

UNIT 8
RIGHTS AND FREEDOM
Primary level

My rights – your rights

8.1 Wants and needs: what is important to me?

Students learn to distinguish between what they want and what their basic needs are

8.2 Human rights: what do they say?

Students compare their needs to the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

8.3 Survey: what people around us think and know

Students undertake a short survey about human rights

8.4 Human rights alive!

Presenting and discussing the results of the survey

Unit 8: Key concept – “Rights and freedom” (for primary level)

Background information for teachers: human rights: what is important to me? to you? to others?

Human rights could be generally defined as those rights which are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot thrive as human beings.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms allow us to develop fully and to use our human qualities, our intelligence, our talents and our conscience and they also allow us to satisfy our spiritual and other needs. They are based on humankind’s increasing demand for a life in which the inherent dignity and worth of each human being are respected and protected.

This unit provides basic information for primary school teachers who want to foster awareness and knowledge about the values of human rights, as well as the sense of reciprocity and universality upon which human rights standards are based. It is only a starting point, which should be supplemented by further research and study and/or by using national manuals and audio-visual materials that are already available. It will hopefully be used to initiate an ongoing process of adaptation and development at all levels of teaching within the world’s many and varied cultures.

The United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995–2004) defined 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 the moulding of attitudes which are directed to:

- (a) The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- (b) The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity;
- (c) The promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups;
- (d) The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society;
- (e) The furtherance of the activities of the United Nations for the Maintenance of Peace. (Adapted from the Plan of Action of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995–2004), paragraph 2.)

This process will depend upon local educational systems, which differ widely, not least in the degree of discretion that teachers have to set their own teaching goals. However, the teacher will always be the key person in getting new initiatives to work and he or she therefore has a great deal of responsibility in communicating and promoting the principles of human rights in the classroom. Teaching about human rights is, however, not enough. These values should permeate the classroom alongside those of democratic decision making and action. Students will not only want to learn about human rights, but to learn in and through them.

The fact that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights³ has almost global validity and applicability is very important for teachers. By working with precepts that have been so widely endorsed for many years now, the teacher can honestly say that he or she is promoting a normative system that has been accepted by the international community and its governments. Education systems differ widely. When teaching for human rights, however, teachers have a second defence – that is, that they are teaching in such a way as to respect human rights in the classroom and the school environment itself.

This means avoiding any hypocrisy. At its simplest, hypocrisy refers to situations in which the subject that a teacher is teaching is clearly at odds with how he or she is teaching it. For example: “Today we are going to talk about freedom of expression – shut up in the back row!”. In this way, students

3. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948.

will learn a lot about power, and considerably less about human rights and the respect for human dignity, which is at the core of human freedoms. As students spend a good deal of time studying teachers and can develop a good understanding of a teacher's personal beliefs, such behaviour could make it difficult for a teacher to have any real positive effect. Because of a desire to please, for example, students may try to mirror a teacher's personal views, without thinking for themselves. This may be one reason, at the beginning at least, why they don't express their own ideas. At its most complex, hypocrisy raises profound questions about how to protect and promote the human dignity of both teachers and students in a classroom, as well as in a school and within society at large. This calls upon teachers to explore ways and means to involve other parties in the process of deciding what to do, how to do it, and why; this means not only involving students, school administrators, education authorities, and parents, but also, if appropriate, members of the community in which they live and work.

The aim of education for democratic citizenship is to support the development of competences in three areas. This unit has the following competence profile:

Competence in ...		
... political analysis and judgment	... the use of methods	... political decision making and action
**	***	*

Toolbox support

In this unit the following tools from the students' toolbox will be used. The teacher must decide if some or all of the students need additional preparation in order to work with these tools.

- 0 Researching in libraries
- 0 Researching on the Internet
- x Carrying out interviews and surveys
- x Interpreting images
- 0 Mind maps
- 0 Creating posters
- 0 Holding exhibitions
- x Planning and giving presentations
- x Preparing overhead transparencies or a PowerPoint presentation
- 0 Writing newspaper articles
- 0 Putting on performances
- 0 Holding debates

UNIT 8: Rights and Freedom

My rights – your rights?

