DEVELOPING CURRICULUM ON "MINORITY RIGHTS IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY"

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Abstract

This study primarily focuses on two broad objectives: first, to develop an understanding on the issues and challenges faced by minority groups in a democratic society and the different approaches to address these; and, second, to develop a curriculum module for middle-school students with the aim of creating sensitivity among students towards the concerns of minority groups. The literature on various democratic theories and minority rights were reviewed for this study. The teaching module comprised concepts such as democracy, minority rights, plural notions of good life, multiculturalism, deliberation, positive discrimination and self-government. A baseline survey and an endline survey were conducted at the beginning and end of this module to check its effectiveness. This was towards analysing any shift in the approach of students` responses towards the given situations and to see if the module had been able to make them consider the concerns of minority groups. A combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis of their responses suggests that some of the students had a positive change in their approaches and had begun to think from the positions of minority groups.

Introduction

The role of education and schools is primarily embedded with ethics and morals (Quinn 2001). Schools as social institutions have this larger role of developing students to fit into society as families may not realise the need or have the means to do so. In a democratic society, schools have to perform the role of preparing future citizens who can actively participate in the democratic processes. Experiencing and practising democratic values would help in developing a deeper understanding of the principles of democracy. For a democratic society, it is important to sustain values and principles through educating its citizens. If a certain form of democracy is what as a society we are aiming for, then it is essential that the principles of democracy

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be developed through education, as it is evident that no child is born ready to participate in the process of democracy (Gutmann 1999).

"Learning means having acquired ability to do something on the basis of experience and effecting a change in the learner`s understanding". In this perspective, making students learn the principles of democracy becomes a responsibility of the schools so that students have the space and opportunity to experience and practise these principles. In order to have an environment where students can practise the values of democracy, I argue, it is necessary to have the entire school structure and culture to be encouraging of such practices.

Democracy is often interpreted or misinterpreted as a "majoritarian" system. Decisions are largely made on the basis of the majority`s will. For this study, majority and minority are seen as positions that can be held by any group of individuals. Having its foundation in the principle of equality, in democracy, ideally all citizens should be treated as equals irrespective of the positions they hold. How is it that in practice, minorities are often subjected to neglect? How should a democratic society address the concerns of minorities? The first part of this article attempts to answer these questions through reviewing the literature on political theories of democracy, minority rights and constitutional principles.

School culture is certainly an important factor in inculcating democratic practices, but having said that, can one incorporate these practices in the classroom teaching–learning processes and "teach" them? If as a teacher, one has to educate students about democratic values as a part of the curriculum, then in what ways can one effectively impart these values? The second part of the article suggests tools to incorporate democratic values, drawn from the literature, and looks at how these can be implemented in classrooms with an objective to develop certain values. The study investigates the questions of why it is important to develop democratic practices through education, what should be a part of such a process and how should such a process be carried out.

Literature Review

Large part of this literature review is based on Will Kymlicka`s book titled *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction* (2002), which provides an analysis of several democratic political theories. The objective is to study some of these theories and understand their respective approach towards looking at the concerns of minority rights. Different democratic political

theories have different approaches to ideas of equality, freedom and justice. Kymlicka argues that all these theories have one common strand, which is that they all are egalitarian theories. They all uphold equality as the ultimate value to be achieved. Here, equality is termed as a basic concept, that is, in terms of treating people "as equals", equal consideration of all citizens by the government, and equal concern and respect for all. No democratic theory would reject the importance of equality, but each theory pursues equality through its own approach. Liberals approach equality through the notion of individual freedom, while the communitarians believe equality should be seen from the view of "common good".

Liberal equality

The liberal equality argument is based on the ideas of John Rawls about justice. For Rawls, an equal distribution of primary goods would lead to equal opportunities. Primary goods, according to him, consist of liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and act as the base for self-respect. Distribution of these primary goods should be equal unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured. Rawls keeps the least advantaged in focus while discussing distribution of resources. Through a "veil of ignorance", he suggests a mechanism through which individuals can be abstracted from their socio-economic contexts and treated with a "sense of justice" in the distribution of primary goods. In such a situation, an individual is likely to put oneself at the least advantaged position and distribute goods in order to safeguard his/her own position (Bhargava and Acharya 2009). Through self-interest, an individual will end up maximising the position of the worst off (Kymlicka 2002).

