

ON THE TEACHING OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS - ACCORDING TO ONE SPECIFIC EXAMPLE

PRIVIND PREDAREA DREPTURILOR OMULUI ÎN INSTITUȚIILE DE ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL SUPERIOR - DUPA UNUI EXEMPLU SPECIFIC

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Summary. *The article presents a case study of an educational programme designed to illustrate the importance of teaching human rights. The paper places emphasis on the role of education and learning in fostering an understanding of human rights, which in turn contributes to the development of democratic processes and the formation of active democratic citizenship practices. The paper is based on desk research and a qualitative analysis of the educational process, utilising literature that is both thematically and qualitatively accessible. The article discusses the goals and objectives of human rights education within a specific educational programme in a higher education institution, teaching methodology, educational literature (both textbooks and normative documents), forms of assessment and achieved results. It also considers the importance of teaching additional topical issues to the identified problems, as well as addressing problematic issues related to human rights in the context of Georgia's rapprochement with the European Union.*

Keywords: *Georgia, Democracy, Education, Human Rights, Teaching.*

INTRODUCTION

The preamble to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights [1] states that the rights contained in the declaration should be protected through education and training. The declaration further states that the aim of education should be the full development of the individual and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. In order to achieve this, human rights should be taught both at school and in higher education.

Higher education institutions occupy a distinctive position in the development of society. The interconnection between the university and the defence of democracy was underscored in the 2006 Council of Europe Declaration on Higher Education and Democratic Culture. [2] This declaration asserted that higher education should serve to reflect and contribute to the advancement of democratic processes within society, the establishment of accountability structures, and the practice of active democratic citizenship. This

is reflected in the promotion of human rights, mutual respect for members of society, social justice, dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution, which is also in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. [3] Over time, the concept of civil society, community participation, democratic education, democracy and citizenship have become increasingly prevalent.

It is evident that the aforementioned developments were preceded by a series of challenges that emerged during the course of societal evolution. The twentieth century witnessed the culmination of these developments, as evidenced by the documents that were established at that time, including the European Charter of Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Human Rights.

Consequently, the protection of human rights and the rule of law have become the foundation for maintaining freedom, justice and universal peace in the world. This has naturally led to the prioritisation of public awareness and human rights education.

A variety of experiences have been documented in this regard. A number of manuals and methodological guidelines have been developed, which are utilised in the educational process. The topic of human rights education is a central theme in higher educational institutions in Georgia. This primarily concerns legal programmes and their content, although it has also been demonstrated to be beneficial to teach human rights in European studies programmes.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

It is our contention that the majority of researchers experience a sense of dissatisfaction upon completion of their work, largely due to the disparate nature of the literature searched and utilized. However, We conducted a thematic and qualitative analysis of the available literature in order to examine the issue in question. The works of specific authors and the analysis of monitoring of the educational process implemented in the higher education institution in terms of achievement of course outcomes, relevance of programme objectives and outcomes, and achievement of programme objectives were all subject to study (It should be noted that such monitoring is conducted on a semester-by-semester basis following the conclusion of the course of study. The monitoring of programme learning outcomes is conducted on a cyclical basis, with the last cycle occurring once every four years). In order to gain a deeper understanding of specific aspects of my research topic, I consulted manuals and articles available on electronic resources. These resources provided clear definitions of the importance of teaching, methods, content and achievement of results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

We should agree with Felisa Tibbitts' view that under the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), "higher education institutions are duty bearers and therefore have obligations to work within a human rights frame in all of its operations. Both human

rights law and the human rights-based approach (HRBA) extends beyond what has been called the ‘civic mission’ of the university, or merely engagement in society. HRBA views such engagement as purposefully oriented towards longer-term aim of social justice”. [4, p.4] Although we may encounter objections here, we also share the opinion that HRBA means that the university explicitly embraces its role in improving the arc of social justice across all of its ways of working.

In such a situation, the teaching of human rights in universities becomes a particularly pertinent and engaging topic. Indeed, universities promote rights-based principles in their organisational structure, processes and procedures, including non-discrimination, dignity and accountability. This empowers all members and partners of the university community. [4, p.9]

In this way, the university itself is seen as a participant in strengthening the role of human rights. This time, however, the aim of our study was not to examine universities as contributors to ‘Diversity, Equity and Inclusion’ (DEI) in higher education, but to present this role in the context of the university’s realisation of its core mission, namely the teaching of human rights through courses included in educational programmes, special educational courses and/or even with non-formal education components. It should also be borne in mind that “Human rights education can be defined as a way to build and strengthen human rights knowledge as well as the required attitudes and skills, [5, p.8] This is also confirmed by the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Learning, adopted by the UN Assembly on 19 December 2011, [6] a number of activities are also organised under the auspices of the UN.

We are the authors of the Bachelor programme of European Studies at Caucasus University [7] From its inception, we have considered the inclusion of human rights as a core component of the curriculum, given the fundamental principles enshrined in the European Union’s founding values, including the rule of law, equality and human rights.

The course is comprised of two principal sections. The initial section entails a discussion of fundamental human rights standards and their influence on democratic processes within the state. Additionally, the role of legal and political institutions in the protection of rights, particularly the bodies operating within the UN system and the Council of Europe, is also examined.

