

# Democracy Education in Schools



# Democracy Education in Schools:

*Theory, Framework  
and Classroom Activities*

By

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## FOREWORD

The modern world has adopted democracy as a form of government. Today, from the most oppressive regimes to the most liberal countries, the form of government of every country is recognised as democracy. Countries raise their citizens through educational institutions to ensure their continuity. As such, democracy education is somehow given in schools around the world.

This study deals with democracy education in three dimensions. The first of these dimensions is the theory dimension. In this dimension, the pedagogical and theoretical characteristics of the educational activities to be carried out for children, especially in the primary education period, have been tried to be explained. The reason why the main scope of this book covers the primary education period is that all these theories are given concretely and subjects such as human rights, citizenship and democratic values and attitudes are mostly included in the basic education period in the programmes.

While creating the conceptual basis, the concept of democratic school was introduced with examples from across the world and the characteristics of democratic schools were analysed in terms of their contribution to students and society. How the concept of family, teacher and school should be in democratic schools is another phenomenon presented in the conceptual framework. Freedom of thought, which is an indispensable element of democracy, is discussed in all its dimensions. Democracy education practices in Switzerland, which stands out as a country with direct democracy practices, are also explained within the conceptual framework.

The second part of the study is the presentation of a framework plan showing the way to be followed in the acquisition of democracy consciousness and democratic attitude behaviours by students. At this stage, an attempt was made to present a framework that can be easily integrated into the programmes in formal education. The proposed framework plan can be easily adapted to students from different socio-economic levels and cultures and can be distributed in the desired time period. While preparing the framework plan, similar practices from across world were also utilised.

The last part of the study consists of activity examples. The main goal of including these examples in the book is to provide teachers and researchers interested in this subject with a previously applied perspective. The activities in the book suggest a student-centred, constructivist and activity-based modular education.

As a result, this study is designed as an introductory book to be used by teachers and researchers on the purpose, content, learning-teaching situations and evaluation steps related to democracy education, which is included in the curricula in all countries of the world. It is thought that expanding the proposed activities and implementing them in schools will provide theoretically based democracy education content.

On behalf of the author team  
Prof Dr Asım Ari



# INTRODUCTION

From the past to the present, human beings have had to struggle with many problems. One of these problems is the problem of social harmony. With the tendency to live in communities, people have produced various solutions to ensure social order and live together in harmony. In the 21st century, most people have come together in support of the concept of democracy because of their search for harmony. The reason for this common decision is the implementation and testing of more perfect forms of administration and new, different searches in the name of democracy. Today, democracy is seen as a way for societies to live together peacefully.

The concept of democracy, which dates to the 5th century BC, exists in the present day as a result of preserving its meaning and importance, which gains in significance every day. The concept of democracy includes the organization of social life, giving people the value they deserve and providing a suitable environment for the protection and survival of human rights. Since democracy is known to be the most preferred form of government in today's world, very serious struggles are being waged to protect and preserve democracy.

To establish a democratic social order, it is an important necessity to have individuals with an understanding of democracy in the society. People's experience of democracy depends on their recognizing and believing in it (Gülmez, 2001). It is possible for a society to make democracy a way of life by equipping individuals who make up the society with democratic values. The role of education in the formation of democracy culture is very important. Raising individuals who have democratic attitudes and behaviors, respect people from different cultures, know their rights, are free and are democratically conscious can only be possible by educating people in this direction. For this reason, providing people with an understanding of democracy requires a good democracy education (Aydemir & Aksoy, 2010).

The development of society and its adaptation to global progress depends on the people living in that society being free, happy, and able to take responsibility for their own learning. Democratic schools are schools that

aim to raise people who are self-learning, responsible, and aware of how they can be useful to society. According to the Alternative Education Resource Organization, there are currently 364 democratic schools in 44 different countries around the world. Although there are slight differences between the educational practices in these schools, the basic principles are the same. Children's preferences, needs, and skills are the focus of education in democratic schools. According to democratic education, everyone has an interest and a skill in a subject. The aim of schools is to help children find these interests and skills themselves. In other words, schools provide a supportive environment for children to achieve this purpose. School life becomes instructive and enjoyable for the child who is engaged in the subject in which he/she is successful and happy.

Children who continue their lives in this way can continue to enjoy their lives when they become adults and continue to do their favorite jobs in line with their skills.

In democratic schools, children's decisions about what they want to learn are respected and the child's innate qualities of justice and democracy are aimed to be developed. Children are free in the learning process. At the same time, they play as active a role as adults in the decisions taken in school management.

