

# Child Rights, Classroom and School Management: An Indonesian Experience

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Indonesia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) through Presidential Decision No. 36/1990. In the Indonesian legal system, a Presidential Decision has a status below the laws and government regulations. This is probably the reason for the ineffective implementation of CRC by the government as well as by families, communities and institutions in Indonesia. It is also obvious that the creation of supporting structures for the fulfillment of child rights is not a government priority.

While the law on the protection of children entitled *Republic of Indonesia Law Number 23 Year 2002 on Child Protection* (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 23 tahun 2002 tentang Perlindungan Anak) shows the Indonesian government's commitment to fulfill child rights, the lack of knowledge and understanding among the adults of this law and how to implement it is the biggest obstacle.

The teaching of child rights in Indonesian schools through civic education tends to portray children as passive objects, indoctrinating them with the obligation to obey the government, parents and other adults. They learn more about their duties as children rather than their rights that should be fulfilled. And what they understand as their rights are restricted by the people around them.

An ideal condition is needed to ensure the fulfillment of child rights. The school provides one condition. It can be a place for children to develop their capability, interest, talent and creativity through their active participation. To achieve this, the support from adults (in this case the teachers) as well as proper school environment are needed.

However, the real situation in schools or in the education community characterized by

many cases of violence and abuse by teachers and school guards, and bullying by students has to be faced.

All these are due to lack of knowledge and understanding about child rights by the teachers in particular and school officials in general.

## Project

A team consisting of a social worker, a school principal and an education official in the North Sumatra Provincial Education Office in Indonesia attended a short training course entitled "Child Rights, Classroom and School Management" in Lund University from 24 September to 10 October 2003. As a follow up to the training course, the team started a project in a public primary school named SD Negeri No. 023898 in Binjai District, North Sumatra Province.

SD Negeri No. 023898 is one of ordinary public primary schools located in East Binjai. It has 177 students, 90 boys and 87 girls, in six classes from grade one to grade six. They come from the surrounding communities. 90% of their parents are temporary laborers, and 10% are public servants. The project team chose this school because the Principal of the

school is a member of the team and participated in the short-course training program in Lund University.

The Lund University program is supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The English-language training program is designed for those holding positions in schools, and at intermediate (education officers and trainers responsible for educational activities at district or provincial levels) or central levels (teacher trainers, headmaster trainers, staff at educational institutes of the Ministry of Education). Each country is represented by a team of 3 people, each member representing one level of education. The team is expected to work together in the project. The training program has 30 participants in order to ensure close working relationship between participants and lecturers.

The right *to, in* and *through* education is the guiding principle in the course and the whole training program has a child-rights-based approach. The program provides opportunities for participants from different countries to compare and share their experiences in light of the CRC, Education for All (EFA) and other internationally-agreed declarations.

A child-rights-based approach has the potential of contributing to the broader efforts of improving educational quality and efficiency. Schools and classrooms that are protective, inclusive, child-centered, democratic and supportive of active participation have the potential of solving problems such as non-attendance, dropout and low completion rates, which are common in developing countries. Child-centered content and teaching/learning processes appropriate to the child's developmental level, abilities, and learning style promotes effective learning. A child-rights-based approach may also enhance teacher capacity, morale, commitment, status and income. Negative attitudes may be altered through the practice of conflict resolution, democracy, tolerance and respect in the classroom.

The overall objective of the course, from a development perspective, is to enhance the right to relevant education for all – an education that empowers the poor and excluded sections of the population to participate as active and informed citizens in all aspects of development.

The objective is to stimulate the transformation of conventional top-down approaches into participatory rights-based, learner-friendly and gender-sensitive approaches to teaching and learning. The training program aims to:

- Develop skills, understanding and attitudes in favor of rights-based educational work at the classroom and school levels, taking into consideration the experience and perspective of the participants, and the CRC, EFA and other internationally-agreed declarations.
- Stimulate and contribute to the development of methodologies in the area of child rights in the classroom and school management at country level.
- Familiarize participants with Swedish and other international practices at school and classroom levels in relation to democratic principles and human rights.

