

# **Challenges of Human Rights Education in Japanese Universities -Finding out the Weakness and Way of Improvement-**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the globalized society, it is important for people to build a friendly relationship to coexist with people each other, a universal concept, “Human Rights” (hereafter HR) could be the key. In this paper, Education is considered as inevitable to learn about the HR.

The Second and Third Phase of World Programme for Human Rights Education (hereafter HRE) by the United Nations emphasize the importance of promoting HRE not only in primary and secondary education, but also in higher education. The purpose of this paper is to find out the challenges that HRE in Japanese universities faces, and suggest a way to improve them.

The author conducted an Internet survey to find the weakness of Japanese HRE by checking syllabi of HR related courses of Japanese universities and visiting several universities to hear about the practices in Japan. The results of the survey reveal that Japanese HRE raises individual HR issues and discrimination more than universal concepts and professors tried to make students be aware of the facts. This paper points out the weakness of Japanese HRE and discusses the reasons why Japanese HRE focuses on the social discrimination. The finding of the survey reveals that HR are not only the certain areas’ issues, but are also inherent to every person.

In the end of this paper, the importance of practicing HRE from not only from individual aspect such as particular discrimination but also from legal and universal aspect such as history of HR is emphasized.

**Key words:** Human Rights Education, Discrimination, Individual Rights, Independent Learning, Empowerment

## **1. Introduction**

In this globalized world, we need a universal principle for us to create a good relationship among the people from different backgrounds. HR that are given to people equally could be the principle for all of us to have and follow.

What are Human Rights? In United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Human Rights (hereafter called HR) are explaining as follows:

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, without distinction as to race, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. All human rights, whether they are civil and political rights, such as the right to life, equality before the law and freedom of expression, or economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to work, social security and education are indivisible and interdependent. Universal human rights are expressed and guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles and other sources of international law

(<https://europe.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx>).

Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed in 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 217A as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and nations. Then, what is Human Rights Education (hereafter called HRE)? The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (UNDHRET, 2011) explains that HRE encompasses education:

- a) About human rights, which includes providing knowledge and understanding human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection;
- b) Through human rights, which includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners;
- c) For human rights, which includes empowering people to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others.

In this paper, the author refers to this definition and considers HRE to be the act of learning widely about people's lives and freedom, which means not only learning about rights and duties as a basis that are universal aspects, but also learning about specific human rights issues such as discrimination, gender, minority that are individual aspects, and others in order for people to seek their happiness. Final goal of HRE is to empower learners to provide the knowledge of individual rights for living and skills to think about the surrounding problems, and decide the solutions based on their wills. In achieving this goal, the study environment of HRE is participatory where learners can express their views and they are heard in the classroom.

Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, states in the Article 80 as:

Human rights education (hereafter called HRE) should include peace, democracy, development and social justice, as set forth in international and regional human rights instruments, in order to achieve common understanding and awareness with a view to strengthening universal commitment to human rights.

Since then, HRE has been developed worldwide. In 1994, the United Nations proclaimed the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). After that, the World Programme for Human Rights Education has started to promote a common understanding of basic principles and methodologies of HRE to provide a concrete framework for action and to strengthen partnerships and cooperation from the international level down to the grass roots. Here is the development and primary target in each phase of World Programme:

The first phase (2005-2009) focused on human rights education in the primary and secondary school systems. The second phase (2010-2014) focused on human rights education for higher education and on human rights training programmes for teachers and educators, civil servants, law enforcement officials and military personnel. The third phase (2015-2019) focuses on strengthening the implementation of the first two phases and promoting human rights training for media professionals and journalists (OHCHR, 2020). The fourth phase (2020-2024) makes youth as focus group, and emphasizes on education and training in equality, human rights and non-discrimination, and inclusion and respect for diversity with the aim of building inclusive and peaceful societies, and to align the fourth phase with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and specifically with target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals ([OHCHR | Fourth phase](#)).

As explained above, in the Second and Third Phase of its World Programme, one of the pillars to be promoted is HRE for higher education.

In this paper, HRE in tertiary education is examined whether this definition of HRE and the goal are achieved in Japanese HRE. Since this paper targets HRE for university students, HRE here is particularly aimed at bringing up the citizens who could be aware of the global challenges and solve them by referring to the HR norms and take action to actually improve the situation.

