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The Revised Democratic Threshold Principle and the Distribution of Educational Resources

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to provide a conceptual framework for understanding the connection between the nature of democracy and the role of education in a democratic society. I begin by giving an account of the nature of democracy, along with an account of the conditions and substantive outcomes required to achieve and sustain a democratic society. I then examine the role education plays in securing these outcomes. From this understanding, and taking my cue from the work of Amy Gutmann, I argue that a democratic society is required to distribute educational resources according to what I call the *Revised Democratic Threshold Principle*. The account offered here provides broad requirements for the distribution of educational resources in a democratic society, along with a justification for these particular requirements in relation to the broader aspects of democratic theory. I finish by briefly examining ways in which the *Revised Democratic Threshold Principle* can fail to be met, and how this serves to undermine democratic decision-making.

Introduction

The contemporary public debate over the distribution of government spending between public and private schooling has become increasingly focused on questions of efficiency and economic viability, on generating a skilled workforce to secure our economic future, and on the taxpayers' "right" to choose how their children are educated. This focus might suggest that the question of distribution of government funding between public and private schools depends simply on the efficiency of private schools and their economic viability – that is, on their ability to meet these particular demands. However, this focus only serves to take critical attention away from a more fundamental issue. This is the question of the function and role that education plays in a democratic society. It is in light of the answer we give to this more fundamental question that proper answers to the questions of efficiency, economic viability, and the "right" to choice can be provided, for any answer to these further questions must be in line with the broader function and role of education in a democratic society.

In what follows, I present an account of what a democratic society requires from the education system that it funds. Part of this involves giving an account of the nature of democracy, along with an account of the conditions and substantive outcomes required to achieve and sustain a democratic society. The rest involves examining the role education plays in securing these outcomes. The account offered here will provide the broad requirements for the distribution of educational resources in a democratic society, along with a justification for these particular requirements in relation to the broader aspects of democratic theory.

The Nature of Democracy

At the heart of democracy lies the right of all citizens, on terms of equality, to a voice in collective decision-making regarding the terms of association of society (Christiano, 2002, pp. 31-35)[1]. This is not *all* that is required for democracy, but it is the essential core of any democracy worth wanting. So while it will not be my task here to offer and defend a full analysis or definition of democracy, I will attempt to shed light on what any such analysis or definition must include, by showing what a commitment to the core idea above entails. As we will see, much follows from this central claim. To begin with, to ensure that citizens are able to express this right to an equal voice in collective decision-making, a democratic society must provide certain basic rights and freedoms. The rights of minorities must be protected from the will of the majority; there must be freedom of thought, speech, association and religion, freedom from arbitrary arrest, freedom to vote, and freedom to hold public office (Gutmann, 1993, p. 413). These are the by now familiar basic rights and freedoms required for democracy: they are necessary for the possibility of the expression of the right, on terms of equality with other citizens, of all citizens to a voice in collective decision-making.

However, these basic freedoms are not alone sufficient to ensure the *political equality* democracy requires. In addition to the civil and political rights listed above, in order to achieve the aim of political equality, democracy requires certain substantive economic and social outcomes. These outcomes play an essential role in ensuring that citizens are able to exercise their rights to equal influence over collective decision-making[2]. An account of democracy that does not address the further question of what these substantive economic and social outcomes should be will be unable to explain how equality of influence over collective decision-making can be achieved or sustained. Although citizens may have the freedom from interference from others or the state, without the additional social and economic resources necessary for exercising one's rights there can not be *equality* of influence over collective decision-making (Beetham, 1999, p. 97).

Questions regarding the social and economic rights necessary for political equality can be brought into focus by asking: What level of social and economic inequality is compatible with political equality? (Beetham, 1999, p. 97). The top- down answer to this question addresses the issue of the influence of wealth over political decision-making. The influence of wealth over political decision-making can be restricted, for instance, through laws that prevent monopolization of the media, as well as through the implementation of limitations on lobbying and campaign funding. Addressing the question from the bottom-up requires that we ensure that all citizens possess adequate economic and social resources for equal citizenship. This requires, at a minimum, the provision of "…both physical security and access to the necessities of life: to the means of subsistence, shelter, clean water, sanitation and basic health care" (Beetham, 1999, p. 97). Given this basic understanding of the relation between the formal and substantive aspects of democracy, the specific and essential role of education in securing the outcomes necessary for democracy can now be examined.

