Human Rights Training

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1   The Conceptual Frame

Human rights training constitutes a fundamental part of activities aimed at the implementation of human rights standards in real life situations in a variety of fields.

According to Article 2 of the 2011 UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training *"human rights education and training comprises all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus contributing to, inter alia, the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviours, to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights"*.

Human rights training is considered to be part of the broader concept of human rights education and is regularly used for adult learning programmes geared towards a broad range of adults such as state officials, including law enforcement officers, military personnel, judges, teachers, and company officials who – as duty bearers – have a specific role in respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights; persons who – as rights holders – want to know about their rights; and finally, persons who – as human rights defenders – are (interested in) actively engaging in action to help realise human rights.

Human rights training thus involves:

- different types of educational activities which are
- aimed at implementing human rights and building of a universal culture of human rights
- through learning processes at the level of knowledge, skills and attitudes
- that have an empowering effect on duty bearers as well as rights-holders.

It is against this conceptual frame that the present contribution should be understood. It has, essentially, a practical purpose. From my perspective as a human rights trainer, active in particular in the field of police and business, it purports to outline some key issues and steps in professional human rights trainings for adults

2   Some Characteristics of Adult Training Programmes

A good starting point for looking at human rights training is to think of it in terms of training in general.
Training is a method of enhancing human capacity and performance in a variety of fields, be that in the area of sports or business or, as in our case, human rights

What are some basic characteristics of professional adult training programmes?

- Audience specificity: The training should be adequately addressed to the particular audience and should take the needs of participants as point of departure.

- The level of content should be moderate: this takes into account the nature of adult learning; it should ensure that concentration on the most critical learning areas is possible. It is useful to distinguish clearly between what is essential („Need to know") from what is desirable („Nice to know").

- Any professional training should strive to achieve a balance between affective, behavioural and cognitive learning: Training is not only about gaining knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts and facts (cognitive), but it is also about fostering attitudes (affective) and developing and practicing skills (behavioural).

- A variety of learning techniques should be used: A careful selection of varied learning techniques helps to achieve the training goals. It does so by keeping interest alive and by minimising the consequences of low energy levels. Furthermore, as humans learn in different ways (auditory, visual, kinaesthetic learners), a variety is indispensable for meeting the different learning needs of participants.

- Group participation and interaction: Involving learners as much as possible serves major didactical purposes: it takes participants seriously as partner in the learning process and it is clearly more effective in terms of ensuring that concepts learned are actually retained and internalized. Participatory techniques include: presentation and discussion, panel discussion, working group discussion, case studies, problem-solving/brainstorming, simulation and role-playing, field trips, practical exercises, round-table discussions.

- Utilising participants' expertise and peer-learning: This is based on the fact that any person in a training setting has relevant experiences. Participatory training techniques ensure that the wealth of knowledge and experience that are in the training room are utilized in the best way.

- Recycling of earlier learned concepts and skills: in order to support internalisation of relevant concepts and skills, it is important to continually refer back to and incorporate concepts and skills learned earlier. This gives participants the chance of reviewing what they have learned and to apply it to more difficult tasks, *e.g.* more complex case scenarios.

- Real-life problem solving: Participants in trainings regularly want to see the practicality of the topics addressed. Focus of the training on actual practical problems participants face in the real world helps not to "lose" them. It ensures that conceptual and theoretical notions are in fact applied to the concrete situations and are thus considered to be relevant and useful.

3 The Social Dimension of Training

Training takes place in a social context, and this social dimension has to be taken into account when designing and delivering training activities. A regular starting point for understanding this dimension is psychological research on human needs. Human beings have fundamental needs, such as physiological needs, security, love and social relations, self-esteem, self-actualisation, they seek to satisfy.

In the context of a training environment, in particular security and self-esteem must be taken seriously. Small-group learning methods, for instance, provide a more protected atmosphere for participants' contributions. Also, relating to others in participatory settings and operating jointly with them towards an objective corresponds to social needs. Obviously, the different needs of participants (can) clash in a setting of intensive group interaction. Group dynamics help explain the system of behaviours and psychological processes occurring in a group.