Citizenship Theory

The theory of citizenship combines the ideas of liberal equality, individualism and communitarianism. It looks at the rights of an individual as the member of a community. Here, the community refers to the larger nation-state that provides certain democratic rights to its citizens. It primarily looks at the kinds of virtues and practices citizens should possess to maintain the institutions and policies that are aligned with the principles of justice and equality (Kymlicka 2002). Deliberation is identified as an effective medium to have active participation of citizens as well as to address the multiplicity of society. Deliberation would also give a platform for minorities to raise their concerns and to be heard at the larger level. The voting mechanism gives no chance to minorities to voice their opinions, while a "reason-centric" democratic society

would have the space, time and resources available to reason each other`s opinions and arguments. A decision made through deliberation would be more likely to have clear interpretations among citizens in comparison to a decision made solely on the basis of voting.

Many studies have shown that citizens will accept the legitimacy of collective decisions that go against them only if they think their arguments and reasons have been given fair hearing (Kymlicka 2002). This has specific implications for marginalised minority groups that have little hope of winning through voting. This is not to say that voting would or should have no place in a deliberative democratic society as several decisions would not be possible without it. But prior to voting, the process of deliberation would help in developing a nuanced understanding of the matter and, at the same time, maintain mutual respect among different groups. As Gutmann (1999) points out, we cannot assume that children are born ready for rational deliberation, which would have significant implications on the kind of education we want to provide to future citizens who can actively deliberate and participate in public life.

Further, while discussing the specific civic virtues a society should aim to develop among its members, Kymlicka (2002) suggests civility or decency as an important virtue that citizens must learn since it not only applies to political activity but also to our actions in everyday life and in the diverse institutions and forums of civil society. Civility refers to the way we treat non-intimates with whom we come into face- to-face contact (ibid.). It requires practising non-discrimination towards people from diverse backgrounds with whom one may not necessarily have any common ground or against whom one may even have some prejudices. Civility in this respect requires citizens to uphold the norms of equality in their daily lives.

Why engage in civility when one can benefit from the current patterns of discrimination and prejudice against minority groups? In response to this question, Kymlicka (2002) offers two answers. The first is that it is assumed that citizens are committed to principles of justice, which provides a sense of solidarity, uniting people with different conceptions of good. The second answer takes a nationalist approach. It makes the argument that social unity based on principles of justice is too thin, and hence there should be a sense of nationhood, which is based on common language, history and public institutions (ibid.). However, India as a nation-state defies all these bases of nationhood due to its diverse cultures, history and languages. There is a strong emphasis on a common language for citizens to be able to deliberate

among themselves. In the Indian context, we have struggled a lot to identify and accept a national language without success. Moreover, the nationalist approach seems to be a parochial way of looking at social unity, which is contradictory to the principles of justice. I think that principles of justice would be applicable to all the human beings irrespective of nationality, language, culture or history.

Multiculturalism

In a multicultural society, common citizenship rights may not be adequate to address the concerns of marginalised groups. For this purpose, "differentiated citizenship" rights, as termed by Iris Marion Young, are required in which members of such groups are incorporated into the political community not only as individuals but also through their groups, with their rights depending on their group membership (Kymlicka 2002). Such group-specific forms of citizenship are necessary because the idea of a single common national culture is not feasible in many nations, particularly India, and also because it is the best way to integrate people. Kymlicka (ibid.) differentiates two forms of inequalities: economic and status. He also goes on to establish that there may not always be a correlation between the two as suggested by Marx. According to the Marxist perspective, removing economic inequality would automatically fade out status-based inequalities, but there are examples of groups such as homosexuals, minority religious groups (Muslims), lower castes and women who are often found to be economical well off but still face status inequalities. Their status hierarchy within the national culture demeans and degrades them and treats them as less worthy of concern and respect (ibid.). Both forms of inequalities require different approaches to address them. Kymlicka uses Nancy Fancer`s model of two approaches: the politics of redistribution to address economic inequality and the politics of recognition to address status inequality.

Do minorities that share basic liberal principles need minority rights? If groups are indeed liberal, why do their members want minority rights? Why are they not satisfied with the traditional common rights of citizenship?

