

Human rights education: The good surf and reclaiming human rights

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My appointment as Chair in Human Rights Education reflects the institutionalisation of human rights education within the field of human rights at Utrecht University. This position is in keeping with the image of the Dutch as a leader in human rights on the global stage. From the perspective of internationals, the Dutch government works very hard in the promotion of human rights. The International Criminal Court is an obvious example. Dutch diplomats and lawyers actively promote international law. At the same time the Netherlands, like every country, has room for improvement, including in women's rights and in human rights education. In all these respects it is entirely fitting that a Chair of Human Rights Education has been established here in the Netherlands. It is also telling that it has been endowed by a civil society organisation.

Through this lecture, in which I officially accept this position, I will explain two elements of my title – the good surf and reclaiming human rights. I would like to explain to you why human rights education has become an essential part of the international human rights movement, complementing the immediate goals of protecting victims and promoting international treaties, with education about human rights for the prevention of abuses and the realisation of “the good society”.

I. The “good surf”

First things, first. I begin with a definition. Human rights education is a practice-oriented expression of the high-minded ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), including equality and respect for human dignity.

Amnesty International defines human rights education as a ‘deliberative, participatory process aimed at empowering individuals, groups and communities (. . .) Its goal is to build a culture of

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respect for and action in the defense and promotion of human rights for all'.¹ As with other educational processes, human rights education, and learning has components of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, which should be consistent with recognised human rights principles and which should empower individuals and groups to address oppression and injustice.

The United Nations offers further explanation of what human rights education encompasses:

- (a) Education *about* human rights, which includes providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection;
- (b) Education *through* human rights, which includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners; and
- (c) Education *for* human rights, which includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others.²

Human rights education is a bold attempt to influence laws and state behaviour but also to connect human rights to the daily lives of people. Human rights education recognises that for human rights to become a legal and moral framework that is self-evident in the political culture of a country, it needs to be part of the fabric of values that are acted on in daily life.

One component of my title is my reference to “the good surf”. What do I mean by this? I refer to the international human rights movement as “the good surf” as it has assisted the rise and evolution of human rights education. As part of the expanded human rights movement, human rights education has proliferated and differentiated since the 1990s. In fact, the expansion of human rights education has benefited from several worldwide developments. These include not only the worldwide human rights movement but also the expansion of mass education and globalisation.³

1.1. What evidence do we have of the proliferation of human rights education?

Civil society networks serve an important role in disseminating ideas and norms about human rights.⁴ The only study on this subject indicated that the number of organisations dedicated to human rights education quadrupled between 1980 and 1995.⁵ These developments mirrored similar increases in the number of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Human rights discourse has entered into the realms of the Nation State. The establishment of national human rights institutions, such as the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (*College voor de Rechten van de Mens*) in the Netherlands, is one sign of state commitment to human rights.

1. Amnesty International, ‘Promoting Human Rights Education and Capacity Building?’ <<http://www.amnestymena.org/en/WhoWeAre/HumanRightsEducation.aspx?media=print>> accessed 2 October 2017.

2. UNGA, United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011) A/RES/66/137, art 2(2)

3. Francisco O Ramirez, David Suarez and John W Meyer, ‘The Worldwide Rise of Human Rights Education’ in A Benavot, C Braslavsky (eds), *School Knowledge in Comparative and Historical Perspective: Changing Curricula in Primary and Secondary Education* (Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) and Springer 2006) as quoted in Susan Garnett Russell and David Suarez, ‘Symbol and Substance: Human Rights Education as an Emergent Global Institution’ in M Bajaj (ed), *Human Rights Education: Theory, Research, Praxis* (University of Pennsylvania Press 2017) 29.

4. See Margaret E Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders* (Cornell University Press 1998).

5. Ramirez, et al. as quoted in Felisa Tibbitts, ‘Introduction’ [2006] Special Issue on International Perspectives on Human Rights Education, *Journal of Social Science Education* 2. See <<http://www.jsse.org/index.php/jsse/issue/archive>>.

An analysis of national constitutions from 189 countries through 2005, found that 60% mention the term “human rights” at least once⁶, although we cannot say, of course, if and how the presence of human rights in national constitutions reflects actual state behaviour.

Inter-governmental organisations, including the United Nations (UN) and regional human rights entities such as the Council of Europe, have promoted human right education in policies and practices. There is now a permanent and ongoing World Programme for human rights education⁷ and in 2011 the United Nations General Assembly passed the Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training.⁸ From the UN point of view, knowledge about human rights by all actors in society is fundamental to the virtuous cycle of people knowing and claiming their rights, and governments being held accountable for their human rights promises.

