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Human Rights Education Potential *"preparing students in cultural diversity context"*

Muhammad Khairil Mustofa, S.PdI., M.PdI.

Abstract

Human rights education is indispensable in preparing students who live in the context of a multicultural society. Human rights education has great potential to make a fundamental contribution in imparting the principles of democracy and human rights for students. However, the school environment where human rights education is implemented has its own problems and challenges that have the potential to hinder the implementation of human rights education. So it requires a strong commitment from schools to maximize the potential of human rights education by creating a school environment that is conducive to the implementation of democratic principles on the basis of human rights.

Keywords: human rights, democracy, participation.

Introduction

Human rights education affirms the commitment to respect and protect the rights of every human being. In the 1945 Constitution Article 28 point J paragraph 1, it is stated that *"every person is obliged to respect the human rights of others in an orderly life in society, as a nation and as a state"*. And reinforced by the 1945 Constitution in Article 28 point A, which reads, *"everyone has the right to live and has the right to defend his life"*. Article 28 point C paragraph 1 mentions that every person has the right to develop themselves through fulfilling basic needs, has the right to get education, and to benefit from science and technology, arts and culture, in order to improve the quality of life and welfare.

The basis for thinking about the importance of human rights education is contained in article 26 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"Education must be directed at the full development of the human personality and at strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It must promote understanding, tolerance and friendship between all nations, races or religious groups, and continue the work of the United Nations to maintain peace"

The mandate of Article 26 (2) is basically to develop human rights which can only be achieved through education. UNESCO also emphasizes that *"human rights education is an integral part of the right to education and is increasingly getting recognition as a human right itself"* (UNESCO, 2009). More specifically, the United Nations Human Rights has promoted human rights education in Resolution 2004/71:

"Human rights education is a long-term and lifelong process in which all people at all levels of development and at all levels of society learn to respect the dignity of others and the ways and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies ... (it) makes a significant contribution. to promote equality and sustainable development, prevent conflicts and

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human rights violations and increase participation and the democratic process, with a view to developing societies in which all human rights are respected"(cited from UNESCO, 2009).

Human Rights Education

Human rights education is a conscious and systematic effort to build students' awareness of individual rights and their responsibility to respect the rights of others. Human rights are about *"the importance of personal human dignity, equal rights and mutual responsibility to ensure the respected rights of others"* (Osler and Starkey, 2002).

UNESCO broadly defines human rights education as a process of learning and implementing human rights itself (UNESCO, 2009). This means that human rights education is not just about transmitting content, but translating principles into practice. Human rights education also promotes the values of equality, peace, non-discrimination, non-violence, tolerance and respect for human dignity. Thus human rights education is an important part in preparing students for citizenship in which students learn and experience how to live in society on the basis of human rights. In this regard, human rights education provides real potential for the development of democratic citizenship. So that educating students about human rights is an important agenda for implementing a democratic society on the basis of respecting human rights.

Citizenship and Democracy

The concept of citizenship is recognizing individuals as actors in democratic governance and requiring the acceptance of human rights, which offers an essential framework that ensures the rights of all individuals are respected as their dignity and fundamental freedoms in democracy as stated in articles 12 - 16 of the Convention on the Children Rights regarding the rights of thought, conscience and religion; association, expression, movement, owning property, marriage and family life (Osler and Starkey, 2000). Since the idea of citizenship is based on the concept of equality and diversity in which all individuals hold the same human rights, democracy and human rights are two important aspects of the exercise of citizenship. This means that the principles of democracy in the practice of citizenship are not only about individual rights, but it is about respecting the rights of others based on universal human values.

The main agenda of civic education is about human relations within individuals and between groups which are an important part of democracy. Tibbits (2005) asserts that the main purpose of education for citizenship is most closely related to *"learning to live together"* (Tibbits, 2005, p: 11). Democracy offers *"political space"* for individuals to have the freedom to enjoy their rights, but at the same time they have a responsibility to guarantee the freedom of others to exercise their rights as well (Osler and Starkey (2005). Citizens are given the opportunity to learn from one another and to share about *"values and priorities"* (Sen, 1999; cited in Osler and Starkey, 2005, p.142).

Human rights education is an important strategy to achieve important goals in the concept of learning to live together. Human rights education will help students to become educated citizens who are committed to human rights values and social responsibility so that students have the capacity to participate in democracy at all levels, from local, national to international. In other words, human rights education is education for citizenship which tends to evolve *"awareness of individuals and groups about their rights and responsibilities as citizens,*

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awareness and commitment to human rights and freedom, equality, rule of law and pluralism" (Duerr et al., 2000, p: 37). Thus human rights education provides an important framework for achieving harmonious and stable social relations, in which the rights of all citizens of diverse cultural backgrounds are respected and respected.

School Environment and Student Participation

School appears to be the most fundamental reason for civic education. The argument is that the school community consists of a group of people with different cultures and beliefs that reflect a community (Osler, 2005). According to Schnapper (1994, cited in Osler and Starkey, 2002, p: 80), schools have the potential to become a model for a democratic state which he calls "*a community of citizens*".

"This school is not only for transmitting national ideology and general historical memory through the curriculum. At a deeper level, such as a political nation, schools form spaces where students, like citizens, are treated equally, regardless of their family or social background. It is a place, both literally and as a concept, built against real inequalities and there is a society that stands out against the forces of discrimination found in civil society. The concept of school, such as the concept of citizenship, is impersonal and formal, children will learn to understand human rights and feel included in the political state" (Schnapper, 1994; quoted in Osler and Starkey, 2002, p: 80).