To summarize the purpose of this paper in simple words; first, to find out the weakness of Japanese HRE at university, and second, to find a way to improve the situation. One of the obvious facts that Japanese HRE faces is that HR is not established

as an academic field and there are no HR degree programs. This brings a lot of challenges in practicing Japanese HRE at university, which are explained in the next section. There are movements to start the degree programs by one of the organizations called the International Human Rights Institute in Osaka. They provide open HR courses in the evening for any people who are interested in as tertiary education, but the aim of establishing the degree courses have not been yet achieved (International Human Rights Institute, 2020).

## **2. Literature Review**

In the previous chapter, the United Nations emphasized the importance of HRE in any educational level. From this chapter, previous research and situation of Japanese HRE is discussed. According to the development of HRE in the world, there have been discussions on HRE guideline for primary and secondary education from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in Japan, however, there has been no guideline or policy for HRE in higher education. Therefore, the contents and methods of HRE in Japanese higher education depend on either the universities or the instructors. Previous research has revealed that there are other challenges that Japanese HRE faces. First, Hirasawa (1991) mentions that the Japanese tend to divide people into two, such as us and others, which makes it difficult to understand others and leads to a lack of HR sense. In a western society, people have a mind that HR are protected under the universal concept, and HRE in western countries tend to raise universal concepts that are applied to any countries and regions, whereas in Japan people consider HR as to be the same and equal, which makes Japanese people consider themselves to be the same with others that influences Japanese HRE, which focuses on individual issues and different from the ones in western countries ‘pp. 18-19’. Mori (2005) analyzes the HRE at school in Japan and points out that there is a strong image that the educational movement against discrimination is one of the main Japanese HRE movements. This influences Japanese HRE encouraging a focus on the issues of discrimination, especially outcast peoples’ problems in the specific areas. These are called, “Buraku” problems in Japan, which occurred in certain areas. The problems are discrimination towards them in finding jobs and marriage. This encourages Japanese HRE to try to solve discrimination issues by raising awareness towards the problem in order for minority children to take action. He also points out that since Japanese HRE focuses on the life of outcast people, there is a lack of teaching it in relation to human rights law and international treaties as a basis of HRE. Another characteristic and weakness of Japanese HRE is that teachers tend to be involved in educational movements, which means that they are reflecting their own

personal concerns, and thinking about their lives by comparing them with the lives of outcast people. Therefore, teachers have a mind towards the issues as the outcast people's and not as their own. This makes it difficult for teachers and students to consider the problems as their own, and solving them together with the outcast people 'pp. 10-11'. Ikuta (2005) mentions that there are 2 spheres in HR, which are moral and philosophical aspect, and legal aspect. Japanese HRE lacks in teaching the latter side, which is the legal aspect. Therefore, Japanese HRE seeks to cultivate students to protect HR, and emphasizes equality. This point is raised by Hirasawa (1991) as well. In addition, Ikuta (2005) criticizes that Japanese HRE is not aimed at learning individual rights from legal perspectives, and solving them through the legal process, thus it fails to seek how to protect individual freedom under the HR. Ikuta explains that this makes students unable to gain the skills to critically think about the rights to be protected from the legal aspect 'pp. 18'. Ikuta also mentions that Japanese HRE tends to be moral education emphasizing equality and the establishment of human relationships, which is influenced by Dowa education that is to learn about Buraku problems and moral education (Ikuta's HP: <http://mailsrv.nara-edu.ac.jp/~ikuta/homepage.html>). Dowa education is to teach discrimination caused by Buraku-problems, and solve them.

Sowa (2008) analyzes the history of Japanese HRE and explains that it was started from Dowa in order to solve *Buraku*-related problems, which is the discrimination against people who were born, brought up, and living in the areas associated with the *Burakumin*, or outcast people. This point is mentioned by Mori (2005) and Ikuta (2005) as well, but in addition to that, Sowa (2008) points out that Japanese HRE focuses too much on specific issues in the certain areas, which makes other regions difficult to be familiar with the issue and learn about HR, which has to be universal 'pp.64'. Itayama (2018) explains that there have been different reasons of starting HRE in Japan between primary and secondary education and higher education. In primary and secondary education, long absences and not being able to go to school for outcast children was the main challenge in HRE while in higher education, discrimination was the main issue making HRE important and necessary. He raises one example, such that a particular discrimination incident related to Buraku actually occurred for an alumna university student in 1950. Since then, there had been frequent discrimination incidents related to Buraku issues at the university and some students requested learning HRE. This kind of case was occurred in several universities in certain areas and was the origin and main reason of HRE in higher education in Japan 'pp. 64-65'. Itayama (2020) raises another example to explain how HRE courses in Japanese universities started and why HR Centers were established. He raises an example of Osaka City University, which is a