Kymlicka (2002) answers these questions through the idea of liberal culturalism. Liberal culturalism is defined as the view that liberal-democratic states should not only uphold the familiar set of common civil and political rights of citizenship which are protected in all liberal democracies, they must also adopt various group-specific rights or polices which are intended to recognise and accommodate the distinctive identities and needs of

ethnocultural groups. (Patten 2014) This view recognises that there are compelling interests related to culture and identity that are fully consistent with liberal principles of freedom and equality, and these justify granting special rights to minorities (Kymlicka 2002). There are also situations when minority groups undermine the individual autonomy of their own group members, such as the Shah Bano case or other instances of giving prominence to group norms related to marriage, divorce and inheritance. One then has to make a distinction between "bad" minority rights that restrict individual rights and "good" minority rights that are supplementary to individual rights (Kymlicka 2002). The important factor should be that the principle of individual liberty underlies all the special rights provided to minority groups.

The central argument is that minorities ought to have the same opportunities to form local majorities and to use their majority power to express their culture as is enjoyed by the majority at the national level. Minority rights are not opposed to nationalism but instead represent a demand to pluralise it, to give more than one group within the state the chance to have its own political community and to express it culturally through the public institutions of that community (Patten 2014)

Kymlicka (2002) categorises the claims minority groups make as internal restrictions and external protection. Internal restrictions are to do with the rights of a group against its own members, and they are designed to protect the group from the destabilising impact of internal dissent. They are meant to ensure that the members of the group follow their traditional practices and customs. Such rights may result in individual oppression, and theocratic and patriarchal structures like khap panchayats (Kymlicka 2002). The other set of claims are to do with protecting a group from the impacts of the decisions of the external, larger society. In a majoritarian society, quite often decisions made by the majority may have negative impacts on the rights of minority groups. Through "safeguarding" rights, minority groups can protect their distinct existence. Minority self-government is a way of protecting one`s group from external impacts rather than internal ones. Minority groups typically demand maintenance of or regaining their own schools, courts, media and political institutions. They also demand collective autonomy to have control over the language and curriculum of schooling in their regions, the language of government employment, the requirement of immigration and naturalisation, and the drawing of internal boundaries (Kymlicka 2002). For minority rights to be aligned with the principles of liberal culturalism, they have to protect the freedom of individuals within the group and promote relations of equality (non-dominance) between groups.

For those who feel that giving such rights to one particular group would mean marginalising another group, Kymlicka responds by saying that such a practice would not create injustice as such rights would put various groups on a more equal footing, by reducing the extent to which minority groups are vulnerable to larger ones (ibid.). It does not constitute unfair privileges or invidious forms of discrimination but compensation for unfair disadvantages, consistent with justice. The theory of multiculturalism has also been critiqued from the point of view that it polarises the nation on the basis of ethnicity and that it would create mistrust and antagonism between different ethnic groups. It may also erode the sense of shared civic purpose and national solidarity. Kymlicka has refuted these claims by stating that there is significant evidence that recognising self-government for national minorities assists, rather than threatens, political stability (ibid.). Implementation of multicultural policies in Canada and Australia has reduced the level of prejudice. Sen (2006) also mentions the same in the case of Britain.

Kymlicka (2002) classifies ethno-cultural groups found within Western democracies into five types: national minorities, immigrants, isolationist ethno-religious groups, metics and racial caste groups. Language in a multicultural society possesses significant importance for various groups to get involved. Largely the official language of a nation has immense advantage for people if the language and culture belong to them. Speakers of other languages are at a distinct disadvantage. Minority groups often find themselves at such a disadvantage. Even when one attempts to create a common culture, such a common culture is inevitably aligned in certain respects with the majority culture. It is the majority group`s language that often serves as the common language of a republic. It is the majority culture that influences the choice of public symbols and norms (Patten 2014). For instance, in the case of India, the nation adopted Hindi as an official language partially because the northern states comprise the majority population that speaks it as their mother tongue. The scope for Hindustani as an official language was hindered due to the belief that it is not pure "Indian". In situations when minority groups are at the risk of being marginalised due to their lack of familiarity with the common language, according to Kymlicka, they have five options:

1. Emigrate to a prosperous and friendly nation-state nearby that will take them

2. Accept integration into the majority culture, while seeking to negotiate better or fairer terms of integration

3. Seek rights and powers of self-government required to maintain their own societal culture

4. Accept permanent marginalisation and seek only to be left alone on the margins of society

5. Seek military overthrow of the state and establish a minority-run dictatorship

In my belief, only the second and third options would require active involvement of the minority groups with the larger society to address their concerns in a democratic manner. The rest of the options do not offer any scope to initiate a dialogue with the larger society.

