

***Human Rights Education or
Human Rights in Education:***

A Conceptual Analysis

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Doctor of Education Degree**

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of

Katarina Tomasevski
(1953-2006)

Global education rights activist, first United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, courageous human rights law expert, friend and colleague.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and that it has not been submitted previously for any degree at any university.

André Keet

August 2006

Signed:

**Human Rights Education or Human Rights in Education:
A Conceptual Analysis**

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KEY WORDS

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Theoretical orientations

Meanings and definitional frameworks of Human Rights Education

ABSTRACT

Human Rights Education or Human Rights in Education: A Conceptual Analysis¹

The purpose of this research is to conduct a concept analysis and conceptual historical analysis as well as to develop a conceptual cartography of the concept of Human Rights Education (HRE) with reference to human rights in education.

HRE has evolved into a burgeoning pedagogical formation that sources its currency from the perceived consensus on human rights universals. However, the proliferation of HRE is paradoxically not matched by a sustained and meaningful theoretical analysis of HRE though it has far-reaching implications for educational systems worldwide.

This study provides a comprehensive theoretical analysis of HRE by examining the meanings that organise and construct the conceptual structure of HRE. The origins of the concept of HRE and its changing meanings are traced over time and paradigmatically analysed across a variety of theoretical orientations. This study also shows that HRE is a concept that is subjected to an unexplored and unexplained conceptual eclecticism that hampers its pedagogical potential as a counter-measure to human rights violations and human suffering.

Amongst all the conceptual possibilities that could have been developed as an analytical interplay between the conceptual cartography, models, approaches and typologies of

¹ In this dissertation I broadly refer to HRE as a pedagogical formulation that focuses on advancing human rights. 'Human rights in education' designates the space within which notions, violations and practices of human rights play themselves out in educational settings. HRE and human rights in education are thus closely linked as conceptual entities and such linkages should provide the backdrop for the textual interpretation of this dissertation.

HRE, this study demonstrates that the dominant conceptual structure of HRE has grown into a *declarationist², conservative, positivistic, uncritical, compliance-driven framework that is in the main informed by a political literacy approach.*

Consequently, this study develops alternative conceptual principles buttressed by a non-declarationist conception of HRE that stands in a critical and anti-deterministic relationship with human rights universals.

² This term is explained on page 7 and though it indicates a very critical stance in relation to human rights instruments, it does not constitute a rejection of international human rights provisions. I acknowledge the fact that international human rights provisions have played a significant but limited role in advancing human rights.

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