

Negotiating the Place for Human Rights in Education- Implications for Curricular Integration

Astha Saxena, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, India

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Abstract

Human rights have long been an area of concern and active research since the inception of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. The World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-2014) has also re-emphasized the need for integrating human rights in school education as well as in the professional training of teachers through its inclusion in the teacher education curriculum. The role of education in building a rights-based perspective among young learners is crucial for imbibing human rights, building requisite attitudes and skills, and seeking its day-to-day applications & relevance in one's own life as well as the life of others. The present paper takes into account the diverse curricular strategies for integrating human rights within different school subjects. The sample for the present study included pre-service educators who are pursuing master's in education course at a university in Delhi, India. The main objective of the study is to collect and analyze pre-service educators' perceptions about the curricular integration of human rights in the school curriculum. Lesson planning was used as a tool to collect and analyze pre-service educators' perceptions about integrating human rights in different subject areas. The lesson plans constructed by the educators depict the integration of human rights within different curricular areas at the school level. The paper also provides concrete suggestions for integrating human rights within the mainstream curriculum at the school level and has implications for teachers, teacher educators, curriculum developers, and textbook writers.

Keywords: Human Rights, Human Rights Education, Teacher Education, Curriculum

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Introduction

Human rights are inalienable and indivisible rights that are bestowed upon every human being. The UDHR (1948) vehemently highlights the 30 human rights articles comprising most importantly right to life, freedom, liberty, equality, freedom from servitude, non-discrimination, employment, education, etc. These rights are indispensable for the all-around development of any child/human being. However, many-a-times children are not aware of these rights as a result of which their rights are at stake in cases of human rights violations, human trafficking, hatred, gender-based violence, etc. that severely hamper the growth of children. Often these human rights do not find a mention in the curricular materials, such as textbooks, workbooks, and other documents which leads to their side-lining even from the classroom transactions and discourse. This creates a gap in the understanding of these rights and their application in daily life. However, a major step in this direction has been taken by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 which mentions in its vision the adherence and responsible commitment to human rights in the making of a truly global citizen. The policy further refers to the integration of human rights within the school curriculum for equitable & inclusive education. As a result of the policy implication, the teacher education programmes across the country both at undergraduate (Bachelors of Education) as well as postgraduate levels (Masters in Education) have included a separate credit-based course on human rights education. The present study takes into account the perceptions of pre-service teacher educators (students of Masters in Education course) about integrating human rights education within different school subjects. The tool used to collect data comprises lesson plans developed by pre-service teacher educators who have integrated human rights within school subject areas. The lesson plans reveal pre-service teacher educators' perceptions about integrating human rights within the school curriculum. The different lesson plans indicate diverse approaches to integrating human rights with school subjects. This is also a reflection on the course on human rights education which they have studied as part of their Masters in Education programme.

Theoretical Framework

Human rights have been a neglected area of study in the school education system. Human rights are directly related to social justice and protecting the marginalized and vulnerable (Fitchett et al, 2011). Human rights education can be defined as a conscious effort both via content and process to develop among students awareness about their rights and responsibilities as well as to sensitize them toward the rights of others. This is to encourage a responsible action for protecting and securing one's own rights as well as the rights of others (Bittner, 1991). ***HRE declares a commitment to those human rights expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the UN Covenants, and the United States Bill of Rights.*** It asserts the responsibility to respect, protect, and promote the rights of all people. In 1993 the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna reaffirmed the importance of human rights education, training, and public information, declaring it ***“essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance, and peace.”*** The General Assembly proclaimed the period 1995 to 2004 the UN Decade for Human Rights Education.

There are two essential objectives for developing effective human rights education programme, which is learning about human rights & learning for human rights. Learning about human rights is mostly cognitive in nature and includes human rights history, the study of important documents, and implementation mechanisms with respect to human rights. All

segments of society need to be aware as well as understand the provisions of the UDHR and how these international standards affect governments and individuals. Learning for human rights involves understanding and embracing the principles of human equality and dignity and the commitment to respect and protect the rights of all people. This would mostly involve values clarification, attitudinal change, development of solidarity, and the skills for advocacy and action (Flowers et al, 2000). The ultimate aim of education for human rights is **empowerment**, by giving people the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to take control of their own lives and the decisions that affect them.