Education and Democracy

The importance of education to modern democratic societies – its role in generating a skilled workforce etc., - is generally taken to be so obvious and well established that other questions

about the connection between education and democracy are often obscured or overlooked. On close inspection, however, education can be seen to be much more closely entwined with democracy's aspirations of equality than it may appear at first glance. To see this we can begin with the following account of the relation between education and democracy offered by David Beetham (1999):

> As has repeatedly been shown, education is necessary to the attainment of other economic rights. Without knowledge about nutrition or health care, the guarantee of a basic income or sanitation will prove insufficient. Education further provides the skills necessary for employment or self-employment, which are the surest means to a basic income and to other economic rights. And education is necessary if we are to be able to exercise our civil and political rights effectively, or even to know what these are. Education is thus a key economic and political right, and one whose denial is especially damaging to the democratic principle of civil and political equality. (p. 97)

There are at least three strands of thought in this quotation that can be distinguished. These are, roughly: (1) education as a basic human right, (2) education as necessary for securing social and economic rights[3] and, (3) education as necessary for political equality. I will examine these in order. Firstly, and this is the most familiar relation between education and democracy, I take it to be a relatively uncontroversial claim that to be provided with at least a minimum level of basic education is a fundamental human right and a basic public good, the provision of which ought to be ensured by a democratic society – this follows directly from democracy's commitment to providing basic human rights[4].

Secondly, education can be seen as *necessary* for securing social and economic rights. This relation is somewhat less obvious. But as we saw above, since a certain level of social and economic equality is required for democracy, to the extent that education plays a role in securing such equality, it will be relevant in this regard. Education is a means to employment and self-employment, and thus is a means to securing a basic income –which, in turn, contributes to a citizen's ability to secure the resources necessary for participation in democratic decision-making and for securing further economic and social rights. Furthermore, education can also be thought of as an end in itself, and in this sense education can be seen as having intrinsic value. Since political equality cannot be sustained without a degree of equality in social and economic goods, we will expect that the education system of a democratic society should not unnecessarily or systematically contribute to inequalities in outcomes in this regard. In addition, and importantly, this means that we cannot address the question of education's role in securing political rights without also addressing its role in securing social and economic outcomes.

Thirdly, education fulfills two broad roles that are directly related to political rights in virtue of which it can be seen as central to democracy. First, it provides an understanding of the political system and of the citizens' rights, roles, and responsibilities within society. In addition, it allows citizens to *better* understand their interests, to assess what others say, and to make determinations for themselves. Of course, coming to know what one's interests are is a difficult task since one's interests are often elusive, and are constantly changing, but this does not mean that we cannot make a distinction between being well-informed about one's interests and being entirely ignorant of

them. A clear example of the role education can play in helping one become better informed about one's interests is public health campaigns which seek to educate the population about the dangerous health effects of cigarettes. These campaigns are an important factor in allowing citizens to determine whether smoking is in their best interest. Without them, citizens will be left at the whim of tobacco advertisers. Not all cases will be so clear cut, however, and even with the provision of educational resources, it may be difficult for one to determine one's interest. But these difficult cases should not detract from the fact that education often *does* allow one to make an informed judgement about one's interest, where one may have otherwise remained ignorant.

The connection between one's ability to better understand one's interests and political equality is most evident in the democratic system of voting. Voting in a democracy is a means of having one's interests considered equally among those of others, but it depends on the assumption that one has a decent understanding of what one's interests are. The system would be undermined if it were systematically the case that, despite having 'an equal say' in collective decision-making, one's decisions were always (or very often) in one's worst interest. That is to say, it is not enough that citizens are treated "… *as if* [italics added] they were equally qualified to participate in the process of making decisions about the policies the association will pursue" (Dahl, 1998, p. 37); rather, in order to achieve the kind of equality democracy aims at – that is, equal consideration of interests in collective decision-making – citizens must, to a certain extent, *be* equally qualified – and by this I mean that nobody should be systematically disadvantaged in coming to know their interests and knowing how best to have those interests met. As Thomas Christiano (2002) points out, it is a central ethical justification for democratic decision-making that it allows for the equal consideration of interests by providing the means to have one's interests heard on a basis of equality with other citizens (p. 32). In a democracy, the institution of voting allows one to vote according to one's own judgement about what is in one's best interest. Since an interest is something about which judgements may be well or poorly informed, in order to have one's interest heard one needs to ensure that one's judgements about it are not poorly informed (Christiano, 2002, p. 32). Otherwise, even if one votes, one is not actually having one's interest heard but rather, one is having heard only what one mistakenly thinks one's interests are, and this mistake may well be due to a lack of education. The claim here is not that education can always counter one's misunderstanding of one's interests, but rather that there are cases where misunderstanding is due to a lack of education, and thus that such misunderstanding could be compensated for by providing the requisite education.

