

## Human Rights Education in the Chinese Context

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### Abstract

Human rights education (HRE) is not only a requirement of the United Nations, but also a requirement of our national human rights action plan. It is consistent with the requirement of establishing a harmonious society, and the individuals need to receive HRE in order to create a favourable climate of human rights valued and respected in China. On the basis of the clarifications of its aims, functions and significance, this paper aims to focus on the analysis of main factors of human rights education, which will deal with multiple subjects, universal objects, rich contents and flexible methods. Then, it points out the existing problems relevant to HRE in the Chinese context and puts forth strategies to deal with the relevant problems.

**Keywords:** Human rights education (HRE); The state's obligations; Subjects; Objects; Methods; Problems and strategies

### Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the General Assembly in 1948, proclaims this document as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, and expects every individual and every organ of society to "strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedom" [1]. Respect for human rights and freedom is clearly proclaimed to be its primary end of human rights education. Through more than 60 years' efforts, the concept of human rights education (HRE) proclaimed in the UDHR has been repeatedly confirmed and recognized until it has developed and applied widely in the whole world.

Nowadays, human rights education is a popular term in the Chinese context. Many scholars have published hundreds of journal articles discussing this topic in the past few years. This paper, starting with a need analysis of human rights education, focuses on the analysis of main factors of human rights education on the basis of the clarifications of its aims, functions and significance. These main factors include multiple subjects, universal objects, sufficient content and flexible methods. Then, it points out the existing problems relevant to HRE in the Chinese context and puts forth strategies to deal with the relevant problems.

### The Necessities of Human Rights Education

Human rights education is not only a requirement of the United Nations, but also a requirement of our country, which can be seen clearly from our national human rights action plan. It is consistent with the requirement of establishing harmonious society, and the individuals' need to receive HRE in order to create a favourable climate of human rights valued and respected in China. Because human rights education play an important role in promoting the values, beliefs and attitudes that encourage all individuals to uphold their own rights and those of others, we can make advantages of HRE to develop an understanding of everyone's common responsibility in making human

rights a reality in each community. The necessities can be analysed from the following aspects.

### The requirements of the United Nations

As we have mentioned above, the UDHR expects every individual and every organ of society to strive by teaching and education to promote the respect for these rights and freedom. In the UN human rights teaching seminar held in Geneva from December 5th to 9th, 1989, a major conclusion was drawn for the issue of human rights education as follows: "It was very important to confirm that everyone was aware of his or her own rights, as human rights and fundamental freedoms should be guaranteed to everyone. Human rights teaching should thus be directed to every quarter" [2]. This conclusion also listed in details the types of people that should receive human rights education.

On December 23, 1994, the General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/49/184, which proclaimed the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). On December 10, 2004, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-ongoing) to advance implementation of human rights education programmes in all sectors. The World Programme seeks to promote a common understanding of basic principles and methodologies of human rights education, to provide a concrete framework for action and to strengthen the partnership and cooperation from the international level down to the grass roots.

### The requirements of our country

From June 14 to 25, 1993, at the second World Conference of Human Rights in Vienna, Chinese government actively participated in all the discussions and negotiations, showing its viewpoints and positions. In the whole process, Chinese government exchanged opinions and attitudes frankly and honestly with other countries, and put forth many suggestions and proposals, which facilitated different countries to reach a consensus. As a result, Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action was successfully adopted. Paragraphs 33-34 of the first section and Paragraphs 78-82 get involved in human rights

education. The active participation clearly shows that Chinese government thinks highly of human rights education.

On April 13, 2009, our government issued the first National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2009-2010), which states detailed regulations on human rights education in section four: "In the period 2009-2010, along with the dissemination of knowledge of the law among the general public, the state will actively rely on the present systems of compulsory education, secondary education, higher education and vocational education, training organizations in state agencies, as well as the media, including radio, television, newspapers, magazines and the Internet, to carry out education in human rights in various forms in a planned way, popularizing and spreading knowledge of the law and human rights" [3]. This section not only lists the subject (the state) and objects (students from schools at all levels) of human rights education, but also clarifies the media (including radio, television, newspapers, magazines and the Internet) and methods (to carry out education in human rights in various forms in a planned way) of human rights education.

