

Human rights education: The good surf and reclaiming human rights

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My appointment as Chair in Human Rights Education (HRE) reflects the institutionalization of HRE 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 organization.

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 HRE has become an essential part of the international HR movement, complementing the immediate goals of protecting victims and promoting international treaties, with education about human rights for the prevention of abuses and the realization of “the good society”.

First things, first. I begin with a definition. HRE 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 HRE as a “deliberative, participatory process aimed at empowering individuals, groups and communities...It's goal is to build a culture of 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 recognized human rights principles and which should empower individuals and groups to address oppression and injustice.

The United Nations offers further explanation of what HRE 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

¹ Amnesty International, “Promoting Human Rights Education and Capacity Building?” Accessed 2 Oct. 2017. <http://www.amnestymena.org/en/WhoWeAre/HumanRightsEducation.aspx?media=print>

(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 behavior but also to connect human rights to the daily lives of people. HRE recognizes 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 HRE. As part of the expanded human rights movement, human rights education has proliferated and differentiated since the 1990s. In fact, the expansion of HRE has benefited from several worldwide developments. These include not only the worldwide human rights movement but also the expansion of mass education and globalization.³

What evidence do we have of the proliferation of HRE?

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 organizations dedicated to human rights education quadrupled between 1980 and 1995.⁵ These developments mirrored similar increases in the number of international NGOs.

Human rights discourse has entered into the realms of the nation-state. The establishment of national human rights institutions, such as the *College voor de Rechten van de Mens* in the Netherlands, is one sign of state commitment to human rights. 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 behavior.

Inter-governmental organizations, including the United Nations and regional human rights entities such as the Council of Europe, have promoted human right education in policies and

² United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training*. GA 66/137, Art. 2, para. 2, United Nations, Geneva 2011.

³ Francisco O. Ramirez, David Suarez and John W. Meyer, “The Worldwide Rise of Human Rights Education,” pp. 35-52, in A. Benavot and C. Braslavsky (Eds.) *School Knowledge in Comparative and Historical Perspective: Changing Curricula in Primary and Secondary Education*, Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC), Hong Kong 2006 and Springer, 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, Philadelphia 2017, p. 29.

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

⁵ Ramirez, et al (2006) as quoted in: F. Tibbitts, “Introduction,” Special Issue on International Perspectives on Human Rights Education, *Journal of Social Science Education*, (1) 2006 p. 2.
<http://www.jsse.org/index.php/jsse/issue/archive>

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

practices. There is now a permanent and ongoing World Programme for HRE⁷ and in 2011 the United Nations General Assembly passed the Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. 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 institutionalization of HRE is also reflected in the proliferation of HRE 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 2000.⁸

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.⁹ 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.¹⁰ Of course, just because human rights is contained in a title of the content of a curriculum, doesn’t 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 HRE 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 law makers 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 HRE but there are no ready-made formulas. For each of these venues, for each set of learners, HRE is customized. A term that has come to be used in the field of HRE is vernacularization or localization. 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 HRE by ideology, context, constituency and locale.¹¹

This flexibility makes HRE a fascinating area of study. It can also create challenges in relation to developing a core literature that applies across contexts. In other words, HRE that is carefully and

⁷ United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *World Programme for Human Rights Education*, United Nations, Geneva, 2005.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Russell and Suarez, p. 29.

⁹ Moon as quoted in Russell and Suarez, p. 31.

¹⁰ *Op cit.*, p. 33.

¹¹ Monisha Bajaj, “Human rights education: Ideology, location, and approaches,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, 33, 2011, pp. 481-508.

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 (HR) movement beginning in the 1990s, HRE has proliferated, it has experimented, it has differentiated and it has also come to be localized 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.

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 “localization” of HRE 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 HRE. My U.S. 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 HRE in their classrooms. These include organizations such as Amnesty International, the Anne Frank House, UNICEF, UNESCO and others. The HRE 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 HRE Toolbox, a whole school approach to human rights education, which will be piloted shortly. I look forward to collaborating with my colleagues at the College 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 HRE 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 HRE here in the Netherlands, but also other countries in Europe. I have already begun to carry out research in schools of social work in the U.S. in order to broaden knowledge about these kinds of curriculum efforts.

When HRE 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 HR alive so that it is relevant for the everyday lives of people. Thus HRE may make contributions on a small scale. This brings to mind the “small places” quote

by Eleanor Roosevelt, and the “coming home” that Oomen¹² 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.*¹³

In truth, human rights education locates itself within struggle, beginning with the personal but often linking up to wider social change processes. While HRE 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 organized by the 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 implementors of the new curriculum. This was an unfortunate oversight as teachers, as with all civil servants, exercise discretion in how they fulfill 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)¹⁴

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 U.S., we begin by reading the biography of a human rights educator, Abraham Magendzo, who grew up Jewish during Pinochet’s Chile.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

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

¹² Barbara Oomen, “Small places: the home-coming of human rights,” Inaugural lecture, Utrecht University Chair in the Sociology of Human Rights, 2 December 2011.

¹³ 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,” March 27, 1958. United Nations, New York. https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/100_for_100/in-your-hands-a-guide-for-community-action. Retrieved October 2, 2017.

¹⁴ Felisa Tibbitts and Gail Weldon, “History curriculum and teacher training: shaping a democratic future in post-apartheid South Africa?”, *Comparative Education*, 53(3), 2017, p. 456.

¹⁵ Abraham Magendzo Kolstein, “Why are we involved in human rights and moral education? Educators as constructors of our own history,” *Journal of Moral Education*, 40(3), 2011, pp. 299-307.

