

### 3. The impact of human rights education in school: the Croatian experience

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There are conceptually as well as contextually different approaches to human rights education (see Fritzsche, 2005; Lenhart, 2003; Tibbitts, 2002). Research leading to an evaluation of the practice of human rights education still remains in the fledgling stages. But empirical investigation of the impact of human rights education may legitimise this field as a discipline. This paper is based on an evaluative study of the effectiveness of human rights education. The central areas of research are core concepts as well as main features of human rights education in schools which were qualitatively and quantitatively assessed. The study was carried out in Croatia, a country with a specific socio-political context, but also with a practice of human rights education which has significantly progressed in the formal education system. This study pursues the question of the effectiveness of human rights education by identifying and analysing the strengths and deficits of its implementation.

#### -----> **Determining human rights education at school**

Education is of crucial importance to the implementation of human rights. Education in human rights aims at creating a culture of human rights within which the objectives are threefold: knowledge of and ability to call for one's own human rights; knowledge of and standing up for the human rights of others; acknowledgement of human rights as values of one's own morals and standards of one's actions (Fritzsche, 2005; Lenhart, 2003). The international community has laid down regulations on human rights education (HRE) in a number of human rights documents and instruments. In response to the appeal by the World Conference in Vienna (1993), in 1994 the General Assembly proclaimed the period from 1995 to 2004 as the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. Governments were called upon to develop national action plans for human rights education, including specific goals, strategies, and programmes to improve *inter alia* human rights education in schools.

The Decade for Human Rights Education ended in 2004 and one must state that hardly any concrete national initiatives were actually set up. "Most of the UN member states failed to inform the United Nations about the status of their national human rights education effort, nor did they draw up national action plans



for education in human rights, making it practically impossible to evaluate the development of human rights education on a global scale” (Bösl and Jastrzembski, 2005: 1). As a follow-up to this decade, the UN General Assembly adopted a World Programme for Human Rights Education, which began on 1 January 2005 and will be continued in several phases each with its own defined focal points and minimum actions to facilitate evaluation. The first phase (2005-07) focuses on human rights education in national primary and secondary schools. States are called upon to take stock of human rights education in their school systems, draw up a comprehensive implementation strategy for the national level, and carry out related measures. On the basis of internationally co-ordinated principles, the plan of action of the World Programme (2005:4) provides a definition of HRE in the school context, according to which HRE encompasses:

- “(a) Knowledge and skills – learning about human rights and mechanisms or their protection, as well as acquiring skills to apply them in daily life;
- (b) Values, attitudes and behaviour – developing values and reinforcing attitudes and behaviour which uphold human rights;
- (c) Action – taking action to defend and promote human rights.”

The learning targets of HRE may also be grouped under the following aspects: (a) learning about human rights (knowledge and understanding), (b) learning through human rights (attitudes, values and development of a human rights-conscious environment) and (c) learning for human rights (development of competence and skills for human rights related activities) (World Programme, 2005). Particularly, the aspect of learning through human rights indicates that HRE is not restricted to the individual learner. HRE is related to instruction and the whole school, since it is a good classroom climate that is crucial for HRE. Therefore, teachers are supposed to teach in such a way as to respect human rights in the classroom and the school environment itself. For learning to have practical benefits, students need not only to learn about human rights but to learn in an environment that models them. “Ultimately, teachers need to explore ways to involve not only students, school administrators, education authorities and parents in human rights education but also the whole community. In this way teaching for human rights can reach from the classroom into the community to the benefit of both” (UNHCHR, ABC teaching human rights, 2004: 23).