The historical formation processes of democratic schools in the world span over more than a century. Educators such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Ferrer, and Neill put the child at the center of education and believed in educating children with freedom, and the schools they founded constitute the basis of the democratic school philosophy (Mintz, 2003).

A society's efforts in the field of education are directly proportional to its seriousness about democracy (Kelly, 1995). In the modern world, countries endeavor to ensure that the concepts of school and democracy in education systems complement each other and take place as a single whole. For this reason, changing and developing our approach to democracy and children is very important for the steps we will take in terms of democracy education.

# DEMOCRACY

The roots of democracy go back to ancient Athens. Herodotus used the term "democracy" for the first time in 430 BC. According to Herodotus, democracy was practiced in Athens for a long time (Leser, 2011). The word democracy, which originates from Latin, is a combination of the words "demos", meaning people, and "kratos", meaning sovereignty (Çakmak & Akgün, 2016); their combination thus means the sovereignty of the people (Doğan, 2007).

The concept of democracy has been the general name of a search for peace with deep roots from Aristotle to John Locke, from Montesquieu to Rousseau, from the American Constitution to the French Revolution, from the Declaration of Human Rights to the present day. Since democracy is also a way of thinking, individuals and societies have interpreted democracy according to their own value judgements.

Scientists' interpretation of democracy according to their own fields of science and interest has led to differences in the definition of the concept of democracy (Yeşil, 2002). The concept of democracy has been handled with different approaches as a way of life, as a political system and as an ideology, and by today has gained various meanings (Çeçen, 1995). Those who are busy with the science of administration have mostly seen democracy as a form of administration and have handled democracy with the concepts of public participation in administration, election, voting and equality. Lawyers, who are more concerned with the responsibilities of human beings, have associated democracy with human rights and responsibilities. In addition, it is known that many scientists, writers, and thinkers from different fields have recognized that democracy is a way of life as well as a form of government and have given democracy a wider dimension. In this sense, democracy has been defined as a way of life based on human values, including the other two approaches. Today, "democracy" is seen not only as a political form of government but also as a way of life.

Democracy is defined in the dictionary as the self-government of the people (TDK, 2020). The concept of democracy emphasizes that the power is in the hands of the people (İba, 2008). Democracy is the

sovereignty belonging to the nation and the rule of the people by the people (Derdiman, 2006). The most widely used and popular definition of democracy is the statement made by Abraham Lincoln, the former President of the United States of America, in the Gettysburg speech of 1863; "government of the people, by the people, for the people" (Sertori, 1993). According to Robespierre, democracy is "a regime in which a sovereign people do everything they can do on their own through their own laws, and everything they cannot do on their own through their deputies" (Aytaç, 2000). According to Kongar (2016), democracy is a majority rule in which those who do not share the same ideas with the current administration about the decisions of the country have the right to express these ideas freely. From a jurist's perspective, democracy is an expression of social peace and the consciousness and determination to claim our common destiny together (Erdoğan, 2005). From a humanist point of view, democracy is to consider personal happiness as a part of community happiness and to believe that there cannot be one without the other (Ateş, 1994). In democracy, people should both know and defend their own rights and defend the rights of other people.

According to Dewey (2008), who sees democracy as a way of life, it is a way of living together rather than a form of government. According to Genç and Kalafat (2008), who draw attention to the inclusive characteristic of democracy, democracy is a way of life in which everyone's opinions are listened to, their rights are not ignored, quality is prioritized and mutual understanding is important.

Democracy is a way of life that includes the relations between the individuals who make up the society (Öncül, 2000). Democracy is an understanding of respect for human beings and equality. In ideal democratic environments, people only listen to the voice of their conscience and the administration is formed with the consent of the people. Democracy is a system based on the view that every person can live his/her own life while at the same time everyone can act together. It can be defined as a system in which the people have a say, the power is in the hands of the people and the people adopt principles such as freedom, equality, and justice to have this power (Büyükkaragöz, 1996).

Cüceloğlu (1997) discussed democracy in terms of the individual and the society and drew attention to the communication dimension of democracy. He emphasized that to create a democratic society, individuals should learn to respect and tolerate the opinions of other individuals. Thanks to democracy, people can realize what they want freely and comfortably. For

this reason, democracy is an invaluable concept for human life and its importance cannot be underestimated.

To ensure democracy, conditions such as public participation in governance, allowing people to express their thoughts freely, society's compliance with the decisions of the majority, protection of minority rights, and the guarantee of fundamental rights and freedoms, must be realized.