On June 11, 2012, our government issued the second National Human Rights Action Plan (2012-2015), in which human rights education is further confirmed and emphasized in its fourth section. This document shows the confidence of Chinese government in human rights education, and the government will take a high priority of training civil servants to strengthen their awareness of human rights protection and support human rights research institutes to develop teaching materials and participate in the training work. Meanwhile, the government will strengthen human rights education in primary and middle schools and make sure that human rights knowledge is included in legal education curriculum. As for institutions of higher education, the government will encourage them to offer public courses and specialized courses on human rights and conduct studies on human rights theories. Besides, this document pays attention not only to promoting the publicity of human rights knowledge in enterprises and public institutions but also to enhancing human rights awareness among the whole populace. At last, this document lays an emphasis on the role of national human rights education and training sites to play. Compared with the first National Human Rights Action Plan, the second one is a more concrete, more practical and more feasible action plan, which provides guidelines for the practical human rights education in China.

Furthermore, the establishment of the National Site for Human Rights Education and Training is also an important measure that has been taken by our government. In China, three such national sites have been set up, including: the Institute for Human Rights at China University of Political Science and Law; the Centre of Research for Human Rights at Nankai University; and the Research and Education Centre for Human Rights at Guangzhou University. Though these national sites for human rights education and training have just been set up, we strongly believe that there still remains a lot of work to be done in human rights research and education which will contribute to the cause of China's human rights protection.

### The requirements of harmonious society

In some sense, human rights education is a concrete requirement of harmonious society. A harmonious society must be a society where every individual's rights are guaranteed. In order to guarantee every individual's rights, it is a prerequisite that every individual can raise awareness of their rights. Human rights education just plays such a kind of role in raising people's awareness of human rights protection,

because human rights education, especially to cadres of state organizations, will raise every person's awareness of human rights, and effectively improve the overall progress and development of the whole society. Only when people are unconsciously aware of their rights, honoring and protecting human rights, condemning the behaviors of human rights violations, can the whole society become a civilized one. A civilized society should be the one where human rights are properly guaranteed.

In addition, human rights education is very important to settle down social conflicts. "The degree of a civilized society not only depends on the economic achievement, but also more importantly depends on the degree of respecting and valuing the people. Social development needs universal human rights education, human rights knowledge is the prerequisite for individuals or groups to seek respect for human rights and freedom. Thus, people can consciously seek their deserved rights and respect for others' rights. Moreover, human rights education has become the foundation to prevent social conflict by delivery of knowledge and enhancement of the skills and development of the concepts of human rights" [4].

Encyclopedia of Human Rights states in its "introduction by Chinese translators": "to enjoy sufficient human rights is a beautiful ideal that humans have long pursued. It is a complicated and systematic project to promote human rights. In the project, it is a crucial link to systematically carrying out theoretical researches, publicity and education in human rights, and popularizing fundamental knowledge of human rights, in order to enhance human rights awareness of every social member" [5]. Here pointed out are the beautiful ideal of the sufficient realization of human rights, and the complicated realization process with human rights studies and education as a crucial link. To enhance human rights awareness of every social member is an effective measure to meet the needs of individuals.

### The needs of individuals

Human rights education is greatly valuable to individuals. Though the national legislation and the international conventions have developed systematic mechanisms of human rights protection at different levels, they cannot guarantee the full realization of human rights. For individuals, only when they can be self-consciously aware of human rights, actively respect and protect human rights, can they ultimately realize human rights. Therefore, in order to realize human rights individuals should be aware of human rights while awareness of human rights has become the prerequisite for respecting and promoting human rights. If individuals want to know what human rights are, they must receive human rights education. "If they were not made to know their own right which should be enjoyed and how to realize these rights and how to get relief when their rights are violated, then these rights and freedom for them are apparently the castle in the air and the object on the other planet" [6].

The ultimate goal of human rights education is to make individuals understand their own human rights and protect their own human rights. Liu Fangfang (2010) believes that "the development of the right-holders' human rights awareness through human rights education provides the right-holders with self-conscious awareness of human rights, active protection of human rights and ultimately facilitates the right-holders' initiative realization of human rights" [7]. In addition, understanding and awareness of human rights will benefit protecting individuals' human rights from being violated. Once their rights are violated, they can timely seek for remedy. With the development of

their own concept of human rights, they honored human rights, which will be helpful in protecting others' human rights unconsciously. From the discussion above, we can see that human rights education is also the need of individuals.

## Aims, Functions and Significance of Human Rights Education

Human rights education has its own aims, functions and significance. It aims at delivering human rights knowledge, developing human rights skills and strengthening respect for human rights and freedom. It will function in raising human rights awareness of individuals, establishing human rights culture and promoting the realization of harmonious society. Human rights education is significant in highlighting the value and dignity of persons, facilitating peace, justice and harmony of society, ensuring the long-term rule and security of the state.

