



An Examination of Factors Prohibiting the Implementation of Human Rights Education in South African Public Schools

Ernest Mpindo ¹, Xolani Khohliso ¹ & Bongani Mashaba ¹

¹ Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching, Central University of Technology, Free State Bloemfontein, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

Schools should be enabling environments that promote learners' holistic growth. However, this is not always the case in public schools in township areas in South Africa because public schools struggle to protect children's rights while also coming up with relevant and appropriate strategies to deal with learners' indiscipline without violating their rights. Couched in the theory of Ubuntu as a research framework, this qualitative theoretical paper analysed the factors prohibiting the implementation of human rights education in South African public schools. This paper employed a literature review and content analysis of secondary data to answer two major questions: What are the factors prohibiting the implementation of human rights education in South African public schools? Which framework can be used by teachers to advocate for the implementation of human rights education in public schools? The paper revealed that human rights education has the potential to enforce Ubuntu to stabilise and create peaceful environments in schools. Considering this argument, the study recommends that a structured method of collaboration with NGOs, schools and community-based partners that could participate in the provision of services focused on fostering peaceful education should be actively considered by the DBE. This paper contributes to the ongoing debates and discussions on the introduction of human rights education as one of the measures to curb violence in public secondary schools and the promotion of human rights to promote the values of ubuntu within the learning environments.

Correspondence

Ernest Mpindo

Email: empindo@cut.ac.za

Publication History

Received:

12th March, 2025

Accepted:

22nd May, 2025.

Published:

10th July, 2025.

Keywords: *Human Rights Education, Ubuntu, South African Public School*

INTRODUCTION

Human Rights Education (HRE) is a global movement that seeks to increase understanding of the rights protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and associated human rights accords, as well as the procedures in place to remedy violations of those rights.¹ National and international law frequently defend human rights, which Galheigo, defines as moral precepts or criteria for levels of human conduct and Perry-Hazan regards them as unalienable fundamental rights that every individual

¹ Kjersti Draugedalen and Audrey Osler, "Teachers as Human Rights Defenders: Strengthening HRE and Safeguarding Theory to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse," *Human Rights Education Review* 5, no. 2 (August 31, 2022): 32–55, <https://doi.org/10.7577/hrer.4776>; Sharynne McLeod, "Communication Rights: Fundamental Human Rights for All," *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* 20, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 3–11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17549507.2018.1428687>.

is naturally entitled to simply by virtue of being human.² Thus, these rights are inherent to every individual, irrespective of their age, ethnic origin, location, language, religion, ethnicity, or any other condition that may arise.³

In the context of public schools and the schooling system, there is no exception and should be perceived as egalitarian in the sense that everyone should be treated equally. This places a duty on public schools as institutions to respect and promote the human rights of learners in the school context and necessitates empathy and the rule of law. It is generally accepted that they should only be revoked for a respectable procedure based on exceptional circumstances.⁴ Teachers face numerous challenges while adopting HRE in schools, and many of these challenges are more noticeable in public schools located predominately in townships than in private and former model Cs schools' public schools in affluent areas. The lack of continuous discussion about what HRE is and how to effectively connect it with other curriculum issues in the classroom is unfortunate. Ncontsa and Shumba suggest that the above silence forms part of the reason HRE is not visible in the curriculum of public primary schools.⁵ Teachers show a lack of awareness of HRE and the scope of human rights when they reject the idea that cultural similarities and differences are a component of those rights. This shows even more ignorance of the connection between ethnocentrism and cultural misinterpretation, and it is closely related to intolerance, institutional violence, and conflicts—all of which are signs of human rights violations.⁶

Traditional curricula may find HRE to be an uncomfortable companion due to its emphasis on advocacy and critical attitude towards authority and power. The South African curriculum, according to Barrios-Tao et al., ignores the political and socioeconomic issues that pose a danger to the adoption of HRE teaching in public schools.⁷ The sentiment emanates from the fact that the South African curriculum has not undergone enough change to thoroughly reflect and address the problem of human rights abuses. This is precisely because there is a tendency in schools to treat HRE-related subjects like social sciences and life orientation as less significant, and there are constant talks of gradually eliminating them.⁸

What makes this paper unique is that the researchers acknowledge the efforts of other academics to address the issue of factors inhibiting the implementation of human rights in South African public schools. There are two main reasons that make this research relevant and unique, firstly, not many studies highlight the need for teachers to reconsider human rights education as the best strategy to reduce classroom violence. This makes the case that morality, a societal component lacking in South Africa, is provided or evoked by Ubuntu through human rights education. This study assumes that morality derived from several human rights literature can help South Africa develop towards peaceful cohabitation. The study also makes the case that when schools switch back to Ubuntu to structure relationships, peace education can be achieved. Lastly, the study is unique because it is based on Ubuntu, a theory that cautions against normalising human rights violations in schools because it cannot be justified by hypocrisy, lying, or dishonesty. Through its emphasis on qualities like tolerance,

² Sandra Maria Galheigo, "What Needs to Be Done? Occupational Therapy Responsibilities and Challenges Regarding Human Rights," *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal* 58, no. 2 (April 2011): 60–66, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-1630.2011.00922.x>; Lotem Perry-Hazan, "Students' Perceptions of Their Rights in School: A Review of the Literature," in *Proceedings of the 2021 AERA Annual Meeting* (Washington DC: AERA, 2021), 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.3102/1681273>.

