From Pity to Compassion: The Ethics of Care and Human Rights Education

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T HIS PAPER explores learning approaches for human rights education focusing on the ethics of care. Human rights education is primarily aimed at understanding principles of human rights as a core to support democracy, and to provide a basis to societies that promote justice and peace in the world (Osler & Starkey, 1999). In human rights education, it is vital to understand human rights in the context of politics and everyday realities, that might be different from the ideals of human rights, and to explore human rights as a tool for change and transformation (Osler & Starkey, 2010). Hence, human rights education may involve not only an endorsement of human rights principles, but also emotional engagements such as imagination, empathy, and support to encourage students to commit to human rights issues.

With regard to emotional engagements, this paper argues that pity and compassion are different sentiments. Drawing on Nel Noddings' conception of the ethics of care, it discusses theories and practices of compassionate learning of human rights education which would provide more inclusive approaches for social justice than the liberal theories of justice (Okano, 2016). It examines a case study of human rights education at a junior secondary school in Japan which aims to promote caring attitude of students and encourage them to learn from others' struggles by taking their perspectives. It investigates the care approaches for human rights education which connect stories of particular individuals to the universality of human rights, and argue how they foster a sense of solidarity with common humanity.

Emotional Terrain of Human Rights Education

Human Rights Education in Japan

Human rights education in Japan has been influenced significantly by Dowa education, which has been implemented since the 1950s especially in western Japan. It has theories and practices that overlap with human

rights education and multicultural education, and has been one of the most influential educational initiatives for social justice in Japanese education (Hirasawa, 2009). It addresses the inequality issues faced by *Burakumin* children, who are believed to be descendants of former outcast communities, face and aims to empower them and combat discrimination against *Burakumin*. Dowa education tends to emphasize moral values, building the students' self-esteem, and tackling interpersonal discrimination. Consequently, relational and emotional dimensions such as "kindness" and "sympathy" have been placed in the center of learning. Since human rights education in Japan developed in close relationship with Dowa education, human rights education also tends to focus on interpersonal relationships and emphasizes emotional aspects rather than legal and political aspects of human rights (Ikuta, 2007). Nevertheless, Se and Karatsu (2004) argues that consideration of personal relationships and the fostering of empathy are commonly stressed both in school and family education, and human rights education can be implemented more effectively by focusing on the relational and emotional dimensions because such approaches are more familiar for pupils educated in Japanese society. Akuzawa (2002), however, criticizes this emotion-centered approach of human rights education as it often neglects concrete legal rights underpinned by the Constitution and/or international human rights instruments. Furthermore, Ikuta (2007) points out that Japanese human rights education is typically depoliticized by emphasizing the moral dimension, tends to overlook legal conceptions of rights and confuses equity with egalitarianism.

Empathy and Learning from Others' Perspectives

Feelings of concern about others are not constrained by borders. Empathy in human rights education therefore implies a cosmopolitan vision as its source (Osler & Starkey, 2005). Appiah (2005) stresses the importance of imagination and conversation in his arguments about cosmopolitanism because they bring "imaginative engagement" (page 85). This "conversation" does not only mean an exchange of languages, but indicates a "metaphor for engagement with the experience and the ideas of others" (ibid., 85) across boundaries, such as national or religious borders of people. He argues that cosmopolitanism can be realized not by sharing a whole set of values or reasoning of others, but by a capacity to imagine others who have different

ways of living, values and reasoning. He also notes that it does not require people to have a consensus particularly about their values.

Barton and Levstik (2004) define historical empathy as an act of care which involves emotions and a sense of civil and social justice. They suggest perspective-taking as a critical skill that promotes the students' understanding about historical facts from the minorities' viewpoints and helps them to imagine their experiences and feelings. In his study on human rights education though indigenous history at two Swedish secondary schools, Nygren (2016) illustrates that students described different historical perspectives through critical referencing and corroborating in their writing assignments, and connected such injustice in the past to the conceptions of human rights in the present. Students "care about the past, care that people were treated unjustly, care for people suffering and care to connect the past to the present and the future" in this learning process (Nygren 2016, 130).

