

A Decade of Human Rights Education in Public Schools in Taiwan

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Human rights education in Taiwan's primary and secondary schools during the last decade came about as a result of the human rights movement that arose earlier. Despite numerous initiatives that have been undertaken, human rights education in Taiwan's school system still faces significant challenges.

Brief Historical Background

Advocacy for human rights and human rights education has a short history in Taiwan. Close to forty years of martial law (1949-1987) preoccupied people with fear of the "white terror" (euphemism for martial law). After the lifting of martial law in late 1980s, the Taiwanese society became more open and a wide range of social and political movements demanding human rights arose. In a broad sense, the emergence of the different social and political movements enhanced the human rights awareness of the people. The education reform movement appeared as one of these social movements at that time. In 1994, a large-scale demonstration demanding education reform took place. Four main demands were proposed to improve the education system: 1) reduction of the number of classes in schools as well as that of students per class; 2) increase in the number of secondary schools and universities; 3) modernization of the education system and its institutions; and 4) drafting of the Fundamental Law of Education.

Although these four demands were not directly related to human rights education, the ideas implied were consonant with education about and for human rights. For example, the demand to reduce the number of students per class or the number of classes in schools was based on the view that smaller classes or less crowded schools provided better learning experience, more attention from teachers, and more learning space. The demand for the expansion of post-compulsory education was aimed at providing greater educational opportunities for more students, and the lessening of intense competition among students in passing university entrance examinations.

The social and political movements in the 1980s and 1990s evoked in many people the need to pay attention and critique the established education system and practices. The traditional over-emphasis on credentialism, intellectualistic education (or cognitive education) and rote learning in schools were spotlighted and put under review. As a result, the established national curriculum, education system and institutions were reviewed and examined. In the succeeding years, education and curricular reform that took place paved the way for the implementation of human rights education in the school system.

Education Reform

The education reform measures during the 1990s can be summarized into the following seven points:

- 1) Advocacy of the idea that education itself is a human right. This fundamental understanding of education consists of several points such as free and compulsory education; equal opportunity to higher education; promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental liberties of individuals; enhancement of understanding between various nations, ethnicities and religious groups; the prior right of parents to decide on how to educate their children; and positive discriminatory care and measures for children with special needs.
- 2) Improvement of the educational opportunities of the disadvantaged or the minorities and de-regulation of the established education system. The disadvantaged are divided into four groups: the indigenous people, female and sexual orientation minority, students with special needs (physical or psychological), and people with distinct dialects.
- 3) Raising of the percentage of students going to school at every level.
- 4) Adjustment in the ratio of the number of students going to comprehensive schools to that of students going to vocational schools. In other words, allowing more students to be able to go to comprehensive schools and universities.
- 5) Change and increase in access to higher education, in addition to the traditional way of entrance examinations. Students are able to access higher education through more flexible ways rather than the conventional single channel—taking examination. In this way, they may enjoy happier life in schools.
- 6) Planning to extend the compulsory education from nine years to twelve

years. Regretfully, this measure so far has never been fulfilled due to budgetary problem.

- 7) Raising the quality of education by increasing budget for education. (Hwang, 2000)

This education reform in some sense built an environment where human rights education could take its root. In spite of this, learning about and for human rights in the school system for the Taiwanese remains a short history. Human rights education is on the list of seven important issues of the Taiwanese national curriculum guidelines—Grade 1-9 Curriculum Guidelines (G 1-9 CG),¹ which can be seen as an outcome of education and curricular reform (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2003). Until the G1-9CG was implemented in 2001 human rights education has never been introduced formally in school. However, the implementation of the new curriculum guidelines does not guarantee the success of human rights education in schools. Since G1-9CG¹ provides that important issues should be taught in cross-curricular way, not as an independent subject, there was a concern that some of these important issues—including human rights—would be ignored and disappear. Especially under the pressure of credentialism, students were driven to put their efforts and concentration on the learning of ‘basic subjects’, e.g., literacy, numeracy, natural science and social studies.

