

***HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION ONLINE:
Qualitative inquiry into international educators'
online learning experiences***

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**A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Education
of Harvard University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Education**

2005

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Acknowledgments

I dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful parents, Soo-Young Joo and Jung-Ja Kang, with my deepest appreciation and respect. I will never thank them enough for all the love and supports they have put in bringing me up and still guiding me through.

I would like to first thank wholeheartedly the providers and the co-instructors of the online course analyzed in this dissertation. It would not have been possible without their intellectual openness, ongoing trust, and generous cooperation throughout my research period. It is the nature of scientific inquiry to critically examine gaps in educational theories and practices, and therefore my investigation on certain issues in this study offers some criticism. I hope that the lessons I draw from this study are critical yet constructive and will help them and all human rights educators to improve online human rights education, which proves to be more challenging and newer than in face-to-face settings.

I would also like to thank the eleven active and four passive research participants. I have learned tremendously from their online learning experiences in this study and more importantly from their professional and life experiences outside of the online course.

Thank you very much for putting your generous time in continuously engaging with me over many international telephone conversations as well as for letting me understand and analyze your learning experiences to advance the field of online human rights education.

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Martha Stone Wiske, who has been extremely thoughtful and generous in teaching and guiding my learning on educational technologies

for the past eleven years. I owe her much of the theoretical ideas developed in this dissertation as well as the extensive practical experiences with applying new technologies for educational purposes that we have often shared together over a decade. Without her insights and encouragement, I could not have come this far and, for that reason and beyond, I am tremendously indebted.

Professor Chris Dede and Professor Mica Pollock also offered invaluable advice and ongoing support from the design of this study to my data collection and analysis. Their timely and attentive feedback on my drafts of this dissertation made substantial contribution to this final manuscript.

My sincere and heartfelt thanks go to other faculty members at HGSE, Dr. Ellie Drago-Severson, Professor Sue Grant Lewis, and Dr. Vitto Perrone for their excellent mentorship on many academic related issues including this research; and to my study group, Susan Klimczak, Polly Attwood, Deidra Suwanee Dees, Jimmy Seale Collazo, and Charlene Desir. We met during the Learning & Teaching Pro-seminar, taught by Dr. Perrone, in 1999 and stayed together as a HGSE family throughout the last six years. To all, thank you very much for being my dearest friends, colleagues, and teachers!

Last but not least, I cannot describe how much I am indebted to my husband, Didier Jacobs, and my most beloved 3-years old son, Jérôme Seong-Bin Jacobs. Didier has been such a committed person – more than me sometimes – to this research from transcribing some of my telephone interviews to proofreading endless drafts. More importantly, he

has listened very carefully and faithfully my own meaning-making process throughout this study and asked important and insightful questions that constructively challenged my own assumptions and examined my evolving understandings. For the last three years, Jérôme has offered not only the infinite joy and rewards of parenting but also hands-on learning experiences in understanding how a young child can fluently and successfully navigate through multiple linguistic and cultural boundaries (i.e., Korean, Belgian, and American in his case) which I myself have never experienced in childhood. These two men of my life have made my wonderful and thankful days and nights.

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ABSTRACT

I observed the learning experiences of eleven international educators participating in a 12-week online course about human rights education (HRE), and analyzed how they communicated and learned online about context-sensitive and controversial HRE issues through constructivist methods such as critical reflection and peer learning.

I observed online texts and conducted semi-structured telephone interviews, which I analyzed by adapting some ethnographic approaches to investigate how the research participants were explaining their goals for taking this course, their learning processes (with an emphasis on online peer interactions), and their learning results.

My main conclusions are:

1. HRE is indeed a sensitive topic, which is therefore challenging to teach, especially in an online environment because online teaching and learning is still novel to most educators.
2. HRE is controversial because it involves issues of power and privileges. There is an ongoing debate about whether human rights are universal or culturally relative, which often raises the possibility of conflict about whose understanding of human rights should prevail.
3. Power relationships played themselves out in subtle ways in this online course, through prejudices based mainly on country of origin, age, profession, and level

of education; through perceived discrimination based on those prejudices; through intimidation resulting from these prejudices and perceived discriminations; through lack of awareness about these prejudices; and through resistance once prejudices became revealed. All of this resulted in a lower level of interactions among course participants than they would have liked and probably than would have been desired to maximize their online learning about HRE.

4. HRE instructors therefore need to manage the emotions that such power issues raise. Emotions are a powerful motivator to learn HRE but can also be overwhelming. Due to the lack of non-verbal communications, online environments make it harder for educators to reveal and share their emotions.
5. Online participants must deal with the interfaces between the online course culture, the educators' local cultures, and the universal human rights culture. Understanding and mediating these cultural interfaces in an online learning environment is therefore critical for HRE instructors.

I conclude with a set of recommendations for online HRE instructors.

[Word Count: 350]

I. INTRODUCTION

My research originates from the convergence of my personal interest in Human Rights Education (HRE) and many years of studying and applying educational technologies. I developed a passion for HRE as I grew up under a military dictatorship in South Korea, which is now a democracy. Moreover, as a young girl, I often struggled to make sense of some of the Korean traditional cultural values and social norms, which I found oppressive towards marginalized people, including children and women. As in many new democracies, international human rights norms are now incorporated into Korean laws, yet many people have not deeply internalized them in their everyday attitudes and behaviors, and sometimes question their very applicability to Korean society. Notwithstanding this big debate about universalism and cultural relativism of human rights, to which I will come back, I believe that education has a role to play in re-enculturating Koreans about their legal and moral rights, and therefore HRE is critical for the Korean society.

HRE is rarely taught in schools as a stand-alone subject matter, and teachers have therefore not been well-equipped to teach it. The demand for HRE is growing in many countries that have been transitioning to democracy in the past fifteen years (United Nations, 2000). It is penetrating schools (mainly through different disciplines such as history or social sciences), but also non-formal educational settings (e.g., non-profit organizations). It is often aimed at marginalized communities in poor countries, which are the most in need of knowing their rights, and which are not easy to access. I therefore

believe that the Internet is an adequate tool to reach out to HRE educators of various backgrounds and settings in remote areas. Moreover, I will argue that HRE educators, perhaps more than other educators, need strong foundations in participatory, learner-centered, and dialogic pedagogies, because HRE is a subject where debate, rather than rote learning, is critical to learning. Based on my past online teaching experience, I believe that the Internet is a valuable tool that can be used to pursue such constructivist teaching and learning for HRE.

My research therefore explores how an online professional development course employing constructivist teaching methods did, if at all, support international educators' learning about HRE. More specifically, I investigated ways in which a diverse set of human rights educators communicated and learned in an online course about context-sensitive and controversial issues related to HRE, taught through constructivist methods such as critical reflection and peer learning.

To that end, I observed and analyzed the learning experiences of eleven educators participating in a 12-week online course for HRE educators. These educators came from eight different countries (i.e., two developed and six developing countries) and were teaching HRE in a variety of educational settings (e.g., grassroots non-profit organizations, universities, international agencies), to a variety of audiences (e.g., grade-school and college students, NGO activists, government officials). Moreover, most of them had prior experience with HRE, albeit in different contexts. The course content dealt with controversial moral and political issues, about which the educators were likely

to feel passionate (e.g., universal women's rights vs. local traditions, combating discrimination in one's own community). Furthermore, I anticipated that the course's constructivist teaching methods would encourage these educators to discuss their own views and to critically reflect upon their own as well as other educators' understandings of the course content.

Considering this complex setting, my research questions focused on the educators' learning experiences. Taking into account the educators' own stated goals for taking this course, I observed and analyzed their learning processes with an emphasis on how they communicated about context-sensitive and controversial human rights issues, through computer-mediated communications. I also investigated how they made sense of their learning processes and outcomes. Therefore, my overarching research question was: *how did these educators describe and understand the goals, processes, and results of their online learning about HRE in this course?*

I collected data from their course applications, online learning activities (i.e., session-based online discussions and occasional assignments), two course surveys (i.e., pre- and end-course), three telephone interviews (i.e., early-, end-, and post-course), and informal, ongoing email exchanges with them throughout the course.

My telephone interviews were semi-structured, and I used a grounded theory approach to analyze them (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). I also adapted some ethnographic approaches to the online environment (a methodology called virtual ethnography) to analyze the

ongoing online data, in order to investigate the ways these educators communicated with each other and made sense of their online learning experiences.

My main finding from the online observation was that there were fairly few interactions among the research participants, even though they had all expressed their excitement about communicating with a diverse group of HRE educators at the beginning of the course. My interview analysis showed that this was partly due to the difficulty of discussing controversial HRE issues online. Given the lack of personal information they had about each other, the research participants made many assumptions about each other and “played it safe,” by both self-censoring what they wrote online to avoid “hurting others” and refraining from sharing their emotions when they indeed felt intimidated. In that way, this online course faced some of the same difficulties that the research participants were facing in their own face-to-face HRE teaching settings. At the same time, the research participants also explained how the online nature of the course, together with this particular course structure and facilitation, also made it harder for them to learn from each other.

My main conclusions are that:

1. HRE is indeed a sensitive topic, which is therefore challenging to teach not only in a face-to-face setting but more so in an online learning environment partly because online teaching and learning is still novel to most HRE educators.
2. HRE is controversial because it involves issues of power and privileges. There is an ongoing debate about whether human rights are universal or culturally relative,

which often raises the possibility of conflict about whose understanding of human rights should prevail, about whose ethics is right or wrong.

3. Power relationships played themselves out in subtle ways in this course, through prejudices based mainly on country of origin (developed or developing, Western or non-Western), age, profession, and level of education; through perceived discrimination based on those prejudices; through perceived intimidation resulting from these prejudices and discriminations; through lack of awareness about these prejudices; and through resistance once prejudices became revealed. All of this resulted in a lower level of interactions among course participants than they would have liked and probably than would have been desired to maximize their online learning about HRE.
4. HRE instructors therefore need to manage the emotions that such power issues raise. Emotions are a powerful motivator to learn about human rights but can also be overwhelming. Due to the lack of non-verbal communications, online learning makes harder for human rights educators reveal and share their emotions.
5. Online HRE instructors also need to deal with the interfaces between the online course culture, the educators' local cultures, and the universal human rights culture. Understanding and mediating these cultural interfaces in an online learning environment is therefore critical.

I draw lessons from this particular online course, from my knowledge of relevant literature, and from my own experiences in HRE and online professional development to suggest a set of teaching strategies for online instructors (see Table 8 on page 232).

While this dissertation emphasizes a particular aspect of the online course, online interactions among peers which happened not to work out very well, its intention is not to pose a judgment on the course or on the instructors. As I will point out on several occasions, the research participants turned out to be quite satisfied with this course overall, and several aspects of the course design and instruction were in my view of high quality.

II. RESEARCH PURPOSE

A. PERSONAL CONTEXT

I still remember one of the most puzzling moments in my life. It was the time when my elementary school bus on a field trip in 1979 entered the De-Militarized Zone that still separates the two Koreas. As a South Korean, I had learned to dread North Korea. Yet, I discovered that this territory, the most fortified in the world, was simply a quiet and peaceful place, full of wild flowers, trees, birds and animals. Soon after, however, I was horrified by hearing radio-broadcasted insults between the two Koreas through the amplifiers over the air, by being observed by heavily armed soldiers, by watching the most miserable pictures of the Korean War, and by walking along a part of the 240-kilometer Truce Line of electronic fences. That night, I found myself struggling with the task of writing a report about my field trip experience. Neither teachers nor textbooks had taught me how and why this tragic division of my country had to happen, and how I should know, understand, and live with this unique circumstance. It was just too overwhelming for a seven year-old Korean girl to experience that formidable situation and to comprehend why human beings cannot live together peacefully without fear and hatred towards each other. Due to that unbearable stress and confusion, I finally burst into tears.

At that time, South Korea had a national curfew, regular air-defense drills, countless armed North Korean infiltrators, complete censorship of the press, and mock elections.

The country was still under a military dictatorship, resulting in continuous university students' riots. Although there was a moral education in schools, its main role was to create a fearful image of North Korea and of its shameless, cold-blooded, and insane people. For example, I remember believing that North Koreans really had red faces, as shown in my elementary school textbooks. Moreover, 35 years of Japanese colonialism and three years of Korean War at the hands of Great Powers had not only destroyed the physical infrastructure of the Korean peninsula, but also disordered many aspects of Korean values and beliefs in the society.

Through my college years, I witnessed and participated in the democratization process of my country, which is now a democracy, or at least that is the image projected abroad. Despite the progress, the truth is that not only was our government dictatorial, but our society and people have also been, in my view, oppressive towards anyone who is believed to be *inferior* (e.g., children and women) or *different* (e.g., disabled people or foreigners). In my country, all the correct paths are so clearly delineated that it is hard to take side trails. The expectations of one's family, friends, and relatives converge, forcing people to accomplish exact steps at particular stages of life. Core principles of human rights, such as respect for diverse opinions and lifestyles, are not yet rooted in the consciousness and the attitudes of many Koreans, due to the cultural traditions and reverence to authority that have prevailed in Korea for centuries. As a result, not only have individual rights and personal freedom been largely marginalized and ignored, but also debate, self-exploration of new ideas and life-styles, and acceptance of others' habits are mostly undervalued and underdeveloped. The case of South Korea illustrates that

human rights cannot simply be legislated, but must be internalized and practiced by every citizen of a country.