Public University. There had been an incident of which a poster that contained discriminatory language against the particular female student was occurred in 1961. Since then, there has been a lot of similar cases occurred such as discriminatory graffiti on a wall and desks. Therefore, Osaka City University and its research center need to raise awareness of students and staff to solve these issues. Osaka City University started the course regarding Dowa education and HRE in 1973 in order to respond to students' accusation and request to deal with discrimination, however, the discriminatory incidents continued. University established the committee to solve the issue and made the action plan based on the policy for solving the issues in 1975 'pp. 6'. Kumamoto (2010) raises problems of Dowa-related HRE in Japan from different angles; such that there are a lack of researchers in the fields of Dowa and Buraku-problems; there is a lack of collaboration with other departments and fields within the university, therefore there are not enough instructors who could teach the issues, and the instructors are mainly part-time, which causes a lack of instructors who could regularly hold the courses. Moreover, she points out that opportunities of outcast people to establish their own academic fields is not available. Like in women's studies and gender studies, they listen to their voices and establish their academic field for research and education, however, Buraku-problems are not yet established as their own field 'pp. 78-79'. Similarly, Ishimoto, Okuda, Kokubo and Kano (2017) points out the problems of HRE in Japan such that, researchers at Human Rights Center tends to be considered the issues are theirs, and makes other researchers lack the awareness of HR as our own issues. Also, there is a tendency for people to try to avoid the HR issues. People think outcast people's issues are complicated and do not want to discuss them with others. Also, there is a lack of researchers in HR areas, and therefore, they belong to the HR Center as additional post. Moreover, there is a lack of collaboration with the HR researchers of other HR Centers in different institutions. These situations cause that the outcome of research has not been widely explored and utilized 'pp. 17-19'.

Akuzawa (2007) has done the comparative research on HRE in Asia, and the Pacific, and finds that there is research and education in HRE in the region, which offers programmes at the graduate level. They cover various fields, such as law, philosophy, ethic, theology, history, sociology, cultural anthropology, politics, psychology, and education. The programmes are organized around not only learning the HR concepts, but also real situations. Therefore, they do not just teach lectures, but they also carry out fieldwork, and introduce internships by collaborating with NGO, International organizations and other human rights organizations. She points out that it is important to introduce HR degree programs in Japan by learning from other countries' practices 'pp. 39-49'.

Finally, Majiima (2010) points out that there are practices of HRE at Japanese universities, but the research of analyzing them has not been done in this field. Then, she raises her practice of HRE as one of the teacher training courses by using legal cases at university and tries to analyze the outcome. This research is unique as a legal case was used in practicing HRE. She carefully chose the legal case for the educational use by considering privacy issues, and made the study plan by thinking about study goals. She finally decided to use a civil case because this kind of case is for learners to easily predict the victim's damage, and protect and recovery, which gives learners to think and decide the equal judgment. She actually conducted the 15 classes based on the case study and analyzed the students' study outcome from the questionnaire that she distributed to the students. She found out that through the course, students changed their minds and perspectives by discussing the case and thinking about the judgment with others. She emphasized that the material of legal cases could be a good educational material for students to analyze the issues and make equal judgment 'pp. 120'.

As explained above, there are several challenges that Japanese HRE is facing. First, Japanese HRE originally started from Dowa and Buraku-problems, and the discrimination issues are raised in Japanese HRE as one of the main topics in certain areas. This is because the origin of Japanese HRE in higher education started from the discriminatory cases in the university, and HR Center was established from the voice of students and staff, and HRE courses were started to offer. The origin of Japanese HRE in primary and secondary education and higher education was slightly different, but both has similarities that Japanese HRE is related to the outcast people's problems. This does not mean that the theme of HRE is only about discrimination, but Japanese HRE lacks in teaching from the legal aspect as a basis and this is the universal aspects, and tends to teach moral and equality that deals with the individual specific issues. As introduced before, there was a case of one instructor who used legal case in practicing HRE was introduced, but this kind of practice was not widely shared among the instructors as good practice. Second, in Japan, people consider discrimination issues as others' issues, and try not to consider them as their own, which makes learners difficult to understand the problems deeply. This point is applied to all the levels of education in Japanese HRE. Third, Dowa and Buraku issues are not considered as one academic field yet, which makes the issues difficult to research and educate. This leads to lack the academics in the field, and making the connection to other researchers and other academic fields. This ends up a smaller number of academics who are in charge of HR courses in Japan. Fourth, it is important to see other countries' practices in order to review and improve Japanese HRE. It is also mentioned to consider the HRE program with a wide range of fields, such as law,

philosophy, ethic studies and others.

