

Broader Support for Human Rights Education in Schools

Human rights education in schools is a multi-institutional task. It requires education reform measures that emphasize relations between schools and society. It addresses both the need to relieve schools of the sole burden of educating children and the need for schools to avail themselves of resources offered by society.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), university-based human rights centers, national education research institutes, and national human rights institutions, are involved in human rights education in most Asian countries as are international organizations such as UN agencies and regional and international NGOs, and, in a few cases, teachers' groups.

Many human rights education programs were started by such institutions. They offer training as well as educational material for teachers. A few NGOs conduct human rights education activities directly in the classroom. However, since so few NGO workers can teach, some NGOs eventually realized that the schoolteachers themselves should be trained. These partner institutions support the schools, aiming to help them develop and implement their own programs either as part of the school curriculum or as extracurricular activities.

Division of Work

The Ministry of Education, schools, and NGOs are normally the only institutions involved in human rights education programs. The ministry defines the policies and authorizes the teaching of human rights. The schools implement the programs. The NGOs provide programs, educational material, and, sometimes, teacher training.

When the ministry has no human rights education program, NGOs are the leading institutions. Programs are implemented quickly once the ministry and schools agree to support them. The programs' continuity and spread are not assured, however, as NGOs are financially unstable and their effectiveness depends largely on their access to funding and other resources.

Some NGOs did not have a human rights education program when they began. Their original objective was to implement a human rights protection program, including the pursuit of human rights violations cases in court or other venues. But since "firefighting" is an endless task, they saw human rights education as a viable long-term investment and recognized the need to move beyond the nonformal into the formal education system.¹

The university-based human rights centers are a kind of NGO but more stable as they have support from the university and more access to government funding due to their status. They provide intellectual support to the programs and can help develop teaching and learning material. They can provide formal academic teacher training programs. They often involve NGOs in their programs. They can also recruit university students to help implement programs, especially if they are based in teacher colleges, where the students benefit from teaching in the field.²

National education research institutes can help transform experience into education policies, program guidelines, teaching and learning material, and training programs. They are important in curriculum reform.³

National human rights institutions, which are government-supported bodies with independent mandates and operations, play a key role in human rights education programs. They not only have the legal mandate to promote human rights, but also an advisory function that is useful in lobbying governments to promote human rights education and fulfill their obligations under international agreements.⁴

Teachers' organizations provide teacher-oriented human rights education programs. They train their members, develop material, and lobby government for changes in policy, program, and curriculum in support of human rights education. They are the best advocate for teachers' welfare, the improvement of which is a requirement for effective human rights education.

Regional human rights and human rights education institutions provide information on material, resource persons, and training programs. They provide opportunities for teachers, education researchers, NGO workers, and education officials to learn from the experience of other countries. They link regional institutions with each other and help establish networks among institutions within countries.⁵

International institutions such as UN specialized agencies and international NGOs play a similar role and also implement country projects or fund national and regional activities.

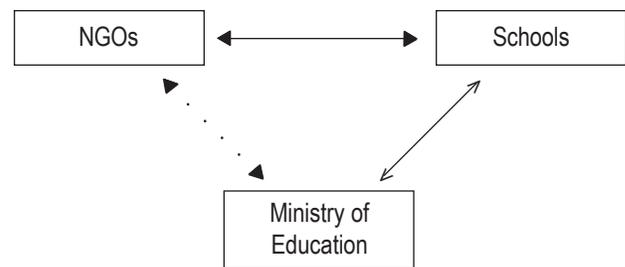
While all these institutions do not yet cooperate with each other, they are usually indirectly linked.

Linkage Models

The type of link between these institutions varies, depending on the country's conditions. There is no best model, but some are more effective than others.

NGO-led model

The NGOs initiate human rights education programs, concentrating on training teachers and developing material for teachers and students. They approach the Ministry of Education to formalize their relationship with the schools, except private schools, which are generally autonomous. The ministry merely allows the NGOs to involve the schools in their programs, which are mainly extracurricular activities.

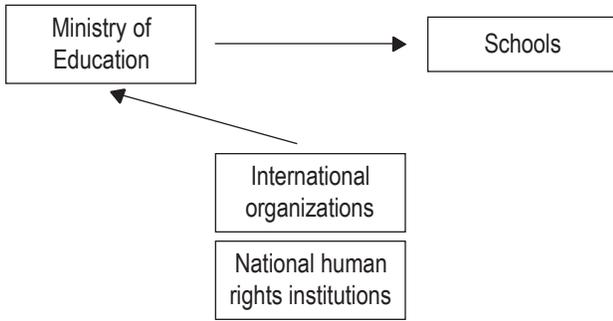


NGO-led programs can be found in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, and Cambodia.

