

# Introduction

**H**URIGHTS OSAKA celebrates its twentieth year of existence in 2014. Its regional program contributes to this celebration by continuing the gathering and dissemination of information on human rights education initiatives in Asia and the Pacific. As a human rights center, HURIGHTS OSAKA promotes human rights in the region by highlighting human rights education experiences of various institutions. HURIGHTS OSAKA also promotes human rights in the region through other activities such as research, material development, training and consultancy.

The regional human rights education program of HURIGHTS OSAKA focused solely on the formal education system during the first twelve years of program implementation. Under this program, HURIGHTS OSAKA undertook research, material development and training activities in South, Southeast and Northeast Asia. Resource limitation prevented HURIGHTS OSAKA from undertaking activities in the Central and Western subregions of Asia and in the Pacific.

Its previous annual publication, *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, featured articles on programs, projects and other initiatives related to the school system. But since there were many more human rights education programs and projects outside the formal education system not only in Asia but also in the Pacific, HURIGHTS OSAKA decided to widen the coverage of the annual human rights education publication and launched *Human Rights Education in Asia-Pacific* in 2010.

This publication, on its fifth year, continues to cover as many human rights education initiatives in the region as possible and gives them the opportunity to be known by many educators in the region and beyond. It is meant to build a significant database on the state of human rights education in Asia and the Pacific. It aims to provide information on the story behind the development of human rights education programs, projects and other initiatives; the variety of experiences in their implementation; the support they receive from individuals and institutions that also largely shapes them; the contexts that define the challenges they face and have to face in the future; the results of their implementation that are lessons for other educators to learn from; and the indications of better respect, protection and realization of human rights in the family, school, workplace, and society that might

have arisen. And as expressed repeatedly in the volumes of this annual publication, the recognition of the people and institutions involved in these programs, projects and other initiatives on human rights education is needed in order to inspire their continuation and further development.

The continuation of this annual publication is very much dependent on the goodwill of the contributors. They all share HURIGHTS OSAKA's goal of promoting human rights in the region. Some contributors shared articles that have already been written sometime before, while others took time and effort to make articles based on existing documentation of their work. There are certainly many more possible contributors who should be included in this annual publication. HURIGHTS OSAKA will continue to search for them and make sure that whatever they are doing regarding the promotion of human rights are known beyond their respective circles and networks.

The articles in this fifth volume of the publication prove the success of the continuing search for programs, projects and other initiatives on human rights education. They consist of a mix of initiatives in the formal, non-formal and informal systems of education that paint what we already know as an eclectic situation of human rights education in the Asia-Pacific.

The articles in this volume generally cover five major themes: play, pedagogy, policies, professional ethics and political support. Each theme points to aspects of human rights education that need appropriate attention and support.

## **Play**

Three articles dwell on the role of play in the life of children. All the articles express concern for the view that play does not contribute to learning and thus should be properly managed in terms of time and place. Two articles stress the lack of space for children to play due to greater concern for constructing buildings in urban areas in the name of urban development. These two articles also point to right to play as part of child rights.

Kathy Wong explains the factors that affect children's play in Hong Kong. They consist of children being made to play alone instead of being with fellow children, of parents having very little time to play with their own children, of children being given toys instead of letting them make their own materials to play with, of less opportunity to join children's programs (such as children's camps) due to financial constraints, and of play being an indoor activity instead of an activity done in open spaces outside buildings.

The key factor in this issue is the adults' view about the value of play to child development. They see play as hindrance to the "development" of children, which according to this view is possible only within the formal education system and other activities that are programmed to complement school activities (such as learning sports and playing musical instruments) and should occupy much of the time of children. As a result, children engage less in active forms of play outside the house, and pressured to study more instead.

Ms. Wong also points to the need to see play in various contexts such as play for children who can join community activities, play for those with special needs, and even play for children who are in hospitals. These varying situations of children do not mean less play for them, rather they show creative ways of making children enjoy play in their respective contexts.

Considering this situation, there is a need to make the public and concerned government officials reminded of the value of play in child development and of the need to adopt new ways of making children enjoy play under different situations.

The article of Usha Ajithkumar Malayankandy echoes the problems in Hong Kong regarding play. She points to the problems posed by the perception of the value of play by the parents and the teachers in India. The results of her survey indicate the tendency to support the role of play in the emotional, social and physical development of children by both parents and teachers. But the parents do not see play as important to the intellectual development of children as much as the teachers. And yet the teachers are not necessarily making the effort of using play in the learning process. The general perception of parents and teachers remains the same: play is for spare time, and should be enjoyed only after study.

The article of Gerry Lanuza, on the other hand, provides examples of play as means of socializing children on gender issues. His study of school children illustrates the manner by which children deal with issues affecting girls and boys, mothers and fathers, wives and husbands, and other situations of women and men. He also explains that while children play inside the classroom, this is done only when the teacher is not around or during break time.

The children also engage in play when they get bored in the learning process. This portrays play as a coping mechanism in boring classroom session.

