

## GC-OHCHR Webinar “Human Rights Education in Higher Education: Pathways for Youth Empowerment”

### Q and A Session

Q: Is there a professional education program for psychologists? Many psychologists want to set up private practices. This is also part of people's mental health, because the benefits are also felt by the community.

A: Not sure if I understand your question fully, but in Finland all schools have psychologists but now have also introduced 'school coaches' as a less formal adult interacting with students during the recess/break as well as individually though not always fully trained psychologists - been very successful as students do not like being identified as going to the psychologist. *Farida Shaheed, UN SR on the Right to Education*

---

Q: Is there any school or primary education sector include human rights concept as a subject?

A: Children's books addressing the issue of human rights or the rights of children is also an interesting approach to playfully integrating human rights knowledge into primary education. For example, an author's collective from Hamburg, Germany, recently published a book with 12 tales about 12 children's rights, called "You may not always be right, but you always have rights" (Link in German only, unfortunately: <https://elbautoren.de/unsere-neuerscheinung-ist-da/>) I have no affiliation with the authors, just posting this as an encouraging example. *Participant*

---

Q: Greetings from the Philippines! I am from the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines and I wish to share that human rights education in our country is practically nil, except for courses that require them like criminology and social studies. Moreover, there are not a lot of, if at all, human-rights focused Master's programs in the Philippines as law studies is more general. There is also limited access to international grants to those who wish to deepen their understanding of human rights.

A: Yes, plenty to do in the Philippines, but also consider that you will find HRE in no traditional courses like Gender studies, migration studies, social welfare. A challenge is that the NGO sector is very strong in Philippines and has lead on HRE, but a variety of universities are active. *Mike Hayes APMA Program*

---

Q: With a career in architecture, I have been working for a number years now to include human rights in the curriculum as well as the practice of architecture and engineering. I believe that a rights-based approach is critical to build an environment where, at present, there are many obstructions to rights that remain unnoticed by practicing professionals. I would love to see more support for the advancement of the RBA in the education of designers of built environment.

A: The mandate of my UNESCO chair is to foster HRE within higher education, in particular in the preparation of professionals. For example, so far, I have been working in training teachers, psychologists and social workers. I am very interested to know what you have been doing in the field of architecture. *Felisa Tibbitts, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Higher Education and Chair in Human Rights Education, Utrecht University*

---

Q: Greetings from Sarajevo! A question for Ms Tibbitts: How would you define a global culture of human rights, and would you agree that HRE in higher education contributes to the building of a culture of human rights? Many thanks!

A: "Culture" has different facets but I think refers to beliefs, values and practices. I understand the critiques of universal values/culture associated with human rights, but I believe that there can be a consensus on the need to promote and protect human dignity. This human dignity is codified through international and regional human rights standards, which have both normative and legal dimensions. Higher education institutions can play a key role in contributing to these experiences on their campuses, but also with faculty working with other human rights actors and duty bearers. What do you think? *Felisa Tibbitts, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Higher Education and Chair in Human Rights Education, Utrecht University*

---

Q: hello everyone, I want to know what OHCHR have done for girls in Afghanistan who are now allowed to go to school?

A: Hi - our Office continues to put s spotlight to the right to education in Afghanistan - you can see more about this here: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/afghanistan>. *Elena Ippoliti, OHCHR*

---

Q: Dr. Tibbits: wise reflections! Could you elaborate on the importance of decolonial approaches?

A: A lot to speak about here! Decolonial approaches reminds of the importance of connecting human rights with both Western and non-Western ways of knowing, accommodating collective rights, and raising the voice and power of marginal groups, including Indigenous Peoples. A decolonial perspective moves us into critical thinking about what counts as knowledge and evidence and who is taking decisions about what is studied and researched in the higher education context. I think that HRBA and decoloniality are related but they are not identical. *Felisa Tibbits, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Higher Education and Chair in Human Rights Education, Utrecht University*

---

Q: Mike! I have done a research about disable people in Afghanistan. How can I publish it in your journal?

A: Two journals are possible: the Global Campus <https://gchumanrights.org/research/publications.html> and Mahidol University: <https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/HRPS>. *Mike Hayes APMA Program*

A: The Global Campus also established a dedicated scholarship program for Afghan students and scholars to support their university level education, research and teaching at GC member universities all over the globe after the Taliban takeover. In addition, our colleagues in the e-learning department are currently working on an online course on the right to education for children in conflict situations, perhaps you could keep an eye out for that once it will be launched! *GC staff*

---

Q: Can we generalize that offering human rights education in university for all departments brings culture of human rights?

