

## **UNCRC, CHILD FRIENDLY SCHOOL, AND QUALITY EDUCATION: THREE CONCEPTS ONE GOAL**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Every country, including Indonesia has identified the improvement of quality education as one of its topmost national priorities. Quality education is education that works for every child and enables all children to achieve their full potential. Having quality education is guaranteed by The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Since it is believed that children are citizens in their own right, entitled to the full spectrum of human rights, including the right for quality education. UNCRC has become the principle of which Child friendly School is developed. It is a school which ensure all children have an environment that is physically safe, emotionally secure, and psychologically enabling. It is a means to advocate for and promote quality education for all children all over the world. As a system, quality education should continually assess and improve all dimensions of system quality: quality of learners, of learning environments, of content, of process, and of outcomes. The current paper pinpoints the interrelatedness of concepts of CRC, child friendly school, and quality education as three concept having one goal, that is, to promote the right of children for education.

**Keywords:** UNCRC, child friendly school, quality education

### **INTRODUCTION**

Practically every country, including Indonesia has identified the improvement of quality education as one of its topmost national priorities. Quality education is education that works for every child and enables all children to achieve their full potential. Lots have been done to respond the demand for increased school access, implementing massive training programs for teachers and administrators. As it is believed that schooling is the one experience that most children all over the world have in common and it is the most common means by which societies

prepare their young for the future.

Having quality education is guaranteed by The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child or CRC. Since it is believed that children are citizens in their own right, entitled to the full spectrum of human rights, including the right for quality education. All children have the right to provision for survival and development, protection, and participation. They have the right to survive, to be safe, to belong, to be heard, to receive adequate care and to grow up in a protective environment. A family is the first line in protecting children's rights. Schools and communities are responsible for building a safe and child-

friendly environment, including schools, outside the children's home.

Child friendly Schools are schools which ensure all children have an environment that is physically safe, emotionally secure, and psychologically enabling. The child-friendly school model was designed by UNICEF and has emerged as UNICEF's signature as a means to advocate for and promote quality education for all children all over the world. The child-friendly schools framework promotes child-seeking, child-centered, gender-sensitive, inclusive, community-involved, environmentally friendly, protective and healthy approaches to schooling and out-of-school education worldwide. This has become the main approach to promote quality education for all children in everyday situations and in emergencies. (UNICEF)

The paper discusses the interrelated concepts of CRC, child friendly school, and quality education. The discussion starts with the idea CRC as basic principle for Child-Friendly School (CFS) which is initiated by the UNICEF. It also analyses the implications of CFS for quality education in terms of improving children's health and nutrition, protecting children's rights, and creating positive psycho-emotional environment at schools.

#### **UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC)**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child commonly abbreviated as the CRC, CROC, or UNCRC is a human rights treaty which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children (UNICEF). It is the most rapidly and widely ratified international human rights treaty in history. This Convention has changed the way children are viewed and treated, for example, as human beings children have a distinct set of rights instead of as passive objects of care and charity. The global acceptance of this

Convention clearly shows a wide global commitment to advancing children's rights. As a result, there is much to celebrate from the Convention, from declining infant mortality to rising school enrolment.

The UN General Assembly adopted the CRC in 1989 after nearly a decade of compromise and negotiation among member states and wide consultations with NGOs. Since then around 196 countries have ratified the CRC and nowadays most all of the countries have ratified the convention, except the USA. Indonesia ratified this Convention on August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1990 with Indonesia Presidential Decree number 36/1990. It then ratified the Law on Child Protection Number 23/2002 on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2002. Since the ratification of the CRC, child rights becomes a serious concern in Indonesia and the government has been very active in disseminating these ACTS for many years.