The institutionalisation of human rights education is also reflected in the proliferation of human rights education publications. A study carried out by Russell & Suarez found “human rights education” in the titles of 474 publications in 2013, as compared with 51 in the year 2000.⁹

In the area of curricula, more than 83 countries across different regions of the world have adopted human rights education in legislation, policy documents, and curricula since the 1990s.¹⁰ Studies of textbooks have also shown a dramatic increase in the number of times that human rights is mentioned, with increases most pronounced in Africa, Asia, and the West, and least pronounced – though still improved – in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.¹¹ Of course, just because human rights is contained in a title of the content of a curriculum, does not mean that it is having the desired effect upon learners. And in the Netherlands at the present time, although “human rights” is mentioned as a theme within citizenship education for schools, it receives little emphasis.

In addition to there being evidence that human rights education has proliferated, we can also see that it has diversified in terms of its audiences. You may already be familiar with public awareness raising through human rights campaigns. The formal schooling sector is a large and important target area for human rights learning. Government workers are another learner group, including not only lawmakers and foreign policy advisors but also military personnel, law enforcement officials, civil servants, social workers, health workers, and teachers. So you see, really, no one is excluded from human rights education, which is for all members of society and a part of lifelong learning.

There are principles of good practice for human rights education but there are no ready-made formulas. For each of these venues, for each set of learners, human rights is customised. A term that has come to be used in the field of human rights education is vernacularisation or localisation. It is this adjustment to content and methodologies in programming that allows the message of human rights to be brought closer to people in their daily lives. Bajaj distinguishes different versions of human rights education by ideology, context, constituency, and locale.¹²

6. Colin J Beck, Gili S Drori and John W Meyer, ‘World Influence on Human Rights Language in Constitutions’ (2012) 27 (4) *International Sociology*.

7. OHCHR, World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005).

8. UNGA (n 3).

9. Russell and Suarez (n 3) 29.

10. Rennie Moon, “Teaching World Citizenship: The Cross-National Adoption of Human Rights Education in Formal Schooling. (2009) Doctoral Dissertation, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, as quoted in Russell and Suarez (n 3) 31.

11. *ibid* 33.

12. Monisha Bajaj, ‘Human Rights Education: Ideology, Location, and Approaches’ (2011) 33 *Human Rights Quarterly* 481.

This flexibility makes human rights education a fascinating area of study. It can also create challenges in relation to developing a core literature that applies across contexts. In other words, human rights education that is carefully and strategically designed to account for context and environmental specificities means that the results of studies may provide insights locally but have limited explanatory power elsewhere.

So we can say that through riding the “surf” of the international human rights movement beginning in the 1990s, human rights education has proliferated, it has experimented, it has differentiated and it has also come to be localised in thoughtful ways. I would like to illustrate the latter point with reference to my own experiences including those in the Dutch context. I will here briefly address work in schools and efforts in schools of social work – sectors that I am already researching as part of my chair position.

1.2. Experiences with human rights education in schools and social work

My own work in human rights education began with my tenure with the Dutch Helsinki Committee in the 1990s. With support from the Dutch Foreign Ministry, we designed curriculum reform projects with Ministries of Education in Central and Eastern Europe, in cooperation with local human rights groups. Whole system changes in citizenship and human rights education were introduced to replace Marxism-Leninism. This happened not only through new content, but the introduction of participatory methods of learning, which were radically different than the rote learning, “correct answer” method of learning that were common practice in schools.

In terms of the “localisation” of human rights education in this post-authoritarian environment, I can tell you that for the teachers I worked with, it was the introduction of open forms of discussion with students that was the most radical aspect of human rights education. My United States (US) colleagues did not find it too remarkable that Romanian teachers began asking students questions instead of dictating information to them, but I know that my Romanian colleagues found this pedagogy to be a paradigm shift.

Here in the Netherlands, many NGOs actively support teachers in carrying out human rights education in their classrooms. These include organisations such as Amnesty International, the Anne Frank House, UNICEF, UNESCO, and others. The human rights education Platform (Platform Mensenrechteneducatie) is a coalition of numerous civil society actors and academics that have lobbied the Ministry of Education for many years to place a greater emphasis on human rights education. Recently, this platform developed a Human Rights Education Toolbox; a whole school approach to human rights education, which will be piloted shortly. I look forward to collaborating with my colleagues at the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights in studying these whole school efforts.