³ McLeod, "Communication Rights: Fundamental Human Rights for All."

⁴ Maria Galheigo, "What Needs to Be Done? Occupational Therapy Responsibilities and Challenges Regarding Human Rights"; Malcolm Langford, "Critiques of Human Rights," *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 14, no. 1 (October 13, 2018): 69–89, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-110316-113807>.

⁵ Vusumzi Nelson Ncontsa and Almon Shumba, "The Nature, Causes and Effects of School Violence in South African High Schools," *South African Journal of Education* 33, no. 3 (2013): 1–15.

⁶ Zahraa McDonald, "Interrupting School Violence with Deliberative Encounters," *South African Review of Sociology* 45, no. 3 (September 2, 2014): 20–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2014.945945>.

⁷ Hernando Barrios-Tao, José María Siciliani-Barraza, and Bibiana Bonilla-Barrios, "Education Programs in Post-Conflict Environments: A Review from Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa," *Revista Electrónica Educare* 21, no. 1 (December 11, 2016): 1, <https://doi.org/10.15359/ree.21-1.11>.

⁸ Dennis A. Francis, "Homophobia and Sexuality Diversity in South African Schools: A Review," *Journal of LGBT Youth* 14, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 359–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2017.1326868>.

morality, and living and thinking together in Ubuntu, human rights education might be investigated to lessen the problem of school violence within this ambivalence.

METHODOLOGY

The study's methodology was qualitative, and it made extensive use of secondary data. To understand the elements that hinder peace education in South African public secondary schools, a thorough literature analysis in areas of interest was chosen based on a variety of criteria, including but not limited to ethics, peace education, human rights, values, and the principles of constructive teaching and learning. Secondary data was analysed using content analysis, which involved analysing textual data and words by methodically identifying, contextualising, and classifying concepts and themes associated with the research title.⁹ Time-tested theories should be compelled and re-established in an effort to bring attention to the importance of human rights education in the academic community and public secondary schools. The ultimate goal was to preserve the field of human rights education and ensure its continued existence in the digital age.¹⁰

DISCUSSION

a. The rationale for human rights education in South African schools

HRE and human rights in education mean that those participating in educational activities violations are not tolerated in education, or that learners' activities and experiences in school must be consistent with human rights. International law requires States to maintain, respect, and preserve human rights, as well as ensure that education promotes adherence to these essential freedoms.¹¹ This commitment is mostly contained in the country's constitutions. In South Africa, Chapter 2 of the Constitution, titled *The Bill of Rights* outlines the Human Rights of its citizens including the right to education in Section 29. By the same token, the Human Rights: Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples emphasises the significance of access to HRE.¹² For a country like South Africa which until 1994 had no regard for Human Rights in Education Schools should play a crucial role in teaching youngsters to appreciate and protect human rights in all spheres of their lives.

Schools are better positioned as they get the most amount of time with students during their developing years. In South Africa, a learner is expected to spend at least 12 in the basic education sector before transitioning to Higher Education. In addition to this, all members of the educational staff, including teachers, must get training in human rights and HRE implementation in schools. HRE should be integrated into the entire educational system, beginning with early childhood development and pre-primary education.

b. The challenges encountered in implementing HRE in South African schools

One of the main issues facing South Africa is the enormous diversity of its learners' body. In addition to the legacy of its political past, a few disparities impact how teachers prepare and present the material in the classroom, which leads to learning challenges in the classroom.¹³ The fact that today's youth, especially those from emerging economies, developing democracies, and nations with limited resources and high need, have only known a society characterised by rapid change, dislocated families, religious

⁹ Terrance Molobela, "A Theoretical Paper for Upholding the Integrity of South Africa's Public Administration," *African Journal of Public Administration and Environmental Studies* 3, no. 2 (August 1, 2024): 31–52, <https://doi.org/10.31920/2753-3182/2024/v3n2a2>.

¹⁰ Mike Cole, *Education, Equality and Human Rights* (London: Routledge, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003177142>.

¹¹ Joanna N. Erdman, "Human Rights Education in Patient Care," *Public Health Reviews* 38, no. 1 (December 11, 2017): 14, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40985-017-0061-8>.

¹² *Human Rights: Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 2014, <https://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/human-rights-documents-online/human-rights-implementation-of-the-united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples>.

¹³ Meagan Driver, "Realities of Comfort and Discomfort in the Heritage Language Classroom: Looking to Transformative Positive Psychology for Juggling a Double-edged Sword," *The Modern Language Journal* 108, no. S1 (January 8, 2024): 147–67, <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12899>.

and cultural diversity, unemployment, and rising risk anxiety highlights the significance of effectively addressing human rights in schools.¹⁴