In contrast, a study by Røthing and Svendsen (2011) about the Social Studies curriculum in Norway suggests how human rights education could fail to connect particularity and universality of human rights. It reveals that human rights issues, such as gender inequality, are commonly portrayed as problems in other countries that are typically developing countries, and it may generate radicalized stereotypes and exclusions. It indicates that learning about sufferings of distant others may end up having a sense of superiority and pity without taking the other's perspectives that could provide a connection between the particularity of their human rights struggles and universal conception of human rights. In addition, an empirical study by Keskin (2014) examines the different elements of empathy as stages of the empathetic learning process. By scrutinizing the data collected from activities focusing on empathy, he highlights elements such as perspective-taking, feeling, understanding, acting, meaning, which are often considered as substitutions for empathy, but are not independent from empathy and forms the stages of empathetic learning process.

Although there are criticisms against human rights education in Japan for its emotion-focus approaches and disregard of the legal and political aspects (Akuzawa, 2002; Ikuta, 2007), the pedagogical effects of emotional approaches of human rights education have not been investigated much. In order to examine it from a pedagogical perspective, we examine the learning of human rights and democratic citizenship focusing on Nodding's conception of the *Ethics of Care.*

Conceptual Framework

In order to conceptualize human rights education focusing on the ethics of care, we start by exploring different forms of empathy drawing from Hannah Arendt's discussion about pity and compassion. Then we scrutinize the conception of care as an approach for human rights education, followed by an examination of the Council of Europe's empathy model for a key competence for democratic culture.

Pity, Compassion and Solidarity

Arendt (1963) argues about empathy by distinguishing pity and compassion as sentiments that both occur with a sense of co-suffering with real-life struggles of others. She problematizes pity as a sentiment which generalizes suffering beings to an abstract image. In her analysis of the French Revolution, pity comes from compassion for the suffering masses rather than suffering individuals, and consequently it generalizes others' sufferings and eliminates its individuality and particularity. In contrast, compassion occurs in a face-to-face situation with particular individuals who are suffering. She notes that this particularity of individuals and the direct connection with them do not leave a space for generalization, and this co-suffering with struggles of particular individuals or groups brings a sense of solidarity to students despite the physical distance between them.

Compassion may help students understand the sufferings of others; however, Arendt warns that because of its nature compassion may abolish the psychological distance between oneself and a suffering individual, and this close relation in the private sphere would disconnect them from the public realm. In other words, an experience of co-suffering with a particular individual makes the experience and situation too special, and prevents the person from locating own suffering to a wider context. Instead, she emphasizes the importance of a sense of solidarity which is triggered by another's struggle. Mediated by concerns for the world, a sense of solidarity becomes a reality through common interests among people, not because of the life of a particular individual. Nevertheless, instead of rejecting the potential of compassion, a Japanese political philosopher Saito (2010) stresses the importance of exploring how compassion towards individuals can be connected to a shared interest which brings a sense of solidarity to the whole humankind.

The Ethics of Care

According to Noddings (2002) a concept of care is a moral attitude and a basic element in human life. She places human relationships in the center of the ethics of care because "human beings are born from and into relation; it is our original condition" (Noddings, 2010, 390). She emphasizes face-to-face encounter between the carer and the cared-for. If an act of care is given without substantial personal contact, the carer may only have an abstract knowledge about the cared-for and it would prevent them from recognizing the cared-for as unique individuals. She illustrates three elements in a caring encounter:

1. A cares for B – that is, A's consciousness is characterized by attention and motivational displacement,
2. A performs some act in accordance with (1), and
3. B recognizes that A cares for B.

(Noddings, 2002, 19)

In a caring relationship, a carer listens to the cared-for attentively. Noddings stresses that this attention is receptive, in other words, the carer puts aside her/his "own values and projects, and tries to understand the expressed needs of the cared-for" (Noddings, 2010, 391). Therefore, a carer does not judge or attempt to apply her/his own values on others, or accept their values as a whole. So, there is no "right" value in the ethics of care, and it does not reject or exclude people who have very different values that carers do not agree with. She also mentions the differences between rights and needs of the cared-for. Needs are claimed by particular individuals and therefore they are not necessarily applicable to other people, while rights have more universal nature.