### -----> The Croatian landscape

For the implementation and evaluation of any education programme, it is necessary to become aware of its socio-political and socio-economic context on the local and national levels. For it makes a difference when we practice human rights education in older democracies as opposed to post-totalitarian or authoritarian countries, in developing countries or in post-conflict societies. Even though we argue for the indivisibility of human rights, we find different priorities regarding human rights and HRE in these societies (Tibbitts, 2002). The context of the country investigated in my study, Croatia, is one of a post-conflict society in transition from a socialist economy to a liberal market economy. Therefore, the implementation of human rights education and other educational efforts of promoting democracy and tolerance have to be seen within the framework of political change and democratic challenge which this society faces as a post-communist and a post-war country on its way to European integration. The

political situation is also influencing the situation in the educational sector in general and especially the implementation of human rights education:

“Croatia is a typical country in transition, still lacking a rational, coherent, consistent, operative and long-term educational policy. ... In such a situation, the need to join a family of highly developed European democracies ... resulted in the production of a series of ill-balanced policy papers in which social priorities were centrally defined in terms of national state building. ... The January 2000 political changes [and] the shifts in national priorities towards democracy, open market and European integration mark the beginning of a new phase of political restructuring in which more pragmatic and efficient policies are needed.” (Vedrana Spajić-Vrkaš, 2001: 53f)

Particular challenges to human rights education in transforming societies are represented by the introduction of “teaching practices that reinforce ‘learner-centred’ approaches rather than lecture-driven modes of teacher-student interactions” in schools “and ... the way of designing human rights education programmes as to take into account an overall national context of political uncertainty, centralised policymaking traditions, and severe resource shortages in planning for such changes” (Tibbitts, 1994). The question of introducing and applying new pedagogical methods is the central topic of this paper.

#### *Human rights education in Croatia*

Croatia can be acknowledged to have progressed a lot in the implementation of human rights education. The recent National Programme of the Croatian Government (*Vlada Republike Hrvatske, Ured za ljudska prava*, 2004) for the protection and promotion of human rights in Croatia from 2005 to 2008 put emphasis on human rights education as one of Croatia’s activities to promote and implement human rights.<sup>1</sup> Croatia is one of six OSCE countries to have ratified a national action plan for human rights education within the UN Human Rights Education Decade. The National Board for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship Education (EDC) was founded in 1996 as an advisory body to the Government of the Republic of Croatia. It developed and implemented a National Programme for Education on Human Rights in 1999, and in the same year a national curriculum was delivered to all preschool institutions, as well as primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia.<sup>2</sup> Within the national programme obligatory teacher training has been carried out continuously and systematically since 1999. In 2000, a network of 21 regional co-ordinators was nominated to facilitate the implementation of human rights education. In co-operation with several national and international NGOs,<sup>3</sup> the Institute for Educational Development is organising compulsory professional training and development of teachers, expert associates and principals. Until 2002 the number of seminars grew to 87 seminars a year, which included 2 545 teachers, principals and expert associates. From 2003 to 2005 the number of training programmes has been permanently growing. In 2002, the National Human Rights Education Committee decided to establish the co-ordinating units for HRE and EDC from preschool to university level, including adult education and media. The units are expected to develop a more efficient strategy for the implementation of HRE and EDC throughout the system, which is still missing in Croatia. In addition, a special tender for NGO projects in education was launched by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) in the spring of 2003 on the basis of the government’s decision to allocate lottery tax proceeds to the NGO activities. “However, the decision has actually discriminated against schools, which are only rarely and insignificantly financially supported for such

projects by the MoES despite the fact that they are expected to implement HRE and EDC in their curricular and extra-curricular activities” (Spajić-Vrkaš, 2003).

## -----> **Evaluation in the field of human rights education**

When half of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education had passed, an insufficient evaluation of human rights education activities had already been apparent:

“The evaluation of activities for human rights education is still very rarely carried out. For instance, the evaluation of human rights education in schools takes place only as part of the regular evaluation process within the school or the Ministry of Education, and not as a separate issue.” (UN mid-term report on the Decade of HRE, 2000: 14)

The evaluation of human rights education programmes has been called for in a number of UN documents such as the World Programme of Human Rights Education (2005: 22) in which the evaluation of HRE is defined as one of the measures of policy implementation: “10. (b) (vii) Support and promote research, for example, on the knowledge of human rights, practices of human rights education in schools, students’ learning outcomes and the impact of human rights education”. This study, which analyses the implementation and impact of HRE activities in secondary schools in Croatia, is meant to meet the requirement of an evaluation of HRE at least partially. But before the results of this study and of the few other studies in the field of HRE are presented, it is necessary to point out the specific difficulties of measuring the effectiveness of HRE. One reason among others for the difficulty of evaluating HRE is the fact that there is no way to prove whether a positive impact is due to HRE activities or to other external factors. The difficulty of measuring the effectiveness of HRE is explained by the fact that non-violence, difference, human rights, democracy and tolerance are part of a complex and multi-dimensional reality, and that programmes may have an impact on single individuals while failing to create any normative standards.

