

# HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN PEDAGOGICS PROGRAMMES

The following is an English summary of a more extended baseline study from Denmark (92 pages). The study examines the **extent** and **quality** of human rights education in the Danish educations of pedagogical staff.

The study is conducted by The Danish Institute for Human Rights in 2016.



You can find the Danish version here: <https://menneskeret.dk/udgivelser/undervisning-menneskerettigheder-paa-paedagoguddannelsen>

# ENGLISH SUMMARY

Pedagogical staff work with children, young people as well as disabled adults. Most pedagogical staff work on behalf of public authorities, and through their care work in regional, municipal and private institutions, they help to secure and to ensure compliance with human rights. The Danish Institute for Human Rights has examined the extent to which human rights, including non-discrimination and equal treatment, are part of the official curricula and teaching within pedagogics programmes.

Overall, our baseline study shows that the curricula for pedagogics programmes contain requirements for teaching human-rights-based obligations, but they stipulate only few requirements regarding non-discrimination and equal treatment. There is no systematic approach with regard to teaching human rights, or non-discrimination and equal treatment, in relation to the obligations of pedagogic practice.

Teachers who participated in the study indicate that teaching human rights, non-discrimination and equal treatment are important areas of pedagogic work. They also indicate that it is challenging to examine human-rights-based obligations in relation to specific pedagogic practice in the course of their teaching. The study showed that teachers need to improve their knowledge about the basic human-rights-based rules and principles that are relevant to pedagogics as a subject. Our study shows that, to some degree, teachers include the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in their teaching. However, teachers generally had weak competences with regard to human rights and children, young people and adults with special needs.

In other cases, where human rights are taught, the interviewed teachers said they primarily taught human rights from a history-of-ideas perspective. Even more rarely, teachers actually qualify value-based discussions with the

human-rights-based obligations that exist within international conventions and within Danish regulations and frameworks. Human rights are usually presented in teaching as a philosophy and as a set of values that, as a future pedagogue, one can either discard or adopt.

In order to strengthen knowledge on human rights and the competences to secure and ensure compliance with them in pedagogic work, programmes should incorporate systematic teaching of human-rights-based obligations, including the principles of non-discrimination and equal treatment from a vocational perspective. Teachers' competences to conduct human-rights-based teaching should also be improved.

The study consists of a review of the international framework for human rights education, a review of the curriculum for pedagogic programmes and selected lesson plans, as well as group interviews with teachers from four out of the six professional bachelor education programmes in pedagogics in Denmark.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the baseline study are to provide new and up-to-date knowledge on human rights education in pedagogics programmes. This is done in order to identify the extent to which the programmes focus on developing the competences of future pedagogues to work in accordance with human-rights-based principles and obligations within pedagogic practice. The objectives of the study are therefore;

- to examine if and how human rights are incorporated into the curricular of the programmes, i.e. into Danish legislation, executive orders and curricula for pedagogics programmes.

- to examine if and how human rights are incorporated into teaching practices on the programmes, including how teachers interpret the official curriculum and incorporate human rights into their teaching.

## DATA

The data basis of the study consists of document analysis and interviews. The first two sections of the study present a review of the international framework for human rights education and an analysis of the Danish framework for pedagogics programmes. The final section of the study consists of an analysis of selected lesson plans and group interviews with several teachers from Danish pedagogics programmes.

The choice of study method makes it possible to identify to what extent and how human rights and equal treatment are part of the curricula for pedagogics programmes and thereby part of training to become a pedagogue. It is also possible to provide descriptions of how teachers interpret curricula in their teaching practice.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study presents four recommendations on how to strengthen the teaching of human rights from a vocational perspective in pedagogics programmes.

### RECOMMENDATION NO.1: NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL TREATMENT IN THE CURRICULUM

The Institute recommends that the Ministry and the programme directors at university colleges:

- incorporate human-rights-based principles on non-discrimination and equal treatment into future executive orders on education and training and local curricula.

**Background:** The study showed that non-discrimination and equal treatment are only vaguely and unsystematically represented in the programme curricula at both national and local levels. The concepts of equality and equal opportunity are mentioned in the executive order and in local curricula. However, equal opportunity is only taught in relation to gender and sexuality, whereas ethnicity is set in relation to concepts of culture and integration. The concept of 'equality' is mentioned once in connection with social and special pedagogics. The qualitative study also showed that teaching in subjects such as non-discrimination and equal treatment is primarily based on history-of-ideas/sociological literature and the personal opinions of teachers and students. Teachers rarely include legal protection in order to qualify discussions. For example, the obligations within the areas of non-discrimination and equal treatment that are applicable in Denmark and in the pedagogic practice within municipal or private institutions.

## RECOMMENDATION NO.2: HUMAN RIGHTS AS PART OF THE PROFESSION'S COMPETENCE ASSESSMENT TEST

The Institute recommends that programme directors at university colleges:

- ensure that teaching human-rights-based obligations is systematically incorporated into the programmes, including ensuring that knowledge and skills regarding human rights are a part of learning outcome tests.

**Background:** The study showed that the programme curricula include knowledge and competency goals in relation to the legal basis of pedagogic work, including international conventions. "Knowledge of conventions" is mentioned in the content description of the 'pedagogue as a representative of the public authorities' module, and international conventions are mentioned in the knowledge and skills goals in all three specialised areas. Therefore, the curricula for pedagogics programmes commit the programmes to teaching human rights to a certain extent. However, the study showed that the extent to which human rights are incorporated into teaching depends on the teacher's personal motivation and competences.

### RECOMMENDATIONS NO.3 AND NO.4: TEACHING SKILLS AND MATERIALS

The Institute recommends that programme directors at university colleges:

- strengthen the competences of teachers with regard to teaching human rights, with particular focus on equal treatment and non-discrimination, as well as the role of the pedagogue as a representative of the public authorities.
- in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, develop knowledge and material specifically targeted at pedagogics students regarding human rights within pedagogic practice.

**Background:** The teachers interviewed indicated that there is a lack of knowledge and teaching material with regard to being able to address human-rights-based obligations in relation to the pedagogue profession. Several teachers also indicated that the profession could be strengthened if students were provided with a broader knowledge of regulations and frameworks. Human-rights-based values, principles and obligations were highlighted throughout as perspectives that would strengthen the academic basis of the profession. However, the teachers do not feel equipped to teach in the field of human rights. The teachers who took part in the study feel as if they lack the competency and materials to facilitate the inclusion of human rights in a manner that would provide future pedagogical staff with the competence to comply with these rights in practice as well as ensure the rights of children and adults. They also feel that they lack the teaching skills and materials necessary to deal with pedagogic dilemmas and value-based discussions from a human-rights-based perspective.