Furthermore, the existing moral education curriculum remains tainted by traditional customs that are antagonist to human rights to some extent. (I received a Teaching Certificate in Moral Education from the South Korean Ministry of Education in 1994.) For example, Confucian ethics consists of four tenets, related to the four fundamental social relationships: (i) a subject must obey his king and the king must rule in the interest of his subjects, (ii) likewise, a son must respect his father and a father must take care of his son, (iii) husband and wife have separate duties in the household, and (iv) friends must be loyal to each other. Although these tenets have had some desirable effects to make the Korean society harmonious, they have also, in my view, been interpreted and applied in ways that oppress people by age, gender, and social status. During my college years, for example, I worked as a volunteer for disabled people in the Cham-Bit Sungyoheo (True Light Foundation) for four years; and, as a member and elected President of the Shalom Choir at my university, I visited numerous prisons, rehabilitation centers, orphan houses, elderly homes, and red districts near US military bases in South Korea, where I witnessed what I would consider human rights violations against all these marginalized people in South Korean society.

When oppressive cultural and moral values conflict with fundamental human rights principles (e.g., dignity and equality), HRE provides critical and effective language and tools, including international conventions to defend and promote the rights of the

oppressed, but also references to debate the boundaries of what may be right or wrong in different societies. Therefore, I believe that HRE should be integrated into the Korean society in general and into the Korean schools in particular.

However, there are five difficulties in implementing HRE in Korean schools. (The government is aware of them and has made some attempts to remedy them, but the educational has proved difficult to change.)

1. The Korean educational system maintains a top-down approach and closed organizational structure that undermines the autonomy in individual schools and teachers. Schools must keep up with a uniform and restricted national curriculum that focuses on repetitive and quantitative-oriented knowledge taught under very tight time constraints.
2. The Korean educational system is quantitative test-driven and very competitive. From very early years, students prepare for the one-day college entrance examination, the result of which largely determines one's career and life. One's job prospect, social network, and even marriage depend heavily on which college the person attends. Assessment throughout the school years is mostly based on right-or-wrong answer tests and is geared toward establishing a hierarchy among students based on test scores. Debate, nuances, or exploring alternative perspectives are not only unwelcome, but also too risky for students and teachers alike.
3. 700 years of Chinese Confucianism and 35 years of Japanese colonialism trained Korean school personnel as well as students to comply with bureaucratic and

dictatorial orders without much resistance and criticism. Debate and negotiation, which are vital to HRE, are simply incompatible with the school culture.

4. South Korea has been a very male-dominated society, which is manifest in the superior status of boys over girls in classrooms. People place higher expectations for obedience on girls than on boys, and girls are discouraged from taking an active role in participating and collaborating in classroom activities and discussions.
5. Since South Korea has preserved its homogeneity of race, language, and culture for more than five thousand years, teachers and students are rarely exposed to situations where different ideas, beliefs, and experiences meet and challenge one another.

I chose my college major, educational technology, in reaction to the didactic pedagogy that dominates the Korean educational system. Among all the branches of education, educational technology was the one that allowed some space for creativity in South Korea. In fact, as I explain in the next section, this choice offered a valuable avenue to incorporate HRE and non-didactic pedagogy such as constructivism through innovative educational technologies.

Nevertheless, my college experiences and voluntary social work confirmed that the five difficulties mentioned above were deeply embedded in the Korean educational system and in the society at large. As an educator, I wanted to make a difference not only at an individual level, but also at a societal level. At the same time, I realized how impossible it would have been for me to stray from the mainstream and make a difference in Korean education. I therefore chose to leave my country to study further in the United States in

1994. My goal was to explore new approaches to education and to gain credibility through a higher degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE), so that when I go back to South Korea to implement progressive changes in education, people would listen to me despite the fact that I am a relatively young woman.

Between my Masters and Doctorate studies at HGSE (1997-1999), I worked as a researcher at the Centre for Teacher Education and Development of the Open University in the United Kingdom (UK). Although my primary task was to explore the Internet's potential for teacher education in the UK, I also had various opportunities to offer workshops for teacher educators from Egypt, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, Hungary and Albania. Through these experiences, I learned about two very important issues in education.

First, I realized the critical role of teachers in making any changes in education. It was rather shocking for me to admit that my learning experiences in South Korea, where most if not all teachers simply followed the government's prescribed textbooks, had thus far inhibited my understanding and imagination of teachers as "change agents" in education.

Second, my international experiences in both developed and developing countries helped me to discover that the educational difficulties that I identified in South Korea also existed across national boundaries to different extents. In fact, South Korea is but one of the numerous countries that have transitioned to democracy since the end of the Cold War. Recognizing the surging demand for HRE, the United Nations declared 1995–2004

the Decade of HRE (United Nations, 2000). Although rooted in my personal experience in South Korea, the relevance of my research interests is therefore global. This discovery, together with the practical difficulty of doing research on a real HRE course in South Korea, led me to analyze an online professional development course for HRE educators around the world.

This summarizes my personal interest in HRE, educational technology, non-didactic pedagogy, and professional development for teachers. I delve deeper into each of these topics in the next section.

B. THEORETICAL CONTEXT

My research is based on four bodies of literature, whose intersection I reviewed in my qualifying paper (Joo, 2002): HRE, constructivist teaching methods, teacher professional development courses, and the Internet's use in education. I briefly explain below the synergy among these topics.

1. Human rights education

Many have argued that the most critical resource for protecting and advancing human rights is the consciousness of people (Baxi, 1997); and education, at its best, is the development of consciousness (Freire, 1999). According to Koenig (1997), successful HRE must originate from the people *themselves* as they become conscious of their

problems, identify their needs, clarify human rights norms, and develop and undertake a course of action to solve the problems they face. Andreopoulos and Claude (1997) claim that, only when people are engaged in learning about human rights in the context of their struggles and their daily lives, “human rights education becomes a fully comprehensive and holistic value system, which is capable of guiding our lives beneficially and preventing abuses of our human rights.” Through this process of empowerment, HRE aims to guide and advance people’s authentic knowledge construction and their critical thinking skills (Meintjes, 1997).

HRE is a distinct subject matter, although it is typically not a stand-alone subject matter in schools. It is sometimes taught through other subject matters such as history, social sciences, or literature. But in most schools, it is not taught at all, although several countries (e.g., Philippines) have started to introduce it in school curricula under the impetus of the United Nations’ Decade of HRE (1995-2004). Besides schools, non-profit organizations play a critical role as providers of HRE for both adult and children. When non-profit organizations provide HRE training, it is generally with a clear purpose and for a clear audience. It is often about helping victims of specific human rights violations develop that consciousness or awareness about their rights, thereby encouraging them to take corrective action, for instance.

This distinguishes HRE from civic, citizenship, and moral education. Civic education is about teaching the civil and political rights and duties of citizens in a particular country. Civic education is therefore possible in a dictatorship, where the focus would be on duties

and where rights would be limited. Citizenship education is similar, although broader as it encompasses non-legal aspects of citizenship, such as encouraging activism through civil society organizations. But citizenship education remains limited to learning to be good citizens of a particular political entity – possibly at the cost of other societies. When I was working in the UK, for instance, I felt that the widespread concern over citizenship education all over Europe had a lot to do with a political agenda of European nation-building. Moral education is about learning to be good to others. It is less related to civil and political rights. But, like civic and citizenship education, it can differ across countries, as it is based on value systems that are embedded in particular cultures. By contrast, HRE is grounded in a body of international law that ought to be applied universally. So HRE ought to be fairly consistent across countries and cultures.

Nevertheless, one of the main findings of the evaluation of the United Nations' Decade of HRE was that countries around the world were very much adapting HRE to their own historical and cultural situations (United Nations, 2000, 2004a and 2004b). This finding relates to the well-known human rights debate of universalism versus cultural relativism. Relativists claim that human rights may be adapted to particular cultural settings, especially when fairly broad human rights principles are translated into precise laws. Universalists are wary that cultural relativism is used by some governments to downgrade rights (for example, Confucianism may be invoked to spurn human rights in South Korea). However, the reality is that people disagree on what ought to constitute human rights even within a given society. That is not surprising because, when it comes to detailed interpretations of broad rights (e.g., the right to security or to privacy), one right

often clashes with another (e.g., limiting privacy to fight terrorism). So the issue of universalism vs. relativism is not only relevant to international debates, but also to national ones.

In the United States, for instance, the human rights issues that remain heavily contested include gay marriage, abortion, death penalty, affirmative action, school prayers, stem cell research, the tension between free speech and political campaign finance laws, and others. Looked at in that way, it becomes clear that HRE is not only about teaching what is right and what is wrong, based on international legal standards, but it is also about learning to debate on the “maybes”. In my view, two key attitudes that HRE ought to teach are to “agree to disagree” and to “keep dialoguing” despite fundamental ethical disagreements. So the tension between universalism and relativism is very much present within HRE itself, as on the one hand HRE teaches and promotes existing universal norms, and on the other hand it teaches to debate what their boundaries ought to be.

In that regard, Amnesty International offers an interesting classification of key elements of HRE (Amnesty International, 1996). According to this framework, the essential learning activities in HRE must aim to improve learners’ knowledge (e.g., learning about existing human rights documents and which rights they contain, and about the universal nature of human rights), skills (e.g., listening to others, critical thinking), as well as attitudes (e.g., not just understanding, but also “living” or practicing the values that underpin human rights, such as dignity of all human beings, or preference of cooperation to conflict). Learning and teaching these skills and especially attitudes is much more

challenging than the rote-learning of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This objective therefore calls for an innovative pedagogy.

2. Constructivism

In order to foster learners' consciousness of human rights, deep innovations in pedagogy are essential. Recent research shows that teaching HRE effectively is a challenging task for educators because it requires pedagogical approaches involving *active participation* and *collaboration* among educators and learners, *multidisciplinary* and *cross-cultural perspectives*, and the development of *creative* and *critical thinking skills* (Joo, 2000). According to Davis (2000), HRE curricula must employ pedagogies that stress *questioning, use of evidence, and problem-solving skills*. Moreover, meaningful HRE addresses *topics related to the daily lives of learners*, enabling them to construct and internalize their understanding of issues according to their own needs, interests, and aspirations (Joo, 2000). The *democratic and participatory learning experience* of all learners is also critical to cultivate learners' attitudinal and behavioral changes with respect to protecting and promoting human rights (Davis, 2000). In fact, I have emphasized in the previous section that democratic debate is not just a teaching method for HRE. It is the very subject matter of HRE: HRE is in large part about learning to debate moral dilemmas.

All these elements are embedded in the constructivist theory of education, which is why I have chosen to focus on this educational theory. Constructivist approaches to learning and teaching stipulate that people must construct new knowledge and understandings

based on their prior knowledge and experience, through critical inquiry and reflection (Bransford et al., 2000; Ravitz et al., 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). Building on learners' own motivation and effort, constructivist pedagogy emphasizes deep understanding of subject matter, authentic and multiple approaches to instructional materials, flexible yet guided inquiry, and ongoing and multi-sourced assessments (Wiske, 1998a). In order to create a constructivist learning environment, educators should provide particularly meaningful contexts in which learners can identify and pursue their own needs, actively engage in the learning process, and apply ongoing critical inquiry and reflection to their learning experience. Moreover, according to constructivism, educators should pay attention to "the incomplete understandings, the false beliefs, and the naïve renditions of concepts" in learners' prior knowledge and experience (Bransford et al., 2000), and should promote learning activities that can help learners to exchange, critique, argue, prove, and reconstruct their knowledge (Fosnot, 1996), among each other and with the educator. When appropriately employed, constructivism also allows educators to "fashion teaching and learning so that *all* students have the chance to learn and to demonstrate what they have learned" (Gardner, 2000, p. 32). Such pedagogy may thus connect abstract human rights concepts to learners' concrete lives and therefore help them start practicing human rights in a more authentic way.

Constructivism is thus in opposition to traditional teacher-centered transmission models of education. Many education scholars have criticized education that simply transmits knowledge from educators to learners through passive and didactic instructions. Freire (1999) does not hesitate to name this the "banking" concept of education, predicated on

the assumption of the fundamentally narrative character of teaching and learning. The notion of narration, with an educator as the narrator, leads learners to memorize the narrated content mechanically. By receiving, filing, and storing deposits of knowledge and withdrawing them later, learners are considered to perform their duties. Freire argues that if we believe that knowledge emerges through invention and reinvention, our view of knowledge as “motionless, static, compartmentalized and predictable (p. 67)” needs to be challenged. He claims, instead, that knowledge is “restless, impatient and continuing (p. 68),” which demands ongoing learning (Freire & Macedo, 1998).

Since the memorization of factual information is insufficient to acquire and develop knowledge in many disciplines and particularly HRE, the traditional educational paradigm of mass production based on ready-made knowledge must be replaced by more individual and more autonomous approaches towards continuous life-long learning (Riel, 2000; Pelgrum, 1997). Globalization and the “information society” put new demands on the educational system to produce adaptable workers and professionals. They accentuate the importance of helping learners construct their own rigorous understanding by actively participating in the learning process, performing ongoing inquiry on subject matters, making sense of their learning relating to everyday life context, and critically reflecting upon their understanding (Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Bransford et al., 2000; Duffy & Jonassen, 1992; Perkins, 1992). I believe that constructivism offers what educators need to overcome the narrow, skill-oriented curriculum and to advance deeper understanding that allows learners to be “critical thinkers, problem posers, and problem solvers who are

able to work through complexity, beyond the routine, and live productively in this rapid changing world” (Perrone, 1998, p. 14).