She distinguishes between caring-for and caring-about. Caring-for indicates to a face-to face encounter between one person who cares directly another, while caring-about implies more general acts, such as being concerned about children in poverty in a developing country and wanting to do something, such as donation (Noddings, 1984). Although caring-for is considered as a preferred form, she argues that caring about others who are in a distant place may also provide the foundation for a sense of justice and functions as an instrument in establishing and enhancing conditions in which caring-for flourishes (Noddings, 2002). Hence, caring and justice are

not considered as a dichotomy, but as interconnecting each other; caring promotes a sense of justice, which is considered as more public conception.

In addition, Okano (2016) argues that the ethics of care is a more inclusive approach to social justice. From a feminist perspective, she notes that liberal theories of justice "have failed to see injustice in the exploitation of domestic workers, who constitute the image of economically independent male citizens that defines what kind of rights should be respected" (ibid., 93). In another words, it may have a connotation of the presupposed inequality based on asymmetric power relationship between the majority and the marginalized minority (Okano, 2012). The ethics of care pays attention to contexts and consequences of suffering people, rather than judicial and moral judgment. Therefore, it is more responsive to different dimensions of vulnerability and allows more sensitive approaches to learning from others' struggles and perspectives.

Pedagogical Applications: Three dimensions of empathy

With more concrete conceptions of empathy being applied in educational settings, the Council of Europe (2016) proposes a conceptual model of the competences for democratic culture which consists of four dimensions: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding. Among them, empathy is considered as one of the key skills "to understand and relate to other people's thoughts, beliefs and feelings, and to see the world from other people's perspectives" (Council of Europe, 2016, 13). Empathy plays an important role in human rights education to decentralize one's own perspective and psychological framework and imagine "other people's cultural affiliations, world views, beliefs, interests, emotions, wishes and needs" (ibid., 47). This model proposes three different dimensions of empathy:

1.   Cognitive perspective-taking – the ability to apprehend and understand the perceptions, thoughts and beliefs of other people;
2.   Affective perspective-taking – the ability to apprehend and understand emotions, feelings and needs of other people;
3.   Sympathy, sometimes called "compassionate empathy" or "empathic concern" – the ability to experience feelings of compassion and concern for other people based on the apprehension of their cognitive or affective state or condition, or their material situation or circumstances.

(Council of Europe 2016, 47)

As this model proposes, perspective-taking involves both cognitive and affective/emotional aspects of learning that are considered as important parts of critical learning. Also, re-imagining the world from another person's perspective may provide a counter-image for stereotypes and reduce prejudices (Galinsky, Moskowitz, & Insko, 2000; Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson, Galinsky, & Simpson, 2011). While (1) cognitive perspective-taking and (2) affective perspective-taking are about *apprehending and understanding* of other's perceptions and emotions, (3) sympathy – or "compassionate empathy" or "empathic concern" - involves the emotion of students *based on* their apprehension of the cognitive or affective state or condition, or actual circumstances of the other people. Thus, "compassionate empathy" or" empathic concern" proposed in the third dimension does not stand alone, but it needs to be accompanied by cognitive perspective-taking or affective perspective-taking because otherwise it could be a mere sense of pity which lacks apprehension of the other's perspectives, feelings or needs.

In order to examine how the ethics of care connects the concept of empathy to practice, we discuss Arendt's concepts of pity and compassion, explore a form of human relationship based on the ethics of care approach, and examine how it can be applied to educational settings drawing from the conception of empathy by the Council of Europe. As Arendt points out, compassion is distinguished from pity which is based on generalized image of the other and fails to recognize individuality and particularity. In pedagogical context, the Council of Europe's model illustrates different dimensions of empathy and highlights how perspective-taking brings cognitive and affective learnings that connect to compassionate empathy. Human rights education based on ethics of care emphasizes the students' attentive listening and acceptance of others' sufferings from their (others) viewpoints, and understanding and responding to their needs. In a caring relationship, one does not judge them even if the values of a cared-for are too different to agree with. A carer is encouraged not to reject such different values, but continue a dialogue and a caring relationship with a cared-for, and search for a common project. Caring does not stand for an essentialist world view, instead it promotes questioning and reimagining the borders between a carer and a cared-for, such as boundaries made by culture, religion, ethnicity, politics or anything else. For example, in encountering people such as a working class Muslim girl with veil who wishes to keep her religious practice at her workplace or school, or a man from an oppressed ethnic group who

