



Human Rights Education- The contemporary imperative

Dr.J.Chandraprasad, former Principal, D.N.R College,Bhimavaram
V.L.N.V. Bhaskar, Asst. Professor in Management,S.D.College of IT, Tanuku

Abstract:

Human Rights Education connects the individuals with real life issues and empowers them to make meaningful changes. At the very outset Human Rights education policy and planning has to be looked at from the angle of promoting understanding and respect for all people, their values and ways of life despite different cultural traits and civilizations. Regard for inherent dignity and equity for all human beings is the basis for the entire approach. Human rights issue has been keenly debated ever since the beginning of institutionalized social and political state order. It has been seen undergoing an evolutionary perceptual change in the context of totality human kind.

Key words:economic development, Human Rights humanistic vision, UNESCO

Introduction

The International organisation UNESCO's mission, since its creation in 1945, had been to contribute to the building of peace, poverty eradication, lasting development and intercultural dialogue, with education as one of its principal activities to achieve this aim. The Organization is committed to a holistic and humanistic vision of quality education worldwide, the realization of everyone's right to education, and the belief that education plays a fundamental role in human, social and economic development. Gandhian thoughts on Education emphasise the relevance of Gandhian thinking in education and it is pointed out that it is not just confined only to basic or elementary education but to total development of humanity for which Gandhiji considered the proper development of every individual as a prerequisite and highlighted the significance of head, heart and hand for the growth of body, mind and soul. Human rights education is a lifelong process that builds knowledge and skills, as well as attitudes and behaviours, to

promote and uphold human rights. Higher education is all education taking place at the post-secondary level in universities or other establishments approved by the State authorities, including institutions for the training and certification of professionals such as teachers, social workers, medical and legal personnel. In this context, human rights education promotes a holistic, rights-based approach to education that includes both "human rights through education," ensuring that all the components and processes of education—including curricula, materials, methods and training—are conducive to the learning of human rights, and "human rights in education," ensuring that the human rights of all members of the education community are respected. Human rights education can be defined as education, training and information aimed at building a universal culture of human rights. Effective human rights education not only provides knowledge about human rights and the mechanisms that protect them, but also develops the skills needed to promote, defend and



apply human rights in daily life. Human rights education also fosters the attitudes and behavior needed to uphold human rights for all members of society. Human rights education activities should convey fundamental human rights principles, such as equality and non-discrimination, while affirming their interdependence, indivisibility and universality. At the same time, 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, for those who have the responsibility for respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of others, human rights education develops their capacity to do so. Both what is learned and the way in which it is learned should reflect human rights values, encourage participation and foster a learning environment free from want and fear. The Human Rights Education programme works with schools in India to make human rights a part of daily school life. The programme is rooted in the belief that if dignity, respect, inclusion and non-discrimination become an everyday occurrence, children start living a culture of human rights - a life where they can thrive and grow.

Human Rights and Higher Education

Human right is essentially the old idea of freedom and rationality of human kind getting affirmed and actualized. Human progress and prosperity remain how linked to the degree of reverence to human rights in different communities. Concern for human rights is an ancient as contours of

human culture. With the march of civilization, as the societies as progressed, constitutional obligations for their governance also emerged while initiating compatibility and coordination with animate and inanimate surroundings. Human rights gradually came to acquire new connotations and locations despite state ambiguities in their formulation and protection. Human rights are not merely a language of compassion, cooperation, consideration and communication in the human affairs. It is the grammar of a civilized society to protect human kind with its dignity, equity, existence and non-exploitative social justice. When incorporated in state system, human rights embrace within their ambit humanitarian impulses as could be seen in edicts of Ashoka, Christian order of Things, Concept of Social Relations as propounded by Confucius in China, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Gandhiji in India, while championing the cause of removal of untouchability and restoration of dignity to the socially deprived people. Thus journey of human rights is perennial and is linked to human kind. They are individual rights, collective rights, social and economic rights, political and religious rights, cultural and environmental rights, and rights to life of dignity. References to Laski for whom rights are not merely certain legal interests of the individual but the requirements for the development of his personality both physical and spiritual, Hobbes' concept of human existence in the state of nature, Locke's theory of social context, Rawl's principles of justice assigning rights and duties and Rousseau's and Kant's views offer significant insights into the understanding and conceptualization of



the implications of the ongoing debate on human rights.

