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Democracy and Education: The Philosophy of Theorist Carl D. Glickman

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Dr. Carl D. Glickman started in education as a Teacher Corps intern in the south. He went on to become a principal and university professor. Over his career, Glickman has won many awards including the faculty career award from the University of Georgia. He has served in a leadership capacity on many university, state, and national organizations focused on improving education. He founded The Georgia League of Professional Schools and has served on the National Commission on Service Learning. Among his accomplishments he has authored numerous books and articles on educational renewal and school leadership (Glickman, 1993). Glickman’s life and career have been concentrated on the democratic and moral imperative of education and educational leadership. He described himself as a progressive constructivist with a focus on the democratization of classrooms and schools (Glickman, 1991). This paper is an overview of Dr. Carl Glickman’s philosophy and vision of democracy and education and how the two are dependent upon each other.

Great Schools and Democracy

“The challenge is clear - improving education and improving democracy go hand in hand... We need to give them tools to live respectfully and collaboratively with others, building communities that can tackle the challenges that lie ahead” (Glickman, 2008, p. 28). Glickman (2002b) believed democracy is the fundamental issue in education. He defined democracy as the confidence that people have the ability to educate and govern themselves through participation in problem solving. He believed that the quest for truth is the way to educate and be. Additionally, when education is guided by public resolve, people will use their education to further the ideology of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” for all (Glickman, 2002b, p. 374). Democracy is a practice and not a belief. Democracy is a way of learning in addition to a way of governing (Glickman, 1998b). People have to get involved and do their part. Democracy is not an efficient mechanism and at times it results in terrible decisions but democracy is the core ideal that unites us as a people (Glickman, 2002b).

Glickman described democratic education as attaining the essential academic knowledge that allows each student to have greater opportunity for personal and professional advancement, achieving the necessary responsibilities of a citizen, and using that education to contribute to building a “better home, community, and society” (Glickman, 2003a, p. xvii). At a time when civic involvement is at an all-time low, Glickman believed this form of education is the duty of schools. Schools should balance education between individual goals and societal duties. The result of moving away from these ideals has resulted in a significant decrease in the number of adults that participate in civic, public or community issues and government (Glickman, 2003a). Glickman believed there are things great schools can do to promote a resurgence of democracy in America.
Glickman asserts that democratic education is conditioned on three domains and can occur in any size school. The first domain is knowledge. Knowledge includes the content, understanding, and skills within and across disciplines. The second domain is relations. Relations refer to the dignity and respect shown to and between the students and faculty to listen and learn from each other. Relations are also the confidence, care, and expectations that faculty and students have for each other. Finally, the domain participation refers to the interaction between the knowledge and the learner that defines the learning experience (Glickman, 2002a).

Great schools do many things to teach democratic ideals (Glickman, 2002b). These schools nurture a democratic feeling by displaying democratic ideals throughout the school. Examples of such displays include student work showcases, service learning projects, and the language utilized in publications and discussions. All these public displays reflect the conviction that academic goals and contributions to society are essential to each other (Glickman, 2003b). Great schools also challenge students to think about and demonstrate how they can use their education to serve the community, connecting the ideals of democracy with the practices of education (National Commission on Service Learning, 2002).

Another important characteristic of great schools is the symbols, traditions, words, and events that symbolize what is important to the school community (Glickman, 2003b). These traditions show that students and adults have utilized their education to make a society a better place for everyone (Glickman, 2003b). These symbols are passed on to the next generation to carry forward. The philosophy is school stays with you always; it is carried forward into and throughout one’s life. Schools are not just classrooms and teachers but also an attitude and purpose founded on democratic ideals. Symbols can take the form of songs, pledges, rituals, service learning projects, and community partnerships. Rituals and special events become predictable ways to construct the relationship between the community and the school. Each event reflects and builds on the past as well as appreciating the present. These ritualized events come in many forms, including academic, intellectual, and personal; they seek to unite everyone (Glickman, 2003b).

Glickman’s philosophy of creating great democratic schools included great leadership. Preparing for change in advance minimizes the chance of failure and supports success of renewals and reforms going forward. Preparation allows school leaders to expect and respond to the daily problems that will arise along the way (Glickman, 2002c). Great schools begin by putting in place an internal set of procedures and beliefs. This framework includes a covenant of beliefs, a charter or governance structure, and a critical study process. By establishing a framework that expects obstacles, leaders can create conditions that enable the school to maintain reforms and attain their goal of promoting the power of student learning (Glickman, 2002a).
School Renewal

A philosophy of democratic education includes a process for school renewal. Individual public schools are accountable to the community and the state but, more importantly, educators are also accountable to themselves (Glickman, 2003a). When beginning the renewal process, schools often can move too quickly and without a clear picture of the issues. Reform will fail if a plan is not well thought out in advance. Renewing schools begins with establishing the framework; the covenant, the charter and the critical study (Glickman, 1993).