### **3. Situation of HRE at Japanese Universities**

Based on the findings from previous research, the author tries to find out the current practices of HRE at Japanese universities by conducting a survey. The result of the survey provides us the weakness of Japanese HRE in detail. The outline of the survey is as follows:

**Target Universities:** Universities in Japan except medical universities, nursing universities, dental universities, technical universities, fashion universities, sports universities, and junior colleges were targeted. The reason why medical universities and others are excluded in this survey is that they offer HR courses related to their specific areas of study, such as ‘medicine and HR’. It is difficult to compare them under the General Education framework because their courses are specialized and unique. Thus, in this survey, the courses are selected from the aspect of General Education courses opened to any students. This kind of course gives us insights into what needs to be taught in HRE for students in general.

**Methods:** Using Internet by checking the homepage of Japanese target universities to search syllabi of HRE, which were found 392 courses related to HR from 125 universities, and among them, visiting 8 universities all over Japan to hear about the practices such as teaching methods and evaluation. In searching the syllabi, a keyword “Human Rights” was used. The reason why 8 different universities were chosen is that their courses are unique as Japanese HRE in the aspects of the themes raised in the courses. They also responded willingly to introduce their methods. When visiting and observing the educational practices, a semi-structured interview for about 1 hour was conducted. The interviews included: (1) the themes they raised in HRE, (2) Methods they took, (3) Assessment, (4) Challenges. Among the 8 results of the interviews, 2 cases are introduced here as they are typical case of HRE in Japan. In the interview, the author took notes and wrote records on the day of visit, so that they were as faithful as possible to the original statements in the interviews.

**Period of collecting the syllabus and analyzing, and visiting universities:** June 2018 to March 2020

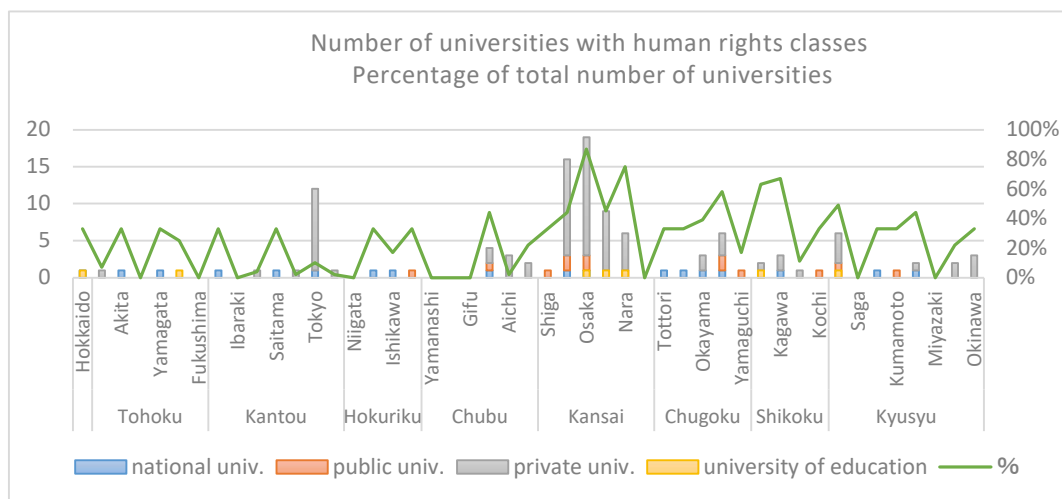
**Limitation:** Although the author tried to check all the syllabi of Japanese targeted universities, there must be universities, which could not be found or hit in the web-engine. Also, visiting the selected universities may not be the one which explains the characteristics of all the Japanese HRE.



## 2-1. Result of Internet survey

The result of Internet survey of analyzing the syllabi confirms that there are no HR degree programmes in Japan, but individual HRE courses are offered for undergraduate and graduate students in Department of Law or as a General Education. In this paper, the author narrowed the survey to HRE offered as General Education, which is opened to all the students, in order to find out what should be learned in HRE to all the students in any fields as a basis of human beings and become global citizens.

