

# Advocacy Role of Youth in Human Rights Education

**Dr. KM Ashifa**

Asst. Professor in Social Work, Faculty of Health Science, Istanbul Gelisim University, Turkey

## ABSTRACT

Human rights are international moral and legal norms that aspire to protect all people everywhere from severe political, legal and social abuses. It holds up the inspiring vision of a free, just, and peaceful world and set minimum standards for both individuals and institutions to treat other people. They also empower people to take action to demand and defend their rights and the rights of others. Human rights education is an apparatus to achieve these solidarity and activism for social justice. It is a necessary pre-condition for sustainable development and helps to develop the communication skills and informed critical thinking essential to a democracy. It provides multicultural and historical perspectives on the universal struggle for justice and dignity among young human rights defenders. The youths are valuable human resource of any society. The responsibility for change, progress and innovation lies on their shoulders. The major aim in educating the young on human rights shall be to develop all their faculties and to train them to acquire higher moral qualities, to be deeply attached to be noble ideals of peace, liberty, the dignity and equality of all men, and imbued with respect and love for humanity and its creative achievements. The magnitudes of violations of human rights are perpetrated every day, that threaten the peace and harmony of the people. In such situation, imparting human rights education to all possible sections of the society, especially to the youth is quintessential approach to defend human dignity. An essential part of human rights learning is action, opportunities to put new lessons and skills into practice. The educated youth can impart knowledge and create consciousness to the people. They can disseminate information on human rights through brainstorming, case studies, creative expression, discourses, campaigns, publications, dramatizations and multi digital forms. These strategies of human rights education can make youth as advocates of human rights and its propagation to the society. The present paper deals with conceptual and institutional frame of human rights education in India and highlight the role of youth in promoting human rights practice in the community.

**Key words :** *Social justice, Democracy, Dignity, Humanity.*

## INTRODUCTION

Human rights education is a necessary pre-condition for sustainable development and provides protection from discrimination, exploitation and human rights illiteracy. It helps to reduce Human rights violation and contribute to building free and peaceful society. Individual's right upholds one's pride and dignity. When the society became more civilized, the individual became conscious of their rights. It is this chaotic state of existence that led to the formulation of certain modes of behavior, customs and traditions making man more protective and life more peaceful. For full

development as human beings, exercise and enjoyment of human rights by all the people is necessary (Spangoli 2007). Human rights and fundamental freedom help us to develop our intrinsic qualities, intelligence, talents and conscience to meet our material and spiritual needs. Considering that, in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

The youth of every country are its valuable human resource and the future of a country. Any idea of national development is just a myth without the active participation of youth in it. The youth are dynamic, passion and aspirations. Their bubbling enthusiasm has to be regulated and utilized. Their surplus power has to be exploited for welfare of the country. Proper guidance and direction can bring them in the forefront of national development. The youth who do this work are amazingly courageous and passionate (Sanders 2005). Standing witness and taking action helps shine light on issues and problems that need urgent change. The responsibility for change, progress and innovation lies on today's youth shoulders. Youth can make or mar society. The educated youth should initiate steps to teach the illiterate people in their neighbourhood. Around the world today there are laws and agreements that are meant to uphold the rights of Youth. These included in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Human rights education is essential for active citizenship in a democratic and pluralistic civil society. Citizens need to be able to think critically, make moral choices, take principled positions on issues, and devise democratic courses of action. Participation in the democratic process means an understanding and conscious commitment to the fundamental values of human rights and democracy, such as equality and fairness, and being able to recognize problems such as racism, sexism, and other injustices as violations of those values. Active citizenship also means participation in the democratic process, motivated by a sense of personal responsibility for promoting and protecting the rights of all. But to be engaged in this way, citizens must first be informed. So the learning essential for human rights activism.

## Human Rights Education: A Conceptual Frame work

Human rights education (HRE) is an international movement to promote awareness about the rights accorded by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related human rights conventions, and the procedures that exist for the redress of violations of these rights (Amnesty International 2005). Human rights education can broadly be termed as an activity to foster and promote human rights culture. It is a deliberate, participatory practice aimed at empowering individuals, groups and communities through fostering

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knowledge, skills and attitudes consistent with internationally recognized human rights principles (Hay 2007). The concept underpinning human rights education is that education should not only aim at forming trained, professional workers, but also contribute to the development of individuals who possess abilities to make societal changes. Education is seen as a way to empower people, improve their quality of life and increase their capacity to participate in the decision-making processes. Human rights education sustains endless curiosity in understanding human rights both as an indispensable element in peoples' lives to achieve their rights and as a tool for social transformation. According to U.N (1996) "Human rights education is training, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skills and the moulding of attitudes directed to:

- *the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms,*
- *the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity,*
- *the promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups, and*
- *the enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society".*

