A New Vision for Human Rights Education in Quebec High Schools

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Part I. Introduction

Human rights education ("HRE") is broadly defined as "a participatory process of empowering individuals and communities by raising awareness, changing attitudes and inspiring actions aligned with human rights principles".[1] It does not only involve teaching people what human rights are but also aims at developing "an understanding of our common responsibility to make human rights a reality".[2] In order to create a "culture of human rights" and a society engaged with human rights, "direct education of human rights is inevitably necessary".[3]

During my internship at Equitas at the *International Human Rights Training Program* this summer, I met 77 participants from over 48 different countries who were exploring how human rights education should be taught in order to effect social change. This made me wonder about the place of human rights education in Canada and what, as a country who is viewed internationally as a place where people's human rights are protected, we actually teach our younger generations about human rights. Do we simply tell them these rights exist or do we also invite them to engage critically with human rights issues and become social justice citizens[4] who play an active role in protecting human rights?

According to a 2013 survey conducted by the Canadian Teachers Association, 52% of Canadian teachers said that human rights education occurred in the schools either through curriculum or extra-curricular activities.[5][6] The survey found that at the high school level human rights education was most frequently found to be a component in Social Science and Humanities courses.[7] While 90% of teachers agree that there is value to human rights education[8], only 36%

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[1] Karen Hopkins, "Amnesty International's Methods of Engaging Youth in Human Rights Education: Curriculum in the United States and Experiential Learning in Burkina Faso" (2011) 3:1 *Journal of Human Rights Practice* at 72 [Hopkins].
[2] *Ibid* at 73.
[3] Rosarie Tucci, "The Human Rights Movement - Building Bridges through a Common Value System: Special Attention on Human Rights Education as a Strengthening Tool" (2005) 47:3/4 *Managerial Law* at 219 [Tucci].
[4] A "social justice citizen" is "an individual who knows how to critically asses multiple perspective and who examines social, political and economic structures and explores strategies for change that address root causes of these problems [and] injustice" See Joel Westheimer, "What kind of citizen? Democratic Dialogues in Education" (2008) 48:3 *Education Canada* at 9 [Westheimer].
[5] Bernie Froese-Germain, Rick Riel & Pauline Theoret, *Human Rights Education in Canada: Results From a CTF Teacher Survey* (Ottawa: *Canadian Teachers' Federation,* 2013) at 7 [CFT].
[6] *Ibid.* The survey included 2,600 teachers in 8 of the 10 provinces and all three Canadian territories.
[7] *Ibid* at 8.

stated that they had been part of a school-based human rights education project. They claimed that lack of resources for curriculum education, the complexity of human rights, having to integrated into an already pack course and the challenge of teaching controversial issues make it hard to "seamlessly [integrate] human rights education into the curriculum".[9] While teachers felt that talking about human rights was sometimes successful in raising the students awareness about human rights and "sometimes [resulted] into changed attitudes and values as well as student engagement"[10], the survey did not actually address whether a student's engagement with human rights extended outside the classroom.

The purpose of this paper is to propose implementing mandatory human rights education in the form of an independent subject –focused course in Quebec high schools. I am not advocating that we create another "alternative school" which "[stands] outside the state structure, a world apart in terms of thinking, culture and practice"[11] but a program that would fit within the existing public school system.

To justify a turn to a mandatory human rights centered course, this paper will be divided into three sections. The first will explore why we need mandatory human rights education by first turning to the international commitment to a culture of human rights and its emphasis on human rights education.[12] I will then focus on the Canadian context and the place of human rights in Canada. By showing how changes in both the international and national landscape have changed our commitment to human rights, we can see why having a mandatory human rights education is something that is not only necessary but also vital in shaping the future.

The issue of *how* human rights education should be taught will be addressed in the second section of the essay. To determine which approach might be the most effective in shaping an engaged society, I will explore different pedagogical practices and human rights education models and compare their impact on student learning. Through an analysis of these different options, we

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[8] *Ibid* at 10.

[9] *Ibid* at 17-19, 18.

[10] *Ibid* at 21.

[11] Scherto Gill & Garret Thomson, *Rethinking Secondary Education: A Human-Centered Approach* (London: Pearson, 2012) at vii [Gill & Thomson].

[12] The paper presents a historical and pedagogical perspective on the issue. In the historical section, the sources that have been chosen reflect the vision that has emerged from the dominant discourse that came from the UN rather than engage with all the tensions and debates that surround this history.

will see why adopting a participatory approach to human rights education program based on a transformative model of human rights education within a subject-centered class is the most likely to form social justice citizens.

Finally, the paper will examine the public education system in Quebec and outline my proposal. The purpose is to show how my approach might address some of the problems and gaps identified in the existing system. While there are issues of feasibility and implementation that might hinder my subject-centered participatory approach, I think we are at a time when we need to talk about human rights education. If we, as a society, are truly committed to universal human rights then we need to shape our public school system in order to teach students to be engaged, critical and passionate citizens.

A. Why high school?

Before addressing the key components of the paper, it is important to take a moment to explain why I have chosen high school rather than elementary school or university education. Adolescence is the most complex moment a person's development.[13] While children start understanding that there are human differences and similarities from a young age[14] and early childhood is about socialization and about living harmoniously in a community[15], it is during this period that "young people can change the mental pictures which they have of the world beyond the school gates, and can thus derive a sense of their own responsibilities and resourcefulness".[16] While there might be "limits to what they can objectively do to affect that world directly"[17], as young students like Malala Yousafzai have shown us, adolescents have unlimited potential to impact their environment. Additionally, high school is the last level of schooling that is

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[13] *Ibid* at 100.

[14] Dora W. Chen, John Nimmo & Heather Fraser, "Becoming a Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Educator: A Tool to Support Reflection by Teachers Embarking on the Anti-Bias Journey" (2009) 11:2 *Multicultural Perspectives* at 103 [Chen et al.].

[15] Hugh Starkey, "The Council of Europe Recommendations on the Teaching and Learning of Human Rights in Schools" in Hugh Starkey, ed., *The Challenge of Human Rights Education* (London: Cassell Educational Limited, 1991) at 23 [Starkey].

[16] Robin Richardson, "Introduction: A Visitor Yet a Part of Everybody - the Tasks and Goals of Human Rights Education" in Hugh Starkey, ed., *The Challenge of Human Rights Education* (London: Cassell Education Limited, 1991) at 8 [Richardson].

[17] *Ibid.*

compulsory till a certain age in Canada. These two reasons are is why I have chosen to focus on human rights education at the high school level.

