

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION and ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN SCOTLAND CONFERENCE DRAFT PROPOSAL

Date 27th October 2011

GLASGOW CITY CHAMBERS

- **(WORKING) TITLE**

Human Rights Education and Active Citizenship: Case for Scotland.

- **BACKGROUND**

1. Human Rights Education (HRE) is about:

- *Knowledge and skills:* learning about human rights and mechanisms for their protection, as well as acquiring skills to apply them in daily life;
- *Values, attitudes and behaviour:* developing values and reinforcing attitudes and behaviour which uphold human rights;
- *Action:* taking action to defend and promote human rights¹.

While education is in itself a human right, HRE is about 'the provision and development of awareness about fundamental rights, freedoms and responsibilities'.² UNESCO broadly defines it as 'the learning and practice of human rights' (unesco.org). The United Nation Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) (Resolution 2004/71) defines it as follows: "Human rights education is a long-term and lifelong process by which all people at all levels of development and in all strata of society learn respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies [...it] significantly contributes to promoting equality and sustainable development, preventing conflict and human rights violations and enhancing participation and democratic processes, with a view to developing societies in which all human rights are valued and respected." **The key role played by education in the development of societies is here coupled with core human rights values and global citizenship ethic.** This call to citizenship is more plainly spelled out by Amnesty International's definition of HRE, whereby: "Human rights education is a deliberate, participatory practice aimed at empowering individuals, groups and communities through fostering knowledge, skills and attitudes consistent with internationally recognized human rights principles. [...] As a medium to long-term process, human rights education seeks to develop and integrate people's cognitive, affective and attitudinal dimensions, including critical thinking, in relation to human rights. Its goal is to build a culture of respect for and action in the defence and promotion of human rights for all". (amnesty.org)

¹ www.unesco.org.

² Gearon, Liam. *The Human Rights Handbook a global perspective for education*. Trentham Books: Stoke on Trent, 2003, p. 157

2. Human Rights Learning is a new way of conceiving teaching and learning. Human Rights Learning is the process whereby HRE can be achieved: it is a progressive awakening of individuals to the multiple forms of violence which plague human existence and civil society. By flagging up the crucial relation between the privileges of some and the oppression of others, human rights learning cultivates ethical reflection and fosters the exercise of social responsibility. Political action and awareness of civic responsibility are required to overcome structural vulnerability and violence. Thus, the transformative politics and thinking inherent in HRE are to be achieved through - what has been defined as - Human Rights Learning and Democratic Active Citizenship.

3. Education of Democratic Citizenship Since the early nineties, both nation states and international organizations have demonstrated a considerable interest in education for democratic citizenship and its link with HRE; *Education of Democratic Citizenship* – EDC – (also defined as global, cosmopolitan, and active) proposes an alternative vision of citizenship, global and cosmopolitan, where its content and practice are underpinned by human rights principles and social justice. EDC concerns itself with rights, responsibilities and action. Democratic Citizenship promotes an active citizen who is not solely aware of her rights, but able to act upon them. This has profound implications as mere empathy has to be replaced with responsibility and outrage to make people ‘act’ for a more equitable and sustainable society. Hence, whilst Education of Democratic Citizenship focuses on horizontal ties (responsibilities among individuals) and calls upon an ethical understanding of civic society, Human Rights Education - HRE – provides a larger framework which brings attention to the responsibilities of nation states towards those under their jurisdiction. ‘One key difference between HRE programmes and citizenship education is that effective human rights education necessarily requires learners to be made aware of the need to hold government to account. Governments are responsible for securing our human rights’.³ It is important to strike a balance of responsibilities: in fact, while stressing emphasis on the responsibilities that individuals owe to each other, it is vital to acknowledge the obligations those governments towards their citizens. Both concepts are necessary and complement each other in: As human life experiences perpetual global social inequalities and injustice and diminished citizenship, EDC and HRE are vital tenets to be upheld.

- **RATIONALE**

The case of Scotland

³ Osler, Audrey and Starkey, Hugh. *Teachers and Human Rights Education*. Trentham Books: Stoke on Trent, 2010, p. 126

A most recent enquiry carried out in several Member States by the *Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights* offers specific and useful insights into the Scottish situation. The OHCHR sent out a questionnaire to be completed by Governments; the survey was aimed at assessing the progress of implementation of HRE in several countries. **The Scottish Government** responded to this questionnaire on date 14 April 2010. Whilst an official reply by the *Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights* is not yet available, it becomes apparent from the Scottish Government's completed response that the HRE agenda has still a way to go here in Scotland. There is more work to be done before HRE can fully acquire a status on national curricula, despite the fact that a number of recommendations and policies seem to be aiming at the development of HRE in formal educational settings within the Scottish context. Further, the holistic approach – so much invoked by international recommendations and scholarly literature – entails far more than the provisions initiated to date.