The training program consisted of two phases. The first phase took place during the 3-week stay at Lund University in Sweden. The main content of the first phase consisted of studies in the subject area, combined with visits to relevant Swedish institutions, including different schools. During the first phase all participants were assigned a mentor. The first phase also consisted of project work on a part-time basis for 5 months on a relevant task in the home country decided upon during the participants' stay in Sweden. The project work should have a high degree of practical relevance for the participants and their home organization. The second phase consisted of a follow-up seminar on the project work for 2 weeks in Tanzania. During this phase the participants were asked as part of the course to develop, discuss and present plans for the application of

the course content in their work. Finally, a couple of months after the second phase, the mentors did a follow-up visit in the participants' home country.

The project in Indonesia aims to:

1. Collect, describe and analyze data pertaining to children's view on child rights particularly through the learning process in school. This covers both the children's knowledge of child rights and their view about the school, and the knowledge of teachers about child rights.
2. Increase the knowledge and understanding of students, teachers and parents on child rights through the learning process in school.
3. Provide teachers with the necessary skills to realize child rights through the learning process in school.

The project aims to directly benefit the

- Students in Grades V and VI of the primary school by preventing discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, religion, customs and traditions
- Teachers teaching in Grades I-VI in the school.

The parents, members of the Boards of Education of Binjai District and the North Sumatra Province were also identified as indirect beneficiaries of the project.

The implementation of the project started in November 2003 when the team started to communicate with the Binjai Board of Education and the North Sumatra Provincial Board of Education. The team explained the objectives of the project, and provided information on the Lund University training course. The team sought the comments of the two Boards of Education on the project during their meetings.

After getting the approval of the two Boards of Education in December 2003, the team started meeting the teachers and students in the primary school. The project was explained to 9 teachers and 66 students aged 10-13 years.

The teachers expressed willingness to learn about child rights by getting the necessary materials on the CRC and learning from resource persons. They were also willing to acquire the skills to fulfill child rights through the learning processes in school. The students, on the other hand, expressed willingness to answer the survey questionnaire.

### Survey

The team, during the training in Sweden, decided to carry out a simple survey in the school. It thought that it would be highly important to find out the basic needs of students, which form part of the whole school system. The involvement of students is important, and thus the project should be based on their needs.

The survey covering both students and teachers aimed to collect, describe and analyze data pertaining to the children's view on child rights, particularly through the learning process in school, and their view about the school. In addition, the survey also aimed to study the knowledge of teachers pertaining to child rights.

The questionnaire for the students, using simple language, contains 16 questions. The questionnaire for the teachers contains 9 questions about their view on child rights and the fulfillment of these rights through the learning processes in the school (Annex A).

66 students answered the questionnaire, with equal number of boys and girls aged 10-13 years in Grades V and VI. 9 teachers, all females, answered their own questionnaire.

The responses from the students reveal that all of them know their rights. 8.5% express the view that they will choose what rights they prefer more if they are given the opportunity to choose. 7.3% wanted to choose the right to express their opinion, 64% want the right to education, 56% want the right to play, 55% want the right to have access to education tools, and 40% want the right to stay out of the classroom for educational activities to learn about

realities in society relating to the subject lesson. Social studies subject, for example, allows the observation of the surrounding environment of the school.

92% of the student-respondents answered that they have the opportunity to ask questions to the teachers. 67% felt that raising a hand first is an appropriate way to ask a question, but 55% have different views on how to ask, such as: asking a question after the teacher finished reading a question; asking a question politely, respectfully, in a well-mannered way; asking a question if pointed to by friends; asking a question whether or not it (question) makes sense; and asking a question if one does not understand the subject lesson.

44% of the student-respondents said that they never do educational activities outside the classroom. 44% feel they would be happy if they will have the opportunity to do activities outside the classroom. On the other hand, 42% of the student-respondents said that they whenever they have activities outside the classroom, the person who decide the place to study are the teachers (48%) or principal (38%). 56% of the student-respondents expressed their “own view” by not choosing the answer listed in questionnaire. They wrote, for instance, that decisions should be made by students, or the whole class, or the leader of each class on what activities to do outside the classroom.