The CRC acknowledges the primary role of parents and the family in the care and protection of children, as well as the obligation of the state to help them carry out these duties. It consists of 54 articles which are not ranked in order of importance; instead they interact with one another to form an integrated set of rights. In general, the Convention calls for: (1) freedom from violence, abuse, hazardous employment, exploitation, abduction or sale, (2) Adequate nutrition, (3) free compulsory primary education, (4) adequate health care, (5) equal treatment regardless of gender, race, or cultural background, (6) the right to express opinions and freedom of thought in matters affecting them, and (7) safe exposure/access to leisure, play, culture, and art.

In other words all girls and boys in the countries are entitled to the rights for survival, development, protection, and participation. First, the right to survival, which includes necessities for life: food, clothing, housing and medicine. Second, the right to development, meaning that a child is entitled to develop his/her potential to the

fullest, which includes the right to be educated, to play, to rest, to engage in cultural activities, to have access to news and information; third, the right to protection, meaning that a child is entitled to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The CRC explicitly states that children should be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence. Children should not suffer inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and school discipline should be consistent with the child's human dignity. Fourth, the right to participation, with freedom for expression in the community, in matters affecting the child's life, and in ways that prepare children to take on increasing roles and levels of responsibility as grow up. (UNICEF, 2016).

A common approach is to group the CRC articles together under four themes. (1) Survival rights which include the right to life and the needs that are most basic to existence (i.e. nutrition, shelter, an adequate living standard, and access to medical services). (2) Development rights which include the right to education, play, leisure, cultural activities, access to information, and freedom of thought, conscience (principle) and religion. (3) Protection rights which ensure children are safeguarded against all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including special care for refugee children; safeguards for children in the criminal justice system; protection for children in employment; protection and rehabilitation for children who have suffered exploitation or abuse of any kind. (4) Participation rights encompass children's freedom to express opinions, to have a say in matters affecting their own lives, to join associations and to assemble peacefully. As their capacities develop, children should have increasing opportunity to participate in the activities of society, in preparation for adulthood. (Children's Rights Alliance, 2016)

Another approach is to categorize the CRC articles into three general categories, as summarized by Wickenberg et al. (2009: 17) into 3Ps (Provision, Protection, and Participation). The first P (provision) guarantees the safety of children and covering specific issues such as with the access of food, health, and education. The second P covers the special needs of children such as education and health care, the protection against maltreatment, neglect, and all forms of exploitation. The third P recognizes the child's evolving capacity to make decisions and participate in society as he or she approaches maturity; it deals with the right to act and be involved in decision making. Indonesian government has developed a lot of projects to promote the child right.

## **CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL**

A Child Friendly School is a school that recognizes and nurtures the achievement of children's basic rights. A school is considered child friendly when it provides a safe, clean, healthy and protective environment for children. At Child Friendly Schools, child rights are respected, and all children – including children who are poor, disabled, living with HIV or from ethnic and religious minorities are treated equally. The learning environments of Child Friendly Schools are characterized by equity, balance, freedom, solidarity, non-violence and a concern for physical, mental and emotional health. These lead to the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, morals so that children can live together in a harmonious way. A child friendly school nurtures a school-friendly child, support children for development and a school-friendly community. (UNESCO, 2015)

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides an ideal approach for children to learn about their human rights. Because it specifies human rights especially

relevant to children. Everyone, but especially children, parents and adults who work with children, should be familiar with this important component of the international human rights framework. Child-friendly school is based on UNICEF Framework for Rights-Based, Child-Friendly Educational Systems and Schools that are characterized as inclusive, healthy and protective for all children, effective with children, and involved with families and communities - and children. According to this framework, child friendly school has the following tenets: child-seeking, child-centered, inclusive, effective, healthy and protective gender-sensitive, and involved with children, families, and communities.

Child-friendly school is a child-seeking school. It actively identifies excluded children to get them enrolled in school and included in learning, treating children as subjects with rights and State as duty-bearers with obligations to fulfill these rights, and demonstrating, promoting, and helping to monitor the rights and well-being of all children in the community.

Child-friendly school is a child-centered school. It acts in the best interests of the child, leading to the realization of the child's full potential, and concerned both about the "whole" child (including her health, nutritional status, and well-being) and about what happens to children — in their families and communities - before they enter school and after they leave the school.