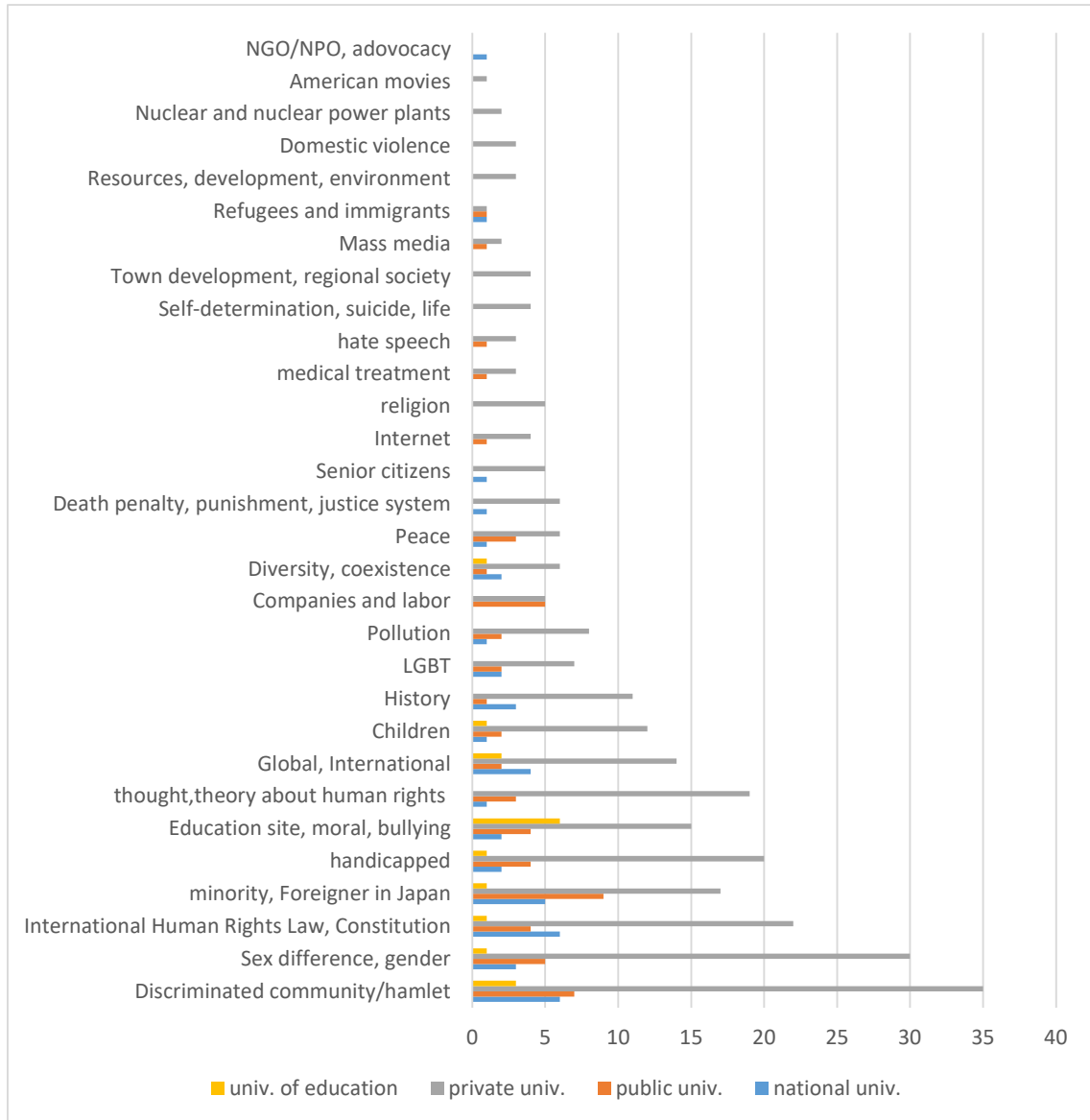
Chart 1 shows the number of courses offered as General Education according to the prefectures. The line chart shows the percentage of HRE courses among the universities in each prefecture. We could see that a lot of courses are offered in the Kansai region, especially in Osaka, Kyoto and Hyogo. This is because those areas have immense Buraku problems in the past and the problems are still ongoing. Of course, it does not mean that other prefectures and regions do not offer any HRE. The characteristics found in the types of universities are; firstly, University of Education offers HRE as a part of teacher trainings; secondly, National and Public University offers not many courses compared to private universities, and thirdly, Private University offers variety of HRE courses especially in Kansai region and Tokyo. This also implies that the practices of universities do not influence to other universities. The result of the survey implies that universities conduct HRE under their own curriculum, or instructors make the programs and courses to teach HRE as their own specialties.



