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HUMAN RIGHTS AND EDUCATION

B. M PATIL

Asst.Professor,
Mahila Shikshanshastra Mahavidyalaya,Tasgaon,Dist-Sangli

Abstract:

Today, the term "human rights" covers the series of often disparate rights and freedoms asserted by many to be universally accepted and essential prerequisites for peoples' enjoyment of a life based on the centrality of human dignity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood". Actions infringing upon the dignity of human beings should not be tolerated. Regional or cultural characteristics should no longer serve as excuses for the violation of human rights. We must uphold what history has already proven, that human rights is a universal value.

INTRODUCTION

All people of all ages should be aware of the basic rights and responsibilities that each individual possesses and, in the long term, to build a "culture of prevention" of human rights abuses. Education in human rights is itself a fundamental human right and also a responsibility. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration states that everyone has the right to education, and that education should strengthen respect for human rights. If people do not know their rights, they cannot defend or fight for them. Human rights education teaches both about and for human rights. The goal is to help people understand human rights, value human rights, and to take responsibility for respecting, defending and promoting their human rights as well as the rights of others.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Human Rights Education is all learning that develops the knowledge, skills and values of human rights-those fundamental rights to which every man or woman inhabiting any part of the world should be deemed entitled merely by virtue of having been born a human being.

In 1994, United Nations proclaimed the period 1995 to 2004 the United Nations Decade for Human Rights. The Plan of Action for Decade defines Human rights education 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 molding of attitudes which are directed to:

- 1) The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- 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 and 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.

During this Decade the United Nations is urging and supporting all its Member States to make

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information about human rights available to everyone through both the formal school system and adult education. The vision of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education is that by the end of the century all humanity will become knowledgeable about human rights and participate in the decisions that determine their lives.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION: OUTCOMES

Provides information about human rights which include learning about:

- 1)The inherent dignity of all people and their right to be treated with respect.
- 2)Human right principles, such as, universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights.
- 3)How human rights promote participation in decision making and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.
- 4)Important human right declarations and Conventions.
- 5)Human rights violations
- 6)The persons and agencies those are responsible for promoting, protecting and respecting human rights.
- 7)Helps people understand human rights, value human rights and take responsibility for respecting, defending and promoting human rights.
- 8)Builds universal culture of human rights.
- 9)Teaches common language of humanity.
- 10)Fosters an attitude of tolerance, respect and solidarity.
- 11)Helps in empowerment, a process through which people and communities increase their control of their own lives and the decisions that affect them.
- 12) Leads to a more enlightened society.
- 13) Helps in acquiring the right to assert ones rights.
- 14) Changes the inappropriate conduct leading to the denial of human rights.
- 15) Equips with necessity courage to face difficult situations.

DETERMINANTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

First the definition of human rights varies. There is a legal definition which is drawn from the international documents. Some nations offer their own political definition which functions like a codicil attached to the international agreements. More important, teachers and administrators definitions of human rights education often include only those human rights which they think can be accommodated in their curriculum and class rooms.

A second determinant of human rights education is the general sense of importance the society attaches to human rights. Where there is a genuine commitment or sense of urgency, an effort is made to include them in the curriculum. In reverse, where human rights are repeatedly curtailed human rights education has been absent from the curriculum

Human Rights Education is far more likely to be pursued in schools where teachers have been involved in workshops or seminars on the subject. They have become convinced that human rights education can be included effectively in their class room. They have weighed the advantage of interspersing the topic throughout the subjects they cover in their classes against making a separate subject or topic out of it. The persuasiveness with which teachers approach the subject may depend on their own involvement in formal organizations like Amnesty International or information groups that show a deep concern for the maintenance of human rights around the world.

Human Rights Education, furthermore, is shaped by the opportunities teachers have to inform themselves about the subject and to discuss with others, how it may be dealt with in their classes to evoke a varying response from their students. These issues clearly are more easily resolved when teachers either produce themselves or are provided with constructional materials which reflect the several aspects of human rights education that may be included in the curriculum.

The final determinant very likely is the teacher's own conviction that human rights can be affected in one's class room. That same teacher's skill to do so becomes a critical factor. Democratic class rooms where each student is respected by all others, where the teacher designs the instructional plan with the student and all participate in its execution appear to be the ingredients of a classroom environment in which human rights are ever present. That kind of class room forms a credible basis for human rights education.

The inclusion of Human Rights Education in the curriculum at all levels is essential. At teacher education level the students have reached, age wise, enough maturity to imbibe the meaning and evolution of the concept of human rights norms and standards spelled out in various international instruments and also to discuss in depth human rights issues in the contest of concrete social, economic and political realities

with emphasis on struggles, needs and aspirations of the people.

Human Rights Education is an education which not only provides understanding of one's own rights (and duties also) and therefore inculcation of self-esteem and recognition of one's own rightful place in society, also fostering an attitude of tolerance, goodwill and removal of prejudices towards fellow human beings. It is partly because the educational system did not give attention to human rights dimension that there is turmoil and turbulence in various countries.

In larger part of our country, especially in rural areas hierarchical social order unfortunately is still prevalent. While a small percentage of people enjoy privileged positions, comforts and luxuries, majority does not have enough to eat, a comparatively small percentage of students have opportunity to go for higher and professional/technical education, a vast majority does not. These violations of human rights are due to the lack of egalitarian values and attitudes in the people. To have an egalitarian society we should inculcate egalitarian values in children. For this the teacher should be a person of egalitarian values.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Teachers, teacher educators and all others in the field of education can and should contribute to the protection of dignity and human rights by following

the suggestions given below:

- 1) It is absolutely necessary that all people must be socialized in their family, neighborhood, school, college, university and in other groups and institutions about the inherent dignity of man and the inalienable rights of man.
- 2) Parents, educated persons and teachers should be made to realize their role as socializers as such.
- 3) All educational administrations and teachers at all levels are to be instructed and educated clearly and fully about human rights.
- 4) The existing contents of education should be revitalized by including potent doses of information on human rights. There should be more and more of lectures-cum discussions, seminars and orientation programmes in schools and colleges to make teachers and students aware of the implications of human dignity and human rights.
- 5) All categories of teachers should be made to realize that if they are not taking their classes regularly, honesty and up to the best possible academic standard and not evaluating their students' honesty are actually violating the rights of students to receive good education and fair treatment from their teachers.

CONCLUSION

The teacher concerned bears a heavy responsibility in exercising his discretion what to teach and how to impart Human Rights Education, taking into account the discipline and professional training students are getting equipped with and also keeping in mind the social realities and needs and aspirations of the people concerned. It is obvious that however, carefully planned education programme may be, it will have little impact in the hands of teachers lacking the necessary motivation, training and informative material for carrying it out.

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