

# Human Rights Education Ways and Means

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**Abstracts:** This paper describes the importance of human rights education as proclaimed by UN (1994) and also the strategies for developing human rights education by UN General assembly 2005. In proclaiming the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), in December 1994, the General Assembly defined human rights education as “a life-long process by which people at all levels of development and in all strata of society learn respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies.” The Assembly called upon Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, professional associations and all other sectors of civil society to concentrate their efforts, during the ten-year period 1995-2004, on promoting a universal culture of human rights through human rights education, training and public information. This paper also focuses on different strategies for human rights education as practices or developed in different parts of the world.

As in the case of any other education, human rights education can also be grouped in to three categories – formal, non- formal and informal. Parents have a role for imparting human rights education from early child hood itself. The role of mass media, NGO, Informational technologies, other organizations, commissions & local bodies are explained under the heading non formal. The role of formal educational bodies like schools, universities and other educational institutions are explained under the heading ‘formal’. Human rights education programs should address:- particular vulnerable groups, including women, children, indigenous peoples, minorities, refugees and displaced persons, the elderly, workers, peasants, persons in extreme poverty, disabled persons and persons with HIV/AIDS;- particular professional groups, including security, military, police and prison personnel, judges and lawyers, public officials and decision-makers, officials involved in development cooperation, media personnel, health professionals and social workers;- the formal education sector, including early childhood, primary and secondary schools, higher education, teacher training; and non-formal learning, including general public information, education within trade-unions and women’s and youth organizations, and education in difficult situations such as armed conflicts and internal tension.

There is a strong international movement for human rights education. According to leading educators, teaching and learning about human rights in age-appropriate ways is feasible and desirable from kindergarten through grade twelve and beyond. Schools in most parts of the world have incorporated human rights education into the curriculum. The paper also reviewed the developing human rights education / training programs, the researches going on world around and opinion papers presented on various seminars regarding the strategies for human rights education. The paper concluded with a note on the importance of developing new learning materials, text books and media for the proper human rights education.

**Key terms:** Human Rights Education, Strategies, Methods

## **Introduction**

In proclaiming the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), in December 1994, the General Assembly defined human rights education as “a life-long process by which people at all levels of development and in all strata of society learn respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies.” The Assembly called upon Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, professional associations and all other sectors of civil society to concentrate their efforts, during the ten-year period 1995-2004, on promoting a universal culture of human rights through human rights education, training and public information.

Dr. Dong-Hoon Kim, Director of HURIGHTS OSAKA (1999) said that there are many countries which are not interested in implementation of human rights education programs. Human rights education programs, if any in such countries, are usually provided by NGOs. Thus, it is necessary in the region to build an effective network among these NGOs

Dr. Clarence Dias said in a paper entitled "Back to the Future" (1999) some important aspects while developing human rights education in Asia-Pacific region. These include: to help put human rights awareness in action; to develop human rights

education strategies in order to bring about social changes; and to make human rights education a life-time education.

**UN – World Programme for Human Rights (Revised draft plan of action for the first phase - 2005-06)**

Human rights education can be defined as education, training and information aiming at building a universal culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and moulding of attitudes directed to:

- (a) The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- (b) The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity;
- (c) The promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups;
- (d) The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free and democratic society governed by the rule of law;
- (e) The building and maintenance of peace;
- (f) The promotion of people-centred sustainable development and social justice.

**Human rights education encompasses:**

- (a) Knowledge and skills — learning about human rights and mechanisms for their protection, as well as acquiring skills to apply them in daily life;
- (b) Values, attitudes and behaviour — developing values and reinforcing attitudes and behaviour which uphold human rights;
- (c) Action — taking action to defend and promote human rights.

The objectives of the World Programme for Human Rights Education and the principles for human rights education activities are detailed in this draft plan that can be utilized by educational experts and policy makers for the effective implementation of Human Rights Education.