Play must always be fun and has a role in children's processing of various issues regarding gender. Play socializes children on how they should behave as girls and boys; it allows them to treat gender issues in their own way – in their fun way. But play also exposes children to the experience of following rules in order to enjoy the activity. They do not enjoy play when the rules that they have agreed on are not followed.

## Pedagogy

The comment of the primary school children in Mr. Lanuza's study about the lack of attraction to the teacher's use of play in the class reveals an important pedagogical issue. The children are not attracted to the plays used by the teacher because they are boring, i.e., they have less action and laughter. The "pedagogical plays" may also be difficult and thus not always replicated outside the classroom as ordinary play. His study indicates that even though play is employed as part of the learning process it may not be an enjoyable experience and thus not effective as a tool of learning.

For students in the secondary school, a different pedagogy is necessary. This is true in learning serious issues such as discrimination. The article of Daisuke Nojima explains the need for a pedagogy that allows students to understand the issue not merely from a personal standpoint but also from a structural perspective.

He explains the issue of discrimination against the *Burakumin*, those who belong to a section of the Japanese population who were relegated to the lowest rung in societal hierarchy several hundred years ago and yet still suffer the stigma of being segregated from mainstream society even at present. He suggests the use of the structural approach of analyzing the issue to provide the students the chance to think of solutions to the problems involved. And this can be done using the simulation method used by peace educators.

He also suggests the participatory manner of employing the simulation method to ensure the involvement of different people, and consequently the emergence of diverse views and suggestions.

The simulation method employed by Mr. Nojima has however been criticized by fellow educators for lacking empathy with those who suffer the discrimination. In one sense, the criticism is that the discussion of the serious issue has been converted into a game-like activity instead of a treating it as very serious personal tragedy.

The anti-*buraku* discrimination education program in Japanese schools put much emphasis on the personal feelings and thoughts of those who are suffering from discrimination and those who realize the gravity of the problems suffered by the discriminated. Thus writing notes and reading stories of the discriminated people are important parts of this pedagogical process.

On the other hand, the article of the Citizens Archive of Pakistan (CAP) provides another example of pedagogy aimed at students. It presents the experience of using various types of materials on significant historical events (such as films, spoken words and photography) that students discuss in interactive manner. Using the workshop format, CAP notes that students relate the human rights they learn to their personal stories and also see the cultural and societal barriers to stopping human rights violations. Their knowledge of the problems in society expands as a result, with the inclusion of human rights implications of these problems.

There is certainly a need for both personal and societal approaches in human rights education. Any participant in human rights education program or activity has to be affected emotionally and psychologically by the issues being discussed but also allowed to understand that the problems are part of the societal structure and require structural solutions drawn from “objective” analysis of the situation.

The article of Supattra Limpabandhu provides an example of how the human rights issues should be understood by adults participating in human rights education activities. She presents the experience of doing participatory workshops for adults who occupy important positions in society (as government officials, members of social organizations, staff of non-governmental organizations, etc.) and therefore have the opportunity to act on the human rights issues at hand.

The workshops aim not only to study the human rights standards but also to facilitate the creation of mechanism for collective action on human rights issues. Ms Limpabandhu finds the use of adult participatory learning method to be most effective to attain this aim. The participants are able to express their views freely that facilitate better understanding of the concepts being studied. To a large extent, the use of participatory adult pedagogy provides joy to the adult participants in much the same way that children appreciate their classroom activity if it is fun. The enjoyment of an educational activity is an important component of a learning process. Participatory activities, or plays or games for children, create the condition for better appreciation of the subject being learned.

The article of the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM) presents the view that the best practices in human rights education are those that involve the active participation of students and teachers, and also school officials. Under the whole-school approach, the implementation of human rights education program requires student involvement in both curricular and non-curricular activities. Student activities comprise an important component that requires the students themselves to implement human rights activities within the school and the local community. Such participatory learning method however should link the curricular and the non-curricular activities. What happens inside the classroom under the different curricular subjects should support activities in the school grounds. This link is an important part of the whole school approach.

## **Policies**

The best practices on human rights education in the school system are most likely to continue and be adopted by many more schools if they are supported by appropriate educational policies. The article of Tiffany Jones provides bases for the argument that there is a likelihood of human rights protection or less human rights violations in schools where students know the existence of educational policies supporting human rights. In her study of schools in several states of Australia, the existence of policies protecting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) students contributes to less discrimination, bullying and other problems affecting them. The awareness of students of these government and school policies comprises an important element in improving the situation of LGBTIQ students. And this awareness can only happen through human rights education activities including creating “supportive school environments through messages of inclusion and affirmation (supportive posters and displays, library resources, equal treatment of same sex partners at events, flexible options in gendered uniforms, and the dissemination of information about counseling.)”

Such policies should cover the development professional standards for teachers and school administrators. The incorporation of human rights principles in these professional standards should help in the teaching and learning of human rights in the school system.

## Professional ethics

The article of Nguyen Thanh Hoan discusses the efforts to improve the professional ethical standards for Vietnamese school teachers. The proposed professional ethical standards incorporated various concerns, including provisions that relate to human rights. The proposed professional ethical standards guide teachers in their relationships with students, colleagues, parents and society. They stress respect for privacy, protection of students, support for the full development of students, non-discrimination towards the parents, and general protection of human rights (specifically, political, civil and other basic rights of the people).