The covenant’s purpose is to describe the principles of learning that are derived from the definition of democracy and education (Glickman, 1993). It communicates good education and student learning expectations. Writing a covenant begins by including all impacted stakeholders. The document is derived through a democratic process and no one person makes the decisions. The covenant’s focus is solely on teaching and learning and how it looks in the school. The covenant serves as a manual for all upcoming decisions regarding the school’s priorities. Glickman (2002b) likened this document to The Declaration of Independence. The covenant provides structure for renewal. Once a school has a covenant it can precede to the formation of the charter (Glickman, 1993).

The next step in the school renewal process is the formation of the charter. The charter is the Constitution, the agreement of how decisions are going to be made and that the students belong to all (Glickman, 2002a). It breaks down and assigns responsibilities. It explains the composition of the decision making body. Finally, the charter describes the decision-making systems to be utilized. Glickman had three guiding rules in this process. First, everyone can be involved and is invited. Second, no one has to be involved. Participation is voluntary. Finally, once decisions are made, everyone supports the implementation. Glickman (2002a) believed that the time to make one’s opinions known is during the decision making process, not after. This process is deeply rooted in democratic philosophy (Glickman, 1993).

The charter only governs the things it has control over (Glickman, 1993). The charter does not concern itself with issues outside its ability to change. Schools need to focus on knowledge and learning and not spend time planning on things like crime, health, housing social services and welfare. These are issue for the community as a whole and the agencies designed to address these issues. Schools cannot address every aspect of a student’s life. The focus of the discussions, when forming a charter, should always be centered on the covenant and how to enhance school-wide teaching and learning. Glickman (1993) believed that the charter process should be open to any member of the group. Additionally, teachers should always have the majority voice in matters that affect their professional work and the principal should always be viewed as an important member of the process. The charter group, as a whole, should also reflect the diversity of the community. Once formed, the charter is a living document, and along with the covenant, should be revisited occasionally (Glickman, 1993).
Glickman’s (1993) final step in the school renewal framework is the critical study or action research phase. Critical study utilizes the covenant and the charter as the foundation. Critical study provides a systematic way of gathering and examining data in order to set learning priorities for the school. Organizations need to act only on things that can be studied. There must always be a conscious method to determine if the action being implemented is getting the desired result. Democracy is powered by information, varying points of view, and critical reflection about differing perceptions and competing priorities. Data have to be used to determine whether the charter is on track with the covenant. If critical study does not show results it would be suggested to revisit the decision with the charter committee and adjust (Glickman, 1993).

The process of school renewal is the internal, analytical process of examining one’s own school (Glickman, 1993). This involves looking at the covenant, raising critical questions about the educational practices, and then assessing where the priorities are in preparing students to become contributing citizens of democracy. Renewal is not a national undertaking, it is a local responsibility. Reform and renewal take time and there will be disagreement: that is what democracy is. It takes vision, courage, and perseverance to sustain school renewal (Glickman, 1993).

### Instructional Leadership

Glickman has authored multiple books on supervision. For schools to be successful, they must include a community of professionals working toward a vision of teaching and learning that goes beyond the individual classroom, grade level, and department (Glickman, 1980). Principals are not the instructional leaders, they are the coordinators of instructional leaders and they are working toward learning that demonstrates particular characteristics (Glickman, 1993). Learning should be an active process, it includes individual and cooperative endeavors, it has goals and they are linked to the real world: it is personalized, it is documentable, it is diagnostic and reflective, and it provides feedback in a comfortable physical setting in a supportive and respectful atmosphere. These characteristics of learning develop the covenant of learning that begins the renewal process and instructional leaders ensure that it occurs. By committing to this description of learning the leadership is saying they will support the process and implement the decisions (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2005).

