



AG/RES. 2604 (XL-O/10)

EDUCATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE AMERICAS

(Adopted at the fourth plenary session, held on June 8, 2010)

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

RECALLING resolution AG/RES. 2066 (XXXV-O/05), in which the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) suggested including human rights content and basic activities in the academic curricula of educational institutions, and resolutions AG/RES. 2321 (XXXVII-O/07) and AG/RES. 2404 (XXXVIII-O/08);

CONSIDERING that in the Plan of Action of the First Summit of the Americas the Heads of State and Government, gathered in Miami in 1994, established that governments should “[d]evelop programs for the promotion and observance of human rights, including educational programs to inform people of their legal rights and their responsibility to respect the rights of others”;

RECALLING that Article 49 of the OAS Charter provides that “[t]he Member States will exert the greatest efforts, in accordance with their constitutional processes, to ensure the effective exercise of the right to education,” taking into account, *inter alia*, that “[e]lementary education, compulsory for children of school age, shall also be offered to all others who can benefit from it. When provided by the State it shall be without charge”;

CONSIDERING that Article 13 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter establishes that “[t]he promotion and observance of economic, social, and cultural rights are inherently linked to integral development, equitable economic growth, and to the consolidation of democracy in the states of the Hemisphere”;

BEARING IN MIND that Article 13.2 of the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, “Protocol of San Salvador,” refers to essential factors to which education in each of the states parties should be directed, one of them being respect for human rights;

APPRECIATING the efforts of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights (IIHR) in producing, uninterruptedly since 2002, Inter-American Reports on Human Rights Education, currently eight of them, which record progress made by the states parties to the Protocol of San Salvador with respect to human rights education;

CONSIDERING that the right to human rights education from the very first years at school helps strengthen the democratic system, development, security, and progress of the free societies of the Americas;

REAFFIRMING that the Inter-American Democratic Charter regards the promotion and protection of human rights as a prerequisite for the existence of a democratic society;

APPRECIATING the efforts of the Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Education: Human Rights Education, convened by the Minister of Education of Panama and the IIHR and held from May 31, to June 2, 2007, and the Ministerial Dialogue: Human Rights Education, convened by the Ministry of Education of Colombia and the IIHR and held on May 28, 2008, to strengthen the human rights material incorporated into the member states' formal educational systems;

RECOGNIZING that effectively incorporating human rights education into the formal educational system, a measure to which all member states are committed, is an aspect of medium- and long-term efforts and therefore requires financial sustainability;

RECOGNIZING ALSO that the IIHR has, in compliance with its mandates, been playing a fundamental role in supporting the inter-American system for the effective incorporation of education on human rights into formal educational systems and in other areas in the countries of the Americas; and

NOTING WITH SATISFACTION the progress made in the implementation of the Inter-American Program on Education for Democratic Values and Practices since its launch in August 2005, and the important role played by the IIHR on the Advisory Board for the Program,

RESOLVES:

1. To acknowledge the progress, actions, and policies gradually being implemented by member states with respect to human rights education for children and young people in academic institutions, as documented by the Inter-American Reports on Human Rights Education.

2. To suggest to member states that they implement, if and to the extent that they have not yet done so, the recommendations contained in the Inter-American Reports on Human Rights Education to incorporate human rights education at different levels in their formal education systems.

3. To suggest to member states that they analyze the contributions of the Curricular and Methodological Proposal of the IIHR to incorporate human rights education into the official curriculum for children aged 10 to 14, with a view to their adopting it and in accordance with Article 13.2 of the Protocol of San Salvador Additional to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, "Protocol of San Salvador." Accordingly, to recommend to the states that have not already done so that they adopt, sign, and ratify the latter instrument.

4. To underscore the work and achievements of the Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Education on Human Rights Education in the signatory states to the Protocol of San Salvador, in which participants shared their experience and discussed the curricular and methodological developments needed to introduce or strengthen human rights education in each state party's educational system.

5. To encourage member states to continue supporting the IIHR in educational activities and projects conducted at the national and regional levels under this mandate, especially through an initiative entitled the Inter-American Covenant on Human Rights

Education, the initial implementation of which enjoys firm support from the Ministry of Education of the Republic of El Salvador and the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, and which comprises the promotion of inclusive education, the provision of infrastructure to ensure quality education, teacher training, curriculum development, and the preparation and distribution of teaching materials.



Inter-American Pact for Human Rights Education

April 2010

The Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, the Ministry of Education of El Salvador and the Ministry of Education of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay agree on the importance of promoting human rights education as the ethical core and coordinating axis of the formal educational system and as a necessary condition for the development of citizenship capacities that lead to the strengthening of the democratic system and the effective validity of human rights.

Therefore, they agree to launch a work plan to create, on the one hand, an analysis on the progress of both countries on human rights education matters. On the other hand, it constitutes a paradigmatic axis to promote greater progress on this matter in Latin America and the Caribbean by informing about this experience jointly with the IIHR.