A: I would say that the integration of HRE across university departments would be an impressive opportunity to the knowledge and practice of human rights at the university. I suppose what I would want to look at more closely are: 1) if the courses are required or optional; 2) the pedagogy of the courses and their aims (e.g., are they focused only on learning 'about' human rights?), c) if there is sign-off on human rights as a living value system by top administrators at the university, and d) there is evidence that students have genuine power in

being able to influence policies and practices at the university that affect them. *Felisa Tibbitts, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Higher Education and Chair in Human Rights Education, Utrecht University*

---

Q: Thanks a lot Ms. Tibbitts! Yes, I believe that HRE in higher education, and in particular specialized human rights postgrad programs (such as the ones within the GC network) can contribute to building a culture of human rights, by having an impact on not just knowledge, but also skills/values and attitudes of students.

A: Yes! *Felisa Tibbitts, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Higher Education and Chair in Human Rights Education, Utrecht University*

---

Q: Last year, we were able to develop a model human rights law syllabus in the Philippines. It was a collaboration with all law lecturers all over the country. However, we were not able to convince law schools to adopt the material because human rights law is not included in the bar examination.

A: That sounds like a good advocacy project. HRE does get taught, we know Ateneo and UP are active in HRE, but often the board (or the body that manages the curriculum) may be more conservative, or may focus more on 'professional' sectors like commercial or family law. *Mike Hayes APMA Program*

---

Q: Let me know that are there effective strategies for promoting human rights at a grassroots level during political instability?

A: A number of organizations do this. I think the DIHR has a handbook on it. Which region are you talking about? *Mike Hayes APMA Program*

---

Q: Thank you all for this rich and comprehensive intervention. Mr. Mike and the other panel list identified a very interesting point which is the participation through them in HRE among youth and children, which I

always find quite challenging depending on the context we work in. Youth are willing to participate in advancing human rights but sometimes the context prevents them to do so, or the access is limited; how can their participation be enhanced in activities related to human rights in “difficult context”?

A: Good, and challenging question. There is a balance between recognizing a child's rights to participate, to make their own decisions, with the role of the educator to be accountable for the outcomes of the training. We don't teach children, but youth (university students mainly 18-25). Other people here are better placed to address HRE for children *Mike Hayes APMA Program*

---

Q: How are human rights implemented and enforced globally?

A: How you can answer this question is enroll in one of the global masters programs and take the course on protection mechanisms. *Mike Hayes APMA Program*

---

Q: Thanks, Felisa. I can provide more info separately but, in short, while I was working at KMUTT in Bangkok I spent a few years trying to establish a UNESCO Chair in community architecture and human rights. That didn't quite work out with KMUTT as a host. I have also been working at the level of the UIA and national institutions of architecture on pressing for the recognition of human rights in the practice of architecture. I am presently back in Bangkok and hope to be talking further at architecture schools in the region, including, meeting up with Mike Hayes at Mahidol at some point while I'm here.

A: Let's be in touch! I would like to support your efforts. [f.l.tibbitts@uu.nl](mailto:f.l.tibbitts@uu.nl) *Felisa Tibbitts, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Higher Education and Chair in Human Rights Education, Utrecht University*

---

Q: I am just wondering where mediation stands with human rights

A: This is an interesting question. I'm at an institution of human rights and peace, so we have to look at how human rights and peace inter-relate. While they both share the same objective - peace, justice, rights - the process to get there is not the same for both disciplines, for example using mediation instead of justice.

However, I think we often over emphasize the differences when they are not that different. Mediation can be rights based, though it is a debate exactly what this looks like. *Mike Hayes APMA Program*

---

Q: My question is more of a general one: how can we ensure that we focus on economic, social and cultural rights (the right to food, shelter, clean water) just as much as we focus on civil and political rights (the right to vote, freedom from torture and etc.) in human rights education? Especially given the general push back from states against the former category.

A: This does depend on the country. Many developing countries (even China) are OK with ESCR) but not civil rights, so it is contextual. ESC in rich countries may be more marginalized and treated as a welfare issue and not a rights one. So the challenge is changing the talk from welfare to rights, and seeing poverty is a rights violation. *Mike Hayes APMA Program*

---

Q: In the UK, we are seeing a framing process take place which categorizes ESCR as "everyday human rights" but this is mostly done by civil society organizations. Wondering if this might be useful for human rights education as well.

A: OK, but isn't homelessness or food security managed by a ministry as well, not just a NGO? And that ministry acts out of the human rights act? *Mike Hayes APMA Program*

---

Q: How can we promote human rights education if the educators and teachers are not human rights aware and lack the competencies to impart the values of human rights? I think it's really very important to embed in the curriculum in the pre-education of learning institutions the human rights values as part of transformative education. It must be a lifelong learning especially when teachers are already employed in the school system and translate this mission in educating the learners for human rights.

A: While we do not work in primary and secondary education, a good start is keeping in touch with the work of SHAPE SEA, which trains lecturers from any discipline to teach human rights. This can be people from teaching colleges which is an entrance point. *Mike Hayes APMA Program*