Earlier human rights were not institutionalized as part of the state or national curriculum frameworks (Bittner, 1991). With the formulation of the World Programme for Human Rights Education established by the UN General Assembly's resolution 59/113 (10 December 2004), the inclusion of human rights within the state and national curriculum, as well as teacher education programmes, got a new fillip. Recently, National Education Policy (2020) has further highlighted the role of human rights education in building a sustainable and peaceful nation.

There could be different approaches for integrating human rights within education, such as, few researchers have found elementary grades to be the ideal learning stage for human rights where certain elements of human rights education such as working in groups, sharing, taking turns, respecting the rights of others, and fair play (1982). Teachers also use certain interactive strategies for human rights education, such as cooperative learning, conflict resolution, role-playing, and simulations (ibid.). At the secondary level, human rights should transcend the disciplinary boundaries and could be taught in a more thematic way such as by including human rights violations, concepts of discrimination, prejudice, and international agreements (ibid.).

Research Design

The present research considers pre-service teacher educators' perceptions about integrating human rights within the school curriculum. Around 30 pre-service teacher educators were included as part of this study. These pre-service teacher educators have been exposed to and completed a course on human rights education. They were asked to develop a lesson plan while integrating human rights concepts within different curricular areas. The lesson plans developed by pre-service teacher educators were carefully scrutinized on three parameters – *approach toward integration of human rights, content for human rights included in the lesson, and level of awareness generated about human rights*. The research method adopted for analyzing the lesson plan is mostly content analysis around the aforementioned parameters and generation of themes.

Findings & Discussion

The lesson plans developed by pre-service teacher educators can be divided into subject-wise streams, such as science, social science, language, and mathematics. The following are subject-wise presentations of the approaches and content of human rights integrated across the curriculum.

SUBJECT	TOPIC/ SUBTOPIC	DESCRIPTION	PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN RIGHTS TO BE INTEGRATED	DIRECTIONS FOR FACILITATOR
Social Science	Freedom of Expression	Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.	UDHR Article 19; CRC articles 13, 14 -Freedom to express -Freedom to think and act consciously	To mediate the students from point A to B where A is the fill-in-the-blanks sentence and B is the child's own thought and how they're going toward compiling the two.
Social Science	Festivals and Traditions	Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share scientific advancement and its benefits.	UDHR Articles 16, 20, 27; CRC Articles 9, 10, 15, 31 To be able to be a part of any cultural community Protection of moral and material interests of each individual	The teacher shall facilitate the craft work to take place, distribute the material, facilitate the student's thought in the focused direction if needed and observe the performance of every student.
Science	Air Pollution	Humans can survive for some time without food, but we cannot survive even for a few minutes without air. This simple fact tells us how important clean air is to us. When air is contaminated by unwanted substances which have a harmful effect on both the living and the non-living, it is referred to as air pollution.	Consensus-based decision-making: Remind students that in order to ensure their own rights are met, they must be responsible for their actions and how they affect others	The facilitator will start the discussion by asking the question about the rising temperature of the city and its possible causes. The teacher will relate the uneven distribution of resources to human rights violations and probe them to figure out the examples from daily life.