Numerous South African schools are depicted as having a high prevalence of violence, racial intolerance, and anarchy.¹⁵ According to research findings from the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, the Department of Education recently acknowledged that violence in South African schools is a problem.¹⁶ Considering this, teachers need to instill values and HRE in their learners. Unfortunately, the lack of continuous discussion about what an HRE is and how to effectively connect it with other curriculum subjects in the classroom is the reason why human rights are not visible in the curriculum of public elementary schools. Although these differences might seem to have little bearing on efforts to advance social justice knowledge, abilities, and attitudes, this is not at all the case. Erdman identifies two potential and noteworthy outcomes: either the human rights component is entirely disregarded in a social justice approach, or it may be inadvertently included, albeit perhaps not to the fullest extent possible and both tend to obscure HRE.¹⁷

c. Lack of HRE implementation opportunities

The two main obstacles facing HRE as a developing field are (1) official recognition by educational policymakers and (2) incorporation into national curricula.¹⁸ As was previously mentioned, even though HRE has become much more prevalent in the last ten or so years, there has not been a concerted effort from the state to prioritize HRE in the curriculum. Issues of Human Rights are covered in the Life Orientation subject at school however the coverage is not sufficient. Many public schools still do not formally address the topic of human rights and human rights education. How they are applied in the classroom is still a concern, even in those systems where human rights and HRE-related issues are covered by their regulations. The inclusion of HRE in curriculum frameworks does not ensure that teachers would address these concerns in their classes, according to Daniels.¹⁹ Teachers need access to vital resources and sufficient, continuous professional development for this to become a reality. With the help of the national educational institutions, but with limited durability, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations usually promote HRE resources and training in post-conflict and post-totalitarian countries.²⁰

d. Concerns about Teachers' lack of understanding of human rights

Studies published by Brantefors and Quennerstedt; Boutros, on teachers understanding of Human rights revealed some gaps in the different components of human rights.²¹ Boutros's study suggested that teachers have a good grasp of the goals and contents of human rights, but they still lack awareness of the systemic factors and hidden problems that are connected to them. Many of the teachers were also not aware that values are a part of human rights, Brantefors and Quennerstedt.²² The

¹⁴ Ero Ikponwosa, "Human Right Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Overview of Some Challenges and Prospects," *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 8, no. 5 (August 31, 2014): 117–23, <https://doi.org/10.5897/AJPSIR08.020>.

¹⁵ Bekithemba Dube and Jacob Segalo, "Post-COVID Teaching and Learning of Religious Education in the Context of School Violence in South Africa," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 3, no. 11 (October 26, 2022): 6–18, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2022SP3112>; Ernest Mpindo and Constance Mphojane, "Human Rights Education: Exploring the Safety of Teachers in South African Secondary Public Schools," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 5, no. 3 (March 8, 2024): 247–56, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2024538>; Letlhoye Segalo and Rambuda Awelani, "South African Public School Teachers' Views on Right to Discipline Learners," *South African Journal of Education* 38, no. 2 (May 31, 2018): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v38n2a1448>.

¹⁶ Lotta Brantefors and Ann Quennerstedt, "Teaching and Learning Children's Human Rights: A Research Synthesis," *Cogent Education* 3, no. 1 (December 31, 2016): 1247610, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1247610>.

¹⁷ Erdman, "Human Rights Education in Patient Care"; Ikponwosa, "Human Right Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Overview of Some Challenges and Prospects."

¹⁸ Lindsey N Kingston, "The Rise of Human Rights Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Possibilities," *Societies Without Borders* 9, no. 2 (2014): 188–210.

¹⁹ Stephen Daniels, "Human Rights Education in Scotland: Challenges and Opportunities," 2019.

²⁰ Daniels, "Human Rights Education in Scotland: Challenges and Opportunities."

²¹ Brantefors and Quennerstedt, "Teaching and Learning Children's Human Rights: A Research Synthesis"; Alexandria Boutros, "The Right to Rights: Education as the Problem and Solution to the Lack of Enforcement of International Human Rights Law," *International Journal of Progressive Education* 14, no. 2 (April 25, 2018): 161–75, <https://doi.org/10.29329/ijpe.2018.139.12>.

²² Brantefors and Quennerstedt, "Teaching and Learning Children's Human Rights: A Research Synthesis."

compartmentalisation or lack of understanding of the relationship is a cause for concern; it exposes the lack of awareness of the scope of human rights. It rejects the idea that cultural similarities and differences are a component of those rights. Implicitly, it heightens intolerance, institutional violence, and conflicts—all of which are signs of human rights violations.

e. HRE is considered “Political” in African states

Evident from the discussion so far is that there is reluctance in the implementation of HRE in the public schooling sector. Keet contends that this reluctance emanates from the fact that HRE is often viewed as political or even oppositional.²³ In several cases, HRE has been associated with a Marxist or communist objective.²⁴ As such, the traditional curriculum may find HRE to be an uncomfortable bedfellow due to its emphasis on advocacy and critical attitude towards authority and power which could be viewed as oppositional. For these and other reasons, school systems that offer HRE frequently place more emphasis on the values and content understanding of HRE than on advocacy and content. Even though this is commended as it raises awareness, advocates of HRE still feel that this may weaken the message of HRE (Langford, 2018).²⁵ HRE needs to be implemented in its entirety for it to be fully effective and transformative.

