



Human Rights Education

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Abstract:

Human Rights Education contributes to the long term prevention of human rights abuses and violent conflicts, the promotion of equality and sustainable development and enhancement of participating in decision making process within a democratic system. Human Rights Education promotes an understanding of the complex global forces that create abuses, as well as the ways in which abuses can be abolished and avoided. Human rights education engages the heart as well as the mind. It challenges students to ask them personally and encourages them to translate caring into informed, non-violent action. In this respect, one can say that human rights education facilitates peace and development.

Key words: sustainable development, Human rights Education

Introduction

The human rights are universal and inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. Human rights are universal, meaning that no one has to earn or deserve human rights. The universality comes about from the realization that everyone is born with and possesses the same rights regardless of race, country, colour, and gender, religious, cultural or ethnic background. Human rights are inalienable in the sense that they can never be taken away from an individual. By virtue of born as a human being one cannot lose these rights. Thus, no person may be divested of his or her human rights save under clearly defined legal situations. Indivisibility means, one cannot be denied a right because one decides that it is less important or non-essential.

The human rights are interdependent because all rights: political, civil, social, cultural and economic, are of equal importance and none can be fully enjoyed without others. Human rights are interdependent in that, all human rights are part of a complementary framework because each

human right entails and depends on other human rights. Violating one such right affects the exercise of other rights. For example, the right to life presupposes respect for the right to food and good standards of living. The defense of economic and social rights presupposes freedom of expression, assembly and association. In this regard, all human beings should enjoy all rights and they should not be denied any right. Despite the documentation of the need to respect and uphold human rights, Amnesty International (2009) reports that there is still gross violation of human rights in most parts of the world. Amnesty International (2009) reports that there is torture and abuse in at least 81 countries, unfair trials in at least 54 countries and restrictions in freedom of expression in at least 77 countries. This paints a gloomy picture of the upholding of human rights; as such violations are inconsistent with contents of the UDHR, which many countries have ratified.² Vulnerable groups such as women and children are also marginalized in many ways, further showing violation of their rights. A sure way of ensuring that people are aware of their rights so that



they can stand for them is to teach them about their rights. Teaching of human rights also ensures the nurturing of appropriate values consistent with the promotion of human rights.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted on the belief that human rights are common to every being. According to Vieira de Mello the declaration recognizes that the "inherent dignity of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" and is connected to the recognition of the fundamental rights to which every human being aspires.³ The idea of human rights as we know them today emerged stronger after the Second World War. As a result of the experiences of the Second World War, the international community vowed not to allow atrocities and turmoil that had been witnessed in the war to occur again. So the world leaders decided to complement the United Nations (UN) Charter on a roadmap to guarantee the rights of individuals everywhere. Contemporary international human rights were marked with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which led to the codification, at international level, of human rights.

The UN has played a leading role in defining and advocating human rights. Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations declares "promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion." It also proclaims that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are

endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training:

The teaching of human rights education is informed by the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training states that,

"...human rights education comprises all educational, training, information, awareness raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Human rights education contributes to the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding, and by developing their attitudes and behaviours to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights" (United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training 2011: paragraph 1).

The United Nations, therefore, has deliberate plans for all signatories to the UDHR to put in place educational measures to sensitize the populace on human rights. Awareness of rights allows common people to defend their rights and of importance is the inculcation of a culture of human rights as part of social, political and economic life. Similarly, according to Flowers "human rights education is all learning that develops the knowledge, skills and values of human rights."⁵

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and



Training also asserts that human rights education encompasses education about human rights. This includes providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection, through human rights, which includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners, and for human rights. This also empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others (United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education 2011, Article 2 paragraph 2).⁶ This shows a multipronged approach to the teaching of human rights, with the most important objective being to empower learners on human rights. The teaching of human rights in schools and colleges is very important in sensitizing the young on human rights.

Of importance is ensuring that the teachers themselves are effectively prepared to facilitate human rights education. Once teachers understand and appreciate the issue of human rights, they will be in a position to effectively facilitate learning that promotes human rights. "The school should not just teach knowledge on human rights but it should be a place where the dignity of every child is upheld ...".⁷ Teachers should therefore be able to incorporate human rights in both formal and hidden curriculum.

Importance of Human Rights Education:

The aim of a Human Rights Education curriculum could enhance knowledge and understanding of human rights, respect, solidarity, and responsibility, develop awareness of how

human rights can be translated into social reality as developing skills for protecting human rights. The most important one is inculcating values and attitudes of human rights in students resulting in the promotion and protection of the rights. Human rights education does not simply aim to teach students – whether children, adolescents, or adults about human rights norms and laws. It also tries to promote appreciation for human rights as a fundamental ethical and legal basis of society and teach the value of human rights enforcement. Human rights education also fosters the attitude and behaviour to uphold human rights for all members of the society. Effective human rights education not only provides knowledge about human rights and the mechanism that protects them, but also develop the skills needed to promote, defend and apply human rights in daily life.⁸

Human Rights Education sheds light on the important protections achieved by human rights, and documents the tragic outcome when the ideal was largely absent or abandoned. Thus, human rights education is important in as far as it contributes to the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding, and by developing their attitudes and behaviours to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights.⁹

In this sense, Human Rights Education contributes to the long term prevention of human rights abuses and violent conflicts, the promotion of equality and sustainable development and enhancement of participating in



decision making process within a democratic system. In this respect, one can say that human rights education facilitates peace and development. Human rights education also aims to create a baseline consensus that enables students and citizens to engage with controversial social and political issues. It provides multicultural and historical perspectives on the universal struggle for justice and dignity. Human rights education aims at developing an understanding of our common responsibility to make human rights a reality in every society. Human rights education helps to develop the communication skills and informed critical thinking essential to a democracy.

According to Bokova and Pillay, human rights education activities should be practical, relating human rights to learners' real-life experience and enabling them to build on human rights principles found in their own cultural context. Through such activities, learners are empowered to identify and address their human rights needs and to seek solutions consistent with human rights standards. Moreover, human rights education develops their capacity to have the responsibility for respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of others. What is learned and the way in which it is learned should reflect human rights values, encourage participation and foster a learning environment that is conducive to personal growth. Even though the implementation of human rights education continues to lag behind the goals envisioned by international human rights programs and initiatives, human rights education has assumed an unprecedented importance on both the national and international level¹⁰. It examines human rights issues without

bias and from diverse perspectives through a variety of educational practices promotes democratic principles. Moreover, human rights education itself is now recognized as a fundamental human right.

Conclusion

The issue of Human Rights is very important in line with global citizenship, the world over. Human rights are very important human entitlements as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is essential to promote the Human Rights Education in every country as this creates an awareness on the rights of citizens and rights of others. Human Rights Education contributes to the long term prevention of human rights abuses and violent conflicts, the promotion of equality and sustainable development and enhancement of participating in decision making process within a democratic system. Human Rights Education promotes an understanding of the complex global forces that create abuses, as well as the ways in which abuses can be abolished and avoided. Human rights education engages the heart as well as the mind. It challenges students to ask them personally and encourages them to translate caring into informed, non-violent action. In this respect, one can say that human rights education facilitates peace and development.

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