In the social work sector, the international federation of social workers has endorsed human rights as a core competency, perhaps because of their mission to work with vulnerable populations. There is a working group of social work trainers here in the Netherlands that developed a manifesto in 2015 calling for the inclusion of human rights education within the training of social workers. I have been delighted to be working with key leaders as they further develop plans through this working group to not only strengthen human rights education here in the Netherlands, but also in other countries in Europe. I have already begun to carry out research in schools of social work in the US in order to broaden knowledge about these kinds of curriculum efforts.

1.3. How to bring human rights close to home: the personal narrative

When human rights education is carried out in schools or in schools of social work, or any other sector in fact, it is supposed to bring the concept of human rights alive so that it is relevant for the everyday lives of people. Thus human rights education may make contributions on a small scale. This brings to mind the “small places” quote by Eleanor Roosevelt, and the “coming home” that Oomen¹³ has reminded us of in the Dutch context:

Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world.¹⁴

In truth, human rights education locates itself within struggle, beginning with the personal but often linking up to wider social change processes. While human rights education draws directly on internationally agreed principles set out in international human rights treaties, it ultimately needs to resonate with personal struggle. How to do this?

Recently, I completed research on teacher training in post-apartheid South Africa. In cooperation with one of the history education reformers, we established several weaknesses of the trainings organised by the South African Department of Education in implementing the new history education. One of the weaknesses was that history teachers – who were supposed to be guiding their students in imagining the new, democratic South Africa – were never given the opportunity to reflect upon their personal experiences during the apartheid period. Nor were they given the space to consider their own views for the future of the country. Rather, the teachers were seen simply as implementers of the new curriculum. This was an unfortunate oversight as teachers, as with all civil servants, exercise discretion in how they fulfil their professional responsibilities.

I was 17 before I ate in a restaurant, for fear of reprisals or humiliation publicly. We have been chased off beaches and other spaces too frequently.

(Teacher training participant 2003)¹⁵

In my own training of teachers, I have learned the power of using personal narrative. In one of the courses I have offered in the US, we begin by reading the biography of a human rights educator, Abraham Magendzo, who grew up Jewish during Pinochet’s Chile.¹⁶ We also study the collective narrative of the Sangtin women writers in India, a shared autobiography that fostered their recognition of shared oppression and cultivated their activist work.¹⁷

In both these examples, the use of personal narrative in human rights education illustrates the highly individualised and personal nature of life history in a particular historical, cultural, political,

13. Barbara Oomen, ‘Small Places: the Home-coming of Human Rights’ (2 December 2011) Inaugural lecture, Utrecht University Chair in the Sociology of Human Rights.

14. Eleanor Roosevelt, excerpt from a speech made at the presentation of ‘In Your Hands: a Guide for Community Action for the Tenth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ (27 March 1958) <https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/100_for_100/in-your-hands-a-guide-for-community-action> accessed 2 October 2017.

15. Felisa Tibbitts and Gail Weldon, ‘History Curriculum and Teacher Training: Shaping a Democratic Future in Post-apartheid South Africa?’ (2017) 53 *Comparative Education* 456.

16. Abraham Magendzo Kolstein, ‘Why Are We Involved in Human Rights and Moral Education? Educators as Constructors of our Own History’ (2011) 40 *Journal of Moral Education* 299–307.

17. Sangtin Writers and Richa Nagar, *Playing with Fire: Feminist Thought and Activism through Seven Lives in India* (University of Minnesota Press 2006).

and social moment. For this reason, I require my teacher-students to write their own political autobiography, so that they can become conscious of the life experiences that have influenced their values, and in turn influence their work as educators.

As an African American woman, I think racial equality will always be at the heart of my work, however, I now take more care to note where addressing important inter-sectionalities (be it class, gender, ability, etc.) would create a more powerful and meaningful experience for individual students.¹⁸

1.4. Transformative human rights education for vulnerable groups: women's movement

Although the use of personal narrative is relevant for all learners, I believe that those learners belonging to recognised vulnerable groups require special attention. For such groups, we use transformative or emancipatory human rights education pedagogy.¹⁹ The transformative approach recognises that the process of human rights education is intended to be one that provides skills, knowledge, and motivation for individuals to transform their own lives and realities. This kind of pedagogy is experiential, problem-posing, participative, analytical, healing and strategic.