f. Teachers’ Attitudes towards Teaching Human Rights Education

While teachers in all schools expressed support for children's rights, private school teachers received significantly greater support than public school teachers. A study by Munongi, shows that the majority of public-school teachers are sensitive to HRE and expressed support for children's rights.²⁶ Even though this is the case Devonald et al. notes that there are still pockets of teachers who still display some negative attitudes towards HRE.²⁷ According to McLeod, this could be the symptom of the lack of training on how to apply HRE, especially in higher education where students are trained.²⁸ In South Africa in particular, there is no proof that HRE pedagogy is currently taught at the university level. Without initiation into HRE especially from HE, teachers are unlikely to support rights-based education or have the confidence to transition to rights-consistent teaching. This is because they may lack the required repertoire which can result in discomfort or become uncomfortable with democratic pedagogy if they do not possess the methodology required or fully understand or have misconceptions about children's rights.²⁹ If HRE can be part of the broader teacher education training, university students, especially those training to teach, can develop an understanding of the Convention and attitudes that support rights.³⁰ This understanding could propel them to become advocates of HRE or influence the attitudes of teachers' reactions to rights-respecting education.

g. A lack of understanding of Human Rights Education

Teachers in South Africa are not familiar with liberatory human rights pedagogies.³¹ HRE is covered as a topic in some teaching disciplines, Life Orientation (LO) and Social Science (SS), but it is not

²³ André Keet, “*It Is Time* : Critical Human Rights Education in an Age of Counter-Hegemonic Distrust,” *Education as Change* 19, no. 3 (September 2, 2015): 46–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/16823206.2015.1085621>.

²⁴ Cole, *Education, Equality and Human Rights*; Erin K. Wilson, “‘Power Differences’ and ‘the Power of Difference’: The Dominance of Secularism as Ontological Injustice,” *Globalizations* 14, no. 7 (November 10, 2017): 1076–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2017.1308062>.

²⁵ Langford, “Critiques of Human Rights”; Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (Routledge, 2015).

²⁶ Lucia Munongi, “‘What If We Give Them Too Much Voice?’: Teachers’ Perceptions of the Child’s Right to Participation,” *South African Journal of Education* 43, no. 2 (May 31, 2023): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v43n2a2166>.

²⁷ Megan Devonald et al., “Human Rights Education in Humanitarian Settings: Opportunities and Challenges,” *Human Rights Education Review* 4, no. 1 (April 30, 2021): 27–48, <https://doi.org/10.7577/hrer.3986>.

²⁸ McLeod, “Communication Rights: Fundamental Human Rights for All.”

²⁹ Claudia Depauli and Wolfgang Plaute, “Parents’ and Teachers’ Attitudes, Objections and Expectations towards Sexuality Education in Primary Schools in Austria,” *Sex Education* 18, no. 5 (September 3, 2018): 511–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2018.1433650>.

³⁰ Kingston, “The Rise of Human Rights Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Possibilities.”

³¹ Nqobile Nomonde Msomi and Jacqueline Akhurst, “Prominent Discourses in South African Education from the Perspective of Community Psychology: Challenges and Opportunities for Youth Liberation and Well-Being,” *Journal of Education*, no. 92 (November 7, 2023): 98–114, <https://doi.org/10.17159/2520-9868/i92a06>.

taught as a stand-alone course or as a separate field in South African public schools. However, emancipatory and critical theories and pedagogies are not taught in South Africa's LO curriculum. HRE models, critiques, and pedagogies receive less consideration in LO classes, which focus primarily on constitutional rights difficulties as current topics. Cooperative, discussion, individualised, inquiry, role-playing, and problem-solving techniques are the main focus of special methods themes, which are taught in LO as a subject as well as in general education courses. The subject does not cover the underlying critical and transformational ideas and pedagogies that can increase awareness of structural and systemic violence and inequality. One of the biggest obstacles to successful HRE is undoubtedly the absence of systematic integration into the classroom. The lack of appropriate teacher training is a major challenge.³² Research from around the world indicates that many teachers lack the pedagogical, emotional, and cultural preparation necessary to teach human rights.³³

Most of the time, teacher education does not incorporate human rights tools. Additionally, teachers receive little instruction in the behaviour and pedagogy needed to model and instruct HRE. Teachers are therefore more likely to uphold social injustice and social fairness, and authoritarian and discriminatory practices, human rights abuses, and social inequalities continue to exist in school environments.³⁴ Teachers must first receive sufficient training to alter their beliefs and behaviours to establish a school culture that supports HRE.³⁵

Ubuntu an Alternative Framework

This study uses Ubuntu as a framework to comprehend that human rights are inherent and normative, not only something that is written down. Ubuntu as a framework moves away from the use of “must” which is expressed in declarations and laws and towards the normative “ought”. The distinction here is that “must” is rooted in the positivist (explain what is wrong with the positivist use of must). The use of “ought” on the other hand, acknowledges that individuals have for one another and their surroundings which is understood as Ubuntu Framing human rights education within the Ubuntu discourse as a potent communication instrument has the potential to improve the understanding and appreciation of human rights as a collective responsibility.³⁶ Studies indicate that the term “Ubuntu” is a dynamic one that has evolved over time, most likely because of shifting social and political contexts.³⁷ Nevertheless, it seems that the term “Ubuntu” was initially associated with the Nguni proverb “umuntu ngumuntu ngabatu” (which translates as “a person is a person through other persons”) during the South African transition process in the 1990s. People started saying things such as, “Ubuntu means that a person becomes a person through other persons,” in reference to the South African transition process.³⁸ It is possible that the emergence of this specific new concept—that Ubuntu denotes human interconnectedness—came from the need to refute the apartheid regime's ideology of segregation.³⁹