Government Support for Human Rights Education

The achievement of promoting human rights education in schools during 2001-2009 period was inconspicuous. Very few teachers voluntarily facilitated the learning about human rights in class since many teachers saw teaching about human rights as an excessive work. The government supported a significant number of projects to promote human rights education, as shown in the following chronological table.

Table 1. Significant Events Promoting Human Rights Education

Time	Significant Events
1997	Workshops on Developing Human Rights Education Materials ² and Workshops of Human Rights Educators ³ undertaken collaboratively by MOE and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
1998	As a new item in education, human rights education considered as part of the new curriculum guidelines at the initial stage of their formation. Eight half-day workshops held from March to June 1998 under the Workshop on Developing Curriculum and Materials for Human Rights Education. ⁴ Twenty-five in-service teachers took part in the workshops. (Tang, 2005)
2000	Seed Teachers' Workshops on Human Rights Education ⁵ held in Taipei, Kaoshung and Kimen, with a total of one hundred fifty participants.
April 2001	The MOE commissioned the Human Rights Education Committee (HREC) ⁶ to conduct a series of activities to enhance human rights education, including funding of related research and studies, collection of case studies as models for practitioners, and awarding of excellent teaching plans.
April 2001	The MOE started to implement the Project on Human Rights Education (PHRE) ⁷ and called for proposals on Content Analysis of Textbooks ⁸ , Project on Collection of and Comparison between Issues related to Human Rights, ⁹ Comparative Research on Human Rights Education in Different Countries, ¹⁰ Survey on Human Rights Consciousness of K1–12, ¹¹ International Conference on Human Rights Education, ¹² and Seminar in Human Rights Education Policy. ¹³
2003	Human Rights Education Information Center issued the electronic news on human rights education ¹⁴ with support from the Department of Elementary Education of MOE.
2005	Human Rights Education Committee (HREC) reorganized and replaced by the Human Rights Education Advisory Group (HREAG). ¹⁵
2005	HREAG collaborated with the National Institute for Compilation and Translation ¹⁶ to implement two projects on publication of original works or translations of excellent human rights education materials.
2005–2007	A three-year Project on Friendly Campus Human Rights Education Model School ¹⁷ was implemented in 2005, 2006 and 2007. In 2005, forty-six schools were selected as model schools, fifty-six in 2006, and thirty-six in 2007. After a process of review and assessment, schools were awarded first, second and third places. Their video documentaries and records were left as valuable data for more studies and as models for other schools to follow.
2006	The Fundamental Law on Education ¹⁸ was amended to prohibit corporal punishment in school.
2007	Human Rights Education Information Center and Human Rights Resource and Advisory Center combined into Human Rights Education Advisory and Resources Center. ¹⁹ This center has four goals: 1) To undertake study on policies and curriculums related to human rights education; 2) To collect human-rights-education-related documents and materials; 3) To provide advice on human rights education affairs; and 4) To enhance and improve human rights education.
February 2008	The Advisory and Counselling Group on Human Rights Curriculum and Pedagogy (ACGHRCP) ²⁰ was organized with the assistance of the Department of Elementary Education of MOE. ²¹ ACGHRCP aims to provide advice to human rights educators in schools and to build a bridge between policy-makers in the central office and educators in the local areas.

(Huang, 2002, 2008; Lin, 2009; Tang, 2005)

The Advisory and Counselling Group on Human Rights Curriculum and Pedagogy (ACGHRCP) is still active in promoting human rights education and plays an important role as the bridge between the central office and the local educators. The leader of ACGHRCP, Professor Chia-Fan Lin, recruited around twenty members from different universities, schools and NGOs to join this group. ACGHRCP aims to help schoolteachers integrate human rights knowledge and skills into the curriculum and pedagogy. ACGHRCP undertakes the following activities:

- 1) Hosting of panel discussions in different areas;
- 2) Offering counsel and advice to human rights teachers;
- 3) Hosting annual conferences;
- 4) Organizing in-service teacher training events, such as reading groups, workshops, panel discussions or seminars;

- 5) Providing training for the leaders of the working team in every county;
- 6) Providing training for members of the working team in each county.