The principles of democracy include national sovereignty, freedom, equality, pluralism, multi-party system, free and fair elections, acceptance of election results, respect for human rights, participation, responsibility, minority rights, political respect, openness, economic freedom, prevention of abuse of power and rule of law (Gözütok, 2011; Gündüz & Gündüz, 2007).

Democratic values are the values that show how democracy views people and events. Democratic values are values such as respect for human rights, reconciliation, openness, sensitivity, tolerance, honesty, respect for differences, solidarity, respect for life, self-confidence, co-operation, valuing people and avoiding violence (Kıncal & Işık, 2003). In order to raise people who embrace democracy, democracy education should start with the teaching of democratic values (Doğan, 2007).

Knowing the characteristics of democracy, protecting the principles of democracy and democratic values, and respecting the lifestyles of different social segments are important for the survival of democracy. The survival of democracy depends on the existence of individuals who can comprehend and internalize its meaning and requirements. To sustain democracy, people should receive democracy education.



# EDUCATION

It is the desire of every society to raise individuals who are compatible with society and who will contribute to society. This function is undertaken by schools, which are educational institutions in today's societies. Education is a powerful tool of social change and development. If education fails to fulfil its duty and responsibility or fulfils it incompletely, deterioration occurs first in the individual, then in the society and then in the whole nation and the world. Awareness of the individual and society is necessary for the correct perception of democracy. If individuals are given sufficient information about what they should do, a democratic structure can be observed in society. Protecting the social structure and ensuring the continuity of this structure is the most important social function of education. Educational institutions fulfil this function by socializing individuals and transferring cultural characteristics. For this reason, democracy can only be maintained and sustained through education.

The concepts of education and democracy are closely interconnected both in terms of their meaning and functioning. Education is the process of changing an individual's behavior through his/her own experiences and through deliberate acculturation (Demirel, 2014). Education should develop human personality and strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and promote understanding and tolerance among different groups (Levent, 2006). As can be understood from the definitions of education, the establishment of democracy in individual and social life is realized through education. There is a need for education on democracy to be transmitted and democracy awareness to settle and develop (Gülmez, 2001). In addition, one of the main goals of education is to raise individuals who respect human rights, and who have a developed sense of citizenship and democratic values. Therefore, there is a need to create democratic environments to achieve success in education. The greatest assurance of democracy is people raised in a democratic environment. John Dewey discussed the relationship between democracy and education in his work "Democracy and Education" published in 1916. Dewey's sentence "Democracies are dedicated to education" expresses the link between democracy and education.

Creating a democratic society is the most important task of education (Gözütok, 2011). An education targeting democracy aims to raise individuals who think, question, share, develop, manage their lives, and make their own choices. The establishment of democracy in society depends on the level of education of the individuals who make up the society. It is much easier for democracy to become a way of life in societies containing individuals who have high levels of education and who have the knowledge, attitudes and skills required for democratic life. For this reason, democratic values should be imparted to individuals through education (Şimşek, 2000).



# DEMOCRACY EDUCATION

Democracy education is a set of educational activities aiming to raise individuals who are aware of human rights and freedoms, adopt and defend democratic values and attitudes, and transform them into behavior (Şahin, 2009). In democracy education activities, at every stage of education, honesty is valued (Ulubey & Gözütok, 2015).

Democracy education has cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aims. The cognitive aim is to learn the concepts related to democracy, the affective aim is to believe in the importance of democracy for the individual, society and the state, and the psychomotor aim is to fulfil responsibilities that keep the concepts alive (Yeşil, 2002).

It is necessary for a society to have a culture of democracy to ensure the continuation of democracy in that society and to protect human rights. The democratic attitudes and behaviors of individuals in society constitute the culture of democracy. Democratic attitudes and behaviors are the ability of people to live together, values such as human dignity, tolerance, respect, and skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and protecting rights. We cannot expect these knowledge and skills to emerge spontaneously or through traditional education. To develop democratic attitudes and behaviors and to create a culture of democracy, individuals should be raised in a democratic educational environment and democracy education should start from the youngest possible age (Flowers, 2010).

The determinant factor shaping the behaviors of individuals is the behavioral style they adopt. It is stated that individuals who adopt democratic behavior exhibit democratic behaviors, while those who adopt oppressive behavior exhibit oppressive behaviors. Democracy education should be given to raise individuals with democratic behaviors (Yeşil, 2002).

