

Mongolia: Human Rights Education in Schools

NARANGEREL RINCHIN

Mongolia has a legacy of respecting human rights, freedom, justice, and national unity. As a member of the United Nations, it has ratified over 20 international instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (both in 1974); the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1969); and the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). Mongolian laws incorporating the principles of human rights and freedom are now awaiting implementation.

The chapter on human rights and freedom in the 1992 Constitution states that everyone is an equal legal subject, and any discrimination based on racial origin, nationality, language, age, gender, social origin, status, economic condition, official position, religion, opinion, or educational attainment is not allowed. It declares the basic political, social, economic, cultural, ecological, and other rights of citizens: the rights to personal security; to live in a healthy and safe environment; to acquire, possess, own, or inherit property; to freely choose education; to protect one's own health; to receive medical care; to participate in government directly or through a representative organization; to either worship or not; to freely express one's own opinion; and to organize peaceful demonstrations. It also respects freedom of the press.

The possibilities for realizing the universal principles of human rights and freedom, especially those of children and the youth, are therefore wide ranging. The formal and informal education systems have been developing in support of this goal.

In 1996, the Mongolian Parliament enacted the Law on Child Rights, which implements

the provisions of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. The recently revised Law on Education of Mongolia (1998) spells out much more clearly the rights and duties of students and teachers at all levels of education. The Constitution guarantees the inclusion of international principles and norms in public legal education programs.

Human Rights Education in Primary and Secondary Schools

Primary and secondary education is divided into the primary level (4 years), fundamental level (8 years), and secondary level (10 years).¹

Human and child rights are studied both directly and indirectly in kindergarten and at the primary and secondary levels, as provided by the 1998-1999 curriculum for primary and secondary levels. Preschool education consists of systematically organized activities to help children obtain skills that meet their needs and interests from the time of birth until they enroll in school. It gives children the basic knowledge of human rights while teaching them correct self-expression, how to understand and speak to others, and good habits, and helps

them understand culture, customs, and etiquette. At the primary level, children learn skills in reading, writing, and speech by freely expressing their own thoughts, through counting, and by gaining elementary knowledge about nature, social life, health, ethics, labor, citizenship, and human rights. The children also learn about national customs, their cultural legacy, justice, hygiene, the value of labor, and teamwork. Knowledge, skills, direction, and critical thinking acquired at the secondary level form the foundation for human rights education and are needed not only for higher education but also for molding good citizens.

In accordance with the education law, the standard curriculums for primary and secondary levels are determined by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Culture (MESTC) while the National Center on Metrology and Standardization certifies the standard. At the primary level, human rights education is integrated with other subjects such as social studies and humanities.

Moral Education at the Primary Level (Grades 1-4)

Human rights are studied at the primary level as part of moral education, Mongolian language, and literature. Moral education teaches national customs, respect for parents and teachers, and basic human rights.

Ethics at the Secondary Level (Grades 4-8)

In Grade 5, the elementary ethics subject introduces children to concepts such as humanism, patriotism, friendship, justice, and ethical conduct.

Legal Education at the Secondary Level

Citizen's rights, freedoms, and their basic principles as provided in the Constitution are studied in Grades 6-8. Legal education, studied as an independent subject in Grades 6-8, includes the constitutional concepts of civil rights and duties, and freedom. It also poses the following questions: "What is national in-

Curriculum for Social Studies in Primary and Secondary Schools, 1998-1999

Subject	Total hours per year (by grade)												
	1	2	3	4	Total	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Moral Education	52	68	68	68	256								
Total	52	68	68	68	256								
History and national culture						68							
History of world civilization; ethics							70						
History of world civilization; legal education								87					
Mongolian history; legal education									87				
Mongolian history										88			
Social Science											36	72	
Total						68	70	87	87	88	36	72	508

dependence?” “What is a democratic political system?” “What is an election? How do people participate in it?” “How do we manage human rights?” “How can people enjoy their rights?” “What are civil duties?” It also introduces the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the International Bill of Human Rights.