Teaching methods must also be adapted according to different cultural backgrounds (Joo, 1999). My coursework on critical pedagogy has helped me appreciate the tension between acknowledging the sociopolitical, economic, and historical realities that shape both educators’ and learners’ lives and acknowledging the need to foster their struggle to make new meanings and develop cultural practices that are transformative and liberatory.

There exist several frameworks to help instructors apply constructivism. One such framework was created by Bransford et al. (2000), which identifies four dimensions of the constructivist learning environment. These dimensions are: (i) knowledge-centered (promoting access to ideas, assumptions, and conceptions of others arranged in meaningful ways), (ii) learner-centered (engaging learners with their own goals and a willingness to construct new knowledge), (iii) assessment-centered (helping educators and learners monitor what the latter are learning), and (iv) community-centered (developing norms for the classroom and school, and connections to the outside world).

Another framework is the Teaching for Understanding (TfU) framework.¹ Encouraging educators to be primary decision makers about curriculum, this framework provides a set

¹ The Teaching for Understanding Framework was developed at HGSE by Dr. Stone Wiske (my advisor), Professor Howard Gardner, Professor David Perkins, and Dr. Vito Perrone, in collaboration with many other educators. I used this framework in my doctoral course works, to develop a curriculum on HRE in the Korean context and to help other educators develop their own curricula. I participated in two research projects at HGSE.

of clear and coherent guidelines for designing and developing a curriculum that is engaging and thought-provoking, and thereby enhances learners' understanding.

Developed through collaboration between university researchers and schoolteachers, the Teaching for Understanding framework helps educators to:

- 1) identify what topics are worth understanding in their subject matters (*Generative Topics*),
- 2) clarify a set of clear goals as to what learners need to understand to place learners' understanding at the center of curriculum development (*Understanding Goals*),
- 3) advance learners' learning through guided inquiry and use performance-based activities to demonstrate learners' understanding (*Understanding Performances*),
and
- 4) monitor learners' progress in learning through multiple forms of ongoing assessment and provide feedback for improvement (*Ongoing Assessments*).

(Blythe et al., 1998; Wiske, 1998)

3. Professional development courses for educators

Constructivism is appealing to many educators, but it is not easy to apply it in practice.

There is a certain "constructivism disease", as educators have heard a lot about constructivism but actually misunderstand this pedagogical approach or are not adequately prepared to apply it. Constructivism is demanding on the educator, who is the critical facilitator of learning and needs to be more knowledgeable in order to understand their learners better, to guide ongoing and often collaborative inquiries, and to assess more flexible learning experiences. Most educators have not been taught through

constructivism, and few have been trained to teach with constructivist pedagogy. This is particularly true internationally, as constructivist theory is less known and practiced outside of North America and Western Europe.

The Teaching, Learning, and Computing (TLC) 1998 National Survey² shows that applying constructivist pedagogy is a real challenge for educators in the United States (US). US teachers were asked to indicate their beliefs in what constitutes good pedagogy and its impact on their teaching practice using paragraph-length vignettes contrasting traditional versus constructivist teaching approaches and statements of different teaching philosophy (Ravitz et al., 2000). Although most teachers indicated that they valued more constructivist teaching approaches such as inquiry-oriented and student-centered pedagogies, at the same time they felt more comfortable with and think their students also preferred a traditional teaching style of teacher-talk-and-student-listen approach. Ravitz et al. (2000) interpret this gap between teachers' teaching philosophy and their actual practice as teachers' own recognition about the hardship of carrying out constructivist pedagogy in classrooms where traditional transmission models of teaching and learning are still prevailing. In general, however, teachers in this survey believe in a much more constructivist basis for teaching than they are often given credit for holding.

² The Teaching, Learning, and Computing (TLC) 1998 National Survey collected data about the relationship between teacher pedagogy and their use of computers in teaching from 4,083 teachers from the 4th through the 12th grades in all subjects except physical education and special education in the United States. Each teacher completed a 20-page questionnaire to indicate their knowledge, practice, and beliefs about teaching and learning (Ravitz et al., 2000).

Professional development courses are therefore critical to help educators apply constructivist pedagogy. Teaching has been historically regarded as an isolated profession. Once a teacher closes her classroom doors, nobody actually knows what is going on inside. Moreover, many teachers rarely share or discuss their teaching practices with other colleagues and do not have enough access to resources to keep them up to date throughout their career. The planning periods in schools are few and often occur in isolation, and even group meetings are usually focused on classroom management or institutional matters, rarely providing the opportunity for individual teachers to exchange their questions and concerns (Kerrey & Isakson, 2000). Day (1999) urges professional development courses to offer opportunities to complement this culture of individualism among teachers. Through the opportunities of collaboration, teachers can learn how to share their knowledge and practices with colleagues, and how to work together to improve teaching strategies. As Darling-Hammond (1997) points out, effective professional development cannot be adequately cultivated without the development of more substantial professional discourse and engagement in communities of practice.

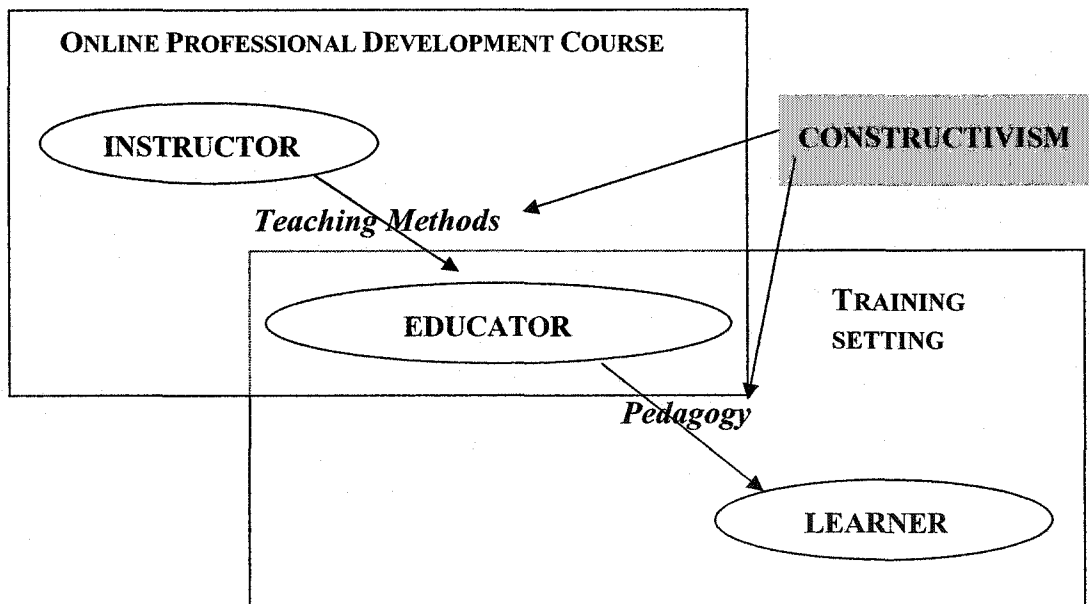
Professional development courses are also critical in allowing educators to learn about the HRE subject matter. In order to teach HRE effectively, it is important that educators themselves internalize human rights concepts (Davis, 2000; Amnesty International, 1996). And again, just as constructivism is well suited to develop learners' consciousness about human rights, it is also useful to improve educators' knowledge on the subject. A common mistake in designing professional development courses is that their teaching methods do not mirror the pedagogical approaches that educators are expected to apply in

their training setting or classroom. For example, educators are often asked through lectures to learn about learner participation, and through pre-planned procedures to learn about developing critical thinking skills. I believe that professional developers should apply what I call the “mirror principle” (see Figure 1). That is, if they want to teach educators about constructivist pedagogy, their professional development courses should themselves apply constructivism, so that educators are truly exposed to the learning experiences they will require from their learners.

Moreover, HRE educators throughout the world – especially school teachers – frequently face the difficulty of teaching HRE in isolation and without training tailored to the resource-constrained realities of many remote areas (Joo, 2000). For example, Davis (2000) points out the challenge of producing high-quality HRE materials, which need to be “simultaneously country specific and international, and include local or national concepts of the citizen, as well as including the various, universal conventions on rights” (p.4). In certain places, particularly those where HRE is most needed, teaching HRE requires educators to take risks in their personal and professional lives, because they typically confront oppressions by governments or other powerful actors. They therefore need safe and trusting environments where they can share their knowledge and experiences through ongoing dialogue and can receive emotional and social support. However, conventional professional development courses (on any subject matter) tend to be short-term and fragmented workshops, which by necessity of their timeframes mainly deal with single topics. Financial constraints translate into large groups of educators and lack of personal attention, and educators have to spend time and money to travel between

their classrooms or training setting to the professional development place, while making sure that everything is well arranged to cover their teaching time. Moreover, it is hard to sustain ongoing professional development and to interact with a network of educators in between workshops. Educators who are eager to learn new instructional methods and keep up with changes in their profession therefore tend to be disappointed (Kerrey & Isakson, 2000). Online professional development courses have been developed to address these difficulties.

FIGURE 1: Two roles of educators



4. Internet use in education

In my qualifying paper (Joo, 2002), I synthesized theoretical considerations and empirical findings about the use of the Internet to strengthen constructivist approaches in professional development courses for educators. I found many hypotheses about the

promises of online courses, an increasing number of pilot projects attempting to achieve them, some anecdotal evidence of success, but very few thorough evaluations of the actual impact of online courses.

Based on my findings, the following ten features of the Internet have been identified as potential contributions to educators' learning and teaching (see Joo, 2002 for complete references supporting these findings):

- free educators from time and space constraints,
- offer real-life, concrete, and up-to-date information and resources,
- provide interactive tools,
- accommodate multimedia materials,
- provide monitoring tools,
- connect broader networks of people and their diverse knowledge,
- facilitate one-to-one and group collaboration,
- promote asynchronous communication,
- provide both local & global resources, and
- disseminate information & resources fast and easily.

In the following few paragraphs, I give an overview of how these features support various elements of constructivist pedagogy (see Joo, 2002 for a more detailed discussion).

Online courses do not require educators to leave their working environment and travel to the professional development site. Rather, educators can choose the time at which they work on their professional development course. Online courses can therefore accommodate a longer time period for educators to process their learning than conventional one-shot formats. This allows for deeper understanding and reflection to advance robust subject knowledge. The Internet also makes it easier to disseminate, categorize and retrieve vast amounts of knowledge. By connecting educators with broader networks of people and their diverse knowledge, and by facilitating access to real-life, concrete, and up-to-date information, the Internet can also help them to gain deeper understanding of their subject matters.

The Internet's one-to-one and group communication facilities can also contribute to educators' transformative learning by facilitating dialogue and feedback among educators in the course of professional development activities. The asynchronous aspect of online discussion allows educators to pose for critical reflection, and self-tracking tools can make it easier for them to grasp the evolution of their thought process. Online courses spread over several weeks or months also allow educators to practice what they learn in their teaching environments, and to use that experience as reflective material for their professional development course.

The Internet provides an educational tool to develop a structured curriculum unit, applying a set of constructivist guidelines such as the Teaching for Understanding framework. To conduct guided inquiry, instructors (in professional development courses)

or educators (in their classrooms or non-formal teaching environments) can let learners use the Internet's interactive features and multimedia materials to actively explore the vast amount of information available online. Moreover, learners' ongoing works can be displayed for continuous and frequent assessments.

Learners' motivation for such guided inquiry can be fostered by focusing on their own needs and abilities. Because the Internet offers real-life, concrete materials for practical knowledge, as well as both local and global resources, educators can use them to create more authentic and context-based learning experience. A variety of multimedia materials also help instructors and educators better respond to individual learners' different learning styles and pace, in accordance with the theory of multiple intelligences.

Certain features of online professional development courses represent challenges for both educators and learners. Good online courses therefore need to face them upfront and incorporate "learning to teach and learn online" as a course component. These challenges include managing learners' time, effective facilitation of online group discussions and effective one-on-one coaching, paying special attention to people who are less comfortable in written communication, and maintaining discipline and focus in the use of open, diverse and interactive online learning environments.

The Internet can also facilitate the creation of "communities of practice" among educators by greatly enhancing communication. Using a variety of interactive and multimedia tools allows for "distributed learning", i.e., a set of collaborative learning

experiences distributed across different settings (e.g., classroom, home, workplace).

Moreover, educators can use the Internet to mentor one another within safe, supportive, and encouraging communities.

Finally, online professional development courses can incorporate monitoring tools, such as time stamps, to foster accountability among participants. The Internet may also contribute to the promotion of democratic and participatory learning in classrooms by changing the roles of educators and learners in the use of the Internet. Educators are expected to be less authoritative and more approachable in the process of teaching and learning. Living in the age of globalization, the Internet can also deliver world-class local and global materials to marginalized people and places, and in reverse make the diversity of the world available to every professional development course or classroom.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I reviewed the four bodies of literature presented in the previous chapter for my qualifying paper. My original dissertation plan (at the time I was writing my qualifying paper) was to design a “best practice” online constructivist professional development course for HRE, deliver it to a set of HRE educators, and test whether the potential of the Internet to support constructivist learning could really be realized. However, upon reflection on that literature review, I realized that there were two important issues relevant to HRE that lacked research: first, the issue of online communication on controversial or context-sensitive issues, and second, a related methodological issue of analyzing online courses from the perspective of the learners to understand why they behave and communicate as they do online.