¹⁶ Sangtin Writers and Richa Nagar, *Playing with Fire: Feminist Thought and Activism through Seven Lives in India*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 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 intersectionalities (be it class, gender, ability, etc.) would create a more powerful and meaningful experience for individual students¹⁷

Although the use of personal narrative is relevant for all learners, I believe that those learners belonging to recognized vulnerable groups require special attention. For such groups, we use transformative or emancipatory HRE pedagogy.¹⁸ The transformative approach recognizes 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 internalized 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 HRE efforts of a women’s group called Women for Women’s Human Rights - New Ways. This program 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 program 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 HRE 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.

¹⁷ Felisa Tibbitts, “Political Autobiography: Reflexive Inquiry in the Preparation of Social Justice Educators,” *International Journal of Educational Sciences*. 13(1), 2016, p. 115.

¹⁸ Felisa Tibbitts “Evolution of Human Rights Education Models,” in M. Bajaj (ed.), *Human Rights Education: Theory, Research, Praxis*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2017, pp. 69-95; *Op cit.*, Bajaj 2011; Andre Keet, “A Conceptual Typology of Human Rights Education and Associated Pedagogical Forms,” *Journal of Human Rights Education*, 2(1), 2010, pp. 30-41.

*Otherwise in the daily routine of life, these kinds of things might go unnoticed. The women in the group empower me ...*¹⁹

Women's human rights is a core focus of the Chair in HRE. 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 honor 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 worldwide²⁰, continue to enact programs 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.

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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 combatting 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 HRE can serve as a strong pillar upholding the movement. Moreover, I propose that HRE 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.

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

¹⁹ Felisa Tibbitts, "Women's Human Rights Education in Turkey: Feminist Pedagogy and Trainer's Engagement in Social Change," *Journal of Peace Education*, 13(1), 2016, p. 53.

²⁰ <https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/> Accessed Nov. 2, 2017.

guarantee 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.²¹

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 implementor of human rights obligations is their potential inability to govern. There are so-called weak or fragile states.

How then can HRE pedagogy take into account these less favorable 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.

HRE programs can be embedded within community development programs, and linked with skills related to self-reliance. This community-based approach to HRE 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 prioritize. 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 HRE program in Senegal, the NGO TOSTAN integrates HRE within their Community Empowerment Program.²²

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 realization of human rights through laws, policies and programs.²³

Within the community development framework, human rights education fosters the changed behavior of both state- and non-state actors, that is, everyday people in their daily lives. The norms for such changed behavior can be fed 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 marginalized groups. The women's movement has always recognized

²¹ Audrey Osler, *Human Rights and Schooling: An Ethical Framework for Teaching for Social Justice*. Teachers College Press, New York, 2016, p. 62.

²² Beniamino Cislighi, Diane Gillespie and Gerry Mackie, *Values Deliberation and Collective Action: Community Empowerment in Rural Senegal*, Palgrave Macmillan 2016.

²³ See Stephen P. Marks and Kathleen A. Modrowski, *Human Rights Cities: Civic Engagement for Societal Development*, UN Habitat, Nairobi and People's Decade for Human Rights Education, New York, 2008. See also: <https://www.pdhre.org/projects/hrcommun.html>

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.

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 criticized 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 globalization through the transmission of so-called universal values and legal norms. This “cosmopolitan” approach to HRE presumes shared values and legal forms that simply don’t exist in some places or, at minimum, need to be discussed or negotiated. The rights perspective may even operate in tension with local cultures where conservative, patriarchal values prevail.²⁴

Critics from the 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 Hopgood²⁵, 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 behavior but insufficiently concerned with human rights in everyday life.

These disputes around the human rights project have influenced critiques of HRE as well. Some scholars from the Global South, such as Keet, have critiqued a ‘declarationist’ approach to HRE 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.²⁶ Without creative a space for a genuine critique of the human rights system as a whole, HRE promotes political correctness and a “transmission” approach to human rights.

HRE theorists have responded by embracing the critical pedagogy approach—established by Paulo Freire²⁷ and foundational to the popular education version of HRE. The infusion of the critical approach within HRE 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

²⁴ 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,” *Education Inquiry*, 4(1), 2013, pp. 189-210.

²⁵ Stephen Hopgood, *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2013.

²⁶ Andre Keet, “Discourse, betrayal, critique: The renewal of human rights education”, in *Safe spaces: Human rights education in diverse contexts*, edited by C. Roux, SensePublishers, Rotterdam, 2012, pp. 7-27.

²⁷ See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press, New York 1968; Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Seabury Press, New York 1973.

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.²⁸ 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”.²⁹ 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 U.S. In every learning context, HRE pedagogy needs to be a listening and dialogic one.

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.

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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 HRE 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 localization of HRE practices. I have also talked about “reclaiming” and strengthening consideration of the human rights framework through critical pedagogy and community-based approaches.

As HRE Chair, I will be studying the situated pedagogy of HRE 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 HRE pedagogies and the range of choices made in terms of the intended HRE 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.

²⁸ See Rebecca Adami, “Human rights for more than one voice: rethinking political space beyond the global/local divide,” *Ethics and Global Politics*, 7(4), 2014; Fuad Al-Duraweesh and Dale T. Snauwaert, “Towards a Hermeneutical Theory of International Human Rights Education,” *Educational Theory*, 63(4), 2013.

²⁹ Robin Frederick Dunford and Sumi Madhok, “Vernacular Rights Cultures and the ‘Right to Have Rights,’” *Citizenship Studies*, 19 (6-7), 2015, p. 606.

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

I hope to do research in the coming years that increase 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, HRE “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 HRE has a future, although it will take more practice, research and self-correction. HRE is an exciting and evolving field. Very recently, the *International Journal of Human Rights Education*³⁰ 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 HRE was established here in the Netherlands, and that this country will continue to exert leadership in the HR field – and to improve its own efforts in HRE.

³⁰ See <http://repository.usfca.edu/ijhre/>.