The aim of democracy education is to raise democratic people who can think freely, research, develop good interpersonal relationships, are respectful, tolerant, and can make decisions (Gömlüksiz & Kan, 2008). The aim of democracy education is to raise individuals who understand human rights and freedoms, respect human rights in all situations and

conditions, and have internalized democracy (Yeşil, 2004). It is the duty of democracy education to help students develop themselves in line with their abilities and to provide them with the requirements of democratic education practically through their experiences. Such an education can be provided by a democratic education program. The democratic education program organizes content, objectives, learning experiences, assessment, and educational situations according to the differences of individuals. The democratic education program is a planned and programmed structure that develops knowledge and basic skills appropriate to the differences of individuals and is open to development (Hotaman, 2010).

It is very important for individuals to learn and adopt democratic principles and values in a positive way in order to achieve the aim of democracy education. Democratic attitudes and behaviors can be learned and adopted by living in daily life. Learning these principles and values will be realized through experience-based education.

Kuzgun (2002, p.23) states that it would be useful to adopt some basic principles for democracy education to be effective:

1. In the programs prepared for the acquisition of the concept, principles and attitudes of democracy, democracy should be accepted as a set of values that shape the relations between people as a way of life. The subjects should not be limited to state and citizen relations.
2. The development and reinforcement of positive behaviors related to democracy should not be limited to school and certain subjects but should be provided in every environment and at every opportunity.
3. Appropriate role models should be presented to students at school. The school should be committed to democratic principles as an institution.
4. In democratic education, it should be recognized that every teacher has an important role and responsibility in realizing the goals of education.
5. In democracy education, personality education should be among the basic educational functions of the teacher. Because, although the knowledge and concepts related to democracy education are related to cognitive skills, the skills of learning, adopting, and

reflecting them require personality education.

6. The acquisition of the personality traits required for a democratic life should start at a very early age.

As it is understood from the definitions and explanations, living and sustaining democracy can only be realized through education. For democracy to remain alive, education must continue throughout life. For this reason, the family, society, and the state must provide the appropriate environment for democracy to survive. Democracy education received thorough family members, at school, among teacher-student-friend groups will further its goal.



# DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

Although there is a very close relationship between the concepts of democracy education and democratic education, these two concepts differ in terms of their content. While democracy education is defined as the teaching of democracy to individuals and its comprehension and internalization by individuals, democratic education refers to education in accordance with democratic principles and values (Tanilli, 1994). From a broad perspective, democratic education includes democracy education. According to Perry (2009), democratic education includes five key concepts of democracy: equality, diversity, participation, choice, and harmony. In democratic education, the personality and honor of individuals are respected, and everyone is allowed to develop according to their interests and abilities without discrimination based on gender, race, and sect. In democratic education, people are equal before the law and therefore have equal opportunities for development and education.

Democratic education does not only consist of teaching the basic foundations of democracy. The success of democratic education depends on the acceptance of democracy as a process experienced rather than a phenomenon explained and on the functioning of the educational process being democratic (Şimşek, 2000). Democratic education is based on the principles and values of democracy by associating them with daily life through curriculum, materials, and teaching practices (Özpolat, 2010). Democratic education also includes discussing current problems, expressing opinions about these problems, listening to the opinions of others, respecting these opinions, and participating in the joint decision-making processes on issues affecting the society and school (Deniz & Kan, 2006). According to Dewey (2008), only a democratic education can create a democratic society.

According to Dewey (1916), education is life itself, not preparation for life. The aim of education is to teach children to think, not what to think. According to Dewey's statement, the goals of education should be democratic. For democracy to be adopted and for students to show democratic attitudes and behaviors, education should be given in a democratic environment, with democratic programs and methods. According to Irban (2004), the principles of democratic education are as follows:

- Democratic education starts with the individual, student, or participant.
- In democratic education there are no privileges, everyone has equal rights.
- In democratic education, the personality of everyone is respected.
- In democratic education, laws and rules are obeyed; however, if there is a need to change them, learners are allowed to express their opinions freely.
- The moral values underlying democracy are given to students through democratic education and these values are kept alive at school.
- Democratic education aims to develop the talents of the individual in proportion to his/her capacity.
- In democracy, the decision-makers are the individuals of the society, or the people chosen by them, and in democratic education, it is ensured that students make their own decisions under the guidance of teachers.

The most important function of democratic education is to develop a deep-rooted idea of democracy in the human mind and to make democracy a natural behavior and way of thinking.