There is no doubt that schools have the potential to foster a conducive environment for upholding human rights principles in implementing a democratic society.

Basically what is needed for a democratic power is to build a culture of human rights in which all individuals with diverse cultures can participate in decision making (Osler, 2005). Human rights education in the school environment will be able to encourage the development of a human rights culture. Understanding and experiencing human rights in schools will help students to practice citizenship and democratic principles in a real way in the context of the school community. This means that schools need to recognize students as current citizens, not just prepare them for future citizenship where the school supports the development of diverse student identities and guarantees their right to participate as citizens to take part in cultural, economic and political affairs in wider society (Carter and Osler, 2000).

Participation is a key means of building democracy and measuring democracy. Human rights education must be able to be a means to increase the capacity and skills of students to participate in decision-making in schools and develop democratic values and respect for human rights, for example through advocacy, counseling and listening skills, conflict resolution (Osler, 2000). Thus students should be given the opportunity to actively practice using their rights to participate in decision-making and responsibilities in school in order to prepare them for citizenship in "*a free democratic society*" (Pais, 2000).

The essence of every democratic society needs "*productive collaboration*" between children and adults to improve the quality of democracy itself (Hart, 1992). In this case, the involvement of adults is important to consider in order to be able to actively participate together with children. This means that adults should not only offer guidance for students to participate, but they should also learn from their active involvement in the participatory process.

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The Problems of Human Rights Education in Schools

There are claims that schools are appropriate places for members of the school community to carry out civic functions by applying democratic principles on the basis of human rights and social justice. Osler and Starkey (2002) argue that the practice of citizenship should be more applicable to the wider complexities of society, and that schools are a "*microcosm of society*" of a diverse global population. However, the claim that schools are a "*microcosmic society*" remains questionable. The question is not whether schools have the potential to represent the interests of the wider community outside of schools, but the extent to which teachers understand their responsibilities in society and how much their capacity is in integrating issues of human rights and democracy in the school context.

Teachers' perceptions of human rights play an important role in the transmission of knowledge about human rights. According to Wilkin (2005), teachers' perceptions are heavily influenced by their ideology, understanding and personal experience of human rights issues. Wilkin (2005) provides an example of racism where teachers experience difficulties in overcoming structural discrimination in education if their perceptions of discrimination remain rooted in their personal domain. Wilkins (2005) found that there are still many teachers who fail to fully involve themselves in the social processes that cause and reinforce their racist acts, even though they understand that they are responsible for teaching the values of racial equality. In a study conducted in Nigeria in the field of child rights participation exemplified how policymakers and school administrators such as teachers and principals do not allow their students especially in primary schools to participate in making rules and regulations that have an effect on their lives at school because it is believed that students are unable to make rational decisions (Ejeh and Akinola, 2009).

In addition, schools have not been able to provide sufficient materials for human rights education in dealing with global community problems. The fact that students as citizens must be aware of the major problems of global society such as injustice, poverty, inequality, hunger, conflict and war, discrimination, racism, xenophobia. However, in many cases, schools still have difficulty finding ways of teaching human rights related to global issues in accordance with the school context (Senarclens, 1983). This is because "*the lack of appropriate educational materials is a reason given by many educators for their failure to deal with global and human rights issues*" (Buergethal and Torney (1976), cited in Tarrow, 1991, p: 197).

Another problem stems from school administrators who have the authority to determine which human rights subjects are included in their school curriculum. A study shows that teachers are generally reluctant to cover risky topics. So that teachers feel insecure about raising controversial issues of human rights and democracy with students because they cannot stand the reaction of society. Often a teacher must get official approval from the school administrator to raise controversial issues in the classroom (Tarrow, 1991)

Human rights education in schools must be attached to the holistic interests of the wider community. So that schools need to make organizational changes that are more open to the wider community for the effectiveness of civic learning.

Challenges of Human Rights Education in Schools

The next key question is whether human rights education can be translated into a school environment? There are three important elements needed in the process of human rights

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education in schools because they evolve during the learning process, namely in providing knowledge, forming attitudes, and honing students' skills (Eide, 1983). Human rights education, however, is not only to acquire cognitive processes, but also to give students the opportunity to exercise their rights in the context of democracy, social justice and civil society (Osler and Starkey, 2002). Thus human rights education is not only about knowledge but also about attitude formation and implementation.

These three elements are important components to prepare students to engage with real problems in society. However, schools tend to find it difficult to understand these three important elements at once. So far, most schools have only included cognitive aspects in teaching human rights education, such as knowledge about minimum pre-requirements as citizens. Meanwhile, two other aspects, namely affective and cognitive, have not been able to be reached (Audigier, 1991). Several case examples prove that the school community is unwilling to take more than a minimal approach to developing citizenship in the school context. Therefore schools need to adjust themselves in order to provide the right context for students to gain knowledge of human rights and to be able to behave that do not conflict with human rights.

Conclusion

First, human rights education has high potential to prepare students for citizenship in culturally diverse societies, but human rights education has relatively low potential in its implementation. *Second*, human rights education still requires a holistic approach by combining the three components; cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, together, so as to be able to contextualize human rights education into the real life of society. Therefore, schools need to pay more attention to the role of teachers in human rights education by equipping them with the content and methods and processes of teaching human rights education. Schools must also be able to provide adequate infrastructure and advice to create a democratic school environment based on human rights. So that students will have the ability and high awareness of the rights and obligations of their citizenship in a culturally diverse society.

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