The Challenge to Indonesian Social Studies Education in Teaching Democratic Values

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Abstract: Processes of democratization in Indonesia occur at a rapid pace in many areas of public discourse. It is therefore necessary for the education system to keep abreast of the changes in community. Demand for the political renewal of the society exemplifies democratic processes in its structures and processes as well as preparing students to understand democracy. This article argues that schools and other educational institutions need to demonstrate open and critical democratic processes in the way that they operate as a prerequisite for teaching students how to adopt the roles of responsible citizens within a truly democratic environment. It explores strategies that teachers may adopt to democratize their curriculum and pedagogy.

Keywords: social studies education, teaching, democratic values.

The democratic ideal is being sought in the structures and processes of numerous formal and informal organizations in Indonesian, as the result of reformation felt in various aspects of life. Attempts are being made to capture the spirit of popular participation in decision making processes.

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In this context, it is crucial that schools provide an adequate avenue for the development of democratic values among students so that young people may be well prepared to take part in an ever strengthening democratic society. It is not surprising, therefore, that debate has arisen firstly on the strategies used in social studies education, but even more importantly, on the development of educational policy regarding the best methods of representing democratic ideals in educational institutions.

This paper examines the dilemmas facing social studies teachers who must address the challenge of opening up new world of knowledge and new ways of democratic thinking to students who, like them, have a limited understanding of the implications of a truly democratic system. Yet, teachers seem to recognize the pressure to contribute to the establishment of democratic ideals and some insights into the needs their students will have in living within and contributing to the new democratic society in Indonesia. Practical principles of teaching democratic values can help young children become good citizens in the new Indonesian democratic society. In an effort to transform successfully develop community held values about the nature and structure of Indonesian democratic society, social studies education can be used as an instrument for developing students' social skills and attitudes which are needed for living in a democratic society.

THE NEED FOR DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN INDONESIAN EDUCATION

Indonesia is a complex multireligious and multicultural nation characterized by great diversity in religions, languages, customs, belief systems and modes of behavior. It is intriguing to observe, despite the diversity and geographical spread of the Republic, that the reformation era has been diffused to all parts of the country and has touched many levels of public and private life. This demonstrates the perceived need for social and political renewal on a grand scale. In spite of the spread of the population across many provinces and more than 250 ethnic languages there seems to be a sense of national commonality and a shared desire to emerge from an autocratic system and develop into a more democratic one. The processes of democratization could, at the end, be a major unifying force in the creation of a new national future.

The Indonesian state was built upon a mixture of cultures but with a strong unifying national history, national ideology and national language. Indonesia has created a political unity based in part on a common rejection to the colonial past. Recent developments have indicated that the nation is paving the way for its fourth political era. These developments include the establishment of ideas of democratization (*demokratisasi*), openness (*keterbukaan*) and anti corruption movements establishment of a general conference of MPR (upper house representatives) in November 1998, and the establishment of a fair and honest general election in June 1999. The desire for a more democratically based society has been at the heart of these social and political movements.

It is necessary that the education system in general and social studies education in particular reflect the democratic transformation of the society. But more than that, it is essential that education accept a role in this emerging process as it prepares students to become citizens who can display truly democratic behaviors. We would assert that, even though Indonesia is yet to emerge as a fully democratic nation, the processes and principles of democratic citizenship should be taught now and not wait until democracy has been accomplished. Political education may be a rather recent phenomenon in Indonesia but through it, schools have the potential to contribute to the spread of values and practices more in keeping with an enhanced democratic citizenship (Harber, 1984).

A key element contributing to the development of political literacy in the Indonesian curriculum is pendidikan IPS (*Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial*) or social studies education. The subject occupies an important place within the Indonesian primary school curriculum. It includes studies of society derived from the social sciences of history, geography, economics, sociology, anthropology and politics but is divided into two sections named 'social knowledge' and 'history'. IPS has the objective of developing students' social capabilities and understandings within the social environment (Depdikbud, 1994; Waterworth and Supriatna, 1997). The values portrayed and the content selected for presentation to students in both social knowledge and history in IPS are eminently suited to the representation of emerging understandings on reformation and democracy.

However, existing methods of curriculum development and current pedagogy in Indonesia may not be best suited to the emerging needs of students in understanding democratic processes. An appreciation of the

true meaning of democracy cannot be learned through academic study alone. Democracy is an action, not just an idea. It can only be taught within a context of social reality. It is a concept that must be 'caught' not 'taught'. It is best understood within classrooms and schools where there is an emphasis upon equal rights for all people, tolerance of difference and a sense of cooperation and mutual support for one another. While there is an academic acceptance of these principles as ideas in the IPS curriculum, the evidence for the display of these principles in action is not readily apparent. Democratic understandings must be accompanied by the development in students of related democratic skills. Some of the essential democratic skills might be skills to interpret and to evaluate political information and political evidence, to organize information using basic ideological concepts and generalizations, to express one's own interests, beliefs and viewpoints through an appropriate medium, to understand and to perceive the interests, beliefs and views of others, to participate in decision making, to influence and persuade others through rational argument, to recognize the influence and persuasions others use in arguments, to apply reasoning to political problems and to construct sound arguments based on evidence, and to perceive consequences of taking or not taking specific political action in given contexts (Harber, 1984).