ACGHRCP also translates international teaching materials such as *ABC—Teaching Human Rights: Practical Activities for Primary and Secondary Schools*, and *The Human Rights Education Series* published by Minnesota University. In February 2009, the MOE recruited primary and secondary school teachers to organize the Professional Community of Human Rights Educators (PCHRE) in every county under the guidance of ACGHRCP. This measure in some sense effectively put human rights education into practice. Thirty-seven professional communities in twenty-five counties around Taiwan are organized under the guidance of the local educational bureau. Table 2 shows the allocation of the PCHRE in every county, the present state and the total number of members.

Table 2. PCHREs in Taiwan

Code	City County	Secondary school teachers as Team Members	Primary school teachers as Team Members	Secondary and primary school teachers as Team Members	Total number of members in each team
A	Taipei	n/a	1	n/a	13
B	Taichung	1	1	n/a	7
C	Keelung	1	1	n/a	15
D	Tainan	n/a	n/a	1	10
E	Kaoshung	1	1	n/a	12
F	Taipei	1	1	n/a	14
G	Yilang	1	n/a	n/a	6
H	Tauyuan	1	1	n/a	21
I	Chiayi	1	1	n/a	11
J	Hsinchung	1	1	n/a	8
K	Miaoli	n/a	1	n/a	10

Code	City County	Secondary school teachers as Team Members	Primary school teachers as Team Members	Secondary and primary school teachers as Team Members	Total number of members in each team
L	Taichung	1	1	n/a	18
M	Nanto	n/a	n/a	1	12
N	Changhua	n/a	1	n/a	13
O	Hisnchu	1	1	n/a	16
P	Yunlin	1	1	n/a	16
Q	Chiyi	n/a	n/a	1	7
R	Tainan	n/a	n/a	1	9
S	Kaushung	n/a	n/a	1	8
T	Pindung	1	1	n/a	13
U	Hualiang	n/a	n/a	1	8
V	Taidung	1	1	n/a	13
W	Kimen	n/a	n/a	1	5
X	Penhu	1	1	n/a	6
Y	Lienjiang	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	25	14	16	7	271

The PCHREs aim to promote human rights education through a bottom-up approach, although ironically they were established in a top-down manner. These teams have five fundamental tasks:

- 1) Prepare the members to become competent human rights educators
- 2) Prepare other teachers in their area of responsibility (county) to also become human rights educators
- 3) Develop human rights materials and pedagogy
- 4) Facilitate the development of a human rights culture in the campus
- 5) Organize appropriate activities and events such as workshops, reading

groups, lectures, or seminars to achieve the above tasks.

The PCHREs are just starting their work since they have been existing for only two and a half years. They have been facing difficulties such as the following:

- 1) The PCHRE members are in desperate need of gaining knowledge on human rights. Most in-service teachers—including PCHRE members—know very little about human rights education since their previous teacher training lacked related courses. The PCHRE members have much to learn before becoming competent facilitators of human rights education.

- 2) Following the first point, in-service teachers lack knowledge on human rights in order to be able to teach students about human rights. They need to learn, for instance, the fundamental concept of human rights, related teaching skills, and the ability to design appropriate human rights lesson plans.
- 3) They also need human rights education resources. Material or digital resources (e.g., teaching materials, handbooks, documentation centers, financial support, lists of experts or counsellors, instruments, and tools) at the national as well as the local levels have to be developed.

Disparate Initiatives

In addition to government supported initiatives on human rights education, teachers, schools and non-governmental organizations undertake human rights education on their own initiative. Following are some concrete examples of such disparate yet useful initiatives including one NGO's promotion of learning materials and the exemplification of an awarded lesson plan.

Foundations of Democracy Series

Lawyers, schoolteachers and legal academics organized in 1995 a non-governmental organization called Judicial Reform Foundation (JRF) to enhance judicial justice, democracy and human rights as its goal. In order to achieve this goal, Chung Hwa Rotary Education Foundation, the Taipei Bar Association and the JRF, jointly organized a law-related education center that worked on a project called 'Planting Seeds of Law-Related Education in Taiwan' (PSLRET) since May 2003.