Theory of Human Rights

How does one look at the concept of human rights itself? Nalini Rajan (2002) anchors human rights on Kantian philosophy. Human rights are referred to as moral principles that expand our freedom and are considered as rational and universal in scope (ibid.). The ability and autonomy to reason is considered as the foundation of human rights. Human rights need to enhance the individual autonomy to reason. Regarding the scope of human rights, Rajan (2002) argues that rights necessarily have to be fundamental and "universalisable". Establishing the nature of relations between democracy and human rights, Rajan says that, human rights flourishes only in states that foster democratic values of individual autonomy and the capability of each one of us to act independently. Further, regarding the conception of human rights, it is said that every right does not necessarily need to have a corresponding reason.

Who should be considered as the legitimate bearers of these rights? Should individuals or groups be considered as the legitimate holders of human rights? Rajan (2002) argues that rights of individuals have expanded to the rights of the group in the case of socially and culturally marginalised groups. An opposite view comes from communitarians and also from Gandhians and Marxists who believe that social and cultural groups should be considered as the legitimate holders of rights. Such a notion, I believe, would have its own fallout, with groups practising certain norms that are in violation of fundamental human rights, e.g., those of women and children. Individual group rights are aligned with the idea of protecting individual liberty and thus maximising happiness.

What should be the nature of a secular state in a democracy that aims to enhance human rights? Rajan calls this discussion "good vs just", which in

Rawlsian terms is put as "good vs right". A principled secular state is likely to be more just than one that is merely tolerant of pluralistic values within society. The principle of tolerance is more concerned about promoting peace between groups of people than about differentiating between the just and the unjust. (Rajan 2002) A tolerant perspective would merely aim at settling for short-term peace and may ignore an unjust practice, while the justice principle would protest against unjust practices of another group. Hence, unjust practices may continue to remain under a tolerant state. The communitarians` demand for the religious freedom of groups would fail to serve justice as this would imply having no external or even internal interference in challenging and modifying unjust practices as mentioned earlier. This is the reason for framing this right as religious equality rather religious freedom in our constitution.

Having a wide range of theoretical concepts drawn from the literature review, the next step was to categorise these concepts and form them into a structure, which would be appropriate for middle school students. Key concepts of liberal equality, principle of justice, multiculturalism, deliberation and self-government were identified to be included in the teaching module. These theories were embedded in the module in forms of group exercises and discussions.

Objectives and Methodology of the Study

The study had the following key objectives:

- To build a theoretical framework comprising concepts related to minority rights and democracy through literature review
- To design a teaching module for six lessons, drawing from the theoretical framework
- To implement the teaching module in the classroom and analyse its effectiveness through suitable assessment tools
- To develop sensitivity among participating students towards concerns faced by minority groups and rights

The module was carried out with two groups of students from two sets of schools. One group consisted of 19 students of grade 8 while the other group had nine students of grade 7. The contexts of the schools and the socio-economic backgrounds of the students were different. Both schools were privately run set-ups, with one catering to middle-class families and the other to largely upper-class families. However, it was not the objective of this study

to consider any such factors for the implementation of the module. The schools and grades were selected for convenience.

Each group was engaged over a period of six consecutive days, having a classroom teaching period of 40 minutes per day. The objective behind having two runs of the module was to provide some time and space to incorporate the learning from the first run and to refine the module for a second run. In order to analyse the effectiveness of this teaching module, a baseline and an endline survey were carried out. These surveys were aimed at understanding students` responses to a particular situation, which involved a certain degree of conflict around the issue of minority rights, and to see if their perspectives and opinions had changed over the period of six days.

The classroom teaching was a combination of defining certain concepts through the "lecture mode", group exercises and discussions based on students` views and understandings. The following broad concepts were covered through the teaching module: understanding of democracy through comparison with monarchy; understanding and defining "minority", different forms of minority groups, plural notions of a good life; understanding and defining "human rights", universal human rights; discrimination—positive, neutral, negative; deliberation; forms of inequalities—economic, status; special rights for minorities—territorial autonomy, guaranteed representation, veto power, land claim, language rights; self-government.