is involved in the resistance movement against the government in his country, or a refugee from a minority religious group who escaped to Europe with fake identification papers, an ethics of care approach helps students to realize the complexity of the situation and identity of individuals, and encourages them to understand how a particular situation is perceived by a particular individual and be concerned and compassionate to her/him. In the following section, we explore how this concept of empathetic learning with caring encounter can be implemented in an educational setting, particularly in a school.

Case study: Cross-curricular learning of human rights based on the ethics of care

The School and the Curriculum

In order to examine empathetic learning in human rights education, this paper scrutinizes a case study from a junior secondary school in Japan. It analyzes the Moral Education curriculum which is implemented as education for human rights and democratic citizenship. It also examines materials and students' worksheets, observed lessons, and conducted a semi-structured interview with the homeroom teacher. All students and teachers mentioned in this paper are given pseudonyms to respect and maintain their privacy.

The school is a state-funded junior secondary school in Nara, in the Kansai region of western Japan. Based on the school's principle of building "a culture of peace in the mind of students," human rights education and Peace Education are embedded in a whole school curriculum and are learned in different places and contexts. For example, Peace Education is connected to the school trip to Okinawa where one fourth of local population perished in the Battle of Okinawa in 1945 and currently hosts more than half of the US military bases in Japan.

The school has an experimental school status which allows teachers to more flexibly introduce special initiatives alongside the national Course of Study, the national teaching guidelines for primary and junior secondary schools. We present a case study of Moral Education developed as a cross-curricular scheme by a teacher, Mr Ogawa (not his real name). He mainly teaches Social Studies, which covers History, Geography and Civics, but also in charge of planning the overarching three-year curriculum in which

Moral Education is placed at its center. He developed curriculums that effectively connect Moral Education, Social Education and other extra-curricular activities and school trips (see Table 1). For instance, students explore conceptions of identities in their studies of holocaust in History and reading of The Diary of Anne Frank in Moral Education with the care approach, and these learnings are also reflected on the student-organized annual art festival (Kitayama, Osler, & Hashizaki, 2017).

Table 1. Overview of the three-year teaching plan

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Theme	What are the **borders** that separate me and others? What is common humanity?	'Who I am? What are the important elements that make up my own or others' **identity**? How can people relate to each other as human beings?	How can people relate to each other as human beings? What can I do to **make a better society** with others?
Moral Education	1. Basic learning: meeting with students with special education needs (SEN) 2. Project work in groups 3. Reflection	1. Basic learning: identity of family 2. Project work in groups 3. Reflection	1. Basic learning: identity of Amerasians 2. Project work in groups 3. Reflection
Extra-curricular activities	1. Short school trip 2. School art festival 3. Peace meeting	1. Short school trip 2. School art festival 3. Peace meeting	1. School trip to Okinawa 2. School art festival 3. Peace meeting
Social Studies	[Geography] Holocaust, Anne Frank and Chiune Sugihara/ Okinawans' identity and border of Japan/ Overseas Chinese	[History] Nation-states in ancient and present times/ expansion of Yamato state/ Frontier and indigenous group (Yezo).	[Civics] Okinawa and US military bases/ Multicultural policy in Okinawa/ Identity of Amerasian/ Civil revolutions/ Japan's colonialism/ Contemporary issues on citizenship

The Moral Education curriculum of Year 1 (12-13 years old) has the main goal of examining the boundaries between "them" and "others" and explore the nature of the human being in the culturally diverse society. Two main questions are posed: What are the borders that separate me and others? What is common humanity? The curriculum consists of three parts: 1) Basic learning; 2) Project work in groups; and 3) Reflection.