### The aims of human rights education

Like any other education, human rights education has its own aims, which will serve as a guideline for educational practice. Without a transparent aims, we can never make any achievement. The aims of human rights education can be discussed from the following three aspects: delivery of human rights knowledge, development of human rights skills and strengthening respect for human rights and freedom.

**Delivery of human rights knowledge:** Human rights education is an educational activity, in which delivery of human rights knowledge is the primary objective. Through human rights education, the trainers will depart human rights knowledge among trainees. This knowledge will benefit the trainees a lot in raising their human rights awareness and highlighting the value and dignity of human beings. Because the knowledge received by human rights education will lay a foundation for individuals' potential development, it will require such an education to have an adequate coverage of content. The adequate coverage can meet the needs of individuals, including the concepts of human rights, the value and dignity of human beings, the fundamental rights and freedom, how to respect and safeguard human rights, how to get relief when human rights are violated. In brief, human rights education includes not only a lot of theoretical knowledge, but also abundant practical examples of application.

Furthermore, human rights knowledge is popularized through such education approaches and channels as the media including radio, television, newspapers, magazines and the Internet, which meet the needs of the new situation of the present information era and serve as good measures to ensure the educational effects of human rights. Thus, human rights education has become a fundamental tool to promote and protect human rights in our country.

However, delivery of human rights knowledge is the basic aim, further aims can be described as to develop human rights skills and to strengthen respect for human rights and freedom.

**Development of human rights skills:** If we define delivery of human rights knowledge as a basic aim, we can define development of human rights skills as a further aim. Regarding human rights, we usually associate it with the following words: respect, safeguard, promote and realize. People often compare respecting human rights to negative rights while they often compare safeguarding, promoting and realizing human rights to positive rights. However, either the negative rights or the positive rights need human rights skills to be guaranteed.

Human rights skills can never be separated from human rights knowledge, so delivery of human rights knowledge is a very important preparation for the development of human rights skills. If a person has human rights skills, he should not only know how to protect his own rights but also know how to prevent human rights violations and know how to get remedy once the rights were violated.

**Strengthening respect for human rights and freedom:** China has a very clear goal for human rights education, which aims at "fully developing the humane personality and strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedom" [8]. Human rights education is also rich in content, which can be seen when referring to the training textbook for national cadres – "Human Rights Knowledge for Cadres' Reading" [9]. Regarding the people to be educated, human rights actions put an emphasis on human rights education for public officials, reflecting Chinese characteristics in the implementation of human rights education.

In addition, education methods and channels are used by public media such as broadcast, television, newspapers, journals, and Internet, which can be used to popularize human rights knowledge under this new information era occurring in modern society and is also an effective measure to guarantee human rights education. To emphasize human rights education to state employees represents a feature of human rights education in our country.

When discussed human rights education in schools, Li Erping (2007) believes that "the aims of human rights education are to raise students' awareness of human rights and to develop students' concept of respect for and protection of human rights. In this sense, the education of human rights for students is believed as "quality-oriented education". Only through such a "quality-oriented education", can the students raise their own awareness and strengthen respect for human rights and freedom, which will lead to the establishment of human rights culture. Once human rights culture has been established, the level of human rights protection will be greatly enhanced and the degree of human rights protection will advance greatly in the Chinese context.

### The functions of human rights education

The functions of human rights education are closely relevant to the aims of human rights education. As discussed above, we have listed the aims of human rights as follows: delivery of human rights knowledge, development of human rights skills, and strengthening respect for human rights and freedom. Correspondingly, human rights education can raise human rights awareness of individuals, establish human rights culture and promote the realization of harmonious society through delivery of human rights knowledge, development of human rights skills and strengthening respect for human rights and freedom.

**Raising human rights awareness of individuals:** Human rights education can raise human rights awareness of individuals. In Chinese traditional culture, people would rather take their duties and responsibilities than pursue their rights. This kind of traditional culture has had an important influence on individuals' attitudes towards human rights. With the rapid development of modern society in China, traditional thoughts should be changed according to the global trends of human rights protection. In modern time, individuals should be aware of their own rights and avoid violating others' rights. In order to achieve this goal, human rights education will play an important part because individuals will raise their awareness of human rights protection by taking part in the process of human rights education.

Though we will design different programmes for different groups of people in human rights education, the essential sections cover the concepts of human rights, categories of human rights, international human rights system, international conventions, domestic law, human rights violations, human rights protection, human rights culture and so on. All these aspects will enable individuals who receive human rights education to have a better understanding what human rights are, how to respect and protect human rights. With all the knowledge of human rights received in human rights education, individuals naturally can associate what they have learned with the reality in society, where he can be self-consciously aware of human rights protection, which will benefit the whole society.

