Education for democratic citizenship is primarily aimed at understanding principles of human rights as a core to support democracy, and provide a basis to the societies that promote justice and peace in the world (Osler and Starkey, 1999). In order to do so, it is vital to investigate 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 and Starkey, 2010). This paper examines emotional aspects of Human Rights Education (HRE) and explore theories and practices of HRE which connect universality and particularity of rights and human rights issues. Drawing on the Council of Europe’s model of Competences for Democratic Culture, it develops theoretical and empirical argument about emotional aspects of HRE. This paper also reports a case study of HRE in Japanese which is based people based on Nel Noddings’ theory of caring and constructivist approaches to identity. It argues about the curriculum that aims to promote deep understanding of the complexity of human relations and identities through taking perspectives of others. It investigates empathy in HRE which connect stories of particular individuals to universality of human rights, and how it fosters a sense of solidarity with common humanity.

Empathy as a Competence for Democratic Citizenship

Council of Europe 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 as it is ‘the set of 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 HRE to decentralize one’s own perspective and psychological framework and imagine ‘other people’s cultural affiliations, world views, beliefs, interests, emotions,
wishes and needs’ (Council of Europe, ibid: 47) This model suggests 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)

**Perspective Taking**

As Council of Europe’s conceptual model proposes, perspective-taking involves both cognitive and affective (emotional) aspects of learning that are considered as an important part of critical learning. Also, re-imagining the world from another person’s perspective may provide a counter-image for stereotypes and reduce prejudices (Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000; Todd et al. 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 emotion of learners *based on* the apprehension of their cognitive or affective state or condition, or actual circumstances. Thus, ‘compassionate empathy’ or ‘empathic concern) proposed in 3 does not stand alone, but needs to be accompanied by cognitive perspective-taking or affective perspective-taking otherwise it would be mere a sense of pity which lacks apprehension of other’s perspectives, feelings or needs.

**Compassion and Pity**

According to Arendt (1964/2016), there is a distinction between compassion and pity. Compassion occurs with a sense of co-suffering with real-life struggles of other person. Because of the face-to-face presence of particular individuals being suffered, compassion does not have a space for generalization of the others as their physical distance is bridged by the vulnerability of those suffered. Therefore, understanding and co-suffering the struggles of
a particular individual or a group will bring a sense of solidarity to learners despite of the physical distance. In contrast, Arendt argues about pity is different from compassion as it is accompanied with generalization of suffered beings in order to deal with the distance. In her analysis of the French Revolution, pity comes from compassion for suffered masses rather than concrete suffering others. This sense of pity is problematic because it generalizes others’ sufferings and eliminate its individuality and particularity. Compassion may help learners to understand sufferings of others, however, Arendt points out about its potential exclusionary nature because it abolishes the distance between oneself and those who are suffered and would disconnect them from the public sphere. Instead, she emphasizes an importance of a sense of solidarity which is triggered by an other’s struggle and brought to the reality through common concerns among people, mediated by concerns to the world, but not to a life of a particular others. Although Arendt’s arguments distinguishing compassion and politics, a Japanese political philosopher Junichi Saito (2000) stresses the importance to explore how compassions can be connected to a common interest which brings about a sense of solidarity to the whole mankind.

**Empathy and HRE**

*Ethics of Care*

According to Noddings (2002), a concept of care is a moral attitude and a basic in human life. The central priority of the ethics of care is relationships with other human beings, not the concept of individual rights. 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 need to depend on abstract knowledge about the cared-for and it might eliminate the recognition of the cared-for as unique individuals. Noddings illustrates three elements in a caring encounter:

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

(Noddings 2002: 19)

She distinguishes between caring-for and caring-about. Caring-for refers to a face-to face encounter between one person who cares directly another (Noddings 1984). 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. While caring-for is considered as a
preferred form, she argues that caring-about distant others may also provide the foundation
for a sense of justice and functions as an instrument in establishing and enhancing conditions
that for caring-for flourishes (Noddings 2002).

*Empathy in HRE: Connecting Particularity and Universality*

According to Barton and Levstik (2004), perspective-taking is one of the critical skills
which promotes students’ understandings about historical facts from viewpoints of minorities
and imagination for their experiences and feelings. They argue that this ‘historical empathy’
involves emotions and a sense of civil and social justice, and therefore it should be considered
as caring.

