Role of School in Affirming Human Rights

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Abstract

Individuals who are detained remain entitled to the respect of their fundamental rights and several provisions in international and regional human rights treaties, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as a significant body of soft law, provide for the protection of the human rights of prisoners. The act of ratification of international human rights treaties was widely regarding by the participants of the working group as only the first step of a process and not an end in itself. In that regard the importance of domestic implementation of international legislation and standards was underlined. In this context, the group considered that it is particularly important and useful to establish directly enforceable domestic rights. Furthermore, jurisprudence by international and regional bodies is seen as an important tool to raise standards.

Keywords: Human Rights, Dignity.

Introduction

All human beings are born equal in dignity and rights. There are moral claims which are inalienable and inherent in all human individuals, by virtue of their humanity alone. The values of dignity and equality of all members of the human race, like many other basic principles are found virtually in every culture and civilization, religion and philosophical tradition. The concept of human rights acquires the precious legacy of contemporary thought to culture and civilization. But still, in the present society, we find some individual being beaten up by a mob and compassion towards a human being, though a culprit does not find its place. There are stray incidents of people taking law into their own hands and acting according to their will and wish. At this juncture, it becomes essential to throw light on the essence and concept of Human Rights Education. Its importance is that Human Rights bring about equity, equality, social Justice and Socio – economic culture and empowerment of people.
Role of the School in Affirming the Rights of Children

Children have the same basic rights as adults, hence the Declaration; on Human Rights holds good in the case of children too. However, because of their physical and mental immaturity, children are vulnerable and they require special rights to protect them and to meet their unique needs. It is because of this immaturity that children must postpone the exercises of some civil rights until they become adults, thereby increasing the obligation to adults to ensure that rights of the child are defended. It is therefore, necessary that children should learn about their own rights. Every society hopes and expects that its children will grow up to be capable and responsible citizens who contribute to the well being of their communities. The major responsibility of giving this awareness and knowledge about their rights is on the schools.

Schools have to take up a major role in relation to the confirmation of children’s rights and in turn educate the parents on their own responsibilities in terms of the right understanding on the rights of the child. Some suggestions are given below and the training Institutions could creatively work out other meaningful and effective strategies.

- Providing knowledge about different aspects of child rights which can be done through symposiums, seminars, talks and also by providing pertinent related literature.
- Children out of school should be brought to school and mainstreamed through efforts on the part of teachers and through different enrolment drives.
- Schools could work wholeheartedly towards the physical concerns of the children in particular to study whether they have enough nutritious food and if not could launch programmes to provide food for children.
- Children with special needs could be given the care they need by working towards providing incentives available for them from the government and other agencies.
- Special bridge courses could be conducted for children of socially disadvantaged classes where the teachers can truly express their commitment for the cause of education.
- School could come to the rescue of children in times of calamities like cyclones, conflicts and clashes and other natural calamities and the teachers could be their special guides and mentors at such situations.
Programmes could be organized to give opportunities for children to express themselves in various ways in and outside the classroom in order that they get opportunities to practice the right to expression they need to enjoy.

Opinions of children need to be respected by teachers and school authorities by enlisting their suggestions and collaboration in matters pertaining to them in different situations in and outside the school.

Schools should uphold the dignity of each student. Practices like calling children with nick names or humiliating them in the class using abusive language, giving corporal punishment that seems to be common in our country lower the dignity and self-esteem of the child should be strictly avoided.

School programme should be planned in such a way that they have sufficient scope and opportunities for leisure and entertainment.

The entire school set up should function in such a manner that respecting the students as individual persons becomes a reality in our Indian schools.

A congenial atmosphere for learning could be provided in the schools by improving on the facilities and using learner centered approaches to teaching than continuing with teacher dominated classroom situations.

Schools should treat all children without any discrimination on grounds of gender, caste, economic status, learning ability etc; instead they should feel that all are treated alike as precious children of our county.

Special efforts should be made on the part of schools to see that the children are admitted and enrolled through various schemes in their school using motivating strategies in the teaching and learning process.

Strategies and Programmes for affirming the rights of the child are listed below:

1. **Integrating the Values of Child’s Rights in the Curriculum:**

   A look at the revised textbooks in our schools in various subjects contain the values that uphold the dignity and rights of the child. One of the best approaches for imbibing values is integrating values in the curriculum. Teaching strategies for the integrated approach of identifying these values and inculcating such values in the children is essential in the teacher training programme. Such training needs to be provided to pre-service and in-service teachers to make it alive in their own thinking and living, thus facilitate their commitment to promote the rights of the child. The existing social science curriculum is replete with the components of human rights, of fundamental rights. The integrated Approach to teaching these values is one of the best
strategies.

The following steps can be adopted in the integrated approach:

i) Identification of the components related to the rights of the child at the point where the lesson is loaded with such a component in order to treat it as a Plug Point.

ii) In the process of the regular lesson preparation, this plug point is used to effect specific learning outcomes related their rights using specific skills and techniques. It implies the stating of learning outcomes, working out strategies to elicit these values, considering their need and their application and arriving at a personal action or resolve towards personalization.

2. An Intellectual and Experimental Study of the Documents:
The document on the Rights of the Child is summarized above in terms of its directions. However, Teacher Training Institutions should emphasize on the learning of the Document by the student teachers. Making the document easily available to teachers and learners will facilitate the working out of various strategies for the study of the document. As a part of the Human Rights Day, the teacher trainees could organize Quiz competition, Slogan competition, Poetry and declamation to guide the learners to be aware of their rights as depicted in the Document. It will go a long way in creating awareness of the rights of the Child.

The activities that can be conducted are, bulletin board displays, group study and quiz competition on the document, Slogan competition, collage and composition of verses/poems, related to the document. Literary activities can be geared towards this and role plays can be enacted during the school assembly. Field trips and awareness walks to slum areas, construction sites and orphanages/children’s homes could be organized and even the School Annual Day can highlight the theme in the items staged.

4. Out-reach Programmes for the Students:
Education to reach out to the deprived and the less fortunate is a fertile area to motivate our students to recognize and respect the rights of others. As we
know, the problem in our country is not lack of resources, but that of unequal ownership and control of the assets. The real problem is the THING that creates poverty, i.e.… inequality dividing our people into the rich and the poor with the rich possessing power over the poor, thus exploiting their assets, their basic rights and human dignity. Exposure of this situation to our learners, in the context of human rights education, and co-curricular activities springing from the documents can provide for respecting the rights of others and striving to promote a situation where human dignity of the less fortunate is recognized. This exposure can be provided through human rights awareness camps, walks to building sites and slums and the like which will be an experience of child exploitation.

5. The Learning Environment and the Hidden Curriculum:
‘What you speak so loudly that I cannot hear what you are saying’, said Gandhiji. Truly, no amount of preaching and speaking on the rights of the child can yield the desired outcomes of human dignity and realization of human rights. An institution Form No. 26 really creates an unconscious, unwritten environment of values upheld which constitutes the hidden curriculum of an institution to the learners. This unwritten, hidden curriculum is more powerful than the written curriculum in shaping the personality of students. Human rights can be effective only in an educational environment where the rights of the child are promoted and protected by the leadership in institutions by modeling it in their lives. The influence of this caring environment can enhance the dignity of the children in our institutions and provide the assurance of their rights being safeguarded.

Conclusion
School is a miniature society where children are moulded to become wholesome personalities. It is these children who become the future citizens of the country, who should be taught the strategies for affirming the human rights so that they can carry it to the future generations. In this regard, all those concerned with the school must work hard to achieve the target of making one and all aware of the human rights and affirming them to keep up the dignity of all individuals.
Reference