Basic Learning: Critical examination of the construction of difference

In the beginning of the academic calendar, learning activities focus on building good relationships and a sense of trust among students in the classroom and the school. Mr Ogawa started the Moral Education class by asking the students if they knew about students in a class for special education needs (SEN), a class for students with cognitive disabilities. Then he posed a question: What is the difference between you and them? He arranged a meeting with a SEN student named Takuya. After the meeting, the students continued communicating with Takuya by exchanging letters about each other's everyday life. They also explored about the meaning of disabilities with the SEN class teacher, and discussed the theme 'What is disability?' Here are some extracts from students' comments on this basic learning unit:

> I was glad that he (Takuya) told me about their [students with education needs] struggles.
> I realized that he actually has a lot of thoughts, but he is just not good in expressing them (…) like me, I am a very shy person.

These students' remarks from the session suggest that the encounter with Takuya and their learning about disability also provided them an opportunity for self-reflection.

Also, this unit encouraged students to carefully examine differences existing in their school and to realize a constructive nature of the boundary between them and Takuya, and helped them to become more critical about perceived differences in their classroom as well as in the wider society, where some differences are more recognized and often problematized, while some others are unnoticed or ignored.

Project Work in Groups: Face to face caring encounter

After they started to critically examine the borders, the students undertook a group project on different topics under the common theme of "What are the borders that separate me and others?" A group focused on a theme inspired by the meeting with Takuya, and other groups went out of the school and interviewed people who are engaged in caring for others in the community. In order to create an opportunity for students to have a face to face encounter which would prevent them from having generalized image of these people, Mr Ogawa assisted the students in finding people who fought for equality and social justice and also who did not fit into a

stereotype. For example, Mr Ogawa introduced a deaf person in a local community who helped other people with disabilities. This encounter challenged the students' sense of pity towards a generalized image of "people with disabilities." Other groups had meetings with students in Fukushima, a priest who grew "roses of Anne Frank" that were given by Anne's father Otto Frank, and a group of students who visited Okinawa. When Nara students interviewed them, they were encouraged to understand the interviewees' situation, thoughts, beliefs and feelings as well as how they responded to others' needs.

A group of students (consisting of three senior secondary school students and a university student who were graduates of the Nara junior secondary school) visited Fukushima as part of the Moral Education curriculum on a weekend in August 2015. The district was in the area affected by the earthquake and the nuclear disaster in 2011. Although the district was outside the evacuation zone, the reputation of its tourist, agricultural and fishing industries suffered serious damage regarding radioactive contamination despite the enormous clean-up efforts and the implementation of a food monitoring program. The students interviewed people who were actively involved in the reconstruction of the community such as people from local non-profit organizations (NPOs) and local markets. They also met six local students (ages 15-18) who were involved in volunteer work in the community tourism reconstruction projects. Having similar age, the Nara students became emotionally affected in meeting the Fukushima students. The Nara students asked them about their situation when the disaster occurred, the reasons for their continued stay in Fukushima and the motivation for their reconstruction projects. The visiting group shared their experience on the visit with the Year-1 students at the Nara school.

The Fukushima students told their stories and feelings to the Nara students:
- I remained in Fukushima only because I wanted to keep being connected to my family, my friends and my school;
- It hurts when people outside Fukushima have pity on me. They asked me questions like "Are you worried?," "Will it be possible for you to have a child?;"
- There is a complex feeling about the nuclear plant. Many of our parents have worked for the nuclear industry and lost their jobs;

- • It was a natural disaster and no one should be blamed. It's everyone's responsibility to reconstruct Fukushima.

Through the meeting, the Nara students emotionally reacted which indicates a sense of co-suffering for the real-life struggles of Fukushima students. Some of them replied that they were shocked in knowing that Fukushima students have such a strong sense of responsibility to their community while they have not thought about their own community as seriously as Fukushima students did. A student shed tears and asked the Fukushima students if there was anything that they could do back home. Toward the end of the meeting, the Fukushima students told the Nara students that they were so glad to have an opportunity to share their experience and feelings with them, and asked them to tell their friends about the situation in Fukushima.