Each citizen is, arguably and in most cases, the best judge of his or her own best interests, or at least this is an inescapable assumption behind the institution of voting in a democracy. Yet without institutions of education, deliberation, and communication it is difficult for citizens to determine where their interests lie, particularly in a world as full of miscommunication, lies, deceit and spin as this one (Christiano, 2002, p. 43). Thus we ought to expect an account of democracy to say something about the important role of education in allowing citizens to know their interests and vote accordingly.

With these three aspects of the relation between education and democracy in mind – that is, education as a basic right, education as a means to social and economic rights, and education as directly necessary for the exercise

of political rights – we can now turn to the question of how the educational resources ought to be distributed in a democratic society.

Distributing Educational Resources

Perhaps the most basic condition on education in a democratic society is that no educable child should be *excluded* from receiving at least the minimum resources necessary to satisfy the basic human right to education. However, democracy requires more than this, since a democratic society may provide this minimum level of education and yet still harbour inequalities antithetical to democracy. For instance, the state could provide the absolute minimum level of educational resources required as a basic human right to a significant majority whilst providing a select few with an abundance of resources – and this would fail to secure the outcome that the majority have their interests considered equally among those of others. By concentrating the flow of resources towards a select few who may have already had adequate resources to allow their interests to be considered equally or more than others, the distribution would allow for even greater inequalities. What is needed is adherence to a principle, or principles, that adequately capture the commitment of democracy to the kinds of substantive outcomes outlined above. For instance, we saw earlier that political equality cannot be achieved or sustained without a level of equality in substantive social and economic outcomes and, moreover, that the education system of a democratic society should not unnecessarily or systematically contribute to inequalities in outcomes in this regard. To anticipate a discussion to come, if a system of government funding of private schools contributes to or sustains inequalities in this regard, violating these principles, then that system can be judged to be undemocratic.

Consider the principle of *equal educational opportunity* as a starting point. There are two broad ways of interpreting this principle. The first interpretation, let us call it *resource equalization*, argues for equal distribution of resources to all educable students. However, as an interpretation of equal educational opportunity this is inadequate. Opportunity should not be taken here as implying simply *some* opportunity; rather, opportunity ought to be thought of as equal opportunity (within certain limits) to secure certain outcomes. On the view of democracy developed above, these outcomes will include securing a level of equality in educational outcomes pertaining to the skills necessary for securing basic social and economic rights, and for coming to know one's interests – outcomes that will not be secured by just some opportunity. Equal distribution of educational resources alone will not ensure these outcomes for two reasons. Firstly, since students vary greatly in their ability to learn, this would allow for inequalities in outcomes antithetical to democracy. Secondly, it says nothing about students who may not be receiving a level of education adequate to develop a minimum level of skills to secure other social, economic, and political rights, despite receiving equal resources.

The second interpretation, the *outcome equalization* interpretation, improves on the *resource equalization i*nterpretation by focusing on outcomes. A strong version of this principle states that educational resources ought to be distributed so that the most disadvantaged students are brought up to, or as close as possible to, the level of the most advantaged students in society in terms of certain outcomes (Gutmann, 1987, p. 128). On this interpretation educational outcomes should be equalized as much as possible by allocating educational resources to those who need the most support to achieve such outcomes. However, the strong

interpretation sets the bar too high, and on closer inspection is implausible. This interpretation ignores the social, economic and environmental factors outside of institutionalised schooling that play an important role in securing outcomes. A variety of factors contribute to educational outcomes, including family life, intellectual and cultural differences, emotional dispositions and attachments of children (Gutmann, 1987, p. 133). To expect institutionalised education to overcome these differences is to expect too much – there must be a limit to the role education can play in compensating for disadvantages. This is not to say that in some cases additional resources should not be allocated to the disadvantaged, but only that equalisation of outcomes across the board is implausible. There is also a further problem with this interpretation as it stands: it says nothing about which outcomes should be equalized. Is equality in math and science outcomes enough? What would count as an *equal* outcome – i.e., what kind of equality are we interested in? For instance, an equality of outcomes in discovering one's interests would be very difficult, if not impossible, to measure precisely. These difficulties prompt us to take a different approach.