Education develops critical faculty to endow a person to discover his location. In this process it has a unique actualization role. It enables the individual to reflect and face reality in a positive frame. Despite India having celebrated fifty years of her independence, perceptual fallacies in the task and role of higher education survive. Though most of us refer to education as a delivery system to realize our social and economic goals yet the kind of empowerment that education should have granted to realize worth and dignity of life has been missing. It may have led to certain amount of economic empowerment yet the creation of conditions to ensure the respect for human dignity has eluded the function of higher education. To this extent higher education has shown operational collapse. It is in this context that a fresh effort requires to be convened to sensitize the system for better realization and awareness about its role and responsibility.

Human Rights Education connects the individuals with real life issues and empowers them to make meaningful changes. At the very outset Human Rights education policy and planning has to be looked at from the angle of promoting understanding and respect for all people, their values and ways of life despite different cultural traits and civilizations. Regard for inherent dignity and equity for all human beings is the basis for the entire approach. Human rights issue has been keenly debated ever since the beginning of institutionalized social and political state order. It has been seen undergoing an evolutionary perceptual change in the context of

totality human kind. The founding fathers of our Constitution enumerated rights as fundamental rights and then the directive principles of state policy, which covered almost the entire range of universal declaration of human rights. The first set of rights enumerated in Articles 2 to 21 of the Declaration are incorporated under the Fundamental Rights – Articles 12 to 35 of the Constitution, and the second set of rights enunciated in Articles 22 to 28 of the Declaration are incorporated under Directive Principles – Articles 36 to 51 of the Constitution. This led to the realization that human rights have a significant role to play in the national context.

While exciting changes have taken place in our social and economic development with growth of our higher education system notwithstanding, our people have generally remained culturally, socially and educationally marginalised in the context of observance of human rights. It is, therefore imperative that they be sensitized to seek their fair share of existence with dignity and liberty in social progress. This calls for creative contributory action on the part of institutions of higher learning to catalyze faith in fundamental human rights. Democracy and protection of these rights constitute the cornerstone of any developing society. Our educational priorities have now to accommodate our urge to change and reflect to create spaces for the socially marginalised people.

Every human being has a right to live with dignity. All social, economic and political efforts are to be geared to promote and protect the dignity and survival of human kind. For this equity,



social justice, freedom from cruelty and awareness about human rights alone would be needed to result in the empowerment of those that are affected and exploited. Higher education with its unprecedented and impressive development particularly through the modern information and technology revolution has to respond to this challenge in order to play its key role and sensitize society with its focus on its total accessibility against all unlawful force either by the state or individuals or groups.

Human Rights education in our country, both in its content and spread, has shown signs of complacency, political, academic and otherwise, coupled with resource constraints. Institutions of higher education have not been able to offer viable courses in Human Rights because job opportunities or self-employment possibilities have not been available to the students. Human rights education has not even become an integral part of our law courses.

National Human Rights Commission set up through parliamentary legislation in 1993 is a statutory institution. Other State Human Rights Commissions have also been set up so far. Their interventionist role through educational institutions could be invoked to spread human rights education across the length and breadth of the country.

It is time higher education should have a basic component of human rights to arrest social exploitation and aberrations that mar our society. Higher education institutions must reflect our concern for development and social integration besides preservation of democracy and peace. Human rights education as a full-fledged academic discipline should take

into account historical perspective, cultural and philosophical background, national and international theories, practices and covenants, fundamental rights and duties with special reference to gender justice, rights of child, custodial exploitation and other kinds of exploitation of the weaker sections of the society. In fact, human rights education has to be used as an important strategy of empowerment effort for educating the disadvantaged sections of the society in their struggle for realization of their human rights. Our educational priorities must reflect the needs of the changing world. For this development of courses on human rights has to be a continuous exercise to be matured workshops, for better collaborative thinking and social action through improvement and consensus building. The courses must reflect the national concern and regional emphasis. They must focus on parallel problems and raw realities of life with constitutional imperatives for which cross section of interdisciplinary teachers may be invited as in the case of curriculum development councils to restructure course. Human rights should be critiques for better understanding, learning and applicability through executive and legislature. Teaching of human rights courses has to be a collaborative excise involving informal teachers also as its constituents. Thus human rights education has to be an input to consolidate democracy which is not a mere form of government, it is a set of values and a way of life that ensures respect for identity, choices, capacities and abilities of every human member of the society