Instructional leadership needs to focus on the development of teacher thinking. Glickman (2003a) believed developing teacher thinking should be the aim of staff development. Things that historically have inhibited a teacher’s professional growth are isolation, poor support of new teachers, invisibility, no professional dialogue, and restricted choices (Glickman, 2003a). Utilizing the framework for renewing teaching and leadership means, using observation, peer coaching, communal groups, critical friends, action research teams, and study groups to break poor historical patterns and develop teacher thinking. Great schools understand that improvement of teaching and learning happens through the efforts of individuals and groups who take on a variety of programs and proposals. The staff members of a great school are always challenging the current instructional practices and do not blame failures in achievement on external causes. Staff
members work in collegial, critical ways with each other on a common purpose. The problem in average schools is the problems always lie with someone else. Good schools start from within (Glickman, 2002c).

Glickman supported several different styles of leadership (Pajak & Glickman, 1989). Non-directive leadership style facilitates thinking in developing a self-plan. The instructional leader has low control and the teacher has high control. This style is very effective with master teachers that are very self-directed. Some behaviors exhibited by a leader using this style of leadership are listening, clarifying, and encouraging. The leader does not need to be directive in any way, the teacher is self-directed (Glickman, 2002a).

The collaborative style of leadership shares control between the leader and the teacher. This is generally the most desired style of leadership (Glickman, 2002a). The leader and the teacher share information and possible practices as equals arriving at a mutually agreed upon plan. Some leader behaviors seen here include problem-solving and shared control. The leader and the teacher are free to share thoughts, ideas, and suggestions in the process (Glickman, 2002a).

In the directive informational style the leader provides the focus and parameters (Glickman, 2002a). The leader lays out the plan and a variety of choices. The teacher can freely choose from presented choices. Some characteristics of this style of leadership include standardization and formalized timelines presented by the leader (Glickman, 2002a).

The final leadership style is called directive control. This style involves the leader telling the teacher directly what to do (Glickman, 2002a). The leader pushes the teacher for change and reinforces consequences. The choices are predetermined by the leader and the teacher has little or no input on the decision. This style is used mostly with beginning teachers and incompetent teachers. The goal is to move toward less leader control and more teacher autonomy (Glickman, 2002a).

The goal of leadership is to provide every student “with what should be his or her educational birthright; access to competent, caring, qualified teaching” (Glickman, 2002a, p. 81). Leadership styles should be fit to each individual teacher by assessing the level of their commitment and abstraction (Glickman & Gordon, 1987). In schools full of self-starting, resourceful, curious staff, school renewal is taking place through non-directive leadership. In a school with common goals but a history of failed efforts to improve and little visible collaboration among teachers would be best served by the collaborative leadership style. In a school with a lack of common learning goals across grade levels and teachers working mostly in private, a directive-informational approach would be appropriate in order to move a faculty toward sharing ideas across classrooms and grade levels. In a school marked by a decline in achievement and resistance to individual or collective change, directive control leadership requiring faculty to participate in a continuous improvement program is necessary. Instructional leaders start where they are and move toward a more collaborative, democratic process of leadership as possible. Competent teachers and powerful schools know that when it comes to
education, one must always learn to do better no matter where they are starting (Glickman, 2002a).

To create a professional environment in schools, instructional leaders need to provide more opportunities for teachers to make choices, observe others, discuss their work, and help beginning teachers ease into their responsibilities (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004). Removing obstacles for teacher improvement includes increasing responsibility for beginning teachers, increasing visibility among teachers, and encouraging teachers to share their instructional plans, insight, and ideas. Great leaders encourage teachers to work in groups and give them partial control over their schedules, materials, and curriculum (Glickman, 1985). All major research studies on effective schools have reported that they all have in place the organizational behavior of collective action. This agreed upon purpose and confidence in realization Glickman calls *ethos* or a “cause beyond oneself” (Glickman et al., 2004, p. 38). Leaders that understand this concept contribute to building great schools.

**Teaching, Learning, and Service**

Consistent with his democratic focus, Glickman (2005) outlined his principles of democratic learning. First, students have a degree of choice as an individual and in a group within the limits set by the teacher. Second, students work with people, problems, and ideas as they learn skills and knowledge. Finally, students are held to a high degree of excellence in both academics and contributions made to society (Glickman, 2005). The goal is to teach students to think independently as they learn to contribute in a democracy. Education must work to create a generation of citizens more intelligent, caring, and committed than the generation before. To achieve this, schools and programs must employ a pedagogy of learning that demonstrates to students the power of democracy as the most powerful way to learn to live together (Glickman, 2003a).

In a democracy, differences are respected and there is a respect for the right of each person to participate, consider, explore, and form their own educated point of view (Glickman, 2005). One cannot form an educated point of view until they reconcile differences in perspective, belief, and purpose by first understanding the views from their own perspective. Teachers need to model for students what they wish for them to demonstrate; respect for differences, engagement of others, and deliberation over what is right (Glickman, 2005). Students learn by what they see as well as by what they do.