Social Science	<p>UNDERSTANDING MARGINALIZATION:</p> <p>Introduction on three main communities as a case study to understand their marginalization. (Adivasis, Muslims and Dalits)</p>	<p>Equality is a value and right that has to be deepened and taught to be respected.</p> <p>This lesson looks more closely at the ways in which inequality affects certain marginalized communities by excluding these communities from mainstream society. This exclusion is both the cause and consequence of inequality.</p>	<p>Human rights are universal and inalienable; indivisible; interdependent and interrelated. They are universal because everyone is born with and possesses the same rights, regardless of where they live, their gender or race, or their religious, cultural or ethnic background.</p> <p>RIGHT TO EQUALITY</p> <p>as the fundamental human right guaranteed to every Indian citizen by the constitution of India is violated during the marginalization of certain communities.</p>	<p>The teaching-learning process shall include the use of a variety of pedagogic tools already given in the book like, storyboards, data, poems, and case studies. Deliberation around these already mentioned tools and additional activities will ensure the achievement of the objectives of human rights education.</p>
Science	Water Pollution	<p>The teacher will teach chapter 18 'Pollution of air and water' through lecture-cum-discussion method. The lecture will include the following pointers,</p> <p>Awareness about water scarcity.</p> <p>Definition of water pollution.</p> <p>Water pollutants and human's role.</p> <p>Case Study - Ganga Action Plan.</p> <p>Potable water and Water Purification.</p> <p>Measures to reduce water pollution.</p> <p>Activities like focus group discussion can be conducted in the classroom as well as the use of TLMs (PowerPoint presentation & documentaries).</p>	<p>Right to Health</p> <p>Right to a Healthy Environment</p> <p>Right to an adequate standard of living</p> <p>Right to clean water</p>	<p>The teacher will begin the lesson by engaging students in discussions.</p> <p>Teacher will prompt the learner's prior knowledge about pollution through a question-answer method.</p> <p>The teacher could use documentaries of case studies and climate change.</p> <p>The teacher can engage students in focus group discussion through which they can come up with measures to reduce water pollution.</p>

Science	Food	<p>The right to food is an inclusive right. It is not simply a right to a minimum ration of calories, proteins and other specific nutrients. It is a right to all nutritional elements that a person needs to live a healthy and active life, and to the means to access them.</p>	<p>Universality and Inalienability: All people everywhere in the world are entitled to them. The universality of human rights is encompassed in the words of Article 1 of the UDHR: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”</p> <p>Right to food as a human right means food must be available, accessible, and adequate; here Availability means that food should be available from natural resources either through the production of food, by cultivating land or animal husbandry, or through other ways of obtaining food, such as fishing, hunting or gathering. On the other hand, it means that food should be available for sale in markets and shops.</p> <p>Accessibility requires economic and physical access to food to be guaranteed. Economic accessibility means that food must be affordable. Individuals should be able to afford food for an adequate diet without compromising on any other basic needs, such as school fees, medicines or rent. And Adequacy means that the food must satisfy dietary needs, taking into account the individual’s age, living conditions, health, occupation, sex, etc.</p>	<p>Here the teacher should try to discuss the right to food through day-to-day examples and help them in understanding what it means to have the right to food and the means to practice it.</p>
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Language (English)	Bholi's struggles as a child	Bholi's sense of self-concept is very Negative and self-esteem is quite low because of her physical appearance (disfigured body due to dark small-pox pock marks), mental backwardness due to the injury to her head, and late speech acquisition with stammer- which has led to bullying, neglect and discrimination due to which her growth and development is hampered.	Equality and Non-Discrimination All individuals are equal as human beings and by virtue of the inherent dignity of each human person. No one, therefore, should suffer discrimination on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity, gender, age, language, sexual orientation, religion, political or other opinion, national, social or geographical origin, disability, property, birth or other status as established by human rights standards.	The facilitator will make the students read the paragraphs where this problem has been highlighted, and explain to them the importance of respecting and treating oneself and everyone else with care, empathy, kindness, and dignity through open discussions in the classroom
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Table 1: Subject-wise Integration of Human Rights in the School Curriculum

Approach toward integration of human rights

From the pre-service teacher educators' responses on the lesson planning sheets, it is clear that they have a clear concept of human rights as given in the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights) document. Also, they are able to integrate well the concept of human rights within different curricular topics. The pedagogical approaches adopted by pre-service teacher educators are mostly discussion, debate, case studies, and activity-based approaches in order to integrate human rights within different curricular areas. Few elements of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) are also evident in their responses especially when they said,

The teacher should try to discuss the right to food through day-to-day examples and help them in understanding what it means to have the right to food and the means to practice it.