The normative discourse appeals to one's conscious to be considerate of others, which is Ubuntu. This is opposed to the positivist view which is instructive. The normative approach is embedded in the humanistic principles which foregrounds the foundation of Ubuntu's core principles of cooperation, kindness, compassion, respect, and solidarity. Thus, when appropriately embraced,

³² Boutros, “The Right to Rights: Education as the Problem and Solution to the Lack of Enforcement of International Human Rights Law:”

³³ John Buchanan and Nina Burrige, “Education for Human Rights: Opportunities and Challenges Arising from Australian Curriculum Reform,” *Curriculum Perspectives*, 2016.

³⁴ Msomi and Akhurst, “Prominent Discourses in South African Education from the Perspective of Community Psychology: Challenges and Opportunities for Youth Liberation and Well-Being.”

³⁵ Buchanan and Burrige, “Education for Human Rights: Opportunities and Challenges Arising from Australian Curriculum Reform.”

³⁶ Martina Lastikova, “Context-Specific Peace Education Initiatives within Local Communities in Western Cape, South Africa: Lessons from Ubuntu,” 2023; Vuyisile Msila, “Ubuntu and Peacemaking in Schools,” *International Journal of Educational Policies* 3, no. 1 (2009): 51–66.

³⁷ Christian B.N. Gade, “The Historical Development of the Written Discourses on *Ubuntu*,” *South African Journal of Philosophy* 30, no. 3 (January 28, 2011): 303–29, <https://doi.org/10.4314/sajpem.v30i3.69578>.

³⁸ Gade, “The Historical Development of the Written Discourses on *Ubuntu*.”

³⁹ Gade, “The Historical Development of the Written Discourses on *Ubuntu*.”

Ubuntu can promote and cultivate communal living, coexistence, and interdependence in educational settings.⁴⁰

The lack of interest and contempt that an indigenous practice as culturally rich as Ubuntu receives in educational institutions, especially in Africa and South Africa, is astounding. The Western, Eurocentric viewpoint that denigrates and rejects indigenous concepts like Ubuntu as false assumptions and simply bogus African thought still permeate many African educational institutions. This resistance may be the main cause of the Ubuntu philosophy's failure to infiltrate curricula and educational institutions in many African countries, including South Africa.⁴¹ Tom claims that colonial educational systems' assumption that Western philosophical world views are superior knowledge has caused Africans, especially the youth, to be socialised out of their traditional beliefs and knowledge systems and given a false "global view" of who they are.⁴²

The Ubuntu concept could be powerful in a classroom or school context because teachers could see that by imparting their knowledge to their learners, they could foster an environment that values tolerance, equality of ideas, and interdependence.⁴³ Akinola and Uzodike add that Ubuntu could be used in the classroom to teach learners a common identity and to regain societal values.⁴⁴ Ngubane and Makua also hint that while Ubuntu could be taught within the indigenous education framework, its concepts are applicable to the current conventional classroom practices.⁴⁵ Mukwedeya recommends that the school and classroom environments reflect a feeling of respect and dignity for both learners and teachers to build harmonious learning safe places that embody Ubuntu.⁴⁶ Teachers who practice in an Ubuntu-inspired environment respect their learners' cognitive understanding for their voices to be heard. This should be a common cause, by virtue of their profession, teachers are required to display compassion, involve all learners, and encourage engagement in the classroom. Thus, Ubuntu emphasises the importance of embracing the trend towards solidarity because, in the current context, it is blind to colour and race and only recognises humanity as God's creation. This does not imply that people should ignore other beneficial external values; rather, it means that they should combine them into a cohesive plan. In a nutshell, Ubuntu is purely humanistic and does not recognise colour or ethnicity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

a. Coordination between teachers, parents and district support staff

An advisory committee must be established to assist with strategic planning and supervision of peace and order in the province and district. During this process, new rules about alternatives to physical punishment and the implementation of HRE in schools could be created, planned, built, and implemented. This method should engage everyone who is involved in basic education, including the learners themselves. It is important to encourage regular meetings and exchanges between teachers, parents, administrators, and support staff, as well as with other stakeholders involved in the nonviolent educational process. An official local or provincial advisory group should be set up to support and encourage peaceful education.

For this council to be representative and demonstrate democratic traits, local community stakeholders must be included. Teachers' ought to take part in policy-related activities more actively.

⁴⁰ Nomlaungelo Ngubane and Manyane Makua, "Ubuntu Pedagogy – Transforming Educational Practices in South Africa through an African Philosophy: From Theory to Practice," *Inkanyiso* 13, no. 1 (July 1, 2021): 12, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ink.v13i1.9>.

⁴¹ Kanyakumarie Padayachee et al., "Integral Education and Ubuntu: A Participatory Action Research Project in South Africa," *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 13, no. 1 (2023): 1298.

⁴² Patrick Tom, "A 'Post-Liberal Peace' via Ubuntu?," *Peacebuilding* 6, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 65–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2015.1040605>.