The Institute's fundamental and ineludible task in regard to democracy is the compliance of the right to education and human rights education, according to that established by Art. 13 of the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in matters related to Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – Protocol of San Salvador. The IIHR considers any action addressed to peaceful living, overcoming poverty and social and economic development sustaining the due investment for the compliance of such rights, as they condition the enforcement of the other human rights, as essential.

The IIHR has the capacity, resources and experience to support the curricular reform and implementation, development of teacher training and the production or adjustment of didactic tools, apart from supporting pedagogic juridical and political processes to encourage other related actions.

That is the reason why, in broader terms, the development of actions on these three fields is posed, emphasizing the connecting points that lead to the strengthening of the human rights education pedagogic dimension, through an ongoing and complementary strategy:

1. Legal recognition of the right to human rights education

The IIHR recognizes the relevance and promotes state recognition of human rights in the legal area, through the signing and ratification of international instruments and their explicit inclusion in the political constitution and legislation, as well as the development of regulations that allow the installation and operation of protection legal mechanisms and the fulfillment of such rights. In regard to human rights education, the IIHR especially promotes the Protocol of San Salvador, which, as pointed out earlier, recognizes the right to education and human rights education and establishes the Inter-American standard on this matter. In the framework of this Pact, the IIHR proposes to promote the greatest juridical developments that ensure the full validity of the right to human rights education. In the educational area, referring to the school, legal recognition and protection of rights should be shown and evidenced, and should be the focus of public authorities.

Promotion and protection of human rights of students and teachers

Human rights education, more than simple intellectual content, should be understood as a mediator between normative prescription and the fulfillment of rights in daily life. Therefore, the inclusion of these theoretical contents in the classroom makes sense as long as they are inspired by and inspire certain values and attitudes that lead to the development of certain citizenship competences. Therefore, efficiency is measured as this teaching impregnates and transforms the correlation between educational agents, on the common ground of human dignity. However, human rights at school necessarily imply the existence of guarantees of respect through behavior standards and protection mechanisms. In the extra-school area, there should be a corresponding juridical framework that guarantees teachers and students the State's respect of their rights and the development of standards and policies to broaden and improve that protection. From that point of view, pedagogic action in the classroom without relevant advance in the juridical and political fields and society in general is not sustainable.

2. Development of educational public policies

Making the human rights protection standards operational requires the development of political and administrative strategies that imply the implementation of inter-related actions by the State in the different areas. It should guarantee that all children and youths in school age receive quality education that includes human rights as a content and main practice. In this matter, the most diverse actions should be taken into account to ensure overcoming any obstacle that prevents the implementation of this right. In the framework of this plan, at least four concrete fields of action are posed.

Endowment of infrastructure and technical resources

The Ministries of Education will carry out the necessary efforts to promote greater and better advances in infrastructure and technical resources endowment in order to guarantee the indispensable conditions for educational work, especially in schools located in marginal zones from social and economic development, as a way to develop positive actions addressed to overcome inequity. The IIHR will contribute to promote and facilitate the exchange of regional experiences in this field, as well as to approach other sectors interested in cooperating with these initiatives.

Curricular design, adaptation and implementation

The curriculum or study plan is one of the main demonstrations of public policy. The selection of contents and the methodological model for implementation express one political vision of the State. The democratic State, therefore, should reflect the principles inspiring this model, and inherently associated to human rights, in curricular development. Human rights education should be, then, explicit theoretical and practical content of democratic education, and, in that sense, an ineluctable task for the countries in the region. Thus, the IIHR has developed a curricular and methodological proposal for the inclusion of human rights education in formal education which seeks to offer guidelines for work in this field that should be carried out by the Ministries of Education. In the framework of this Pact, the IIHR will continue offering specialized technical assistance to those individuals in charge of curricular reform and the thematic areas or subject matters in order to support them in this important task.

Approach to exclusion, discrimination and poverty from a human rights education perspective

Exclusion, discrimination and poverty – especially the latter, which is an epitome of the former – constitute generally opposed situations to the full exercise of the right to education. This is some sort of vicious circle, as these circumstances represent real obstacles to access, permanence and conclusion of the educational system, and the lack of education, at the same time, deepens these contradictions to human dignity and democratic society. Therefore, these should be the main focus of educational actions, at least from an objective point of view (as content of study) and a subjective point of view (such as attention of the subject who suffers these situations). In regard to the first one, the curriculum should explicitly deal with these topics in order to analyze their historical dimension and to understand the role of each individual's contribution as a citizen, for their development. In regard to the subjective field, actions should be performed to allow the inclusion of those people excluded from the educational system for any reason, especially due to poverty. The right to receive a systematic, quality education that allows the individual to receive a significant technical and ethical training is a *sine qua non* condition for the full exercise of the other human rights, democratic citizenship and to aspire to a personal life project. The actions that should be performed to make this right real imply actions that go through infrastructure development, technological investment and projects for the direct attention of students and their families, by means of scholarships or stimulus to create conditions that guarantee access, permanence and conclusion of the educational system.

