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HUMAN RIGHTS AWARENESS OF THE STUDENTS IN NAGALAND

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ABSTRACT

The two great and infamous World Wars made human beings realize that violation of human rights by the dominant over the dominated will bring human existence to an end. Violation can be avoided only when people learn to respect other's rights and others as the human beings as they are. This awareness is the need of the hour for the whole world community. Nagaland is one of the place still facing imperialism and the rights of Nagas are violated. To free themselves from the clutches of imperialism, they must by themselves have the awareness about the basic human rights proclaimed by the United Nations. Creating awareness for the adults out of educational institutions is the toughest job but the tomorrow generation who are in the schools now could be instilled with the human rights values. For which, the current level of their awareness, human rights institutions and instruments and the sources of awareness is very important. This study is an attempt to study the awareness on the basis of the primary data collected from students, teachers and school administrators.

Keywords: Nagas, Human Rights, Awareness, Human Rights Institutions, Human Rights Instruments, School

Introduction

Nagaland is a place of beauties and bounties but also of miseries and under 'mighty' in the past and present and 'May it not be alike in future!'. It is being believed that every Naga village was a paradise and paramour of million hearts but ironically a place of threat and fear, where visiting of a neighbouring village was at the risk of losing the heads. Head was counted worthy and precious and more precious was the heads of children and women. But within the village there was practiced real democracy that had never been easily found in many other parts of the world. Great human values found in the villages have been carried forward till today by many Naga people. That gave a wonder and doubt. As many researches were prompted by 'wonder' or 'doubt', here too a 'doubt' that 'Are the great human values inherent in the Nagas?' as a Cambodian study (Laksiri Ferando, 1999) interpreted about the people of Cambodia having inherent great human values in them.

Status of Nagas

Once the British found a 'way' out to reach Manipur from Assam, the Nagas had to lose their 'way' and 'way of life' and the life of democracy changed to 'demon crazy'. There came the first violation of a remote foreigner and violations of Naga human rights. The British realization, that they would lose more than what they would gain, made many other parts of Nagas and customs undisturbed till their leaving India. Gandhiji (1947) said, "Nagas have every right to be independent." But, Gandhiji's death and India's independence resulted in violation of the basic right of Nagas for freedom and made them bear untold human rights violations and that till now the world failed to hear the violations. Many people from the other parts of our nation believe that Nagas are a separatist group; fighting for grabbing the land of India, wanting to divide India and getting a free nation out of India.

Let the world hear later but now let the people of the Nation hear and support the cause of Nagas. Let the Nation hear later, but let every Nagas know that their rights are violated blatantly. Let the Nagas as a whole know later but let the students' know their rights. This student's awareness is expected to reach the realization of their rights into action.

Research Question

Therefore, this research was attempted to answer the following question:

Are the students- the responsible citizens of tomorrow, aware of human rights? This question implies the others instilling awareness in the minds of students and therefore, their awareness or other sources causing the awareness. And also, whether students' awareness stops by being aware of without any practices? These questions sprang out into the following objectives.

Objectives

1. To assess the students', teachers/lecturers and principals' awareness of the term 'human rights' and some other terms associated there with.
2. To identify the most useful sources for the students in gaining awareness of human rights and different terms associated there with.
3. To identify practices in school environment that promotes/violates human rights.

In this study, the awareness of teachers/lecturers and principals is taken into account irrespective of whether something is a part of curriculum or not, the teachers are well able to infuse what they know and their philosophy into their students in their daily teaching - learning transactions. This is a part of a comprehensive research study, due to the limited scope of this article; the focus is delimited to the above objectives only. The contents of the textbooks were also analysed but it is not included in the current article. Here, the term 'awareness' refers to the second level of Bruner's Discovery learning i.e. recognition. Awareness refers to the student's familiarity with the terms or to say that the terms the students hear is not new to them but familiar irrespective of their perception or conception levels.

The term 'students' in the title refers to the students studying at their 10+2 level either in Higher Secondary Schools-run by either central government, state government, private individuals or bodies and colleges affiliated to the Nagaland Board of School Education.

Methodology & Sampling

This descriptive study conducted its investigation from a sample of 946 higher secondary students from both male and female gender, sampled using Stratified Sampling Method, from 22 institutions across the State of Nagaland comprising both of government and private schools/colleges from the 2 urban (3:2 ratio) and 6 rural districts of Nagaland. Similarly, 46

teachers/lecturers and 15 principals participated in this study. The assessment was made on the percentage.

TOOLS USED

Investigator designed tools were used for assessing the awareness level of students and teachers/principals. The following tools were used for collecting the data:

1. Human Rights Awareness Questionnaire for Students (HRAQS)
2. Human Rights Awareness Questionnaire for Teachers/Principals (HRAQTP)
3. The contents, from Social Sciences and Integrated Science text books of classes : 8 to 10 and Environmental Education text book prescribed for classes 11 and 12, were analyzed by close observation of contents.