First, there is scant empirical research on how people actually engage in an online course. I am especially interested in investigating the impact of computer-mediated communications on the exchange of context-sensitive information and ideas, which is very relevant to HRE, notably given the debate between universalism and cultural relativism. On the one hand, Postman (1998, 1992) speculates that information exchanged via computers is no longer connected to meaningful personal and social contexts, and therefore computers should be used mostly to communicate “context-free information” (1992) rather than “knowledge, certainly not wisdom” (1998). Moreover, computer-mediated communications remove facial expressions and reduce social cues

(Dubrovsky et al, 1991; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986); this enables people to disguise their identities and therefore potentially to be less authentic and honest (Jones, 1999).

Other studies have argued that online communication can be very engaging, involve “virtual feeling”, create “Net persona”, and encourage people to share intimate stories with strangers, which they might not do in face-to-face interactions (Barnes, 2001; Turkle, 1995). Constructivist-oriented studies say that computer-mediated communications are not simply a collection of written texts, but support people’s ongoing engagement to construct their own social worlds based on what is most meaningful to them (Baym, 1995; Lee, 1994; Mantovani, 1994). As Paccagnella (1997) claims, “relationships on the Internet can be altogether more or less democratic, uninhibited or egalitarian than in real life, depending on an intricate pattern of elements.”

Second, the literature on online professional development courses is very much centered on the instructor’s or course designer’s perspectives. But taking constructivism seriously requires studying the learner’s perspectives. For HRE in particular, it is very important to understand how learners make meaning of their online interactions and learning processes.

Exploring further the contrasting views about online communication about personal and sensitive issues from the learners’ perspectives is essential for understanding and fulfilling the potential of online professional development courses, particularly in HRE. Instead of designing and testing my own course, I therefore decided to observe an online

professional development course for HRE educators provided by a third party (a non-profit organization), and to focus my inquiry upon the learners' online learning processes, paying particular attention to the ways they understand and practice how to respect diverse perspectives, how to negotiate different views, and how to think critically and reflectively about HRE.

While I acknowledge my positive preconceptions about constructivist online professional development courses derived from my literature review, my purpose was to investigate a concrete course not on the basis of how it ought to benefit learners according to a particular theoretical framework, but in terms of how it is actually experienced by the learners. I believed that such in-depth inquiry into learners' perspectives on their own online learning is a critical stepping stone for ultimately improving the quality of online professional development courses.

In order to put the educators' online learning processes in context and fully understand them, I also needed to comprehend their initial goals for taking this online course at the outset, and their perceptions about whether learning outcomes at the end of the online course had achieved these goals.

Therefore, the overarching question guiding my research was: **How did the eleven research participants describe and understand the goals, processes, and results of their online learning about HRE in this course?**

More specifically my research questions were:

1. Goals: *How did the eleven research participants describe their reasons for taking this online course about HRE?*

I examined these educators' stated reasons for taking this online course. This question laid the context for questions 2 and 3.

2. Processes: *How did the eleven research participants communicate about the course content in the online learning environment, and how did they describe their online learning processes?*

I first observed and analyzed the patterns of behavior of these educators in the online learning environment, keeping particular track of their communication with peers and instructors in this course. As I noted in my introduction, however, there were not many online interactions among the course participants. Therefore, I focused on how the eleven research participants explained these behavioral patterns through the End-Course and the Post-Course Interviews.

In particular, I investigated the ways in which the research participants did or did not deeply engage in the online course discussions and how they reflected upon their own perceptions of the online learning processes.

3. Results: *How did the eleven research participants describe and make sense of what they learned in this online course about HRE?*

I collected data to illuminate what the research participants regarded as their learning outcomes in relation to what they identified as their reasons for taking the course in question 1. My goal was to highlight what and how they understood and made sense of this online course about HRE.

IV. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I explain in detail a) how I developed the overall research design, b) what the course setting was, including design and teaching method, (c) how I recruited the research participants in my study, d) how I collected the data, and e) how I analyzed the research data from various sources.

A. OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN

My research is a qualitative case study of an online professional development course, focusing on eleven international educators' learning experiences. Qualitative inquiry, as Merriam (1998) points out, investigates "meaning in context (p.1)"; and the researcher's prior knowledge and experience would help "focus on the problem of interest and select the units of analysis most relevant to the problem (p.1)." From the outset, I was interested in understanding the common and salient online learning experiences across the eleven research participants in my study, rather than their individual cases. In order to understand the collective online learning experiences, however, I first needed to focus on each individual's online learning experiences and then discover patterns and structures across the eleven research participants (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Therefore, my overall research design encompassed both individual and collective levels of data analysis.

In order to fully understand individual and collective meaning-making processes in this particular online course, my study employed two qualitative research methodologies: virtual ethnography and semi-structured telephone interviews.

1. Virtual Ethnography

Ethnography is a well-established methodology to explore how people make meaning of their ongoing lives and their worlds (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). It assumes that meaning-making processes are highly specific to a given community and that researchers must first discover *what* a given community of people actually do and the reasons they give for doing it before researchers can perform interpretive analysis on people's actions (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999a).

This is the kind of understanding I aimed for in my study: I wanted to analyze what the research participants did in an online course and how they made sense of their learning experiences. However, because I was studying the ongoing experiences of learners in an online learning environment, I had to use an adaptive ethnographic methodology called virtual ethnography. Virtual ethnography shares several key features of more traditional, face-to-face ethnography (Hine, 2000):

- I as a researcher was the primary tool for data collection and analysis.
- I emphasized the perspectives of the participants in my research setting.
- My prolonged engagement with the participants helped me develop a deeper understanding of the online community's shared behavior.

- In my writing, I must convincingly convey my description and analysis of local phenomena (i.e., this particular online course) to my readers, who are otherwise unlikely to share my insights due to their lack of interactions and experiences with the research setting and the participants.

However, the research setting of virtual ethnography is obviously different from that of ethnography. The latter takes place in a physically bounded space to which the researcher usually travels and in which s/he is always visible to the subjects. The former occurs in a cyberspace bounded by computer-mediated communications technologies, where the researcher may or may not be visible to the subjects.

An advantage of ethnography over virtual ethnography is therefore that participant observations are richer in the former, as they can include tone-of-voice and non-verbal communicative clues, while being contextualized by vivid physical environments. Yet, even in virtual ethnography, the data consist of more than just texts, as the ethnographer can analyze the ways in which texts form conversations (who writes to whom, when), as well as the “tone” of writing, to the extent that such “tones” can be discerned in the generally informal writing style of the Internet, sometimes referred to as “online talk” (Barnes, 2001). Moreover, virtual ethnography has advantages of its own, as computer-mediated communications among subjects are automatically and accurately recorded in electronic form for later uses (Schensul et al., 1999a). According to LeCompte and Schensul (1999a), “audiovisual techniques, which involve recording behavior and speech

using electronic equipment, expand the capacity of ethnographers to observe and listen by creating a more complete and permanent record of events and speech” (p. xv).

My research setting was also different from the virtual ethnography studies that I found. Existing research concerns porous online communities such as chat rooms or listservs, where participants can freely come and go and remain mostly anonymous. It also focuses on illuminating anthropological and sociological theories on consumerism or on hidden identities (Miller & Slater, 2000; Markham, 1998; Paccagnella, 1997), and not on the basic experience of online teaching and learning.

On the contrary, my research setting was a closed online learning community where only the members of this particular online course (i.e., co-instructors and the course participants) could enter and share their experiences in HRE. Moreover, all of them were identified by their real names and therefore could be recognized by the members of the online learning community. Although a virtual ethnographic analysis of online texts alone would never be sufficient to gain a deep insight into the research participants’ understandings of their online learning experiences, I believed that I would be able to observe and document concrete and therefore useful incidents that I could further analyze through the following telephone interviews.

However, my ability to apply virtual ethnography turned out to be very limited due to the paucity of online interactions among the course participants, as I explain in Chapter 7 (Processes). For example, my fieldnotes for online observation contained an overview of

the session's topic and a brief summary of the session activity instructions. Fieldnotes are an ethnographer's way to capture data, including transcriptions of what research participants say and observations about their environment. In my case, it was easy for me to create a full and exact verbatim record of all the postings by simply copying and pasting the online messages. So I planned to use these fieldnotes not only to describe each research participant's observable behaviors and monitor the sequences of the research participants' online interactions, but more importantly to keep details of my own "active processes of interpretation and sense-making (Emerson et al., 1995, p.8)" of the online observation experiences in the form of bracketed analytic notes. However, since there was only one posting per research participant in each session, my fieldnotes mainly recorded isolated messages and my speculations on what was going on behind this online phenomenon. Therefore, I decided to investigate this particular finding, lack of peer interactions online, in great detail in my End-Course and Post-Course telephone interviews.

2. Semi-structured telephone interviews

Due to the limited online interactions, qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews turned out to be my major methodology by far. According to Weller (1998), semi-structured interviews provide an advantage of combining open-ended flexibility with a focused agenda, making them "play an important role in the development of exploratory models and the preparation for more systematic forms of investigation (p. 149)". In my case, this meant that I would pre-formulate my interview protocols based both on my original research questions and on emerging themes from the online observations, in

order to guide the telephone interviews, yet allow the research participants to reflect upon their behaviors and thoughts in the online course environment in an open-ended way.

In order to get “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973), I set up a series of three semi-structured telephone interviews per research participant at the beginning of the course (Early-Course Interviews), a few weeks after its end (End-Course Interviews), and then six months later (Post-Course Interviews). I applied the three-interview strategy by Seidman (1998) to take full advantage of each interview series. I used the first interview to establish background information about my research participants’ in HRE and teaching practices, the second one to allow them to reconstruct the details of their online learning experiences which I had observed throughout the course, and the third one to encourage them to reflect upon the meanings that their online learning experience held for them.

Another rationale for conducting interviews was to grasp each participant’s particular contexts better, that is, their lives and work outside of the online course environment, which was bound to influence both their online behaviors and meaning-making processes. Since the research participants in my study were from all over the world, telephone interview was the only possible way for me to employ.

However, I have not yet found any academic article on how to carry out effective telephone interviews, especially in a cross-cultural context. Some qualitative studies that compared the advantages of telephone interviews versus in-person interviewing only concerned telephone interviews designed to simultaneously carry out a large scale of

interviews by a group of researchers at one location (Shuy, 2002; Lavrakas, 1993; Frey, 1989; de Leeuw & van der Zouwen, 1988). In such context, the advantages of telephone interviews include “reduced interviewer effects” because interviews can be monitored in one facility, “better interviewer uniformity in delivery” due to the easier and shorter training of a group of interviewers, “greater standardization of questions” that are not biased, “researcher safety” for dangerous research sites, and “greater cost-efficiency and fast results” partly due to the computer-assisted telephone interviews (Shuy, 2002, p.540).

My telephone interview situation was quite different. Although I developed a list of interview questions in advance, I adapted most of the questions depending on the answers of each participant during a particular interview and revised both End-Course and Post-Course interview questions in light of my previous data collection and analysis. For example, I included more specific questions about online peer interactions in the End-Course interviews due to my online observation on the lack of peer interactions. For the Post-Course interviews, I developed new interview questions to understand individual perceptions of the collective excerpts from the End-course interviews that I shared before the Post-Course interviews. I also added a question about their understanding of the role of emotion in HRE, which was one of my findings from this study.

Moreover, for most cases, I asked the same question to the eleven research participants and probably got eleven, if not more, different answers, which made my analysis very challenging. Although I would agree that this form of interview provided a financial

saving for me as a doctoral student, each interview took a lot of time to conduct (between 45 and 90 minutes), transcribe, and analyze. My experience contradicted with what Groves (1989) claims: telephone interviews would take 10 to 20 percent less time than in-person interviews.

From my thirty one telephone interviews, I learned how difficult it can be to even arrange a common date and time across different time zones. I carried out some of my telephone interviews at 5:30am or 11pm, and had to exchange countless messages, sometimes for months, to schedule them. Since I had never met them in person and only talked over the telephone, I usually felt such a discomfort, almost a sense of guilt, to cut off the research participants' honest and interesting stories and redirect them toward my research questions. (I did want them to talk about their background, but I needed some information about their experience in this online course, too!) My End-Course interview with Lema in Ethiopia, for example, simply ended when my phone card ran out. Although we were at the end of our conversation – just before saying 'bye' to each other, I felt really bad and embarrassed. I tried to call him back right away, but for some reason, the phone connection did not work out. I followed up with him via emails later, but did not expect that this would happen. I also had two or three phone disconnections with the US research participants, which, when we got reconnected, led to joking about how this could happen in the United States.

One thing that I was very conscious of in applying this methodology was the level of English both for me as a researcher and for the seven international research participants

who spoke English as a second language. We all had our different level of articulation in expressing our thoughts in English and also different accents in our pronunciation. I did have the impression on several occasions that participants' answers were superficial at least in part due to the language barrier. This barrier was compounded by poor phone line and recorder quality. As a result, I lost some chunks of data simply because I could not understand parts of the recorded conversations at the transcription stage.