Reflections: Critical examination of borders and awareness of common humanity

Reflection session followed the group projects and student presentations. This activity aimed to help the students a) explore commonalities and connections among the findings of the different groups, b) critically examine the conceptions of borders, and c) be aware about common humanity. It started with the students talking about what they thought were the most impressive words of Anne Frank. A student chose a quote of Anne; "I want to be useful or bring enjoyment to all people, even those I've never met." Mr Ogawa followed up the student's response by asking questions to the whole class: "So, how could we become a person like this (a kind person who is useful or bring enjoyment to all people)? How could we make our society be like this?"

Keeping this question in mind, students from each group presented what they learned and found through their project. A student from the Fukushima project commented that despite the tragedy and hardships, the Fukushima students have been working hard to reconstruct their community. Also, she thought that their feeling of loss and pain could not be understood by others easily. Her comments imply that even though they realized that they were not be able to fully understand the Fukushima students' feelings, she still tried to accept them as they were.

A student who met Takuya, a student from SEN class, gave a critical reflection about boundaries. He identified positive and negative borders: "There are negative borders which created discrimination. But I found there were also positive borders, for example, streaming the class to fit individual attainment to promote equity." Then Mr Ogawa asked a question: "What kind of border is between Takuya and us?" A student replied: "I can't draw a border between Takuya and me if I empathized with him." His comment suggests that he realized a border as something constructed.

During the students' reflection session, Mr Ogawa wrote on the whiteboard some words expressed by the students particularly those reflecting compassionate empathy. At the concluding part of the class, Mr Ogawa asked the students whether or not they agreed with the quote of Anne Frank, "In spite of everything, I still believe that people are truly good at heart," and asked if they have understood the essential human nature. Students discussed the questions drawing from what they learned from the encounters with people in their group project, and identified three essential elements: To support each other; to respond to somebody's needs; and to try to know the others' situation more deeply.

Discussion

Before the exchange with the Fukushima students, the Nara students did not understand why the young people in Fukushima stayed in their hometown despite the dire situation, based on their assumption that everyone would want to escape from a place that was damaged by an earthquake and radioactive contamination. Through the exchange meeting, they learned how the Fukushima students cared for their family and friends, and how they decided to reconstruct their community and to challenge a number of difficulties and struggles. Also, listening to their stories gave the Nara students the motivation to take action in the future.

In order to avoid generalization and making judgment during the reflection session, Mr Ogawa tried to avoid the Nara students from discussing the Fukushima students' circumstances based on their own viewpoints as outsiders. Instead, he asked questions that encouraged the students to carefully reflect on the ways of thinking, experiences and emotions of the Fukushima students as unique individuals. He employed the ethics of care approach to his teaching to overcome a pitfall of emotionally-engaged learning, such as

having a mere sense of pity to a group of people with an abstract image, by taking their perspectives which promotes compassionate empathy.

Mr Ogawa realized that a number of exchange meetings in Moral Education class provided learning beyond what they understand about these individuals themselves. Students commented,

> I used to believe that a person with a disability is different from myself. I don't know why, but I started to believe that we are the same human being after I learned about Anne Frank and a Bosnian student.
> I realized that a border, which I myself drew, started to dissolve.

Mr Ogawa said:

> At the end of the first year, their study about the border still left some questions: "Who draws a border and for what reasons? Who would take advantage of it?" So, I plan the second-year curriculum about identity to develop their understandings about self and others, and borders.

This Moral Education curriculum also suggests an approach to promote compassionate learnings in human rights education. The ethics of care approach helps students understand a complexity of unique individuals with various vulnerabilities and particular needs, not simply as anonymous "disabled," "refugees" or "sufferers from a disaster" who are simply entitled to universal rights.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has argued about the potential use of the ethics of care approach on human rights education by focusing on learning from the others' struggles, listening to the others' voices, and understanding their perspectives as unique individuals. Based on a notion of vulnerable human beings, the ethics of care approach enables students to understand the situation of others and the decisions they make in a relative manner, which leaves a space to be more sensitive to social justice for people with various dimensions of vulnerability than the liberal theory of justice. The case study of Year 1 students

in this paper shows compassionate emotional engagement of the students, and how it helps them to explore connections between the particularity of others and common humanity. As this is planned as three-year-curriculum, the development of the students' learning will be observed by paying attention to how this awareness of common humanity will promote a sense of solidarity, a foundation for social justice.

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