These techniques are intended to assist learners in identifying forms of oppression in their own lives and to motivate them to take action to address them. This process can be a transformative one for those who have internalised oppression, a “deficit” resulting from experiences of human rights violations. Thus transformative learning and emancipatory learning can bring about profound changes in the individual learner. This has been demonstrated in studies that I and others have carried out in Turkey, India, Senegal, South Africa, Australia, Argentina, the US and other places.

In Turkey I studied the non-formal human rights education efforts of a women's group called Women for Women's Human Rights - New Ways. This programme involved a four-month study group experience, addressing legal literacy, women's access to education and jobs, and women's rights in the private domain, including decision-making in the household and child-rearing practices. This impact study confirmed that a well-designed programme could have significant influences on women's knowledge about laws related to women's protection, their self-confidence and communication skills, and their ability to take decisions to enhance their well-being. Many women returned to school to complete their education or became active in the women's movement.

When I'm doing [human rights education] groups, I'm also questioning myself. To what extent am I able to enjoy my rights – at home, at work, in daily life? So the groups are triggers that keep the process alive. Otherwise in the daily routine of life, these kinds of things might go unnoticed. The women in the group empower me [...].²⁰

18. Felisa Tibbitts, 'Political Autobiography: Reflexive Inquiry in the Preparation of Social Justice Educators' (2016) 13 *International Journal of Educational Sciences* 115.

19. Felisa Tibbitts, 'Evolution of Human Rights Education Models' in M Bajaj (ed), *Human Rights Education: Theory, Research, Praxis* (University of Pennsylvania Press 2017) 69; Bajaj (n 11); Andre Keet, 'A Conceptual Typology of Human Rights Education and Associated Pedagogical Forms' (2010) 2 *Journal of Human Rights Education* 30-41.

20. Felisa Tibbitts, 'Women's Human Rights Education in Turkey: Feminist Pedagogy and Trainer's Engagement in Social Change' (2016) 13 *Journal of Peace Education* 53.

Women's human rights is a core focus of the Chair in Human Rights Education. The Soroptomists were originally founded in 1921 as an alternative club for women who were not welcomed into all-male professional associations, and also at a time of relatively few women professionals. Over the past year I have had the pleasure and the honour to meet Dutch Soroptomists. Many of them are remarkable women, accomplished professionals, some of whom had to defy social conventions in pursuing their careers. I have felt an instant solidarity with the Soroptomists, which I think they know.

Carla Atzema-Looman, whose philanthropy funds this Chair, was herself a trailblazer in the Netherlands. She was the first female board member of a major Dutch company. During her tenure there she set up a pension fund for women and promoted numerous company policies to ensure the dignity of not only female workers but all staff, regardless of their seniority. The Soroptomists, which operate in 122 countries worldwide,²¹ continue to enact programmes to support women and girls' economic and social empowerment worldwide.

Their collective efforts over nearly 100 years through over 75.000 clubs today illustrate many of the ingredients of a successful social movement: leadership, courage, self-education, stamina and solidarity. Such efforts have brought about changes on the legal front, the work front and the home front. I thank the women – and the men who supported them – who were engaged in the early stages of the women's movement here in the Netherlands.

2. Reclaiming human rights

This brings me to the second element in my inaugural lecture's title: the reclaiming of human rights. In the past few years, for different reasons, the international human rights movement has been stressed. Human rights have come under attack in the name of national security and combating terrorism. In many countries, the civic space for NGOs has diminished. Some critics claim that there is a gap between the agenda of the human rights movement and the concerns of the majority of the public.

At this juncture, I believe that human rights education can serve as a strong pillar upholding the movement. Moreover, I propose that human rights education can help to support, or "reclaim" human rights in some environments, by offering partial solutions to two key paradoxes that have plagued the international human rights project. These paradoxes relate to, first, the centrality of the Nation State, and, secondly, to the historical origins of human rights. I will briefly address each of these paradoxes and the solutions offered by human rights education practices.

2.1. *The paradox of human rights and the nation state*

First, the paradox of the Nation State. I wonder if you have considered that the state – a powerful actor that may effectively deny or abuse the rights of individuals or groups – is also made the guarantor of human rights. The UDHR and subsequent human rights instruments are traditionally understood by legal scholars as a means of restricting the power of the state and preventing it from exercising arbitrary power. Yet Osler points out that these international treaties also strengthen state power in making it the guarantor of human rights.²²

21. <<https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/>> accessed 2 November 2017.