A more plausible interpretation of equal education opportunity is needed, one that overcomes the difficulties of the interpretations above and that accords with the account of democracy developed in the previous sections. Consider the following observation from Amy Gutmann (1987):

> The democratic truth in equalization is that all children should learn enough to be able not just to live a minimally decent life, but also to participate effectively in the democratic process by which individual choices are structured. *A democratic state, therefore, must take steps to avoid those inequalities that deprive children of educational attainment adequate to participate in the political process.* (p. 134; italics in original)

Here Gutmann suggests an alternative interpretation of the principle of equal educational opportunity. Her suggestion is that the principle is best interpreted by what she calls the *democratic threshold principle*, which would impose the requirement on a democratic society that it allocate sufficient resources to allow all educable students to learn the skills necessary for participation in democratic decision-making. On this threshold view, a democratic society cannot let the level of education fall below the level of the threshold where citizens will lack the skills necessary for exercising their political rights (Gutmann, 1987, p. 136). A *threshold principle* is an improvement on the earlier interpretations in that it is easier to measure what an adequate outcome would be, and it ensures that resources are allocated to bring all citizens to an adequate level – in the sense that gross discrepancies can be detected and countered without the need for an accurate measure of equality. However, as stated, the democratic threshold principle is problematic. The adequacy of the principle depends on how the ability for 'participation in democratic decision-making' is understood. If we take it to require simply the ability to read and write (as on a voting slip), then the level of adequacy may still fall below the minimum requirements for democracy set out earlier. Education, we saw, was also a means to securing other social and economic goods. A system of education that was sufficient for 'participation in democratic decision-making' understood merely as having an ability to vote – i.e., as an ability to read a voting slip and fill it out – may harbour inequalities in other areas. However, if we understand the ability to participate in democratic decision-making in the

broader sense, that is, as requiring a certain level of social and economic resources and also requiring educational resources necessary – but not necessarily sufficient – for discovering one's interests, then the *democratic threshold principle* of this sort promises to provide us with an adequate account of the educational requirements of democratic society. Let us now reformulate the democratic threshold principle in terms of the requirements established earlier.

The Revised Democratic Threshold Principle:

(A) Educational resources are to be distributed such that no educable citizen shall fall bellow the minimum level of education necessary for ensuring access to the social and economic rights necessary for political equality (understood as equal consideration of interests) and for a sufficient understanding of the democratic system.

(B) Above this minimum level, educational resources must be distributed in a way that does not *systematically* lead to, or contribute to, inequalities in the influence citizens have on collective decision-making – either socially and economically, or with respect to their judgements regarding their interests.

Part (A) of the *Revised Democratic Threshold Principle* captures democracy's commitment to providing the substantive outcomes necessary for political equality. The principle builds on Gutmann's by extending the scope from merely "outcomes necessary for political participation" to the kind of substantive outcomes outlined earlier. Part (B) recognizes that above the minimum level required to satisfy (A), there may be inequalities in educational outcomes that translate into political inequality. Thus it serves as a check on such inequalities (this is a top-down requirement, in the terms of the vocabulary introduced in section 1). This closes a loophole in Gutmann's principle that would have allowed for inequalities to creep into the system by advantaging elite minorities while nevertheless satisfying the *threshold principle* by ensuring a certain baseline educational provision for all. For instance, just as wealth can be used to directly influence representatives, educational resources may be distributed in such a way that some students are systematically put in an advantaged position that would allow them to secure further social and economic or political ends – and thereby exert undue influence over collective decision-making[2]. While a certain level of inequality in this respect is to be expected, since students have differing abilities, part (B) requires that the system of education should not be a factor which systematically contributes to such inequalities. This would prevent situations where educational resources above the threshold required for (A) are distributed to an elite minority such that they are systematically placed in an advantaged position that would allow them to secure further social and economic ends and political influence.