There is hardly any literature on the impact of HRE available. The reason why hardly any research on this impact has been conducted to date is that the Decade of HRE is so recent (Ramirez, 2001). The results of the research conducted indicate a substantial ignorance. A study from the USA,<sup>4</sup> for instance, states that only 8% of all adults can name a document defining international human rights. Also in Germany, people with higher education could name spontaneously only between three and seven human rights (Müller and Weyand, 2004). These and other studies<sup>5</sup> also confirm the phenomenon of the so-called “bisection of human rights” (Sommer and Zinn, 1996), in other words a greater reliability of the subjects to identify civil and political human rights rather than economic or cultural human rights. Results usually show a rather modest preoccupation with human rights. According to Sommer, Stellmacher and Brähler (2005), less than half the adults surveyed are ready to work actively for human rights. Students often mention activities not primarily aiming at compliance with human rights but at the formation of a decent life in school, when questioned on their activities in the field of human rights. Activities mentioned include: being charitable, arbitrating in a dispute, not being prejudiced (see Müller and Weyand, 2004).

The results mentioned here make it clear that the goals of HRE cannot be seen as achieved yet. What follows is an outline of the extent to which these results match those of my own study. This study is meant to uncover the difficulties of

the implementation of HRE in schools and to give recommendations as to how the implementation of HRE could become more effective.

## -----> **The impact of human rights education in school**

The quantitative and qualitative research this article is based on was undertaken in the context of the author's PhD project, an evaluation of human rights education in Croatian secondary schools. In order to measure the impact of human rights education, descriptive data on the students' knowledge about human rights articles, human rights documents and institutions which protect their rights have been collected. The students' attitudes towards human rights violations, such as human rights abuses of other social and ethnic groups in Croatia, and various student human rights activities have been monitored. Finally, human rights-related methods of teaching and learning have been examined. The instruments used to assess the impact of human rights education included both qualitative and quantitative measures. Students of nine classes with different forms of human rights education initiatives (such as cross-curricular topics in history classes, an individual subject "human rights education", through extra-curricular activities or through out-of-school activities and through teachers' classes) as it is foreseen in the National Programme on HRE have been surveyed. The subjects of the empirical study were 221 students (69 male students and 152 female students) from 10 different secondary schools (from 9th to 11th grade) across Croatia.

The classes surveyed were in schools from different regions (northwest, east and south Croatia) and differed in type (grammar schools, vocational schools, technical schools, etc.). The ethnic distribution of the students was as follows: 90% (199 students) of Croatian origin; 12 students from the Hungarian minority in Slavonia, five Bosniacs, one Serb, one Albanian and one Macedonian. One class that had no experience or activity in human rights education was surveyed for better comparison and assessment of the results gathered. Furthermore, the analysis of the data gathered was run to examine any difference between male and female students, between students from UNESCO schools and regular schools and between students from schools from war zones and those from zones not directly affected by the war in their rating of knowledge, attitudes and action concerning human rights, regardless of control or treatment group.

## -----> **Progress and setbacks: human rights education in practice**

The collection of quantitative data was guided by research questions concerning the following four issues: knowledge about human rights, attitudes towards and perceptions of human rights violations, the students' actions to protect and fight for human rights and rights-based teaching and learning. As stated above in this chapter, an important aspect of the implementation of human rights education in schools is the rights-based principle in the context of the learning environment and of teaching and learning. This aspect has been taken into account by carrying out teacher interviews and by observing human rights education activities and related teacher-training programmes. An analysis of these qualitative data throws light on several obstacles to implementation of human rights education in schools.