B. RESEARCH SETTING: THE ONLINE HRE COURSE

1. The course provider

The provider of this online course was an international agency based in the United States. At the time of my research, it had already offered several online courses to professionals, such as activists or governmental officers, involved in human rights around the world. This particular course was their first one about HRE for international educators.

I first knew about this organization in 1999 and inquired about their HRE activities. Since then, I have developed a relationship with them partly because they had a plan to develop a distance learning program for human rights-related professionals. I therefore volunteered to share my knowledge and experiences in the field of open and distance education. As this distance learning program got funded and started its development, I wanted to explore the opportunity to design and teach a small-scale online course for classroom teachers for my dissertation research. They welcomed the idea and actually

proposed that I design and teach the online course with them. At that time, I was writing my qualifying paper with this proposal in mind.

However, as I explained in Chapter 3 (Research Questions), my qualifying paper research made me realize some gaps in research on educational technologies, and therefore I became interested in exploring a more ethnographic approach to online research, focusing on learners' learning experiences. In order to do this kind of research, I realized that it would be important that I pulled myself out of the designer and teacher positions because of the validity issues. For example, how could I as a designer and teacher of an online course also carry out research with a focus on my learners? How much would my investigations reflect upon my own theoretical assumptions and previous experiences in online learning? Although I appreciated the fact that I as a qualitative researcher could never be a completely neutral, detached, and independent outsider (Pollner and Emerson, 1988), this level of involvement in the course design and delivery was not desirable for my research. Hence, I decided not to get involved in both design and delivery of the course at all.

The course was designed and delivered by two instructors, who were both experienced HRE educators. They had only limited experience in online teaching though. A third person provided technical support.

2. Course purpose and structure

According to the syllabus (see Appendix 1), the course's purpose was to introduce the international field of HRE, including presentations of programming approaches, teaching and learning resources, and related pedagogical theory. The course was intended for educators working in both the formal and non-formal sectors. The course was meant to assist them in the development of a curriculum, training, or plan to use these skills to further their efforts in HRE within formal education settings, for staff development within their own organizations, or for outreach and advocacy.

The course had the following sequence. First, it introduced the human rights framework and programming approaches and teaching materials in use worldwide. It then explored discipline-based approaches to HRE, examining programming and sample materials that came from the social sciences, the humanities, and the sciences. This was followed by a presentation of interactive teaching methods and related pedagogical theory that was then complemented by an examination of issue-oriented education and advocacy approaches to HRE, drawing examples from children's rights, women's rights and the rights of minorities.

The course was offered over a 12-week period from September 1 to November 23, 2003. Each session was one week-long. For each session, course participants had to read the instructors' lectures, read the course materials (the reading time for the whole course was estimated at 60 hours by the instructors), and contribute to the online discussion that was

initiated each week by one or two questions posed by the instructors. Table 1 shows the topic of each session as well as the discussion questions. Course participants also had to submit four individual written assignments and to develop a curriculum unit as a final project to enact their understandings of HRE. The organization providing the course awarded Certificates of Participation to those who submitted satisfactory final projects.

The organization providing the course hosted the course web environment and provided administrative and technical support. Considering connectivity problems in developing countries, the course provider used a web environment that was mostly text-based (i.e., few graphics). The web site was pass-word protected such that only course participants and instructors (and myself) could access it. That site consisted of the following places to facilitate different types of learning activities.

1. This Week contained weekly session-based course materials such as the instructors' lectures, reading assignments, and the instructions for written assignments.
2. Course Documents provided the course syllabus and major readings in a downloadable PDF format.
3. Communication Centre displayed individual course participants' and instructors' email addresses. There was also a link that enabled the course participants to send an email to all the course participants including instructors. Bios and photos of course

participants were also posted on this part of the site, though many bios and/or photos were missing.

- a. Bios & pictures: Padam, Allison, Halim, Fayola, Lynn, Zhen, Jean
- b. Bios but no pictures: Rana
- c. No bios & no pictures (only name, job title, affiliation): Ahlam, Emily, Lema

[Note: See Chapter 7 (Processes).]

4. Project Work exhibited the series of individual assignments that course participants created over the course period. Therefore, participants could freely access their own as well as fellow participants' assignments. (The participants sent their assignments to the instructors, who posted them on this page of the web site.)
5. Discussion Board hosted a series of online discussions, to which the participants were required to contribute each week. Each message in the discussion board was indexed by its date, author, thread, and by subject heading. The participants could not post their messages directly on the web site, though. Rather, they sent their messages by e-mail to the whole list of participants and instructors. The instructors then posted the e-mails on the web site. As I will explain in the process section, the thread function was actually not used: participants simply individually answered the instructors' messages, but never added messages in reaction to other participants' responses. In other words, there were only two layers of thread: one subject initiated by the instructors, and one response by each course participant.

Besides the online discussion board, the course offered two other opportunities for interaction, which will be discussed in depth in Chapter 7 (Processes):

1. Buddy System: The instructors assigned pairs of course participants, and they requested all course participants to pay special attention to their buddies' messages on the discussion board and to respond to them. (The buddy system started from Session 3 until the end.)
2. Peer Feedback on the final project: The instructors assigned small groups of course participants (from three to five) who had to share their final assignments and give feedback to two other course participants whom the instructors assigned.

The two instructors alternated among themselves to lead each session. They started with giving a written lecture to introduce the topic at the beginning of each session (on Monday). At the same time, they posted one or two questions to generate an online discussion on the topic (see Table 1). They let the discussion unfold among the course participants throughout the week without intervening. Finally, they synthesized the online discussion one or two days after the start of the next session (on the Tuesday or Wednesday of the following week).

The instructors also communicated with the course participants by e-mail on a one-to-one basis. This occurred either in response to private inquiries sent by the participants, or as individual feedback on participants' assignments.

TABLE 1: Weekly Session Titles and Online Discussion Questions

Sessions	Online Discussion Questions
1. Orientation	Q1: Why are you interested in HRE?
	Q2: Why do you want to educate other people about human rights?
2. Introduction to Human Rights	Q3: Where did you first hear about human rights?
	Q4: How do most people in your society learn about human rights?
3. Introduction to HRE	Q5: Which of the definitions of HRE in this week's readings are closest to your own definition?
	Q6: What particular feature of a HRE program that you read has inspired you, and why?
4. Models & methods of teaching HRE	Q7: Think of a positive learning experience and describe it in a few sentences. What were the factors that made this learning experience so important for you?
	Q8: Which model seems closest to the approach to HRE that your project might take?
5. Education for change: children's rights	Q9: What is the relationship between education and advocacy?
6. Education for change: women's rights	Q10: What are some of the key women's human rights issues that need to be addressed in your community?
7. Education through the social sciences	Q11: What do you think are some of the special "opportunities" for teaching human rights using the social sciences?
8. Education through the arts, humanities & sciences	Q12: Describe briefly other learning activities you know of that use subject matter from the arts, humanities, or sciences to teach about human rights?
9. Developing learning activities	Q13: What are some cultural, methodological, political or logistical features you need to consider in developing learning activities for your own community?
10. Organizing training & presentations	Q14: In what ways is a HRE training/presentation different from other kinds?
11. HRE & anti-discrimination	Q15: In order to combat discrimination your community, who needs to be educated about human rights? What strategies can you suggest to accomplish this education?
12. Future of HRE	No assignment for online discussions. Individual peer-feedback on others' final projects.

3. Teaching methods and rationale for the course design

I interviewed one of the two instructors (whom I will call by the pseudonym Linda) after the end of the course in order to gain some insights about her pedagogical philosophy, and to hear about how she reflected upon the course. (I will write about the reflection part in Chapter 7 on Processes.) I also received written answers to similar questions from the second instructor, whom I will call Julie. I did not share my findings with either of them prior to our interview or e-mail exchange in order not to bias their responses to my questions.

When asked about what was most important in teaching HRE, the instructors very much expressed the ideas that I presented in my theoretical context (Chapter 2). They valued adapting the curriculum to the audience and context, and especially putting human rights values into individual life contexts:

Linda: "How does it affect my culture, my background, and then finally, of course, my life. It's very often easy enough for people to put it into the context of government. It's very much harder to put the human rights values and principles into individual lives, and families, and your neighborhood, and your community." "It's really about your life. And how you treat other people, and how you live in the family. And that's very difficult."

The main vehicle through which this pedagogic principle were integrated into the course were the weekly discussion sessions, where course participants were invited to pull out of the readings lessons that were relevant to their contexts, and the final assignment:

Linda: "The goals were to not only convey the fundamentals of human rights education, but also to give people some of the skills to do it themselves. And that's why I felt that the project part of the course [the final assignment] was very

important for people to make something that they could actually use. So the course wasn't just information, but they assimilated the information into something that could energize them to go forward, and I hope it did that."

Linda had experience in teaching international learners, and was mindful of cross-cultural aspects of teaching HRE. For example, she always insisted on having a co-instructor who was a native of the country he was teaching in, and she regretted that the instructors of this particular online course were both North American.

Two other constructivist principles that the instructors valued very much were active and collaborative learning. When talking about a previous online course that she facilitated,

Linda said:

Linda: "They had readings and they had something more formal, but I felt that a lot of the best learning came from people almost telling the stories about themselves, about their community... And people learn so much from that... So I would not only always include that, but I would make sure it has the subject matter and be relevant to learning, but to leave a lot of space for personal storytelling and personal opinions."

Jae-Eun: "Why do you think that's important for human rights educators?"

Linda: "Oh, I think...we were talking about universal principles. What does that mean in this country? I personally think that facilitating them means to set up situations so that people can learn from each other's experiences. And that's one way if they can do that. The participants bring a lot to the course, and the course needs to be set up to maximize what they have to contribute, and it has advantages."

Jae-Eun: "Can you say more about why you think that the discussions and dialogues..."

Linda: "Well, I think you have to honor people's experiences. You have to understand that they don't know nothing. They know plenty. And trying to put their experience in what they already know into the context in human rights education of human life, is an important learning. And the way you get that is to be able to talk about their lives. If they're teachers, their teaching. But I really think that's why I think of myself very often much more as a facilitator. My role

is to set up situations in which they can learn. Yes, from reading, of course. And yes from traditional methods, of course. These are teachers. They read. They have a love of books and paper. But it's not the only way to learn. And furthermore, it's not the only way to teach. And I think when a teacher is brought into that kind of participating learning, he or she is much more likely to use these methods in their own teaching situations. So, you know, you're illustrating a principle by doing it."

The course offered three avenues for letting the educators learn from each other: The buddy system, peer evaluation of final assignments, and the online discussion board. I asked her what the rationale was for each of those.

The buddy system was meant to stimulate the online discussions, as buddies were asked to pay particular attention to each other's messages and to respond to each other. When I asked how the buddy pairs were matched, she answered that:

Linda: "Time zone was one, so that it would be very hard for them to actually exchange emails quickly if they were too far apart geographically. If it was morning in one place and the middle of the night somewhere else, they would have to wait a long time for responses. So that was one very practical one. And you know, I'm not entirely sure. I think we tried to get people with similar interests, like we had two social workers, we had two academics. I think that was fairly...you know, I can't remember."

Julie did not remember exactly how the pairs were matched either, so it seems that the rationale of the pairing was not so important. Julie added that the buddy system was very much an experiment to substitute for online working groups, and she realized that it had not worked well. She and Linda feared that group assignments would not work due to time zone differences and inflexible schedules. (This explanation surprised me, since the asynchronous nature of the online course discussions is precisely a strength in accommodating inflexible schedules; I will come back to this point in Chapter 10

Recommendations.) Julie also wrote that their organization had since acquired chat-room technology that they would have provided had they had it at the time of this course.

For the peer review groups, Linda explained that they decided to increase the size of groups from two to three people, in order to decrease the likelihood that some course participants would be left out in case their peer dropped out of the course.

Linda: “But also because we felt that we tried to organize the peer reviews so that they were hearing voices from different parts of the world, from different disciplines, different approaches, and different perspectives. I think most people were pretty satisfied with how that worked. So it wasn’t just that you submit a project and the teacher responds. That’s much more top down, but that you get some ideas from your peers before the final thing.”

About the online discussion, I asked her why she and the other co-instructor were not posting messages on it, except for the weekly opening question and closing synthesis of responses of course participants.

Linda: “We responded all the time, individually. Sometimes if somebody wrote something that really struck me, I would privately send them an email, not to the whole course. I’d say, ‘thank you for what you said. I thought that was really moving. Or I was really confused by what you said. What did you mean by da, da, da.’ These were not to the whole group. But I probably sent, in a week...and I kept track of it, so I tried to make sure that at least once everybody got a private note from me about what they did... But many people I would write many more times. When somebody said something very personal or painful, I would just say, thank you for risking that kind of personal comment... Positive feedback to let them know, and then of course, in the facilitators messages [the lecture note posted at the beginning of each session], I really tried to quote from what people said. And again, I kept a record. So I tried to quote at least once from everybody. But I didn’t say who said it. At the beginning, I started to do that. And [the other co-instructor] said ‘no, let’s not say who said it’. But if you go back and look at the facilitators responses, they’re just full of quotations.”

Jae-Eun: “I get an impression that you must have dealt with so many private emails with more than 20 course participants in this online course.”

Linda: "Not really. I didn't do it all the time, but if what somebody wrote raised a question, or I just thought really moved me, I just would send not much, just thank you. Really short. Not at all long. ... Let's say I didn't do it always and I tried to do it at least once for everybody. But sometimes people...some people, you know, really said a lot. But it wasn't so many."

