

Teaching Human Rights Courses

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The 1997 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand provides for the protection of the dignity, rights and liberty of the people (Section 4). The schools, guided by the National Education Act of 1999 and the Basic Education Course of 2001, are obliged to promote and protect them.

The constitutional provision relates to the aims of *Serviam* (literally, I will serve), the philosophy and motto of Mater Dei School. It also relates to the school's vision, which recognizes human value, dignity, rights and equality. Our philosophy is to train people to gain high virtue. From the very beginning, our teachers and school staff have been emphasizing the need to engage in activities that develop in the students a sense of service and social welfare by upholding the principle of *Serviam* I am obliged to serve, fair and in peace - the guideline in the Ursuline Schools in Thailand. We make sure that the course of education in every learning area of the school curriculum conforms to this principle.

Since 2001 the school has been carrying out a human rights education policy in association with other institutions such as UNESCO and the Committee on Human Rights Education of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (which has Associate Professor Valai Na Pombejr and Khun Sumitra Phongsathorn as honorary advisers). Human rights are most especially integrated in the social studies, religion, and culture learning areas. We hold workshops and teacher training activities on the integration of human rights in these learning areas. We think that it is important for teachers to have continuous program on developing teaching methodologies for human rights education, while at the same time

making them participate in improving the human rights content in the learning areas.

In addition, we continuously emphasize the development of human rights lesson plans, and the practice of human rights in line with our status, role, freedom and duty as good members of the local and global societies. This practice includes participation in activities aimed at ensuring that human rights affect life in both Thai and global societies to obtain peace. This is consistent with the learning standard in every step of the secondary curriculum content specified by the Ministry of Education: culture, population, duty and living.

Education

All teachers have to emphasize in the learning activities inside and outside the school the integration of international human rights standards (including child rights that are part of human rights under the Constitution of Thailand). An interdisciplinary approach is used in the individual courses. Human rights can be integrated in the following five learning areas in basic social education for every class from primary level 1 (Grade 1) to secondary level 6 (Grade 12):

First: Religion, morality, ethics, and human rights

Second: Culture, population, duty, and living. This content is also emphasized in

the following elective courses and as additional content in secondary level subjects:

Academic Year 2002:

elective course on human rights education in secondary school level 2 (Grade 8)

Academic Year 2003:

elective course on Peace Education in secondary school level 3 (Grade 9)

Academic Year 2004:

elective course on human rights education and the role of Thai women in secondary school level 4 (Grade 10). It is also treated as additional content in individual subjects that all students take.

Academic Year 2005:

elective course on juvenile justice education in secondary school level 4 (Grade 10). It is also in an elective course on legal education in secondary school level 5 (Grade 11).

- Third: Economics and human rights (separate basic course)
- Fourth: History and human rights (separate basic course)
- Fifth: Geography and human rights (separate basic course).

The Mater Dei School courses on human rights are recognized by other institutions for leading the way in learning and teaching human rights, especially in relation to social education, religion and culture. This is shown in the school celebration of “Universal Human Rights Day” on 7-8 December 2005 that was attended by representatives of other institutions

such as the Surasakmontri School, Committee on Human Rights Education of the Parliament, the Office of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand, the Ministry of Education (MOE), UNESCO Bangkok Office, the Office of the Fundamental Education Commission, the Office of Education Bangkok Area 1, and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace.

The Mater Dei social science teachers have also been working with public schools in strengthening the latter’s human rights education programs.

In addition, Mater Dei School has been conferred the honor of having a representative in the ad hoc subcommittee of the MOE for the development of supplementary learning materials for human rights education course in 2002. These model learning materials were meant to help teachers all over the country teach human rights in social studies, religion, and culture subjects in the secondary level.

All teachers involved in the development of the content of human rights education in the school work well and continuously with the national education authorities. They work with both private and government sectors including independent organizations from the five regions of the country. All representatives of these institutions cooperate excellently, sacrifice and dedicate themselves to the work of realizing the worth and dignity of human beings. They all stress the “Virtue of Human Rights” that gives everyone the chance to have loving kindness; assist and respect each other; and happily live together in society. They all believe that human rights education leads to human rights culture in Thai and global societies, which in turn creates peace.