**Establishing human rights culture:** Another function of human rights education is to establish a human rights culture. Human rights education will create a climate of respect for and safeguarding human rights in society, where human rights are valued and honored. Human rights education advocates respecting and protecting human rights and views human rights as moral rights and deserved rights. People will take pride of their respecting human rights and condemn those who violated others' rights by human rights education. If the whole society values and honors human rights, a fashion will be confirmed. This will conversely influence individuals' behavior in their daily life. In addition, respecting and safeguarding human rights has become a rule of a civilized society, but it is not easy to establish a culture of human rights. Therefore, human rights education is heavily burdened with complicated tasks because education itself is a life-long process.

China traditionally lacks the concepts of human rights and people have weak knowledge about human rights, which increase the difficulty of human rights education. The establishment of a human rights culture needs the majority of the people's high attention to human rights, with regard to the Chinese context, and it still has a long way to go to establish a human rights culture. Professor Ban Wenzhan (2009) has written an article entitled "On the development of universal human rights culture and the promotion of human rights education in China" [10]. In his article, Professor Ban discusses the basic concept of universal culture of human rights, believing that universal culture of human rights should be helpful to the universal respect for and realization of human rights. Then, he discusses the necessities, feasibility, basic approaches, and the requirements and revelations of establishing universal culture of human rights for human rights education in China [10]. In some sense, human rights education can play an important role.

**Promoting the realization of a harmonious society:** China advocates the realization of a harmonious society, emphasizing harmonious relationship between individuals, between individual and society, between individual and the state. A harmonious society must be a society where human rights are valued, honored, respected and protected, meanwhile if human rights are valued, honored, respected and protected in society, the society must be a civilized and harmonious society. A person with better understanding of human rights can prevent human rights from being violated. In other words, human rights education can help to solve the disputes in society, and decrease the social conflicts, which will greatly benefit the establishment of a harmonious society.

Regarding human rights education among college students, Professor Zhu once points out, "To those students who may later become teachers, teaching staff, officials, law enforcement personnel and army men, the functions and influences of human rights education at universities are great" [11]. The greatness lies in promoting respect

for human rights and freedom and realization of a harmonious society. Individuals will get along well with each other in society where human rights are respected. People will treat others as brothers and sisters. In this case, all the members of human beings will unite into a warm big family, which makes an ideal society.

### The significance of human rights education

We can never keep aims, functions and significance of human rights education in isolation. Professor Ban Wenzhan (2009) insists that "the development of a universal human rights culture will contribute to the promotion of universal respect for and the implementation of human rights, which has moral, legal and cultural significance" [10]. Since we have discussed the aims and functions of human rights education, now we would like to discuss the significance of human rights education.

**Highlighting the value and dignity of persons:** Human rights education can highlight the value and dignity of persons. According to Chinese tradition, human beings are most valuable on earth, and people are more precious than monarchs. "Human rights are the rights that every human being is entitled to enjoy. They are determined by human nature, which inevitably possesses two inseparable attributes—the natural attribute and the social attribute. Every human being has the desire to pursue happiness equally without violating other people's rights. This desire is a powerful motive force for the development of human rights" [12].

Human beings can enjoy human rights because they are human. Human rights originate from human's values and dignity. "Everybody is a relatively self-supporting harmonious subject, and the existence of human beings has its dignity and value. Such dignity and value do not come from God, but from human beings themselves and from the universe and nature, so they are possessed by all human beings" [13]. Through human rights education, human's values and dignity are further highlighted, and pursuing happiness is justified to be everybody's human rights, which is of great significance for the establishment of human rights culture in our society.

**Facilitating social justice and harmony of society:** Human rights education can facilitate social justice and harmony of society. In China, we view social justice and harmony of society as an ideal. In a harmonious society, social justice should be guaranteed and human rights should be valued, honored, respected and protected. "In social life, everybody has or should have some interests, demands, qualifications, powers and functions and freedom, that means some rights. These rights are essential to the survival and development of everybody and to the achievement of social harmony as well" [13]. Only when human rights are guaranteed in real society can social justice can be ensured.

Because human rights education can raise people's awareness of human rights protection to avoid human rights violations effectively, social conflicts will be greatly decreased. In this case, social justice and harmony can be realized. Some scholar divides realistic harmony into three categories: "the harmony between human beings and nature, the harmony between men and men and the harmony between physical and mental aspects of human beings" [13]. Human rights education can play a significant part in facilitating social justice and harmony of society, where human's values and dignity are emphasized and honored.