Part II. A Case for Mandatory Human Rights Education

In order to establish why we need mandatory human rights education in Quebec high schools, we must first establish why human rights are important. To do this, I will first examine international commitments to human rights and the emphasis placed on human rights education as a tool for change. I will then study why understanding human rights is important in the changing Canadian social and political landscape. By tracing how the human rights movement has fostered a sense of a universal culture, the importance of HRE in promoting this vision, Canada's history and commitment to multiculturalism and how the current public education system has left gaps that could filled by turning to human rights education, we can see why establishing a mandatory human rights education program is a necessary step in the development of public education reform in the different Canadian provinces.

A. Human rights at the international level

Though some would argue that tracing the origins of human rights could go all the way back to studying Hammurabi's Code, our discussion of the international commitment to human rights will start focus on the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* ("UDHR") because it "carved into stone [a] commitment to human rights and [set out] universal norms and standards".[18] While the positive legacy of this document can be debated[19], for the purpose the paper it is important because it (1) represents a commitment to creating a "universal culture of human rights" that has been shaped changes in the social and political landscape and (2) involves a strong commitment to human rights education.

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[18] Tucci, *supra* note 3 at 128.

[19] Micheline Ishay, *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient times to the Globalization Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, Ltd., 2004) at 8 [Ishay].

i.   *A universal culture of human rights*

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was drafted shortly after the formation of the United Nations ("UN") in the wake of the World War II. While its liberal and western ideals "did not correspond with the [the conditions and visions] prevailing in various parts of the world" [20], the UDHR recognized the "inherent dignity of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world"[21] and sought to protect individual freedoms from state abuse. While not a legally binding document, the vision of the UDHR "initiated the international process for the gradual realization of human rights"[22] and the creation of a global movement that built bridges among different nations and groups.[23]

The vision of human rights promoted by the UDHR has changed over time in response to social, political and economic pressures. At its inception, for example, human rights "were quite self-consciously conceived as representing the priority interests of individual human beings needing to be guaranteed by states on behalf of their respective citizens".[24] Mobilization around group-based categories such as race and gender in the 1960s pushed for the recognition of collective rights.[25]

Some concrete examples of how mobilization and changing environments shaped the global understanding of human rights can be seen in the adoption of different UN documents. For example, the demise of colonialism in the 1950s and 1960s and strong civil rights movements resulted in the adoption and ratification of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966) and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) that took into consideration "the right of people to self-determination, including the right to determining their

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[20] *Ibid.*

[21] *Press Kit: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Magna Carta for all humanity*, December 1997 UNDPI 1937.

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] Tucci, *supra* note 3 at 129. For a critical exploration of the development and history of UN ideology see Jean-Philippe Thérien, "Human Security: The Making of a UN Ideology" (2012) 26:2 *Global Society* 191-213 and Asbjørn Eide, "The Human Rights Movement and the Transformation of the International Order" (1986) 11:3 *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*.

[24] Sumner B. Twiss, "History, Human Rights, and Globalization" (2004) 32:1 *Journal of Religious Ethics* at 42 [Twiss].

[25] *Ibid.*

own political status and to pursue their own path to economic, social and cultural development".[26] Strong women's movements through political pressure virtually compelled the UN to adopt a *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,* which came into force in 1981. [27] In more recent times, global migration has resulted in increasing questions about citizen rights and the rights of stateless people.[28]

Through these examples, we can see how shifts caused by an increasingly globalized world have complexified our understanding of what human rights are and whose rights should be protected. The opposite pushback is also true. The adoption of different UN documents have, in some cases, resulted in the imposition of change on different groups and countries policy and behavior. One of the reasons the tension between universalism and cultural relativism emerges is from this imposition.[29]

By studying economic, political, and social shifts around the world (though mostly in the liberal democratic West) we can see how the understanding of a universal human rights community that was first put forward in the UDHR continues to change and shape our understanding of human rights. While this vision plays a "balancing act between universality and cultural relativism"[30], it "invites the international community to examine society and the state of the world as it actually is and imagine it as it could be".[31] The continued commitment and growing of discourse of a global village of universal human rights highlights one of the reasons why ensuring that students received human rights education is important.[32]

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[26] *Ibid* at 43.

[27] *Ibid* at 48.

[28] Ishay, *supra* note 19 at 167. See for example the "1978 UNESCO Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice and the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families [which are just two examples of conventions put forth to] further promote the social and cultural rights of migrant workers and their families"(273).

[29] Tucci, *supra* note 3 at 129; see also Audrey Osler & Hugh Starkey, *Teachers and Human Rights Education* (Trent: Trentham Books, 2010) at 91-96 [Osler & Starkey].

[30] Tucci, *supra* note 3 at 129.

[31] Osler & Starkey, *supra* note 29 at 57.

[32] For a further discussion of the implications of cultural diversity for human rights and the impact of globalization on society and our understanding of human rights see Osler & Sarkey, *supra* note 29 at chapter 7.

ii.   ***The educational component of a commitment to human rights***

The Preamble of the UDHR emphasizes the promotion of human rights education "as a common standard of achievement for all peoples"[33] and key to achieving universal human rights.[34] Promoting human rights education has become increasingly important as "there is growing consensus that education in and for human rights is essential and can contribute [to] the reduction of human rights violations, the building of free, just and peaceful societies [and is] an effective strategy to prevent human rights abuses".[35] This need was reintegrated in the 1990s when reports showed that the project envisioned by the UN has not become a lived reality for many people. The *Decade for Human Rights Education* and the *UN World Programme for Human Rights Education* reflect how human rights education has been integrated in the commitment to universal human rights.

The main objective of the *Decade for Human Rights Education* (1994-2004) was "the building and strengthening of programs and capacities for human rights education at the national and local level".[36] Countries produced Action Plans that were reviewed by the UN outlining how they would go about promoting knowledge about human rights. The UN reports noted that in many cases "there was a large gap between the resources allocated to activities for human rights education by such institutions and their affirmation of support".[37] A lack of financial support and unclear implementation strategies made it difficult to assess to what extent these programs would be successful and sustainable.[38] While most of the countries that submitted overall evolution of

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[33] *Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* GA Res 217A (III), UNGAOR, 3rd Sess, Supp No 13, UN Doc A/810 (1948) 71 at Preamble.

[34] Additionally, the concept of education in and for human rights also appears in a number of international human rights instruments for example *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (art. 26), *the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (art. 13), *the Convention of the Rights of the Child* (art. 28), and, *the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action* (sect. D, paras. 78-82).

