S. (1995). *Democratic principles in action: Eight pioneers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Boyask, R. (2015). The public good in English private school governance. *Eur Educ Res J*, *14*(6), 566–581. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904115614010

Brundrett, M., & Duncan, D. (2011). Leading curriculum innovation in primary schools project: A final report. *Education*, *25*(3), 119–124.

Brundrett, M., & Terrell, I. (Eds.). (2004). *Learning to lead in the secondary school: Becoming an effective head of department*. London, UK: RoutledgeFalmer.

Bryant, M., & Khatiashvili, T. (2011). Belling the cat: Georgia's experiment in distributive leadership. *Int Stud Educ Adm*, *39*(2), 33–43. Retrieved from http://content.ebscohost.com/

Bush, T. (2007). Educational leadership and management: theory, policy, and practice. *South African J Educ*, *27*(3), 391–406.

Bysik, N., Evstigneeva, N., Isaeva, N., Kukso, K., Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2015). A missing link? Contemporary insights into principal preparation and training in Russia. *Asia Pacific J Educ*, *35*(3), 331–341. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2015.1056588

Cerna, L. (2014). *Trust: What it is and why it matters for governance and education* (No. 108). *OECD Education Working Papers*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/5jxswcg0t6wl-en

Coffey, E. M. (1991). *A study of democratic leadership as a model for school governance*. Fordham University.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods appproaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dewey, J. (2001). *Democracy and education*. Hazleton, PA: The Pennsylvania State University. https://doi.org/852

Ehman, L. H. (1980). The American school in the political socialization process. *Rev Educ Res*, *50*(1), 99–119. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543050001099

Ferrão, M. E. (2014). School effectiveness research findings in the Portuguese speaking countries: Brazil and Portugal. *Educ Res Policy Prac*, *13*(1), 3–24. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10671-013-9151-7

Fung, A., & Wright, E. O. (2003). Thinking about empowered participatory governance. In *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance* (pp. 3–42). https://doi.org/10.1086/659440

Gorgodze, S. (2016). Rise and fall of decentralized school governance — Decision-making practices in Georgia. *Int Educ Stud*, *9*(11), 25–39. https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v9n11p25

Gurova, G., Piattoeva, N., & Takala, T. (2015). Quality of education and its evaluation: An analysis of the Russian academic discussion. *Eur Educ*, *47*(4), 346–364. https://doi.org/10.1080/10564934.2015.1107377

Harber, C., & Trafford, B. (1999). Democratic management and school effectiveness in two countries. *Educ Manag Adm*, *27*(1), 45–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263211x990271004

Hawkes, T. E. (2017). Circles and parallels: Democratic governance in a small school. *Sch Stud Educ*, *14*(2), 191–218.

Holcomb, E. L. (2007). *Students are stakeholders, too!: Including every voice in authentic high school reform*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Holdsworth, R. (2000). Schools that create roles of real value for young people. *Prospect Q Rev Comp Educ Issue 115*, *30*(3), 349–363. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02754058

Kirkpatrick, H. (2000). *Legitimacy and school reform: Implementing and sustaining democratic school governance*. Stanford University. https://doi.org/10.16953/deusbed.74839

Knoester, M. (2011). Is the outcry for more pilot schools warranted? Democracy, collective bargaining, deregulation, and the politics of school reform in Boston. *Educ Policy*, *25*(3), 387–423. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904809351691

Komatsu, T. (2012). *Decentralized school governance and social cohesion in a post-conflict society: School leaders ' participatory democratic accountability in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. University of Minnesota.

Kopaliani, B., Harnisch, D. L., Doliashvili, N., & Guettermann, T. C. (2013). Progressive education in Georgia: Tradition or reality? *Int J Progress Educ*, *9*(2), 12–21. Retrieved from https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/

Liebman, J. S., & Sabel, C. F. (2015). A public laboratory Dewey barely imagined: The emerging model of school governance and legal reform. *NYU Rev Law Soc Chang*, *28*(1), 8–23. https://doi.org/10.3868/s050-004-015-0003-8

Lo, W. Y. W., & Gu, J. O. (2008). Reforming school governance in Taiwan and South Korea: Empowerment and autonomization in school-based management. *Int J Educ Manag*, *22*, 506–526. https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540810895435

Long, J. R. (2014). Democratic education and local school governance. *Willamette L Rev*, *401*(1), 8–23. https://doi.org/10.3868/s050-004-015-0003-8

Mabovula, N. (2009). Giving voice to the voiceless through deliberative democratic school governance. *South African J Educ*, *29*(2), 219–233.

Mabovula, N. (2010). Revisiting Jurgen Habermas's notion of communicative action and its relevance for South African school governance: can it succeed? *South African J Educ*, *30*(1), 1–12.

