STUDY ON KNOWING AND IDENTIFYING HUMAN RIGHTS

I. Scheau

University of Alba Iulia (ROMANIA)

Abstract

The present paper presents the extent to which human rights are known by the students, the master and post-graduate students included in the post-graduate programs at the University “1 Decembrie 1918” of Alba Iulia. The paper is structured in two parts: a theoretical one that presents the history of human rights and a practical one that represents a research on the extent to which the human rights are known by students, master and post-graduate students.

The theoretical part of the paper puts forward a series of historical moments in the process of foundation of the idea of human rights: the philosophy of J. Locke, the ideas of French and American revolutionaries, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the reflection of the main human rights in the Romanian Constitution.

The practical part introduces the results of a research conducted in 2019 on a group of students and master and post-graduate students of the University “1 Decembrie 1918” of Alba Iulia, research that identified the level of knowledge regarding the human rights of the above-mentioned group.

Keywords: human rights, students, master students, knowledge, identification.

1 INTRODUCTION

Although the concern regarding human rights existed in Greek Antiquity in Plato’s or Aristotle’s writings, in the Middle Ages when Magna Carta mentions two human rights: lawfulness and forbiddance of abusive arrest, the idea of human rights materializes in Modern Age in the writings of T. Hobbes and J. Locke. For that matter Locke asserts that each person takes advantage of a series of rights such as life, liberty / freedom, possession / ownership and health. These rights are on the one hand, natural, namely they belong to everyone because it was born human, and, on the other hand are unalienable, namely they cannot be alienated. This apprehension of Locke, known as God’s natural law, represented the foundation of all modern constitutions and was also included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights elaborated by the United Nations.

However this way was a long one and it presumed, according to Cezar Bîrzea, getting over several stages:

- **The Petition of Rights** (1628), a document adopted by the English Parliament which promulgated the inviolability of residence and the incumbency of lawfulness in applying taxes.
- **Habeas Corpus Act** (1679), a law-marking document of English Parliament, by which it was requested The Court of Justice to compulsorily check the lawfulness of incarceration, in order to avoid any abuse.
- **The English Bill of Rights** (1689), which stands against excessive and useless physical punishments, requesting the use of some rules of law.
- **The Declaration of Independence of The United States of America** (1776) explicitly evokes the principle of natural right. (“The declaration considers as a self-evident reality the fact that people are born equal, their creator endows them with certain unalienable rights among which: the right to life, liberty and happiness.”)
- **The Declaration of Human’s and Citizen’s Rights** (1789), although did not benefit of the same legal value as the previous texts adopted by legislative courts, it had an enormous importance for the modern history. It is a political document resulted after French revolution, which focuses on the natural human rights (“People are born and remain free and equal in rights“(art. 1)).
- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** was adopted by UN in 1948 it represents the most important instrument for international protection of the human rights. (…). The Universal Declaration has a double advantage. On the one hand, it considers that the rights apply for any human being, regardless of the place of residence. They are valid for any individual without any
geographic, political, economic, ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural discrimination. On the other hand, human rights are considered indivisible, meaning that they form an organic code that must be applied as such, in its thoroughness". [1, pp. 47-48]

2 METHODOLOGY

General information: The present research was carried out between February and April 2019 at the "1 Decembrie 1918 "University in Alba Iulia. The research was carried on 111 students in the science of education, distributed as follows: 87 students, 12 master students and 12 postgraduate students.

Purpose and objectives of the research: The aim of the research was to identify the extent to which the human rights are known by students, master degree students and postgraduate students at the 1 Decembrie 1918 University in Alba Iulia. The research objectives were:

- identifying the level of knowledge regarding the human rights,
- finding if they know the institutions which protect the human rights,
- to recognize the violations of human rights.

In accordance with the aim and objectives of the research, the research method was chosen: questionnaire survey. This questionnaire was applied to focus group members in order to collect the information needed for research.

3 RESULTS

The first item in the questionnaire asked respondents to mention what human rights they know. Being an item with an open answer, the answers received are presented in the following table in percentage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right to</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>MasterDegree Students</th>
<th>Postgraduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom / Freedom of expression / movement / Religious freedom</td>
<td>89.65%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>81.60%</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>77.01%</td>
<td>58.33%</td>
<td>66.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote</td>
<td>55.17%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>52.87%</td>
<td>41.66%</td>
<td>41.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>26.43%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>8.04%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>6.89%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>3.44%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>16.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and Mental Integrity</td>
<td>3.44%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>16.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private life</td>
<td>2.29%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>2.29%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td>1.14%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mentioning the fact that the students represented the benchmark, and the percentages are ordered depending on the frequency of occurrence it can be noticed the fact that there is a significant gap between the first three rights and the others. It seems that regardless the study degree, the rights to freedom, life and education are considered fundamental rights that must be assured to each citizen. It can be also noticed an equalization of the frequency of occurrence of the other rights, with two exceptions: the right to vote, where the students had a percentage double than the master and postgraduate students, and the right regarding the property, where the percentage of post-graduates is almost four times higher than in case of students or master students. These aspects should be considered normal because on the one hand the students are individuals that have just reached adulthood, and who did not benefit from the right to vote, and on the other hand the post-graduates are mature individuals who own certain properties.
The second item of the questionnaire asked the respondents to point out if they know which institutions are involved in protecting the human rights. The answers are represented quantitatively in the next figure.

We can notice the answers of the post-graduates, who are acquainted with some public institutions that protect the human rights, but the percentages were pretty high even for the other two categories of respondents. Next, the questionnaire asked to the ones who answered YES to mention what institutions they know. The answers revealed the fact that they know as well national institutions that deal with these matters as well as international institutions. From the answers received, resulted the following institutions, depending on the frequency of the answers: at national level – The Agency for Child Protection, Police, The Agency for Customers Protection, People’s Lawyer, School, Justice and Romanian Institute for Human Rights; at international level: UN, UNICEF and ECHR.

The respondents who answered NO were asked to mention what institutions should protect the human rights. The answers revealed the following institutions: NGO’s, the Parliament, Town Hall, Justice, Agency for Child Protection, but there were also cases when the respondents answered that they should take care themselves of the human rights because no institution would solve their problems. The last item of the questionnaire asked the respondents to mention if they identified violations of the human rights, so far, in their activity. Statistically, the answers are represented in the next figure.
Paradoxically, the highest percentage of the respondents that answered that they did not encounter cases of violation of the human rights was from the master students, although this percentage was rather expected from the students group who do not have a very broad life experience. Similar with the previous item, for this item there was also an additional question depending on their answer: the respondents who answered YES were asked to mention the cases of violation of the human rights. Most of them mentioned the example of school, where they considered that many human rights are violated, such as: the right to education, equality and in particular the freedom of expression. Moreover, some of the respondents asserted that a lot of abuses and discriminations take place in schools, and of course the victims are the children. Other violations of the human rights mentioned by the respondents are in the following areas: work, health, justice, but there were also mentioned the persecutions from the communist regime. There also were a few answers that considered that persons who have abortions violate the right to life. The respondents who answered NO were asked to mention the reasons why they didn't identified any situations of violation of human rights. Most of them explained that this situation occurred due to the little life experience, but there were also situations where the fact that the human rights were not violated was explained through the fact that the institutions responsible with the observance of human rights have performed properly their activity.

4 CONCLUSIONS

After analysing the data we can conclude that the issue of the importance of human rights is more current than ever, and human rights education should be developed.

REFERENCES