

EDUCATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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INTRODUCTION

Attempts to identify various aspects of human rights took a concrete shape in 1948, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was made on 10 December 1948. The Declaration was followed by various other efforts to reinforce the above effort. A few important ones are.

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Guide for Teachers, UNESCO, 1951
2. Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child 1959
3. UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education 1960
4. UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education adopted on 14 December 1960 entered into force on 22 May 1962.
5. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted on 16 December 1966 entered into force on 23 March 1976.
6. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination adopted on 21 December 1965 entered into force on 4 January 1969.
7. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted on 16 December 1966, entered into force on 3 January 1976.
8. International Conference on Human Rights, Teheran, 1968
9. International Congress on the Teaching of Human Rights, Vienna, 1978.
10. International Congress on Human Rights Teaching, Information and Documentation Malta, 1987.
11. Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989.
12. World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 1993.

The First International Conference on Human Rights, held at Teheran Iran on 22 April-13 May 1968, urged the nations to revamp their education system to develop a spirit of respect for human rights in the students. The First Congress on Human Rights, organised by the UNESCO in 1978 pointed out necessity for stress to be given on the topics such as UN Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other Covenants and Instruments related to Human Rights. The U. N. Convention on the Rights of Child 1989 considered a child as a human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. The Convention covered varieties of rights- civil, political, economic, social, and cultural.

National Human Rights Commissions

There have been national human rights commissions. These Commissions are independent bodies and even take to task, the concerned national governments, for violation of human rights, if any.

A FEW IMPORTANT STRATEGIES

A few important strategies are as follows:

Development of the Spirit of Tolerance

Tolerance has been defined by Symonides and Voldin (1995) as the recognition and appreciation of others, the ability to live together and to listen to others, to respect as formulated by the UNESCO declaration on Race and Racial Prejudices of 1978, the right of all individuals and groups to be different. (P.38). The importance of development of the spirit of tolerance among individuals has been highlighted by the UN in declaring 1995 as the Year of Tolerance. Envy, hostility, jealousy, etc. belong to the lower vital nature. Vital education should

enable the human beings control their senses. Yoga helps in purification of nerve channel Nadi Sudhi. Indian educators like Swami Dayananda, Sri Aurobindo etc. have given stress on the control of senses. During these days one finds communal and religious conflicts even to the extent of murdering people. Religious fanaticism has been the most serious threat to communal harmony. Sri Aurobindo many years ago had urged the people to Shun lowness and narrowness in religious thought and experience. He asked them to be wider than the widest horizons, loftier than the highest Kanchanajungha and profounder the deepest oceans. Now a days religious leader rarely gives such advises. Hence, education has to play the role of spiritualising the society. Attempts have been made in different parts of the world to develop the spirit of tolerance in the students. Raisa (1995) mentioned about one project that was based on the development of the cultural identity of the individual, a multi-cultural outlook and international understanding.

Development of Values

There is high correlation between human rights education and value education. Textbooks, manuals, teachers' guides, and other types of instructional aids used for value education also promote human rights. Clive Beck referred to human wellbeing in terms of basic values such as survival, health, happiness, friendship, helping others, insight, awareness, fulfilment, freedom, and a sense of fair meaning of life. All these are part of human rights.

Development of Democratic Ideals

Human rights are intimately connected with democratic ideals. The Declaration arrived at the International Congress on Education for Human Rights held at Vienna on 14-25 June 1993 stated that

“Democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Democracy is based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural; systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives.”

“The recognition of the interdependence and mutually reinforcing nature of democracy, development and human rights, human rights education under the Decade shall seek to further effective democratic participation in the political, economic, social and cultural sphere and shall be utilised as a means of promoting economic and social progress and people centered sustainable development.”

PROVISIONS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIAN CONSTITUTION

Following provisions exist in Indian Constitution that provides safeguard for human rights:

*Equality before Law -Article 14

*Non-discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth- Article 15

*Equality of opportunity- Article 16

*Freedom of speech, expression, assembly, association, movement, residence, acquisition, and disposition of property, practising of any profession, carrying out any occupation, trade, or business – Article 19

- * Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour- Article 23.
- * Prohibition of labour in case of children below 14 years- Article 24.
- *Freedom of religion- Article 25
- * No provision for religious instruction in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State fund- Article 28
- *Conservation of language, script, and culture- Article 29(l)
- * Right of minorities to administer educational institutions- Article 30
- *State guarantee of a social order-Article 38(l) of Directive Principles of State Policy
- *Adequate means of livelihood, equal pay for equal work for both men and women, non abuse of health of the worker, opportunity to children to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity- Article 39 of Directive Principles
- *Right to work to education and to public assistance in specific cases- Article 41 of Directive Principles
- *Provision for free and compulsory education of children up to 14 years of age – Article 45 of Directive Principles.
- *Ensuring education and economic development of S. C., S. T., and other weaker sections of society - Article 46 of Directive Principles

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Articles 28 and 29 of the U.N. Convention deals with the rights of the child. These are as follows:

Article 28:

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving the right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall in particular:

- a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all.
- b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need.
- c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means.
- d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children.
- e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates.

