

Thailand: The Montfort College Experience

ANURAK NIDHIBHADRABHORN

Saint Louis Marie Grignon’s motto was “God alone.” Fr. Montfort, as the 17th-century French priest was called, devoted his life to the needy and oppressed, and dedicated himself to educating the poor through the Brothers of Saint Gabriel, who were dedicated to teaching the ultimate truth, God, and universal love.

Montfort College is a private school, established in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in 1932. It was initially a boy’s school. Girls are now admitted to grades 10 to 12. The school has 4,684 students—2,298 in the primary and 2,386 in the secondary section—and over 400 teachers, 40 of whom are non-Thai. English, French, Chinese, and Japanese are taught. A program, where up to 80% of the subjects will be taught in English, will begin in 2004.

Montfort upholds these principles:

- Our ultimate goal is to know the truth and apply it to our daily life.
- *Labor omnia vincit*—diligence conquers all.

A Montfortian does all for God. Montfort supports students’ self-development, believing that all are capable of *phutha*, or enlightenment and awareness of all things.

Montfort has also a variety of indoor and outdoor activities and clubs. Students and teachers go outside the school to experience and be immersed in social realities.

Montfort and other schools have the duty to integrate students into society and help them relate with other people. The ideal society is one where justice, peace, and freedom prevail.

Montfort aims to produce students with the following qualities:

- *Fulfilled*. Developed in all areas—knowledge, physical, spiritual, social.
- *Warm*. Friendly, trustful, reliable.

- *Generous*. Helpful in all situations, giving to others and society.
- *Moral*. Joyful, and good to others.
- *Well rounded*. Skillful, knowledgeable, efficient, and sociable.

Students learn inside the classroom and through school activities such as field trips. At the same time, students develop their inner selves, spiritual gifts, and capabilities.

As students learn, they widen their horizons; cultivate new attitudes, visions, and wisdom; and become ready to join society.

How Human Rights Concepts are Integrated into School Subjects

The Brothers of Saint Gabriel’s Congregation set up its first school, Assumption College, in Bangkok a century ago. Montfort College is the congregation’s third school.

The school employs campus ministry activities to help students relate with the Creator, their fellow Thais, and nature. To help students understand this mission, we allow them to experience these relationships directly. We bring students to visit the homes of the elderly, for example, or to orphanages, hospitals, temples, cottage industries, and minority ethnic groups, to know society, the people’s suffering, their toil and exploitation, so that as adults the students will not allow history to repeat itself.

The school uses the learner-centered approach. We integrate various subjects. From time to time we take the students on field studies, during which they perform assigned tasks. For example, the art teachers ask them to draw pictures of places visited; the English teachers, to write a report in English; the science teachers, to write the names of the animals and plants they see; the social studies teachers, to observe how the people earn a living; and the mathematics teachers, to draw up a budget for their daily expenditure.

As a rule the field study begins with teachers discussing the site to be visited and types of activity they will assign the students. Students are told what the school expects and demands. After each field study, the students reflect on their activities and assess them using evaluation forms.

To achieve our education mission we should develop our students physically, mentally, cognitively, emotionally, and socially.

Curriculum Development

Human rights are the result of humanity’s increasing and persistent demands for dignity,