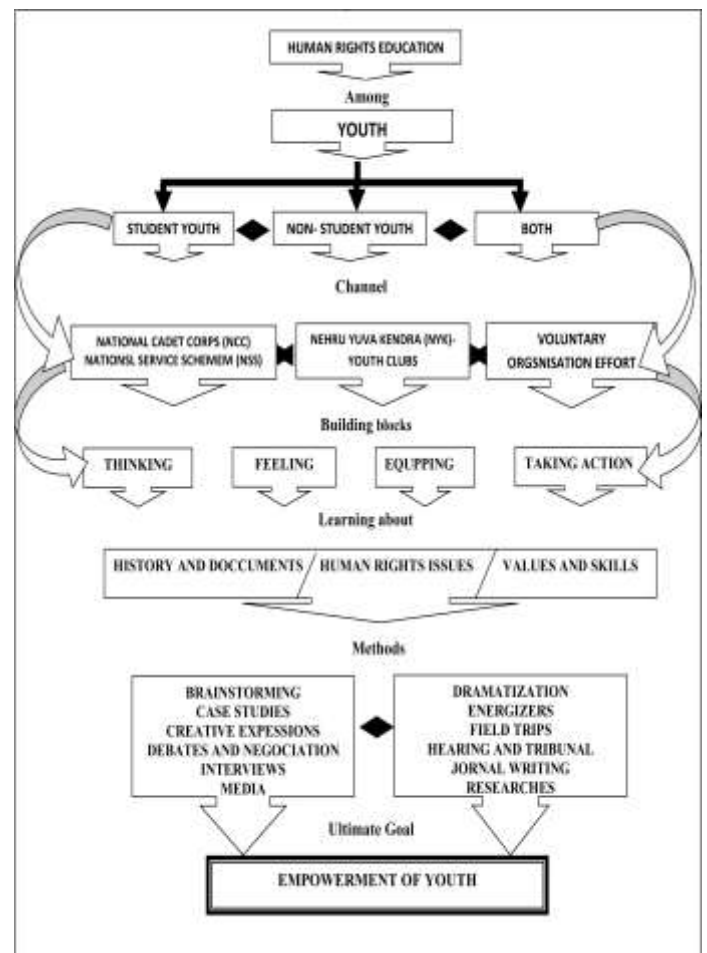
The United Nations envisages human rights education for all sectors of society as part of a "lifelong learning" process for individuals. The 'human rights' consists of economic, social and cultural rights, civil and political rights, the rights of Child, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against Women. The UN and other agencies have clarified that HRE has components of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, which should be consistent with recognized human rights principles and which should empower individuals and groups to address oppression and injustice (Amnesty International 2007). Human rights education has both normative and legal dimensions. The legal dimension incorporates sharing content about international human rights standards as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other treaties and covenants to which countries subscribe. Human rights education is also a cultural enterprise. As a medium to long-term process, human rights education seeks to develop and integrate people's cognitive, affective and attitudinal dimensions, including critical thinking. Its goal is to build a culture of respect for individual rights. It envisages action in the defense and promotion of human rights for all. The process of human rights education is intended to be one that provides skills, knowledge, and motivation to individuals. This shall enable them to transform their own lives and should be consistent with human rights norms and values. For this reason, interactive, learner-centered methods are widely promoted to impart human rights education. It is an education about human rights and for human rights. Its goal is to help people to understand and value the human rights, and take responsibility for respecting, defending, and promoting human rights

### Youth for Human Rights Education

The youth India has a major role in maintaining peace and harmony. All citizen are entitle to express their views. It

requires a part in the creation of constructive spaces that promote mutual respect. By considering this worth and dignity, society provide more important. The commission on human rights are aware of the increasing interest of the younger generation in the fundamental objectives of the United Nations, in particular the furtherance of peace and social justice by making measures for the promotion and encouragement of community in respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The promotion and protection of human rights needs to be at the forefront of any youth movement dedicated to peace building, reconciliation and violence prevention. A major aim in educating the young shall be to develop all their faculties and to train them to acquire higher moral qualities. It also helps young leaders to learn about the ideas, concepts and strategies of human rights through engaging in meaningful dialogue, promoting critical analysis, encouraging self-reflection and fostering action. Emotional and psychological development and community-building are just as important as to intellectual content. In this context brining human rights into culture is essential for sustainability. The figure 2 shows that, empowerment of youth leads to the sustainability of the society and human rights education is essential way to maintaining youth as fruitful resources through learning and practice for making human rights as way of life.

