Democratic Views of Adolescents

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Background

Doubts about adolescents' democratic orientation:
- Limited political knowledge
- Very little political participation
- Views associated with personal interests

Differences in democratic position exist among students with diverse educational backgrounds as well as between males and females.

Method and Research Design

Longitudinal interview study (ages 14 and 16). N=40, distribution is equal between genders and between those in the pre-vocational and pre-academic tracks. 6 participating schools.

Focus is on democracy in real-life situations, primarily in the classroom.

Research Questions

- Which preferences do adolescents have regarding decision making in day-to-day situations and how are these related to their views on democracy?
- What are the differences in democratic views between adolescents from pre-vocational and pre-academic educational tracks and boys and girls?

Results

On Views
- Interviewees tend to take the group perspective as their starting point for decision making.
- Three models of decision making (majoritarian, deliberative, consensual) are present in their respective views.
- There is limited comprehension of political democracy.

On Differences
- Females and pre-academic students more often emphasize deliberative decision making.
- Males and pre-vocational students more often emphasize consensual decision making.

Conclusions and Implications

Real-life scenarios provide solid insight when studying democratic views of adolescents. This research provides for a more positive account of adolescents’ democratic views.

Citizenship education can incorporate day-to-day situations to create a deeper understanding as well as positive attitudes toward democracy and its underlying principles.

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