22. Audrey Osler, *Human Rights and Schooling: an Ethical Framework for Teaching for Social Justice* (Teachers College Press 2016) 62.

In practice the capacities and interests of states in implementing human rights varies tremendously. As an aside, I am now working on a study with an international development researcher to try to understand if and how civil society actors carrying out human rights education take such state conditions into account.

On the one hand, states may lack political will to implement human rights policies. This goes without saying. However, another problem linked with states being the implementer of human rights obligations is their potential inability to govern. There are so-called weak or fragile states.

How then can human rights education pedagogy take into account these less favourable political and governance contexts? One of the responses in conditions with weak or fragile states has been to concentrate on change at the local level, with a focus on community development.

Human rights education programmes can be embedded within community development programmes, and linked with skills related to self-reliance. This community-based approach to human rights education can involve processes such as mapping power and leadership in a community, holding discussions about the needs of members, and deciding collaboratively which ones to prioritise. In the absence of effective state services, community members address their own problems, which may or may not involve resorting to changing formal or customary laws, but will almost certainly involve human rights values. In the non-formal human rights education programme in Senegal, the NGO TOSTAN integrates human rights education within their Community Empowerment Program.²³

This is also the principle behind the fascinating Human Rights Cities movement, of which Utrecht and Middelburg are a part. Within the Human Right Cities movement, there are strong local governments and they work collaboratively and inclusively with community members in strengthening the realisation of human rights through laws, policies, and programmes.²⁴

Within the community development framework, human rights education fosters the changed behaviour of both state and non-state actors, that is, everyday people in their daily lives. The norms for such changed behaviour can be strengthened through the cross-cutting (human rights) values of non-discrimination, equality, inclusion and participation, as well as the norms associated with the human rights of specific marginalised groups. The women's movement has always recognised that gender equality would be brought about by a social movement that encompasses such legal and policy reforms but also the empowerment of individual women.

2.2. *The paradox of the north-south divide and human rights critiques*

A second paradox has to do with the so-called North-South divide and critiques of human rights. In the Global South, the notion of human rights has for some time been criticised for being Western in origin, in denial of local cultures, hegemonic in its approach and hypocritically used by leaders in the Global North. Human rights, it is argued, has become the steward of globalisation through the transmission of so-called universal values and legal norms. This "cosmopolitan" approach to human rights education presumes shared values and legal forms that simply do not exist in some

23. Beniamino Cislighi, Diane Gillespie and Gerry Mackie, *Values Deliberation and Collection Action: Community Empowerment in Rural Senegal* (Palgrave Macmillan 2016).

24. See Stephen P Marks and Kathleen A Modrowski, *Human Rights Cities: Civic Engagement for Societal Development* (UN Habitat and People's Decade for Human Rights Education 2008). See also <<https://www.pdhre.org/projects/hrcommun.html>>.

places or, at minimum, need to be discussed or negotiated. The rights perspective may even operate in tension with local cultures where conservative and patriarchal values prevail.²⁵

Critics from the political-right argue that human rights is part of an international system that overrides national prerogatives, ignores national culture and demeans national pride. Critics from the left, including Hopgood, argue that the international human rights movement has been overly focused on the ‘professional’ enterprise of human rights: focused on legal human rights treaties and changing duty bearer behaviour, but insufficiently concerned with human rights in everyday life.²⁶

These disputes around the human rights project have influenced critiques of human rights education as well. Some scholars from the Global South, such as Keet, have critiqued a ‘declarationist’ approach to human rights education as promoting the values embodied in international human rights standards as absolutist, negating the possibility of genuine “dialogue” with learners in regard to their existing value systems.²⁷ Without creating a space for a genuine critique of the human rights system as a whole, human rights education promotes political correctness and a “transmission” approach to human rights.

Human rights education theorists have responded by embracing the critical pedagogy approach, established by Paulo Freire,²⁸ which has been foundational to the popular education version of human rights education. The infusion of the critical approach within human rights education means not only critically reviewing the social and cultural environments in which learners find themselves, but also the human rights framework itself. This approach can explicitly reveal and allow learners to examine the arguments of the Western origins and potential hegemonic influences of the human rights system, while in a learning context dedicated to promoting and protect human dignity. The focus then becomes not whether the human rights framework is the preferable value system to apply, but “what is to be done” – using the value system and language indigenous to and embraced by the learner, and presumably consistent with humanistic values.

