

Definition of HRE

“The Human Rights Education contains educational programmes and activities that focus on promoting equality in human dignity, in conjunction with other programmes such as those promoting intercultural learning, participation and empowerment of minorities”

*Official definition of Human Rights Education
for the Council of Europe Youth Programme*

There are many definitions and a number of different approaches, but human rights education is best described in terms of what it sets out to achieve. The long term aim of such programmes is to establish a culture where human rights are understood, defended and respected. Thus, anyone who works with other people may be said to engage in human rights education if they have this end in mind and take steps to achieve it – no matter how or where they go about it.

There may be slightly different views about the best or most appropriate way to move towards such an end, but that is as it should be. No two individuals or groups of individuals, or cultures have identical requirements, and no one educational approach will suit all individuals, all groups, or all societies. This only goes to show that effective human rights education needs to be, above all, learner-centred: it has to begin from the needs, preferences, abilities and desires of each person, within each society.

A learner-centred educational approach recognises the value of personal action and personal change and also takes account of the social context in which learners find themselves, but this need not mean that educators have to work in isolation, or that they cannot learn from others who may be working in different contexts. What draws human rights educators together from around the globe is a common enterprise – a desire to promote and inhabit a world where human rights are valued and respected. There are general guidelines, tried and tested methods, educational materials, and many people working in the field – all of which can help us to achieve this common aim.

“Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace”.

Article 26, UDHR