80% of the student-respondents like the place/location chosen for their activities outside the classroom. Libraries and zoos are favorite places to visit, but 79% have their own view from the options listed.

Relating to the learning process in the classroom, 95% of the student-respondents like the way the teachers teach, although 68% have their own view from the options listed. 76% think they need tools such as textbooks, notebooks, writing materials, television, library, laboratory, musical equipments, playing tools, drawing materials to support the learning process and 74% have their own view from the options listed. From the options listed, 44% think that

sports equipments are needed, 36% want visual aids, 31% want pictures and 23% want musical equipments.

Relating to the school environment, 47% of the student-respondents have their own view on what they do not feel comfortable with in school. From the options listed, 35% said that they do not like the school facilities. They point to narrow school yard (29%), dirty environment (27%), lack of latrines (15%) and dilapidated school building (12%).

In relation to discrimination, 76% of the student-respondents think that teachers give special attention to some students because of their intelligence, good behavior, and leadership in class. In response to this view of the students, the teachers said that they always try to give an equal opportunity to the students during learning process. However, students who have good behavior, intelligence, and leadership in class are always the first to take the opportunity offered.

### **Teacher Training**

Based on above information, the team organized a one-day training course for 9 teachers of the school. The members of the team and the teachers discussed how to explore and develop new teaching strategies and methodologies in promoting student participation in the learning process – making students willing and able to express their views freely in all matters and having fun at the same time. For instance, previously the learning process focuses more on reading, writing and written exercises in the classroom. During the training, teachers were encouraged to have group discussion, play games, role-play as well as activities outside the classroom. Teachers were also encouraged to be creative in finding new strategies and methodologies in the learning process relating to their subject lesson by using simple tools that are available in the school.

Teacher training, carried out as part of the project, was needed to increase the knowledge

and understanding by the teachers on child rights through the learning process in school and to provide teachers with the necessary skills to realize child rights through the learning process in school.

At the beginning of the training, teachers seem to reject particularly the principle that child rights should be fulfilled, protected and respected by adults, and that corporal punishment for students is against child rights. They thought that when students do not behave properly despite oral admonition, they deserve corporal punishment from the teachers. Concerning the use of participatory learning process, teachers said that they would want to use it too. But they also need to fulfill the curricular requirements on time, as well as work within the limited time for each subject lesson. Otherwise, if they would like to employ the participatory learning process they should have enough time available.

### **Application of the Teaching/Learning Methodologies**

After the training, two teachers tried out the teaching/learning methodologies in two classes in Grades V and VI. The two classes were chosen after a discussion among the team members. They considered the age of the students (who have already spent 4 to 5 years in the school), their capability to understand the questionnaire, and their need to increase their knowledge and understanding about child rights during their last or final 2 years in the school. The try-out was done in the daily classes for Indonesian language, mathematics and natural science subjects. The two teachers trying the methodologies considered these subjects as appropriate for applying the child rights principles, although there is still the possibility of carrying out the program in other subjects. The two teachers used the playing-while-studying method, and study and discussion outside the classroom. The two teachers developed the subject lesson plans that incorporate the new teaching methods.

In the mathematics subject, for example, they previously teach only theories and formulas on how to measure the width of the yard, but never showed how to actually measure it. In the Indonesian language subject, teachers always decide the topic of the essay the students have to write about instead of allowing them to decide. They rarely give the students the chance to observe the community outside the school in order that they can have ideas on what to write about. During the implementation of the project, the teachers gave the students the time to do observation activities outside the school.

The try-out of the teaching/learning methodologies was held during the 3-15 February 2004 period.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The team monitored the teaching try-out twice a week by direct classroom observation and discussion with the two teachers involved. The team members went inside the classrooms a number of times whenever the two teachers feel they do not fully understand the methods being used and when the team wanted to know how the methods are being applied in the classroom. Two teachers said that they need more time and space to implement the new methods. They also felt that they still lack the knowledge to develop their own strategies and methods, as well as lack facilities in the school.