[35] *Guidelines for National Plans of Action for Human Rights Education,* OHCHR, UN Doc *A/52/469/Add.1 and A/52/469/Add.1/Corr.1, (1998) at para 12.*

[36] YvetteV Lapayese, "National Initiatives within the UN Decade for Human Rights Education: The Implementation of Human Rights Education Policy Reforms in Schools" (2004) 3:2 *Educ Res Policy Prac* at 167 [Lapayese].

[37] *United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) and public information activities in the field of human rights Report by Secretary General,* UN GA, 52 sess, UN DOC A/52/469/Add.1 (20 October 1997) at 19.

[38] *Ibid.*

the Decade "highlighted steps undertaken within the school system"[39] national human rights education plans were few and far between.

To address the gaps revealed by the *Decade for Human Rights Education,* the UN *World Programme for Human Rights Education* sought to promote human rights education programs by focusing on different sectors of society one at a time.[40] The First Phase (2005-2009) is specifically interesting, for our purposes, because it focused on human rights education in primary and secondary school systems.[41]

During the First Phase, more than 80 countries, Canada included, submitted national plans outlining how they would implement human rights education in their schools. While most countries stated that human rights education would be compulsory, they noted that the subject would appear within the framework of other courses such as civic education, social studies or moral education.[42] The exact way the topic would be integrated in general curriculum was often unclear.[43] The UN's final report showed that "76 Member state [were] taking measures to integrate human rights education in their school system [and] particular progress was being made in making human rights part of national curricula, [but gaps] in implementation remained".[44]

The participation of member states in the *Decade for Human Rights Education* and the *World Programme for Human Rights Education* highlights the international movement to promote human rights education. It reflects the important value placed on human rights education and concrete steps being taken by the international human rights community to promote awareness of human rights. This can be read as an international acknowledgment that in order to create this

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[39] *United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004): Report on achievements and shortcomings of the Decade and on future United Nations activities in this area*, ESC, 60th SessUN Doc E/CN.4/2004/93 (2004) para 29.

[40] The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-ongoing),* online: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Pages/Programme.aspx

[41] The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *First phase (2005-2009) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education,* online: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/WPHRE/FirstPhase/Pages/Firstphaseindex.aspx

[42] *United Nations Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee on Human Rights Education in the School System*, GA, 65th Sess, UN Doc A/65/322 (2010). Report at para 25.

[43] *Ibid* at para 26.

[44] *Ibid* at 2.

culture of human rights education is key.[45] It reveals why we should promote mandatory human rights education since "education can be part of the solution to injustice and violence".[46]

B. The Canadian human rights landscape

Canada has had a long history of involvement in the human rights movement and participated in the drafting of the UDHR. This section will study the implications of the entrenchment of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* ("*Charter*") and the adoption of a policy of multiculturalism rather than assimilation as two key moments that shifted the Canadian understanding of human rights. I will also turn to how these policies have shaped public education, specifically citizenship education, and why this reveals the urgent need for a mandatory human rights education course in order to shape Canadian citizens that are not only aware of diversity and human rights but are also social justice citizens.

i.   *The Charter, multiculturalism and education*

While Canada is viewed internationally as a place where human rights are protected, Canadian society and policy has a long history of intolerant attitudes towards ethnic minorities and this intolerance was reflected in the judiciary and the public education system.[47] While this changed slowly between the 1950s to the 1970s as provinces developed comprehensive human rights codes[48], it was the constitutional entrenchment of a national *Charter* whose goal was to "protect Canadians and enhance national unity"[49] that set the stage our modern understanding

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[45] Tucci, *supra* note 3 at 139.

[46] Osler & Starkey, *supra* note 28 at 129; it is important to take a moment to acknowledge, however, that there are many issues that arise when we talk about incorporating human rights education in a 'non-Western' context because of the way in which the discourse of human rights has been influenced by the ideals of the "West". Indeed, imposing human rights education and pedagogical practices can actually be seen as negating human rights. While I believe that human rights education is important for the promotion of a universal culture of human rights and the development of rights conscious individuals and communities, to ignore this history is to turn a blind eye to the politics involved in the human rights discourse.

[47] *Ibid* at 25.

[48] Terri A. Sussel, *Canada's Legal Revolution: Public Education, the Charter and Human Rights* (Toronto: Edmond Montgomery Publications Limited, 1995) at 27 [Sussel].

[49] *Ibid* at 28.

human rights in Canada. Like the UDHR, it set out to govern the relationship between citizens and the state.[50] Unlike the UDHR, it was binding and enforceable.

The entrenchment of the *Charter* had a significant impact on the public education system.[51] Until this point, provinces had had exclusive jurisdiction to "make laws in relation to Education"[52] pursuant to s.93 of the *Constitutional Act, 1867.* The arrival of the *Charter* challenged this supremacy by ensuring that "laws affecting education and the policies and practices of school officials must abide by the rights and freedoms enunciated in the *Charter".*[53] Over time, not only was the running of the school impacted but so too was the content of classes as the diversity of cultures and beliefs represented in the classroom were now protected.

The entrenchment of the *Charter* helped solidified the policy of multiculturalism that had been announced in the Canadian House of Commons back in 1971.[54] Successive waves of immigration in the 20th century, especially after the *Immigration Act* of 1967 that removed restriction on non-white immigrates to Canada[55], had changed the Canadian landscape.[56] Strong activism on the part of different minority groups forced the government to realize that assimilation policy promoting white-English culture was no longer reflective of Canada's reality. When the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* came into effect in 1998 it officially recognized that Canadian society was fundamentally "pluralistic ethnically, racially and culturally".[57]

Canada's multiculturalism has been a source of tension and debate in public policy that shaped public education. On one hand, the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* strongly encouraged Canadian institutions to "[promote] respect and appreciation for the multicultural reality of Canada".[58] At the same time, immigrant parents started to protest the fact that the "multicultural

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[50] *Ibid* at 31.

[51] *Ibid* at xiii.

[52] *Constitution Act*, 1867, 30 & 31 Vict, c 3 at s.93.

[53] Ailsa M Watkinson*, Education, Student Rights and the Charter* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ldt, 1999) at 10 [Watkinson].

[54] Keith McLeod, "Human Rights and Multiculturalism in Canadian Schools" in Hugh Starkey, ed., *The Challenge of Human Rights Education* (London: Cassell Educational Limited, 1991) at 164 [McLeod].

[55] Carl E. James, "Assimilation to Accommodation: Immigrants and the Changing Patterns of Schooling" (2004) 44:4 *Education Canada* at 43-44 [James].

[56] *Ibid;* McLeod, *supra* note 55 at 166-168.

[57] McLeod, *supra* note 55.