(Chart 1: Breakdown of practicing HRE in regions)

Chart 2 shows the themes raised in HRE in Japanese Universities. This survey is categorized by the key words found in each syllabus, and collected by multiple answers of each course. While reading each syllabus, the author and three research assistants who

were graduate students in literature discussed and decided the key words in this survey.



(Chart 2: Theme raised in HRE)

Of the themes chosen in HRE, the most common was ‘Discriminated community/hamlet,’ specifically the ‘Buraku and Dowa problem,’ which is historical discrimination found in certain areas of Japan. This topic is actually raised at most in Kansai region. In other regions, the following tendency was found; such that ‘Education site (teaching methods at school), moral and bullying’ issue is raised in universities of Education, ‘Sex difference, gender’ is raised in many private universities in Tokyo, ‘HR Law and Constitution’ is raised in national universities, and ‘minorities and foreigners in Japan’ is raised in public universities. Importantly, the “International Human Rights Law, Constitution,” “thought,

theory and Human Rights” and “Global and International,” are raised high in all types of universities. In the previous section, the literature review reveals that Japanese HRE tends to raise individual domestic issues, but this result implies the potential of changing the Japanese HRE by introducing not only individual discrimination issues, but also universal and global aspects. Also, other characteristics found are that private universities tend to raise a variety of themes, while national and public universities have certain curriculum, and their courses are organized under the curriculum. Universities of Education offers courses for students who will become teachers after graduation, thus the focus was different. Next, Table 1 shows the HR Centers in Universities.

N/PU/P	Univeristy	Center	Main research area	Activities
N	Hokkaido University	Center for Ainu & Indigenous Studies	Ainu culture, Ethnic discrimination	comprehensive research on indigenous people, holding symposiums and seminars, exhibition
N	University of Teacher Education Fukuoka	Research Center for Teaching Practice Human Rights and DOUWA Education	Bullying	research about bullying, holding a seminar
PU	Osaka City University	Research Center for Human Rights	Offering various human rights classes on campus.	research, periodical publication, organize a lecture and seminar
PU	Hiroshima City University	Hiroshima Peace Institute	World peace, Abolition of nuclear weapons Community development	symposium, citizenship courses, bulletin and publication of booklet, peace seminar
P	Kansai University	Kansai University Institute of Human Rights Studies	Research about Elimination of Buraku Discrimination, race and ethnic issues, disability, and gender	extension lecture, symposium, publication
P	Kinki University	Kindai University Center for human rights	International Human Rights Security and others	providing classes, annual bulletin issues
P	Kansai Gaidai University	HUMAN RIGHTS RESEARCH INSTITUTE	Practices of Human rights education	annual bulletin issues, resarch on human rights, holding a workshop
P	HANAZONO University	research center for human rights	US military base in Okinawa, Kagasaki investigation	survey, research, enlightenment, library, periodical paper
P	KWANSEI GAKUIN University	Institute for Human Rights Research and Education	Human rights issues in general	survey, research, archive collection, collegium, publication, holding workshop
P	Osaka Dental Univeristy	Human Rights Education center	EU Discrimination elimination directive, Elimination of disability discrimination and provision of reasonable consideration	presentation at a conference
P	Otani University	Human Rights Center	Creating environmently suitable for education and research	workshop for teachers, study group for human rights, resource center
P	Ritsumeikan University	Peace Education and Resarch Institute	Social history research of the area which has a military base and other	survey, research, publication
P	Ryukoku University	Human Rights Issues Research Committee	Elimination of Buraku Discrimination LGBT, research on human rights, and different levels	survey, research, publication
P	Tenri University	Human Rights Research Laboratory	Human rights in general	study group, publication, holding a seminar,
P	Kyoto Sangyo Univeristy	Human Rights center	Elimination of Buraku Discrimination , harrsment,discrimination, Human rights violations	consultation for harassment
P	Dosisha University	Center for Christian Culture	Discrimination and economic disparities by ethnicity, culture, gender and religion	holding a lecture
P	Himeji University	Humanities and Human Rights Education Institute	Universal "Life and Dignity"	publication, academic course (every year)
P	Kanagawa University	International Human Rights Center	International human rights law	research and educatoin, connecting network in Japan and abroad, collecting information
※N : National University, PU : Public University, P : Private University				