The research question on knowledge about human rights refers to human rights components as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)



as well as to the declaration itself. As regarded in the European context the knowledge refers also to the institutions for the protection of individual rights such as the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. The data gathered show the following results: a certain familiarity or acquaintance with the UDHR can be observed (43% of the students mentioned the UDHR or any of the human rights conventions, for example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child). In one class, nearly all students (92%) named the UDHR, any of the human rights conventions, or both. One third of the students surveyed (32.4%) named the Court as the institution they would turn to in case their rights are violated; 25% said they would turn to national human rights institutions to claim their rights. When asked about human rights in general, more than half the students (about 53%) think of civil and political human rights. A small number of students think of more structural characteristics (19% of them, for instance, believe that “human rights are innate and egalitarian”) and “normative postulates” (11.9% think for example of “rights which should be respected and fought for”). Second and third generation human rights are hardly thought of. Accordingly, it is violations of civil and political rights that most students think of when asked about violations of human rights in general.

A similar situation occurs when students are asked to recognise human rights articles: most students recognised the first six out of 16 articles listed as stating human rights, and these six articles also stated political and civil rights, such as the right to live (art.3), the right of free expression of opinion (art.19), the right of human dignity (art.1), the right to peace (which is not yet a human right) and the right of free movement (art.13). When comparing with similar studies, Croatian students’ knowledge of human rights can be judged as relatively high. In the students’ awareness of human rights, however, the presence of civil and political rights tends to be over-represented and, therefore, confirms the thesis of the so-called “bisection of human rights”, which had also been confirmed by previous international studies (Müller, 2000, Sommer, Stellenmacher and Brähler, 2003). The fact that economic, social and cultural rights are less known than civil and political rights also shows that the idea of the indivisibility of human rights as stated in the declaration has not yet been achieved.

Interestingly, these findings on the knowledge of Croatian students about human rights do not correspond to findings in other transitional countries: the study of Sommer et al. (2005) shows regarding the “bisection of human rights” that the students from the four western countries (Germany, Finland, Norway and the Netherlands) had less knowledge about economic rights than about political rights, whereas students from the post-communist “former Yugoslavia” (today’s Republic of Serbia) in comparison showed higher values in the recognition and importance of economic rights. The researchers interpreted the results as a tendency to “apple-polish”, in other words the students gave the answers that they thought the researchers expected. Moreover, at the time of the study, the country was subject to an economic embargo so that the tendency can be seen as a wish for democratic changes. However, the researchers implicated the results with the socialist society in the “former Yugoslavia”: “In socialist societies, in general, a greater importance is attributed to economic rights compared to civil and political freedoms” (Sommer et al., 2005: 290).

Another aspect of the phenomenon of the bisection of human rights in transitional countries is given by a study of Tibbitts (1994). Students from central and eastern Europe associated civic and political human rights with rights promoted in the

West and with individualism and liberal democracy. Even though these rights are welcomed, in the eyes of the students they are at the same time part of political changes which have coincided with extraordinary economic distress. In the communist period, uncertainty about the future as well as the economic situation was not as bad. A negative correlation seems to exist between civil liberties and guarantees for an adequate living standard. Surprisingly, Croatian students exhibited similarities to German students rather than to students from other transitional countries with a higher recognition of political rights than of economic rights. This could be due to the age of the Croatian students who were little children when the political system changed. In addition, a significant difference (.000 at  $P < 0.01$ ) in the students' knowledge of human rights could be observed regarding gender, schools from the UNESCO-ASP network and also schools from war zones.

The findings of a relatively high knowledge of human rights documents and instruments in general, as well as the findings of the under-representation of social and political rights in particular, represent important starting points for further and more effective human rights education activities. One could recommend, for instance, putting emphasis on all three generations of human rights and, thereby, on the indivisibility of human rights. As was mentioned above, however, knowledge about human rights and related documents is not sufficient to bring human rights to life in the classroom. “‘Facts’ and ‘fundamentals’, even the best-selected ones, are not enough to build a culture of human rights. For these documents to have more than intellectual significance, students need to approach them from the perspective of their real-life experience and grapple with them in terms of their own understanding of justice, freedom and equity” (UNHCR, ABC teaching human rights 2004: 20).

