

# STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

Human rights education is one of the new courses introduced into the school curriculum. It improves the quality of learning achievement by promoting pupil-centered and participatory teaching and learning practices and processes, as well as new function for our noble profession. It helps in no small measure towards the contribution of social cohesion and conflict prevention by enhancing the social and emotional development of the child and by introducing democratic values. It helps learners to develop attitudes of solidarity across issues and nations. Human rights education promotes understanding and friendship among people and nations of the world. It is very essential because, it is used to affirm that all individuals, irrespective of status, have moral rights which a society should not deny. This work therefore attempts to explore strategies for implementing human rights education in our schools which include training of teachers and other education personnel, dissemination of information, curriculum development among others.

**KEY WORDS:** Human Rights, Teachers, Schools, Education.

## INTRODUCTION

Human rights represent an ambitious attempt to bring relationship into the political institution and the societies of states (Cassese, 1990). Human rights as used here refer to a right which remains above the ordinary law of the land and which is antecedent to the political society itself (Ekot, 2000). According to Eze (1984) human rights are demands or claims which individuals or groups make on society some of which are protected by law while others remain aspiration to be attained in future. Human rights are dynamic and not static. According to Ajomo (1993), human rights exist in man and have arisen because of the nature of man, which makes human a social animal.

Human rights constitute a body of unique virtues which are highly cherished as a new phenomenon. This is because the concept is highly rooted in most of the world's religions and cultures; which is today neglected in many legal systems (Ekot, 1999).

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Culture Organization (UNESCO), defines human rights education as education, training and information aiming at building a universal culture through the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and molding of attitudes directed to:

- (i) The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- (ii) The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity;

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- (iii) The promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all religions, indigenous people and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups.
- (iv) The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free and democratic society governed by rule of law;
- (v) The building and maintenance of peace;
- (vi) The promotion of people-centered sustainable development and social justice.

It should be noted here that provision on human rights education have been incorporated in many international instruments including;

- a. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 26);
- b. The international Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right (article 13);
- c. The Convention on Rights of The Child (article 29).
- d. The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against Women (article 10);
- e. The International Convention on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (article 7);
- f. The Vienna declaration and Programme of Action. All these are aiming at protecting the rights of the subjects (Beitxer, 2005).
- g. The Declaration and Programme Action of the World Conference against Racism, racial Discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance held in Durban, 2001 (Declaration Paras. 95-97 and Programme of Action, Paras. 129-139).

All and sundry have the right to education no matter their religious, political or cultural affiliation. It is an internationally recognized and accepted right, just as the right to life and nobody is to be denied it.

### Strategies for Implementing Human Right Education

Whether private or public schools, primary or secondary, the government is the only authorized agent that produces the curriculum for these schools through the ministry of education. Thus the implementation strategy addresses primarily the ministries of education, which is vested with the responsibility for primary and

secondary education at national level in Nigeria. Ministries of education are thus the principal actors.

The implementation strategy of human rights education in the school system in Nigeria aside the institutions/agencies deal with such concern as:

- (i) Educational policy
- (ii) Programme planning
- (iii) Curriculum development
- (iv) Teaching and learning material development
- (v) The in-service training of teachers and other education personnel.
- (vi) Teaching and learning methodologies
- (vii) Inclusive education
- (ix) Regional/ provincial/local administration
- (x) Research
- (xi) Dissemination of information

For the above strategies for implementing human rights education to be successful, there is need for close collaboration with other institutions such as:

- (i) Teachersq colleges and faculties of education of universities.
- (ii) Teachersq unions, professional organizations and accreditation institutions.
- (iii) National, federal, local and state legislative bodies, including education, development and human rights parliamentary committees.
- (iv) National human rights institutions such as ombudsman and human rights commission.
- (v) National commission for UNESCO
- (vi) National/local organizations, including for instance, National Committee for the United Nation Childrenq Fund (UNICEF) and other community - based organizations.
- (i) National branches of international non-governmental organizations.
- (ii) Parents associations
- (iii) Studentsqassociations.
- (iv) Education research institutes
- (V) National and local human rights resources and training centres.

Aside the institutions mentioned above, the human rights education needs the support of the following stakeholders to succeed:

- a. Ministries such as welfare, labour, justice, women and youth.

- b. Youth organizations
- c. Media representatives
- d. Religious institutions
- e. Cultural, social and community leaders
- f. Indigenous peoples and minority groups; and
- g. The business community.

The world programme for human rights education (plan of action for the first phase 2005-2007), proposes four stages to facilitate the planning, implementation and evaluation of human rights education in the school system. These stages are:

Stage One: This stage is concerned with the provision of guidelines to assist member states in implementing the plan of action. This they do by addressing the question: where are we? They also help to provide guidelines and how to collect information on and analyze the following:

1. Current situation of the primary and secondary system including the situation of human in schools.
2. Historical and cultural backgrounds that may influence right education in the school system.
3. Human rights education initiatives.
4. Achievements and shortcomings of the obstacles to initiatives undertaken within United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004.
5. Involvement of various actions such as governmental institutions, national human rights institutions, universities, research institutions and non-governmental organizations, in human rights education in the school system.
6. Good human rights practice existing at national and regional levels.
7. Role of similar types of education (education for sustainable development, peace education, global education, multicultural education, citizenship and values education) that may exist in the country.
8. Determine which measures and components of human right education exist already; and
9. Identify key features and areas by analyzing and determining advantages, disadvantages, as well as opportunities

for and limitations to human right education in the school among others.

Stage two is the setting of priorities and developing of national implementation strategy. With regards to this section, the plan of action for the second phase (2005-2007) addresses the question; where do we want to go and how? It helps by:

1. Defining a mission statement which in this sense is the main goal for implementing human rights education in the school system.
2. Fixing objectives of human right education.

The priorities set here will help to focus on issues potentially necessary for the achievement of the strategies for implementing human rights education and will lead to impact in the society generally. Impact as used here refers to what can be actually achieved. Direction of the national implementation strategies is set in such a way that it links objectives with available resources by identifying inputs which are allocation of available resources such as human, finance and time. It also has to do with identifying activities such as tasks, responsibilities, time frame and milestones as well as outputs. Outputs here refer to concrete products such as new legislation, studies, capacity-building, seminars, educational materials, revision of textbooks among others.

The third stage is implementing human right education. According to world programme for Human Rights Education (plan of Action 2005-2007) this is the implementing and monitoring stage. This simply involves the dissemination of the national implementation strategy as well as monitoring the implementation using fixed milestones.

The final stage is the evaluation. Evaluation addresses the questions: Did we get there? Here the plane of Action advises that we adopt evaluation as a method of accountability and a means to learn to improve a possible next phase of activities. This of course may involve the use of self-evaluation as well as independent external evaluation to review implementation. It also involves the checking of the fulfillment of the set objectives and also examining the implementation process. It finally involves the acknowledgement, dissemination and celebration of achievement of results.

## CONCLUSION

Right to education is synonymous to right to life, right to religion, freedom of expression, right to peaceful demonstration, right to own property etc. It affects every living being. It is an internationally recognized right. It helps to improve quality of learning achievements, contributes to social cohesion, conflict prevention and encourages participatory education. Human Right Education promotes the development of a culture of human rights. It can be effectively implemented in our school through the ministry of education who also control and monitor the curriculum with the assistant of other stakeholders and agencies

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