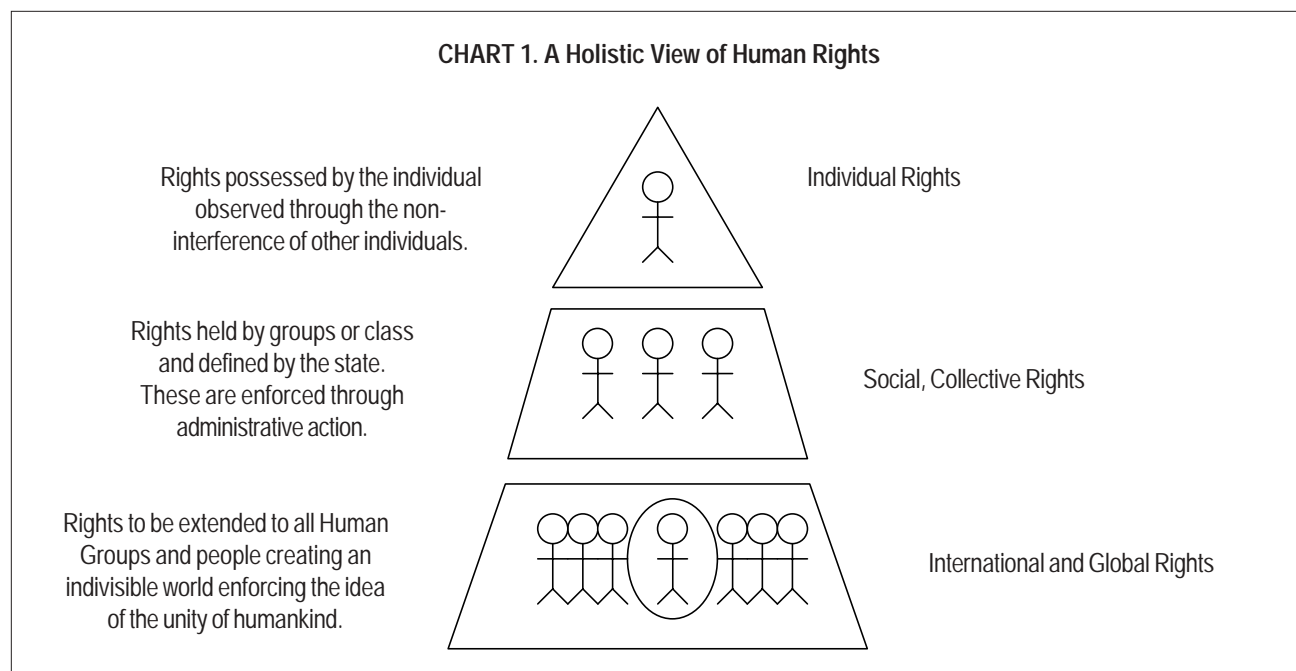
respect, justice, protection, and freedom—all needed for decent human existence (Chart 1).

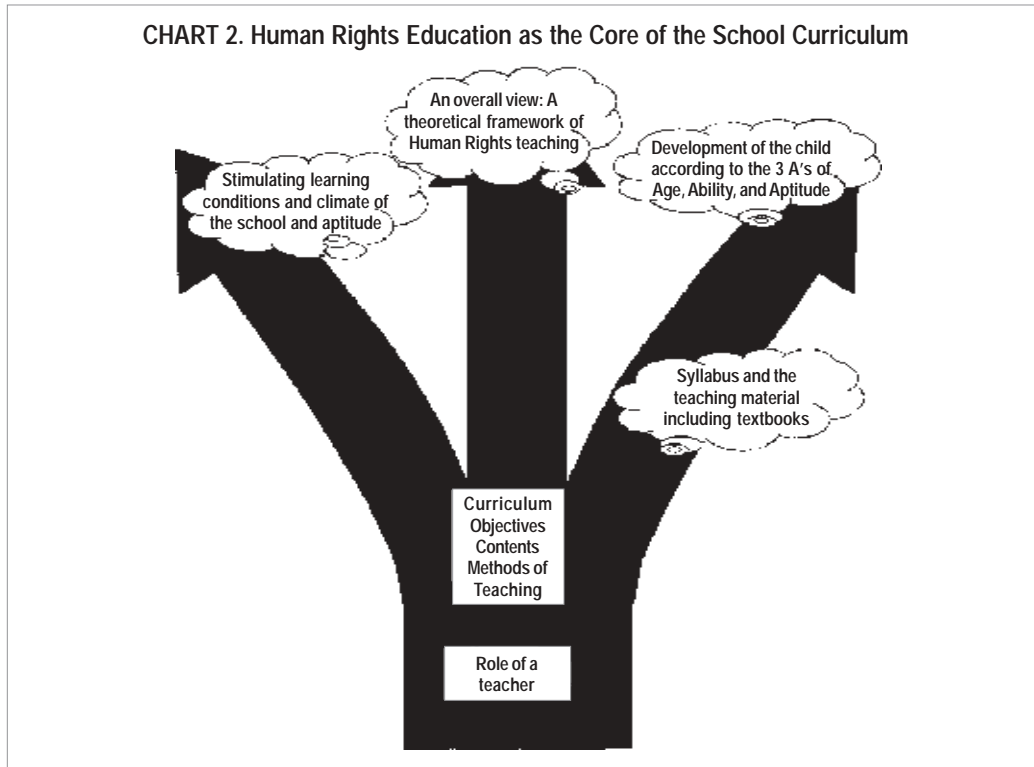
Montfort’s human rights education program, therefore, aims to achieve the following:

- Enhance the knowledge and understanding of human rights.
- Foster attitudes of tolerance, respect, solidarity, and responsibility.
- Develop skills to make respect for human rights a way of life (Chart 2).