Figure 2



As youth is consider the resources of the society, comprehensive national policies and programmes had been announced by the government. Development bearing on

student youth welfare was setting up of National Cadet Corps (N.C.C) by the ministry of defense and National Service Scheme (N.S.S) by the ministry of Youth Affairs in the universities and colleges with aim of developing the personality of the students through community service. Nehru Yuva Kendras serve as focal point for developing activities for non-students youth, particularly in

rural areas to provide the rural youth with opportunities for development of their personality and skills enabling them to act as vanguard in the process of development. Yuvak Mandals, Training programmes for leaders of rural youth clubs, promotion of sports and games, promotion of yoga,

awards for outstanding sportsman, workers education programme, functions and literacy programme for rural women, College and university planning forums, National integration samities, exchange of youth delegation between states, work centers for training in skills, youth hostels and adventure programmes, correspondences, financial assistances to voluntary organizations etc are major youth welfare programmes in India. These efforts of both government and non-government organisations can be made use of the channels for promoting human rights

Human rights are highly inspirational and also highly practical, embodying the hopes and ideals of most human beings and also empowering people to achieve them. Human rights education shares those inspirational and practical aspects. In order to make youth as the human rights educator, they should consider about the three primary goals of human rights education: knowing about human rights, valuing human rights, and acting for human rights.

**Thinking:** Participants need a common core of knowledge and understanding in order to work together and be effective advocates for human rights. Certain facts are important to being an effective human rights advocate like a knowledge of fundamental human rights documents, a grasp of the history and development of the movement.

**Feeling:** This Building Block addresses the vital emotional and personal aspects of human rights education. All human rights education can take place in the context of a setting participant to build connections and work together toward common goals for which all share responsibility.

**Equipping:** Effective human rights education helps participants build the skills they need to act on behalf of their human rights and the rights of others. The farthest-reaching way to teach human rights is to prepare others to teach. And since people learn the most when teaching others, this strategy also helps people better internalize human rights education.

**Taking action:** An essential part of human rights learning is action, opportunities to put new lessons and skills into practice. Such practice is important because it builds more lasting and meaningful learning. It is also important because it turns education about human rights into education for human rights.

The various methodologies can define what they want to know and to seek information for themselves and others. Participatory methods have been effective for human rights education. These methods can encourage critical analysis of real-life situations leads to thoughtful and appropriate action to promote and protect human rights. For skill enrichment and practical application of human rights

learning, a member of alternative methods have been recommended.

**Brainstorming:** encourages creativity and generates many ideas quickly. It can be used for solving a specific problem, answering a question, introducing a new subject, raising interest, and surveying knowledge and attitudes

**Case studies:** give small groups of participants case studies to respond to as primary data for learning. Cases can encourage analysis, critical thinking, problem solving, and planning skills, as well as cooperation and team building.

**Creative expression:** can help to make concepts more concrete, personalize abstractions, and affect attitudes by involving emotional as well as intellectual responses to human rights

**Debates and Negotiations :** help to clarify different positions on a controversial issue. They usually involve two or several small groups who plan and present arguments on different sides of an issue, which may not necessarily represent their personal views. Debates develop logic, understanding of an issue, and listening and speaking skills. Ideally a debate concludes with all participants being able to vote for or against the proposition and discuss their positions

**Dramatization:** Many dramatic techniques can enhance learning. Sometimes their purpose is for participants to experience an unfamiliar situation or identity and

develop empathy and appreciation for different points of view. Other dramatizations may serve to concretize concepts like acting out articles of the UDHR or analyze conflict

**Field trips:** Sometimes participants need a safe place to learn, removed from the outside world. At other times learning is enhanced by exposure to new people and places, often unrecognized in their own communities. Visits might be to places where human rights issues develop or where people work to stop abuses or relieve victims

**Hearings and Tribunals :** Public testimony can give a human face to both human rights defenders and victims and serve to both educate and motivate those who attend

**Journal Writing :** Having participants write down their reactions, opinions, and ideas before a discussion not only raises the level of discourse, but also provides them with a written record of their evolving ideas about human rights. Journal writing also reinforces the value of independent, critical thinking

**Media:** Newspapers, news magazines, and news programs on radio or television can serve as excellent learning tools.

**Films and videos:** Although videos and films on human rights topics are readily available, using them effectively requires planning.

**Research and investigation:** Independent investigations that permit participants to explore topics in depth and to share their findings with others.

These methods can also be used for perpetuating human rights learning into practice. The youth for human rights education by means to achieving the human rights as way of life and spreading human rights culture into the society. In order for

youth to contribute to the enjoyment of human rights and the establishment of world peace, the world community must provide the necessary means for educating youth in both practical skills and spiritual values. At the same time, youth must also be at the forefront of efforts to promote social progress and justice. There the youth should become the harbingers of human rights movement and can empower the entire nation.

### Conclusion

Consciousness on human rights are very essential for the social transformation. Every individual has certain rights for surviving, developing, protecting and promoting life as common individual in society. The human rights education has to be purposive and relevant. The quintessence of human rights is to respect the human rights and evolve a culture that is more sensitive to the basic needs of every human being. It should ensure social justice economic and political rights and provides equal opportunities for growth and development of every individual and group of people. Youths' awareness on human rights is very important because they became the strong force in social movements. They educate others about their rights. They help other young people attain a higher level of Intellectual ability and to become qualified adults. Active participation of youth in the process of inculcating human rights skills and values for combat violations of rights and create a society with justice and peace. Though the human rights education for youth to utilize the abilities and interest of them for achieving sustainable social development.

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