**Ensuring the long-term rule and security of the state:** Human rights education will enable people to have a better understanding of that "the State respects and safeguards human rights", which was included

in the Chinese Constitution in 2004. Respecting and safeguarding human rights has become a constitutional principle. Human rights education can make people not only know how to protect their own rights, but also know how to take their corresponding obligations. If everyone knows both their own rights and obligations, they can avoid violating others' rights. This will help to build up good relationship between each other, while good relationship between people will help to form a harmonious society.

Human rights education can enable people to know their obligations while pursuing their own rights. With a virtue of morality, people can learn to respect each other's values and dignity. In this case, human rights education can lead to the establishment of a number of obligations and of stable social relations, which is beneficial to the long-term rule and security of the state. "According to Chinese traditions, humanism is practiced and great harmony pursued not by means of emphasizing the rights of individuals but their obligations and not by means of emphasizing the rule of law but the rule of virtue" [13].

### Main Factors of Human Rights Education

Human rights education is a systematic project, covering many factors. Besides its aims and goals mentioned above, human rights education has its main factors showing its outstanding features: multiple subjects, universal objects, sufficient contents and flexible methods. We will have a detailed discussion of these main factors as follows:

#### Multiple subjects of human rights education

The subjects of human rights education are multi-factors. As Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action points out that "(h)uman rights and fundamental freedoms are the birthright of all human beings; their protection and promotion is the first responsibility of Governments." This proclamation clearly shows that the government should not only shoulder the responsibility of human rights education but also view the responsibility as its top priority. Wang Fengyun believes that our government's duties and functions of human rights education are to develop the concept of human rights, to deliver human rights knowledge and skills and to establish human rights culture [14]. The duties and functions can be further divided into the following four aspects, namely, planning, organizing, coordinating and monitoring, among which planning is the prerequisite, organizing is the core, coordinating is the key and monitoring is the guarantee [14]. Therefore, the state is the most important factor in the whole process of human rights education.

Teachers from schools at different levels should actively participate in human rights education. Teachers are not only educators but also trainees. In fact, many teachers are still in need of human rights knowledge and skills. As for those teachers who have the expertise in human rights education, they should take advantages of their profound knowledge relevant to human rights protection to impart this knowledge to their young learners, who are from primary schools, middle schools, colleges and other kinds of special training schools, in particular, from colleges and universities. Because these students will go to society soon, most of them will get involved in social modern constructions, and they may meet many human rights issues. Once they have received some training in human rights education, they will have general knowledge about how to respect and protect individuals' rights. In order to meet the end, human rights education should

encourage learners' active participations and play active and creative roles in distribute human rights culture. In this sense, learners today are potential educators of human rights education in the future.

Any person with expertise of human rights education from the UN bodies, Foreign Ministry, human rights institutions, Non-governmental Organizations (NGO), the courts and other units can play a part in the whole process of human rights education. These people have practical experience and social experience, so they can make use of their expertise and provide trainees of human rights education with lectures or speeches. Because they have a better understanding of the reality of human rights protection, they may have vivid examples to give the trainees. They are the important force of human rights education as well.

Individuals and the public are also the important subjects in human rights education, because every individual should do value and respect the others' human rights. If any individual can autonomously consider the protection of human rights, and is willing to do something right to influence others in the right way. This will undoubtedly play a role in human rights education in daily life and daily communication.

#### Universal objects of human rights education

The objects of human rights education are individuals, covering civil servants working in different national bodies and organs, school students at different levels, the populace, a very large group of individuals who need to have some knowledge of human rights. Human rights education is a systematic programme.

Civil servants are directly involved in the management of our national affairs. Human rights protection awareness plays a very important role in their daily work. But unfortunately, some of civil servants lack human rights knowledge. Therefore, they are in great need of receiving human rights education. "Human rights education and training will be carried out especially among government employees, focusing on people working in public security agencies, procuratorates, courts, prisons, urban management organs, and administrative law enforcement organs. The law enforcement departments will draw up their own plans for human rights education and training in line with their own work needs, highlighting publicity and education of regulations and laws on the protection of human rights, and give human rights education on a regular basis" [15]. Thus crucial point of the issue is grasped. To give human rights education to the persons who exercise public power will benefit human rights protection in our country and increase its overall level of human rights protection.