2.States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and conformity with the present Convention.

3.States parties shall promote and encourage international co-operation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy

throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

Article 29:

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- a) The development of the child's personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.
- b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of The United Nations.
- c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language, and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilisations different from his/her own.
- d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all people, ethnic, national, and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.
- e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

2. No part of the present article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principles set forth in paragraph of the present article and to the requirements of the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.

EDUCATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom." In order to strengthen efforts for ensuring implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights more effectively, The United Nations in its resolution No.49/184 of 23 December 1994 has declared the decade 1995-2004 as the UN Decade for Human Rights Education. The objectives of this decade are:

1. The assessment of needs and the formation of effective strategies for the furtherance of human rights education at all school levels, in vocational training and formal as well as non-formal learning.

2. The building and strengthening of programmes and capacities for human rights education at the international, regional, and national and local levels.

3. The global dissemination of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the maximum possible number of languages and in other forms appropriate for various levels of literacy and for the disabled.

The education for human rights is defined as training, 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.

The Human Rights Education has five directions, which are:

1. The strengthening of respect for human personality and the sense of its dignity.
2. The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity
3. The promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality, and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples, racial, national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups
4. The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society.

5.The furtherance of the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

ROLE OF THE HOME

The home plays most important role in human rights education. The mother is the first teacher of the child. Her attitude towards human rights plays vital role in building desirable attitudes towards human rights in children. Other members of the family also play vital role. The way the family brings up the child shapes the attitude of the child. Generally, many parents punish the child. This goes against the Rights of the Child. The society has to be enlightened about such rights of the child. In ancient times, corporal punishment was rampant. Giving slap is a common scene. Modern child psychology forbids any kind of punishment. If punishment is to be taken out, the society has to be more patient in dealing with children. Generally, it is seen that the mothers who are weak in body get easily irritated. The couple having no means of sustenance, if has more children also give various types of punishment. The present-day society is consumer-oriented society. It has motivated society for non-essential wants which have made families more starved and of material possessions and resulting unhappiness. The essence of happiness needs to be cultured. The human rights violation is more seen in case of illiterate and poor families. Hence, adult education is a must.

ON GOING ACTIVITIES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION:

A large number of activities are going on in the education system to provide education for human rights. Some of these are as follows:

Associated Schools Project

The UNESCO launched Associated Schools Project in 1953. It is now being implemented in 2114 countries and in 2,800 schools.

Awards

UNESCO has instituted awards for promoting human rights education. In 1994, the UNESCO prize for the teaching of human rights was awarded to the Philippines Commission for Human Rights.

International Baccalaureate Diploma

International Baccalaureate is an evaluation programme for school leavers. It is administered by the International Baccalaureate Organisation, a Switzerland based non-profit, nongovernmental organisation holding consultative status with UNESCO, Council of Europe, and ECOSOC(UN). It has a specified course of study. Students of different countries can appear at this examination. The certificate so obtained is treated at par with the corresponding examination certificate of the concerned countries. It has built in flexibility to accommodate certain variations from country to country.

UNESCO Chair for Human Rights Education

UNESCO has instituted Chairs for human rights education. The UNESCO Chair at Comenius University at Bratislava had been formally established on October 26, 1992. The University provides a comprehensive two-semester course on theory and history of human rights. The title of the course is "The Origin and Significance of Human Rights." It is offered to students of all faculties. There are also a few Semester long courses.

Intercultural Education Programmes

UNESCO and the Council of Europe have been encouraging intercultural education. There are many publications for training of teachers.

Development of Awareness among Teachers and Teacher Educators

Various nations have been taking steps for developing awareness of schoolteachers and teacher educators. In India, the National Council for Teacher Education has organised a number of programmes for teacher educators. Self-learning print materials have been developed. Video programme has also been developed.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION OUTSIDE FORMAL SYSTEM

Human rights education is being provided to general public through mass media such as television magazines and newspapers. Reports on violation of human rights are brought to the notice of the human rights commissions.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN FORMAL INSTITUTIONS

Human rights education is interdisciplinary in nature. It involves the subject areas of political science, civics, history, philosophy, science, sociology, commerce, geography and last but not least the Education subject. Some of the topics may be : Education for tolerance, Personal responsibility, Child as a teacher, Learning of a teacher from a student, Openness in education, Respect for the personality of the student, Education based on dialogue between teachers and students, Mutual out of school co-operation between the teachers and the students, Democracy and mutual understanding, Procedures for the protection of human rights, Violation of human rights and democratic freedom, Terrorism, Organised crime, Drug trafficking, Casteism, Communalism, Religious fanaticism, Religious tolerance, Spirituality, Non-violence, Economic right, Civil right, Cultural right, Linguistic rights, Social right, Critical thinking, Scientific temper, Intellectual honesty, Justice and empathy, Legal awareness, Equality of educational opportunity, Equality of sexes, Feminist theory and practice, Political economy and humanism, Nationalism and minority rights, Local government and civic rights, Constitutionalism and legitimacy, History and philosophy of human rights, Human rights and human responsibilities, World citizenship and Auroville, The ethics and morality, Variety of religions and their common challenge, Role of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human rights in the national and world history, National health care and human rights, Internationalism vs. nationalism, International understanding, Environmental pollution, Population explosion, Violation within school and families, etc.

