

## Cornerstones of Human Rights Education

**1. Human Rights Education is an essential part of the human rights development itself.**

Human rights that remain unknown or misunderstood remain powerless rights. But even if we all understand their meanings but nobody would be willing to respect and to implement them, they had no influence on our lives. An important part of the development of Human Rights is the awareness that it has to be implemented in peoples minds. This effort we call Human Rights Education.

**2. Human Rights Education can refer to a variety of international and national experience. But this is not enough! Today we need a kind of "human rights mainstreaming" for all educational programs.** At the same time we also have a) to concentrate on teaching Human Rights across all major subjects concerning human rights at universities and schools, b) to apply the findings of the theories of learning to HRE, c) to cooperate more profoundly with the relevant social sciences and finally, d) to evaluate HRE. Successful HRE depends on its professional implementation as well as on the education of teachers and multipliers. Therefore, universities as such are challenged to develop adequate offer.

**3. Human Rights Education is not only a matter of schools.** While HRE in schools has to be guided by the norms of balance and pluralism, nonformal HRE can feel free to take a side and to get involved in political actions.

**4. HRE has a clear profile:** Three essentials are to be named:

4.1 The message of HRE is threefold: First, get to know and defend your Human Rights! Second, do respect the same Rights of others! Third, defend the Rights of others according to your possibilities. Thus HRE has three major dimensions: knowledge, values and social responsibility.

4.2 HRE wants to reach different groups of people: there are to mention the victims and the perpetrators. The victims have to stand up for their rights and the perpetrators shall not discriminate.

4.3 HRE has to develop an understanding for the legal as well as for the moral dimension of Human Rights, for the relation between citizen and its state as well as for the relations among citizens themselves.

**5. HRE has always meant learning Human Rights.** The high-minded goals have to be confronted with the motivation and disagreement of learners. HRE has to meet all real expectations of the learner such as their ignorance, their impatience, their prejudices as well as their own feelings of superiority. It has to be made clear and evident what Human Rights mean for each and everyone's life and what happens if we do not enjoy Human Rights such as freedom of speech or the right to participate.

**6. HRE has to teach the power of Human Rights!** Human rights are the result of a civil learning process full of conflicts. The gain of this learning process consists of legally recoverable rights of the citizen towards the state, as well as mutual moral rights that citizens can ask from each other. Human rights have a legal side and a moral side influencing the standards of the civil society.

**7. HRE should not be practiced or perceived as moral indoctrination.** Mutual understanding of common dignity can not be ordered or forced into someone. But there are ways and measures to teach in order to strengthen the people's willingness to accept mutual and common rights and equal dignity; for instance: to promote respect by experiencing respect of its own, to support empowerment by teaching children rights, to facilitate participation, to educate in Human Rights but not only to distribute information about Human Rights.

**8. HRE has to be open for the intercultural exchange of ideas concerning Human Rights.** This education has to avoid any hippocratic arguments and blindness regarding cultural difference and disagreements of less individualistic societies. Still Human Rights Education has to avoid any

blockade of its own by misunderstandingly being considered as an repressive instrument.**3.2 The priority of security**

**9. HRE can not be reduced to teaching democracy.** Development and Implementation of Human Rights have indeed a lot in common with democracy but at the same time they are not the same. Human Rights also have a rather important impact on places where democracy has not yet been established, has declined or never existed.

9.1 The rights of the child mark an important Human Rights area (UN-Treaty on the right of the child from 1989) such as family (protection and safety), school (right to education) and economy (such as child labour). They are to be claimed and to be respected anywhere even without democratic structures.

9.2 Human Rights apply for foreigners even though they do not enjoy democratic civil rights within a society.

9.3 The Human Right no to be tortured is valid regardless to the governmental system of a state.

9.4 Global economic players have to respect Human Rights (even if it seems that they have sometimes more power than states). This is one of the top issues on the international Human Rights agenda - even though it is not expected that these economic players ever become democratic.

9.5 An finally: even in established democratic societies - Human Rights limit a democratic majority because they stand for human values that are never placed at disposal.

**10. Human Rights Education has a critical momentum.** HRE informs about human rights violations and enables the learner to judge the policies of states against human rights standards. HRE is an important critical factor whenever democracies get into conflict with Human Rights standards - such as after Sept 11th in western democracies. Therefore HRE aims at social change: it orientates on the idea of equal dignity of all people. And believing in joint power of all citizens, people will fight against discrimination, they will disobey tyranny and stand up for the idea of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Art 28 of the Declaration states: "Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized".

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