Glickman (1998a) pointed out that democratic education does not mean students and teachers have the same or equal authority. The teacher has the moral duty to establish educational conditions that guide student learning. Teachers assert control to ensure that learning occurs from interaction between academic knowledge and the natural interest of the students. Schools use governance through the school charter to implement learning that results in informed and participatory students (Glickman, 1998a).

Glickman (1998a) also believed in the importance of listening to students. He believed that if they are asked, students will express what is engaging and what is boring about
teaching and learning. Teachers may not always want to hear what the students have to say but, if they listen, students will teach them how they learn. The student’s responsibility is to press the issue of influence with the teacher in an effort to improve learning (Glickman, 1998a).

Glickman (2003a) pointed out the difference between education and schooling is schooling has been intended to continue and maintain existing power relations and instructional structures in society. On the other hand, education is the process of transmitting the knowledge of values, aesthetics, spiritual beliefs, and cultures from one generation to another. Public schooling is the institutional practices and administrative structures that guide how a school operates to educate its students. Public education is the knowledge base, epistemological perspective, and teacher, parent, and community modeling that gives students the tools they need to participate in society (Glickman, 2003a).

The debate about educational change ignores the original mission of public education, preparation of educated citizens to participate in a democratic society (Glickman, 2003a). Good education ensures that all students appreciate and utilize freedom of speech and accept the responsibility to demonstrate respect for the rights of others. Good education also makes sure students understand the key importance of separation of church and state and know, and are dedicated to, the due process step prior to being denied of “life, liberty, property or the pursuit of happiness” (Glickman, 2002b, p. 374). Students who receive a good education also are knowledgeable and conversant about the issues of our society. They know how to reason and consider a variety of points of view. Students would test viewpoints, shape informed opinions, and would practice and convey the acceptance of the value of all people. Students who do well in school recognize how school and learning will help them and those who do not do well in school will never perform better until learning is connected to a real democratic future (Glickman, 2003a).

With regard to pedagogy, democratic education believes in a core curriculum that everyone receives without specified tracks. However, Glickman (1998b) also pointed out that democratic education understands that there are times when students need something different. Not a different track, but attention to a particular characteristic. For example, gifted students would receive some intensive support to encourage the growth of that talent. Students with behavior issues that are harmful to others would not be able to stay in class with other students. Special education students would receive time with specialists. Finally, all students would have ten percent of their day devoted to activities for which they have shown special interest, aptitude, or talent. Individual characteristics and interests are considered (Glickman, 1998b).

**Standards, Policy, and Authority**

Glickman (1990) discussed in his writings the two recent reform movements: legislative and empowering. The legislative movement added more laws, regulations and accountability at the state and federal levels. This movement included high stakes testing and common curriculum. Teachers and principals became passive workers and morale
declined across America (Glickman, 1989). The empowering movement aimed to give back some autonomy to the local schools and school boards. Glickman believed the policymakers need to learn to involve teachers in their collective work on reforming schools. Educators need to have a reform process that includes their ability to make knowledgeable decisions about their teaching, and allows educators to take responsibility for implementing and accepting the consequences of their choices (Glickman, 1990).

Standards policy is a substantial issue in education because it affects every student, faculty member, and school. Standards have a direct influence on how America defines the following; the curriculum to be taught, well-educated students, and the fundamental purpose of schools (Glickman, 2001). Glickman believed there are some good aspects of standards. For example, the expectation that every student, regardless of race, wealth, or gender, will achieve at higher levels than ever before and the equalization in funding are seen as positives. However, Glickman also identified the faults in standardization. For example, states exercise of total control over schools, enacting narrow standards, and making no allowances for innovation in schools are negative for schools. If democracy is going to be furthered it will only happen when it protects the diversity of ideas and variety of viewpoints (Glickman, 2002b). What Glickman believed is necessary is special protection for classrooms and schools that have different perspectives and alternative concepts of education and schools without grade levels. Glickman suggested that educators consider the following options in responding to the ever increasing standardization of education: rebel openly, suggest changes in the accountability system, accept state testing but develop community based project or assessment as a cultivating project, accept state standards and make them work by involving students in finding ways to teach them, mainly ignore the test and do a quick preparation close to the date, or resign and find a school that practices democratic beliefs (Glickman, 1990).