According to Büyükkaragöz (1990), the contributions of democratic education to students are as follows:

- It tries to develop behavior, attitude and understanding patterns for democratic life.
- It prepares for a life in democracy.
- It uses subject areas in a practical way to prepare individuals for a successful life.
- In learning, it is concerned with thinking and creating lasting behavioral changes.

- It provides valid experiences for the student in community life.
- It carries out experimental interaction for the relations of individuals with their environment.
- It develops conscious and self-control habits in group members.
- It is based on an attitude towards working together in co-operation.
- Effort, ability, and creativity are essential to enable students to direct their own development and learning.
- It provides different experiences according to individual differences and abilities.
- The learner is encouraged to make decisions, plan, self-discipline, evaluate and be coherent in the activity.
- There is motivation according to interests and desires.
- Young people endeavor to create their own culture alongside the adult culture.

In democratic education, the student is at the center and planning is based on cooperation. There is no privilege in democratic education, everyone has equal rights. Individuals' personalities are respected. Laws and rules are obeyed in democratic education. Students are consulted about the laws and rules to be changed (Çağlar, 1977).

For a democratic education, students should be recognized as members of the community and their opinions should be given importance. Students should be given the opportunity to express their opinions through class discussions and their active learning should be encouraged. Students should participate in the design and evaluation of lessons and learning activities. For an order in which democracy and human rights are realized, it is essential to make education an important part of democracy and democracy an important part of education (Bursalıoğlu, 2000).

Considering curricula as practices determined only by experts and containing what students should learn without asking them is contrary to the concept of democracy and at the same time to the concept of education. To design curricula in line with democratic education, they

should be based on the basic principles of democracy such as participation, human rights and freedoms, pluralism and equality. Students should be seen as members of the community they should be accepted as active builders of their own world and their ideas should be consulted when creating programs.

Gözütok (2011) emphasized the necessity of a democratic environment and democratic methods for a permanent democracy education. For this reason, it is of great importance that the education system and schools are provided with a dynamic and democratic structure and that the society is sufficiently informed about the nature of democracy.



# DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS

The schools that Miller (2006) addresses within the freedom-based learning approach are nowadays referred to as democratic schools. According to the freedom-based learning approach, learning starts with the needs and goals of the individual. The individual's independence and self-motivation have an important place in learning. Free schools such as Summerhill, Sudbury Valley School Model and homeschooling are examples of this approach.

Democratic schools are schools that emerge because of conscious practices to incorporate democracy into life (Apple & Beane, 2006). These schools are schools that put students at the center, give freedom to students, and benefit from democratic principles and practices in the management of the school. In these schools, the child is considered free. For this reason, the child does not have to comply with the school, the school tries to adapt to the child (Mercogliano, 2006). In democratic school environments where students' sense of responsibility is emphasized, students can direct their own learning and claim authority and ownership at school. These are schools where students are directly involved in school governance and where democratic principles such as equality, respect, freedom, and trust have gained a stronger and more important dimension (Lathrop, 2005).

In democratic schools, everyone directly involved in the school has the right to participate in decision-making processes. What is meant by the idea of participation here is that the boards, commissions, teachers, administrators, students, parents, and other school employees have a say in school-related decisions and participate critically in the decision-making process (Apple & Beane, 2006).

From the perspective of democratic education, a democratic school is defined as an effort to make the school a small universe with a democratic structure (Hetch, 2010). The realization of this endeavor requires the creation of democratic communities with democratic procedures, acknowledging the versatility of students, recognizing that intrinsic motivation is the beginning of learning, accepting students' self-management and responsibility, and supporting students in developing

their own learning strategies and self-assessment. In addition, the acceptance of students planning their own learning, the inclusion of democracy-related content in curricula, and the whole process and dialogue should also be included in practices.

Students in democratic schools are recognized as individuals with different abilities, experiences, and emotional structures (Engel, 1999). The goal of these schools is to raise individuals who are free, responsible, eager to learn, know how to live together, have cooperative characteristics, and are happy, well-intentioned, and fair. In democratic schools, students are allowed to enjoy their freedom if they do not interfere with the freedom of others and foster a sense of mutual trust. Every student has the right to act, think and speak freely. The school will be successful if it directs the students to speak freely and to be heard (Frey, 2006). In democratic schools, students decide for themselves the ways and times of learning. School is a place of life and experience as well as a place of learning. Therefore, the school tries to provide as many experiences as possible. Studying, learning, playing and entertainment should form a whole, students can either read or play games or, if they want, they learn by experimenting.