For public officials, human rights education is particularly important. Public officials should be the main object of human rights education, because public officials are not only those who enjoy their own rights, but also the defenders of the rights of others. On behalf of the State's exercising public authority, they should take an important responsibility to protect individuals' human rights, and they have the duty to be directly responsible for the obligations of the State's respecting and protecting human rights. Human rights education for public officials must make them be aware of the aims and boundaries of public power in their own hands, to develop their awareness of human rights protection and to ensure that they can manage national affairs according to law, enforce the law strictly and administrate justice impartially. Because the public officials' daily work and their level of awareness of human rights protection not only directly affect the practice of the country's overall human rights protection, but also

determine whether the solemn commitment of the state's respecting and safeguarding human rights is truly honored and realized.

Human rights education in primary and middle schools is the basic part of the programme, while human rights education at the college level is a higher stage of programme. For the primary and middle school students, human rights education can be included in legal education and moral education. For college students, human rights education can be designed as human rights courses. It is just because these college students will soon go to work in society they will find human rights education quite significant for their preparatory work.

In addition, the populace is a largest group of people who needs human rights education. The general goal of human rights protection is to guarantee every individual's human rights. When their rights are violated, these individuals should be aware of the violation of their human rights. However, because the populace has little knowledge of human rights protection, they may have no idea to protect their rights and they may even not know what their rights are on many occasions. In this case, the first task is to raise their awareness of human rights protection by human rights education.

### Rich contents and flexible methods of HRE

The "National Human Rights Action Plan" set forth detailed regulations on human rights education in section IV: "In the period 2009-2010, along with the dissemination of knowledge of the law among the general public, the state will actively rely on the present systems of compulsory education, secondary education, higher education and vocational education, training organizations in state agencies, as well as the media, including radio, television, newspapers, magazines and the Internet, to carry out education in human rights in various forms in a planned way, popularizing and spreading knowledge of the law and human rights" [15].

If the college students are non-law-major students, they should have optional public course of human rights, in which basic knowledge of human rights should be covered, such as the concept of human rights, the definition of human rights, the nature of human rights, the categorizations of human rights, historical development of human rights, human rights protection system and so on. Li Erping believes that the content of human rights education in Chinese universities should be developed and expanded at the following seven levels: "the core values of human rights, the characteristics and particularity of human rights, the basic concepts of human rights, the history of human rights, the content of human rights, human rights practice, and practical issues of human rights" [16]. For the law-major students, their courses of human rights education should cover specific knowledge of international conventions and their implementing mechanism.

Flexible methods in delivery of human rights education are important principles to enrich the content of classroom practice. Systematic approaches consist of lectures, discussion and group learning, peer teaching, student oral presentation, carrying out project work. Lectures are main approaches in transmission of new information. Lectures may also contain different teaching styles by inviting the natures of seminars, negotiations and solutions of problems. Discussion and group learning is to develop learners' ability to learn collaboratively and solve problems cooperatively. Peer teaching is the opportunity for trainees to experience what they have learned and this method can help each other to gain some insights through collaborative preparation and presentation phases associated

with their prior experience. Student oral presentation is a method to offer the opportunities to trainees to apply the received knowledge to real practice, which will serve the preparatory stage for their later real social practice in the aspect of human rights protection. Carrying out project work is a kind of skill for their lifelong education. To be more exact, it is a kind of small-scale research built up in classroom context but will play an important role in human rights education.

### Problems and Strategies in Human Rights Education

Human rights education has become the basic means to improve and protect human rights in China. However, there would be a lot of problems in reality as there are many steps needed to carry out abstract regulation to specific implementation to implement measures for human rights education listed in the human rights action plan. Apart from the overall planning, there is a need to set specific numeric goals, and to list detailed implementation procedures and plans for various forms of human rights education. Only through careful work, can these goals for human rights education be completely achieved. In this case, strategies should be employed to solve the problems.

### Problems in human rights education

Human rights were traditionally sensitive words, influenced by political factors. Protection of human rights and human rights education are the state's major responsibilities and duties. And they are the international obligations that the state should take. However, because human rights are sensitive words in the Chinese tradition, they were heavily influenced by political factors. China has begun to pay more attention to the significance of human rights education, but owing to the weak foundation, there are still a lot of problems to deal with. With regard to the problems in human rights education in China's universities, Chen Youwu believes that problems exist mainly in the following aspects: "human rights education as a discipline is relatively at a low rank, the ways of the education are limited, few universities have offered courses on human rights, few students have received human rights education, and disciplinary backgrounds of the teachers are diversified, both subject of duty and adequate faith are lacking in human rights education" [17]. Professor Ban Wenzhan believes that "because Chinese legal education and moral education have different goals and content from that of human rights education and it is neither systematic nor popular of the given individual or professional training, there exists a great limit to promote the realization of the goals of human rights education" [10]. He further points out that "the existing human rights education belongs to few units and few individuals' behavior... which has the nature of great random and uncertainty" [10]. We will discuss the following three problems we currently confront.