The social aspects of training also raise important human rights issues that are relevant in any training, *e.g.* treating people with dignity, non-discrimination, respecting and ensuring the right to freedom of expression and participation. This human rights dimension is explicitly recognised in the UN Declaration on Education and Training when requiring that human rights training encompasses *"education through human rights, which includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and trainers"*. It can be a powerful learning device to explicitly address group rules and behaviour from a human rights perspective.

4 Triangulating Human Rights Training – Knowledge, Attitude, Skills,

As mentioned, effective adult trainings are based on a balance between affective, behavioural and cognitive learning.

Human rights trainings contain specific challenges with regard to this balance, in at least two ways:
On the one hand, as human rights are normative standards, there is a real temptation to focus too strongly on presentations of the law of human rights in the form of lecturing and presentations.
On the other hand, cognitive learning techniques are often preferred because they pose the least risk both to participants and trainers. Depending on the context, this might be a very legitimate consideration because of the sensitivity of human rights. Such use might be the only option in more formal settings, *e.g.* involving state officials of a certain rank; also there might be a (culture related) reluctance to get involved in more participatory techniques.

However, it is fundamental to remember that human rights trainings which stay at the cognitive level will only have limited effects and will not be able to grasp the full dimension of human rights.

- Human rights touch upon fundamental attitude issues of human beings, *e.g.* how one sees the world, oneself and the others;
- Human rights concern basic moral questions and cannot be reduced to legal standards only, despite the fundamental importance of the legal aspects of human rights.
- The relevance of attitudes becomes apparent when one starts looking at root causes of human rights violations;*e.g.* stereotyping, racist attitudes, status thinking, exaggerated ingroup-outgrouporientation.
- The focus on real-life problem solving requires giving attention to the development of analytical skills. Such a focus ensures that human rights concepts are in fact applied to the concrete situations and are thus considered to be relevant and useful.

The triangle of human rights education serves as a useful analytical tool to achieve a proper balance between the different dimensions of learning. Indeed, practical training manuals in the field of human rights more and more use this triangle for structuring training programmes and checking which learning dimension is served by a certain training exercise.

The following is a list of desired competencies or learner outcomes, structured along the three dimensions of the triangle:

Knowledge and understanding. The trainee is aware of or knows about and understands certain issues/topics: the history and philosophy of human rights, international human rights standards and principles, arguments for and against universal human rights, the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, human rights protection mechanisms.

Attitude and values. The trainee shows respect for oneself and respect for others based on the dignity of all human beings; empathy towards others, willingness to self-reflect, valuing of equality, personal and/or professional engagement in building a culture of human rights, commitment to respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights as a duty-bearer, commitment to claiming and defending human rights.

Skills and behaviour. The trainee is able to apply human rights principles (especially the principles of proportionality) to practical work/situations; analyse real life situations through a human rights lens, including identifying violations of human rights; identify root causes and consequences of human rights violations, analyse power relationships and roles of actors, critically evaluate actions by duty bearers, apply the human rights framework to resolve conflicts and locate information as sources on human rights relevant to one's personal and professional needs.

5   Designing a Human Rights Training Programme

The process of designing an effective human rights training programme covers several steps. The characteristics of adult learning programmes and the triangle of human rights education serve as guides in this process.

Step 1: Assess the need for training, the context of the training and the participants

The first step involves determining the reason and the need for holding a training in a given context (mostly in response to a human rights problem or challenge that people or organisations face). It also entails getting familiar as much as possible with the contextual setting as well as with the proposed target audience. For this purpose, reports on the human rights performance, descriptions of the organisational characteristics etc. must be sought out. A pre-course questionnaire to the participants is a good tool for knowing their profile as well as their needs.

Step 2: Setting learning goals and objectives

On the basis of the assessment of the situation and the needs, learning goals and objectives should be identified along the above mentioned three dimensions of the triangle of human rights education. This process of identifying and concretising goals and objectives is a very important part as it helps keep the focus during the design of activities as well as during the delivery of the training.

Step 3: Designing and sequencing of training activities - drawing up a first agenda

Once the learning goals and objectives have been explicitly stated, a proper consideration of the concrete training activities follows. The guiding questions will regularly be: which content and which methods will help meet the objectives identified? These will entail a brainstorming of possible activities and an evaluation of their suitability to achieve the goals, taking into account the profile of participants as well as the skills of the trainer.