FINDINGS

1. AWARENESS : An overwhelmingly high number of students were aware of the term 'human rights' which was found higher than that of the teachers' under this study and also the students' awareness studies conducted in the Philippines(HURIGHS, 2005), Malaysia (HURIGTS, 2005) and Cambodia(Laksiri Fernando, 1999). some other studies. But, it was found less than that of the principals' awareness; howsoever the difference was very insignificant. Further, it was found that the awareness of male students was higher than that of the female and higher awareness among the urban students (99.40%) than the rural students (99.12%).

Table : 1a Students' Awareness of Human Rights

	Rural	Urban	
Male	99.55%	99.60%	99.57%
Female	98.71%	99.20%	98.96%
	99.12%	99.40%	99.26%

Table:1b Percentage of Respondents' Awareness about the term 'Human Rights' in all variables

Human Rights Awareness	Students	Teachers	Principals
	99.26%	87.20%	100%

In general, the students were found with high average awareness (82.9%) of those different terms related to human rights studied; such as (given on descending order of awareness) global warming(91.68%), World Environment Day(91.37%), United Nations(91.26%), Fundamental Rights(88.53), Universal Declaration of Human Rights(78.95%), National Human Rights Commission (77.68%), Convention on the Right of Child (70.21%) and Naga People Movement for Human Rights(57.16%).

2. SOURCES: Where do they get to know those terms related to human rights? Students' answers to this question revealed that more than half the number of students found school(53.8%) as the most useful source followed by media(37.89%) and family(11.74%). In general 'media' was found the most useful source for more number of female students than the male students. This shows that the female students in Nagaland tend to adapt media unlike the traditional women.

SCHOOL

Thus, school was found the most useful source for majority of the students. Individually analyzing school as the most useful source, it was revealed that in spite of the absence of contents related to human rights, school was found to be the most useful source in bringing the awareness upon the students. This brings a speculation that the hidden curriculum comes into effect of bringing

awareness upon the students. Since the teachers (average 77.1%) and principals (average 86.7%) exhibited great awareness and moderate understanding (teachers 55.7% and principals 66.7%) and despite the human rights contents absent in text books, the teachers were able to well fuse that knowledge upon students connecting other subject matters to human rights wherever possible. That could have made the school as the most useful source for bringing awareness among students. When the school students are day by day loaded with new and emerging areas of knowledge, the hidden curriculum is a relieving force and implies the need for well qualified, committed and knowledgeable faculty in educational institutions. This hypothesis showing relationship between the quality teachers and student's knowledge in areas not incorporated in the curriculum may be taken for an in-depth study in future researches.

Table:2 Comparison of Teachers' vs. Principals' HR Awareness

No	Awareness/Understanding of	Awareness%		Understanding%	
		Teacher	Principal	Teacher	Principal
1	Human Rights	87.20%	100%	63.10%	93.30%
2	Environment vs Human Rights	72.30%	86.70%	42.60%	60%
3	Human Rights Violations around	72.30%	73.30%	63.80%	73.30%
4	National Human Rights Commission	76.60%	86.70%	53.20%	40%
	Average	77.10%	86.70%	55.70%	66.70%

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

In spite of human rights contents, in universally accepted terms, were not found in the curriculum and student's overwhelming level of awareness of different terms related to human rights, 'whether the school environment is congenial for exercising human rights?' is the next question needing answer.

The result shows that still there were many institutions without students' unions or associations (about 42%) . Right to association itself is a human right and that basic right was not implemented in many schools/colleges. The teachers/lecturers should give their best guidance and advice to the students in the formation of students' associations. . Here, it is to be noted that the teachers' attitude towards the formation of students' association was found negative and this showed some similarities with their human rights knowledge. This right to forma association is associated with right to participation and thus effective participation need to be ensured by the educational institutions. But the responses of quite many teachers showed that they understood human rights equivalent to activism and allowing the formation of students' associations were expected to bring lack of teachers' control over the students. Existence of unions itself is not sufficient but there should be equal representation of students from different communities, educational and economic status but 40.43% schools/colleges were found with associations which were not represented by different sections of students. Similarly, active participation of the students' union in bringing a proper human friendly atmosphere in the schools/colleges but many institutions were found without any active participation and animation. Students should be free to express their problems or grievances in a democratic type of school atmosphere, in this study the students were found free to express their problems to the teachers and there existed good relations between teachers and students and teachers and the administrators. But the schools/colleges had not tried to sensitize the school/college community on human rights by celebrating International Human Rights Day

Observation and celebration of International days in educational institutions is one of the finest ways to promote human rights and creating awareness, but more than 90% of the institutions

found not observing those important days. Though policies give directives for the observation of these international days, there found no effective monitoring and checking mechanism for the extracurricular activities recommended.

Conclusion

In spite of relevant contents' absence, the students' awareness of human rights and high level of 'knowledge and understanding' level prompted to make an assumption that human rights might have been instilled by the school hidden curriculum or be inherent in the students that might have been transmitted from the uncorrupted tribal social and cultural values. Students less awareness in some terms related to human rights might be due not to the exposure of those technical terms used in international human rights instruments as these were not part of their school curriculum. The less awareness may also be attributed to students' dilemma between the moral and ethical values. Though school was found the most useful source among the three sources for the majority of students, the opportunities to exercise human rights in the schools/colleges were found inadequate. In the text books, more than adequate contents on environment were incorporated but the least or none of the international instruments were listed.

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