Human rights: what is important to me? to you? to others?

Lesson title	Learning objectives	Student tasks	Resources	Methods
Lesson 1: Wants and needs	The students learn that their individual wants – the things and ideas they would like to have and realise – are as important as the things that human beings actually need in order to live a decent life.	Students select pictures that represent their wants and needs and discuss and decide on them.	String (a clothes line), clothes pegs, clippings (pictures) from magazines, handout.	Group work.
Lesson 2: Human rights: what do they say?	By matching each of their own needs to an article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the students recognise that the declaration has been very closely aligned to the needs of people.	The students think about lesson 1 using a list or chosen articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.	Handout (simplified version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), lists of needs from unit 8, lesson 1.	Group work, research.
Lesson 3: Survey: What people around us think and know	The students further their learning experience by interviewing adults about their attitudes to and their knowledge of human rights. They notice how differently individual human rights can be valued.	The students prepare a survey and practise working with it in the classroom. The survey itself should be done as homework during the following week.	Handouts, paper, pencils and pens.	Surveys in groups.
Lesson 4: Human Rights alive!	The students become aware of the how differently people value individual human rights by presenting the results of their survey. They reflect on their own learning processes and thus enable the transfer of knowledge and competences.	The students present and discuss the results of their survey. They reflect on the entire learning process.	A4 size notepaper.	Group discussion, plenary discussion.

Lesson 1

Wants and needs: what is important to me?

Students learn to distinguish between what they want and what their basic needs are

Learning objectives	The students learn that their individual wants – the things and ideas they would like to have and realise – are as important as the things that human beings actually need in order to live a decent life.
Student tasks	Students select pictures that represent wants and needs and discuss and decide on them.
Resources	String (a clothes line), clothes pegs, clippings (pictures) from magazines, handout.
Methods	Group work.

Information box

Human rights have both an ethical and a legal nature. Even though human rights as a whole are considered indivisible, it remains clear that every individual clarifies for himself or herself what is important for his or her own life. Moreover it is important to understand – especially for adolescents – that not all needs are basic needs that have been recognised as rights in the international standards on human rights. Distinguishing between wants and needs, respecting the ways that people may value certain rights over others, and at the same time accepting the importance of the cohesive international human rights framework, is a long-term learning process. Although the legal aspects of human rights are not addressed in this lesson, teachers should be aware that binding legal treaties – which governments sign and agree to abide to – were based on the normative framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In Europe, the main legally binding human rights treaty is the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights).⁴

Lesson description

The classroom should be prepared in such a way that the students can sit in groups of four to six. The teacher should place all the materials needed for the lesson on a separate table, from which the students can take what they need and return it at the end of the lesson. Ownership is a key factor in successful EDC/HRE, and both students and teachers need to see their classroom as a living space that they care about. There should be as many clippings from magazines as possible (dozens, maybe even hundreds of pictures) stuck on the walls of the classroom.

The teacher gathers the students in front of the “picture wall” and engages them in a discussion:

- What were your experiences when you collected the pictures?
- Was there something that surprised you? If so, what?

After a few minutes of introductory conversation, the teacher gives two students the task of holding the clothes line (approximately 4 metres long) and 12 clothes pegs. The teacher then takes two prepared cards with the words “WANTS” and “NEEDS” written on them. He or she hangs them on the right and left-hand sides of the line and then asks the students to think about which picture they would choose to hang under “WANTS” and which to hang under “NEEDS”. Once everybody has

4. ETS No. 5, opened for signature on 4 November 1950 and entered into force on 3 September 1953.

thought about this, the teacher asks two students to hang up their suggestions and to explain why they decided in the way they did. Next, the teacher should try to clarify the difference between wants and needs in a discussion with the students, but should take care that he or she does not give a definition of them, but rather collects and orders the students' explanations.