Child-friendly school is inclusive of children: it does not exclude, discriminate, or stereotype on the basis of difference; it provides education that is free and compulsory, affordable and accessible, especially to families and children at risk. It respects diversity and ensures equality of learning for all children (e.g., girls, working children, children of ethnic minorities and affected by HIV/AIDS, children with disabilities, victims of exploitation and violence); it responds to diversity by meeting

the differing circumstances and needs of children (e.g., based on gender, social class, ethnicity, and ability level).

Child-friendly school is effective for learning: it promotes good quality teaching and learning processes with individualized instruction appropriate to each child's developmental level, abilities, and learning style and with active, cooperative, and democratic learning methods; it provides structured content and good quality materials and resources; it enhances teacher capacity, morale, commitment, status, and income — and their own recognition of child rights; it promotes quality learning outcomes by defining and helping children learn what they need to learn and teaching them how to learn.

Child-friendly school is healthy and protective of children: it ensures a healthy, hygienic, and safe learning environment, with adequate water and sanitation facilities and healthy classrooms, healthy policies and practices (e.g., a school free of drugs, corporal punishment, and harassment), and the provision of health services such as nutritional supplementation and counseling; it provides life skills-based health education; it promotes both the physical and the psychosocio-emotional health of teachers and learners; it helps to defend and protect all children from abuse and harm; it provides positive experiences for children.

Child-friendly school is gender-sensitive: it promotes gender equality in enrolment and achievement; it eliminates gender stereotypes; it guarantees girl-friendly facilities, curricula, textbooks, and teaching-learning processes; it socializes girls and boys in a non-violent environment; it encourages respect for each others' rights, dignity, and equality.

Child-friendly school is involved with children, families, and communities: it is child-centered — promoting child participation in all aspects of school life; it is family-focused — working to strengthen

families as the child's primary caregivers and educators and helping children, parents, and teachers establish harmonious relationships; it is community-based - encouraging local partnership in education, acting in the community for the sake of children, and working with other actors to ensure the fulfillment of children's rights. (UNICEF, 2012)

It is obvious that the vision of Child-Friendly Schools for educating children goes far beyond who gets the best score on the final examination. Their mission insists that each and every girl and boy has the right to participate in her or his own learning in a safe, protective learning community. It is the obligation of "duty-bearers", which is us, the adults, to ensure that all children are cared for, protected and supported to be able to develop to the fullest. To the fullest here means physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually with equality and integrity.

At the schools, teachers are trained on child rights, while teaching methods focus on a child-centered approach. Lessons for children include essential life skills aimed at keeping them safe and building the skills they will need to fulfill their potential and contribute fully to society. In addition, Child Friendly Schools bring together students and members of the community to develop and act on ways to improve their school's environment, values, and morals so that children can live together in a harmonious way.

### **QUALITY EDUCATION**

In September 2015, the United Nations ratified 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to serve as benchmarks for every nation to ensure global prosperity, protection of the planet, and an eradication of poverty. Building on the principle of "leaving no one behind", the new Agenda emphasizes a holistic approach to achieving sustainable development for all. The 17 SDGs include

no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequality, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace and justice strong institution, partnership to achieve goal. (UN SDGs, 2015)

Goal 4 of the SDGs which was a unique goal focused purely on education, *Quality Education which states "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning"*. The call for a Quality Education is a grand step in ensuring that all children, and not just those from high-income countries, have a quality education. Some argue that the threshold level of quality education is on literacy and numeracy, but the SDGs recognize that this definition is insufficient and outdated. Education is a system designed to help all children reach their full potential and enter society as full and productive citizens. (UN SDGs, 2015)

There are several definitions of quality education. One notion of quality education is based on context. Quality education apparently refers to inputs (numbers of teachers, amount of teacher training, number of textbooks), processes (amount of direct instructional time, extent of active learning), outputs (test scores, graduation rates), and outcomes (performance in subsequent employment). Another definition is based on an institution's or program's reputation, that is, the extent to which schooling system has influenced change in student knowledge, attitudes, values, and behavior (Adams, 1998). In addition, a consensus exists around the basic dimensions of quality education today. Quality education refers to a system of education that through programming process, structure, and content enables (1) learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn,

and supported in learning by their families and communities; (2) environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities; (3) content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace; (4) processes through which trained teachers use child-centered teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities; (5) outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society (UNICEF, 2000).