[58] *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, RSC 1985, c 24 (4th Supp).

initiatives were simply a recognition of culture in terms of food, music and costumes"[59] and did not address true issues of diversity and racism. This tension between the rights of dominant the white majority and minority rights resulted in curriculum reform in the different provinces that brought anti-racist education into schools and slowly integrated diversity more critically into education about Canadian citizenship identity.[60]

As Canada adopted a policy of the reciprocal recognition of diversity human rights started appearing in different provincial curriculum.[61] The most common place for human rights to appear was in citizenship education. While citizenship education has historically been one of the main obligations of public schooling[62] different understanding of the nature of "good citizenship" have resulted in different approaches and definitions of a unified national identity.[63]

Keith McLeod argues that "multiculturalism within the context of Canada is an aspect of human rights, and multicultural education can be seen as an aspect of human rights education".[64] He argues that through multicultural education basic and fundamental principles of human rights have been passed on to Canada's youth. An analysis of different courses the Canadian provinces have established to promote diversity and build students understanding of citizenship, however, reveals that, while the ideals and goals outlined might be to promote the recognition of diversity and teach students to engage critically with society, the results do not always conform to these goals.[65] This is why we need implement a new program, which confronts these challenges?

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[59] James, *supra* note 56 at 44.

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] The dominant discourse on the politics of recognition in Canada comes from the work of Charles Taylor. He argued that misrecognition represented a source of injustice and that we ought to have reciprocal recognition among equals in order to be able to overcome injustice. Recognition, Taylor argued, takes place through dialogue and is "a vital human need." For more information, see Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1992).

[62] Alan M. Sears & Andrew S. Hughes, "Citizenship Education and Current Educational Reform" (1996) 21:2 *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadienne de l'éducation* at 123 [Sears & Hughes].

[63] *Ibid* at 126. See Sears & Hughes for a discussion of the character of citizenship education in English Canada and a discussion of the conception of the activist citizen that emerges. This understanding somewhat problematized by Westheimer, *supra* note 4. Westheimer argues that while some of the citizenship discourse may emphasize "good character" through volunteering and engagement, this does not necessarily result in "social-justice oriented" citizens who are critically engaged with the social, political and economic structures around them.

[64] McLeod, *supra* note 55 at 164.

[65] Westheimer, *supra* note 4 at 6; James, *supra* note 56; Sears & Hughes, *supra* note 63 ; Nicole Fournier-Sylvester, "A/Political Education: A Survey of Quebec Students' Perceptions of Their Citizenship Education" (2014) 37:3 *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation* 1-23 [Fournier-Sylvester]; Patricia Bromley,

ii.   Where are we left?

By studying the growth of the human rights discourse since World War II, we can see that, at least on paper, there is an international commitment to the creation of a universal culture of human rights. While this vision is problematic because it promotes a particular set of values and principles that are not reflective all community's understanding of human rights and society, the utopian ideal continues to dominate conversation, especially in the global west. The understanding that human rights education is a key component to ensuring the creation of this global community and conduct that protects is ideals is reflected not only in UN projects but also in the fact that countries have, in theory, pledged to promote human rights education.

Canada has shown its commitment to this universal culture of human rights through its policy of multiculturalism and the entrenchment of its own *Charter* in order to promote human rights, recognize diversity, and enforce the protection of individuals and groups from discrimination and injustice. The fact that this united national vision that has not been translated into the public education system in a way that has greatly altered students' conduct shows that the work being done at the school level is still inadequate.

Combined together, the study of the international and Canadian landscape and commitment to human rights and human rights education helps us justify *why* mandatory human rights education in Canadian schools is something that is important in shaping both Canadian society and our relationships with others.

Part III. How should Human Rights be Taught in the High School Classroom?

Having answered *why* we should have human rights education, we now turn *how* human rights education should be taught in order to foster and build a Canadian society that engages critically with diversity and human rights. To determine which approach might be best, it is

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"Multiculturalism and human rights in civic education: the case of British Columbia, Canada" (2011) 53:2 *Educational Research* 151-164 [Bromley].

important to consider issues of adolescent development and pedagogy, and different human rights education models. Through these different discussions, we can see that adopting a participatory approach within a subject-based core course would be the best way to prepare youth to be active and critically engaged citizens.

A. Student learning and pedagogy[66]

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the reasons this paper focuses on high school is because adolescence is the most complex moment a person's development. It is a time of physical, cognitive, psychological and emotional change. It is also a time when children are faced with new learning experiences and teaching styles.

The shift from primary school to high school is often difficult on students because the school environment and the teaching methods change.[67] In many cases, students are "regrouped for different subjects" and go from one subject-centered class to the other with perhaps less to no connection between the materials covered.[68] Whether we be studying high schools in Queensland, Australia or Montreal, Quebec, we see that high schools favor "subject-based curriculum rather than a thematic, inter-disciplinary approach adopted in primary school".[69]

Subject-centered education if often referred to as 'teacher-centered' education.[70] At the basic level, it is a pedagogy where "professors introduce the specific things that are worthy of being studied, and students are told how to interpret them".[71] The goal of this approach to instruction is to cover the discipline and students learn through the delivery of information either in

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[66] The models I am engaging with come from the Anglo-tradition that are reflected in Canada, the US, the UK and Australia. While these methods and discourses are present in other countries and are influenced by other pedagogical traditions, it is important to take a moment to acknowledge the fact that understandings of student development and models of pedagogy differ around the world. Pedagogy is shaped by "national culture, history and by the migration of ideas and practices across borders [and] practical exigencies and constraints such as policy and resources" See Robin Alexander, "Towards a Comparative Pedagogy" in Cowen and A.M. Kazamias R, ed., *International Handbook of Comparative Education* (New York: Springer, 2009) 923-942 [Alexander] for a discussion comparative pedagogy.

[67] Krishnaveni Ganeson & Lisa C. Ehrich, "Transition into High School: A phenomenological study" (2009) 41:1 *Educational Philosophy and Theory* at 61 [Ganeson & Ehrich].

[68] *Ibid* at 63.

[69] *Ibid.*

[70] Alexander, *supra* note 67 at 3; See also Gill & Thomson, *supra* note 11 at 182-190 for a discussion of the traditional ideal and some of its strengths and weaknesses.