Ministry of Education-led model

Programs initiated by the ministry are usually a result of a legal requirement to include human rights education in schools or in the national school curriculum. They have policy, personnel, and funding support.

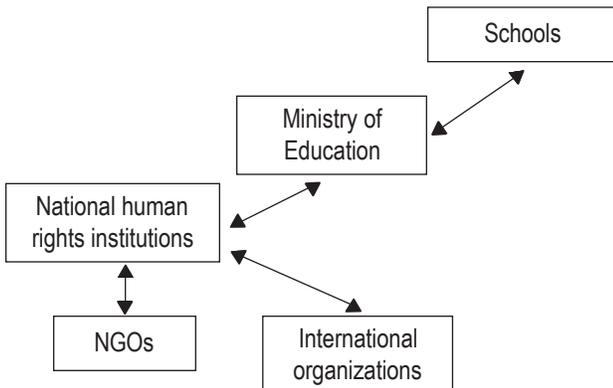
The ministry provides teacher training and teaching material although the regularity of support depends on the priority it gives to human rights education. Ministry-initiated programs are supported by international institutions such as UN specialized agencies (UNICEF, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], UNESCO, International Labour Organization [ILO]) and national human rights institutions.



Ministry-led programs or projects can be found in Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and India. In Japan, the local education boards and their secretariats started anti-discrimination programs in the mid-1960s and are now adopting broader human rights education programs. Specialized UN agencies are active in Cambodia (especially the OHCHR), Indonesia (UNESCO), Mongolia (OHCHR), Republic of Korea (UNICEF and UNESCO), Thailand (UNICEF and UNESCO), and the Philippines (UNICEF and UNESCO). The ILO may become more active in Pakistan under its new country project on human rights.

National human rights institution-led model

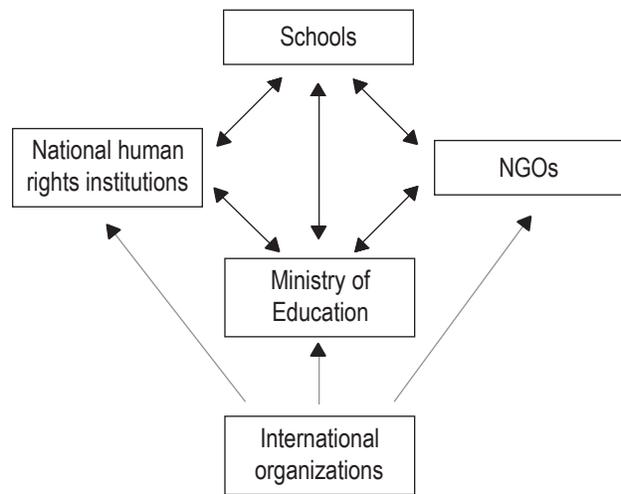
National human rights institutions implement informal, nonformal, and formal human rights education programs. They lobby government agencies to initiate human rights education in schools. They also involve NGOs and international organizations in human rights education programs, mainly facilitating program development and implementation.



Of the seven national institutions existing in Asia, those in the Philippines, India, and Indonesia are involved in human rights education programs or projects. Their counterparts in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Malaysia, and Thailand are expected to be involved in such programs in the near future as they develop their own action plans and as international support for national institutions increases.

Full model

Sustainable and dynamic program implementation requires an appropriate division of work and linkages among all the institutions involved. A full model does not put the burden of the program only on the school or ministry but allows significant roles for all institutions. It requires the legal inclusion of human rights education in the school curriculum, as well as the authorized involvement of other institutions in program development and implementation.



The Bigger Picture

The multi-institutional approach to implementing human rights education is directly linked to the idea of civil society, which recognizes the importance of the government’s partnership with nongovernmental institutions in

dealing with public-interest issues and its admission that it cannot solve all problems faced (or provide all services demanded) by society.

In civil society people exercise their right to participate in societal affairs as well as fulfill their civic duties. It is a concrete manifestation of the active exercise of “citizenship.” After the Kobe earthquake in 1995 and the Gujarat earthquake of 2001, for example, civil-society organizations led rescue and relief work. They also wage major campaigns to protect the environment. Civil society includes NGOs, community organizations, and other private institutions that work on societal issues.

Civil society is becoming more prominent in international governance, as seen in the number of national, regional, and international NGOs that have played important roles in UN activities. In the field of human rights, civil society takes part in a number of UN initiatives such as

- Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture,
- Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery,
- Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations,
- Trust Fund for the International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People, and
- Assisting Communities Together.

A new member of civil society is the business community. The UN’s Global Compact scheme is meant to encourage private corporations to take part in UN programs. It promotes the idea of “corporate citizenship and the practice of corporate social responsibility” and asserts that in “this new global economy, it makes good business sense for firms to internalize these principles as integral elements of corporate strategies and practices.” UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan proposed the Global Compact during the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January 1999. He challenged world business leaders to help “build the social and environmental pillars re-

quired to sustain the new global economy and make globalization work for all the world’s people.”⁶

Outside these UN initiatives, big private corporations are developing a growing interest in social responsibility, seeing that social investment and philanthropy do not harm and, in fact, enhance their business.