Other factors may systematically lead to some citizens being in positions, either socially and economically, or in respect to their judgements regarding their interests, such that those citizens have undue influence over collective decision-making. However, the point is that from the point of view of democracy, education should not be a contributing factor. The gross inequalities that arise from other sources *should* be dealt with in democratic theory. How to deal with these, however, is a separate issue. It is true that by satisfying (B) some of these factors may be mitigated, since those in a position to take advantage of systematic differences in outcomes between schools will no longer be able to do so.

I am thinking here of families that can afford to send their children to elite schools in districts other than their own. Yet with these systematic differences removed there may be less incentive to go to such trouble. In this sense, the revised democratic principle can serve to lessen the influence of other social and economic factors on educational outcomes.

The *Revised Democratic Threshold Principle* captures the democratic requirements of education discussed earlier and is justified insofar as we are committed to those requirements. It captures the requirement that citizens be provided with the minimum skills necessary for securing the economic and social rights necessary for democracy, and in addition it ensures that the opportunities with respect to gaining access to these social, economic and political rights are not distributed at a level of inequality antithetical to democracy.

Other Factors Affecting Education

One consequence of the *Revised Democratic Threshold Principle* as stated is that the level of resources necessary for reaching the democratic threshold is relative to the social and economic factors in the student's environment - although, the degree to which social and economic factors influence the education of each individual student will differ from case to case. Since educational outcomes depend on a variety of environmental factors outside of institutionalised education, students from disadvantaged backgrounds may require more educational resources to bring them to the level required by the democratic threshold - more than would be required to do the same for a student from an advantaged background.

The point can be made clearer by an example. Consider two primary school students, Sally and Anne[4]. Sally has a nurturing home environment and is eager to learn. Anne, on the other hand, comes from a poor and socially disadvantaged family and, let us suppose, as a consequence of her impoverished living arrangements, has difficulties learning at school. It will take more resources to educate Anne to the level required by the democratic threshold principle than it will Sally. In a society where the number of students like Anne is large, this will amount to a large proportion of resources being dedicated to helping disadvantaged students reach the democratic threshold.

The objection is sometimes raised that this will lead to less resources being available to educate the more able. It seems to some that rather than allocating a copious amount of resources to helping the disadvantaged, the resources would be more efficiently allocated to students who will excel and benefit from them. While it is true that it would require a large investment of resources – or let us suppose it is true – the conclusions often drawn from this implication are false. For instance, Randall Curren argues that in societies with many citizens who are highly disadvantaged in their non-educational environments, the resources required to bring these citizens to the level of the democratic threshold would be so great that those more able would receive less or no resources (Curren, 1994, p. 6). This view, however, presents a false and potentially dangerous dichotomy. We do not need to take resources from the able and give them to the less able. Consider the amount of funding that goes towards defence and homeland security in affluent democratic societies. In comparison, spending on education is small. Could we not reallocate some of this funding to education? If resources cannot be reallocated, then adherence to the *Revised Democratic Threshold Principle* may require an increase in taxes. Alternatively, we may agree with the critic

that it would indeed require more resources than is economically viable to educate the most disadvantaged if we do nothing else to overcome social and economic inequalities – no amount of institutional education resources may be able to overcome severe disadvantages. However, if we had an understanding of education that sees it as requiring more than simply redistributing resources within the system of institutional schooling, we would see that educational equality requires action at all levels of society.

What Curren's criticism does reveal is that the desirable outcomes may be better achieved by minimising disadvantage outside of the school system rather than by trying to compensate for them from within. Of course, not all social and economic disadvantages can be rectified, and there will therefore always be the need for compensation for disadvantaged students in the educational setting. The question is whether the funding should go to correcting inequalities through the education system alone or whether the social and economic system would be a better place to address these disadvantages. What is important here is that for a democracy, or any nation committed to democratic ideals, fixing such inequalities is not optional insofar as that nation aims to be democratic; it must rectify inequalities one way or another. Furthermore, not all nations will share the same focus. Developing nations, for instance, may focus on reaching the minimum requirements in education for democracy at the bottom end. On the other hand, developed nations might focus on redressing inequalities from the top-down. However, it is worth noting that countries like the U.S., Australia, the U.K. and many others arguably fail on both accounts. Funding goes neither to correcting inequalities through the education system nor to correcting the social and economic inequalities in other areas which affect educational outcomes.

