

## 2. HRE and its connection with EDC<sup>13</sup>

Education for democratic citizenship and human rights education are closely inter-related and mutually supportive. They differ in focus and scope rather than in goals and practices. Education for democratic citizenship focuses primarily on democratic rights and responsibilities and active participation, in relation to the civic, political, social, economic, legal and cultural spheres of society, while human rights education is concerned with the broader spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms in every aspect of people's lives.

*Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, adopted in the framework of Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 of the Committee of Ministers on 11 May 2010.*

The following section looks at the connection between HRE and EDC more closely.

Decades ago, the United Nations and its specialised agencies formally recognised the right to human rights education, that is, the right of citizens to be informed about the rights and freedoms contained in the human rights treaties ratified by their countries. Governments are accountable for the implementation of these human rights standards through laws, policies and practices. They report on their progress by making periodic reports to treaty bodies. Monitoring organisations such as human rights groups also help to keep track of progress.

It is self-evident that citizens should know and value their human rights and respect those of others. We need to understand the legal responsibilities of our governments to fulfil our rights. We should appreciate the ethical responsibilities of citizens to cherish and uphold human rights in everyday life. The knowledge and disposition to know and responsibly uphold one's rights and those of others begins early in life: in our families, in our schools and in our community.

UN agencies such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNESCO and UNICEF, along with intergovernmental organisations such as the Council of Europe and national human rights agencies, have referenced HRE, proposing specifically that the treatment of human rights themes should be present in schooling.

Human rights education has both normative and legal dimensions. The legal dimension incorporates sharing content about international human rights standards as embodied in treaties and covenants to which our countries have committed. These standards encompass civil and political rights, as well as social, economic, and cultural rights. In recent years, environmental and collective rights have been added to this evolving framework. This law-oriented approach recognises the importance of monitoring and accountability in ensuring that governments uphold the letter and spirit of human rights obligations.

At the same time, HRE is a normative and cultural enterprise. It is a value system that helps everyone to reflect on the degree to which their daily experiences are consistent with human rights norms and values. The infusion of a human rights-based approach to schooling is addressed later in this volume.

In terms of classroom learning, interactive and learner-centred methods are widely promoted in HRE, as they are with EDC. The following kinds of pedagogy are representative of those promoted in HRE:

- experiential and activity-centred: involving the solicitation of learners' prior knowledge and offering activities that draw out learners' experiences and knowledge;
- problem-posing: challenging the learners' prior knowledge;
- participative: encouraging collective efforts in clarifying concepts, analysing themes and doing the activities;
- dialectical: requiring learners to compare their knowledge with those from other sources;
- analytical: asking learners to think about why things are and how they came to be;
- healing: promoting human rights in intra-personal and inter-personal relations;

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13. Author: Felisa Tibbitts (2009). Original source: Tibbitts F. (2008), "Human Rights Education" in Bajaj M. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Peace Education*, Information Age Publishing, Charlotte, NC.

- strategic-thinking-oriented: directing learners to set their own goals and to think of strategic ways of achieving them; and
- goal- and action-oriented: allowing learners to plan and organise actions in relation to their goals.<sup>14</sup>

Human rights education in the curriculum of many countries intersects with democratic or global citizenship education, by taking the core concepts of citizenship education and applying them both more universally and more critically. Knowledge about key concepts and facts, and issues of civic disposition and civic skills are applied to the areas of global social responsibility, justice and social action.

In addition, human rights education explicitly fosters social responsibility and action among students. HRE moves beyond the promotion of participation as an element of representative democracy, however, by casting such actions along a spectrum of rights. Taking action can be intrinsically valued as an exercise of one's rights. Such actions can also be instrumental as a means of overcoming oppression or injustice.

The broad normative framework of HRE and the wide spectrum of potential learners have resulted in a great deal of variation in the ways in which HRE has been implemented. Although HRE is defined by the universal framework of international (and sometimes regional) standards, the specific topics and their applications depend upon local and national contexts. Moreover, human rights education in school settings is adapted to the age of learners and the conditions of national/local educational policies and schools.

Human rights themes and content in school curricula can take the form of cross-cultural themes mandated by educational policy or they can be integrated within existing subjects, such as history, civics/citizenship education, social studies and humanities. HRE can also be found in arts programmes and non-formal clubs and special events that take place in school settings.

As the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education recommends, these educational areas are closely interrelated and mutually supportive. They differ in focus and scope rather than in goals and practices. Education for democratic citizenship focuses primarily on democratic rights and responsibilities and active participation, in relation to the civic, political, social, economic, legal and cultural spheres of society, while human rights education is concerned with the broader spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms in every aspect of people's lives.

Where HRE and EDC coexist in a school setting, they are mutually reinforcing. The International Education Association (IEA) Civic Education Study was published in 1999, and used data collected from 88 000 14-year-olds in 27 countries.<sup>15</sup> An analysis was carried out in order to examine country differences in students' knowledge pertaining to human rights compared with other forms of civic knowledge, and students' attitudes towards promoting and practising human rights.

This analysis showed that students' experiences of democracy at school and with international issues had a positive association with their knowledge of human rights. Factors that might be called "democracy at school" mattered for the human rights attitudes of individual students. The analysis of IEA data corroborated that students who have the most exposure to the practice of democratic ideals in their classrooms and schools are the most likely to hold positive human rights attitudes. Moreover, students with more knowledge of human rights had more frequent engagement with international topics and held stronger norms for participatory citizenship and were more politically efficacious.

Schools that offer EDC and HRE in tangent to one another are equipping learners to be empowered and responsible citizens who know and cherish their rights and freedoms.

14. ARRC [Asia-Pacific Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education] (2003), "What is Human Rights Education", *Human Rights Education Pack*, ARRC, Bangkok.

15. Torney-Purta J., Barber C. H. and Wilkenfeld B. (2008), "How Adolescents in Twenty-Seven Countries Understand, Support and Practice Human Rights", *Journal of Social Issues*, 64: 1.