Magno, C. (2009). Reimagining the school leadership paradigm in a postsocialist context. *Eur Educ*, *41*(3), 23–41. https://doi.org/10.2753/EUE1056-4934410302

Marinetto, M. (2012). Pessimism of the modernist intellect versus optimism of the democratic will: The interpretive school of governance. *Comp Eur Polit*, *10*(5), 616–624. https://doi.org/10.1057/cep.2011.32

Maxcy, B. D., & Nguyen, T. S. T. (2006). The politics of distributing leadership: Reconsidering leadership in two Texas elementary schools. *Educ Policy*, *20*(1), 163–196. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904805285375

Mestry, R., & Naidoo, G. (2009). Budget monitoring and control in South African township schools. *Educ Manag Adm*, *37*(1), 107–125. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143208098166

Mihai, M., McNay, L., Marchart, O., Norval, A., Paipais, V., Prozorov, S., & Thaler, M. (2017). Critical exchange: Democracy, critique and the ontological turn. *Contemp Polit Theory*, *16*(4), 501–531. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-017-0140-0

Mintrom, M. (2001). Educational governance and democratic practice. *Educ Policy*, *15*(5), 615–643. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904801015005001

Mykhaylyshyn, G., & Yakymiv, O. (2017). Current methods of professional management of the head of an educational institution. *J Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian Natl Univ*, *4*(2), 104–114. https://doi.org/10.15330/jpnu.4.2.104-114

Ng, P. T., & Chan, D. (2008). A comparative study of Singapore's school excellence model with Hong Kong's school-based management. *Int J Educ Manag*, *22*(6), 488–505. https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540810895426

Nicholas, M. C., & Hathcoat, J. D. (2014). Ontology. In D. Coghlan & M. Brydon-Miller (Eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research* (pp. 571–572). London: SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446294406

Noe, R. A. (2010). *Employee Training and Development* (6th Ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill/Irwin. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gde.2010.06.002.Parallel

Qureshi, S., Bradley, K., Rao Vishnumolakala, V., Treagust, D. F., Southam, D. C., Mocerino, M., & Ojeil, J. (2016). Educational reforms and implementation of student-centered active learning in science at secondary and university levels in Qatar. *Sci Educ Int*, *27*(3), 437–456.

Ravitch, D. (2010). Why public schools need democratic governance. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *91*(6), 24–27. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com

Robinson, V., & Ward, L. (2005). Lay governance of New Zealand's schools: An educational, democratic or managerialist activity? *J Educ Adm*, *43*(2), 170–186. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230510586579

School district governance: How democratic? (1977). (Research Action Brief No. 3). Eugene, OR.

Sharvashidze, N., & Bryant, M. (2014). A high-need Azeri school: A Georgian perspective. *Manag Educ*, *28*(3), 97–100. https://doi.org/10.1177/0892020614537663

Smith, M. (2003). Authentic student voice in school governance: Developing responsible democratic citizens. *Am Second Educ*, *31*(3), 36–65.

Sørensen, E. (1998). New forms of democratic empowerment: Introducing user influence in the primary school system in Denmark. *Statsvetensk Tidskr*, *101*(2), 129–143.

Sørensen, E., & Torfing, J. (2009). Making governance networks effective and democratic through metagovernance. *Public Adm*, *87*(2), 234–258. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.2009.01753.x

Stevick, D. (2009). Overlapping democracies, Europe's democratic deficit, and national education policy. *Eur Educ*, *41*(3), 42–59. https://doi.org/10.2753/EUE1056-4934410303

Sui-chu Ho, E. (2006). Educational decentralization in three Asian societies: Japan, Korea and Hong Kong. *J Educ Adm*, *44*(6), 590–603. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230610704800

Torney-Purta, J., & Barber, C. (2005). Democratic school engagement and civic participation among European adolescents. *J Soc Sci Educ*, *4*(3), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.4119/UNIBI/jsse-v4-i3-992

UNICEF. (n.d.). The United Nations convention on the rights of the child and HIV/AIDS, 14.

Vieno, A., Perkins, D. D., Smith, T. M., & Santinello, M. (2005). Democratic school climate and sense of community in school: A multilevel analysis. *Am J Community Psychol*, *36*(3/4), 327–341. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-005-8629-8

Walton, D., & Zhang, N. (2013). The epistemology of scientific evidence. *Artif Intell Law*, *21*(2), 173–219. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10506-012-9132-9

Wright, C., Mannathoko, C., & Pasic, M. (2009). *Child friendly schools manual*. New York, NY: UNICEF. Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org

| *First A. Author* | PhD STUDENT, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University |