Julie also wrote that "I would write participants who had not participated for two weeks, encouraging them to do so. Several participants wrote me directly with questions or needs, which I answered privately. I have remained in touch with some of the participants and even wrote a letter of recommendation for graduate school for one."

I conclude from this exchange with the instructors that they understood the needs of adult professional learning and very much favored the use of constructivist pedagogy for HRE, and consciously introduced certain teaching methods accordingly (e.g., discussion board, final assignments, buddy system and peer reviews). However, perhaps due to their limited experience in online teaching, they did not exploit the full range of online educational capacities (e.g., reluctance to set up working groups), even considering their correct assessment that they had to limit themselves to basic technologies in order to make the course accessible to participants whose access to the Internet was not easy. I will come back to that in Chapter 10 on recommendations.

C. RECRUITMENT OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Originally, I understood that this online course would be designed for school teachers, but the course instructors decided that they would include educators from non-formal educational settings such as international agencies or non-governmental organizations.

This decision was mainly based on the fact that people in such organizations were more likely to be able to pay the tuition – especially those based in developing countries.

From the 30 applicants, the organization selected 24 course participants based on their ability to pay the tuition. That figure included five participants who received a scholarship from the organization based on their regions (e.g., Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe, etc.).

On September 6, 2003, on my behalf, one of the instructors sent an e-mail introducing me and my research project to all 24 course participants, and requested them to individually contact me to participate in my research. I offered three options. The first option was active participant, which involved three telephone interviews on top of authorization to read all their written materials (see next section on data collection). The second one was passive participant, which only authorized me to read their materials. The third was non-participant.

The interview data was critical to my methodology, and so I considered only those choosing the first option to be my research participants. The reason why I offered the second option was that I anticipated that my research participants would interact in the course with other course participants (who would not be my research participants).

Securing the latter's passive participation would therefore allow me to read their materials, such as online discussion messages, as they pertained to my research participants.

Between September 6 and 14 in 2003, eleven course participants agreed to be active participants and three to be passive participants. Ten people did not answer. Therefore, on September 18, I asked the instructors to grant me access to the online course so that I could start collecting data from these research participants, and asked how they wanted me to deal with those who had not replied.

Then, on September 22, I got the following email response from Julie, one of the instructors:

It appears that some of the more active participants in the course have agreed to be part of the research. We do have a problem with the other non-replies, as I had said before that you would not be able to access the course website unless all participants had agreed to this. Thus, we do have a problem.

I replied within an hour explaining that

My plan is to use information from people who agreed to participate, and ignore messages posted by others. That is the authorization I requested from the participants and that was approved by the Institutional Review Board. ... Many educational researchers do research in real social settings. Although they focus on research subjects who voluntarily participate in their research, they have to see these individuals within their social setting: one cannot make the classroom, or the community, or the web site disappear. Educational research would be impossible if anyone connected to research subjects had to give permission.

At that time, what worried me most as a researcher was having a sense of doubt from the instructor whom I had known for years. Before the online course started, I had already signed their memo of understanding to ensure my ethical commitment to this research, particularly as it pertained to privacy. Therefore, at the end of my reply, I added that "I

hope you understand that as a beginning researcher I take this research very seriously. I do not have any intention to abuse the privilege you have given me. Please, trust me.”

Within two minutes, Julie sent a brief reply.

I believe that the language I have used in the past has indicated that you would need approval from everyone in order to access the course website. However, I understand your situation and it is a difficult one, indeed. ... The difference between a usual social setting and a course website is (a) ours is password protected and therefore participants have the expectation that their actions are not being observed by outsiders, and (b) you are able to "eavesdrop" completely on conversations. ... Our first responsibility is to the students.

I could understand all what Julie said, yet I had a hard time to contemplate from where and how this misunderstanding started. In the end, upon my absolute promise to not read non-replied course participants' postings, they gave me access to the online course on October 17, seven weeks after the course had started. Meanwhile, the instructors resent my introduction email to the people who did not reply, and I got one more passive participant.

Therefore, I ended up with eleven active participants and four passive participants, leaving nine non-participants. In keeping with my agreement, I have not read any message that was posted by these nine non participants. This was possible because each discussion message was only displayed by the subject of that message with its author's name beside. Therefore, I could simply avoid reading the postings of the non-participants in the course.

I introduce each of the eleven research participants in Chapter 5.

D. DATA COLLECTION

I collected data for a period of fifteen months (August, 2004 – November 2005).

Appendix 2 shows the overall matrix of the data sources, data collection, and data analysis. My main data sources are:

Weekly, session-based online discussions about the course content (online texts):

September – November, 2003.

Three telephone interviews (Appendix 3), recorded on audiotapes and then transcribed.

In my transcribed texts provided in the findings chapters (Chapters 6-9), I use the following symbols:

- “ ” My or interviewee’s actual words
- , When an interviewee does a brief interruption in a sentence
- ... When an interviewee makes a longer interruption
- [] My personal comments to either help you understand the context or protect the privacy of the research participants and instructors

I had requested all the research participants to copy me on any e-mail exchange they might have with other course participants or with the instructors outside of the discussion board. It turned out that nobody did copy me, despite some reminders. Nevertheless, I learned from my interviews that little such interaction occurred, and I got a general sense of the interactions that did occur (again through my interviews).

In addition to the online discussion board and interviews, I used the following data sources as supporting information or to guide my interviews:

Interview with one of the instructors (Appendix 4), recorded on audiotapes and then transcribed: February 15, 2005, and written responses from the other instructor.

The purpose of this interview, which I carried out before sharing any research findings with the instructors, was to understand the rationale for the course design and teaching methods, and to gather the instructors' own reflections about how the course unfolded.

Filled in course applications (Appendix 5) (offline text): June, 2003.

Two course surveys (Appendix 6) (offline text).

These surveys were prepared by the organization providing the course, for its own use.

- Pre-course survey: August 25-31, 2003
- End-course survey: November 17-21, 2003

Session-based individual assignments including final projects (offline text):

September – November, 2003.

Course materials (syllabus, weekly lectures, readings, resources) (offline texts):

June – November, 2003.

I also received various references, including background readings and web sites from some of the research participants, to improve my understanding of their specific contexts and interests during this research.

Due to the misunderstanding between me and the organization about accessing the data which I explained in the previous section, I was unfortunately unable to build rapport and start collecting my data as I had anticipated. First, I conducted my Early-Course Interview with the active participants after they had agreed to participate in my research but before I got access to the online course environment, hence without having been able to read their course applications, entry surveys, biographies, and first posting on the discussion board. However, the focus of my Early-Course Interview was to delve into the research participants' background anyway, so I quickly picked up the basic information I would have learned from their course applications.

Second and more importantly, I had to rush on Week 7 to analyze a vast existing body of data. I produced a first field note covering not one but 7 weeks, which was definitely not optimal. I never fully recovered from the initial delay. As it took a long time for me to transcribe and analyze the Early-Course Interview and read all the other written data, I scheduled the End-Course Interviews three weeks after the end of the course instead of one week after as planned. Although I started employing professional transcription services after the End-Course Interviews, the amount of data I had to digest in order to prepare the Post-Course Interviews, my last opportunity of data collection, took almost five months. As a result, I lost contact with two of the eleven research participants

(Padam and Lynn), with whom I have therefore not been able to conduct the Post-Course Interview.

Although international telephone interviews proved to be mostly satisfactory, I lost some data due to inaudible recording in parts of some interviews, especially with Zhen, Padam, Lema, and Halim, and especially for the Post-Course interview. I also lost the entire Post-Course Interview of Rana due to a defect of the telephone recorder (but I did use my hand-written notes of that interview.)

Finally, I had the chance to conduct one interview face-to-face, as Ahlam happened to visit Boston around the time of my Post-Course Interview. I noticed this in-person interview was more interactive than the telephone ones, as both she and I interrupted each other more often.

E. DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, I was interested in understanding the research participants' online learning experiences through their meaning making processes. I applied ethnographic data analysis to the interview data, which was my main data source (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). By reconstructing the research participants' own meanings and patterns of online behaviors that I observed, I wanted to tell a shared story about how these eleven educators understood their online learning experiences and to what extent their individual

contexts might have influenced both their online behaviors and their understandings (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

My data analysis consisted of two stages: preliminary analysis and deeper analysis. More specifically, I employed the following analytic strategies to analyze my thirty one telephone interviews of about 700 pages of single-spaced transcripts by combining ethnographic data analysis methods from Auerbach & Silverstein (2003) and LeCompte & Schensul (1999). Appendix 7 gives an example of how this approach was used to develop the four themes about one part of the data: the difficulties the research participants faced in their HRE settings (see Chapter 6, Section B).

Step 1: Preliminary Analysis (at the individual level)

a) Question-based pre-codings

Since I started with a set of interview questions based on my research interests, I first used question-based pre-codings to cluster the raw interview data of each research participant around the interview questions that I had planned to ask them, which were related to my research questions. As explained in Section A of this chapter, this was necessary because I flexibly adapted my planned interview questions in the course of each interview, depending on the open-ended answers of the research participants. For example, in the course of answering the question about how they heard about this online course, some research participants covered another question about their motivation to

take this online course. I therefore had to skip the latter question and used the question-based pre-coding to re-organize the data based on my planned research questions.

At this stage, I did not eliminate any part of the interview data, but just moved pieces around to lump similar ideas together within my question structure. Here are two examples of question-based pre-codings:

- EXP-HRE (Prior experiences in HRE)
What kind of life experiences have made you interested in human rights education?
- DIF-HRE (Difficulties in teaching HRE in their settings)
What is most difficult for you to teach about human rights? Why?

Since my telephone interviews were based on a semi-structured and spontaneous approach, there were many cases where a research participant would explain one issue in answering different interview questions. For example, when I asked about their life experiences related to their involvement in HRE, some participants talked about how their family or schooling experiences affected their understanding of human rights. Therefore, I made the following subheadings under EXP-HRE.

- EXP-HRE-Family (experiences in family related to their involvement in HRE)
- EXP-HRE-Schooling (experiences in schools related to their involvement in HRE)
- EXP-HRE-Work (experiences in work related to their involvement in HRE)

I found it essential to go through the interview data and first put all the relevant explanations into more structured headings, as a way to initially organize the vast amount of related data. I started doing this from the very first interviewee and then subsequently revised this process throughout my interviews in each series. Therefore, at the end of each interview series, I finished with a more comprehensive set of headings and sub-headings.

Once I finished this first stage, I then moved to the next stage of finding and naming descriptive concepts in the interview data called Items Analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

b) Items Analysis (descriptive concepts)

This stage focused on selecting the relevant texts for further the analysis. According to Auerbach & Silverstein (2003), relevant texts refer to specific parts of the research data that illustrate distinct descriptive concepts considering my research interests. By carefully reading word-by-word and line-by-line, I tried to pick up interesting and/or recurring words, concepts, or phrases used by individual research participants, by grouping relevant texts together. For example, from the Early-Course interviews, Fayola repeatedly pointed out the “lack of awareness” about rights among the women immigrant she was working for in the United Kingdom, and therefore the need for “raising [their] awareness”, while Rana was very concerned about the level of “resistance” toward human rights concepts among some of the government officials and other people she taught to in Bangladesh.

One of the important tasks done at this stage was to identify gaps in the data, and thus revise my strategies for subsequent rounds of data collection. For example, from the very beginning of the Early-Course interviews, the concept of “emotion” (of both the research participants and the people to whom they taught HRE) seemed to be quite critical in terms of successfully teaching and learning HRE. This concept again appeared in my End-Course interviews in various forms, such as fear or satisfaction. However, I could not identify any deep thoughts or analysis of this particular concept by the research participants in the first two series of the telephone interviews. I therefore added a couple of questions on the role of emotion in HRE in my Post-Course interviews so that I could get more direct responses from the research participants.

Many ethnographers recommend initially recording a wide range of talk and activities that seem relevant during the early stage of fieldnote taking, and then becoming more selective and systematic over time based on ongoing developments in the data and analysis (Schensul et al., 1999; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Emerson, et al., 1995; Sanjek, 1990). Through this Preliminary Analysis, I aimed to identify emerging concepts answering my research questions, as well as to find surprising or missing pieces of data that might require further investigation in subsequent data collection.

Step 2: Deeper Analysis (collectively across all the research participants)*c) Patterns Analysis*

Once I went through all the Items Analysis at an individual level, I then compared the similarities and differences across the eleven research participants for Early-Course and End-Course interviews, and the nine research participants for Post-Course interviews. My focus at this analytic stage was to derive collective meanings from individual narrative data and to produce a list of emerging themes that seemed to be common or contrasting across all the research participants. For example, I realized that more than half of the research participants identified gender inequality or discrimination as one of their difficulties in teaching HRE in their settings. This pattern seemed to happen in different contexts (i.e., schools in rural Lebanon for Ahlam, textbooks in Bangladesh for Rana). Another pattern that came up was that people often kept silent about human rights violations that they observed and/or experienced, due to fear of reprisals through violence or merely social exclusion. This particular pattern seemed to occur from the African communities in the United Kingdom (Fayola) to the university classrooms in the United States (Emily).

In doing this, my emphasis was on the relevance of these patterns to my research questions rather than the quantitative measure of how many of the research participants discussed about a particular issue. (Still, I do mention when certain themes were mentioned by many research participants, or how strongly they were feeling about them.)