The training activities have to be designed in a logical flow so that the different parts of the learning process complement each other.

Step 4: Locations and materials

The physical environment is of importance for the process of learning and must be given adequate thought. This includes the location (outside the regular place of work); the size and shape of and seating facilities in the rooms (allowing employing the training activities envisaged); and the availability of basic services to create a comfortable environment.

Also, training materials supporting the learning process must be identified, *e.g.* copies of human rights documents and work sheets for the training.

Step 5: Revise design and evaluate the total result

In a final step, the design should be revised by mentally walking through it and adjust where necessary.

6 The Trainer's Part in Conducting a Training

The actual delivery of training is a multidimensional activity. Only some aspects which are directly related to the trainer's part are mentioned here.

The selection of appropriate trainers is a crucial issue as it determines the general atmosphere of a training to a considerable extent. This is particularly the case in contexts where human rights might be an emotionally charged topic and where a certain resistance to a human rights approach might be expected. Examples for these contexts include the police, but also the business world.

Rather than theorists and academics, professionals in the field, such as police trainers for police trainings, are those who are able to create an environment which is conducive to learning. Peer practitioners are credited with having relevant experience based knowledge, an appropriate understanding of the conditions of the participants as well as being able to establish a collegial relation with participants. In addition, external human rights experts are essential to bringa much needed external perspective on the practical discussions.

There are no clear standards for what constitutes a qualified human rights trainer. Taking again the triangle of human rights education as an analytical tool, minimum competencies would include a sound knowledge of human rights standards and familiarity with interactive training methods as well as considerably developed communicative and analytical skills. From my own experience, however, I think that the most relevant competencies clearly lie at the level of the attitude of a trainer.

Carl Rogers the founder of person-centred psychotherapy, has put forward six "necessary and sufficient conditions in therapeutic personality change", which he later extended to the field of education. Central among these conditions are the following three Firstly, the trainer should be a congruent, genuine, integrated person. This would mean that within the relationship he or she is freely and deeply him/herself. This condition also refers to the therapist's/trainer's willingness to communicate about this experience if it stands in the way of the two other central conditions.
Secondly, the trainer should have an essentially non-judgmental attitude towards the other person, accepting each aspect of the other person's experience.
Thirdly, the /trainer experiences an empathic understanding of the other person's internal frame of reference and endeavours to communicate this experience to him/her. It is to sense the other person's private world as if it was your own, but without losing the ''as if'' quality.

These three attitudinal competencies are certainly highly beneficial and facilitative in the sensitive training context of human rights where fundamental questions regarding one's identity might come up and one's moral attitudes are touched upon. Human rights trainings might even bring to light traumatic personal experiences. These three competencies are also clearly in line with the basic attitudes and values which undergird human rights.

7   Evaluation, Follow-up and the Broader Organisational Context

Evaluation of human rights training activities is essential in order to gauge what participants have learned, to understand which approaches and methods have been successful and what could be improved within what can be called a cycle of continuous improvement. It is increasingly recognised internationally that approaches to and tools of evaluations have to be professionalised.

As said at the beginning, training is part of human rights practice. It cannot to be seen in isolation from other activities. Rather it is linked to a whole range of human rights activities which pursue the goal of social change in favour of human rights. Such a systemic view is also suggested by research in social sciences which stresses that the effects of training as a form of intervention into a given system, *e.g.* the police system/organisation, is strongly determined by the organisational structures and the environment in which it takes place. Two main consequences follow from such a systemic view on training:

Firstly, where appropriate, training activities should allow for discussion of follow-up measures at an organisational level which make sure that the lessons learned and competencies gained are fed back into the respective system. Such an approach is particularly called for in trainings of human rights defenders but is also used in other areas, such as human rights training in the business world.

Secondly, in a broader organisational development perspective, management measures should support the transfer of training matters into the organisation. For example, in a police context, this would mean that human rights are visibly acknowledged within the organisation by internal decision-making processes like selection of personnel, advancement, communication and information strategies, management and leadership functions, disciplinary procedures etc.

8   References and Further Reading

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