Standardization results in the loss of imaginative and creative thinking used to explore new possibilities that encourage students to pursue their natural interests (Glickman, 2006).

American education should be built on a foundation that is more than the opinions of any one individual or group. America should respect and support any concept or innovative idea that is willing to be tested publicly. It should involve enthusiastic and non-discriminatory participation of all stakeholders (Glickman, 2001). Glickman believed that absolute ideological truths have no place in education. Absolute truths only attempt to crush each other and education is comprised of many intricacies that will ultimately overcome any singular certainty. Additionally, any single truth will be full of contradictions, as seen throughout history. The real concern of any one-reform effort is the endorsement of one definition of a well-educated citizen (Glickman, 2001). Individuals should be allowed to define that for themselves.

Some standards and assessment are necessary to the idea of equity for and the capacity of all students. However, the freedom of a school to control its own resources and use the best of learning practices is essential to school success and the attractiveness of the profession. Schools can and do determine what is necessary for students through the utilization of their framework. The work of renewal and innovation is going on in
individual schools and districts that challenge current standards and assessment. This has to be integrated into a larger systemic policy (Glickman, 2001). “There is not tragedy in reaching for the stars and failing short; the greatest tragedy is never reaching at all” (Glickman, 2006, p. 690).

Democracy and the Future

Schools in America are no worse and no better than they have been on the past. America is in a precarious position, but, it always has been (Glickman, 2006). The greatest experiment of human kind is democracy. Even though, in the beginning, and some would argue, even today, it did not apply to all, the conviction that each person was equal and having absolute right to “life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness” was at least possible (Glickman, 2002b, p. 374). Education, to date, has been unable to finish the work of the revolution. The primary reason schools exist is to prepare all people to take their just position as respected and valued citizens in the democracy (Glickman, 2006).

Citizen education is not just a narrow understanding of how the government works (Glickman, 2008). Citizen education focuses on the more thorough comprehension of freedom. Through participations, deliberations, judgment, and choices of economic, social, and intellectual life, students are prepared for their roles as American citizens (Glickman, 2008). This comprehensive view is what is missing in education today (Glickman, 2003a).

Glickman (1988) continually brought his focus back to the educational theory of democracy. Democracy is best created and progressed by a community that defends and safeguards freedom of speech, separation of church and state, universal distribution of knowledge, free press, and the unencumbered search for truth. The basic idea is that all people are able to educate themselves when provided with an atmosphere that encourages them to interact actively with the information (Glickman, 1998). This results in the individual gaining knowledge and eventually forming one's own judgments and conclusions. Citizens are then able to govern themselves individually and collectively in a way greater than all other forms of governance (Glickman, 2003a).

What is democratic learning and what is it not? Glickman (2006) stated it is students working actively with problems as they learn and have a high degree of choice within the limits of the teacher. Students are responsible to use their educational time wisely and share their learning with those in class and those outside of class. They also decide how to make their learning a gift to their society and assume growing responsibility for acquiring materials for projects. Further, students demonstrate what they know publicly by sharing with and working in the community. Children work cooperatively and challenge and learn from each other. Democratic learning is not students deciding for themselves what they will learn or if they will learn. Nor is it learning the same thing at the same time. It is not passively listening or getting categorized into ability groups. Democratic pedagogy is resolute. It builds toward increasing participation and responsibility for one’s own learning. Teachers do not allow students to just be free. Teachers guide student to learn how to be free (Glickman, 2006).
Glickman (1999) pointed out that democracy has never been implemented perfectly and many have been marginalized along the way. To assume that democracy only belongs to white people is to marginalize all of those of citizens, white and of color, who have worked and fought to improve democracy by promoting ideals that give all people hope. Retreating from democracy is dangerous to minority groups and everyone (Glickman, 1999). “Thus, democracy is as much an educational theory as a political theory; one rests upon the other. The task…is only for the courageous educator who… is willing…, to serve as a beacon of that which is indeed possible” (Glickman, 2003a, p. xx).

In the long haul, progressive education re-centers schooling on intellectual inquiry and public engagement while respecting the student’s capacity to come to his or her own conclusions resulting in a concrete contribution to others (National Commission of Service-Learning, 2002). The belief in democracy and education leads America on. Education can re-invigorate democracy but educators have to sustain the progressive dream. “We cannot possibly imagine what this wiser, healthier, more caring world might look like, but the next generation will learn from our efforts and pick up our dream and remake it their own” (Glickman, 2003a, p. 322).

References