Under the PSLRET project, the education center translated in 2003 the *Foundations of Democracy: Authority, Privacy,*

Responsibility and Justice, published by the Center for Civic Education (CCE),²³ and promoted their translated version in schools through workshops. The Foundations of Democracy series consist of curricular materials for students from kindergarten through twelfth grade on four concepts fundamental to an understanding of politics and government: Authority, Privacy, Responsibility, and Justice. By December 2006, one of the outcomes of the PSLRET project included the translation and publication of the K-3 and Grades 4-6 versions of the Foundations of Democracy series.

Two hundred forty eight lawyers helped familiarize teachers with the K-3 version until 2007. By the same year, twenty nine schools and twelve district educational authorities had become partners of the education center, and three thousand four hundred ninety school teachers had been trained on how to teach the Foundations of Democracy series. In addition, with the assistance of the National Institute of Educational Resource and Research,²⁴ the education center produced videos focusing on the concepts of privacy and justice of the K-3 version as teaching resources for teachers. Many lawyers took part in workshops held by the education center as trainers and in-service teachers joined the training activities. The number of participants increased from year to year. The education center held longer-term and bigger adaptations to replace American laws and cases with the Taiwanese ones. As a result, versions for the Grades 7-9 and 10-12 of the series were published by 2009.

The translation and promotion of the Foundations of Democracy Series won high praise nationally and internationally. The Chinese translations were awarded as excellent publications on human rights by the National Institute for Compilation and Translation in 2005 (volume suited for K-5), 2006 (volume suited for Grades 5-9) and 2008 (volume suited for Grades 10-12). In

2007 and 2008, there were exchange visits between CCE and JRF.

With regard to educational practice, this series may be the best prepared and most widely used material for teaching human rights in the Taiwanese schools at present. It is highly valued by teachers and parents who have read it carefully. Nonetheless, these people might still be minority compared with the number of other teachers and parents who are not yet involved. Thus JRF is still striving to promote the series by holding workshops, giving lectures or holding competitions of lesson plans related to the Foundations of Democracy Series for in-service teachers every year. For instance, in April 2010 there were fifteen sessions held in different schools

across Taiwan, facilitating the understanding of the series in teachers. In addition, the complete series composed of three volumes is disposed to PCHREs by ACGHRCP by this year.

Lesson Plan on Distributive Justice

The lesson plan entitled “Who is in the priority group taking the NiH1 vaccine? On the distributive justice” won the first prize in the competition of lesson plans on human rights 2009 held by ACGHRCP.

Four school teachers from Chin Shuei Primary School in Taipei County prepared the lesson plan with the aim of teaching fifth graders about distributive justice. Based on the Foundations of Democracy series



TV commercial film watching and thinking: Is it fair for *sumo* players to play football?



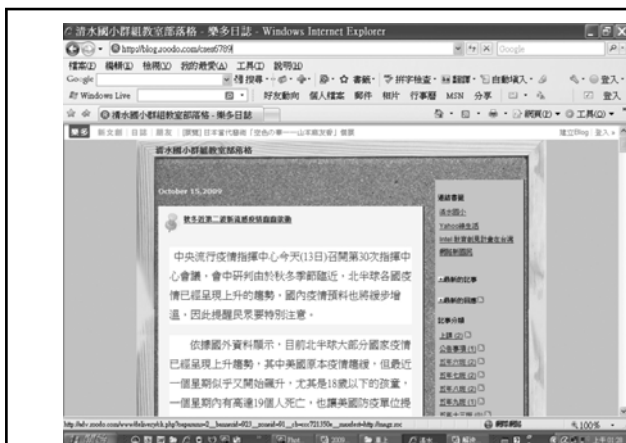
Discussing the concept of distributive justice presented in the Foundations of Democracy series, Grades 5–9 version.



Reading picture book *The Gentle and Passionate Light in Gondar*.



Reading picture book *Tops & Bottoms*.



