

M1 Leading idea “Rights and obligations”

Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, there has been widespread interest in its contents being present in children’s and teenager’s education. This interest has evolved at the same rate as the reflections generated by the Declaration. Throughout the 50’s and 60’s, the main goal of education in, and for, Human Rights aimed at educating both toward individual rights (civil and political), which were called ‘first generation rights’, and toward economic, social and cultural rights (the so-called ‘second generation rights’). However, since the 70’s, there has been a shift in the goals of human rights education that is derived from a general interest in ‘third generation rights’ which focus on encouraging mutual respect and collaboration between different peoples in the international community. Human rights education has thus diversified so as to include contents which were not present in the Declaration in 1948

<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>. Among this new content, we can find a focus on environmental rights, rights related to peace, as well as those focused on social and cultural diversity, all of which have been promoted in the educational context.

However, although the Declaration of Human Rights is now more than 60 years old, we still do not have a Declaration of Human Obligations to complement the former. It is generally accepted that we cannot deal with rights without, at the same time, referring to obligations. José Saramago, the Nobel Prize winner for literature in 1998, died while working on a Declaration of Obligations. From this Portuguese writer’s point of view – one in which rights only gain their full meaning in connection with obligations - we could ask the following question: Which human obligations are universal enough to be included in a Declaration?



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