

Human Rights workshops - results and methodology

This is a note about the results we are getting with the human rights workshops, how we are getting these results and what we want to achieve.

We have found that the people who attend these human rights workshops are experiencing cognitive and behavioural changes, becoming more tolerant of others and in fact becoming more 'democratic' in their attitude to life. Many of them are finding that they deal with people and situations in a different way to previously.

One young man from Iran asked the workshop presenter for a quiet word and was clearly a little troubled. He told her had been having real difficulty with his mother and sister and girlfriend. He told her he had realised her had been being 'really macho and controlling'. As he put it, "I've been treating my family like property!"

Many discussed the course and what they got out of it on their Facebook pages. Even the gentleman who presented the first series of workshops told me his daughter had been incredulous at the changes in her dad after the series finished. She exclaimed, "Dad, what's happened to you. You're so different!" She meant more tolerant and considerate of other people. And that was someone from Iran who had had a hugely successful career in an American global company and had travelled the world and lived in many countries.

Formal, technical assessment of the results is not practical. It will need monitoring, evaluation and benchmarking by a social science department or institution to evaluate the kinds of results we are seeing.

Why are we getting these results?

When we started with the first Persian language group, I realised three things.

1. For people where our six languages are natively spoken to have a chance of a democratic government, they need to have a democratic mindset. (We definitely also feel that human rights education is vital in western countries to curb or eliminate a variety of social ills, not least racist bullying and islamaphobia.)
2. Human rights is not just about advocacy and taking governments to task about their practices; it's also about how we as individuals treat other individuals, men and women, parents and children, teachers and students, employers and employees, and so on
3. We had a group of people, all of whom had some pressing issue they needed to be resolved. All the issues are real and important but as they all insisted their issue was the most important it felt like a dialogue of the deaf! They are not going to achieve a resolution by focusing on the problem and the solution to all the problems is in the UDHR. Our intentions with the workshops and the website are
 - a) Equip participants with a working knowledge of the Preamble and Articles of the UDHR (the Preamble is the Mission Statement for the UDHR).
 - b) Give them something they can all agree about which is the ideal scene for their issue (and all the other issues)
 - c) United by their new understanding of the UDHR, their awareness of how they can now interact socially and what all this means for their future, they will create a force for

individual and institutional change in the direction of a liberal and democratic society and government.

What are we doing to get these results?

We are using a particular workshop format for the sessions which is described in another document, Intro to Human Rights Workshops - final.

Our successful action is giving participants an intimate knowledge of the Preamble and Articles of the UDHR which they make their own and which brings them to cognitive and behavioural change based on their recognition of truth as it relates to them and their lives. As described in *An Overview of the Workshop Leader Training Programme*, it is the process of instruction and debate, as well as the content of the course, which is responsible for these changes.

Broad implementation to greatly expand the activity to achieve similar results

I have worked out an implementation programme (in a project proposal document) for any country. One group of funded full time trainers would train other groups on a once a week basis for fifteen weeks with the agreement of the participants' department or employer. This could result in training a very large number of people at government level or community level or in businesses in quite a short space of time. At government level, participation in the workshops and completion of the course could be made a prerequisite for advancement.

Via the internet, this could be enormously expanded so we are also looking at IT solutions for doing workshops internationally. This would depend on the quality of internet etc in some of these countries, but that is the direction we would like to go in. We could additionally record the audio of the workshops as a training tool.

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