13th Annual International Conference for Education & Democratic Citizenship (ICEDC) - Education for human rights and citizenship: the challenges of intergenerational justice.

"Reimagining Human Rights Education: Bridging UN initiatives and daily reality"

Elisa Gazzotti
Program Coordinator, Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Office for UN Affairs & Co-Chair NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning. @ elisa.g@sgi-ouna.org 🐦 SGI_OUNA   https://www.power-humanrights-education.org/

Research Questions

- How can we build **an authentic** culture of human rights?
- Why do we need to **reimagine** human rights education?
- What role can **young people*** play as agents of change?

Young people and youth are used interchangeably. UNESCO defines youth as between 18-25 years old.

Background

- In recent years, human rights education for and with youth has been increasingly identified as a strategy for preventing and tackling current global challenges. Yet, in reality, young people face innumerable challenges interwined with their sex, gender, ethnicity, abilities and socio-economic background.
- A society that deprives young people of hope cannot expect to achieve sustainability or build a culture of human rights. (Ikeda 2014).

"Human rights issues must not only be debated actively among governments; we must establish a shared global culture of human rights that is rooted in the realities of daily life and based on unfailing and uncompromising respect for human dignity."
(Ikeda 2008)

Challenges & Opportunities

- 1.8 billion young people. There is no a consistent definition of youth. Young people are not a homogeneous group and their challenges vary according to multiple other factors.
- 263 million of children and young people are out of school. 408 million youth resided in settings affected by armed conflicts. 27 million of young people are international migrants (UN 2018).
- HRE is often weakly integrated in teacher education programmes. It is very likely to be taught mainly in post-secondary education, easily becoming tools for an "elite".
- A significant gap exists between formal international support for HRE and national implementation.
- Many initiatives in the HRE programmes lack continuity. The impact is often weak due to limited time frames and resources.

- Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 4.7 and young people
- The World Programme For Human Rights Education Fourth Phase (2020-2024): Youth
- The UN Strategy. Fourth priority: Increase UN's efforts to promote human rights education and sustainable development education […]
- Jayathma Wickramanayake (Sri Lanka) appointed Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth at the UN
- Human Rights Council adopted Resolution 35/14 on Youth and Human Rights

Reimagining Human Rights Education

Inner transformation

- As I consider education in the twenty-first century, I would like to assert that what is most urgently needed is a **paradigm shift** from looking at education for society's sake to **building a society that serves the essential needs of education**. (Ikeda 2000:65).
- The only way to make any progress in eradicating widespread social evil and realize peace is **for each individual human being to revolutionize their own inner nature.** The essential foundation must be an inner transformation taking place in the lives of each human being and steadily expanding through society. (Ikeda 2004)

Structural and Systemic Change

- **Establishing regional centers for Human Rights Education and Training** along the lines of the Regional Centres of Expertise operating in collaboration with the United Nations University to promote the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development […] **A similar system for human rights education could involve** not only **communities with demonstrated best practices in human rights,** but also **those that are striving to improve conditions despite severely problematic histories of human rights abuse.** (Ikeda 2013).
- **Adopt a convention on human rights education and training based on the UDHR** would strengthen measures ensuring its implementation. Holding a UN and civil society forum on human rights education that would review achievements to date and deepen deliberations toward the adoption of such a convention. (Ikeda 2017).

Comprehensive awareness-raising

- **To learn –** It is essential to deepen understanding and awareness. Everything starts from grasping basic facts.
- **To reflect –** Education must also inspire the faith that each of us has both the power and the responsibility to effect positive change on a global scale.
- **To empower** – Even if we establish agreed-upon ethics and paradigms of behavior, unless an increasing number of people embody and practice these in their lives, the severe realities we face will not change.
- **To exercise leadership** – Unless this [awareness-raising] gives rise to empowerment and, beyond that, to the exercise of leadership, it will not generate real transformation. (Ikeda 2012)

For an authentic human rights culture to emerge, we must cultivate in people an inner voice that speaks to us and them of the value and importance of human rights which forms our view of ourselves and through which we lose part of ourselves and who we are if we do not uphold them. (Lamb 2018)

