

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION: A CALL FOR INCLUSION IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The concept of human rights has evolved over the years and now got hold of a rationality of human kind getting accepted and actualized. They are a kind of grammar which one needs to recognize to invest human kind with dignity, equity, existence and non-exploitative social justice. Thereby human rights education has gained importance in the current context. Sabine Horenberg (2002) argues that human rights education should become an integral part of general education Human rights education is important for everyone and it is the safest, surest and cheapest way to a knowledgeable and enlightened society through the medium of teachers. This leads to a major task of teacher education. The paper is exploring the inclusion of human rights education in teacher educational program.

Education must be utilized in a constructive manner. Education is supposed to transmit to the pupil what mankind has learned about it and about nature and everything of importance it has created or invented. The impact of education is till the eternity. It pervades in every aspect of life. It helps in the formation of the attitudes, skills, and values among others for better living. Education makes you aware about the rights, duties and responsibilities. The importance of rights or specifically human rights is incontestable. Rights are such kind of statutes which are helpful in the development of personality of human beings. Human rights come from a universal set of ethical principles, which seek to ensure the equal worth of each individual life and which are applicable to all people at all times and in all places. They are the natural rights of a human being which means the fundamental right

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to guarantee dignity as a person.

So education needs to carry this responsibility of making everybody aware about human rights, whether through formal education or informal education. The following words exhibit the same idea-

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

-Article 26(2), Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Education about human rights is an empowering process. It has to do with development of attitudes and values that uphold human rights in daily life and in the agendas of nations. There is a growing consensus that education in and for human rights is essential and can contribute to both the reduction of human rights violation and the building of free, just and peaceful societies. Human rights education is also increasingly recognized as an effective strategy to prevent human rights abuses. The World Conference on Human Rights considers Human Rights education, training and public information essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace. While discussing the importance of human rights education, it is also essential to define human rights education. Human rights education may be 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 which are directed towards:

- The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- The full development of the human personality and its inherent dignity.
- The promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender, equality and friendship among all nations.
- The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society.

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

Human rights education is much more complex than mere awareness-raising. It consists of legal standards, knowledge, awareness and skills and it aims to influence political and social behavior. Human rights education works on three aspects - teaching skills, offering knowledge and shaping attitudes. The skills would aim at encouragement needed to take action to defend human rights and prevent human rights abuses. The knowledge is about provisions of information about human rights and mechanisms for their protection. The values, beliefs and attitudes would be shaped which promote a human rights culture. So, the three dimensions of human rights education campaigns are knowledge; values, beliefs and attitudes; and skills. In other words, human rights education can be done at three levels- the cognitive level, the affective level and the application level.

It has been well accepted that promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels should be universal and conducted without conditions attached. This education needs to be given to everybody, irrespective of the variations. There are various agencies which are involved in the process. In fact, a 'National Plan of Action for Human Rights Education' had been developed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the framework of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). The Guidelines are to assist States in responding to concerns and offering suggestions for developing State Plan of Action for the individual states. The World Conference on Human Rights calls on all States and institutions to include human rights, humanitarian law as subjects in the curricula of all learning institutions in formal and informal settings. The importance may be discussed, plans may be charted out, however, it needs to be appreciated that while Human Rights Education is a global issue; it is effective primarily at the national and the local levels. This is especially because human rights need to be understood in the particular psycho-social dimensions of the country, which is influenced by religious, social, economic and political climate of the country.

The increasing recognition of the importance of human rights is making Human

Rights Education a vital part of international education activities throughout the world. The same has to filter down at the national and local levels. In India also several efforts have been made. Various bodies have been formed and charged with the responsibility for the same. Among all these identified and recognized organizations, there is one agency which has yet not been completely harnessed. Or rather, if put in impolite words, it has been overlooked for its potential in contributing to the matter. It is widely accepted that when it comes to education for human rights, literacy for all and schooling for the greatest number of children possible should be the first priority. However, this very agency of 'school' has not been assigned the task of promoting human rights. There have been a few self-initiated efforts in this direction but they are not very organized, consistent and continuous.

Schooling provides not only basic education, but under the best of circumstances it aids a child to explore the world and to express ideas, ask questions and puzzle out answers. Hence, provides a useful ground to a child for gaining knowledge, forming attitudes and developing skills essential for protection and promotion of human rights. In United States of America, one of the largest organisations working in the area of Human Rights, has gone far and named its journal as 'Fourth R', with this fourth R being 'rights'. This cannot be denied that besides reading, (w)riting and (a)rithmetic knowledge of human rights is equally essential. Several steps can be taken to develop a school curriculum, which would help the raw and the tender minds at the lower and the basic levels to develop the eternal value of life and understand the real meaning behind human rights. Some aspects of Human Rights can be dealt within the prescribed periods of the timetable but most of the vital aspects have to be kept in view and dealt within the whole school and home life as occasions arise.