There is a second aspect to the relative nature of the *Revised Democratic Threshold Principle* worth mentioning. Consider a statement by Beetham as to what is necessary in the social and economic realms for ensuring civil and political rights:

> To ensure equality of civil and political rights … does not require equality of economic and social condition. What is needed, at the bottom end, is a minimum platform below which no one is allowed to fall, plus specific resources such as legal aid; at the top end, regulations to limit the advantages of the wealthy in access to public office, and to prevent their undue influence over office holders and channels of public information. (Beetham, 2003, pp. 5-6)

What Beetham is suggesting here in regard to social and economic rights is similar to what I have been saying about education. As we have seen, education is a means to social and economic prosperity. If, in a society where wealth and social standing give its possessors increased opportunities for access to public office and an increased ability to influence office holders over those less well-off, and if the social and economic opportunities secured through education are not distributed on an equal basis, then the education system will contribute to inequalities in political influence in a way that makes it a thoroughly undemocratic institution. In modern democracies, social and economic standing *do* make a difference to one's ability to influence decision-making. To the degree that such inequalities persist, the level of the democratic threshold required to ensure a level of equality in opportunity in respect to social and economic rights compatible with democracy may again be implausibly high. As we saw above, this suggests that education cannot be

expected to compensate for all disadvantages. The more social and economic inequalities there are in society, the more pressure there will be on education to compensate for these inequalities. On the other hand, the less social and economic inequalities there are, the less education will need to compensate for.

Conclusion

We have now completed what we set out to do, namely, to provide an account of what a democratic society requires from the education system that it funds. We have seen why answering this question must come before issues of efficiency and economic viability, questions of generating a skilled workforce to secure our economic future, and the demands regarding taxpayers' "right" to choice. We saw that democracy must be committed to a certain level of substantive equality if it is to provide citizens an equal voice in collective decision-making. Educational outcomes, we saw, are related to economic and social outcomes as well as outcomes directly related to political equality. We saw that an adequate understanding of "equal opportunity" in education requires ensuring that certain substantive outcomes are met which allow citizens access to the resources required for exercising their right to an equal say in collective decision-making. The *Revised Democratic Threshold Principle* captures this commitment by requiring that this minimum be provided for, while also requiring that "top-down" advantages which lead to inequalities be kept in check.

To conclude, we can return to the question with which we began, that of government funding for elite private schools – schools which constantly out-perform public schools and are largely funded by private interests. What justification could exist for government spending on the education of the most socially and economically advantaged when those resources could be better used to diminish inequalities between the most advantaged and the least advantaged? On the account developed above – and in accordance with the revised principle – there can be *no* justification. Democratic society, in order to deserve its name, has a fundamental obligation to take measures to ensure the conditions necessary for all citizens to exercise their right to influence collective decision-making on the basis of equality. Government funding of such elite private schools contributes to the kind of systematic creation of inequalities in educational outcomes which the *Revised Democratic Threshold Principle* is designed to prevent. It increases the kind of inequalities we should be aiming to rectify from the top down. Resources would be better directed toward correcting for disadvantage from the bottom up. If the account of the role and function of education in a democratic society above is correct and the democratic threshold principle is entailed by other democratic principles (such as those necessary for equal consideration of interest), then its negation, in the form of inequalities fostered by government spending on elite private schooling, is a negation of democracy itself.

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Notes

1. This thought, in various guises, is prevalent in the contemporary literature on democracy. It is particularly emphasized in Christiano (2002) and Beetham (1999). I take it that this thought is closer to Dahl's (1998) "Elementary principle" that "…all the members [of an association] are to be treated (under the constitution) as if they were equally qualified to participate in the process of making decisions about the policies the association will pursue" than to what he goes on to fill out this idea with, i.e. his "criteria for a democratic process." (p. 37) Thus, I take it that this thought is more the aim democracy, and definitions of democracy fill out the ways in which this aim can be met by terms of association.

2. The egalitarian nature of democracy is emphasised by several contemporary writers. For instance see Beetham (1999), Christiano (2002), Gutmann (1987), and Gutmann (1993).

3. On this view, education is not just one additional right but is necessary for all others – it is primary and essential for democracy. Once we see education in this light, the value we put on education in a democratic society cannot be independent of the value we put on other social and economic goods or on democracy itself.

4. Article 26 No. (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that: "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit." www.un.org/Overview/rights.html

5. Education cannot always provide what is needed here, but it sometimes can. Even the well educated can make decisions in their own worst interest.

6. This example is based on a similar one Gutmann gives in her 1987 book *Democratic Education*.

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