The program adopts the following methodology, approaches, and strategies:

- Human rights education is the most important part of the core curriculum of general education.
- Human rights education can be promoted through extracurricular and co-curricular activities.
- Human rights education creates an atmosphere of respect for human rights. Values, attitudes, knowledge, and patterns of behavior should be integrated into the students’ personal experiences to help them view reality critically.





Human Rights Values

<i>Core values</i>	<i>Competencies</i>
1. Equality 2. Dignity 3. Freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation • Mutual sharing • Respect • Human relations • Self-esteem • Self-respect • Empathy • Understanding • Tolerance • Problem solving • Questioning • Creative expression • Self-confidence • Rational thinking • Listening • Decision making

<i>Core values</i>	<i>Competencies</i>
4. Solidarity/Unity 5. Justice 6. Truth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unity • Participation • Adaptability • Understanding • Dialogue • Flexibility • Equity • Nondiscrimination • Rationalization • Kindness • Courage • Unwillingness to compromise [on principles and values]

The curriculum focuses on the following themes: equality; freedom of choice and speech; dignity; solidarity; right to life; dialogue; physical, cultural, and moral integrity; honesty; and justice.

Subjects such as language, environmental studies, and mathematics can be infused with human rights values. Activities such as role-play, drama, debates, exhibition, use of charts, posters, drawings and sketches, and cartoons are recommended.

14 • HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN ASIAN SCHOOLS

Core Values—Cooperation

<i>Content</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Indicator for assessment</i>	<i>Method of assessment</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct activities in small groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Choose activities collectively. – Do activities collectively. – Emphasize the human rights core value of freedom of thought. – Discuss the values from their working experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students decide on materials with teacher's assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process indicator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expression of ideas by individual students – Collective decision – Active participation – Creation of something attractive and polished • Impact indicator: Expressing ideas about collective effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation • Questioning and listening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvise a melody individually, a song collectively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Collectively decide on a particular song. – Collectively decide on necessary instruments. – Collectively make instruments and sing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students decide on material with teacher's assistance (depending on type of instrument) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process indicators same as above, plus one more: harmonious singing • Impact indicator same as above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing a team game: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Prepare a playing area. – Play the game. – Emphasize core values through discussion after the game. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students decide on material with teacher's assistance (depending on type of instrument) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Playing as a team – Being a good sport (facial expressions) – Friendly parting after the game • Impact indicator same as above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above

Secondary Level

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Concept</i>	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Understand the meaning of human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality before the law • Common humanity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality before the law • Brief history of the law • Order in society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Weak vs. strong – Equal relationships • Anti-discrimination law • Commonalities of laws • Common humanity • Common heritage • Evolution • Diversity • Capacity for self-actualization (scientific evidence, education) • Socioeconomic inequality • Discrimination based on gender, caste, class, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies • Simulation • Inference • Remedies • Projects • Visit to jails, police stations, etc. • Interview with members of police, activities, victims, ex-convicts

Adapted from: HURIGHTS OSAKA, "South Asia Training Workshop on Human Rights Education in Schools," *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume four (Osaka: Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center, 2001), pp. 62–64.

Human rights education
and the elementary-level curriculum

In the upper-primary stage, the major subject areas relevant to human rights education are social studies, science, and languages.

The human rights dimension lies in providing a critical understanding of Thai society throughout history, focusing on the position of women.

Children should be made aware of legislative reforms and the role of international organizations in uplifting the status of women and condition of children.

Human rights education
and the secondary curriculum

Secondary schools offer a much wider and varied range of opportunities to teach human rights and to practice and observe rights and duties.