Suggestions

With the Indian experience, Human rights should be publicized through education system as an integral part to enlarge the scope of their awareness and implementation through an interface with law and society. Basic issues and infirmities should be underlined in international documents, local conditions, communities, curriculum, gender violence, exploitation etc. The specificities in the role of law enforcing agencies such as police, armed forces, investigative agencies and crime syndicates are identified for better information and visibility. Teachers of human rights should have media awareness and exposure, NGO exposure, knowledge of case studies, legal background and a continuous flow of information on allied subjects. It is equally important to stress that UGC is a major national partner in the promotion of human rights culture as it considers it to be one of the major objectives of higher education. Promoting Human Rights courses in colleges and universities with financial support. Such exercises have not merely been intellectual but have built linkages between what happens in society and what could be the action oriented ways to sensitize people to change their stereotyped images. In fact they help us situate the human rights issues in the wider context of socio-economic contradictions. Thus human rights education is a complex but vibrant concern for an age in which higher education institutions have to contribute significantly in order to change the complexion of our society and rid it of its aberrations that stall its development. Higher educational policies—legislation, plans of action, curricula, training

policies and so on—should explicitly promote human rights education and infuse human rights throughout the higher education system. Policies are to be developed in a participatory manner in cooperation with all stakeholders and fulfil a country's international obligations to provide and promote the right to quality education. To be effective, policies need a consistent implementation strategy, including the allocation of adequate resources and the setting-up of coordination mechanisms to ensure coherence, monitoring and accountability. Academic freedom informs the environment of higher education institutions, where human rights education promotes the daily practice of human rights by fostering mutual understanding, respect and responsibility. Explicit and shared policy statements protect the human rights of all actors. Teaching personnel have a mandate to pursue human rights education, and students can express their views freely, participate in academic life and have extensive opportunities for interacting with the wider community. Higher education institutions develop new knowledge and advance critical reflection in the area of human rights, which in turn inform policies and practices in human rights and in human rights education. Through an assessment of existing experiences and comparative studies, research can support the identification and dissemination of good practices as well as the development of innovative methodologies and tools based on those practices; research can also guide lesson-learning and evaluation exercises. For higher education institutions to serve as a model of human rights learning and practice, all teaching personnel and other staff need to be able to both transmit and model human



rights values. Education and professional development must foster educators' knowledge about, commitment to and motivation for human rights. Furthermore, as rights-holders themselves, teaching personnel need to work and learn in a context of respect for their dignity and rights. Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of gender, nationality, place of residency, sex, ethnicity, religion, color or and other categorization. Thus, human rights are non-discriminatory, meaning that all human beings are entitled to them and cannot be excluded from them. Of course it is a stark reality that while all human beings are entitled to human rights, not all human beings experience them equally throughout the world. Many governments and individuals ignore human rights and grossly exploit other human beings.

6. World program on Human Rights Education-Plan of Action,Office of the High Commissioner,United Nation Human Rights,UNESCO,New York and Geneva,2012.

References.

1. Burman, B.K.Roy, Human Rights in Perspective: Paper in Study Week on Human Rights and Human Rights Education (18-22 August, 1998) IIAS, Shimla.
2. Hargopal, G.Human Rights Education Transformative Perspective (unpublished paper).
3. IOS Bulletin, Human Rights Today, Vol I No.1 July –September, 1998 &Vol.I No.2 December, 1998.
4. National Human Rights Commission, Annual Reports-Different Issue
5. UGC IXth Plan Approach to Promotion of Human Rights Education (HRE) in Universities and Colleges, UGC (1998) New Delhi.