Youth as agents of change…

Education for global citizenship, in particular, can provide the conditioning context (relation) that enables people to **reframe events**, wherever they may occur, **through a shared human perspective**, and to **foster action and solidarity.** […] Through education for global citizenship, learners have the opportunity to:

(1) gain the experience of **seeing the world through the eyes of others**;
(2) **discover and clarify what is necessary** in order to build a society where we can all live together; and
(3) **collaborate to give birth to spaces of security** in their immediate surroundings (Ikeda 2000)
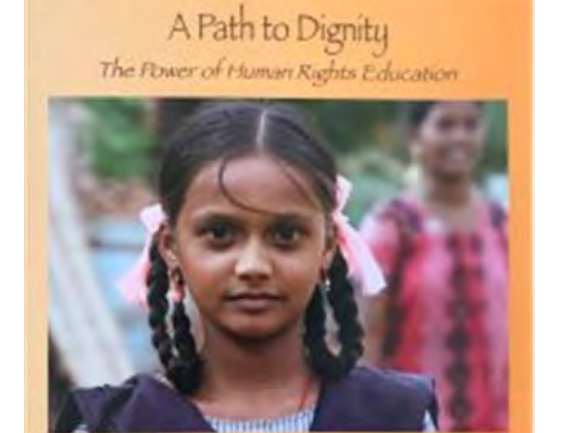
…in practice

Young people leading workshops on HRE to foster global citizens.

Using storytelling as a tool: from victim of violence to actors of change thanks to HRE.

Transforming Lives: The power of Human Rights Education Exhibition showing in Caux, Switzerland

Excerpt from the movie: A Path to dignity. HRE in school in India

Conclusion

"The work of establishing universal human rights **starts with a transformation in the awareness and behavior of each individual**. And **persistent efforts at human rights education and learning can**, as they develop into a broad-based grassroots movement, lay the **solid ethical foundations** for a **flourishing culture of human rights**." (Ikeda 2011)

References

Bajai, Monisha. (2017) *Human Rights Education – Theory, Research, Praxis,* PENN.
Danish Institute for Human Rights "Human Rights Education Indicator Framework". https://www.humanrights.dk/sites/humanrights.dk/files/draft_human_rights_education_indicator_framework.pdf.
Ikeda, Daisaku. (2000) "Education Proposal", *Soka Gakkai International.*
———. (2002) "The Challenge of Global Empowerment: Education for a Sustainable Future", *Soka Gakkai International.*
———. (2004) "Inner Transformation: Creating a Global Groundswell for Peace", *Soka Gakkai International.*
———. (2008) "Humanizing Religion, Creating Peace", *Soka Gakkai International.*
———. (2011) "Toward a World of Dignity for All: The Triumph of the Creative Life." *Soka Gakkai International.*
———. (2012) "For a Sustainable Global Society: Learning for Empowerment and Leadership", *Soka Gakkai International.*
———. (2013) "Compassion, Wisdom and Courage: Building a Global Society of Peace and Creative Coexistence", *Soka Gakkai International.*
———. (2014) *A Forum for Peace – D. Ikeda Proposals at the UN* (edited by Olivier Urbain, IB Thauris).
———. (2014) "Value Creation for Global Change: Building Resilient and Sustainable Societies", *Soka Gakkai International.*
———. (2017) "The Global Solidarity of Youth: Ushering in a New Era of Hope", *Soka Gakkai International.*
Lamb, Michele. (2018) "Building an Authentic Human Rights Culture: Daisaku Ikeda's Contribution to Human Rights Theory, Practice and Education.' Conference Paper given at the First International Ikeda/Soka Studies Education Conference, De Paul University, Chicago, USA.
OHCHR. (2018) Report on Youth and Human Rights, UN Doc A/HRC/39/33.
———. (2019) Draft Plan of Action for the fourth phase (2020-2024) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education.
United Nations. "The UN Youth Strategy" https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/18-00080_UN-Youth-Strategy_Web.pdf.
———.(2018) "Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security" https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-10/youth-web-english.pdf