⁴³ Evanson Z. Sambala, Sara Cooper, and Lenore Manderson, "Ubuntu as a Framework for Ethical Decision Making in Africa: Responding to Epidemics," *Ethics & Behavior* 30, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2019.1583565>.

⁴⁴ Adeoye O. Akinola and Ufo Okeke Uzodike, "Ubuntu and the Quest for Conflict Resolution in Africa," *Journal of Black Studies* 49, no. 2 (March 28, 2018): 91–113, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934717736186>.

⁴⁵ Ngubane and Makua, "Ubuntu Pedagogy – Transforming Educational Practices in South Africa through an African Philosophy: From Theory to Practice."

⁴⁶ Joel Mukwedeya, "Peace and Harmony through Ubuntu in a Globalized World," in *Comparative Education for Global Citizenship, Peace and Shared Living through Ubuntu* (BRILL, 2022), 221–41, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004518827_014.

They should take a more active role in planning and policymaking, for example. A few of the teacher informant participants have shown a wish to actively engage in the policy-making process. Teachers may receive adequate representation and a higher position in the classroom with this type of empowerment. Every other educator who is represented in the structures of different schools has stated that they believe they could offer guidelines guiding the behaviour, needs, and interests of learners to offer a new viewpoint that might not otherwise be considered or handled in any other way.

At each of the schools where this study was carried out, the Department of Basic Education ought to reconsider employing full-time experts. They might only address issues pertaining to nonviolent education and assist in implementing laws that respond to violations of human rights that take place in educational institutions. Their services could help schools through program benefits. The services of these workers may contribute to direct support for human rights. Such a skilled person's guidance could also be helpful in identifying pupils who need care and attention, evaluating alternatives to physical punishment, determining intervention needs, and developing long-term predictions.

b. Evaluation of programmes and training for HRE in schools

It is recommended that an evaluation plan or comprehensive review be applied to the creation and execution of school management policies and programs. To make sure they protect the rights of teachers and learners, this strategy should entail a thorough assessment of all departmental practices and alternatives to physical punishment. The issue at hand is whether or not, teachers and learners can interact and assess the classes and material without infringing on each other's rights. The success of the overall tactics as well as the teachers' contentment with their safety and human rights in the classroom can be evaluated using the assessment plan. To give teachers, principals, and members of governing bodies (parents) the tools they need to operate effectively and successfully within the HRE framework that has been implemented in schools, this study suggests that DBE develop specialised educational seminars and training for all its staff. It is recommended that comprehensive training programs be created in schools so that all parties involved may respond to human rights breaches with the appropriate background knowledge. A few potential training choices are the departmental in-service training, SETA programs, and the present faculty development courses.

Additionally, it is recommended that departments or divisions that handle disciplinary actions, learner conduct, or special education needs be encouraged to enrol in HRE-related continuing professional development courses. They must be aware of national changes, such as the legal and policy trends created and developed by the Ministry of Education or the National Government, to successfully promote learners' human rights and serve as a resource for pertinent human rights information.

c. Dissemination and introduction techniques for information

New information-dissemination techniques and induction procedures for teachers, administrators, personnel, and community-based stakeholders must be developed by the DBE. There aren't any induction plans or procedures in place for new teachers at any of the schools that were the focus of the study's investigation. There are no resources available that provide a thorough explanation of induction for handling human rights breaches of teachers and learners in the classroom, despite the principals' perception that department heads are integrating new teachers into their schools.

The following topics should be thoroughly covered in materials that are created and distributed: (i) the nature and extent of the human rights that learners and teachers have in school environments; (ii) the actions that should be taken in the event that these rights are violated; (iii) the recognition and respect of the rights and responsibilities of teachers and learners as outlined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa; and (iv) departmental policies to protect. To achieve this particular objective, it is in the best interests of the DBEs to distribute information via the following channels: The departmental website, learner frameworks, community awareness campaigns, orientation materials for schools, departments, and learners, and/or direct parent mailings are some examples of ways to reach parents.

The DBE ought to give careful consideration to developing a systematic plan for collaborating with community-based partners, educational institutions, and non-governmental organisations that could contribute to the delivery of services meant to support peaceful education. There must be a