Social Science in the Upper Secondary Level (Grades 9-10)

Social science covers four main topics: politics; economics; the legislative process; and philosophy. Human rights are studied in these fields in detail. Social science includes general knowledge of freedom, equality, principles of democracy, the Constitution, the Constitutional Court, crime, punishment, investigation, the judiciary, the economic system, and so on.

There is still no separate subject on human rights at the primary and secondary levels. MESTC, in cooperation with the Mongolian Open Society Institute, will be implementing a special program on human rights at the basic school levels (Grades 1-10) beginning in school year 2000.

For this fundamental change in the human rights education program, innovations in subject content and in the curriculum were made, and textbooks for teachers and students published.

The following are examples of human rights education programs:

Human Rights I

Level: Primary school (children 7-12 years old)

Objectives: Enable children to do the following:

- Define their rights and duties in everyday life through simple examples.

- Respect the rights of others.
- Understand freedom.
- learn how to exercise their rights and perform their duties.

Content:

- The rights of children and adults—their differences.
- What rights and duties does a child have?
- Any action should be made in accordance with law.

Human Rights II

Level: Secondary school

Objectives:

- Enrich previously acquired knowledge on human rights, freedom, legal protection of human rights, the role of law in individual and social life, and legal relations.
- Enhance the capability of children and youth to use the law to protect their rights.

Content:

- Basic rights (political, social, economic, cultural) and duties.

Human Rights III

Level: High school, technical and vocational schools

Objectives:

- Give students more knowledge about specific laws.
- Enable students to enter into special legal relations and behave properly within the legal framework.

Content:

- Laws on social welfare, business, government, taxation, and ecology; and against corruption.

Extracurricular programs

Extracurricular programs have been developed mainly by the Informal Education Center and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The center works with other education centers in all provinces in managing citizens' education programs. It has produced a number of textbooks on human rights and developed programs on human rights education.

MESTC is implementing a special study program called Human Rights Education in secondary schools in 2000.

The field office of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights initiated a special tertiary-level course that over 70,000 students in state and non-state universities began to take up in school year 1999-2000.

In cooperation with UNESCO, the government has been implementing a Distance Learning program for adults, reaching out to 36,000 families. Courses on human rights and democracy play a significant role in the program. A textbook on human rights and local government was published and used in a nationwide radio training.

MESTC and NGOs hold joint retraining activities focusing on human rights education for teachers. The field office of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights organizes annual 7-10-day training sessions on human rights education for teachers at various levels (kindergarten, primary, secondary, and tertiary) and for officers of NGOs and governmental organizations.

The Mongolian Open Society Institute has also produced a textbook on human rights and organizes training for all basic-education teachers. Other institutions (the Informal Education Center, Academy of Political Education, Center for Children's Rights Protection, and other NGOs) organize similar training activities.

The Center for Citizenship Education (CCE) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, independent NGO founded in 1992. It implements

short- and long-term projects that help promote civil society in Mongolia, inform the public of the importance of civics, contribute to reforming Mongolia's education system, and support the nonprofit sector.

CCE's mission is to contribute to the development of civil society by educating citizens through the Civic and Human Rights Education Program and the NGO Support Unit Program. Teachers and NGO leaders play different community leadership roles. By bringing the two groups together CCE also helps them learn from each other.

CCE has developed rapidly along with the NGO sector in its first year and a half. It has conducted most of the management training with occasional volunteer guest presenters and mobilized a core of 28 volunteer trainers to conduct most of the Civic and Human Rights Education courses.

CCE Support Unit

The NGO Support Unit did the following, among other activities:

- Conducted a 17-day training-the-trainer seminar, with 33 participants, on NGO management and civic education for the volunteer training corps
- Developed a modest library.
- Published two issues of the experimental *NGO News*, which were distributed at workshops and meetings.

Civic and Human Rights Education Program

The program did the following:

- Implemented its programs jointly with the Ministry of Education of Mongolia.
- Translated, adapted, and published the textbook *Democracy for All*.
- Implemented We the People—Project Citizen, and translated, adapted, and published *Project Citizen*, with support from the US-based Center for Civic Education.