In accordance with resolution 2004/71 of the Commission on Human Rights, the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education will focus on the primary and secondary school systems. The detailed procedures suitable for this programme were given in the draft plan. It includes:

(a) Policies — developing in a participatory way and adopting coherent educational policies, legislation and strategies that are human rights-based, including curriculum improvement and training policies for teachers and other educational personnel;

(b) Policy implementation — planning the implementation of the abovementioned educational policies by taking appropriate organizational measures and by facilitating the involvement of all stakeholders;

(c) Learning environment — the school environment itself respects and promotes human rights and fundamental freedoms. It provides the opportunity for all school actors (students, teachers, staff and administrators and parents) to practice human rights through real-life activities. It enables children to express their views freely and to participate in school life

(d) Teaching and learning — all teaching and learning processes and tools are rights-based (for instance, the content and objectives of the curriculum, participatory and democratic practices and methodologies, appropriate materials including the review and revision of existing textbooks, etc.);

(e) Education and professional development of teachers and other personnel — providing the teaching profession and school leadership, through pre- and in-service training, with the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies to facilitate the learning and practice of human rights in schools, as well as with appropriate working conditions and status.

The components of human rights education in the primary and secondary school system is given in the appendix of the revised draft plan of action.

The plan also focuses on Implementation strategies at national level , its stages, what are the steps to be followed, which includes specific actions and its output. The coordination of the implementation strategies at international level and the evaluation criteria that can be effectively used for the evaluation of the first phase (2005-07) of the world programme are also detailed in the plan.

In harmony with the plan of action several developments are going on regarding the Human Rights Education on the different parts of the world. All such works focus on the urgent need to strengthen existing capacities for human rights education, as well as to develop new capacities, at regional, national and local levels.

During the Decade, there must be coordinated efforts to enhance the capacity of human rights education programs for:

- Provision of human rights education to people in difficult situations;
- Contribution to sustainable capacity-building through the further education of human rights educators;
- Development of strategies for human rights education which address the diverse conditions of learners and build on local concepts and cultural sensitivities;
- Provision of public access to primary human rights documentation in relevant forms and languages;
- Provision of information about international human rights supervisory procedures, including information about opportunities for NGOs and individuals to participate in those procedures.

Thus the Human rights education programs should address:

- particular vulnerable groups, including women, children, indigenous peoples, minorities, refugees and displaced persons, the elderly, workers, peasants, persons in extreme poverty, disabled persons and persons with HIV/AIDS;
- particular professional groups, including security, military, police and prison personnel, judges and lawyers, public officials and decision-makers, officials involved in development cooperation, media personnel, health professionals and social workers;
- the formal education sector, including early childhood, primary and secondary schools, higher education, teacher training; and
- non-formal learning, including general public information, education within trade-unions and women's and youth organizations, and education in difficult situations such as armed conflicts and internal tension.

The following are some ideas and suggestions for the promotion of human rights and human rights education, framed in the International Conference on Human Rights Education in the Asia-Pacific Region(1999);

- To ask celebrities to talk about the Decade publicly.
- To ask the mass-media to pick up more topics relating human rights issues including discrimination. (Sometimes, they are too careful to do so)

- Not only a national plan of actions, but also a personal plan of actions is important. Such small but substantial efforts of individuals will eventually lead to a great achievement.

- Make networking among NGOs, governmental agencies and UN agencies for this;

- \*UN agencies should make information about human rights education more easily available to NGOs, and NGOs in the region should send more voices information about their activities to UN agencies and NGOs

- \* Both governmental agencies and NGOs are required to make data-bases for their human rights education information.

- \* For the realization of human rights in the region, we have to learn from the history including aggression, colonization, armed conflicts and others, so that we can really appreciate human rights.

- \* It can be a good idea to set up an ‘Asia-Pacific human rights education fund’ with contributions from companies, local governments and individuals

### **Formal Education**

The human right educators should

- incorporate human rights values and awareness as a key element in education in primary and secondary schools;

- revise school curricula to integrate human rights education into the curriculum at all levels of formal education, produce human rights training and educational materials for students and teachers, and develop in-service teacher training courses;

- ensure that human rights is a subject of teaching in universities, including in schools of law, economics, medicine, politics and social work.

According to Pat (2000) It is important to develop a community college humanities course titled human rights and wrongs : the history , law , Art and literature of human rights movement . the author argues that a special focus inter disciplinary course provides a broader base for exploring and understanding most of the pressing issues of our time .He used universal declaration of human rights by UN as a textual basis for the class , which explores human rights issues in 6 units. The course examines how and why the range of human kind’s capacity for good and evil from their own perspective.

Daya Singh (1997) proposed a pro active conceptual and Practical frame work for educators researchers and mental health practitioners interested in human right issues and global peace. This model is proposed to enhance global peace through human right education. Paper describes the role of human dignity to enhance the human rights and the strategies for the development of human dignity.