A study by Røthing (2012) about HRE curriculums and materials in Norway reveals
that human rights issues, such as gender inequality, are commonly portrayed as problems in
other (most often, developed) countries and it may generate radicalized stereotypes and
exclusions. It suggests that HRE learning about sufferings of a distant other may end up
having pity and sense of superiority if it does not involve cognitive and affective perspective-
takings that could connect particularity of human rights struggles of a distant other and
universal conception of human rights. Through a study on HRE though indigenous history at
two Swedish secondary schools, Nygren (2016) found that students described different
historical perspectives through critical referencing and corroborating in their writing
assignments, and they connect such injustice in the past to 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’ (Nygren 2016: 130). In addition, an
empirical study by Coşkun Keskin (2013) examines different elements of empathy as stages
of the empathetic learning process. Drawing from the data collected from activities focusing
on empathy, he highlights that elements such perspective-taking, feeling, understanding,
acting, meaning, that are often considered as substitutions for empathy, are not independent
from empathy but forms the stages of empathetic learning process.

*HRE in Japan*

In Japan, Dowa education has been implemented since 1950s and it brought a
significant impact on HRE especially Western Japan. It has theories and practices that overlap
with HRE and multicultural education, and has been one of the most influential educational
initiatives for social justice in Japanese education (Hirasawa, 2009). Dowa Education addresses inequalities of Burakumin children, who believed to be descendants of former outcast communities, and aims to empower them and combat discrimination against Burakumin. Dowa Education tends to emphasize moral values, building students’ self-esteem, and tackling interpersonal discriminations. Consequently, relational and emotional dimensions such as ‘kindness’ and ‘sympathy’ have been in the centre of learning. Nevertheless, it often neglects concrete legal rights underpinned by the Constitution and/or international human rights instruments (Akuzawa, 2002). Since HRE has developed in a close relationship with Dowa Education, HRE also tends to focus on interpersonal relationships and emphasizes emotional aspects, and it is commonly regarded as Moral Education (Ikuta, 2007).

Nevertheless, Se (2006) argues that consideration of personal relationships and the fostering of empathy are typically emphasized both in school and family education in Japan. He therefore suggests that HRE can be implemented more effectively in Japan by focusing on the relational and emotional dimensions because such approaches are more familiar for pupils educated in Japanese society.

The Case Study
The School and Participants

In order to examine empathetic learning in HRE, this paper scrutinize a case study from a junior high school in Japan. It analyzes the Moral Education curriculum which implemented as education for human rights and democratic citizenship. We also collected materials and other documents related to the Moral Education curriculum and conducted an unstructured interview with the homeroom teacher and semi-structured focus group interviews with 16 year-2 students (aged 14-15 years).

The school is a state-funded junior high school in Nara, in the Kansai region of western Japan. Based on the school’s principle of ‘to build the culture of peace in the mind of pupils’, HRE and peace education are embedded in various occasions and learnt in different historical and geographical contexts. For example, peace studies link to the school trip to Okinawa where 100,000 citizens perished in the Battle of Okinawa in 1945 and currently hosts more than half of the US troops in Japan.

In Japan, national Course of Study provides teaching guidelines for year 1 to 12. The school has an experimental school status which allows teachers more flexibility to introduce special initiatives alongside the national Course of Study. The homeroom teacher of the researched year-2 class has a major responsibility to teach social studies, which covers
History, Geography and Civics. He has also developed an overarching curriculum which includes Social Studies, Moral Education and extra-curricular activities. For example, annual peace meetings are organized by students in connection with their study of The diary of Anne Frank.

Moral Education is implemented as three-year course in connection to Social Studies and other elements such as extra-curricular events and school trips. The main objectives of this Moral Education curriculum for year 2 students is to investigate identity in a diverse society. The main questions that students explore for the year is ‘Who I am? What are important elements that make up my own or others’ identity? How can people relate to each other as human beings?’ The curriculum consists of three parts:

**Moral Education Curriculum Framework for Year 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme:</th>
<th>The main questions and activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start to think critically about the construction of identity</td>
<td>Students interview people in the island that has a special custom to form a second family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore important elements that form peoples’ identity</td>
<td>Students are divided into nine groups. Each group visit and interview as well as read about different people with diverse background to understand their thoughts and feelings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity as a human being</td>
<td>Students explore commonalities of their learning to find out if there is common elements that relate them and others as human beings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Start to Think Critically about the Construction of Identity*

In the beginning of the curriculum, a question is posed for students: ‘What is the important aspects that construct an identity as family member? Are family members united by blood-relationship or other aspects?’. Most of the students identify themselves as a member of a family, though not all of them as some students have difficult relationships with their family. These different circumstances of the students at home are reflected to the curriculum and therefore it suggests students to examine their own identities, including an identity as a family
member, as not given but constructed or chosen. Therefore, students were encouraged to investigate their identity as a family member critically.