As a system, quality education should continually assess and improve all dimensions of system quality: quality of learners, of learning environments, of content, of process, and of outcomes.

**Quality learners** can be viewed through some elements, such as health, early childhood experiences, and family support. Children who are physically and psychosocially healthy commonly learn well. Early childhood experience plays a very important role in providing the basis for a healthy life and a successful formal schooling. Adequate nutrition is certainly crucial for normal brain to develop in the early years. Positive early experiences are also vital to preparing a quality learner. Healthy children with positive early learning experiences and supportive home are thus most likely to succeed in school (UNICEF, 2000: 5). Quality learners are intrinsically motivated to learn and grow. Learning for them is not limited to external structures such as classes. Learning is an integral part of daily experience, a natural and necessary part of life. Quality learners consciously use the opportunities in their personal experiences and learning environments to meet their personal learning objectives (Nancarrow, 2017).

**Quality learning environment** refers to pedagogy that creates classrooms where students and teachers work productively in an environment clearly focused on learning (UNICEF, 2000). The environment must be designed to support all students in their learning process, and teachers and education support personnel in their jobs. It is made up of physical, psychosocial environment. The psychosocial environment covers psychological and social factors that have consequences for satisfaction, health and ability to perform at the place of study such as the interpersonal relationships in the school, the social environment and how the students and the staff interact with each other, and how the students' experience of the learning situation. The social environment, culture and welfare help to promote a good psychosocial learning environment.

**Quality content** refers to the intended and taught curriculum of schools. National goals for education, and outcome statements that translate those goals into measurable objectives, should provide the starting point for the development and implementation of curriculum (UNICEF, 2000). Quality educational content may include the relevant curriculum and the teaching material. The curriculum must highlight basic life skills, which include such topics as health, hygiene, etiquette, nutrition, knowledge about HIV/AIDS, peace education, gender equality or other important national and international issues, and vocational skills.

**Quality Process** refers to how teachers and administrators use inputs to frame meaningful learning experiences for students (UNICEF, 2000). In the school context, this often simply means the quality of children's experience at school, with a focus on the process rather than the final output. This includes the children's happiness and security as indicators of the quality of education provided by a school. Thus, the good quality teachers are those who are capable of helping their students learn. Quality process is commonly founded on the

principle that good people working with sufficient resources and according to good processes will produce good results, but that faulty processes will prevent even good people and plentiful resources from producing optimal outcomes.

**Quality learner outcomes** are the expected results produced by the educational system, what children know, can do, and their attitudes and expectations they have for themselves and their societies. Achievements related to literacy and numeracy represent key educational outcomes. Other achievements of quality education are related to community participation and learner confidence, enhanced life-skills, and the capability to make responsible choices and resolve conflict (UNICEF, 2000). The evaluation of learner outcomes from the standpoint of quality is essential to strengthening and improving educational systems.

## CONCLUSION

Education is a basic human right and a significant factor in the development of children, communities, and countries. It is intrinsically linked to all development goals, such as supporting gender empowerment, improving child health and wellbeing, reducing hunger, fighting the spread of HIV, spurring economic growth, and building peace. therefore, every country has identified the improvement of quality education as one of their topmost national priorities. UNCRC, child friendly school, and Quality Education of the SDGs are concepts designed to guarantee that children all over the world have access to quality education. Children are citizens in their own right, entitled to the full spectrum of human rights, including the right for quality education. UNCRC has become the principle of which Child friendly School is developed.

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