- Conceptualized and conducted training workshops for teachers of civic and human rights education and for NGO leaders.
- Conducted 75 days of civic and human rights education training of 1,639 teachers and school administrators.

NGOs also provide legal consultation services and help protect the rights of children and women against violence in the family and other human rights violations.

Survey on Human Rights Consciousness

A survey of 152 people was conducted to find out the extent of understanding of human rights among various social groups, especially teachers and students at the basic and tertiary levels.²

In response to the question “What knowledge and training on human rights do students receive in basic schools?” respondents mentioned that classes in history and sociology provide an elementary understanding of human rights as defined by the Constitution. 77.5% said that human rights are discussed only very briefly and in a limited way.

To the question “Are there any proven human rights violations in basic schools?” 98.6% listed the following violations: humiliation of students by teachers inside the classroom; superficial participation of students in school head councils; teachers’ stereotyped view of students; breaches of relations between students and teachers; excessive subject load that limits deeper learning; widespread pressure on students; and reprisals against students by teachers. There is evidence that students are physically punished for not doing their homework, and that teachers sometimes teach while drunk. 46.1% of the respondents favor the development of new subjects on human rights; 32.6% want special rules on human rights to be enforced in secondary schools; 30.7% want human rights to be integrated in history and humanities subjects; 19.2% want special pedagogical

activities in learning human rights; and 15.3% want human rights to be integrated in history and sociology subjects.

These findings clearly indicate that human rights education is a valuable component of general education. The respondents’ input is important to developing human rights education programs that will make human rights less theoretical and promote self-reliance of students through individual activities.

The general human rights situation in the country should also be considered in developing a human rights education program. Children’s rights are often violated. In 1998, for example, 4,000 children lived in poverty, 40,000 dropped out of school (including 1,200 in Ulaan Baatar—the capital city), and over 5,000 live on the street (including more than 1,000 in Ulaan Baatar). Such children are prone to get involved in robbery, prostitution, and hooliganism; to become immoral; and to lose their spirituality and other good qualities.

Objectives of Human Rights Education

Human rights education should have the following objectives:

- Assess training content, facilities, and teaching staff ability using international human rights education standards, principles, and norms.
- Define an assessment method for human rights education, its objectives, content, form, and results. This method will then become the national system and constitute the legal support for human rights education in schools.
- Develop human rights education programs for all levels of education, which integrate human rights in general as well as specific professional courses.
- Develop curriculums, teaching methodologies, and other technical aspects of human rights education, and prepare textbooks, and manuals for teachers and students.

- Train human rights teachers, and promote retraining of teachers of basic secondary schools through short- or long-term training courses and workshops.
 - Create conditions through human rights education activities favorable to ensuring collaboration in promoting equality, justice, and human rights within the family and society.
 - Guarantee and secure the rights and duties of children and youth, especially their right to education, through pertinent amendments to education laws in accordance with international human rights norms.
 - Implement the right to education in the informal and formal education systems by raising the level of education of the whole population.
 - Broadcast Olympiads, competitions, and radio and television programs taking up human-rights-related topics to all students and teachers.
 - Organize lectures, seminars, and consultations about the rights, duties, and responsibilities of students; principles of discipline and ways of relating to students and parents; student organizations (leadership and membership); and groups in society.
- Pay attention to the right of children and women to self-development through access to books, news, experiments, and research, and through development of personal talent, knowledge, and skills in any field of interest.
 - Consider human rights education as a value in democratic development and adapt it to the nomadic lifestyle and civilization of the people of Mongolia with full regard for its relationship to human rights and freedom.

Notes

1. In 1998-1999, there were 447,121 students and 18,125 teachers in a total of 627 schools. The student/teacher ratio was 24.6:1. Of the total number of teachers, 28% are in the capital city and 72% in the rural areas. The enrollment rate is 98% at the primary level and about 90% at the secondary level (Statistical Information MESTC 1999).

2. Surveyed were officials of 23 *aimag* (provinces) and the Academy of Education in Ulaan Baatar, basic-education teachers, the Grade-8 students of school #33 in Ulaan Baatar, and first-year students of Tushee College (a non-state school).