The professional ethical standards for teachers and school administrators are important materials for learning human rights. They are important materials in teacher training and as well as training for school administrators (both pre- and in-service training programs) and also for human rights education within the school system. The whole school approach discussed earlier would benefit from teachers and school administrators who are guided by human rights-influenced professional ethical standards.

At the personal level, teachers who believe in human rights and try to incorporate them in their teaching embody the characteristics of human rights educators. Anamika's article cites several examples of teachers in Taipei whose belief in human rights influences their pedagogy inside the classroom.

Anamika's study of three Grade Six teachers in a Taipei school reveals that personal belief in human rights leads to "critical thinking, commitment and belief in human rights, belief in efficacy of human rights education, belief in democratic communication instead of giving instruction, zeal of a learner, facilitator not controller, observer, activist, ability to handle challenges, patience, and tolerance." These personal characteristics should by and large be the very same professional standards for teachers in general. Those who maintain these characteristics would be able to respect human rights of their students, their colleagues and the parents. They would also be able to effectively facilitate the learning of human rights by the students inside and outside the classroom.

## Political support

Human rights education initiatives of teachers, individuals, schools and organizations in society (including non-governmental organizations) benefit from strong political commitment to human rights by the government. Such political commitment takes the form of laws on human rights; human rights institutions (human rights offices or commissions, human rights ombudsperson); national and local human rights policies, programs and projects; officials assigned to work on human rights; and funding for human rights.

The articles of Sev Ozdowski and Nina Burridge (in the case of Australia) and Anamika (in the case of Taiwan) provide examples of government support for human rights that benefit human rights education in general. The link of national initiatives on human rights or human rights education to the international initiatives (such as the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education and the World Programme for Human Rights Education) is important. Such link provides international standards by which national human rights education initiatives can be developed and assessed.

In Australia, the absence of a national law on human rights did not stop the government from adopting several measures that support human rights and human rights education. There are laws on specific rights of people (such as laws on rights of people with disability, women, the aged, racial minorities, etc.) and national human rights institution that provide legal support for human rights education. The Australian government adopted the Australian Human Rights Framework and the National Human Rights Action Plan that clearly support human rights education.

In Taiwan, the government issued the 1993 blueprint on human rights education, supported the establishment of a Human Rights Education Committee in 2001, and provided funding to a number of human rights education conferences (local and international), workshops and projects.

These are examples of political support for human rights education from the government. As experienced in Australia and Taiwan, such political support helped mobilize people in the government, academe and the civil society, as well as made financial and other resources available, for a variety of activities aimed at institutionalizing human rights education.

The article of Nina Burridge and her colleagues, on the other hand, provides a reminder on the need to push for wider implementation of the existing political support for human rights education. The article discusses the



results of a comprehensive research on the extent of integration of human rights education into Australian school curriculums. The research results point to the need to use more curricular subjects and other aspects of the school system for human rights education.

## **Place for Children**

This volume includes several appendices consisting of the declarations from the three conferences of the Child Friendly Asia Pacific Network. These declarations provide important guide on transforming the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into local government policies, programs, mechanisms, projects and activities. In 2009, the members of this regional network advocated for

Educating community through the implementation of public awareness campaigns on the specific issues and needs of children and the important role individuals, organizations, business and governments can play as [child] rights advocates.

In 2011, they agreed on the need to ensure that “all adults engaging with children are aware of, and secure the rights of children, including adults acquiring the knowledge and skills that best meet the needs of all children.” In 2013, they encouraged “education[al] institutions at all levels to implement child friendly curriculum programs and to adopt strategies for meaningful participation of children and youth in decision making at all levels of management of the institution.”

This Asia-Pacific network of child rights advocates play an important role in making local governments able to realize child rights within their local jurisdiction in very specific and practical forms. The role of education, from awareness-raising to training activities, is a given requirement in implementing the regional network ideas and suggestions at the local level.

## **Linking Initiatives**

Despite the seeming weakening of international attention to human rights education, human rights education initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region remain strong. Some of these initiatives are not necessarily denominated as human rights education programs, projects or activities. They can be

programs, projects or activities that address specific issues relevant to specific societies or groups of people. As shown by some of the articles in this volume, issues regarding history, gender, play and even professional ethical standards have human rights implications. HURIGHTS OSAKA highlights the human rights components of the educational programs, projects or activities needed to put these issues into the mainstream consciousness of the people as much as make them part of government policies and mechanisms.

HURIGHTS OSAKA also facilitates the linking of these programs, projects or activities across geographical and other “borders.” However, HURIGHTS OSAKA should probably be more active in creating these linkages, making use of its networking capacity.

In celebrating its twentieth year, HURIGHTS OSAKA needs to see how to further improve its program for Asia-Pacific. In doing so, it needs to explore collaboration with different institutions on different issues and programs. But there is also value in strengthening old ties and looking at new initiatives with previous partners. A serious consideration of all these possibilities is probably the best way to celebrate two decades of HURIGHTS OSAKA existence.

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