Social Integration Education and Civic Education for Democracy in Preparation for Unification of Korea*

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Abstract

The term “civic education for democracy” is widely used and defined differently depending on the purpose of education and on the tradition, necessity of the country. Despite such diverse definitions of the term, directions of civic education for democracy are characterized by the following categorization regardless of periods and countries: first, civic education for democracy aims at democracy and seeks to achieve democracy, second, the education is designed to help develop relationship skills required in everyday life in a community. On the other hand, in terms of nurturing attributes of citizens, the education may be operated in a virtue-oriented manner and with the aim of addressing social.

Even if Korean civic education does not have a long history, it is extremely important to set standards and create contents for a new concept of civic education for democracy which fit to recent changes in our society in preparation of unification. This should be emphasized not only in preparation of unification, but also in integration education following unification. Upon unification of Korea, we have to place the first priority on ‘overcoming differences’ and other problems such as mutual slander and derogation to ensure national integration. Therefore, in order to help students become a healthy citizen in the same political community from the perspectives of the global community and the world civil society, civic education for democracy to achieve social integration needs to focus on the following in terms of content:

1) Understanding of cultural diversity and culturally responsive education

Koreans tend to be considerably unfriendly to other peoples or citizens of other

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countries as we have a strong sense of pride as a single-race state. As a result, Korea remains the lowest place in ‘multi-cultural sensitivity index’ and ‘mutual understanding capability’ among OECD member countries. Consequently, it is very meaningful to choose the enhancement of ‘understanding of multi-culturalism,’ ‘inter-cultural capability’ and ‘culturally responsiveness capability’ as key contents of integration education.

2) Global awareness education
   Today, societies are characterized by global village and global community. Global awareness education should be beyond existing traditional education practices and help students cultivate a higher level of citizenship skills which they are expected to have as a citizen of the global community. Division of the country should be viewed from global perspectives beyond the national viewpoint, and in this respect, civic education for democracy in Korea should be a global citizenship education fit to social changes today.

3) Enhancement of a sense of community or solidarity
   Given that the civic education for democracy (political education) in Germany since the unification stressed making a clean break with political education or socialist ideology of East Germany, ‘reminding German citizens of a sense of belonging to a shared community, and strengthening spiritual ties for integration,’ the biggest challenges that Korean civic education may face after unification of Korea will be to make a break with ‘North Korea’s unique socialist ideology,’ the so-called ‘legacy and marriage portion’ of North Koreans and raise a ‘sense of belonging and solidarity between the two Koreas.’

4) Active participation
   Being a citizen means basically being a sovereign. Generally, sovereignty is exercised via an election in most cases, in which citizens are clearly recognized as a sovereign. In a democratic society, individuals take part in every decision with equal rights, enjoying equality and autonomy, and such decision will in turn relate to the individuals either directly or indirectly.

*Key words* - social integration, civic education for democracy, culturally responsive education, global awareness education, sense of community, active participation