Virgina *et al.* (1992) developed a Curriculum for Teaching Human Rights to Children Ages 3-12. The Ten Principles from The Declaration of the Rights of the Child, proclaimed by the United Nations in 1959, provide the nucleus for the manual. The manual contains curricular activities and booklists to help teachers further children's understanding of their rights.

Similarly California State Department of Education develops a Model Curriculum for Human Rights and Genocide (1987). This document contains resources and guidelines to help teachers and curriculum developers integrate the teaching of human rights into their courses. Part 1 of this document contains a model that can be used by developers of curricula. This section also provides the philosophical basis for including studies on human rights and genocide in the curriculum; the location in the History-Social Science Framework where these learning can be integrated; and questions that will engage students in critical thinking on this topic. Part 2 contains curriculum resources to help school districts develop their history-social science curriculum.

There are several sources of information regarding the Human rights education curriculum development. Two important sources of information for human rights education are (1) Human Rights Watch; 485 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10017-6104; T: (212) 972-8400; F: (212) 972-0905; E: <hrwnyc@hrw.org> and (2) Freedom House; 120 Wall Street, New York, NY 10005; T: (212) 514-8040; F: (212) 514-8045. Both organizations produce annual reports on the status of freedom and human rights throughout the world. Two university-based centers that produce first-rate educational materials on human rights are (1) Center for Teaching International Relations of the Graduate School of International Studies at the University of Denver; Denver, CO 80208; T: (303) 871-3106; F: (303) 871-2456; E: <mmontgom@du.edu>; and (2) Center for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University; 1108 International Affairs Building, MC: 3365, New York, NY 10027; T: (212) 854-2479; F: (212) 316-4578; E: <eshr@columbia.edu>. The United Nations, of course, is a key source of information and curricular materials on human rights.

The United Nations World Wide Web site features "CyberSchoolBus," a collection of K-12 curricular materials and other resources for teaching and learning about human rights and related topics, at <http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/>>. For other United Nations educational resources, it is better to contact the United Nations Office of Communications and Public Information, New York, NY 10017; and contact UNESCO's Education Information Service, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France; <<http://www.education.unesco.org/>>. (ERIC Custom Transformations Team 1998)

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has been focusing its contribution to the Decade on the following areas: Development of training material for specific target groups (including the police, prison officials, primary and secondary school teachers, judges and lawyers, national and local NGOs, journalists, human rights monitors and parliamentarians; in addition, a Human Rights Trainers Guide, defining OHCHR's methodological approach to human rights training for professional groups, is being finalized). Development of the OHCHR website (address: [www.unhchr.ch](http://www.unhchr.ch)), which has become an important and widely used tool for the quick dissemination of comprehensive human rights information. Databases are being integrated into this website, enhancing its usefulness (e.g. the existing Treaty Bodies Database, as well as Human Rights News Database and Human Rights Documents Database to be launched in 1998) and links have been made with other relevant UN websites; Global dissemination of the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights), also within the framework of the UDHR 50<sup>th</sup> commemoration.

In this line the Asian Regional Resource Centre for Human Rights Education (ARRC) (1998) conducted Training of Trainers (TOT) on a sub regional basis and a special Training Course for teachers in Human Rights Education Curriculum Building in Nepal . Campodia, Thailand etc.

### **Informal Education**

The aspects of Human Rights Education can be rightly started from the early child hood itself. Parents should have a prime role in imparting Human Rights Education in this age. For this they should be adequately awared and trained by the Govt. Organisation, NGOs and mass media about the importance and strategies of early child hood Human Rights Education

### **Mass Media**

A media sensitive to human rights concerns can contribute significantly to education about human rights, including amongst persons at all levels of literacy and

living in rural or remote areas. Within the Asia-Pacific region, the media have tended to trivialize and sensationalize human rights issues. There is a particular need to strengthen the capacity and role of the mass media in the coverage of human rights issues and furtherance of human rights education.

### **New HRE Materials**

The book entitled “Un Guide pour l’ Education aux Droits de l’Enfan”t published by AI Senegal (1998) is intended as a pedagogical tool for educators and group facilitators throughout Senegal. It explains why it is important to educate about children’s rights, and discusses techniques for group animation including guidelines for organizing role-play.