**Lack of ready-made coursebooks:** For historical and cultural reasons, there run human rights courses in the formal curriculum only at a few universities. According to Sun Shiyun, "There are more than 1,600 universities, more than 300 law schools or departments, among which only 15 run human rights course independently, less than 5% of the law schools or departments" [18]. By October 2008, there were about 30 law schools or departments running human rights courses [17]. However, things has changed a lot in the past few years, up to July 2012, there are about 60 laws schools or departments running human rights course. Even though human rights education has developed rapidly in the past few years, we still have a lot of difficulties. For example, teaching materials or coursebook as one of four core factors in education are still in great need. Exercising human rights education

get different groups of individuals who have different needs, the problem is that we find it very difficult to get the suitable coursebook. On the one hand, the coursebooks for human rights education are rare in China. On the other hand, human rights education has just started, basic constructions including coursebook design are still very weak.

Just because of lack of the appropriate coursebook, the existing course has not formed a systematic series of coursebooks on human rights. This will have negative impacts on the achievement of human rights education. Lack of materials and coursebooks will lead to diversity of the classroom teaching, teachers usually choose the materials randomly, which cannot ensure the standards of human rights course. Furthermore, because the universality of objects of human rights education, civil servants and the populace cannot find their coursebook relevant to human rights education. In fact, lack of well-compiled coursebook can be solved by adopting the strategies of organizing first-class experts to compile coursebooks (refer to next section).

**Lack of qualified teachers:** Besides coursebooks, lack of qualified teachers is also a serious problem for human rights education. Because human rights education just started a few years ago, we have not cultivated many qualified specialist on human rights. In Chinese context, we still have no qualification standards for human rights educators. Even though those teachers or professors have profound knowledge of their special areas, they may lack systematic human rights knowledge. As a special course, human rights education requires educators to deliver human rights knowledge, and to develop human rights skills, and ultimately to establish a human right culture. To meet all these ends, we need a large group of teachers or educators.

In addition, without professional standards for human rights educator, we have to get different groups of people involved, including officials of legislation, judges, lawyers, professor from philosophy and other disciplines. These people have their expertise in their own areas, their contributions should be valued, but this also causes a confusion of human rights education. For those people who received human rights education, they will find it very difficult to construct a systematic knowledge of human rights. It is regretful that we are in great need of qualified teachers in human rights education. The problem can be solved by speeding up the cultivation of qualified specialists in human rights (refer to the next section).

**Lack of the support of systematic theoretical research:** In October 2011, China has issued a white paper entitled the Socialist System of Laws with Chinese Characteristics, and the history of human rights research is about dozens of years, but the systematic theoretical research is still weak, therefore, the socialist human rights theoretical system of human rights with Chinese characteristics has not been formed. Human rights education needs to be supported by theoretical research, and theoretical research can be separated from human rights education, either. We can never keep these two aspects in isolation. However, in reality, because we are in need of systematic theoretical research to support human rights education, without the support of systematic theoretical research, we find it very difficult to practice human rights education.

Viewed from a philosophical perspective, human rights education without the guidance of theories is a blind education, while theories without practice of human rights education are empty theories. Only when we integrate human rights education with theoretical research, can we more effectively and efficiently carry out the plan of human rights education. In order to solve this problem, we would suggest

conducting systematic research to establish the system of human rights theories (refer to the next section).

### Strategies in human rights education

Professor Chen Youwu put forth the solutions to the problems mentioned above, he insists that solutions should be found in “enhancing the awareness of human rights education in universities, giving better play of the role of the state in this education, reinforcing the construction of human rights education as a discipline and consolidating its foundations of faith” [17]. Here we will discuss the strategies to be adopted as follows:

**Organising first-class experts to compile coursebooks:** Though it has not been long for human rights education, China nowadays has got dozens of universities to run human rights courses, which is an important part of human rights education in the Chinese context. Even though we are in great need of qualified teachers for human rights education, different universities of China can join their efforts to make contributions to human rights education by organizing first-class experts to compile coursebooks or develop teaching materials for human rights education. We should see that human rights education is a great career, attracting our government’s attention, while it has appeared a group of scholars in human rights areas. A journal article search for the title of human rights education in China can provide hundreds of results. This has proved that many scholars have showed their concern with the issues of human rights education in China. We may say that these scholars, to some extent, have expertise in human rights education.

