

## **Abstract**

The overall objective of this thesis is to suggest ways of reconciling three main goals of educational provision: (i) the training of competent human resources, (ii) individual enrichment, and (iii) promoting liberal ideals of social progress, in view of more inclusive, participative, and cooperative forms of democratic life.

In the process, this study will provide a critical understanding of the instrumentalist views of education, which sees the latter as a tool for bringing about (i) sufficient functioning habits for individuals to cope with the complexity of human experiences, (ii) autonomous citizens and cooperative social organisation, and (iii) the essential civic virtues in citizens for sustaining an inclusive, participative political procedures. These views are reconciled in the notion of liberal education across the spectrum of lifelong and lifewide learning, and implemented in democratic school conditions.

In this study, I begin with an overview on educational reforms initiated in the industrial advanced economies (the economic core) since the early 1980s. The criticism that these policy reforms are overly instrumental, in the sense that education provision has been too focused on vocational, technocratic training, labour productivity signalling, and gaining economic competitiveness, is examined. The second part of this study defends a view on education that, while remaining instrumentalist, argues that its objective is rather the promotion of personal enrichment and societal development. In the third part of the study, I show that the notion of liberal education aims to sustain the liberal ideals of freedom of citizens who are capable of pursuing their conception of good, and facilitating an inclusive, participatory democratic life. The contents and methods of implementing liberal education are explored drawing on theories and application of lifelong learning framework and experiential learning techniques.

Finally, an experiential learning project, The Making of a Seasonal Food Garden, is designed to offer an on-going project-based learning opportunity to the school community. Through the making of a seasonal food garden, learners can design, build and create a seasonal food garden with hand-on skills, communication, teamwork, and interdisciplinary knowledge (acquired inside or outside classrooms), in problem-solving situation and production-based learning.

The reason for choosing a seasonal food garden as the subject of study is to foster good practice and understanding of the delicate and thoughtful interaction needed between human activities and the natural elements. It is important to include the natural environment in the educational process among learners and youngsters, if we believe in the premise that education is a

means of fostering personal and societal development. The pressing environmental problems that the world population is facing at present is also our daily experience; therefore, the contents of education must also include studies of interaction between human activities and the natural environment in the aims of developing desirable habits of mind, civic virtues, and problem-solving skills that are relevant to the matters. Experiential learning that connects learners and the environment can bring upon inspiration, care, reliance, partnership and aesthetic experience among participants, as well as between the nurturers and the nurtured.

Last but not least, the process of this study conveys that the contents of education should embrace more significance on fostering (i) autonomous citizens and cooperative social organisation, and (ii) the essential civic virtues in citizens for sustaining an inclusive, participative political procedures. It is because these two educational goals set the foundation for the sustaining of equal access to opportunities and sufficient functioning habits in individuals to cope with the complexity of human experiences.