

Human Rights Education: Do students know? Do students care?

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Abstract

Human Rights Education (HRE) is a fundamental right that has been a recent, prominent concern of a number of international organisations. It has been dominant on the United Nations' agenda for the past twenty years. The UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) has been followed by the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-ongoing) and a current UN Draft Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. This issue has also been addressed by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the Council of Europe and Amnesty International, amongst others.

This paper will share the findings of a pilot project that aimed to gauge BEd, PGDE and BA Early Childhood Practice (BAECP) students' knowledge of HRE. All BEd, PGDE and BAECP students at one university were invited to complete an on-line survey that allowed them to share their experiences of and attitudes towards HRE. This included the importance that students gave to HRE, and their confidence in teaching about human rights issues. It also explored students' perceived barriers to teaching about human rights and their perceptions of how teaching about human rights fits into Curriculum for Excellence.

Findings from the survey were followed-up by focus group interviews, exploring emerging issues in-depth. The results of the survey contributed to the development of a CPD opportunity for students at the university. The findings may inform education course content, future implementation of the CfE, and the fulfillment of teachers' obligations to provide the right to education about human rights.