After our national human rights teaching and education sites were established in 2011, human rights education was once again highlighted. These sites should take this opportunity to gather the experts together, conducting some researches into the needs of human rights education in China. Based on needs analysis, the coursebook on human rights should be put into agenda. Of course, the existing experience cumulated in human rights education should be valued, summarized and reported, which can serve as a foundation for materials design and coursebook development. As for materials design and coursebook development, we still need a syllabus or national curriculum for each group of individuals. In this sense, we have a long way to go in human rights education.

**Speed up the cultivation of qualified specialists in human rights:** At a practice level, lack of qualified teachers is another serious problem. If we are talking about this problem at a policy-making level, we may find that human right course are still marginal in curriculum which is highly influenced by course design and curriculum development. A scholar points out that serious lack of specialists with professional knowledge of human rights law has led to no ways to run human rights education at most of universities in China [19]. The scholar, after further analysing the situations in China, believes that “human rights law is a comprehensive subject, which content almost covers all the branches of law” [19]. Therefore, the high demands of human rights law require teachers to have both profound and extensive knowledge, and to be able to integrate knowledge from different branches of law in order to form a systematic knowledge structure, and to deliver the significance and values of human rights to the students.

Just because of the high demands and requirements of qualified specialists in human rights law, we need to speed up the cultivation of such a kind of persons with an intention to providing sufficient number of qualified teachers for human rights education. In this

aspect, we are lucky enough to have some universities such as Nankai University, China University of Political Science and Law, Shandong University and so on, where MA programmes in human rights law have been run successfully. At China University of Political Science and Law, PhD Programme in human rights law has been run for several years. This is just a beginning rather than a conclusive end. With the development of human rights education, more and more qualified specialists will appear in human rights areas.

**Conduct systematic research to establish the system of human rights theories:** To strengthen human rights education, China needs to strengthen research work on human rights theory and practice, while popularization of human rights education will further improve the overall ability of research on human rights theory and practice. So in this way, strengthening human rights education and actually researching into human rights theory and practice are mutually supplementary and harmonious. Harmonious unification of human rights education and research on human rights theory and practice will play a role that can't be undervalued in improving people's awareness of human rights, respect and protection of human rights as well.

Human rights research can effectively provide theoretical support for human rights education. Basic concepts of human rights should be clarified, and specific issues relevant to human rights protection should be explored in order to construct a series of systematic theories. At a macro level, human rights research should focus on the international human rights regime, regional human rights system and domestic human rights protection. At the level of core concept, human rights should distinguish human rights from politics, economics, society, culture, law, history, the state and individuals.

Viewed from an inter-disciplinary approach, human rights research should distinguish human rights from the dominance of law, philosophy, ethnics, political science, sociology, psychology, anthropology and international relations. Therefore, human rights research itself is a very complicated system. Systematic research should cover different areas of human rights, which will be beneficial to the establishment of the scientific system of human rights theories.

Based on human rights research, core concepts are clarified, whole picture of human rights theories is described, theoretical system is constructed, and different theories relevant to human rights are enriched and perfected. All the things mentioned above will provide human rights education with support and help. On the one hand, the content of human rights research can be used as teaching materials, which will play a part in human rights education. On the other hand, through human rights research, we can have a better understanding of many issues relevant to human rights protection, from which human rights education can benefit a lot.

## Conclusions

Human rights education is nowadays a popular topic in the Chinese context. This is not only a requirement of the United Nations, but also the primary obligations that the state should take. Chinese government has paid close attention to human rights education and issued two National Human Rights Action Plans, which has served as guidelines for Chinese human rights protection including human rights education. Human rights education has its own features including multiple subjects, universal objects, rich content and flexible methods. The aims of human rights education are to impart human rights knowledge, to develop human rights skills and to strengthen respect for human rights and freedom. Therefore, human rights education

plays an important role in raising human rights awareness of individuals, establishing human rights culture, and promoting the realization of a harmonious society. Human rights education is of significance for highlighting the value and dignity of persons, facilitating peace, justice and harmony of society, and ensuring the long-term rule and security of the state. However, there are still many existing problems in human rights education in Chinese context, which are embedded in lack of well-compiled coursebooks, qualified teachers, and the support of systematic theoretical research. In this case, we must use some effective strategies to cope with these problems, and China must organize first-class experts to compile coursebooks, speed up the cultivation of qualified specialists in human rights, conduct systematic research to establish the system of human rights theories and take active part in the international communication in human rights areas. In brief, the cause of human rights education is just a beginning in China, and we still have a long way to go in many aspects.

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