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Improving Sense of Equality through Debate Class:
The Integration of Equality and Equity Values in Classroom Debate

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Abstract

In recent years, some cases of violence against minority groups in Indonesia have been reported. The supporting aspects of the mishaps are twofold: (1) the lack of awareness of the society members on the issues of equality and (2) the lack of protection from law enforcement for minority groups. To tackle the problems and prevent them from repeating themselves in the future, educators shall integrate equality awareness in their formal educational process. This paper articulates a model of integrating classroom debate with equality and equity awareness program. Classroom debate has been underused in Indonesian formal education context. It is due to popular belief that debate is against our local wisdom. However, we argue that this under-usage can be overcome because debate is very fluid and adaptive to our native culture and education system. The education of young people on these very important matters is a way to prevent social injustice and violation of minority rights in the future. The model has been accepted and appreciated by the participants of the research and is ready to be applied in wider context.

Keywords: debate, equality, equity, integrated learning, critical thinking

Introduction

Social problems happening in Indonesian in recent years have been inspiration in writing this paper. In particular, the social problems happening to minority groups have been the focus of the paper. Indonesian society members in general take their privilege as majority in granted and they do not really tackle the discrimination subjected to minorities very well.

Minority religious groups are treated unfairly quite often by the majority and the law enforcement officers do not have any particular strategy to stop this from happening. Amrullah (2011) recorded that an allegedly Shia school was burnt down by the villagers in Madura, Indonesia. To put it in a context, Indonesia is predominated Sunni Muslims and this type of vigilante has given the majority a prototype of discrimination.

Purbaya (2016) reported that a student, who practices a non-mainstream traditional faith, in a high school in Semarang Indonesia was instructed by the teacher to convert to Islam or she will face the possibility of not passing the final exam. It shows that even the management and teachers of a state school in a big city in Indonesia do not understand the concept of religious freedom regulated by the national law. It was lucky that the government of the city has finally settled the problem and the student was then allowed to continue her study. In a nutshell, those are some examples that our minority groups suffer from potential discrimination from the majority.

This paper contains optimism to reduce the problems by introducing the concept of equity and equality as early as possible to the younger generation in Indonesia. University students are deemed as ideal candidates to receive such treatment. That is the reason why this paper is dedicate to that

particular cohort with the expectation that when those young people become active members of the society, they will change the paradigm of social justice in their environment.

Public may heard for equity and equality in a number of occasions but it does not mean that they can differentiate between both terms conveniently. Equality is the ideal concept that everybody should have the same rights, social goods, opportunities and protection. Equity is an effort to get there i.e. by giving people in proportion to what they need to be equal.

Experts realize that to give everything in the same quality and quantity for everyone would not bring humanity any closer to equality. The problem is that certain members of the society already have unfair advantage and a far head start from the rest of the society members. Some people are already privileged by having the right family, connection, genetics, certain amount of wealth, correct suburbs to live in, majority religion and so on. If we give the same thing to everybody, the strong will become stronger and the weak will become weaker (Duclos, 2006).

There is a tendency that the majority would have a bigger slice of representatives in the government bodies than the minority groups. Hence, it will become natural that some of the regulatory products will slant to the side of the majority. The rules regarding the building of house of worship will definitely ease the majority and create hurdles for the minority religious groups. Other example is the fact that there are very few regulations have been produced to help the live of disabled people. Again, majority seems to put a little attention to the needs of the minority groups no matter how urgent (Eisenberg, 2006).

Society and the government should work hand in hand to uphold the value of equality. The first step to achieve equality is to understand the basic concepts of equality. Some basic concepts should be simulated in real life situations and we have to identify the possible victims of discrimination under the current system and norms.

Methods

There are ample of combinations and methodology to integrate general contents in formal education especially in language teaching. Kong (2016) has shown the likely possibility to integrate several subjects in language teaching. There are three elements Kong highlight on the experiment to integrate any subject to language teaching:

(1) organizing collaborative tasks that require students to use targets language
(2) provide language scaffolding that helps students develop and describe their answers and thus the use of their target language
(3) give students some form of target language to support the process of assignments solving.

