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Reflections on Human Rights Education and Intercultural Dialogue

On the empowerment of people and ideas
for
handling a reality of diversity

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“Intercultural Dialogue – Challenge for Democratic Citizenship and
Human Rights Education”

Challenges

1. Unwrapping segregating and discriminating ideologies and exposing their functions and consequences
2. Empowering ideas for handling a reality of diversity and for ensuring equality, solidarity and justice

Two forms of intercultural dialogue

1. Intercultural dialogue as communication and negotiation between representatives of cultural communities → Danger of reaffirming the notion of distinct and homogeneous cultural blocks
2. Intercultural dialogue as everyday interaction between people → Need of structures that foster such interaction

Guiding Principles for Human Rights Education

- 1.HRE needs to be emancipatory
- 2.HRE needs to challenge current policies
- 3.HRE needs to address the disequilibria of power
- 4.HRE should have a regional approach
- 5.HRE should be practical

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

- Launched in March 2007
- Successor of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)
- Its mandate covers nine thematic areas
 - Racism, xenophobia and related intolerances
 - Discrimination
 - Compensation of victims
 - Rights of the child
 - Asylum and immigration
 - Visa and border control
 - Participation in the democratic functioning of the EU
 - Respect for private life and protection of personal data
 - Access to efficient and independent justice

Tasks and working methods of the FRA

Main tasks:

- to collect objective, reliable and comparable data
- to provide advice to the EU and Member States
- to raise awareness among the general public

Methods:

- data collection through its information networks
- commissioning of research projects

FRA activities on Human Rights Education

- Research project on “The role of commemoration sites, original sites and historical museums in Holocaust education and Human Rights education in the EU”
- Awareness raising about the Shoa (Video-conferences with survivors of the Holocaust)
- Fundamental Rights S’cool agenda
- Diversity Day

HRE Principle 1

HRE needs to be emancipatory in order to enable people to enter into an informed and self-determined intercultural dialogue

Emancipatory HRE approach needs to include education about:

- where and how to get information about human rights matters
- how to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information
- how to analyse and critically assess relevant information in order to develop opinions about subjects
- how to share information, build networks, participate in society and how to use the newly generated opinions and views for entering into discussion with other people

HRE Principle 2

HRE needs to challenge current practices and target at strong and weak points of our social and political systems

HRE needs to inform about:

- the history of human rights and human rights violations
- ideologies that had and still have a major impact on human rights matters
- goals that have been achieved in the past in terms of managing diverse societies
- problematic aspects and deficiencies of our current political and social systems in terms of ensuring equality, solidarity and justice
- the contextual frame of decision making and the overall impact of decisions on society
- the question of responsibility for social and political practices
- the impact of decisions on individuals on a micro-level

HRE Principle 3

HRE needs to address the disequilibrium of power between population groups and between different interests

HRE needs to inform about:

- the question of power relationships
- the causes for disequilibria of power
- the impact of power disequilibria on interaction
- how the position of marginalized groups can be enhanced

HRE Principle 4

HRE should

- **focus on the region where it is taught**
- **focus on issues related to the background of those to whom it is taught and**
- **be as diverse as the society in which it is taught**

HRE Principle 5

HRE should be practical, i.e. it should show possibilities of participation and of contributing to social change

- What is it that everybody of us can do for creating a society that respects its diversity and its intercultural reality?
- What is it that we can do in order to develop a framework of common values in a diverse society?
- What is it that we can do in order to change values and behaviour?
- How can we influence political leaders, the media and other relevant actors?
- How can we become a public actor?
- Etc.

Not the end...

HRE has the strongest impact, if it is taught within an anti-discriminatory, inclusive school system that reflects and inhabits diversity and that facilitates intercultural dialogue among equals

Thank you for your
attention!

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