Research questions on attitudes refer to the students' perceptions concerning human rights violations, for example their perceptions of the human rights abuse of other social and ethnic groups living in Croatia and to their experience of human rights violations in their daily (school) life. The data collected on students' attitudes towards human rights violations manifested a high awareness of violations of the human rights of poor people, mentally and physically disabled people and Roma people (about 76% of the students had these attitudes). Students displayed an average awareness of violations of the human rights of social groups such as elderly people, young people and women. In the eyes of the students, minority groups like Serbs, Bosniacs or Hungarians (Serbs and Bosniacs being former war enemies) are hardly discriminated against. Only 17% of all students believe that the human rights of the Hungarians are being violated. The perception of students from the Hungarian minority areas<sup>6</sup> in eastern Slavonia, however, stands out from the average: here 61% of the students from the Hungarian minority believe that the human rights of the Hungarians are being violated. This view is not shared by the rest of the examined students who are mostly of Croatian origin. Therefore, awareness of the situation of some of the more inconspicuous minority groups does not seem not to be very developed among members of the majority group.

When asked about the students' personal experience of human rights violations in their daily (school) life, students state that it was mostly through the teachers that they experience discrimination in terms of unfair treatment, punishment and disrespect of students' opinions. Teachers who behave unjustly or abusively and who do not avoid hypocrisy such as talking about, for example, the human right



of free expression but who is not willing to allow discussions and critical thinking in his or her classroom will have little positive effect; students will learn mostly about power and considerably less about human rights. Therefore, the teacher–student relationship can become a serious obstacle to the implementation of human rights education in school.

With regard to the possibilities of taking action against human rights violations, half the students surveyed (49%) think they cannot do anything or relatively little. Still, they consider action against human rights violations as a priority task of politicians (about 85% of the students think that politicians can do relatively much or very much). Thus, the gap between being aware of human rights violations and taking action against them is quite substantial. Human rights education has to attend to bridging this gap with much more effort. Male and female students, students from UNESCO schools and students of non-UNESCO schools differ significantly (.060 at  $P < 0.01$ ) in their attitudes. Surprisingly, students of war-zone schools and students of non-war-zone schools do not differ significantly in their attitudes. Since the items for attitudes in the questionnaire do not represent the whole spectrum of possible questions asked in order to examine the students' attitudes towards human rights, interpretation of these results would rather be guesswork.

The investigation of action in the field of human rights refers to the students' ability to connect and act upon the rights and responsibilities they are entitled to in their daily lives. More than half of the students admit that they were "very little" or "not at all" engaged in human rights activities. Most of the human rights activities that students engage in are everyday actions meant to protect one's own or fellow students' human rights. "Classical" human rights activities, such as participation in a demonstration or membership in a human rights organisation, are not what students usually engage in. The only human rights activity attracting students appears to be humanitarian aid (which, seemingly, is due to the whole society's efforts to cope with the consequences of the war). The intensity of the activities does not differ significantly among the different groups of female and male students (.381), students of UNESCO schools and students of non-UNESCO schools (.136), and students of war-zone schools and students of non-war-zone schools (.819). The most important target of human rights education, to turn people into active defendants of human rights, cannot be seen as sufficiently met. When looking at the students' readiness to engage in human rights activities, one probably has to speak of a rather sobering situation. Especially with regard to the more civil human rights activities (demonstrations, petitions) schools do not rely on a lot of experience. Their mission, therefore, often only pertains to possibilities of action within the realm of each individual. This means that even students who experienced human rights education in school were not eager to become active in the sense of participating and fighting for collective rights, but who indicated engagement for human rights only in case their individual rights are affected.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, investigation into rights-based teaching and learning include interactive methods, personalised teaching and the organisation of everyday life in school with the aim of the promotion of democracy and participation as well as the students' positive attitude towards learning about human rights. A practice of teaching bequeathed to most schools by the educational system of the socialist era consists in the drumming of facts into students' heads by dry lecturing. Teachers are trained to apply new and more participative methods, but an apparent gap between the theories of the teacher-training seminars and the practice in



classrooms remains to be closed. The new and more participative methods are an integrative part of human rights education. But the gap between the theory and the application of these methods is also apparent in the teaching of human rights. Many teachers have realised this as a problem to be solved, though (see below the results of the teacher interviews).