In groups of four to six, the students are given the task to choose 10 pictures from the whole collection, five under the category of "WANTS" and five under "NEEDS". Each group is given this task in written form (with the teacher either giving printed copies of the handout to everyone or writing the task on the blackboard).

Task and presentation:

- As a group, the students should choose 10 photos out of the whole collection. Five of them have to fit to the category of "WANTS" and five of them should fit the category of "NEEDS" (if two or more groups want the same picture, try to find a solution).
- The groups should discuss their choices and try to answer the following questions:
 - Why is this important in my life?
 - What would it mean if I didn't have this?
 - What do I want to have or attain later in life?
 - What does this mean for me as a boy/a girl?
- The 10 chosen pictures should then be sorted according to importance and the students should explain why they have chosen them in this order. They should find a solution that suits all group members.
- Two group members should hold the clothes line, and one person should explain each choice. Only the first and last choices should be explained. Finally, the students should try to explain in their own words the difference between wants and needs. Can they find a "definition" of both?

The clothes line is hung on the wall (or anywhere else in the classroom), together with all the pictures chosen.

Lesson 2

Human rights: what do they say?

Students compare their needs to the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Learning objectives	By matching each of their own needs to an article in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the students recognise that the declaration has been very closely aligned to the needs of people.
Student tasks	The students think about lesson 1 using a list or chosen articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
Resources	Handout (simplified version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), lists of needs from unit 8, lesson 1.
Methods	Group work, research.

Lesson description

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher should summarise the results of lesson 1. He or she should make a connection between needs and human rights and make a short presentation on the history of human rights (see handout ‘Human rights: a list for comparing rights and needs). The teacher’s input should not last for more than 10 minutes.

The students are given the task to match their own needs (which they have defined) to the human rights shown on the simplified list of human rights (handout). They should work in the same groups as in the previous lesson and should consider the following questions: which human rights are important to them, even unconsciously? Can they understand the connection between rights and needs? Can they think of examples from real life which relate to a particular right? The handout can help with this. The teacher should decide whether to work with this simplified version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or with the original document (available via the website www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/). Using the simplified version, the students should be able to recognise quite quickly that human rights were developed on the basis of everyday needs.

Example from the handout:

Basic rights list	The “NEEDS” we have defined	To which article of the original human rights declaration does this belong?
<i>Right to live, exist</i>		
<i>Right to work</i>		
<i>Right to own property</i>		
<i>Right to free speech</i>		
...		

The students should try to copy their list of needs from the previous lesson onto the handout. This won’t be very easy, as the wording of the rights and needs will not be the same. This might stimulate discussions and trigger decisions that are not always clear. This is intentional.

In a second step, the groups that have already finished should compare their list with the original declaration of human rights.

At the end of the lesson, a class list should be developed. This means that the group lists should be copied onto one larger list, which will be presented to everybody. If computers are available, the students could make an electronic list, using the handout as a template. This task can be assigned to a small group of students who could complete this as homework. If necessary, the teacher could compile the list instead.

Lesson 3

Survey: what people around us think and know

Students undertake a short survey about human rights

Learning objectives	The students further their learning experience by interviewing adults about their attitudes to and their knowledge of human rights. They notice how differently individual human rights can be valued.
Student tasks	The students prepare a survey and practise working with it in the classroom. The survey itself should be done as homework during the following week.
Resources	Handouts, paper, pencils and pens.
Methods	Surveys in groups.

Lesson description

The class now possesses a list of human rights (this is deliberately not a complete list). It becomes evident from the list that even without knowledge of the concept of human rights, everybody knows that people have got needs and that these needs are very similar to the rights presented in the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. By learning this, the students have partly reconstructed the history of human rights, which, after all, were not randomly created in isolation, but developed out of the idea that all human beings have got basic rights that nobody can take away from them.

In the third and fourth lessons, the students should conduct a short survey. In their local community, they should try to find out what is being associated with human rights, how human rights are judged and what level of basic knowledge about human rights people have.