An evaluation session was held on 19 February 2004. 10 teachers, 2 officials from the Board of Education of Binjai, 2 Grade V students, and 2 Grade VI students attended the evaluation session. The four students who attended the evaluation session were in the two classes where the project was tried out. The selection of the students was based on gender (two girls and two boys), and their willingness to attend the evaluation session. It was held in the classroom where the two teachers tried-out the program. The two

teachers demonstrated to the evaluation session participants the use of the methodologies. The participants commented or raised questions on the teaching demonstration. During the evaluation session, all four students said that they enjoyed the learning process, they easily understood the topic of the subject when they worked in discussion groups, and the study outside the classroom methodology made them easily understand the reality that they previously only learn theories. But one student did not agree with group discussion held outside the classroom because of exposure to the sun.

On the whole, the evaluation session participants said that the project was able to attain its objectives. However, they think that there is still a lot of room for improvement in implementing the project. For instance, a sustainable training program for teachers is needed to increase their knowledge and understanding, and school facilities should be available for these methodologies.

### **Obstacles**

The team faced some obstacles in implementing the project. There was limited time available due to the frequent school holidays during the project period (September 2003-February 2004). The inadequate teaching materials and school facilities needed for the project is another obstacle.

Based on the project implementation experience as well as the results of the evaluation session, the team came up with a set of suggestions on how to implement the project:

1. A special training for teachers on the CRC and the appropriate teaching skills related to child rights, especially in handling students who come into conflict with school systems, has to be provided.
2. School facilities that support the implementation of the project in schools have to be made available.

### **New Phase of the Project**

Based on activities held and the results of the evaluation process, the team considered to do a follow-up to the project in the same school. In this new phase of the project, the inputs during the seminar in Tanzania on 26 February-6 March 2004 from tutors and participants from other countries were utilized.

The follow-up phase has the following characteristics:

- The program remained the same but it covered an expanded target group – all grade levels from Grade I to Grade VI.
- The training for all teachers in the school has more knowledge input for greater understanding of the concept of child rights as well as acquisition of necessary skills to fulfill child rights through the learning process inside the classroom (focusing on CRC provision on child participation).
- There is classroom try-out following the teacher training, and project monitoring during the try-out period to provide an opportunity for the team to discuss with teachers any difficulties encountered.
- The evaluation involved teachers from two different primary schools in Binjai, Department of Education of Binjai as well as representatives of the parents of the students.

### **Teacher Training**

The team held on 22-25 June 2004 a training for the same nine teachers as in the first training focusing on subjects that came out in the previous needs assessment. The subjects included the CRC, case studies, reproductive health issues, sharing of experiences, and problem solving, among others. In discussing the CRC, the historical background of the convention and the issues that emerged after the ratification of the convention by the Indonesian government in 1990 particularly relating

to schools were discussed. The problem of understanding child rights under the civic education program was also taken up. It was stressed that this problem relates to the lack of participation of students in the learning process because they are treated as passive objects and to their failure to learn their rights because the focus is on duties.

The discussion on problem solving/case studies focused on many cases that the teachers face regarding the learning process. This session took much time because of the many perspectives in dealing with students inside the classroom. The reproductive health issues were discussed because the teachers think that they need appropriate and correct information about reproductive health that they can transmit to the students, and for their personal (family) benefit. During this session, the teachers asked the resource person many questions to due to myths about sexuality, HIV infection, and menstruation.

During the training, teachers were encouraged to seek appropriate approaches and teaching methods in accordance with their actual context and situations to be able to have a student-centered method, putting students at the center of teaching activities. In this method, the students become the subject and not the object of teaching. When students are the object of teaching they are passive: teachers teach and students are taught; teachers choose what to teach and students are subjected to their (teachers') choices. When students become the subject of teaching-learning, they are actively involved in the whole process of learning. Teachers function as facilitators and build a two-way communication with their students.

At the last day of the training, the teachers were asked to design their action/teaching plan for one semester. The plan is expected to help teachers in their teaching, especially because the method to be used is considered new and has never been employed before. However, it

is only a tentative and alternate guide for teachers in presenting the subject. It is not a step-by-step guide that has to be strictly followed by teachers.