It is striking that according to 44% of all students, participative teaching methods like discussions, study groups or workshops are never or almost never carried out at all. Of those interviewed, 63% confirm that *ex-cathedra* teaching is commonplace. Half the students state that immediate learning about one's own or other people's rights takes place only sometimes. The other half contends that this sort of immediate learning does not or hardly ever takes place at all. A positive index, however, is the students' awareness of the importance as well as their interest in learning about human rights: a large majority of students (89%) consider HRE to be "very important" or "important". This awareness and interest provides a solid foundation for further human rights education in schools. In conclusion, one has to say that teachers often struggle a lot in trying to apply more participative and progressive teaching methods. Teachers trained in the old methods tend to forget about the new methods and to go back to lecturing facts in order to get to the end of an overloaded curriculum. It remains difficult for the student to take an active part in class, and he or she might even be penalised for the expression of opinions (by bad grading or an entry in the class-register). These findings for Croatian human rights classes are problematic when you have in mind that "the school is an arena for the exchange of ideas and must, therefore, be premised upon principles of tolerance and impartiality so that all persons within the school environment feel equally free to participate" (Tomaševski, 2001: 14). A comparison of the data shows that students from UNESCO schools and non-UNESCO schools differ in their perception of participative teaching methods. Since UNESCO schools are expected to teach in accordance with innovative and participative methods, this result is hardly surprising.

The data collected on knowledge, attitudes, action and teaching principles permit a perspective on the interdependencies between the main areas of human rights education. This perspective may also help to assess its effects. Assuming a causal nexus of knowledge acquisition, attitude formation and active engagement, it remains to be questioned whether Croatia has managed to establish a stable base for further human rights education. In the context of human rights, there seems to be no correlation between knowledge and action (Pearson.007/ significance.916), knowledge and attitude, or attitude and action (Pearson -.17/ significance.799). Given the disparate nature of knowledge and behaviour, this lack of correlation is hardly surprising. Knowledge resulting in action, however, is an important objective of human rights education which has hardly been reached.

There appears to be a significant correlation between human rights-based teaching and learning, on the one hand, and attitudes towards human rights, on the other (P. 134 / S. 047 from level of 0.05). This correlation hints at a strong effect of participative teaching and critical thinking on changes in attitudes and awareness. A similar correlation could be found in a Romanian study which appears to confirm the results of others that have shown a clear link between instructional methodology and the development of participatory attitudes, or "civic behaviour" in students (Tibbitts, 1999). These empirical findings confirm the connections

between the three different learning objectives and teaching methods, as required by the concepts of human rights education.

The following part summarises specific structural obstacles that have been revealed in interviews with teachers of the surveyed classes and other human rights education practitioners and that complicate the effective realisation of human rights education activities:

*Lack of policy priorities and implementation strategy:* Human rights education is not yet included in the education strategy papers. The situation is accurately described by Spajić-Vrkaš (2003: 47): “It is a fact that the government proclaims the promotion of democratic principles (human rights, openness, tolerance and diversity) throughout the school system as its priority; that it officially supports the National Human Rights Education Programme and pays for the training of teachers in its implementation; that it officially supports the Council of Europe’s policy on education for democratic citizenship, and that, in the end, no policy for the implementation of such programmes has yet been devised by the government.” One of the consequences of the fact that there is no binding law and no implementation strategy for human rights education programmes is the fact that school teachers have no mandate to integrate human rights education in teaching. Consequently, teachers cannot demand in-service training but always depend on the school manager’s “good will” to allow the training. Further, human rights education is not seen as part of the teaching load and, therefore is not remunerated or even favoured. All efforts in human rights education depend on the individual teacher’s motivation. “The lack of school autonomy, formalism of the national inspectorate, inadequacy of advisory service and the lack of accountability were often mentioned as factors which hinder the integration of HRE and EDC into teaching” (Spajić-Vrkaš, 2003: 48).