Thus, the lesson plans aim at fostering critical thinking and problem-solving abilities among the learners with respect to bestowing the right to nutritious food to each and every person.

Another example of critical pedagogy can be cited as follows,

This lesson looks more closely at the ways in which inequality affects certain marginalized communities by excluding these communities from mainstream society. This exclusion is both the cause and consequence of inequality.

The above statement in the lesson tries to build a critical understanding among the learners with respect to unequal treatment faced by the marginalized sections of society. Further, it will stimulate the learners to think about ways of removing such inequalities from society and promoting equal rights for all.

Content for human rights included in the lesson

The content for human rights as presented in the lesson plans that the pre-service teacher educators intend to include in their lessons includes the human rights as mentioned in the UDHR (1948) & United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). While integrating the concept of human rights with diverse curricular subjects, the lesson plans display a seamless integration of subjects such as science, social science, and language. It was found that mathematics was not opted by pre-service teacher educators as a subject for integrating human rights. This suggests that teachers find science, social science, and language as primary subjects for integrating human rights. The content usually includes topics such as equality, democracy, marginalization, freedom of expression, air pollution, food, etc. All of these are global issues of concern that are also essential to achieving the SDGs by 2030 (*Transforming Our World- The 2030 Agenda*, UN). The content of the lesson plan also includes a few interesting activities based on human rights principles while integrating the curriculum subject. These activities are thought-provoking and reflective in nature and aim at sensitizing the students toward various categories of human rights. Some such activities are provided in annexure-1 & 2.

Level of awareness generated about human rights

The level of awareness generated among the students depends on the level of engagement with the topic/area. In the case of human rights, there are different levels of awareness for different levels of learners. Learning about human rights is largely cognitive, including human rights history, documents, and implementation mechanisms. Some of the groups in formal education especially emphasize the cognitive and attitudinal goals for human rights education (Flowers et al, 2000). As per the review of literature in the field of human rights, the following levels of awareness are recommended at each level of education.

Level of Education	Level of Awareness	Skills to be fostered
Primary level	Development level needs of children education, health, hygiene, and safety. First aid and a healthy environment basic can be included in the content for human rights	Listening skills, communication skills, reading skills
Middle level	Development of mind and body in this stage requires teachers to give directions about virtue, work behavior, and reflection	Tolerance for other's opinions & cultures, peace-building,
Secondary & Senior Secondary level	Students' behavior should conserve human rights; achieving these others rights will be automatically protected. <i>Speeches and debates on problems related to human rights- war, abuse, kidnapping, theft, murder, etc.</i> should be conducted	Value clarification, attitudinal change, conflict resolution, taking responsibilities

College level/University	Create an environment of awareness, so that every student is aware of his/her right. Incultation of <i>generosity and high morals</i> , not just for self-development but also for the <i>national and global development</i>	Empowering self & others, strategizing appropriate responses to injustice, active citizenship
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Table 2: Levels of Awareness about Human Rights at different Education Levels

The present study takes into account the level of awareness aimed at while developing lesson plans for school students. The content analysis of the lesson plans reveals that the main focus of lesson plans is on the following aspects:

- Development of basic understanding with respect to human rights education
- Discussion & debate around human rights for preserving one's own rights & rights of others
- Incultation of values of tolerance, empathy, justice, democracy, non-discrimination, and peace-building
- Communicating and promoting human rights through campaigns, seminars, dialogue, etc.

Conclusion

The present paper provided insights into the metacognitive world of pre-service teacher educators regarding their understanding and perceptions with respect to the integration of human rights within the school curriculum. The lesson plans developed by the sample pre-service teacher educators represent their ideas and pedagogical approaches coherently with regard to integrating human rights within the school curriculum. The data in the form of lesson plans and activities suggest that teacher educators are able to link human rights with diverse curricular areas at the school level, such as democracy, equality, reproduction, employment, food, marginalization, air pollution, etc. Since these pre-service teacher educators have also undergone a course on Human rights education, they are better able to integrate the human rights concepts with school subjects. This reiterates the importance of introducing human rights education courses at the teacher education level. The case studies and activities integrated into the lesson reflect the rights-based approach recommended for human rights education including the key principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment, and legality (UNICEF, 2007).