(Table 1: HR Center in the Universities)

Table 1 shows that the role of HR Center is mainly engaged in lectures,

symposiums, publications, surveys, research, enlightenment activities, setting up a library devoted to HR, and so on. Research areas in each center are different, such as the elimination of Buraku discrimination, race and ethnic issues, disability discrimination, gender, international human rights security, the US military base in Okinawa, Human rights issues in general, Ainu culture, ethnic discrimination, world peace, the abolition of nuclear weapons, community development and others.

One characteristic is that the HR Center is aiming at researching certain HR issues related to the local area of its center. This results in a lack of emphasis on making connections with either other centers or regional or global organizations, such as the United Nations in order to solve the issues. Again, this leads to the weakness of Japanese HRE, which focuses on domestic issues, especially the various forms of discrimination which occur in the different regions, and lacks in connecting with other organizations.

Another feature is that not many national and public universities have HR Centers. This is because since national and public universities are owned by central and local governments, it is not easy to establish the center by the university-decision under the situation that HR is not recognized as one academic field yet. Although Table 1 does not list up, HR committees are found in both national and public and private universities to discuss and solve the issues within the universities.

### **3-2. Practices of HRE at Japanese Universities**

After searching the internet to unearth the situation concerning HRE in Japan, the author chose 8 universities which offer HRE courses university-wide and visited them to ask about their practices. The 7 instructors and 1 administrative staff of 8 different universities were chosen including not only national and public universities, but also private universities, and university of education. Also, the themes they raised were not only Buraku issues, but also peace education, bullying, global society and others, which are unique in Japan compared to other countries. The reason why I chose instructors and an administrative staff for the interviews, and not to the presidents of the universities is that this survey is not aiming at hearing about the university policy, but it is to hear about the actual practices of HRE, which could not be found from university HP and syllabi.

#### **3-2-1. One of the Practices of Japanese National University**

This university is located in a Peace City, Hiroshima, where an atomic bomb was dropped for the first time in the world in 1945, and was established under the principle of 'Freedom and Peace.' One of 5 mission statements by the university is 'the spirit of peace.' In order to achieve this basic principle, there are many liberal arts subjects related to peace for 1<sup>st</sup>

and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, such as ‘Hiroshima and Peace,’ ‘Peace and Human Beings’ and ‘Peace and Human Rights.’ The author asked about the practice of the third subject called, ‘Peace and Human Rights-Perspective of Globalization and Gender,’ which is ‘a compulsory subject for 1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate students.’ When the author started questioning one of the instructors, it was obvious that the teaching method was decided by the instructors. As a result, she could make a lesson plan by herself although the university determined the curriculum and its mission. There are no guidelines on what should be included and how to teach peace and human rights education.

Therefore, the instructor chose the topic from the perspective of Gender because of her specialty. She made her own original notebook as a portfolio for students so that students could use it during the class and keep it as their records. The number of students who take the course is varied depending on the year, for example 95-300 students. The method that she uses is lectures with discussions. Since the class size is big, she tries to make small groups for discussion. She also sets a task for students to go to one of the peace memorials either in Hiroshima or Nagasaki by themselves and write about what they learn by visiting them.

In her lectures, she raises issues such as poverty, LGBT, children and women. After learning about various topics, students think about which topic is the most interesting for them and make a group for searching information together. Then, individual students write the report as a final product. Although the class is big with about 100 students, the instructor uses a technique to provide a task for students to learn by themselves.

### **3-2-2. One of the Practices of Japanese Private University**

The author also learned about the ‘Human Rights Courses’ from one administrative staff member at one of the private universities. The university has emphasized its commitment to solving the issue of Buraku, because discrimination incidents occurred not only at the Engineering department in the university, but also in the dormitories of Sociology and Economics and Business departments in 1970’s. In the engineering department, the instructor made discriminatory statements in the lecture. In the dormitories, discriminatory graffiti were found. Since then, the students voiced their request to offer HRE courses and hold the seminar to solve the issues. In response to their voice, the university established the Human Rights Center, and research and education to solve the problems have been started by the center.