[71] Dave S. Knowlton, "A Theoretical Framework for the Online Classroom: A Defense and Delineation of a Student-Centered Pedagogy" (2002) 2000:84 *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* at 6.

class lectures or readings.[72] While this approach is the most common in educational institutions at all level in North America, it has been challenged on the grounds that it is essentialist, focused on "abstract content [and solely emphasized] mental achievement".[73] It is often compared with student or learner centered education.[74]

Student-centered approaches to education are founded in constructivist learning theory, which "assumes that meaning exists within us rather than in external forms and as such, learners construct their own knowledge based on interaction with their environment".[75] Here, the teaching goals are that students "learn how to use the discipline and integrate it [in order to solve] complex problems".[76] In a classroom, students are found to be actively participating in the material delivery through collaboration, community learning, and some assignments for formative purposes.[77]

Like teacher-centered education, student-centered learning has both its advocates and critics. The key element that is criticized is that this approach is "lacking pedagogical efficacy" and clear definition.[78] Does student-centered education mean students control everything? If so, how will anything actually be learned? In outlining the different contours of student-centered education, Jacob Neumann addresses this issue by pointing out that student-centered education does not necessarily have to mean "hands-off" teaching. There can be student-centered contexts that "center *with students* [emphasizing] a partnership between teachers and students".[79] This train of thought, developed through the work of Dewey, Freire, Carl Rogers, among others, allows for the creation of an education setting where teachers give up a certain level of control and student control certain elements of the learning.[80] As a result, students are invited to creatively participate

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[72] Mary E. Huba & Jann E. Freed, *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the Focus from Teaching to Learning,* (Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, 2000) at 5 [Huba & Freed].

[73] Alexander, *supra* note 67 at 3.

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] Vincenza Nazzari, Paul McAdams & Daniel Roy, "Using transformative learning as a model for human rights education: a case study of the Canadian Human Rights Foundation's International Human Rights Training Program" (2005) 16:2 *Intercultural Education* at 174 [Nazzari].

[76] Huba and Freed, *supra* note 73.

[77] *Ibid.*

[78] Jacob W. Neumann, "Developing a New Framework for Conceptualizing "Student-Centered Learning"" (2013) 77:2 *The Educational Forum* at 162 [Neumann].

[79] *Ibid* at 167.

[80] *Ibid* at 167-169.

in their learning rather than passively absorbing it but the class is structured around an outline/plan.

Different authors have problematized the dichotomization of teacher-centered and subject-centered education because of the fact that teachers are involved in shaping student-centered education and students have been taking a more active role in teacher-centered education as the focused has shifted to developing not just knowledge but also competencies and skills.[81] Subject-centered classes, however, remains the most common approach to teaching students because it provides students with a focused setting to study a particular discipline. This structured setting is important in helping students actually develop the competencies of the subject being taught. It allows them to be focused, rather than scattered, in their learning.

The problem with human rights education in subject-centered courses is that learning about human rights is not an independent subject. The different Canadian provinces have integrated human rights within the citizenship, civics and history courses that are part of their provincial curriculum. [82] Implementing human rights in specific areas of national curriculum is also the approach that has been adopted by Austria, Burkina Faso, Poland, the Netherlands, the UK[83], the USA and Australia.[84] Countries like Cambodia, Ecuador, Peru, Philippines, on the other hand, have proposed to incorporate human rights as a cross-curricular theme in secondary schools but not directly implemented it into any particular course.[85] Hungary and Switzerland have made a commitment to human rights part of their curriculum guidelines.[86]

While many experts agree that "HRE can take many forms, but [that] it works best when incorporated into the existing curriculum, rather than added as a distinct subject"[87] what we see with these different approaches is that human rights are taught, here and there, by different teachers, in different courses even if the country feels that HR should be integrated in the

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[81] *Ibid* at 170; Alexander, *supra* note 67.

[82] Alexander, *supra* note 66.

[83] Liam Gearon, *The Human Rights Handbook: A Global Perspective for Education* (Sterling: Trentham Books, 2003) at 158 [Gearon].

[84] *Ibid* at 160-168; Lapayese, *supra* note 36 at 180;

[85] Lapayase, *supra* note 36 at 180.

[86] *Ibid*.

[87] Hopkins, *supra* note 1 at 88-89.

curriculum.[88] While national curriculum program might allow and encourage teachers to address human rights in their different courses, the focus and the importance of these rights is not necessarily addressed in a cohesive manner. This is problematic because student are not really given the opportunity to engage critically with the idea of human rights nor are they given the "opportunity to develop and practice skills that are necessary for their own and other peoples' rights".[89]

Additionally, without a specialized core course, there is nothing "to guarantee a minimum level of understanding"[90] among all students. If we are committed to human rights education as a way to raise awareness, change attitudes and inspire action, we need to give students the tools with which to learn. A program that fails to ensure a minimum level of understanding fails to meet its objective.[91]

The significance of subject-focused classes on student development and the fact that an absence of a core course makes it impossible to ensure that students at least have a basic understanding of human rights helps justify why implementing a mandatory human rights education course at the high school level is a necessary and pressing project. While a human rights course could not successful if it was the only place in the school setting where student engaged with human rights, indeed human rights education is based on a whole-school (and societal) project[92], there seems to have been a greater willingness to adopt human rights values and multicultural policies in school[93] than to implement them in the classroom. A critique of both student-centered pedagogy and teacher-centered teaching shows us that finding a collaborative middle ground is necessary and possible.

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[88] Jeremy Cunningham, "The Human Rights Secondary School" in Hugh Starkey, ed., *The Challenge of Human Rights Education* (London: Cassell Educational Limited, 1991) at 102 [Cunningham].
[89] *Ibid.*
[90] *Ibid.*
[91] *Ibid.*
[92] Starkey, *supra* note 15 at 21-22.
[93] OHCHR, *supra* note 41.

B. Models of Human Rights education

The questions remains – what type of human rights education do we want? In this section, I will compare (1) the values and awareness model of human rights education and a (2) transformative model of human rights education.[94] While these models are often differentiated in terms of target audience, they are both used in teaching youth and communities.[95] By studying these different approaches to human rights education, we can see that if we want to have a program of human rights education that leads to awareness, engagement and social action, then a combination of these different approaches is required.

i.   The values and awareness model

The "Values and Awareness Model", sometimes called the curriculum-based approach, is a model whose "goal is to pave the way for a world that respects human rights through an awareness of and commitment to the normative goals laid out in the Universal Declaration and other key documents".[96] It is the most common model of human rights education and is the one most often found in the formal education settings.[97] A "key pedagogical strategy [is] to attract the interest of the participant [in order to make them] 'critical consumers' of human rights".[98] The reason it is the most common form of human rights education in formal school settings is that it fits the understanding of education as a place of knowledge transmission and content focus.