Reflections on Teaching

Both the groups studied were familiar with the basic concepts of democracy and fundamental rights. At a basic level, minority was explained in terms of the number of individuals. With the example of voting, the categories of minority and majority were put forward. Taking it to the next level, it was explained that being minority is not only about having lesser number of individuals in a group. The King, the British and Hitler were small in terms of their numbers but at the same time held supreme power. Would we consider them as a minority? This was conveyed through a group exercise. Students were spilt into small groups with varying number of students in each group. First, they had to make as many paper planes as possible within five minutes; quite naturally the group with more number of students was able to make more paper planes. For the next part of the exercise, in the same groups, they had to suggest a name for their entire class and finalise one name through voting. I had expected to have a similar pattern as in the paper plane exercise—the group with more number of students would have more

votes for their suggestions. Surprisingly, this did not happen. There were some students who voted for other group`s suggestion rather than their own, defying the expected pattern. This I, impulsively, connected with the notion of influence some groups had over others. Similarly, in a society, groups with fewer members do not necessarily have less influence or power. Their ability to influence others` actions could be more than that of groups with more members. Hence, minority is not necessarily about numbers.

I asked students what makes them feel happy. Eating ice cream, listening to music, spending time with family and friends, travelling, playing, etc., were some of their responses. Can we have one common idea of happiness? Can we force someone to feel happy by something that makes us happy? Through this conversation, we discussed the idea of plural notions of a good and happy life. All of us want to live a happy life, and each of us have our own ideas of what makes us happy. Students agreed that we cannot force others to feel happy. Sometimes, while pursuing our happiness, we also disturb someone else`s idea of happiness. We discussed some examples of such instances. If a dam is constructed, then it would make the city people happy by providing them with enough water and electricity, but the local villagers would not be able to live good lives due to it. When someone plays loud music, it might make that person happy, but it could disturb others` happiness at the same time. Such practices are widely observed in our society. We tell girls how to behave, what to wear; we tell the minority groups such as Muslims what to eat, where to go, etc. The example of beef was also taken up. Is it right to force someone to live a good happy life the way the majority feels?

One of the most effective group exercises, felt by both students and myself, was the one on positive discrimination. Students were split into different families with varying numbers and family needs. They had to discuss how to allot Rs 1,00,000 among all the families based on their backgrounds and requirements. All the groups allotted more money to the groups that had more requirements. Why did any group not choose to distribute the money equally? The reasons were that only one member of the family was earning the money and that there were more number of members in the family. Would equal distribution be fair in such situation? Students agreed that it would not have been. But are we then not discriminating or favouring one family over the others? Students responded that it is for good because that family needs more money. From this, we came to the concept of positive discrimination. Sometimes, equality does not necessarily mean fairness. We need to understand others` situations and make adjustments accordingly. Reservation as a form positive discrimination aims at doing this.

It acknowledges people with needs and provides them opportunities to cover up for their disadvantages.

When asked what students thought about the relationship between economic inequality and status inequality, a student responded by saying that a black person or someone from a lower caste who is rich might have low status in society, which was in opposition to Marx`s suggestion that if economic inequalities are addressed, then status would naturally get addressed. There are various examples of groups who despite being economically well off suffer from low status in society, such as homosexuals, women and people from lower caste or other ethnic backgrounds. Both kinds of inequality need to be addressed with different approaches. Income redistribution as one of the ways to address economic inequality was discussed. Some students brought up the question of begging and if it is right for people to beg for money when they can work and earn. While discussing status inequality, examples of manual scavengers and women were taken. What would happen if manual scavengers do not do their function? Students responded by saying that the city would stink, and it would become dirty and diseases would spread. Hence, the work of manual scavengers is indeed crucial for our society as a whole. Similarly, women`s contribution in our society is significant. As a society we need to recognise and value their contribution and therefore consider them as an integral part of society.