The people, government, and the market work together rather than compete with each other, and trisectoral partnership is now a reality.⁷

Taking Obligations Seriously

Another argument in support of the multi-institutional approach to human rights education comes from the curriculum itself. Almost all school curriculums require the study of “duty to society.” Educators consistently demand the need to balance rights with duties and obligations. Students are taught to become good, productive members of society. Although duty as taught seems to border on mere obedience to government, it certainly implies an active role of people in societal and governmental affairs.

Now people are performing their duty through their involvement in civil-society organizations. Will schools turn them away if they show interest in the welfare of the students? Schools (and the government, as well) have no reason to do so since they promote the performance of duty in the first place. It is to the credit of a number of schools that civil-society organizations (such as NGOs) are involved in their human rights education programs.

As the business sector becomes more and more involved in the programs, the idea of corporate social responsibility should be promoted. Private companies can be laboratories to help students understand the concept of labor and other related rights. They can also finance the development of material and the training of teachers. There are few examples

of corporate sponsorship in the field of human rights education, although corporate support for schools in general is not a new idea.⁸

Conclusion

The multi-institutional approach to human rights education in schools is still developing. It would be interesting to find out how untapped institutions can enrich programs. Companies' human resource development programs, for example, may improve teacher training methods. Social research institutions can broaden discussions on human rights issues. Organizations of youth, women, the elderly, and the disabled can give students the opportunity to put their classroom knowledge into practice. Media organizations have stories for case studies. The list goes on.

Government participation need not be limited to national agencies. Local governments can also implement human rights education programs in line with decentralization, which gives schools more autonomy from national government control. An example is the experience of local governments in Dowa education in Japan.⁹

What needs re-emphasizing is the idea that human rights education need not be a burden if other institutions help teachers and schools. Human rights education need not be expensive if institutions pool their resources. The multi-institutional approach to human rights education does not merely institutionalize a program: it gives a role to institutions that find education worth supporting.

Endnotes

1. See "What Motivated MDDR to work out a Human Rights Education Program in Schools?" in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume one, HURIGHTS OSAKA, 1998, for an example of such NGOs.

2. The Center for the Study of Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Colombo (Sri Lanka), Peace and World Order Studies, Philippine Normal Univer-

sity, and the Research Center for Human Rights, Osaka City University (Japan) are examples of university-based human rights centers.

3. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (India), the National Institute of Education (Sri Lanka), the Korean National Commission for UNESCO, and the National Institute of Educational Science (Vietnam) are examples.

4. Seven Asian countries now have national institutions—India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. There are proposals for the creation of national institutions in Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Bangladesh, and Japan. Iran has a national institution but it is not recognized as such by the UN.

5. Some of the key regional institutions are the following: Asia-Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development; Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center; Asian Coalition on Housing Rights; Asian Forum on Human Rights and Development; Asian Human Rights Commission; Asian Migrant Resource Center; Asian Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education; Child Rights Asianet; Child Workers Asia; Diplomacy Training Program; and End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism.

6. See www.unglobalcompact.org for more information.

7. The World Bank has its own trisectoral program called Business Partners for Progress, an informal global network of businesses, civil-society organizations, and relevant government ministries. See Lalit Kumar, *Partnership of NGOs with the Public and Private Sectors*, a paper presented at the International Forum—Asia Looking to the Future, Osaka City, 22-23 February 2001. Mr. Kumar, however, warns that there are also risks in trisectoral partnerships:

- loss of values, ideology, skills, credibility, and even identity;
- co-optation by the stronger partner;
- misuse of a partner's name, reputation, and goodwill by the other partners;
- lack of respect for the value of shared contributions, monetary or otherwise; and
- sustainability.

8. The Human Rights Education Programme in Karachi, Pakistan, receives support from private corporations for printing material for students. The "ethical

fund” project of Singapore’s United Overseas Bank Group (UOB) and Unifem Singapore is another example. UOB contributes one third of its annual management fee of 1.5% to Unifem projects. Part of this contribution goes to the education fund project, which supports the schooling of children from poor families in rural Indonesia. UOB also “invests only in companies whose corporate practices are women- and family-

friendly” (Trish Saywell, “Honey Pot,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* [11 January 2001]: 33.

9. See Yoshiro Nabeshima, Mariko Akuzawa, Shinichi Hayashi, and Koonae Park, “Japan: Human Rights Education in Schools,” in *Human Rights Education in Asian Schools*, volume three, (Osaka: HURIGHTS OSAKA 2000) for a discussion on this issue.