significant number of DBEs and community-based organisations to provide services efficiently. If the DBE could have both official and informal meetings, there might be less misunderstanding about the specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations surrounding the implementation of HRE in schools. For the DBE to address HRE and prepare new teachers to handle human rights violations, it is suggested that a framework or model be put into place. Examples of good academic training and support programs include a professional academic training and support program, a clearly stated induction policy, a framework, assessment, and evaluation of HRE, vociferous and strict advocacy and liaison services, clearly specified information and referral services, data collection mechanisms, and program evaluation. In certain schools, some of the services are offered, but in smaller quantities. However, the creation of a successful framework and introduction may be seriously hampered by the lack of collaboration between parents and schools.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to provide an overview of the critical results of the implementation of HRE in South African public secondary schools to offer suggestions for these educational institutions to become more peaceful and supportive of HRE. Understanding the type, scope, and elements of disruptive learning environments in South African public secondary schools is essential. Acknowledging the excellence of the nation's educational system is equally vital. To combat human rights abuses, discrimination, and marginalisation in schools, the basic education department must be strengthened. The rise of democracy in South Africa and the ensuing reforms and dedication were the battle's most significant results. This paper argues that everyone, including parents, teachers, and learners, has a right to a peaceful, engaging classroom that is provided by the South African institution and accessible to the public. According to this paper, efforts should be made to address all the factors that have contributed to widespread violence and human rights violations in educational settings, as well as those that hinder the effective implementation of human rights education in schools and a pedagogy that supports learners' peaceful education through human rights and positive values. Through a range of discourses, the article has recognised and discussed the need for an effective HRE framework. It is still socially built to promote peaceful education. The provision of a safe learning environment is related to how teachers, learners, and parents see these barriers to an effective HRE framework and what they think should be done to remove them. This encompasses their beliefs about themselves as equals, their worldview, and their aspirations for their communities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akinola, Adeoye O., and Ufo Okeke Uzodike. "Ubuntu and the Quest for Conflict Resolution in Africa." *Journal of Black Studies* 49, no. 2 (March 28, 2018): 91–113. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934717736186>.
- Barrios-Tao, Hernando, José María Siciliani-Barraza, and Bibiana Bonilla-Barrios. "Education Programs in Post-Conflict Environments: A Review from Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa." *Revista Electrónica Educare* 21, no. 1 (December 11, 2016): 1. <https://doi.org/10.15359/ree.21-1.11>.
- Boutros, Alexandria. "The Right to Rights: Education as the Problem and Solution to the Lack of Enforcement of International Human Rights Law." *International Journal of Progressive Education* 14, no. 2 (April 25, 2018): 161–75. <https://doi.org/10.29329/ijpe.2018.139.12>.
- Brantefors, Lotta, and Ann Quennerstedt. "Teaching and Learning Children's Human Rights: A Research Synthesis." *Cogent Education* 3, no. 1 (December 31, 2016): 1247610. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1247610>.
- Buchanan, John, and Nina Burridge. "Education for Human Rights: Opportunities and Challenges Arising from Australian Curriculum Reform." *Curriculum Perspectives*, 2016.
- Cole, Mike. *Education, Equality and Human Rights*. London: Routledge, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003177142>.
- Daniels, Stephen. "Human Rights Education in Scotland: Challenges and Opportunities," 2019.
- Depauli, Claudia, and Wolfgang Plaute. "Parents' and Teachers' Attitudes, Objections and

- Expectations towards Sexuality Education in Primary Schools in Austria.” *Sex Education* 18, no. 5 (September 3, 2018): 511–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2018.1433650>.
- Devonald, Megan, Nicola Jones, Silvia Guglielmi, Jennifer Seager, and Sarah Baird. “Human Rights Education in Humanitarian Settings: Opportunities and Challenges.” *Human Rights Education Review* 4, no. 1 (April 30, 2021): 27–48. <https://doi.org/10.7577/hrer.3986>.
- Draugedalen, Kjersti, and Audrey Osler. “Teachers as Human Rights Defenders: Strengthening HRE and Safeguarding Theory to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse.” *Human Rights Education Review* 5, no. 2 (August 31, 2022): 32–55. <https://doi.org/10.7577/hrer.4776>.
- Driver, Meagan. “Realities of Comfort and Discomfort in the Heritage Language Classroom: Looking to Transformative Positive Psychology for Juggling a Double-edged Sword.” *The Modern Language Journal* 108, no. S1 (January 8, 2024): 147–67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12899>.
- Dube, Bekithemba, and Jacob Segalo. “Post-COVID Teaching and Learning of Religious Education in the Context of School Violence in South Africa.” *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 3, no. 11 (October 26, 2022): 6–18. <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2022SP3112>.
- Erdman, Joanna N. “Human Rights Education in Patient Care.” *Public Health Reviews* 38, no. 1 (December 11, 2017): 14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40985-017-0061-8>.
- Francis, Dennis A. “Homophobia and Sexuality Diversity in South African Schools: A Review.” *Journal of LGBT Youth* 14, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 359–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2017.1326868>.
- Gade, Christian B.N. “The Historical Development of the Written Discourses on *Ubuntu*.” *South African Journal of Philosophy* 30, no. 3 (January 28, 2011): 303–29. <https://doi.org/10.4314/sajpem.v30i3.69578>.
- Human Rights: Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 2014. <https://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/human-rights-documents-online/human-rights-implementation-of-the-united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples>.
- Ikponwosa, Ero. “Human Right Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Overview of Some Challenges and Prospects.” *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 8, no. 5 (August 31, 2014): 117–23. <https://doi.org/10.5897/AJPSIR08.020>.
- Keet, André. “*It Is Time* : Critical Human Rights Education in an Age of Counter-Hegemonic Distrust.” *Education as Change* 19, no. 3 (September 2, 2015): 46–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16823206.2015.1085621>.
- Kingston, Lindsey N. “The Rise of Human Rights Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Possibilities.” *Societies Without Borders* 9, no. 2 (2014): 188–210.
- Langford, Malcolm. “Critiques of Human Rights.” *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 14, no. 1 (October 13, 2018): 69–89. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-110316-113807>.
- Lastikova, Martina. “Context-Specific Peace Education Initiatives within Local Communities in Western Cape, South Africa: Lessons from Ubuntu,” 2023.
- Maria Galheigo, Sandra. “What Needs to Be Done? Occupational Therapy Responsibilities and Challenges Regarding Human Rights.” *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal* 58, no. 2 (April 2011): 60–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-1630.2011.00922.x>.
- McDonald, Zahraa. “Interrupting School Violence with Deliberative Encounters.” *South African Review of Sociology* 45, no. 3 (September 2, 2014): 20–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2014.945945>.
- McLeod, Sharynne. “Communication Rights: Fundamental Human Rights for All.” *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* 20, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 3–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17549507.2018.1428687>.
- Molobela, Terrance. “A Theoretical Paper for Upholding the Integrity of South Africa’s Public Administration.” *African Journal of Public Administration and Environmental Studies* 3, no. 2 (August 1, 2024): 31–52. <https://doi.org/10.31920/2753-3182/2024/v3n2a2>.
- Mpindo, Ernest, and Constance Mphojane. “Human Rights Education: Exploring the Safety of Teachers in South African Secondary Public Schools.” *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social*