As a group exercise on human rights, students were asked to discuss in small groups and come up with a list of rights they want for their class. Later, the entire class had to vote and shortlist rights. Some of the finalised rights were "right to study", "right to talk", "right to ask questions", "right to equality", "right to bring mobile phone" and "right to sit anywhere in the class". Once the rights were finalised, my objective was to deny a group of students these rights based on a random selection. Odd and even roll numbers were used to group students, and then deny one group of all the rights. I intended to create a similar exercise as the 'Blue eyes–Brown eyes" experiment. With both batches of students, the exercise did not come out as I had expected. A possible reason was that I did not use any markers to distinguish one group from another. Those who had rights did not realise how to "use" their rights over others. All the students carried on with the class normally. Another reason could be that this exercise was not allotted a separate slot of time. I tried to run this exercise along with delivering my module, which made it difficult for me to deny certain rights such as "right to ask questions" and "right to study". There was an interesting discussion on two rights: "right to study" and

"right to talk". I asked students if they found these two contradictory to each other, for instance, if someone wants to exercise one`s right to talk, it would naturally hinder another`s right to study. Having agreed on it, students voted for "right to study" over "right to talk".

A group exercise was planned to discuss the concept of deliberation. I used Kohlberg`s Heinz dilemma as a situation for students to take opposing views and deliberate among themselves. In small groups, a set of students were asked to defend the husband, while the other set had to defend the druggist and attempt to come to a common consensus. None of the groups managed to do so due to each member holding on to his/her opinion, but the discussion helped students to understand each other`s opinions. Deliberation helps us in understanding and analysing each other`s views and provides a possibility for accommodating other`s views. Voting, on the other hand, gives no opportunity for members to communicate their views. Critical situations such as the Heinz dilemma cannot be effectively resolved merely through voting. Students seemed to have understood the objective of deliberation. However, reflecting on using Heinz dilemma as a situation, I feel that students could have been asked to deliberate and shortlist the classroom rights. Discussing something that is developed by students themselves is likely to engage them more in the discussion. Moreover, finalising the rights would require students to give practical reasons to each other and try to come to a common understanding. Such an exercise could be a replacement of Heinz dilemma.

Analysis of the Module's Effectiveness

For the baseline survey, a conflict about dam construction involving different stakeholders, mainly city people and villagers, was put up. The conflict in Kashmir was used as a situation for the endline survey. Students were asked to respond to a set of questions based on their understanding of the situation, which also involved suggesting what they thought should happen in that particular situation. Students` responses were quantified on the basis of four criteria on a three-point scale, identifying concerns related to minority groups, demonstrating concerns towards their issue, addressing their issue and providing reasons for their arguments.

According to my understanding, using the Kashmir conflict for the endline survey influenced students to approach it differently vis-à-vis approaching the situation of dam construction. Students might have been influenced by their home environment in addressing the Kashmir conflict, which to a large extent would be apprehensive about the issues related to minority rights

in Kashmir. Their preconceived notions about Kashmir could have had overarching effects on the learning of this module.

To analyse the effectiveness of the module, other factors were also considered to look at the frequency of terms used by students in their writings and their shift in approach while dealing with a particular question in the baseline and endline surveys. Students were asked to suggest the final decision-makers in both the cases, that is, who should decide whether the dam should be constructed and who should decide about Kashmir`s fate. The objective was to identify if the students were able to perceive from the position of the minority groups. Out of 24 students, 12 students showed a positive shift in their responses to this form of question, implying that in the baseline survey, these students had suggested that other stakeholders should make a decision, while in the endline survey, the same students responded by suggesting that the people involved should make a decision. One of them answered in the case of constructing the dam that "the decision should be taken by the government on the basis of whether the majority of people want the dam to be built or not." The same student responded to the question on resolving the Kashmir conflict by saying, "the people of Kashmir should decide because they know what is happening there." Another student responded to the first question as, "the government has to work upon making the decision (about the dam)." The answer to second question by the same student was, "the people of Kashmir should make the ultimate decision because they have to suffer not anyone else. They have all the right to take decision." The change in these two students` approach from the baseline to the endline question is apparent. Similar shift in approaches were observed in 10 other students. Apart from them, there were eight students whose responses did not show any change in their answers and four whose responses showed a negative change in their approaches to the same question.