“The global perspective” and “major concerns” are integrated into the social sciences. Human rights can be taught in the context and understanding of the following:

- “small” society—family life, school, and community;
- “big” society—community, country, and state;

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Content</i>
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thai history • History of world civilization • Thai’s cultural heritage and composite nature Focus on understanding diversity and consideration for other’s rights.
Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an appreciation for different ways of living, interdependence, and adherence to common values by diverse cultures. • Promote values of democracy, secularism, socialism, and national integration. • Study issues relating to the environment, arms race, and human rights. Introduce the students to a comprehensive view of human rights and the interconnection between secularism and democracy.
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content—thematic and additional language content to help promote awareness of human rights. • Convey humanistic values through folk tales, legends, poems, essays, and dramas.
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress the development of scientific temper and attitude, cultivate social and ethical values against possible misuse of science. • Biology can explore the scientific bases for human rights and social prejudice. • Science can include teaching of health, diseases and contribution of the World Health Organization.
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach elementary statistics and graphing, etc. • Natural science and Mathematics, etc.

16 • HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN ASIAN SCHOOLS

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Contents</i>
Literature and language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer the opportunity to study the rights of children and young people. • Promote culture exchange with schools in other countries and promote harmonious social relations, peace, freedom, and justice.
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights as it covers topics such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – growth of democracy, – development of trade unions, – social reforms, – independence movement, – industrial revolution, and – impact of colonization. <p>All of the above might be linked with the study of the International Labour Organization and its efforts to ensure just and equitable conditions for all workers, and to abolish child labor and abuse of human dignity.</p>
Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress environment and pollution issues. • Study environmental and ecological problems.
Civic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on Thai democracy, including topics such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the individual and society, – the Constitution, – the judiciary, – democracy, – foreign policy, – the UN, and – problems of human rights, disarmament, new international order, etc.
Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus mainly on the study of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the Thai economy, – economic development, and – social justice. <p>Cover areas such as the rights of consumers and consumer protection.</p>
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress the development of scientific temper: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – cultivation of ethical and social values against possible misuse of science. • Biology can explore the scientific bases for human rights and social prejudice. • Science can include teaching of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – health, – diseases, and – contribution of the World Health Organization. • Teach elementary statistics and graphing, which may be used to interpret data on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – food and population, – agriculture and industrial outputs, and – expenditure on armaments and on education. • Natural science and mathematics also reflect the modern scientific and technological work that may either benefit humankind or work to its detriment.

- forms of government—democratic, dictatorship, parliamentary;
- United Nations;
- the world today—East-West problems, armaments, events and personalities in international affairs;
- the world around us—studies of individual countries;
- the family and society—economic, political, and cultural interdependence;
- religion and philosophy of life—what we believe in; and
- analysis of different religions and traditional beliefs and practices.

Teaching Human Rights through Cocurricular Activities

Human rights education goes beyond subject teaching to organization of other activities and should be considered as integral to the whole education process. Activities that promote cooperation and group living can include human rights content. Teachers can involve elementary-school children in creative tasks such as

- paper cutting;
- drawing;
- collage;
- work related to science, environmental studies, and social studies;
- exhibitions;
- displays; and
- debate on human rights issues.

These activities lead to an understanding of human rights as the children learn to cooperate and respect each other.

Field visits

Several years ago Montfort started a program of field visits for students to an indigenous people's community in Chiangmai province. This extracurricular activity provides students the chance to know the Pagayo hill tribes first-hand through a visit to a dormitory for Pagayo hill tribe students, who study at a nearby town's high school. Montfort students live with the Pagayo students for a few days and experience their culture and way of life and visit the Pagayo hill tribes in the mountains. Montfort students thus learn to value Pagayo hill tribes' rights to their own culture, livelihood, and way of life. Montfort started to offer this field exposure program to students of other schools, mainly from well-to-do families. The program provides possibly the only opportunity for students to learn about indigenous people's life.

This program is a means of making students appreciate human rights from the perspective of the disadvantaged.

Conclusion

Educational institutions must incorporate human rights concepts and principles in their curriculum and activities. We need to teach our children to cultivate and uphold values such as the dignity of each person, justice, and protection and freedom of the individual.