Another pedagogical response actively seeks to bridge local and transnational vernacular rights cultures. Critical interpretive pedagogy proposes more specifically that human rights must be interpreted within a plurality of cultural, religious, and philosophical doctrines.²⁹ Rather than simply applying a universal set of abstract principles, rights are actively interpreted, shaped, and transformed. They are thus ‘sutured with the multiple histories, cultures, and contexts in which they are formed, and reflect a history of struggles that is both local and transnational’.³⁰ This quasi-universalistic approach is a practical accommodation to the criticisms of universal values.

This responsive pedagogy is not only relevant for the Global South, but also anywhere resistance can be found, including in the Netherlands and the US. In every learning context, human rights education pedagogy needs to be a listening and dialogic one.

25. Audrey Osler and Chalank Yahya, ‘Challenges and Complexity in Human Rights Education: Teachers’ Understandings of Democratic Participation and Gender Equity in Post-conflict Kurdistan-Iraq’ (2013) 4 *Education Inquiry* 189.

26. Stephen Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights* (Cornell University Press 2013).

27. Andre Keet, ‘Discourse, Betrayal, Critique: the Renewal of Human Rights Education’ in C Roux (ed) *Safe Spaces: Human Rights Education in Diverse Contexts* (Sense Publishers 2012) 7–27.

28. See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Seabury Press 1968); Freire Paulo, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (Seabury Press 1973).

29. See Rebecca Adami, ‘Human Rights for More than One Voice: Rethinking Political Space beyond the Global/Local Divide’ (2014) 7 *Ethics and Global Politics* 163; Fuad Al-Duraweesh and Dale T Snauwaert, ‘Towards a Hermeneutical Theory of International Human Rights Education’ (2013) 63(4) *Educational Theory*

30. Robin Frederick Dunford and Sumi Madhok, ‘Vernacular Rights Cultures and the ‘Right to Have Rights’’ (2015) 19 *Citizenship Studies* 606.

Both critical pedagogy and critical interpretive pedagogy open up the possibility, of course, that the human rights framework will not be the one of choice for learners. Yet, how can such a framework ever truly be imposed? We must respect the agency of the learner at the same time, of course, as human rights is presented as a desirable and potentially effective legal and normative framework. Those of us who are “human rights believers” must have the courage to present the framework as such, even in moments when human rights are under attack.

3. Concluding remarks

And now allow me to make some concluding remarks. The Chair in Human Rights Education, so generously funded by the Soroptomists, was founded with a particular agenda: to contribute to the body of empirical evidence surrounding human rights education as it pertains to the Netherlands and potentially other countries as well.

You may remember my attention to “the good surf” and the proliferation, differentiation, and localisation of human rights education practices. I have also talked about “reclaiming” and strengthening consideration of the human rights framework through critical pedagogy and community-based approaches.

As Chair in Human Rights Education, I will be studying the situated pedagogy of human rights education in the contexts of schools and in certain areas of professional studies, such as social work education. In my research, I will pay attention to human rights education pedagogies and the range of choices made in terms of the intended human rights education curriculum. I will also study the implemented and achieved curriculum. My main focus will be the Dutch context and in this respect, I will work closely with colleagues in academia and in the NGO sector.

I also plan to bring in a comparative perspective. For example, there is an impressive effort in the Netherlands to promote human rights education in certain schools of social work. I am already carrying out parallel research in the US and I hope that in combination with Dutch researchers, we will gain a better understanding of if and how human rights education curriculum strategies influence social workers’ conceptions of their role to promote and protect human rights.

I hope to carry out research in the coming years that increases our understanding of how human rights education can be effectively offered in a range of learning environments, so that it both promotes legal literacy, but also fosters dialogue, critical analysis, and active choices about applying human rights values in daily life.

At the beginning of my presentation, I said that I would like to address two elements of my title, human rights education “riding the surf” and “reclaiming human rights”. I hope that I have provided a satisfactory explanation of what I meant by this.

I would now like to share my belief that human rights education has a future, although it will take more practice, research and self-correction. Human rights education is an exciting and evolving field. Very recently, the *International Journal of Human Rights Education*³¹ was launched. I am happy to be part of its editorial board and to have an article included in this inaugural issue. It is fitting that this Chair in Human Rights Education was established here in the Netherlands, and that this country will continue to exert leadership in the field of human rights and to improve its own efforts in human rights education.

31. See <<http://repository.usfca.edu/ijhre/>>.

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