The school has an annual school trip to an island in central Japan. The island has a special custom of a second family system called ‘neyako’ in addition to their own family. Parents of young boys entrust their children to other adults’ care in the island as social education to live in the community after they graduate from junior high school. Each day, after having dinner at home, young boys as neyako gather at a house of neyaoya (literally means ‘parents of the house to sleep’) and stay every night. Through the neyako system, they learn about important values and attitudes in the community and receive advice about their future career from senior members as a part of socialization process.

When the students visited the island, they asked local people questions such as ‘Is your own family and neyako the same? How did you come to feel as being a family member of neyako family?’ Then they discovered that young boys in the island sometimes feel easier to talk to neyako family than own family members on certain topics, which indicates that being a member of a family is not always determined only by blood relationship.

Explore Important Elements that Form Peoples’ Identity

Students become more interested in finding the important elements that form people’s identity. Students are divided into nine groups. Each group worked for a small project to visit and interview people who are engaged in various initiatives in the community. In the interview, students tried to understand their thoughts, beliefs and feelings as well as how they respond to others’ needs. Students are encouraged to meet with people with diverse background and they visited: a hospice/palliative nurse, a fair-trade activist, a person with disability working at a community bakery, a priest who grows ‘roses of Anne Frank’. One of the student group visited to a priest and listened to her about how she met Anne’s father Otto Frank in Jerusalem, received roses from him, and grow them on her uncle’s farm to give them to schools that promote peace education. After the visit, students are suggested by their teacher to carefully read The Diary of Anne Frank to understand deeply about her situation and feelings when she was hiding in an apartment in Amsterdam.

Identity as a Human Being

The reflection follows after the nine groups worked for their small research projects. Students were asked to summarize what they have learnt, and examine the commonality among each group’s findings about the important elements that relate people each other.
Students’ comment on their worksheets shows that they critically observed their views on others and recognized the importance of understanding deeply about the perceptions and feelings of others in order to have empathy toward others.

‘I used to see children in a developing country as ‘pity children’ or ‘unfortunate children’. You often have preconceived ideas about their situation and needs. But you never know about them before you actually talk with them. …they embrace their life despite their difficulties…what I need to do first is to have a fairer view on them without a distorted image.’

‘The difference between pity and empathy is that pity is just feeling sorry for people. Empathy is a feeling based on the understanding of others that gained by meeting with them.’

‘It is important for me to know Anne’s feeling more deeply by reading her words in her diary in order to imagine her feeling and have sympathy to her.’

‘The nurse in a hospice told me that care is not one-way, thus they need to have a dialogue with the patient. …It is important to see things from others’ perspectives. You need to start to come closer to other people, then they do the same as you.’

**Discussion and Preliminary Conclusion**

This paper overviewed theories about emotional aspects of HRE, particularly empathy which is considered as one of the vital competency for participating in a culturally diverse democratic society. This paper investigated empathy as a key aspect of learning of HRE and education for democratic citizenship. Perspective-taking is a one of the important approaches in order to provide deep understandings of those being suffered, and careful empathetic learning allows learners understand others cognitively and affectively in a form or caring.

In the case study we examined the curriculum which explore identities from constructivist perspectives. Students shows their understanding about multiple identities through deconstructing stereotypical identification of self and others after having caring encounters with people with different backgrounds. Deep learning from face-to-face encounters provides them an opportunity to reconsider how they establish and maintain human relations. It also helps them to reimagine how different categories or borders that identify people, such as ethnicity, disability or family, are constructed socially, economically, culturally and politically. Not many students, however, consider struggles or needs of people they met in the course in connection to social and systematic problems. As it was the second
year of the three-year-curriculum, it needs to be reflected to the third (final) year’s curriculum so that it could provide a connection between the learning through caring encounters to a sense of solidarity to common humanity.

References