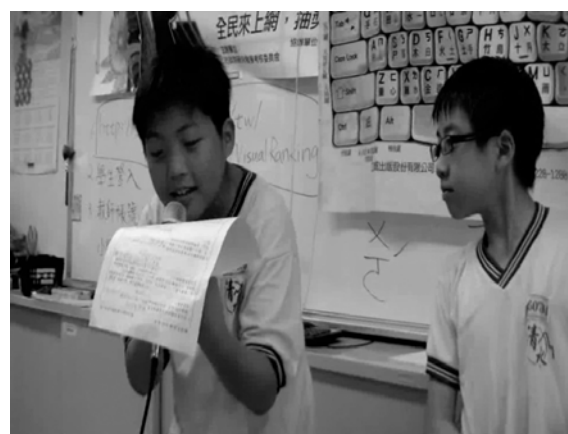
Learning about N1H1 influenza and vaccine on the internet.



Using INTEL VISUAL Ranking thinking tool via website.



Collaborating on an assignment: Deciding the order of taking vaccine.



Sharing ideas.

(Grades 5-9), this lesson plan took the N1H1 influenza issue to interest students and to activate them to deliberate upon the order to get the vaccine. The lesson plan lead students to think critically and gain the understanding of distributive justice by effective combination of plural media and instruments including the INTEL Visual Ranking thinking tool, picture books (*The Gentle and Passionate Light in Gondar* by Nanami Nanami and *Tops & Bottoms* by Janet Stevens), a TV commercial film and the Foundations of Democracy series (Grades 5-9 version). Following are some photos and descriptions of the process of implementing this lesson plan.

Lesson Plan ‘You and Me’

In 2009, the Center for Human Rights Education affiliated with Taipei Municipal University of Education was established with Professor Jau-wei Dan as the first director. The Center hosted a competition on lesson plans for human rights in May 2010. The theme of the competition is focused on elimination of discrimination and enhancement of multiculturalism. Fourteen teams composed of in-service teachers have been chosen in the final run. The third example introduces one of the chosen lesson plans entitled “You and Me.”

Three teachers from the Louchen Primary School in Changhua County prepared the

“You and Me” lesson plan. One of the teachers, Chen, is enrolled under the PhD program in the National Chiayi University. During her study, *Human Rights Lesson Plans—For Southeast Asian Schools*, published by the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center, was discussed. This piece of work inspired Chen and her colleagues to collaborate on a lesson plan focusing on the relationship between Taiwanese and the Southeast Asian immigrants including immigrant workers and spouses.

The goal of the lesson plan is to help the third grade students to gain more understanding about different cultures—especially those of Southeast Asia—and become more open-minded and not stereotype others. Three main activities are introduced in class:

- 1) Demonstration of photos and videos of immigrant workers. These materials aim to present the contribution done by the immigrant workers to the socio-economic development of Taiwan.
- 2) Interviews of the immigrant spouses in class or paying visits to those in the neighborhood. The interactions between pupils and immigrant spouses aim to enhance the mutual understanding and eliminate the discriminative stereotypes.
- 3) Learners’ artistic creation to express their feelings and respect for different people and different cultures.

Following are photos of the class

Challenges

The promotion of human rights education in the school system in Taiwan faces a number of challenges.

First, there is a popular misunderstanding in Taiwan of human rights as equivalent to benefits or advantages. In this sense, human



Demonstration of photos and videos of immigrant workers in Taiwan.



Free artistic creation with different colors of beans, which represent people with different skin colors.

rights education is seen as teaching students to fight or strive solely for their own good. As a result, some teachers mistakenly see human rights education as education on selfishness or self-centered education.

Second, the issue of human rights in schools in Taiwan is often over-simplified and made synonymous with the prohibition of corporal punishment. Not a few teachers feel ill at ease about this. They are reluctant to treat corporal punishment itself as a violation of human rights; rather, under the traditional Confucian culture, corporal punishment is firmly accepted as an effective means for adults to control and discipline children’s behavior. Many teachers see the prohibition of corporal punishment in school under the

Fundamental Law of Education as a negative factor in correcting students' misbehavior in school.