- The Scottish Government focuses mainly on formal Education in relation to HRE.
- There are no training programmes for HRE in non-formal educational contexts, or in the broader civil society.
- There is a need for a more coordinated approach to HRE and EDC in Scotland: Amnesty, LTS, Oxfam, IDEAS, UNESCO, BEMIS should come together and channel their resources in a mutual effort to foster HRE.
 1. Initiate a sensitization campaign about HRE;
 2. Host a conference to raise awareness about HRE
 3. Rationalize and allocate areas of intervention within the Scottish context, to optimize the promotion of HRE at all levels and in all settings.
 4. Impact on policy development.
- Engage more significantly with European actors in relation to HRE to ensure that Scotland plays a key role in the promotion of a Human Rights Culture and Active Citizenship.

• **CONFERENCE THEMES**

- Human Rights Education (HRE): Concept Definition(s) and Global Trends
- Human Rights Learning
- Democratic Active Citizenship
- The Curriculum for Excellence
- The role of government and the law in shaping human rights culture.
- The role of civic society in educating about human rights
- The role of NGOs and trade unions.
- Media influence to impact the public opinion on human rights issues
- Human rights in professional training
- A human rights-based approach in schools.

- HR based approach in community organisations, public and private sectors.
- Human Rights and Active Citizenship as Development

• **AIMS OF THE CONFERENCE**

The key aims of this event are to:

1. Broaden Scotland's horizons in terms of Human Rights and global citizenship.
2. Promote the importance of Human Rights Education and Active Citizenship in making a more equal, more dignified more tolerant and just society.
3. Initiate a sensitization campaign and raise awareness at all levels and in all settings about HRE and DAC;
4. Impact on policy development.
5. Engage more significantly with European actors in relation to HRE to ensure that Scotland plays a key role in the promotion of a Human Rights Culture.
6. Advance Understanding of HRE and DAC as means to:
 - foster a culture of human rights
 - develop a language of human rights
 - make individuals aware of the wider world, and participate in and contribute to the community at local and global level.
 - strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
 - foster an understanding of dignity;
 - promote tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national , ethnic, religious and linguistic groups;
 - allow people to participate effectively in a free and democratic society;
 - promote a people-centred sustainable development and social justice.

• **TARGET AUDIENCE AND POTENTIAL SIZE OF MARKET**

The desired audience for this event include:

- Members of the civic society
- School Teachers and teacher educators of different subjects
- Head teachers
- Members of the Parliament
- Representatives of the Third Sector
- Representatives of the Public Sector
- Representatives of Scottish Local Authorities
- Representatives of education authorities and educational units
- Representatives of governance institutions related to HRE
- Education Policy Makers (for Formal and Informal Education settings)

The market has a considerable size here in Scotland: the recent scoping for a 'Glasgow Human Rights Network' (hosted by the university of Glasgow) has recruited over a hundreds of participants from the public sector, primary, secondary, higher and further education, the third sector and the broader civic society. This is only but a symptom that strongly suggests market requirements and the necessity to hold such an event. Further, a British Council publication on Citizenship and Human Rights Education in the UK, includes over 80 (among NGOs, international organizations, research centre, networks, etc.) involved in and engaged with HRE and Citizenship activities across the UK.

- **PROPOSED DATES**

Suggested dates for the event is 27th October 2011.

- **PROPOSED VENUE**

Glasgow City Chambers

- **PARTNERS (interest registered from previous meetings)**

BEMIS (Black and Ethnic Minorities Infrastructures in Scotland)
Education Scotland (previously) LTS Learning and Teaching Scotland
UNESCO Scotland
AMNESTY Scotland
IDEAS (The International Development Education Association of Scotland) / Global Learning Project Scotland (GLPS)
Scottish Commissioer for Children & Young People (SCCYP)

- **ESTIMATED NUMBER OF DELEGATES**

120-150

In the UK, the International Centre for Education for Democratic Citizenship (a joint international centre between Birkbeck University, and the Institute of Education, University of London) holds a yearly conference on Human Rights Education and Citizenship. However, it should be noted that this has mainly an academic focus, it has little engagement (if any) with the third sector, and it does not have the Scottish setting (which, for matters of devolution, has significant specificities).

- **REGISTRATION FEES**

None

- **CONFERENCE OUTCOMES**

- To fill the existing gap in promoting and fostering Human Rights Education in civic society;
- To adopt a holistic
- To promote equality, inclusiveness and cohesion;
- To build a culture of respect for diversity and equality, vital in the transmission of core values of social justice and human dignity;
- To instil a vision of a just world, of ethical relations among individuals and communities, essential to overcome violence and balance the power structures;
- To introduce new structures in education and professional learning;
- To establish a new awareness about global and active citizenship;
- To enhance the political and cultural settings in Scotland in matters of Human Rights Learning and citizenship and to establish Scotland within the broader European framework;
- To impact future policies and practices toward a holistic, rights-based approach.