For example, although Lema was the only one who had difficulties in accessing the

materials and participating in the discussions in this online course, I felt this point was important to preserve at the collective level of analysis because reliable access to technology was one of the most basic and essential parts of online learning.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, although I gathered a lot of interesting narratives about how each research participant decided to become a HRE educator and these narratives had some common themes (e.g., family influence on their sense of equality), they were not critical in answering my research questions.

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) emphasize that the very task of a qualitative researcher is to “find the connection (p.33)” between the research participants’ concerns and her own concerns. Moreover, they argued that qualitative researchers should keep asking the following questions when analyzing the data (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003):

- Does it relate to my research concern?
- Does it help me understand the research participants better?

Based on the Patterns Analysis, I then moved to the next stage: Structures Analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

d) Structures Analysis

At this stage, I started analyzing the patterns from the narrative data with a unifying meaning. For example, I realized that the pervasive level of gender and racial discriminations were linked to the level of acceptance of such discriminations in a

particular cultural or national context. In addition, both the acts of denial (know about the human rights violations, but do not want to accept) and of silence (know, accept, but consciously keep silence about human rights violations) seemed to belong to ways that people resisted fully practicing human rights principles. Therefore, by organizing patterns and emerging themes into more coherent and broader structures, I drew theoretical constructs inductively from the actual research data.

At the same time, I started cross-referencing the data from all the data sources in order to clarify major structures across the eleven research participants, and thereby to develop an initial set of findings. Once my data collection was completed in November of 2005, I retrieved all the raw data and carefully read through this information considering my research questions. In looking at the raw data this time, I aimed to i) identify and verify my focused codes (Emerson et al., 1995), ii) discover missing data that left my research questions unanswered, iii) cross reference the whole set of data, and iv) saturate all the items, patterns, and structures so that further analysis would produce neither new information nor additional codes. This last analysis has led me to confirm or revise my coding one last time and generate the final findings of my research. In this way, I tried to develop an emerging conceptual model that would be considered grounded in the data and reflective of the lived experiences of all the research participants in my study.

F. VALIDITY

To ensure the validity of my research, I:

- employed iterative, systematic, and diverse methods of data collection and analysis: I cross-referenced data collected from multiple sources before, during, and after the course (online texts, documents, surveys, and telephone interviews).
- examined alternative interpretations of the data: I shared some of preliminary data analysis with different groups (i.e., HGSE class on qualitative research and my reading group) to search for alternative perspectives on the data itself as well as on my initial interpretations.
- carried out member-checks: I provided each of the eleven research participants with my interview transcripts to probe for any misunderstandings or misinterpretations of their words and to see whether they wanted to make any changes. Just before the Post-Course interviews, I also shared collective excerpts of the End-Course interviews with all the eleven research participants, in order to understand how each research participant would react to this particular set of data.
- reviewed my research process with my ad-hoc committee: I discussed various aspects of my research process with my advisor, including the misunderstanding of access issues between me and the course instructor. In sharing the drafts of this manuscript, my advisor provided her guidance on any pitfalls or blind spots I might have exhibited due to my own assumptions and familiarity with this online course.
- undertook my own critical self-reflection throughout the research: By listening carefully to what the eleven research participants said and wrote, I tried to ensure that

my interpretations of the data had concrete evidence from which I drew my inferences. I also described and analyzed my own preconceptions about HRE and online courses derived from my long experience working on these topics. I believe that this kind of critical self-reflection or reflexivity helped me both keep track of the details of my own journey in this research and to gain a deeper understanding of the research participants' online learning experiences.

V. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

In this chapter, I briefly describe the research participants with the following characteristics: age, educational background, current position and career history, and particular areas of interest in HRE. I have also included some of their family background, which I learned through my telephone interviews, when those personal details seemed to be relevant to their HRE interests. For more detailed information, please refer to Appendices 8 and 9. To keep consistent, I list the research participants by age in ascending order. I use pseudonyms for all of them to protect their privacy.

Now, let me introduce the eleven research participants in my study.³

Ahlam (witty; imaginative; one who has pleasant dreams)

Ahlam is a Lebanese woman in her late 20s and attended American schools and universities in Beirut, and earned a BA in elementary education. After her college study, she taught English to elementary and secondary students in a rural school in Lebanon. She then returned to the American university to pursue her Masters degree in public health. At the time of our first interview, she had just graduated from her Masters program and was working as a research assistant at her department of public health at the American university. Her particular interest in HRE involved children's and women's rights in relation to health, but she was not directly teaching HRE neither in formal nor

³ I tried to find a pseudonymous name for each research participant in his/her local language with a special meaning that, in my best guess, seemed to match well with that particular participant. Although I was not able to find all such names, if I did, I indicate those meanings in the parentheses next to their pseudonyms.

non-formal setting at the time of my study. During my study, she changed her job to become an officer at an international agency, focusing on health-related rights. During our first interview, she explained that she had never lived or worked in a foreign country, though she had traveled.

Padam (a wild Cherry tree)

Padam is a Nepalese man in his early 30s and worked as an officer at a Nepalese human rights NGO in Katmandu. His job involved organizing trainings on human rights for other NGOs and community leaders. In our first interview, he explained that he was from a poor family in a rural area of Nepal and came to the capital, Katmandu, when he was a child worker without his family. Therefore, his HRE interest was in the protection and the promotion of rights for marginalized people in Nepal. He had a BA in population studies and a MA in anthropology. He was working on his LLB (Law) degree at the time of my study. Unfortunately, I lost contact with him for the Post-Course Interview despite my efforts to contact him through numerous emails and phone calls to his office.

Halim (mild; gentle)

Halim is a Turkish man in his early 30s and worked as a trainer in a private university in Istanbul. He earned BS and MS degrees in aeronautical engineering and studied for his PhD degree in organizational theory during my study. He participated in various European human rights related activities (e.g., Council of Europe' training for trainers), and gave several trainings about human rights at local NGOs. He wanted to serve as a

reference person about HRE in the region. Through my interviews, he emphasized the importance of non-formal education through NGO training in HRE.

Allison

Allison is a white American woman in her mid 30s and worked as an officer at a regional office of an international NGO. She earned a BA in anthropology and international relations and a MA in dispute resolution. At the time of my interviews, her job was to coordinate educational activities in US schools and universities in the Northeast of the United States, which included teaching students as a guest speaker in classrooms. Before joining this regional office, she spent two years in Guinea in West Africa as a Peace Corp volunteer. Her interests in HRE were in women's rights and refugees' rights.

Emily

Emily is a white American woman in her mid 30s and was teaching as a full-time lecturer at a public university in the Midwest of the United States. She had a BA in comparative religion and both a MA and a PhD in anthropology. Through her anthropology training, she studied social issues related to women and children in rural China, Central Asia, and the Middle East – especially Turkey. She taught classes on women studies, globalization and was about to teach her first class on HRE. In our interviews, she told me that she was from a moderate-income family and her father was a progressive social science high-school teacher. In our first interview, she informed me that she and Tom, one of my passive participants, were domestic partners.

Lema (cultivated, developed)

Lema is an Ethiopian man in his late 30s and worked as an officer at an Ethiopian NGO in Addis Abeba. He had a BA in economics and was interested in promoting democratic values and law enforcement in Ethiopia. During my study, he and his wife, who was also working in a local NGO, had a baby.

Rana

Rana is a Bangladeshi woman in her late 30s and worked as an officer at the Bangladesh country office of an international agency. Before that, she had worked in a local human rights NGO. Her current job focused on children's and women's rights, especially concerning sexual exploitation and violence. She gave several workshops on these issues to NGO activists as well as government officials. She had both a BA and a MA in English. Just before my Post-Course Interview, she got a one-year fellowship from a private foundation and came as a visiting fellow to a university in the United States.

Fayola (Walks with honor)

Fayola is a Zimbabwean woman in her mid 40s. She finished her secondary education in Zimbabwe, went to India for vocational training and came back to Zimbabwe, joined the Zimbabwean army, and then immigrated to the United Kingdom. During the first two interviews, she worked as an officer at a local NGO for African women immigrants, but just before my Post-Course Interview, she became co-founder and trainer of a local NGO with a special focus on Zimbabwean women in the United Kingdom. She had a BA in

media and design management from a British university. In our first interview, she explained that she was divorced and had a teenage daughter.

Lynn

Lynn is a white American woman in her early 50s and worked as an officer at a NGO for disabled people in the United States. She acquired a physical disability from a car accident. At the time of this accident, she had been working as a high-level executive assistant in corporate settings for over 20 years, but while she was recovering at a hospital the company went bankrupt. She then realized how her disability limited her employment opportunities and developed an interest in human rights and disability issues. At the time of my interviews, she was working as an administrative assistant in an organization serving people disabled by landmine-related accidents around the world. In terms of her education, she completed executive secretarial courses at a career college in the United States. I unfortunately lost contact with her before the Post-Course Interview.

Zhen

Zhen is a Chinese man in his early 50's and had been working as an officer for educational programs at various country offices of an international agency for many years. He received a BS in English literature and language from a Chinese university, and a MA in comparative education from a British university. He came back to China and started teaching English to college students. He then joined the Chinese country office of this international agency and got involved in educational programs for ethnic minorities in rural China. After the United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001, he was assigned to

provide emergency education programs in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2003. During my study, he had a similar job in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) office.

(Emergency education programs are programs supporting or temporarily replacing the failing state educational system in the context of armed conflicts.) Zhen was therefore not teaching HRE itself, but he was working in the field of education in countries where human rights violations are acute. He had a wife (a university professor) and a son, who both lived in Finland. His particular HRE interest was in children's rights, especially rights to education.

Jean

Jean is a white American woman in her early 60s, and taught as an adjunct professor at a local college in the United States West Coast during my study. Before this position, she worked as the director of the West Coast regional office of an international NGO. She had both a BA and a MA in political science. During my interviews, she explained that she had gained interest in human rights through two political events that struck her in her childhood: civil rights demonstrations in the United States, which eventually led her to work as an advocate for desegregated public schools, and the 1956 revolution attempt in Hungary, which led her to travel extensively to that country and developed personal relationships there.

As Table 2 indicates, the eleven participants in this research had very diverse backgrounds including gender, age, race, level of education, and previous experiences in HRE and online learning.

I came to meet three of the research participants (Allison, Rana, and Ahlam) either in person or via videoconference during the course of my study.

During the academic year of 2003-2004, I served as a co-director of a Harvard Graduate School of Education's student group on HRE, and organized a series of face-to-face seminars with HRE educators. I therefore invited Allison, who was living in the region, to come and give a two-hour seminar with our students. So, we met in person while she was taking the online course, which allowed me to learn more about her work in the region.

In March of 2004, I organized a virtual seminar with Rana from Bangladesh via videoconference. This was also done as a part of my job as Project Manager in the International Education Policy Program. Therefore, I had quite a few email exchanges with Rana to prepare her seminar, and she shared her curriculum vitae, which was very helpful for me to understand her previous and current jobs in more detail. In the virtual seminar, she talked about how to protect and promote children's rights – especially for young girls who were exploited by sexual trade or violations, which was her particular HRE interest.

In June of 2004, when I was busy with scheduling my Post-Course Interviews, I got an email reply from Ahlam informing that she would come to Boston to attend a 3-day workshop at the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH). In my first interview, I

introduced HSPH to her, and she applied and successfully received funding to attend their workshop. Therefore, I met her in a guest house in Brookline, where she stayed for four days, and did my Post-Course Interview with her in person. We then toured Boston a little and chatted a lot about family, study and work. I also invited her for dinner in my house the next day. It was a very unexpected, but wonderful encounter with a research participant.

TABLE 2: Demographic data of my eleven research participants

(Figures in brackets indicate the number of participants by characteristics)

Gender	females (7) and males (4)
Age	in their 20's (1), 30's (6), 40's (2), 50's (2)
Country of origin	Africa (2), Asia (3), Middle East (2), US (4)
Country of Residency	Africa (1), Asia (2), Middle East (3), US (4), Western Europe (1)
Highest Level of Education	Diploma/Vocational (1) Bachelors (2), Masters/post-graduate (7), Doctorate (1)
Previous experiences in online learning ^a	as a teacher (1) ^b , as a learner (1) ^c , no previous experience (9)
Formal education on pedagogy and/or teaching experience in formal school system	Yes (4) ^d , no (7)
Previous training in HRE ^e	formal training (6), informal/on-the-job training (2), no training (3)

^a Two research participants had experience in distance learning, though not online: Zhen developed and provided distance learning programs broadcasted on TV in rural China and also currently in the Occupied Palestine Territories; Lema earned a certificate by taking a correspondence course from the Ethiopian Office of the UK Open University.

^b Emily, at college-level as part of a face-to-face course.

^c Lynn, who took 2 online courses provided by the same organization as this one.

^d Ahlam at elementary and secondary school level; Emily, Jean and Zhen at college level.

^e Based on the Pre-Course Surveys: Formal (Ahlam, Halim, Allison, Rana, Fayola, Lynn), Informal (Zhen, Jean), No (Padam, Emily, Lema)

VI. ANALYSIS OF GOALS

Research question: *How did the eleven research participants describe their reasons for taking this online course about HRE?*

In this chapter, I analyze the research participants' HRE needs and goals for taking this course, to address my first research question. The purpose of this analysis is to set some context for my research questions on learning processes and results, with which I deal in the next chapters. It is indeed inappropriate to analyze learners' learning processes and results without knowing their goals.