Part Two examines and analyses the specific rights guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights and other international treaties, namely the right to life, the prohibition or punishment of torture, inhuman treatment, the right to liberty and security, and the right to a fair trial. The course examines a number of fundamental rights, including freedom of religion, freedom of expression, assembly and association, non-discrimination, the right to property and the right to free elections. It also considers relevant European and international standards, as well as case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

The objective of the aforementioned course is to equip students with an understanding of pivotal international instruments of national and international human rights

law, along with the mechanisms that safeguard these rights, the standards that govern them, and the manner in which these mechanisms are operationalised in practice. It is also worthwhile to examine the significance and impact of the activities of international organisations in the field of human rights protection. Naturally, the teaching of all these specific issues provides students with an opportunity to apply their acquired knowledge. Of course, achieving results depends on using the right teaching methods.

Many interactive learning strategies can be used to teach human rights, but not all methods are suitable for all types of audiences, so teachers need to be flexible and adapt teaching methods as needed. In 1995, Professor David McQuoid-Mason of the University of Natal published a paper in which he proposed a number of innovative teaching methods, including brainstorming, case studies, debates, field trips, games, group discussions, lectures, and open-ended questioning. The aforementioned methods were employed in the classroom setting, including stimulus, question and answer, role-playing, simulations, small group discussions, participant presentations, values clarification, visual aids, exhibitions, theatre, print and electronic media. The meaning of each method was elucidated, and it was noted that the essentials of learning are the same. The most successful training methods include hands-on interactive exercises.[8, p.2]

In the teaching of human rights, the lecturer employs a variety of methods, including oral instruction, book work, and written work in the form of essays, case studies, and other written assignments. Furthermore, all lectures provide an opportunity for the utilisation of demonstration and discussion/debate methods. It is evident that the high quality of the discipline is attributable to the lecturer's expertise in human rights, the effective utilisation of this expertise and the establishment of a clear link to national, regional and international human rights instruments. This serves to reinforce the importance of studying human rights, while also facilitating the application of human rights knowledge in practice, thereby contributing to the formation and promotion of a universal culture of human rights.

In the context of human rights education, students are confronted with a series of pivotal inquiries.

1. The concept of human rights, basic standards. Legal institutions for the protection of human rights in the UN system and the Council of Europe.
2. Important aspects of the European Convention on Human Rights
3. The right to life.
4. The prohibition or punishment of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment.
5. The right to liberty and security of person; Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights.
6. The right to the protection of private and family life, as set forth in Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.
7. The right to assemble and demonstrate. This is set forth in Article 11 of the European Convention.

8. Freedom of religion and belief. This is set forth in Article 9 of the European Convention.
9. The right to freedom of expression is enshrined in Article 10 of the European Convention.
10. Prohibition of discrimination and minority rights. This is set out in Article 14 of the European Convention and in Additional Protocol 12 to the Convention.
11. The right to property is enshrined in Article 1 of the First Additional Protocol to the European Convention. The right to education is similarly protected in Article 2 of the same Protocol.

The forms and criteria for assessing knowledge demonstrate that students have acquired an understanding of the principles and institutions of national and international law that protect human rights. They are able to identify important international instruments of national and international law and mechanisms for the protection of rights. Furthermore, they are able to link their knowledge of these mechanisms with practical applications. With appropriate knowledge and logic, they are able to create a project and demonstrate their ability to analyse this area. They learn to act in the specified field in accordance with ethical principles. The results achieved are undoubtedly facilitated by the literature employed in the teaching process, including Alastair Mowbray, *Cases and Materials on the European Convention on Human Rights* - latest edition [9], which is worthy of note despite its age. So various electronic resources are actively used, which offer relevant material for teaching the subject. It is also encouraging to observe that, in recent years, examples of Georgian cases have been included in the lecture course, as well as in textbooks by Georgian authors, in the discussion of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. [10]

CONCLUSIONS

In addition to the aforementioned outcomes associated with the course curriculum, it is evident that students are demonstrating a growing inclination towards pursuing a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter pertaining to human rights. This is exemplified by a particular phenomenon. A review of the European Studies programme's history reveals a growing demand for research papers in this field. To illustrate, bachelor theses have been prepared on the following topics: gender discrimination in labour relations and problems in Georgia; dynamics of protection of prisoners' rights in the penitentiary system of Georgia (compared to European standards); independence of justice as a condition for Georgia's accession to the European Union – the context of implementation of EU recommendations; guarantees of freedom of speech in Georgia – European perspective. The study of such topics is of great importance in Georgia from two perspectives: firstly, in terms of human rights, and secondly, in relation to a key priority identified by the European Commission. The objective is to enhance the protection of human rights within the country, including the implementation of an ambitious strategy to safeguard human rights and guarantee freedom of assembly and expression. In parallel with technological advancement, particularly in the fields of medicine and

genetic sciences, an increasing number of issues have emerged from a human rights perspective. The manipulation of human genes, tissue and organ transplants poses risks, and the human rights of all individuals are at stake in response to these developments.

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