THE CONTENT OF INDONESIAN DEMOCRATIC VALUES

Is Pancasila, Indonesia's formal ideology, still consistent with the teaching of democracy? Pancasila may still be regarded, despite the opinions of some to the contrary, as a sound basis for the promulgation of democratic values. It is no accident that discussions of democracy in the reformation era often revert to debate about the meaning and interpretation of Pancasila. Pancasila remains an important part of public discourse.

Pancasila consists of five basic principles, which are included in the Preamble of the 1945 Indonesian Constitution (*Pembukaan Undang-undang Dasar 1945*). Those principles are *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* (belief in God), *Kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab* (a just and civilized humanitarianism), *Persatuan Indonesia* (Indonesian national unity), *Kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh Hikmah Kebijaksanaan dalam Permusyawaratan Perwakilan* (Indonesian democracy based on consultation and consensus) and *Keadilan sosial bagi seluruh rakyat Indonesia* (social justice for all Indonesian people) (Hanurawan and Waterworth, 1997).

There is sound justification in teaching democratic values in IPS on the basis of the current state political ideology because it can be readily argued that Pancasila embodies the essential principles of a democratic way of life within a multireligious and multicultural society. It is possible to derive democratic values and show the application of these values to the social and political realities of Indonesian life from the five foundations of Pancasila.

The first foundation, belief in God, provides an understanding of the democratic principles underlying freedom of religion. It establishes the principle that the Indonesian state is tolerant of the plurality of religious beliefs and practices.

The second proclaims a just and civilized humanitarianism, indicating that the Indonesian people acknowledge universal democratic values based on the equality of all people and nations. It recognizes the place of Indonesia as an equal member of the international community of nations with the same rights and responsibilities as all other nations. This represents the ideal of civilized behavior founded on tolerance and respect between people.

The third foundation, Indonesian national unity, reaffirms the integrity of Indonesia as a united state, recognizing the democratic rights of all Indonesians regardless of the diversity and richness of their religious and cultural background. As citizens, all Indonesians may give their loyalty and allegiance to Indonesia recognizing that a democratic state is the foundation for the existence of individual democratic rights.

The fourth, that Indonesian democracy is based on consultation and consensus, asserts that the state should maintain a commitment to Indonesian-style democracy (Ramage, 1995). This principle may be applied to the broad range of legal, political, economic and civil processes.

The fifth foundation, that social justice is deserved by all Indonesians, acknowledges the democratic rights of all people to social and economic justice based on a sense of egalitarianism in society and guaranteeing prosperity to the nation (Ramage, 1995).

It is therefore reasonable to argue that democratic principles are inherent in Pancasila and that Pancasila provides an adequate and complete basis for the study and exploration of the democratic foundations of Indonesian society. As an ideological statement, Pancasila requires students to become familiar with democratic principles so that they may participate

competently as Pancasila citizens. Pancasila is not only a guide but also a schoolmaster, demanding the acquisition of democratic understandings and skills for those who would become politically literate citizens.

In order to demonstrate the very essence of democratic values, the school must teach in a way that is consonant with democratic values. Democracy cannot be taught in an autocratic way in autocratic classroom settings. It cannot be taught within a classroom environment that demonstrates or allows intolerance or unfairness or that deplores critical independent thinking. We would hope that Indonesian students would be encouraged to gain a critical understanding of democracy in action. They should understand the role of democratic values in forming the new democratic Indonesian society. They should be encouraged to explore and evaluate the development of democracy in the old order (*orde lama*) and new order (*orde baru*). They should be encouraged to acquire the skills for living successfully in a plural society and to regard groups outside their own culture with fairness, respect and equity.

PROBLEMS IN DEVELOPING DEMOCRATIC IDEALS IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

It may be possible to recognize the presence of democratic ideals in Pancasila and to affirm the requirement that schools accept the responsibility to develop democratic ideals in their students, but the achievement of these outcomes is far from simple and easy. Structures and processes within educational systems in emerging democratic societies like Indonesia tend to prevent the development of democratic ideals. What might be claimed in the rhetoric may rarely be achievable in practice.