Security and eradication of violence

School is not separate from its environment. Citizen insecurity and the manifestations of violence are replicated in school. The explanation to this phenomenon transcends the educational area, and therefore its solutions require the participation and coordination of different institutions and sectors. However, educational authorities should pose solutions and proposals that would allow prevention, attention, containment and improvement actions. Human rights education should have a main guiding role in any policy seeking to face this problem. In this field, the IIHR also has an extensive experience and contact networks with security bodies, society entities and communities, so it may also be a facilitator for the dialogue for the definition of agreements for joint and complementary work.

3. Strengthening of the educational system pedagogic conditions and resources in human rights

The fulfillment of human rights education happens in the classroom, through the dialogue between educational agents. The actions previously mentioned allow for the creation of different conditions for its development, but in the school environment, the development of pedagogic conditions should be ensured to make human rights education possible. This implies the design and implementation of a methodological model to put the curriculum into practice within the classroom, through the educational act, for the realization of human rights in daily life. The first condition deals with the development and strengthening of theoretical-conceptual and methodological capacities in teachers; the second is related to the design, development and availability of essential support pedagogic tools for both teachers and students; the third has to do with the development of spaces and capacities for the students' political participation.

Ongoing teacher education and training

For 30 years, the IIHR has dedicated its best efforts to this field. It has a wide experience with more than 15.000 formal educational system agents trained in the region, as well as the development and implementation of study programs for teachers in the different levels and responding to different concrete needs. The most effective work strategy for the IIHR on this matter is focused on training multiplying agents who would transfer their knowledge, in a cascade effect, to their colleagues. Currently there is a training program combining attendance (seminars-workshops) with long-distance training (Inter-American Virtual Classroom). Both methodologies have demonstrated their effectiveness to work with teachers. The proposal for these trainings, coherent with the human rights institutional conception, incorporates the human rights historical, normative, social, political, ethical and daily dimensions. In regard to the target population, the IIHR equally emphasizes on the individuals who currently teach, and those who are still in professional training (universities and teaching schools), as well as on other educational agents who support this process (other public officers related to the educational field, in charge of the education of civil society entities, international organization officials who cooperate with the different educational systems in different fields, university teachers and students and community leaders).

Advisory to Ministries – or their providers – for the development of didactic materials

The IIHR has a wide expertise in the production of didactic tools for human rights education. It currently has a collection of more than 200 titles, among printed, audio-visual and digital material, specifically addressed to teacher training and classroom support, which constitute one of the main sources of reference for teachers in the region. The IIHR has supported explicit requests by Ministries of Education for the development of specific materials in determined contexts, which have become official study texts (for instance, *Módulos de Educación Cívica y Derechos Humanos* and *Cuadernos de trabajo para estudiantes de educación media*, produced for El Salvador jointly with the Department of Education Sciences of the José Simeón Cañas Central-American University).

The IIHR puts its bibliographic collection at the disposal of the Ministries, either as reference or as contextualized adjustment basis for other materials. Likewise, it offers its academic experience for the construction of new didactic tools.

Student governments and other student political participation instances

The exercise of citizenship does not happen automatically; it requires the development of certain capacities that may and can be learned and practiced at school. However, the academic discourse is not enough; it requires the exercise of the object of that knowledge: the individual rights and responsibilities. For this, educational systems should create the conditions and spaces necessary for children and youths to learn and practice in significant instances that transcend mere simulation, which means being holders of rights and their corresponding responsibilities and the role of each individual in democratic society, through the development of capacities for a critical knowledge of reality, dialogue, negotiations and daily living, among others. Several countries have student governments, through which school students elect their representatives through school electoral processes; these representatives have different attributions, depending on the case. In other places, there are other formal and informal instances of representation

and participation. In any case, one of the Pact's purposes is to strengthen and give greater meaning to models that teach and stimulate student political participation, as well as to promote their existence and development in all the educational systems in the region.

Although this classification of fields and derived actions is based on certain inherent characteristics, it is not clear at the time of implementation. The actions pointed out are complementary, even recognizing their specificity, and in most cases and situations they imply interactions, inter-institutional, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary approaches, as well as the need to understand and implement them in a strategic framework. That is the reason why the IIHR, acknowledging each institution's mandate, especially of the Ministry of Education, stimulates and coordinates work among all the relevant part to optimize resources and maximize results in each field.

In this sense, it expects that the Inter-American Pact for Human Rights Education constitutes a reason for the development of a juridical, political and pedagogic model that would strengthen the effective validity of the right to education and human rights education, according to that established by the Protocol of San Salvador.