The lesson plans and the activities designed by pre-service teacher educators can provide ideas for developing textbooks for various school subjects while integrating human rights. This is also one of the important policy recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Therefore, the teacher education programmes, as well as school curriculum, should emphasize human rights education whether through formal or informal means within the curriculum so as to bring about awareness and empowerment among youth in making them responsible global citizens.

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Appendix-1

Activity 1

Topic: Air and Water Pollution

Sub-Topic: 1) Importance of air and water in our life

2) Effect of human activities on our natural environment

Level: Secondary

Human Rights Education Theme: 1) Importance of Human Rights in our life

2) Awareness of Human Rights

3) Introducing the Right to a healthy life

Material Required: sheets, pen, questionnaire layout, poster samples, colors, pencil, etc.

Objectives:

- 1) To explore awareness of people about their role in environmental pollution
- 2) To help students understand the importance of Human Rights (right to a healthy environment in general).
- 3) To spread awareness about human rights and the protection of the natural environment.

Process: After teaching the lesson ‘Pollution of air and water’ the teacher will give students a task to interview 3-5 people each. Students will be given the freedom to choose these people at their convenience. These people could be school staff, family, friends, neighbors, etc.

Instructions for an interview -

- The students will be asked to interview the selected people about their awareness of environmental pollution.
- The teacher can provide a layout and guide students to ask questions like -
How many vehicles do you and your family own?
How often are they put to use?
Do you practice carpooling or prefer using public transport?
What is the average amount of water you and your family consume daily?
Do you try to reuse the water for watering plants or other purposes?
- Apart from factual data students will also be asked to collect subjective opinions of people regarding the increase in environmental pollution.
- Students will be asked to record their data in written form.

After the task is complete, the teacher in the next class will engage students in discussion or ask students to present their data and their experience.

Later the teacher will explain about Human Right to a healthy environment along with other Human Rights like the right to Health, the right to an adequate standard of living, right to clean water and sanitation.

The second task following human rights teaching will be to make posters that could help in spreading awareness about the same. Students will be shown samples of some posters that can help encourage people to fight for their rights and work towards a healthy and safe environment.

Learning Outcomes: Through this activity, learners will be able to,

- Understand the need to spread awareness about both environmental pollution and human rights.
- Sensitise people around them and encourage them to work on protecting the environment for future generations.
- Respect the human rights of every citizen of the world.

Appendix-2

Activity 2

Topic/Sub-topic: Minorities and Marginalisation

Level: Secondary

Human Rights Education Theme: Equality, the constitution of India provides safeguards to religious and linguistic minorities as a part of their fundamental rights.

Objectives: The objective of the activity is to help students identify the factors that contribute to the marginalisation of minority groups and to be able to empathize with them.

Process:

Helping the class develop a definition of “Minority group”.

- Are they always in a minority mathematically?
- In what ways do minorities usually differ from the majority or dominant population?

The term minority is most commonly used to refer to communities that are numerically small in relation to the rest of the population. However, it is a concept that goes well beyond the numbers. It encompasses issues of power, access to resources and has social and cultural dimensions.

Brainstorm with the class a list of contemporary “minority groups”, starting with the local community. Be sure to include minorities based on class, ability, sexual orientation and other non-racial factors.

- Do these minority groups experience discrimination? In what ways?
- Senior students could eventually do case studies to find out about the size, location, history, culture, contemporary living conditions and key claims of specific minority groups.
- What are some circumstances that create minority groups in a population (e.g. indigenous peoples, immigrants, refugees, migrant workers)?

Learning Outcomes:

The students will be able to identify the umpteen factors that lead to the marginalization of minority communities and will also be acquainted with the significance of safeguards to protect the minority communities against the possibility of being culturally dominated by

the majority. They will learn to accept and appreciate diversity in all its manifestations.

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Contact email: Saxena.astha2010@gmail.com