There appears to be at least three domains where democratic renewal should occur in educational practice: school governance, school curriculum and classroom pedagogy. A renewal should occur in all three domains at the same time for true reformation of democratic values to penetrate and persist. School governance should be characterized as democratic, where adequate levels of participation in educational decision-making occur with all key stakeholders in the educational enterprise. In autocratic regimes, schools and other educational structures and institutions tend to be hierarchical with clearly defined layers of authority and strings of responsibility between officials. Decisions are generally made by only the paid officials and very rarely at the local school level. Control is

maintained by highly intricate systems of bureaucracy and stringent rules on how the 'paper work' must be completed. The key stakeholders like principals, teachers, parents and maybe students have their power limited or denied by the intricacies of the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy helps the power holders maintain the hegemony of their positions. In many ways, the Indonesian education system appears to exemplify this system of educational governance. Grass roots power at the school level is virtually non-existent.

Similarly, in autocratic regimes, the school curriculum tends to be the tool by which the regime exercises and maintains its control. The curriculum is devised centrally and adherence to the curriculum is enforced centrally. Participation in planning or changing the curriculum rarely occurs at the local level, and when it does, local control occurs only in areas of the planning process that are inconsequential or in the sections of the curriculum where adaptation to local contexts cannot be avoided. A centralized curriculum tends to focus upon essential learning which students must acquire rather than competencies that might help students to interpret and critically evaluate knowledge. While a centralized curriculum contains values and skills, those values tend to be consonant with the values of the regime and the skills limited to routine or mechanical competencies. Again, it could be argued that the Indonesian curriculum displays some of the characteristics of the curriculum of an autocratic regime. As the democratization process occurs, we should expect to see a gradual reduction in the exercise of centralized management of the curriculum and an increase in local participation at school level in the articulation of the curriculum.

As a consequence of the exercise of central control over school governance and curriculum, classroom pedagogy in autocratic regimes tends to be constrained and conservative. Teachers tend to be reluctant to adopt student centered approaches in their classrooms because of the dominance of the knowledge-based curriculum supported by a centralized examination system (which also focuses upon the memorization and comprehension of facts, principles and rules). Teachers become anxious about the completion of all the requirements of the curriculum and feel they are unable to spend time exploring curricular concepts using more student centered activities because they regard the latter as time wasting distractions. They see their roles as ensuring the coverage of the curriculum as the recitation of a liturgy rather than the exploration of ideas. So the

classroom practices they adopt encourage an autocratic rather than democratic form of discourse. Again, pedagogy employed in Indonesian classrooms tends to reflect these kinds of characteristics. Furthermore, teachers seem to be unaware of the fact that such pedagogy is counter productive to the democratization processes so many of them want to support.

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING DEMOCRATIC VALUES

Teachers and schools are able to engage in a series of strategies to increase the awareness their students have of democratic values and demonstrate how these values may be put into practice, thus empowering the Indonesian people to exercise their rights as citizens. It must be recognized that the implementation of such strategies may meet with variable rates of success, because democratization processes occur at variable rates in different sectors of society. Moreover, even with the support of legislative changes and public will, there is no guarantee that democratization processes will occur in large-scale institutions like education at a rapid pace. The conservative imperatives compelling educators to inculcate existing cultural forms in their students tend to preserve older rather than newer ideologies and social structures. But even more importantly, it is necessary to recognize that challenges to prevailing ideologies bring alternative ideological positions and interests into conflict. All ideological positions privilege certain groups of people above others and the displacement of one ideology by another also means a change to levels of privilege enjoyed or disadvantage suffered by groups. Within educational systems, privileged schools, colleges and universities favor certain elites within society and would be unlikely to consider changes to existing structures, processes and paradigms because of the shifts in power those changes would necessitate.

However, despite the influences which would militate against change, we would argue that certain strategies should be considered by educators in the pursuit of democratic ideals which we believe are in the best interests of students and of the whole society. These are discussed here in relation to firstly the school and then the classroom.

Democratization of School Governance

Schools should provide an example of democratic processes in the way they are governed and the way decisions are made within them.

Schools that teach the value of democratic ideals should encourage the expression of those ideals in their governing and administrative bodies by permitting relevant stakeholders to participate in decision making. Teachers should have experience of democracy in action to be able to adequately represent the concept to their students. By the same token, teacher training institutions should exhibit the same democratic processes in their courses of study and their research. Training institutions tend to support prevailing ideologies and therefore certain elites by favoring certain research paradigms and topics. They may unwittingly privilege positivistic and quantitative paradigms which are less likely to focus on grass roots, local and personal growth matters and therefore less likely to promote processes of democratization and empowerment of the teaching profession.

Empowerment of Teachers

In autocratic regimes, teachers tend to be under trained and consequently under skilled, factors contributing therefore to their inability to encourage the civic empowerment of their students. It is unrealistic to expect teachers to participate fully in school governance processes, curriculum development and the effective teaching of democratic ideologies without adequate pre service and in service education.