Kanwar et al. (2017) argues that innovation in education shall be done. Kanwar et al. (2017) add four elements of integrating subjects to other subjects. The four elements are:

(1) Experience Intergation
(2) Integration of Social Aspects
(3) Knowledge Integration
(4) Curriculum design integration

Oproescu (2017) states that integration of subjects must consider teaching-learning activities in constructivist perspective. Both teaching and learning will be better if there is a clear formulation of learning objectives. Integrated method of teaching subjects will bring various learning experiences to the students.

Not only a subject can be integrated with other subjects, subjects can also be integrated with workplace environment (Rook, 2017). The students will get the best experience from schools and workplace. It enhances the values of the real life experience. From the literature review, we can agree that integrating subjects or values to another subject is a valuable enterprise.

Debate is a compulsory subject for English Department students at Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia. The nature of debating class is very technical yet it is very fluid and flexible in class administration and execution. Thus, debate is a perfect candidate of a subject to be integrated with the values of equality and equity.

There are some topics which have been identified to be included into the modules. The topics are taken from the most social problems happen to minorities in Indonesia. The topics include but not limited to:

(1) Social injustice in general
(2) Discrimination against religious minority
(3) Discrimination against LGBT Community
(4) Discrimination against women
(5) Discrimination against disabled people

The design of the integration only uses up the half part of the semester. The meetings are designed as follows:

(1) Meeting 1   Social Injustice
(2) Meeting 2   Discrimination against Religious Minority
(3) Meeting 3   Discrimination of Sexual Orientation
(4) Meeting 4   Discrimination on Disabled People
(5) Meeting 5   Discrimination based on Gender
(6) Meeting 6   The Bear Trap of Discrimination
(7) Meeting 7   Future Actions of Promoting Social Equality
(8) Meeting 8   Mid Term Test

At the end of the program, a selection of students are tested and interviewed. The test and the interview become parts of the evaluation of this integration. Because the integration is related with a debate class taught in English department, we also check the development of the debating mastery and linguistic development. There are three aspects of developments measured at the beginning and the end of the program:

(1) Awareness of social injustice and discrimination
(2) Linguistic development (vocabulary)
(3) Debate technicality mastery.

Results and Discussions

By the time this paper is written, the pretests have been processed and five meetings have been conducted. The results of the tests are covering the five main themes on the modules: (1) social injustice in general, (2) discrimination against religious minority, (3) discrimination against LGBT Community, (4) discrimination against women and (5) discrimination against disabled people. The data of this research are processed and coded using NVIVO 12. In NVIVO 12, data point is called references. The following explanation is made based on certain references on certain topics.

On the social injustice in general, students were asked about the definition of equality and equity. There 54 references showing that the students did not know bith equality and equity. The number of the students who only know equality is 36 people. Only one student know equity but did not know equality. Only 10 students know the concepts of both equality and equity.

On discrimination of religious minority, most students are tolerant to religious minority. There are 47 references showing that students respect religious minorities. There are 48 references showing that students accept the existence of religious minorities. There are 6 references showing that some students want those religious minorities banned by the government. There are 10 references showing

that some students want people who practice religious minority to be converted to a more mainstraim religion. There are 3 references showing that some students fully support religious minority.

On the topic of discrimination of LGBT Community, the data show a concerning trend of intolerance. There 29 references signaling that some students want to "cure" or "normalize" LGBT people. There 29 references signaling that LGBT community should be banned in Indonesia. Fortunately, there are 44 references showing that some students can tolerate the co-existence of LGBT community.

On the topic of discrimination against disabled people, students show positive attitude towards disabled people. There are 66 references showing that students support better facilities for disabled people. Out of those 66 references, 10 references show that education and special trainings are important to be provided. A number of 54 references show that students highlight the importance of showing empathy towards disabled people.

On the topic of discrimination based on gender, students have shown mixed comments. There 28 references showing that some students believe that man and women have exaclty the same rights and competency. Other 51 references show that men and women somehow have different qualities in logical prowess, physical strength and patience. The trend shows that there is a subtle form of discrimination in the mind of the students.

Conclusions

This paper only describes the early stage of a model integrating equality value and debating classroom. There is a promising results coming out from this social and pedagogical experiment. We are expecting a change of mindset of younger people who are growing to be adults. The mindset that will help minority to get what they deserve: equality. Without the right mindset, discrimination will be preserved by the next generation. It can only get worse when discrimination is slowly absorbed not only by the norms followed by the society but also by the law and regulations.

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