In terms of the frequency of words or concepts used by the students when they were asked to write about their learning during the teaching of this module, democracy, equality, voice and choice, minority rights, majority, happiness and good life, discrimination, accountability, fundamental rights and freedom were some of the highest recurring terms. This is to infer that these are some of the terms or possibly also concepts that stayed with the students through the module. These are also some of the key aspects that the module emphasised on. It can be argued that even when the quantified indicators are not demonstrating a significant effect of the module on the students` responses, such qualitative factors support the effectiveness of it.

Conclusion

It was felt that the study was able to meet its set objectives of running the module. It certainly did influence students to begin thinking in the direction of minority concerns. One of the objectives was to formulate my own understanding on how as a democratic society we can address the concerns faced by several minority groups. Reviewing various literature on the topic introduced me to different democratic theories looking at the issue of minority rights. One of the key learnings was to keep the focus on individual liberty. Even while entitling minority groups with rights to protect them from external impacts, it is essential to ensure that individual liberty is not subject to violation from the group itself. If these rights are in absolute form, then even the group members themselves cannot question or attempt to change group norms that are against individual liberty and autonomy. The state has to balance its interference in matters of minority groups by encouraging group practices that are aligned to individual liberty and by condemning practices that harm individual liberty. In cases of violation of individual liberty, minority groups cannot defend it on the basis of preserving their cultural or traditional norms. Several personal laws in our country are violating individual liberty, which I feel must be subject to state intervention.

In a multicultural society like India, I believe, any coercive attempt to unify its cultural identity would face severe resistance from different cultural groups. Each group intends to preserve and prosper its culture, language, history and traditions. Attempts of unifying our society into one single identity would pose a survival threat to the various groups that do not identify themselves with this uniform identity. Taking a liberal culturalism approach to such situations, it would require us to respect plurality and multiple ways of living a good life. Minority groups in particular are even more at the danger of losing their culture and language due to the larger society`s impact on them. Rajan`s (2002) argument in the form of "the good vs the just" changed my own understanding of the term "tolerance". Tolerance has been frequently talked about in the present times, but being tolerant of each other is in itself a passive approach. It would practically mean to be tolerant of unjust practices of gender discrimination in the name of a group`s tradition. A justice approach would demand us to protest against such unjust practices of other groups.

Another objective of the study was to develop sensitivity among school students towards the issues and challenges faced by minority groups. Almost all the participating students were from a certain privileged background.

The idea was to make them start thinking from the perspectives of different minority groups. This was the reason for not dealing with a particular form of minority group, such as religious or economic, but to discuss the category of minority as a position that can be held by anyone at some point. Person X could be from a Hindu family making him/her a part of the religious majority, but at the same time, he/she could be from a low economic background, making X a part of the economic minority. Students were introduced to this line of thought and also towards the issues faced by different minority groups. There were discussions on homosexuals and transgender people, differently abled groups, lower castes, etc. The idea of one being born into these groups was also discussed by grouping students on the basis of random selection, where one did not have a choice in being part of a certain group. Similarly, one does not have a choice to be born into a poor and lower-caste family. It is through pure chance that some of us are born as part of the majority groups. This should make us more responsible towards those who were not so "lucky" as us.

From the qualitative analysis of the baseline and endline surveys and the frequency of the terms used by the students, it can be inferred that the students were able to grasp the key ideas of the module. It is indeed a personal hope that these students would be conscious of their privileges and aware of the rights of minorities, based on our week`s engagement. In terms of expanding the possibilities of the module, given more days, it would be important to include the concepts of secularism and what it means to be a part of a secular state such as India. Some of the literature referred for this study did involve secularism in its theory. Other possibilities could be to discuss deliberation in more detail as I feel that deliberative democracy can address the concerns of minority groups to a great extent by providing a platform for different stakeholders to exchange and understand each other`s reasons. It demands active participation from citizens who are willing to listen to others and, if required, are open to change their own position. The module could also include gender- and caste-based discriminations in our society in depth and develop awareness among students.

To conclude, I would like to go back to Will Kymlicka and reiterate an aspect of democratic society. A democratic society is based on an egalitarian principle, which aims at treating all human beings as equals. The fact that some groups are not treated equal to other groups is a state of concern for a democratic society. For a non-democratic society, such unequal treatment may not be even a cause for concern and could be an acceptable norm. However, for a democratic society, there is always a prolonged effort to

create an environment that is inclusive of all its members and treats each individual equally.

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