Empowerment of Parents

Again, it is unfair to expect parents to participate in the governance processes of their children's schools when such participation is not only outside their experience but also contrary to the normal parental roles in an autocratic regime. Schools need to encourage parents to become more involved firstly in the education of their children and then in the governance of their schools. Parent participation and education programs need to be created and supported for an adequate level of parent involvement to occur.

Resourcing of Schools

Resourcing of schools tends to be uneven in autocratic regimes and working class and rural children tend to be the ones that miss out the most. If democratic values are to become accessible to and practicable for all children then resourcing of schools in terms of teaching and learning

resources and in terms of equal opportunities needs to be pursued. Education needs to become a funding priority in the processes of democratization.

Student-centered Pedagogy

Teachers need to develop classroom strategies that are appropriate to the development of democratic values and skills. Such strategies should be comprehensive and diverse and should allow students to learn on the basis of real life experiences (Sleeter and Grant, 1988). The emphasis should not be placed upon the development of pedagogy that develops an uncritical and high moralistic understanding that will not sustain students as adequate participants in a democratic system. Education should provide students with opportunities to develop decision-making skills and these are best developed in learning environments that use inquiry learning (Cox, 1994) and other activity-based pedagogy like role play, simulation and educational games. Inactive learners find it difficult to learn skills and develop understanding which relate to social action.

Developing Critical Thinking Skills

Students need to develop skills to think clearly and logically and to be able to question the validity of opinions presented in the media. Movement to a democratic system may be accompanied by a relaxation of controls on the media so that, instead of a narrow range of opinions being expressed in the media, and careful management of the presentation of topics on the electronic and print media, there is now a barrage of highly diverse and contradictory material. Students need to be provided with skills to critically evaluate the media with which they will come in contact. It is necessary that they examine current issues such as fair and honest elections and the preservation of human rights and apply their skills of analysis and evaluation to them. There are a number of approaches that students can use to analyze controversial issues about democracy including critically analyzing information and evidence, asking awkward questions of people and information sources, recognizing rhetoric, and cultivating tentativeness (Gilbert and Hoepper, 1996). In these contexts, teachers can use cooperative learning, inquiry learning, small group discussion, classroom discussion or classroom debating amongst their strategies.

Understanding of Democratic Values and the Development of Personal Values

In a political system that is rapidly changing, there is the chance that a values vacuum may occur. Uncertainty about values once held to be inviable might lead students to reject values that are essential to productive social life and peace. It is important that students be encouraged to distinguish between values of human existence important to the stable functioning of society from those that derive from a variety of political or ideological positions. They need to be encouraged to develop and refine their own sense of values. Teachers might consider strategies which lead students to clarify and adopt certain personal value positions like value clarification methodologies.

Developing Critical Rationality Through Moral Dilemmas

A teaching strategy often used for moral development is based on analyzing and processing moral dilemmas (Cox, 1994). The highest level of development of values understanding is achieved when people recognize independent moral principles, rights, duties, justice and the qualities of democratic citizenship. Through experiencing critical rational discussion in IPS students will recognize that concepts of democracy are the most effective in resolving real life dilemmas. The strategy of dilemma analysis is useful for exploring meaning and application of moral values and procedures of moral argument (Gilbert and Hoepper, 1996). Students are encouraged to probe democratic values, problems and associated issues, and are asked to justify the choice they would make. Through a critical approach to Indonesia's past and present democracy, students can have the capability and a context to locate democratic values for themselves. In this strategy, teachers can use moral dilemma activities, such as a discussion in small groups.

A Community Action Project

The purpose of this strategy is to give students opportunities to learn by doing things for others who benefit from the services and to encourage students to view themselves as members of an Indonesian community. Students move out from the classroom and are directly in contact with members of target groups in the community to do some sort

of service project. For the strategy to be most effective, students who are performing service learning must behave in a constructive and positive manner (Pate, 1992). Indonesian teachers can use the Sinau Wisata (the Study Tour) to Gedung MPR (Upper House of Representative) or DPRD (Local House of Representatives) as a form of a community action project for developing democratic values.

CONCLUSION

The democratization process, which is penetrating all aspects of life in contemporary Indonesian society, is vital for the creation of a society that exemplifies the spirit and intentions of Pancasila. Schools have a central role in preparing young people to understand democratic processes and to practice democratic skills in order for them to participate as effective citizens in the new democratic nation that is being shaped. The process of democratization within schools may be difficult to sustain because of the inherently conservative nature of teachers and schools. However, if students are to be adequately fitted for their emerging roles as citizens, they must be permitted to explore processes of rational and critical thought and practice skills of analysis, discussion, participation, voting, representation, opinion formation and dissemination, as well as understand the various meanings and experiences of democracy in Indonesia and elsewhere. For these things to happen, Indonesian schools and classrooms will need to change, since democratic values can only be taught in democratic classrooms and schools.

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