*Curricular obstacles:* The possibilities for integrating human rights education in the official curriculum are very narrow. Teachers stated that the time and space available for human rights education activities were very limited: according to their practical experience the time left for such activities ranges from one or two days a year to once every other week when performed as extra-curricular activities. The reasons for this are diverse. The most important reason is a curriculum overload which obligates students to prepare for six subjects a day so that no time remains for participation in workshops and the like. Another reason is a content overload of the various subjects. If a subject is overloaded by content, the use of chalk and board remains the only effective method to cope with the content. Since full instruction of content is usually checked and evaluated by school inspections, and since students wish to be sufficiently prepared for university entrance exams, teachers are virtually constrained to apply that method.

*Teaching and learning:* A full curriculum has a negative impact on the application of participative and interactive teaching methods. Other obstacles reside on the different levels of the education system. On the level of the education administration one obstacle is represented by the school inspectors (teachers are not expected to use time for the application of active methods when it might be needed to teach more content). On the level of the school another obstacle is represented by the staff itself. Colleagues might reprehend colleagues or envy the application of active teaching methods if their own out-dated teaching methods are called into question (“You’re silly. How can you engage in something you’re not even rewarded for?”). Another problem to be mentioned is the dilemma that students get into if freedom of expression is permitted by one teacher and

punished by another. In summary, the reality of teaching and learning in Croatian schools can be described as an “outmoded approach to knowledge that stresses quantity of information instead of intellectual, social and communicative skills and competences by which learning is set free from school and linked to life” (Spajić-Vrkaš, 2003: 45).

*Learning environment:* The World Programme (2005: 7) says that the learning environment should provide “the opportunity for all school actors (students, teachers, staff and administrators and parents) to practise human rights through real-life activities”. But in some of the schools surveyed, human rights education activities appeared to be rather private or hidden activities. In these schools the rich experience from human rights education cannot benefit the whole school or have a positive influence on the school climate.

*Education and professional development of teachers:* A problem with the teacher-training programmes is the over-emphasis on instruction of knowledge by lecturing as well as the insufficient practice of interactive teaching methods. Another problem is the conflict between the application of human rights-based teaching and learning methods used in human rights education activities, on the one hand, and the application of methodologies by the same teachers when they fall back on outmoded teaching methods in regular subjects. Further, there is neither any satisfactory evaluation of teacher training nor any appropriate monitoring of the teachers trained. The only follow-up activities are short interviews with teachers at the end of the school year about general information on actions taken in the context of human rights education. Few NGOs offer the monitoring of teacher-training programmes, but only in the case that financial support is guaranteed. Finally, it appears that the teacher-training seminars in human rights education often serve the purpose of fulfilling one's duty of obligatory further training.

## -----> Conclusions

This article is a summary of a study of the impact of human rights education as practised in school. The study follows the purpose of further guiding human rights education. The presented results of the evaluation of human rights education in selected Croatian secondary schools exhibit a relatively high knowledge of human rights and a positive attitude towards learning about human rights. But the lack of basic principles of HRE within the teaching methods in the Croatian school system reduces the programme's overall impact. Related to the difficulties in applying human rights-based teaching and learning principles is not only inappropriate teacher training, but also a restricted participation of students as well as a lack of democratic principles within school life. For these reasons, the following recommendations are being suggested:

*School climate:* In order to promote human rights education as well as human rights themselves in a school, relevant activities have to include all the members of a school: all students, all teachers and other educational personnel as well as parents and also the local community as mentioned in the World Programme as one of the five components of human rights education in the school system. The respect and the openness for human rights education have to be ensured so that human rights principles are reaching not only teaching and learning but the school in its whole. In addition, it has to be stressed that the school climate is means and end at the same time.

*Teacher training:* Even if many teachers finished training programmes in human rights education or similar programmes there is still a lack of active methods in teaching or emphasis on the students' participation in class. Therefore teacher-training programmes have to be improved in regard to training active methods. A monitoring system as a follow-up to teacher training could help to raise the effectiveness and sustainability of trained teachers. Finally, the installation of a network for the exchange of didactical materials as well as experiences among active teachers is being recommended.