Such books on Human Rights Education in regional languages should be prepared by experts of the field to make available for the formal and non-formal education.

### **Information Technologies**

The increased use of wire-less data transmission is fashioning information as a powerful weapon in struggles against authoritarian governments and oligopolies. There must be increased efforts to ensure equitable access by the global human rights community to the benefits of this technology.

There is no question that computerized communication is shaping the worldwide human rights movement. But there are differing views of this new technology. It is better to approach this work from different angles: by improving protection of human rights defenders; by building better networks within the human rights and NGO world; and of course through a growing program of human rights education and awareness. In all these areas information technology is important.

The Internet is excellent for raising awareness about human rights among the general public as it facilitates a widespread distribution of information. One idea currently being discussed is to add pages devoted to human rights education to the IS website (European Commission website on the information society- IS). Materials produced by the IS HRE team that could be included are the First Steps manual, the HRE bibliographies produced each year, the recently completed 12-Point Guide for Good Practice in the Training and Education for Human Rights of Government Officials, as well as selected articles from this newsletter. All, human rights educators should also take advantage of computer technology to improve communication,

exchange of information and experience. Another option would be to start an e-mail conversation, or a bulletin board along the lines of the one set up for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights campaign, to which sections and individual HRE coordinators could subscribe. For human rights educators, there is a growing pool of resources available via the Internet which can be drawn from when designing and developing human rights education programs and curricula .( Information technology and human rights , 1998 )

### **NGOs**

The NGO community is one of the strongest agency to impart human rights education in the Asia-Pacific region to mobilize to:

- safeguard the integrity of all human rights education activities;
- undertake evaluation of the impact of human rights education activities;
- forge solidarity alliances to address the human rights education needs in particularly different country situations;
- enhance the exchange of experiences, knowledge and skills in the area of human rights education; and
- prevent monopolization of human rights education activities by national governments and human rights commissions.

Several such organizations are there to impart human rights education. The Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (2003) is responsible for helping to maintain and grow K-12 school partnerships, supervising volunteers in developing human rights education materials, and coordinating trainings, workshops, and other events for educators, students, business professionals, and the general community .Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights is the largest Midwest-based, volunteer-driven non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of internationally recognized human rights. Minnesota Advocates documents human rights abuses, provides direct legal representation, and educates on human rights issues, particularly pertaining to to women, children, and immigrants and refugees.

Similarly With aim of developing human right education in Europe the Nordic Youth Committee and the Council of Europe (2004) conduct training programs with the following aims and objectives

- To develop the competence of trainers in working with human rights education with young people at local, regional and national level

- To identify and address the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes for trainers working with human rights education with young people;
- To develop the trainers' knowledge and competence in concepts of human rights education with young people;
- To come up with ideas and prepare plans for human rights education activities for young people;
- To contribute to the development of a network of trainers on human rights education

### **National governments**

National governments have an obligation to promote human rights education in all its aspects. The governments should ensure non-discriminatory NGO participation in the planning and implementation of human rights education activities. It is necessary to respect fully the autonomy and integrity of human rights education activities in the non-governmental sector. Officials in all areas of government should receive human rights education.

According Ewegeniya and Roman (2004) the state governments should consider human rights education as training, upbringing, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skills and the moulding of attitudes.

In their proposed convention the state parties (Article 5) undertake to promote and facilitate human rights education, based on holistic approach, at all levels of education and to ensure that all those responsible for training lawyers, law enforcement officers, the personnel of the armed forces and public officials as well as staff of educational and public health systems, include appropriate elements of human rights teaching in their training programme. Each State Party to the present Convention undertakes to introduce at its territory an obligatory expert examination of curricula, programmes, manuals and other educational materials for all disciplines in the view of their conformity with observance and implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to establish a permanent body responsible for to making such examination. The States Parties recognize an importance of informal human rights education and thereupon undertake to assist efforts of individuals, groups and organizations on implementation and development of such education.

## National Human Rights Commissions

In all their human rights education work, national human rights commissions should facilitate non-discriminatory NGO participation. At the same time, human rights education activities of national human rights commissions must not preempt activities in the non-governmental sector. The national human rights commissions should develop, as a priority, cooperative human rights education programs with NGOs. (Statement of Workshop on Asia-Pacific Human Rights Education, 1996)

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