This approach is problematic, however, because it either runs the risk of providing a superficial understanding of human rights or "being experienced as primarily ideological".[99] While we will see these problems expressed explicitly in our analysis of Quebec's curriculum, they are present in most programs that adopt the curriculum-based approach. For example, in her survey of students in the US, Patricia Dye discovered that "students tend to personalize the concept of

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[94] By no means are these the only models nor are they exclusive of each other. See Hopkins, *supra* note 1 at 72*;* Felisa Tibbits, "Understanding What We Do: Emerging Models for Human Rights Education" (2002) 48:3-4 *International Review of Education* at 165 [Tibbits].

[95] Hopkins, *supra* note 1 at 72.

[96] Tibbits, *supra* note 95 at 163.

[97] *Ibid* at 164.

[98] *Ibid.*

[99] *Ibid* at 164.

human rights [but] have great difficulty in grappling with the concept of universal rights for all people".[100] They understood human rights only at one level. In their study of mandatory compulsory *Citizenship and Human Rights Education* courses and *Democracy and Human Rights* courses in Turkey, Kenan Çayır and Melike Türkan Bağlı found that, while these courses may represent an step in developing respect for human rights in Turkey, it does so by imposing the western-ideology on students and does not actually empower students or facilitate their relationship with human rights.[101] These examples highlight how it is not clear whether the knowledge and awareness program actually builds "critical human rights consciousness".[102]

That being said, while the values and awareness model of human rights education might be problematic, it remains the most common model and is reflected in most countries and community-based human rights education programs.[103] It has, in many cases, been "successful in raising awareness about the UDHR and the status of human rights locally and internationally".[104]

ii.   *The transformative model*

The transformative model of human rights education is aimed at empowering individuals to recognize human rights violations and work towards their prevention.[105] It was pioneered by Jack Mezirow who saw the approach as the process of creating "effective change in a *frame of reference*"[106] through critical engagement with our assumptions and beliefs.[107] The focus of this model is the individual or a whole community and involves "strategies of empowerment leading towards activism for change [and] leadership".[108]

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[100] Patricia Dye, "Active Learning for Human Rights in Intermediate and High School" in Hugh Starkey, ed, *The Challenge of Human Rights Education* (London: Cassell Educational Limited, 1991) at 105 [Dye].

[101] Çayır & Bağlı, *supra* note 47.

[102] Tibbits, *supra* note 95 at 164.

[103] Gearon, *supra* note 84.

[104] Hopkins, *supra* note 1 at 84.

[105] Tibbits, *supra* note 95.

[106] Jack Mezirow, "Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice" (1997) 1997:74 *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education 5-12*. Mezirow understands "a frame of reference as [encompassing] cognitive, conative and emotional components" (5) -.

[107] *Ibid* 7.

[108] Tibbits, *supra* note 95 at 166.

The "transformative model is characterized by experiential learning".[109] It emphasizes creating links between individuals and their surroundings and provides a framework for the development of knowledge and skills that can be put into practical strategies.[110] It aims to foster leadership and build these skills by valuing personal experience and through project-based activities.[111] An inherent characteristic of this approach is "leadership development for active and engaged citizens".[112]

While the transformative approach to human rights education can sometimes be found in classes where in depth case studies of human rights are explored[113], this approach is mostly used in the non-formal setting and leadership training. For examples, Equitas adopted a transformative approach to their *International Human Rights Training Program*. Understanding human rights education as "a process of transformation that begins with the individual and branches out to encompass the society at large"[114] the organization created a curriculum where "participants are engaged in all aspects of the learning process and are challenged to consider whether their values and attitudes truly reflect the underlying principles of human rights".[115] While the program involves learning about human rights principles and instruments, the focus is on critical reflection, engagement and the creation of an action plan that will promote human rights education.[116] This program has resulted "HRTP alumni actively promoting social change through human rights education in their countries".[117]

The turn to a transformative approach is not without its disadvantages. As can be seen during the *IHRTP* and in an analysis of the use of the transformative model and experiential learning at the Francophone African Youth Forum in Burkina Faso, [the participants] were not give key leadership roles during the Forum.[118] While participants are the focus, the hierarchy between educator and student remained. Additionally, because the transformative model is so participant

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[109] Hopkins, *supra* note 1 at 74.
[110] Nazzari, *supra* note 76 at 174.
[111] Hopkins, *supra* note 1 at 82.
[112] *Ibid* at 76.
[113] Tibbits, *supra* note 95 at 166.
[114] Nazzari, *supra* note 76 at 172.
[115] *Ibid.*
[116] *Ibid.*
[117] *Ibid* at 182.
[118] Hopkins, *supra* note 1 at 86.

focused and participatory, having a clear course plan and time-table is difficult which sometimes results in a lack of opportunity for youth to actually transfer and use the skills they are learning.[119] To address this issue, there is a tendency to rely of small group discussions for brainstorming and then a larger group discussion for the reporting of findings.[120]

Finally, "all empowerment models are dependent upon sustained community supports of some kind".[121] Being unable to create a sense of safety, openness and trust makes it difficult for participants to feel comfortable engaging deeply with human rights in this setting. So, while Equitas holds its program in Canada because it gives participants a sense of safety and security that they might not have when addressing these issues in their own countries[122], creating this sense of security in a high school might be difficult as students are faced with issues of bullying, school hierarchy, and many students do not see the classroom as a safe space. For a transformative model to work, human rights education must be a whole school project. [123]

C. A participatory awareness and transformative model

By comparing two human rights models and some of their challenges, we can see how they are both strong approaches to developing human rights education. If we conceive the goal of human rights education as not only to transmit knowledge of human rights but also to foster critical thinking, integrate human rights values in society, build a sense of personal responsibility to protect human rights and create active and engaged citizens, then we need to create classrooms where students will not only learn but develop their leadership skills. In other words, we need a human rights course that will contain the transmission of knowledge element of the awareness model and the practical leadership qualities of a transformative model.

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[119] *Ibid* at p 87.
[120] *Ibid;* Equitas, *International Human Rights Training Program: Participants Manual,* (Montreal, 2014) [IHRTP].
[121] Tibbits, *supra* note 95 at 164
[122] Nazzari, *supra* note 76 at 174.
[123] Starkey, *supra* note 15 at 21-22.

Part IV. A Vision for a New Human Rights Education Program in Quebec

Having outlined why we need human rights education and how we should go about teaching human rights education at the high school level, this final section will outline my vision for mandatory human rights education in Quebec. To do this, I will first briefly highlight how the Quebec education system reflects the problems with human rights education discussed in Part 2. I will then outline my proposal which is deeply influenced by the curriculum and pedagogy I encountered at Equitas. Through this case study, I hope to justify why implementing mandatory human rights education in the form of a participatory focused independent subject –centered course would be the best way to address the problems identified in different human rights education models and help foster a society of critically engaged social justice citizens.