Human rights education is very much relevant today when the nation finds communal clashes in Bihar and religious clashes in Gujarat, Orissa, etc. Human rights education in brief should focus attitude of tolerance, respect and solidarity and should develop individual awareness about the ways and means by which human rights can be translated into social and political reality.

Strategies of the Central Government

The Annual Report 2002-03 of the MHRD, Departments of Education state the following strategies:

Human Rights Education in Schools, Colleges and Universities.

Generating awareness and reach through media advocacy to the deprived and special target group of children that a Right to Basic Minimum Education is their human right

Introduction of human rights issues in the school curricula at primary as well as at secondary level and preparation of appropriate course material for this purpose in a way to make it part of the students' all-round development

Devising a plan of action for training the teachers on human rights/values in collaboration with State Education Departments/SCERTs/NCTE.

Introducing courses on human rights at the undergraduate and post-graduate level,

including either a compulsory/special paper at the under-graduate level
Introduction of short-term/long-term courses on human rights through the distance education programmes.

Encourage research on human rights by liberally instituting scholarships and internships on issues pertaining to human rights.

To bridge the gap in the availability of research material on human rights, a National Resource Centre for documentation, training research and education in human rights is to be set up in IGNOU

Gyan Darshan and Gyan Vani, the dedicated video/audio channels for education under Prasar Bharati, AIR, could be put to effective use for spreading human rights education

Encouragement to be given to Colleges and universities to hold seminars/workshops/debates on issues of human rights. unions. Project-based learning should be encouraged. Assignments and field activities like data collection, event organisation, camp activities, social service events during distress situation etc. may be integrated into course designing and performance evaluation

Publication of a booklet containing the basic instruments of human rights for public distribution

More stress to be given on preparation of course material in multimedia forms like videos, CDs and films for mass propagation and mass education.

Dissemination of information on human rights to be carried out through Websites.

WHAT CAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS DO?

The universities and colleges play vital role in developing awareness of people on human rights and developing appropriate attitude to implement human right concepts.

Some of the products of the universities and colleges join the teaching profession. Hence their education for human rights shall be effectively utilised in the school system. This education shall be also of much help to them in performing their citizenship roles. Srinivasa Rao and Jahwari (1999) reported about a Diploma Course in Human Rights and Social Development at S. V. University, Tirupati. There are also concepts of human rights as integral part of the law courses. Various aspects of human rights education at the higher education stage may be as follows:

1. Survey of awareness about human rights among college and university students, college and university teachers, parents, schoolteachers, school students, educational administrators, SC population, ST population, people remaining below poverty line, child labourers and their parents, politicians, panchayat raj representatives, etc.
2. Organising exhibitions on the different aspects of constitutional provision and their violation.
3. Carrying out evaluation of textbooks in the light of human rights violation.
4. Evaluating classroom activities of the teachers in the light of the rights of the child.
5. Studying newspaper reports on violation of human rights.
6. Studying the problems concerning non-enrolment of children in schools and developing plan of action to solve this problem.
7. Evaluating the state and national programmes of human rights education.
8. Organising activities such as one act plays, street plays, etc. portraying various aspects of human rights
9. Organising public meetings in the locality to develop awareness of public on human rights.
10. Studying different religious practices and activities of godmen that violate human rights.
11. Studying the problems of girl students in co-educational institutions.
12. Studying the problems of women teachers in co-educational schools and colleges.

13. Studying the provision for equal opportunity in education.
14. Studying the conditions of work at home and at other work sites.
15. Studying the superstitions existing in the locality
16. Providing courses on human rights education.
17. Studying the NFE programme with reference to the rights of the child to get basic education.
18. Studying the extent of punishment given in schools that dissuade a child to attend schools.

CONCLUSION

The higher education institution has to revamp its system for ensuring development of awareness of its students' community on different aspects of the issue of human rights. It has to revise its courses of study to accommodate this issue. The universities need to change their strategies to give more power to the students to decide the course structure, evaluation strategy, teaching methodology, duration of study, etc. The courses have to be flexible to cater to the interests of varieties of students. The NPE 1986 had pointed out necessity of de-linking degrees from jobs. Serious efforts need to be made on this issue.

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