### **Sustaining the Application of the Rights-based Approach**

During the semester that the teachers teach about child rights, the students had the tendency to more freely ask questions, had fun and participated in the learning process. On the other hand, teachers were more motivated to increase their knowledge and understanding of the subject, and their creativity in the learning process.

On 8-15 August 2004, the team members' mentor visited the school as well as the government authorities in Medan and Binjai such as the officials of the Department of Education of North Sumatra Province, Department of Education of Medan, the Mayor of Binjai, the Department of Education of Binjai, and the Teacher Training Center to discuss the sustainability of the project and the possibility of continuing the same project in other schools.

One important lesson learned from the project is the need to develop a material or module for teacher training.

### **Concluding Statement**

The basic learning from this small project is the importance of expanding it to more schools and increasing the skills of teachers through appropriate training.

### **Endnote**

1. Team members: Tigor Nababan – Chief, Board of Compulsory Education, Board of Education of North Sumatera, Indonesia; Hirtap Simanungkalit – Headmaster, Primary School (SD) in Binjai; Rupinawaty Gurusinga – Social Worker.

## ANNEX A

### Questionnaire

#### I. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

1. Do you know that you have rights as a child?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
2. If you are given the opportunity to choose your rights, which rights would you prefer?
  - a. Right to speak
  - b. Right to ask questions
  - c. Right to get learning tools
  - d. Right to play
  - e. Right to study
  - f. Right to be allowed to study outside the classroom
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_
  - h. \_\_\_\_\_
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_
  - j. \_\_\_\_\_
  - k. \_\_\_\_\_
  - l. \_\_\_\_\_
  - m. \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Have you ever had opportunities to ask questions to your teacher?
  - a. Yes
  - b. Occasionally
  - c. Not at all
  
4. How did you use such opportunities?
  - a. Raised a hand first
  - b. Just asked the question straight
  - c. Waited for other students to finish asking questions
  - d. Waited to be pointed out by the teacher
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_
  - h. \_\_\_\_\_
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. How would do you feel if you are offered an opportunity to study outside the classroom?
  - a. Like
  - b. Not really
  - c. Dislike
  
6. Does your teacher ever take you to places outside the classroom to study?
  - a. Yes
  - b. Occasionally
  - c. Not at all
  
7. Who decides on the location of the study outside the classroom?
  - a. Teacher
  - b. Principal
  - c. Students by voting among themselves
  - d. Students through discussion
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. Do you like the location?
  - a. Yes
  - b. Not really
  - c. Dislike
  
9. What are the favorite places you would like to go to if you have a chance to study outside the classroom?
  - a. Zoo
  - b. Market
  - c. Library
  - d. Park
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_
  - h. \_\_\_\_\_
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_
  
10. Do you like the way the teachers teach inside the classroom?
  - a. Yes
  - b. Not really
  - c. No
  
11. Which teaching method of your teachers do you like?
  - a. Liberated
  - b. Active
  - c. Lecture
  - d. Excited
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_



- f. -----
- g. -----
- h. -----
- i. -----
- j. -----

12. Do you think you need to use a tool of learning?

- a. Yes
- b. Not really
- c. Not at all

13. What tools of learning do you need?

- a. Visual equipments
- b. Pictures
- c. Musical instruments
- d. Sports equipment
- e. -----
- f. -----
- g. -----
- h. -----
- i. -----

14. Do you feel comfortable with the situation in your school?

- a. Yes
- b. Not really
- c. No
- d. -----
- e. -----

15. If not, why?

- a. The playground is not comfortable.
- b. The school premises are dirty
- c. The school building is dilapidated
- d. The schoolyard is narrow
- e. No toilet
- f. -----
- g. -----
- h. -----

16. Do you think that some people in your school get more attention from your teachers?

- a. Yes
- b. No

## II. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

1. Do you know that a child has rights?
2. Do you know child rights?
3. Are you willing to implement child rights based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child?
4. What do you think about this school becoming a pilot project on child rights?
5. What tools do you think would be needed in the teaching process on child rights?