*Educational system:* As the teachers mentioned structural problems, such as having no time or space for implementing human rights education because of the content overload in the curricula, the promotion of the human rights framework throughout the entire vertical system, from the ministry to the school, has to be started. Within this, "elements of school operation should be examined from a human rights point of view, including the governance structure, relations among staff, between staff and students, opportunities for students to influence school policies, bullying and harassment policies, and discipline measures. The school should be a place that promotes and protects the human rights of staff as well as students" (Tibbitts, 2004).

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## -----> Endnotes

1. One must not ignore, however, deficiencies in the respective education legislation: “an analysis on legal provisions for education for democratic citizenship and human rights education in Croatia (Gardašević, 2002) shows that no laws on education contain explicit regulations on human rights education, even though the Constitution proclaims human rights as one of the highest values of the Croatian society” (Spajić-Vrkaš, 2003: 43).
2. As part of the human rights education activities, a number of didactic materials have been developed such as Maleš, Spajić-Vrkaš and Stričević (2003) *Living and Learning of the Human Rights* or *Teaching of Human rights and freedoms*. Research Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship of the Faculty of Arts in Zagreb. Education for human rights in primary school systems as well as Uzelac (2005) *111 Steps towards the Democracy and Human Rights*. Mali korak, Zagreb.
3. The most important NGOs in the context of human rights education (within which teacher-training programmes were organised and manuals developed) are “Small Step” (Zagreb), the “Croatian Helsinki Committee” (Zagreb), “the Forum for the Freedom of Education” (Zagreb) as well as the “European House” (Slavonski Brod).
4. Dennis N. Banks, *Promised to Keep – Results of the National Survey of Human Rights Education 2000*, published online by the University of Minnesota Human Rights Resource Center at <http://hrusa.org/educaion/PromisestoKeep.htm> (download 14.5.2004).
5. The following selection of empirical studies gives an overview of the most important research concerning the evaluation of human rights education:
  - W. Doise, D. Spini and A. Clemence, *Human rights studied as social representations in a cross-national context*. 1999.
  - Peter Hart Associates Inc. (1997) Hart Survey on attitudes and knowledge of human rights, Adult and Youth. <http://www.hrusa.org/features.shtml> (download 19.10.2003).
  - B. Jeup, R. Piesch and J. Zinn (1993) *Menschenrechte*. Semesterarbeit, quoted in Gert Sommer, Jost Stellmacher and Ulrich Wagner (eds, 1999) *Menschenrechte und Frieden – Aktuelle Beiträge und Debatten*. Marburg, (1999: 48).
  - Lothar Müller (2000 and repeated in 2003) *Menschenrechtserziehung aus Sicht von Studierenden und MRE in der Schule*.
  - Gert Sommer, Jost Stellmacher and Elmar Brähler (2005) Menschenrechte in Deutschland: Wissen, Einstellungen und Handlungsbereitschaft. In *Der Bürger im Staat*, 55, H. 1/2, pp. 57-61.
  - J. Stellmacher, G. Sommer and E. Brähler (2005) The Cognitive Representation of Human Rights: Knowledge, Importance and Commitment. Peace and Conflict, *The Journal of Peace Psychology*. 11 (2005: 267-292).
  - Tina Ramirez (2001) *The Impact of Human Rights Education on Eighth Grade U.S. History Students' Understanding of Citizenship and Democracy*. Unpublished paper, Vanguard University.





6. On 13 December 2002, Croatia's new Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities (CLNM) was proclaimed. Regarding minority rights and education, the option of separate schools is available to all national minorities, with a Hungarian-language school in eastern Slavonia and Italian-language schools in Istria, for example.
7. The following example can shed some more light on the character of "individual engagement": one of the surveyed human rights education classes discussed the increasing problem of unsafe food in the cafeteria of their school, but instead of fighting against this with a petition of all students, the only action undertaken was done by a single student in the form of asking parents to help in calling the health authority.