The students should create, conduct and evaluate a short survey, with the aim of understanding how human rights are present in their immediate surroundings. The teacher provides them with a handout on which they can note various different categories of answers: personal attitudes to human rights, knowledge of human rights, and the current situation in their country. The students should interview adults, (relatives, friends, neighbours, passers-by) and ask them the following questions:

- Do you think it is important that human rights have been established for the whole world? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Which rights need protecting the most worldwide?
- Who is responsible for doing this?
- Which rights need protecting the most in our country?
- Who is responsible for doing this?

The students should be careful not to judge whether the attitudes, opinions or knowledge expressed are correct. Rather, they should simply note down the answers.

Interview situations are not easy and it might be helpful to simulate them in the classroom. A small group of students could take on the role of the interviewers, and two students could take on the roles of unknown passers-by. Interviews with friends or relatives could also be rehearsed. It is important that students should not forget to introduce themselves and to explain the goal of the interview. When watching the interview rehearsals, the other students can give constructive feedback. In this way everybody learns.

Questions to be thought about:

- How are notes taken?
- What is the division of roles within the interview group?
- How are the results going to be presented in the next lesson?

The teacher gives the students one week in which to conduct the interviews. It is best to conduct the interviews in small groups.

Lesson 4

Human rights alive!

Presenting and discussing the results of the survey

Learning objectives	The students become aware of how differently people value individual human rights by presenting the results of their survey. They reflect on their own learning processes and thus enable the transfer of knowledge and competences.
Student tasks	The students present and discuss the results of their survey. They reflect on the entire learning process.
Resources	A4 notepaper.
Methods	Group discussion, plenary discussion.

Information box

A discussion (an exchange of arguments, from the Latin, *discussio*, i.e. argument) is a specific form of verbal communication between two or more persons in which one or several issues are addressed – i.e. discussed – with each side presenting their arguments. A discussion should be held in a spirit of mutual respect. A good style of discussion requires the speakers to allow, and even encourage views and opinions other than their own to be expressed, considering them carefully instead of rashly rejecting them. Personal qualities such as serenity, composure, and politeness will work to the advantage of both sides. In the best of all cases, a discussion will lead to the solution of a problem or a compromise that everyone involved can accept.

In modern societies, discussions are a civilised, that is, a non-violent means of handling controversy and dealing with conflicts of interests and objectives. Conflicts are not suppressed, but solved. By learning and practising their discussion skills, students learn a basic element of building and maintaining peace in society.

Lesson description

The students should present the results of their survey about attitudes, knowledge and implementation of human rights. It will not be possible to present all the results in one lesson. Instead, the class should be divided into three groups, with each group presenting their joint results.

Only general impressions can be carried over into the plenary session, which will be the basis for the final discussion.

It is recommended that every student should make notes on a piece of paper about what they found most surprising, most satisfying and most annoying about the survey.

These notes should be written in such a way that they can be laid out or hung up in the classroom.

In our country there are still a lot of violations of human rights

I was surprised that many people wanted to answer the questions.

Specifics about human rights are not usually known.

It is important for the final discussion that the teacher does not conclude at this point that the students now know everything about human rights. This was only a first analysis of and an approach to human rights. The students should be motivated and eager to continue to think about human rights and to maintain a critical stance. The teacher might consider encouraging motivated students to learn more about human rights by studying the work of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, or human rights groups such as Amnesty International.

All key sentences from the results of the survey should be laid out or hung up in the classroom and the students should read them quietly. A discussion should then take place that can be divided into questions and comments regarding the following:

- learning processes;
- new knowledge;
- experiences during the interviews;
- ideas on how to continue working on the topic of human rights as a class or as an individual.

At this point, it would make sense if everybody involved (the teacher, students and the whole school) understands how work on this topic could be continued in the future. The topic of human rights should always be of interest for human beings – it is not just a topic that can be viewed as having been “ticked off” of a list of things to learn.