A. What are we currently teaching in Quebec?

In Quebec, the two programs that have the greatest role in fostering multiculturalism and teaching about human rights are the mandatory *History and Citizenship* course and *Ethics and Religious Culture Program.* These are courses that are taught at different moments in the elementary and high school cycle with different goals and are independent courses without the course schedule. Both courses are based on a teacher-centered approach.

First, let us consider Quebec's Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports' ["MELS"] *History and Citizenship* course. MELS outlines its program's goals as being " to help students to develop their understanding of the present in the light of the past [and] to prepare students to participate as informed citizens in the discussion, choices and community life of a society that is democratic, pluralistic and open to a complex world".[124] It seems, in theory, to promote an understanding of diversity through history and create aware citizens.

Surveys of the course with recent graduates, however, show that it is plagued with the issues faced by teacher-centered courses and awareness model of human rights. It is "largely

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[124] Ministère de l'Education, du Loisir et du Sport, *History and Citizenship Education,* online: MELS
http://www1.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/programmeFormation/secondaire1/pdf/chapter72.pdf

content driven, [adopts] predominantly passive teaching practices, and [conceives] of citizenship from a liberal democratic perspective that fails to address inequalities or inspire commitments to political participation or social justice".[125] The course is further problematic because it "[lacks] a working definition of citizenship".[126] This is especially challenging considering the "intercultural vision of citizenship is said to define Quebec's [and Canada's] approach to social cohesion".[127]

MELS's mandatory *Ethics and Religious Culture* ('ERC') program aims at fostering recognition, tolerance and respect.[128] The programs objectives - 'the recognition of others' and 'the pursuit of the common good'[129]- are based on the liberal teaching that "all people possess equal value and dignity" and that this diversity ought to be acknowledged and celebrated.[130] These values are outlined in the UDHR, the Canadian *Charter* and the *Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.*

While the ERC program sparked debate and controversy[131] with some groups claiming that it "replaces the quest for knowledge with the promotion of multiculturalism"[132] and that it is an attempt "to bind children's loyalty to Quebec's state religion of left-wing, heritage-averse ideology"[133], what is key for our purposes is that this program is a course that seems to promote an understanding of religious freedom as understood in the human rights discourse. It is an "attempt to go beyond the satisfaction of purely personal interests [and] promote projects that favor community life and respect for community ideas, and democratic ideals". What remains problematic is that it focuses solely of religion and culture. In doing so, it does not teach about

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[125] Fournier-Sylvester, *supra* note 56 at 17.
[126] *Ibid* at 6.
[127] *Ibid* at 17.
[128] Ministère de l'Education, du Loisir et du Sport, *Objectives of the Ethics and Religious Culture Program*, online: MELS http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/en/programme-ethique-et-culture-religieuse/program-elementary-level/introduction-to-the-ethics-and-religious-culture-program/objectives-of-the-ethics-and-religious-culture-program/.
[129] *Ibid.*
[130] Ronald Morris, "Quebec's Ethics and Religious Culture Program: Controversy, Content and Orientation" (Spring 2011), *Canadian Issues,* at 56 [Morris].
[131] The case of *Loyola High School, et al. v. Attorney General of Quebec* was heard at the Supreme Court of Canada in March 2014. It involved a Catholic private school that sought the right to teach an equivalent course to the ERC program from a religious perspective. The Crown argued that this would undermine the program's objective of neutrality and the purpose of the program. A decision should be rendered by the end of the year.
[132] Morris, at 56.
[133] B Kay, "Quebec's Creepy New Curriculum" The National Post (Dec 17 2007), online: National Post < http://www.nationalpost.com/opinion/columnists/story.html?id=5828a9b0-d652-48ad-8178-e5a587a96d28>.

human rights but the importance of one particular right. Additionally, to date there is no evidence to date that this program actually results in producing young Canadians that recognize, are open to and respect religious diversity.

What is reflected through a study of the Quebec *History and Citizenship Program* and the ERC program is that, while these programs may reflect Canada's commitment to multiculturalism and some of the values outlined in the different human rights charters, there is no evidence which shows that these programs are actually resulting in citizens that are more aware of human rights issues and engage with them critically. While 52% of Canadian teachers might report that human rights education occurs in their schools through curriculum and extra-curricular activities[134], we have not seen the fruits of this labor. A new approach is, therefore, required.

B. My proposal

I recommend that we adopt a mandatory subject-centered human rights course that is taught using a participatory method and pedagogy, which combines the awareness and transformative models of human rights education. I imagine this course being taught in grade 11 at the end of high school so it can build off the knowledge that students would have developed through the integration of human rights in their other courses throughout their studies. In no way is this proposal supposed to extract human rights from other courses.

The course would involve two central parts. The first would be classroom focused and would combine both teacher-centered and student-centered pedagogy in order to transmit knowledge about human rights and create a space in which students could engage critically with the topic and take on leadership roles in the discussion. The second component would be a student-project that would take the student out of the classroom and allow them to take on leadership roles in the community and engage with their responsibility as a citizen in the promotion, education and protection of human rights. My recommendation is based on different

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[134] CFT, *supra* note 5 at 7.

elements of Equitas' *IHRTP* program – specifically their approach to participatory education[135], the learning spiral[136] and the Individual Plan[137].

i.   The classroom: ensuring the transmission of knowledge

I would recommend that, unlike the *IHRTP* which starts by a focus on the participant and their experience of human rights, mandatory human rights education in Quebec start by using a more teacher-centered pedagogy and focus on the theoretical elements. The professor would go over the history of the human rights movement and some of its key documents and instruments. It would be important for the teacher to point out who writes the history and how/why a particular discourse might dominate. The teacher would also highlight some the tensions between universalism and cultural relativism and the danger of "othering" human rights violations which often makes us forget the social dynamics, even here at home, that lead to human rights violations.

As we saw earlier, having a more traditional classroom setting is important in order to ensure a basic level of understanding among all students.[138] While some might argue that this runs the risk indoctrinating students because it will promote a particular understanding of human rights and place a value on respecting this vision[139], the goal of the course is for students to become engaged with human rights. Without having a basic knowledge of the subject this is impossible. Indeed, it has been argued that "the result of not engaging in critical human rights courses, is that ill-educated young people are more prey to indoctrination or extremist ideologies once they have left school, never having had the opportunity to develop their own critical faculties".[140]

To avoid completely falling into the trap of most teacher-centered courses and not engaging students, the teacher could start the course with a class poll or journal entry exercise.