Hecht (2002) states that the common characteristic of democratic schools is their emphasis on building a democratic community, pluralistic learning, and dialogue. Their administrative structure is the most important characteristic of democratic schools. These schools are governed by structures called school councils or school meetings. In accordance with the principle of active participation and learning by living, it is ensured by school councils that students play an actor role in the decision-making process (Feldman, 2001).

Supporters of the alternative education tradition, which includes democratic schools, think that in a democratic society people's thought should be freed, different opinions should be expressed and discussed, but they do not believe that a standardized education system can serve this function (Miller, 2006). For this reason, alternative schools, including democratic schools, have not become part of public education. Today, according to the Alternative Education Resource Organization, there are 364 democratic schools in 44 different countries.

The teaching-learning process of democratic schools and traditional schools is different from each other. In democratic schools, there is an idea that every child has a special talent in a subject. The learning process in

democratic schools is called “pluralistic learning” (Hecht, 2010). In pluralistic learning, students focus on topics that interest them. Students' self-confidence increases as they are empowered with their own learning and learn about topics that interest them. Students learn to respect themselves and other people's opinions and learn new things from their opinions. According to the principles of pluralistic learning, the child creates goals suitable for their needs, the content is determined based on these goals, and the students develop their own learning strategies. Self-assessment is used to evaluate the learning process.

In democratic schools, democracy is learned by living it. For this reason, curricula should be prepared and implemented in a way that enables the implementation of democracy into school life so that students can gain democratic experiences. In democratic schools, curricula are designed to be “learner-centered” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). Flexibility, child appropriateness, active participation, and individualization according to the needs of the child are the basis of all elements of the curriculum. Thanks to planned education programs and practices, students in democratic schools have learning opportunities in the areas they want to develop. These opportunities allow students the freedom to choose what, when and how to learn (Hecht, 2010). In many schools, students are not required to follow a standard program, although there are some schools that require attendance of core courses. Students can evaluate the different learning opportunities offered to them and choose the one that suits them from various activity areas. At the beginning of the school year, the school's curriculum and syllabus are explained to the students. The student who will follow the course must meet the conditions of the course in the program. Students can choose from the courses that are suitable for them. They are free to choose what they want.

There are several learning centers in democratic schools. Students can take advantage of these opportunities whenever they want. If the subject that the student wants to learn is not included in the curriculum and learning centers, the student may request to start an individual or group lesson on this subject. In democratic schools, as much space for exploration as possible is created within the school for students. If the school does not have the facilities related to the subject that the students want to learn, then they make use of the facilities of the external environment. In this way, an organic connection with the external environment of the school is created and students' willingness to learn is not restricted (Hecht, 2010).

The aim of democratic schools is to help students to explore by providing as many learning environments as possible. For this, the school focuses on providing a diverse educational framework that can meet the learning needs of all members of its community. A democratic school has both a planned curriculum and resources such as learning centers, personal contracts, the school's external environment and workshops to create learning opportunities for the areas that students want to develop. Teachers and students determine the courses in the program together. If they wish, students can go to learning centers and improve themselves in computer, music, and art subjects. Students can request individual or group lessons through personal contracts. Students can make workshops and exhibit them. If they wish, they can invite their friends to the workshops by making announcements on the bulletin boards.

The assessment of students in democratic schools is different from traditional education. Democratic curricula consist of systems that provide students with the opportunity to recognize and evaluate students effectively and evaluate their performances and processes with appropriate methods and techniques (Hotaman, 2010). According to these programs, summative assessments, which are product or outcome oriented, are not used. Instead, formative assessments, which are performance and process-oriented, are carried out. Thus, the assessment of students is carried out by considering their different intelligence and talent areas. Alternative assessment tools such as individual assessment, peer assessment, observation, project, research reports and portfolio assessment are used. The reason why alternative assessment tools are preferred is to evaluate students' performance while performing tasks based on real life. The reason for such assessments is to determine the real capacity of the individual, which includes the development of basic skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, questioning, research, and creativity. In democratic schools, where students are not graded, traditional exams are not administered, standards that students must meet are not set (Hecht, 2010), teachers give personal feedback to students instead of grading them (Morrison, 2007), and learning is seen as an individual process, there is cooperation among students, not competition. Thanks to the assessment approach adopted and the perception of learning as an individual process, education ceases to be a competitive environment and turns into a cooperative environment.

In democratic schools, students of the same age are not required to be in the same class. Classes are not organized according to age but according to students' common interests. Older and younger children study together.

Mixed-age group practice helps to remove age-related prejudices and allows children to learn from and with each other (Hecht, 2010).

