

Human Rights Education in School Curricula

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I was sent to the Special **OSCE Meeting on Human Rights Education and Training** in Vienna to present the policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport on students' rights implementation.

This organization usually deals with the subject of security. It was, however, thought necessary to deal with human rights and, more specifically, with students' rights, as the OSCE believes that human rights education in schools and granting students' rights in educational institutions will create a society of friendship between people and between nations, and reduce the hatred between the latter.

As Israel's representative, I presented two aspects of our educational system:

- Formal human rights education, human rights education in school curricula, and
- Human rights education and training for public officials.

The subjects presented at the Conference

The students' rights booklet was presented at the Conference, together with the edition in Braille, which received special attention. Until now, organizations have distributed to students declarations of their rights. For the first time, they saw that a State distributed an official declaration to students, listing their rights and responsibilities in the school, at home and in society. This was perceived innovative and special.

A summary of the subjects raised by the States at the Conference Implementing students' rights:

Professor Tomashevski, from Poland, opened a fascinating discussion with a declaration about the importance of processes of implementation of students' rights to enable social advancement and active and quality citizenship. Research indicates that **students lose control of responsibility only when they do not have rights and areas of responsibility**. Children's rights must be taught from early childhood through university, **as a required subject**. It is best that the subject be studied in a cultural context, to reduce racism in every country and worldwide. It was stressed that education about rights is the solution to social problems, as it enables children to cooperate with each other and demonstrate social concern. Students' rights must be published annually, while developing a suitable curriculum from multi-disciplinary viewpoints. Recommended focal points are children's rights in school, at home and in the community.

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Professor Manfred Novak, Head of the Faculty for Human Rights at the University of Vienna, noted that a "faculty for rights" should be created in education, where universities train educators. In Vienna, they are now working on this process.

Students' rights are a separate field. Most important and significant is the code of conduct **required of educators dealing with students**. Few countries in the world require this field in teacher training. It is therefore incumbent upon forum members to develop additional examples in their countries.

The German representative stressed the immediate need for human rights and students' rights education, so that "Auschwitz will not occur again in our time", and so that students will experience their rights from early childhood through the special framework of the educational system. This education will influence them as adults.

Education should focus on tolerance for others, **taking time to listen to children, to hear and relate** seriously to what they say.

There is a difference between human rights education and education about children's rights in school for students and young people.

The English representative presented the **Student Parliament**, which establishes procedures and accepted practices for schools toward integration of the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

An ombudsperson from Poland presented the "citizenship knowledge" that should be provided to every child in every educational institution, and recommended **the slogan run in the media in the name of teachers** and students in Poland: "Human rights begin with me!".

An ombudsperson from Slovenia said that students' rights are **a required subject in primary and junior high schools in Slovenia**. Several times a year, days and weeks of concentration on a number of rights are conducted on the community level in every school.

The Azerbaijan representative asked for cooperation from the nations present **to building a curriculum and models for students' rights integration**, and recommended developing an ethical code for teachers, which relates to ways of integrating those rights.

The Egyptian representative said that students' rights are taught **in the university as required courses** in the fields of education and politics. Meetings are now being held in the Egyptian Parliament to discuss the implementation of the Convention for the Rights of the Child and the development of ways and means and school programs.

The Canadian representative presented **university and college study outlines for teacher training** in the field of rights and responsibilities.

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The Spanish representative said that the essence of training is not only **studying the subject in universities** that train instructional personnel, but that every university student **must volunteer during one school year** to work on a project presenting human rights in the schools. Without an evaluation of his/her work, the student will not receive a teaching certificate.

The Croatian representative said that since 1999 in Croatia, the government has an obligation to implement a policy of granting rights to students. There are many study programs responding to different population needs, stressing human rights, students' rights, equality and religious freedom. There are multi-disciplinary study programs, varied activities outside of school and mass communication study programs.

The media shape the behavior of children and youths, and influence their opinions. Therefore, mass communications studies are a **required subject** from first grade through secondary school. Together with the students, radio and television programs and films are produced about human rights and, especially, about children's rights. Regular radio programs and talk shows on television explore different angles of the implementation of children's rights in schools and of human rights.

The Swedish representative stated that **the public must be informed about children's rights using all communications media**. They should also be studied in school. It is important that one of the approaches be multi-cultural. We must be aware of the different needs of children. Governments must give children every possibility to study and develop, so that each individual can properly advance. These suggestions have been implemented in Sweden:

- Community and school activities on the subject should be publicized,
- Processes of assimilation in the schools should be supervised,
- the needs of immigrants should be responded to, they should be told in their own language about their rights and helped to realize them,
- Forums should be held in response to the problem of violent children, with the participation of parents and professional counselors,
- Teachers should be taught about their areas of responsibility in the realization of students' rights,
- Universities must be required to teach the subject,
- Civil servants must be taught about children's rights and how to realize them,
- it is urgent that the police in every country learn about the rights of children and youths,
- Governments must require in-service training programs for teachers, and check actual implementation,

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- A program evaluating students' rights implementation processes must be operated,
- Extensive, practical in-service training must be given for school principals,
- Every education student must be required to take a course about rights for at least one year, and implement it during his/her training,
- All school administrators must be required to take an in-service training course on students' rights.

The Russian representative said that they have a **school for parents**, where they learn about children's rights, **to build a common language and practical procedures together** for the children's futures. Parent education establishes the status of the children in the community, and in the services they receive in the afternoons.

The American representative said that, beyond education for rights, we are now establishing **help centers for children**, youths and their families. At these centers, there will be **attorneys for children**. The attorneys will undergo special training, now being developed in the universities as a special field.

To endow a culture of rights, everyone must be committed to learning about the rights due to all children. These must be publicized in different languages, so that immigrants can understand the significance of the special rights of children. Teachers must be taught about implementing students' rights on various levels. Principals must be required to do so as well. The integration of rights should be expressed in all communications media. The development of a distance-learning course is now nearing completion; it will deal with implementing rights in schools, as part of the annual training of school educational personnel.