- Sciences* 5, no. 3 (March 8, 2024): 247–56. <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2024538>.
- Msila, Vuyisile. “Ubuntu and Peacemaking in Schools.” *International Journal of Educational Policies* 3, no. 1 (2009): 51–66.
- Msomi, Nqobile Nomonde, and Jacqueline Akhurst. “Prominent Discourses in South African Education from the Perspective of Community Psychology: Challenges and Opportunities for Youth Liberation and Well-Being.” *Journal of Education*, no. 92 (November 7, 2023): 98–114. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2520-9868/i92a06>.
- Mukwedeya, Joel. “Peace and Harmony through Ubuntu in a Globalized World.” In *Comparative Education for Global Citizenship, Peace and Shared Living through Ubuntu*, 221–41. BRILL, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004518827_014.
- Munongi, Lucia. “‘What If We Give Them Too Much Voice?’: Teachers’ Perceptions of the Child’s Right to Participation.” *South African Journal of Education* 43, no. 2 (May 31, 2023): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v43n2a2166>.
- Ncontsa, Vusumzi Nelson, and Almon Shumba. “The Nature, Causes and Effects of School Violence in South African High Schools.” *South African Journal of Education* 33, no. 3 (2013): 1–15.
- Ngubane, Nomlaungelo, and Manyane Makua. “Ubuntu Pedagogy – Transforming Educational Practices in South Africa through an African Philosophy: From Theory to Practice.” *Inkanyiso* 13, no. 1 (July 1, 2021): 12. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ink.v13i1.9>.
- Padayachee, Kanyakumarie, Savathrie Maistry, Geoffrey T Harris, and Darren Lortan. “Integral Education and Ubuntu: A Participatory Action Research Project in South Africa.” *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 13, no. 1 (2023): 1298.
- Perry-Hazan, Lotem. “Students’ Perceptions of Their Rights in School: A Review of the Literature.” In *Proceedings of the 2021 AERA Annual Meeting*, 1–16. Washington DC: AERA, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.3102/1681273>.
- Sambala, Evanson Z., Sara Cooper, and Lenore Manderson. “Ubuntu as a Framework for Ethical Decision Making in Africa: Responding to Epidemics.” *Ethics & Behavior* 30, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2019.1583565>.
- Segalo, Letlhoyo, and Rambuda Awelani. “South African Public School Teachers’ Views on Right to Discipline Learners.” *South African Journal of Education* 38, no. 2 (May 31, 2018): 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v38n2a1448>.
- Sousa Santos, Boaventura de. *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*. Routledge, 2015.
- Tom, Patrick. “A ‘Post-Liberal Peace’ via Ubuntu?” *Peacebuilding* 6, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 65–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2015.1040605>.
- Wilson, Erin K. “‘Power Differences’ and ‘the Power of Difference’: The Dominance of Secularism as Ontological Injustice.” *Globalizations* 14, no. 7 (November 10, 2017): 1076–93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2017.1308062>.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to acknowledge the financial support provided by the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching, through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning office, funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training’s (DHET) University Capacity Development Grant. This support enabled the research and publication of this work. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the funding bodies.

ABOUT AUTHORS

Ernest Mpindo is a PhD candidate and works as a Researcher for Curriculum and Academic Staff Development unit in the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching at the Central University of Technology, Free State (Bloemfontein Campus) South Africa. His research is focused more on classroom management strategies, school safety, student teacher development, school violence, human rights education and education law.

Dr. Xolani Khohliso is the Director for Curriculum and Academic Staff Development Unit and the Head for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. He holds a PhD in Curriculum Studies, M. Ed in Language & Media Studies, B. Ed Honours in Curriculum Studies, B. Ed in Senior, and FET Phase (UKZN) and Various Courses including; Higher Certificate in Information Technology, Certificate in Advanced Labour Law (UKZN), Certificate in Project Management (UP), Certificate in Monitoring and Evaluation (UP), Certificate in Public Sector Audit and Governance (UCT), Certificate for entry into the Senior Management Services (National School of Governance), etc.

Bongani Mashaba is a curriculum developer in Curriculum and Academic Staff Development at Central University of Technology, currently pursuing his PhD in Curriculum Studies at the University of South Africa.