The ‘Human Rights Course’ was started in 2009, and they offer about 14 courses related to human rights. There are 4 themes in the Human Rights courses, such as the

Buraku-issue, Sexuality, Disability and Women. The instructors who teach human rights should choose any of the four topics for their courses. They are not compulsory for any students, but they are one of the liberal arts subjects (similar to General Education), so any students from any year and specialty can take them. There are several omnibus style courses, but one representative instructor of the courses should be the one who makes the syllabus and does the assessment. Again, there are no guidelines for the contents and methods of teaching, thus instructors decide by themselves.

The number of students in each course is varied from 10-100. The method is mainly lectures, but some instructors invite guest speakers or take students on field trips to actually visit and learn from the sites. Assessment is mainly done by examination, but participation is emphasized as well. The instructor's specialties are varied, such as international law, minority, social welfare and others.

Besides the courses, this university conducts Faculty Development for teaching HR courses once a year, and instructors share what the students find interesting in topics and methods of teaching. Also, the university conducts training sessions for the staff and students twice a year. About 60-100 staff and students participate in this. There is another staff training for newer staff in order to enhance the awareness of human rights for the staff.

### **3-2-3. Findings from the visits**

Because of space limitations, other courses are not explained in detail, but through hearing about the practices, it was ascertained that professors chose the topics and found ways of teaching that allow students to participate in the class actively, and become familiar with HR issues by inviting guest speakers, using newspapers, and taking them to the field etc. However, there are still many courses, which are taught in lecture style from teacher to students and assessed by a final examination. Here is the summary of 8 universities.

- **Topics:** The Dowa issue, The History of HR, The Movement for HR, Zainichi Korean (who are the permanent ethnic Korean residents in Japan), LGBT, Global society and HR, Children's HR, Bullying, Handicap-related issues, women's rights, sexuality, etc..
- **Number of students in class:** 10-200 depending on the courses
- **Assessment:** examinations, reports, short essays, etc..
- **Outcome:** Students **become aware of** discrimination and the facts.
- **Teaching Methods:** lectures, guest speakers, DVDs, Newspapers, Fieldtrips, activities, etc.

The courses are intended to focus on learning the facts, and are not aiming at learning

individual rights and developing the skills to take an action by solving the current problems for a better society, which means lacking the intention to empower students.

### **3-3. Challenges of HRE in Japanese Universities**

Some Japanese universities determine HRE a compulsory subject, but there are no guidelines for teaching by the universities. The Kansai region where the Dowa problem was highlighted is the most active in offering the HR courses for undergraduate students. It is clear that Japanese HR Centers tend to focus on domestic HR issues, as can be seen in the narrow focus on the discrimination of Dowa, and as a result, lack the connections to understand individual rights and contribute to their solutions. Also, instructors do not have much chance to share their practices among them, thus their teaching is planned mainly by themselves. One good example raised in this paper is a private university which has conducted Faculty Development and Staff Training for raising the awareness of human rights.

Note that internet search was used for collecting the information, and only selected universities were targeted for hearing, thus there are limitations to reach to the general conclusion, and further research and literature review is necessary.

## **4. Conclusions**

Through analyzing the previous research and conducting the survey in this paper, the following challenges and suggestions for Japanese HRE are also identified. First, Japanese HRE tends to focus on individual issues, and lack the contents of universal aspect. HRE should include not only local issues such as discrimination, atomic weapons, and natural disasters and individual rights (the individual aspect) but also the history of HR, and theory and philosophy of HR (the universal aspect). Second, Japanese HRE tends to focus on the facts, but should be organized by learning about how to analyze the problems and find the solution by themselves. Also, it is important to empower them by providing the knowledges of their individual rights. Third, there is no HR degree programs in Japan, but there should be HR degree programs at university level in Japan as well. This requires Japanese universities to have more academics to research and educate HRE, and HR itself will be recognized as one academic field. Also, it is important to share the research outcome and educational practices among the universities, HR Centers and even individual researchers. Lastly, it is important to provide a guideline for HRE in higher education in Japan, so that university can follow in setting the curriculum, and instructors can make the programs according to it. This gives university and instructors what to teach and include, which leads to promote HRE in Japanese

universities.

Throughout the paper, the author explains the situation of Japanese HRE and find out the challenges and weakness through the survey and find ways of improvement for them. The conclusion summarized here may not be something particularly new, but if the suggestions are taken into consideration among the Japanese universities, the Japanese HRE in higher education will be changed. For the final goal of HRE is to provide people with the knowledge, skills and behavior of HR through HRE so that people will be empowered to create a society where they can respect each other under HR principle.

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