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135 IHRTP, *supra* note 121 at Stream 1.
136 *Ibid* at 1:28 -1:32.
137 Equitas, *International Human Rights Training Program: Individual Plan for Putting my Learning into Action,* (Montreal, 2014) [IHRTP IP]; Nazzari, *supra* note 76 at 176-177.
138 Cunningham, *supra* note 89.
139 *Ibid.*
140 *Ibid.*

Like the pre-training exercises filled out by the participants at the IHRT[141], this would allow the teacher to gather quantitative data about levels of knowledge/awareness and provide for a space for more personal and individual exploration of the students' knowledge of/relationship to human rights. Teachers could then adapt their course appropriately.

ii.   *The participatory and critical exploration of human rights*

After the teacher has gone over what human rights are and some of the key historical moments and tensions, I propose that the class adopt a more student-centered and participatory approach. Adapting the learning spiral used in Equitas' curriculum[142], this part of the course would start with the individual's experience and move outward to engage with human rights at the community, national and international level.[143]

Students would start by being invited to think critically about their own experience of human rights. Through discussion and personal reflection to draw out the elements and circumstances that promote or hinder their enjoyment of their rights. As Patricia Dye has observed, this is the easiest part of human rights for students to understand.[144] The class would then come back together to create a concept map that would highlight the similarities and differences in their experiences.

Once these personal experiences of human rights have been explored, the course would spiral out to invite students to consider how their individual experience may be different from their neighbor's or another child their age.[145] To avoid "othering" human rights violations, these examples should focus cases found close to home like talking about a homeless teen in Montreal or the plight of Canadian aboriginal communities rather than a child-bride in Kenya. The

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[141] IHRTP 2:26-2:30.
[142] Nazzari, *supra* note 76 at 176.
[143] Nazzari, *supra* note 76 at 172.
[144] Dye, *supra* note 101.
[145] IHRTP, at *stream 4.*

responsibility would fall on the teacher to ensure that these exercises do not become stereotypical and reproduce privilege and bias. In some cases, teacher training would be required.[146]

After having engaged with human rights violations at the individual level, the course would further spiral outwards to discuss human rights violations that involve whole communities. To see how some groups as a whole have been historically discriminated against based on particular characteristics. Since not all classes can go out on fieldtrips and visit First Nation reserves, one way to ensure that this part of the course is student-focused for the teacher to assign students different groups and have them engage in independent research and presentations. This would force students to engage with material and facts and control how the information was passed on.

The next step would be to invite the students to engage critically with Canada's national commitment to human rights and evaluate whether this commitment has been translated into action that protects universal human rights. While the teacher/expert model would play a role in transmitting the information like in the first part of the class, students could be engaged through class debate and simulations. Having to take on different roles would force students to think critically about the factors that drive decision-making. It would also require that they make arguments that they might instinctively not agree with but had not necessarily considered. Another way students could take on a leadership role is by asking them to draft policy on particular topics that would address a current issue.

Finally, like in *Stream 5* at the *HRTP,* the course would also spiral out to address international instruments and mechanism.[147] This is also the place where a comparative study of human rights issues in different countries would occur. Students would explore human rights situations in different countries and engage in work that allowed them to examine either a particular instrument or the way international instruments been used/or could be used as protective mechanisms in different countries.

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[146] See Osler & Starkey, *supra* note 29 and Francine Best, "Human Rights Education and Teacher Training" in Hugh Starkey, ed., *The Challenge of Human Rights Education* (London: Cassell Educational Limited, 1991) 120-132 [Best] for a discussion of the importance of teacher training in HRE courses.
[147] *Ibid* at Stream 5.

iii.   The project

The second component of my mandatory human rights education course is student-initiated project that would take students outside the classroom. Based on the individual plans completed by *IHRT* participants at the end of the training[148], this project would involve students taking on a leadership role to engage in human rights education using the participatory approach in their communities. Whether they participate in a school based project, an already existing organizing or set up a new program, students would be expected to implement their program based on what they had learned in the fall term.[149] Like the *IHRTP* participants, they would be evaluated on how the project considers the different tensions and pitfalls that had been addressed during the term.[150]

Some might argue that this type of project runs the danger of recreating a saviour-savage-victim triangle where the student goes out and saves an individual or group from oppression. In some ways it might. However, the goal of the program is to foster critical thinking and develop engaged citizens. A part of this process is to build a sense of personal responsibility to educate about human rights and denounce human rights violation. If we want our youth to take on leadership roles, we need to not only give them the tools to do so but also the opportunity. We need to "[integrate the academic with the vocational".[151] By following a student's project and engaging with them in its conception we can help ensure that values that were taught and the tools that were developed are at play. It also gives a student the space to create social change even if it is only at the small scale.

Part V. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to propose that we implement mandatory human rights education in the form of subject-centered courses in Quebec high schools. By turning to

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[148] IHRTP IP, *supra* note 138.

[149] In their discussion of a human-centered approach to secondary education, Gill& Thomson also discuss the importance of allotting time in curriculum to integrate the academic with the vocational. Their project is a school based rather than course based shift. See Gill & Thomson, s*upra* note 11 at 168-169.

[150] IHRTP IP, *supra* 138; Nazzari, *supra* note 76.

[151] Gill & Thomson, *supra* note 11 at 161.

historical and pedagogical sources, the paper has outlined both *why* we need mandatory human rights education and *how* human rights should be taught. My (perhaps utopian) proposal is that we adopt a participatory approach to human rights education that combines the dominant models of human rights education and pedagogy, in order to create an environment that reflects our commitment to universal human rights and shapes students into engaged and critical social justice citizens. I believe that through this approach we can radically impact society. We have the potential to create individuals who will become leaders in education and protection of human rights at home and abroad.

Addressing problems in the existing framework and proposing an alternative solution cannot fully be done without acknowledging issues of feasibility and implementation that may hinder the success of this project. While some have been mentioned in passing throughout the paper, the most obvious issue is that of teacher training.[152] We need teachers who are prepared to present both human rights content (their history, legal concepts, different approaches, tensions and philosophies) *and* to adopt the participatory approach. Without such a combination of skills we might end up with a classroom that has the same problems as already existing courses. While there might be reluctance to jump into a system based on my proposal because of the need for specialized training, this is not an unsurmountable hurdle. How the implementation issues can be addressed, however, is a question left for another day. The first step is to recognize that we need a new approach to human rights education in Quebec in order to make are commitment to universal human rights a lived reality rather than a theoretical ideal.

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[152] See Best, *supra* note 148; Osler & Starkey, *supra* note 29.

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