Related to this is the third obstacle: human rights education is seen as synonymous with law-related education. There are two issues on this. On one hand, many teachers are worried that they might break the law if they control children's misbehavior. On the other hand, they consider the result of human rights education to be anti-educational since teachers cannot do anything to control or interrupt the students' misbehavior. The anti-educational effect stifles teachers' enthusiasm for teaching and makes them indifferent teaching machines.

The fourth barrier flows from the above: an underpinning traditional and cultural ideology in the form of the strong tendency toward authoritarianism, bureaucratism, and paternalism implied from the Confucian doctrine. This tendency is not easy to change. Many schoolteachers are used to playing authoritarian and patronizing roles in school. The values implied in human rights education, such as equality between human beings, between teachers and students, seem to challenge their taken-for-granted Confucian beliefs and deprive them of their privileged status as the "commander" and also a patron in front of the students.

The fifth obstacle refers to the deficiency of courses related to human rights in the teachers' training program. Universities rarely provide a teachers' training program that offers such courses; and the very few courses on offer are optional. An increase in the number of pre-service and in-service teachers with sufficient knowledge and teaching tools for human rights education is urgent and crucial in strengthening Taiwanese human rights education.

The sixth barrier is probably the deep-rooted myth of credentialism—people obtain higher social status and achievement as they gain higher education. More

importantly, in Taiwan, most people extremely believe that intellectualistic learning (i.e., emphasis on cognitive learning) is the only way for students to obtain higher education. Hence, students are asked by parents and teachers to put their efforts on learning 'basics'—literacy, numeracy, natural science and social studies. Many adults in some sense see learning about and for human rights as a distraction from learning and even as a burden.

The final obstacle to promoting human rights education in the school system is that human rights education is often misunderstood as well as over-simplified by some as political indoctrination, or in more rigorous terms, indoctrination on political convictions of a particular political party. This is obviously a misunderstanding since human rights education advocates and protects the human rights of all human beings, no matter which political party the individual belongs to or prefers. This might be related to the history of Taiwan, martial law rule from 1949 to 1987. The lifting of martial law caused a misconception among the public that human rights problems had been solved once and for all through political liberation. This misconception is indeed a subconscious misunderstanding of human rights as consisting only of political and civil rights. This misunderstanding shows the importance of implementing human rights education in Taiwan.

Conclusion

Overall, this article provides a brief overview of the development of human rights education in public schools in Taiwan in relation to the national curriculum reform during the last decade. So far, the importance of human rights education has gradually gained approval from parents and teachers. However, there are still obstacles to overcome. In addition to the obstacles mentioned, there are new challenges for human rights educators in schools in Taiwan. For example, the increasing number of

international marriages in Taiwan led to human rights and education problems for the immigrant spouses and their children. According to the Department of Statistics (2010), there were more than four hundred thousand international marriages from 2001 to the end of February 2010. These immigrant spouses come from China and Southeast Asia. Spouses from Southeast Asia have more difficulties regarding accommodation, adaptation and parenting than those from China. However, paying heed to the education of immigrant spouses and their children has been one of the urgent tasks and responsibilities of the government at present. This issue may not be directly the subject matter of human rights education in schools but can be human rights issues related to the present educational policy and practice in Taiwan.

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Endnotes

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- 21 Department of Elementary Education of MOE, 教育部國民教育司。
- 22 Professional Community of Human Rights Educators (PCHRE), 人權教育輔導團。
- 23 The nonprofit Center for Civic Education, based in Calabasas, California, aims to promote an enlightened, competent, and responsible citizenry. Its goals are to promote increased understanding of constitutional democracy and its fundamental values and principles; develop the skills necessary to participate as informed, effective, and responsible citizens; and increase the willingness to use democratic procedures when making decisions and managing conflicts. Source: Partnership Case Studies, available in www.iawg.gov/rawmedia.../a96977e0_8545_4a4c_9a54_887013027ca4.
- 24 National Institute of Educational Resource and Research, 國立教育資料館。

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