The next question which comes up in mind is that is it really so easy to do. Are we able to achieve whatever we preach in school? The obstacle to the same is rooted in the epistemology, the handling of the concepts. The difficulty of putting the theory of education for international understanding into practice is frankly recognized and expressed. "How can human rights be achieved through education at various levels?" The first solution to this problem lies in teacher training. The world conference on human rights has proclaimed

'Educators have a responsibility to ensure that educators contribute to the promotion of equality, peace and universal realization of human rights.' So this aspect needs to be given due attention and has been given weightage on several platforms, as is evident in the objectives framed by NCTE for teacher education. The general objective of teacher education as elaborated by NCTE states that it should sensitize teachers towards promotion of social cohesion, international understanding and protection of human rights in children.

Teachers must be familiar with human rights if they are to effectively help their students to respect these rights and to recognize any flagrant violations in the world. So now the onus comes on teacher training. Our teacher education institutions should professionally equip the student teachers who plan to take up this profession with all the necessary qualities and competencies. So education on human rights needs to be an essential component of our teacher training practices. Only a trained teacher could share and shoulder responsibility of teaching of human rights in the right way. Thus, arises an urgent need to include teaching of human rights in the teacher education curriculum at B.Ed and M.Ed levels.

Human rights is not just an academic subject matter, feelings are touched upon in the course of Human Rights Education. So it cannot be considered as yet another theoretical subject which can be just added and the purpose would be solved. The point is thus how should it be transmitted and how should it be taught so that the knowledge is truly acquired? The teachers should not only learn the cognitive but also the affective content of human rights that prospective teachers should learn. The teachers need to develop the affective part, which includes tolerance, mutual respect, commitment, and empathy among others. It has to be introduced very carefully for the prospective teachers should not feel another subject being loaded on them. Our teacher education programs are already carrying the blotch of being overloaded. There is no doubt that overloaded programs have the effect of blunting teacher's keenness and enthusiasm.

The teaching on human rights should be teaching to sensitize. It should provide basic interdisciplinary knowledge of world problems and problems of international cooperation. Creative participatory teaching methods that are

relevant to people's lives should be used, and human rights should be introduced as a holistic framework. An enabling environment should be ensured for the teacher trainees so that they are not just preaching but are also practicing rights. Priority should be given to integrate human rights into all relevant training and educational curricula. A multicultural, multidisciplinary team should be arranged for training on human rights so as to facilitate the exchange of knowledge between its members.

Besides teaching pre-service teachers to commit themselves to the ethic of human rights and the aim of changing society towards more complete fulfillment of human right goals, preparation programs would help teachers to-

- Appreciate the fundamental unity of mankind;
- Acquire a basic interdisciplinary knowledge of world problems and problems of international cooperation and how to work in solving them.
- Take active part in devising international education programs, educational equipment, and materials.

Human rights education in the teacher education courses should set out the core competences needed by teachers to put democratic citizenship and human rights into practice in the classroom, throughout the school and in the wider community. These programs should provide Global education; Social and Civic education; and Moral education. Human rights in modern India cannot be examined appropriately without taking into account the socio-cultural and religious forces at play. So the education should be contextualized. For instance, right to education is a human right; however, the length of compulsory education offered by different States varies depending on various factors. For Netherlands, it is 13 years, but for India, it is eight years. The Indian Constitution needs to be made the base for all the efforts. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution reflects the spirit of Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". This spirit needs to be developed in our teachers.

Our teachers should have

- a moral commitment to human rights and human dignity

- a personal commitment to fundamental values and norms
- the readiness to defend human rights
- to display social and civic responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Education on human rights and the dissemination of proper information, both theoretical and practical, play an important role in the promotion and respect of human rights with regard to all individuals without distinction. Education about human rights should be considered as a central core in the entire life of the school and outside school also. Teaching and learning about human rights is not just an aspiration. It is a key and practical defence for upholding and protecting rights. . The idea that the Human rights education should be included in teacher training curriculum was emphasized by the Third World congress on human rights in New Delhi in 1990. so it is almost two decades after that and the conditions are still the same. At both pre-service and in-service levels, efforts need to be made for capacity building of our teachers on the same issue. The gloomy part about the whole thing is that we talk of training teachers, however, our teacher educators (the trainers of the teacher trainees) are themselves ill-equipped for the same. There are no established mechanisms to create a professional cadre of teacher educators. The program of M.Ed and other higher education courses should have a component of the same. These programs can have an optional paper on Human Rights Education, so that we can have trained teacher-educators for our teacher trainees. At the international level, Publications, Seminars and Conferences have supported teacher educators in their attempts to discover how to include more teaching about human rights in their programs. They have also given guideposts to educators exploring the meaning of schooling and teacher education in the rapidly emerging 'global village'. The Indian teacher educators need to be made conscious about them.

To put in one line, 'Education in and for human rights is a fundamental right' and so the State needs to make efforts at all levels to ensure that everybody seeks this right.

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