As I explained in Chapter 3 (Research Questions), my purpose for this dissertation was to gain a deep insight, from the research participants' own perspectives, into their learning goals, processes, and results. To attain such understanding, I needed to obtain deeper knowledge of the research participants' backgrounds than what I could gain from reading their course applications and entry-surveys. I therefore focused my Early-Course interview on their life histories and professional situations, to get some deeper insight into what had brought them into HRE, what motivated them to become a human rights educator, and what were their needs and goals not just for taking this particular online course but for their careers in general.

This chapter is therefore divided into three sections. The first one explores how the research participants explained their goals for taking this particular online course. It is

based mostly on an analysis of their applications for the course and on their responses to the Pre-Course Survey administered by the course provider. But I also complemented these data with some of my interview data.

The second and third sections take both a broader and deeper perspective of the research participants' professional development needs relevant to HRE. They are based on three questions that I asked during my Early-Course interviews to let them explain their needs to improve the way they were teaching HRE in their settings:

- 1) what were the most important aspects of learning and teaching HRE in their settings,
- 2) what were the major difficulties they faced to teach HRE in their settings, and
- 3) what were the strategies they employed to overcome these difficulties.

I present the main themes of the research participants' responses to the interview question on difficulties in the second section of this chapter (see also Appendix 10), and their responses to the questions on strategies to overcome these difficulties and on the most important aspects of teaching and learning HRE in the third section (see also Appendix 10). I combine answers to these two interview questions into one section because I have found a close convergence between them, which means that the research participants were indeed trying to put their educational philosophies into practice.

This chapter thus focuses not on this online course environment, but on the research participants' own face-to-face teaching settings in their respective countries, the rationale for this focus being my desire to gain a deep knowledge of the participants' needs based

on their own teaching practice as well as to situate their specific course goals in a larger context.

I originally thought of my interview questions on the research participants' own teaching settings (and indeed of my first research question on goals) merely as context questions, to lay the ground for the research questions on processes and results. I did not expect to devote such a large portion of my dissertation to them, since I was primarily interested in the online course rather than the research participants' own teaching environments.

However, analyzing the research participants' goals for taking this online course in relation to their broader personal and professional contexts allowed me to identify key themes that proved to be very critical for the rest of my analysis, particularly on learning processes. As will become clearer later, I found striking parallels between:

- The themes of the research participants' difficulties in teaching HRE in their own settings and the difficulties they faced in interacting with each other in this online course. Therefore, Section 2 of this chapter mirrors Chapter 7 (Processes).
- The themes of the research participants' strategies for overcoming these difficulties and my own recommendations about effective online HRE strategies. Therefore, Section 3 of this chapter mirrors Chapter 10 (Recommendations).

I have also constructed Chapter 8 (Results) based on the first section of this chapter, which summarizes the research participants' stated goals for taking this particular online course.

A. GOALS FOR THIS ONLINE COURSE

Before delving deeper into the research participants' own HRE teaching context to gain a deeper insight about their overall HRE needs and goals, I first examine how they stated their goals for taking this particular online course. From all my data sources, I have extracted three types of goals that research participants articulated at the beginning of the course regarding their reasons for taking this online course:

- i) increasing their knowledge about human rights and HRE (Knowledge),
- ii) improving their skills in teaching HRE (Skills), and
- iii) learning from other course participants (Peer Learning).

I present data for each research participant in Appendix 11, using bolded initials (**K**, **S**, and **P**), to refer to each type of goals.

The Knowledge goals were formulated differently by each of the research participants, but were nevertheless broadly similar (see Appendix 11). They included learning more about human rights as such:

Ahlam (Pre-Course Survey): "To learn more about human rights laws and mechanisms"

Lema (Pre-Course Survey): "Good understanding on human rights concepts"

Fayola (Pre-Course Survey): "To be better able to use human rights instruments in my trainings and campaigns"

Consistently with the course title "Introductory course on HRE", the Knowledge goals mostly referred to knowledge useful to teaching human rights. For example:

Ahlam (Course Application): “To have more access on HRE teaching materials and resource persons”

Padam (Pre-Course Survey): “To learn about the syllabus on HRE and course selection, preparation of materials and strategies on HRE”

Halim (Course Application): “To get familiar with theoretical aspect of HRE”

The Skills goals were about “how to” apply the knowledge about HRE in practice. Again, the Skills goals were fairly general and broadly consistent, although several participants identified more specific goals. For example:

Halim (Pre-Course Survey): “To get some clues on working with ‘difficult’ or ‘sensitive’, mainly excluded or disadvantaged groups”

Allison (Pre-Course Survey): “Skills for teaching human rights to diverse communities” and “Non-Western approaches to teaching HRE”

Lynn (Pre-Course Survey): “How to impart human rights principles in a way that is relevant to ordinary people’s daily experience?”

Although all research participants expressed their Knowledge and Skills goals in a roughly similar way, it is important to note that they started from quite different levels of existing knowledge and skills. Hence the goal “to learn more about human rights laws and mechanisms” would require deeper materials for a course participant who was already familiar with the basics of human rights instruments than for one who was not. The summary table in Appendix 12 shows the answers of nine research participants (two didn’t reply) regarding their current level of experiences with HRE-related topics and skills at the beginning of the online course. Based on Appendix 12, I could roughly assign these nine research participants into three groups depending on the level of experiences in their knowledge of and skills in HRE:

- * Beginning (rating mostly 1 or 2, rarely 3): Padam, Fayola, Lynn
- * Intermediate (rating mostly 2 or 3, rarely 4): Jean, Lema
- * Advanced (rating mostly 4 or 5, rarely 3): Ahlam, Halim, Rana, Zhen

The third category of goals that I have identified – Peer Learning – refers to two separate things: an expressed desire to learn other perspectives on HRE from the diverse group of course participants, and the goal of building a network of HRE educators for the future. In my view, it is actually more a desire about part of the learning process than a learning goal. (I will deal extensively with learning process in the next chapter.) But six participants did explicitly mention such goals in either the Course Applications or the Pre-Course Surveys, and all my eleven research participants expressed excitement about the diversity of the group during my Early-Course Interviews. It is fair to say, however, that Peer Learning was generally a goal of lesser priority than Knowledge and Skills. For example, all the research participants listed it as the last item of their written goals.

I have also realized that there were two types of goals in the research participants' minds: specific short-term objectives, and long-term goals. Several participants had immediate professional needs, such as designing the curriculum for an academic course they were scheduled to give during the next term or a training they really wanted to develop. The first assignment (due the first week) was to write a 1-2 page memo on their ideas about their final projects, which was meant to be used in their communities, organizations, or situations in which they worked. Some participants had a very clear idea of their final projects, and indeed developed those projects at the end of the course (i.e., Ahlam, Halim,

Emily, Lema, Jean). Others had some options in mind, and indeed chose one of them at the end of the course (e.g., Allison, Fayola). Finally, some had no specific ideas, but broad interests in a particular HRE topic (e.g., Rana, Padam).

According to adult learning theory, a majority of adult learners desire their professional development courses to explicitly deal with issues about which they currently and directly struggle, thereby meeting their immediate professional needs. When course participants have specific goals that are not met in a professional development course, they are unlikely to be satisfied by the course. Jean eventually dropped out of the course because she felt that it was “not specific to my needs”. She had taken the course to help her in a specific HRE project that she was leading in a high-school.

Some participants had also long-term goals, which they had typically not reported in their applications or entry surveys but had explained to me during my Early-Course Interviews. These goals mostly concerned possible future career changes. For example, Allison explained how taking this online course would help her accomplish two long-term goals: i) figuring out “how to outreach into public school systems in the United States” and ii) making a “career change” or “career jump” as a human rights educator living overseas. To Ahlam, this online course would provide “a formal qualification” for her future career plan as a human rights educator at international development agencies. “I would like it to be a career for me,” she said.

To sum up, research participants had some precise goals for taking this particular online course, relating to knowledge acquisition, skill learning, but also interactions with peers. Some research participants also had very specific goals in terms of their immediate professional needs, such as developing a curriculum for a course they were due to deliver soon, and some had more general long-term career goals.

B. GOALS IN CONTEXT: DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING HRE IN THEIR SETTINGS

As explained in this chapter's introduction, I interviewed the research participants about the difficulties they experienced in teaching and learning HRE in their settings in order to gain deeper insight into their overall HRE needs and goals, or to put their stated goals for taking this course into the broader context of their HRE practice. From their narrative explanations, I identified the following four themes (see also Appendix 10), which I will develop in this section:

1. Controversial and sensitive nature of HRE: HRE happens in the context of widespread human rights violations. Many research participants particularly reported that these violations have happened against them and/or their learners, and so talking about them is very sensitive and sometimes dangerous, as it challenges established power relationships.

2. **Prejudice, discrimination and oppression:** A major source of human rights violations is prejudice and discrimination based on social status including age, gender, race, and level of education. Such discriminations are present in both their teaching and learning setting and in society at large.
3. **Lack of Awareness:** Although these discriminations exist, the research participants observed that there was often a lack of awareness about them, either on the part of the victim or of the perpetrator, which added to the difficulty of teaching about them.
4. **Resistance:** Even when awareness existed in learners' minds, there was often resistance to accept it or to change behavior. This resistance seemed to appear at two levels: one was denial (i.e., they know, but do not want to accept), and the other was silence (i.e., they know and accept, but consciously keep silence about the known violations).

1. Controversial and sensitive nature of HRE

The first theme that I identified from my research participants' explanations of their difficulties to teach HRE in their settings was that HRE is a sensitive and controversial subject matter in that it challenges established power relationships in their respective societies. International human rights law typically imposes a certain ethical vision of how societies ought to be organized, which is empowering to disadvantaged members of

society (to which my research participants identified, either because they felt they belonged to that group or because they worked for them), but threatening for those in power. I distinguished two parts in that first theme. First, HRE is sensitive because it happens in the context of human rights violations (at least from the perspective of the victims, including the research participants and most of their learners). In other words, there is a disconnect between the subject matter and the reality surrounding the learners. Second, HRE touches on controversial political debates, which may vary across societies but no society is free of them.

a) Facing pervasive human rights violations anytime anywhere by anyone

All of my nine participants perceived pervasive human rights violations against themselves or their learners, and highlighted the paradox of teaching HRE in such situation.

Rana from Bangladesh described that “[v]iolation of human rights is worldwide. Everywhere it is happening, in every profession, in every aspect of life: family, in business, in profession, on the street. Anywhere you go, you see the violation.” From her childhood, she used to observe many human rights violations, such as domestic violence against women. Human rights violations can happen any time anywhere by anyone, she emphasized. She continued that “as a young woman, I was always vulnerable to any kind of exploitation and abuse outside my family. When I was out on the street, if my father allowed me to go to the school or college alone, or with my friends, it doesn’t mean that I will be safe on the street. [...] When I am on the street, I am very careful because it is not

a safe environment. I always feel, like any other woman here, threatened or challenged, for any kind of what is it called, both abuse maybe? Because... people, on the street, in the shops, even in the education institute, they could be harmful for you, so I had to be always very careful and I got this lesson from the family. That is something on which, nowadays I am basically developing the skills on how to deal with particular situation, how to deal with life. So... that was necessary and I was always alert by the family members. I was told what can happen to me, and also I was told if something happen, how to handle that.” Considering her HRE work with adolescent girls who are exploited by the sex industry in Bangladesh, I could see how her own experience as a young girl in feeling “threatened or challenged” in the society would make her empathize – not just sympathize – with the girls whom she is working with.

Ahlam’s experience with her young students in a rural elementary school in Lebanon also revealed what she called human rights violations. She confessed that “it is very difficult to teach about something they [her students] don’t see in their life. Because when they get slapped inside the class, I think it is very hypocritical to teach human rights in a class where the administrator slaps the kids because they did not do well on a dictation.” She spent two years teaching in this school, and observed various levels of human rights violations. “When I started teaching, I noticed a lot of violations of children’s rights. So I found myself feeling more like advocating for the rights of my students.” This was even more shocking to her because her own educational experience in American schools in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, had been much more liberal. As a young first-time teacher who just graduated from a liberal university, she remembered herself being “very

revolutionary” in her rural school, and confessed that “going to a village with very strict discipline procedures and even sometimes students get beaten if they don’t have good handwriting, it was a big shock for me to see conditions where students learn with fear and threat. It really hurt me.”

This feeling of “fear and threat” actually extended to herself as a teacher. “I remember once. I took them [her students] on a field trip and then I got a huge scolding from the principal: ‘they are my kids, not yours, you are not allowed to take them out’... and I had a huge scolding. So... I left and I was threatened to be sued because I left them [the school] without notice. I could not take it anymore.” She described the principal as “very professional” who “knows how to talk and to twist facts.” During her teaching in this school, therefore, she could not “feel comfortable really because that is not the person I would look up to. I want to work in a place where I really look up to my superior. But, I could not.”

She continued explaining how this unjust treatment was also common to all teachers at the school.

Ahlam: “I remember one of the unethical practices I saw. First of all they [administrators of the school] had spikes and microphones in the teachers’ room and the class, and it was very awkward to feel Big Brother is watching you all the time. It is really uncomfortable to know that you are watched all the time.”

Jae-Eun: “So... who is watching? The principal or the other...?”

Ahlam: “Yeah, the principal is the owner [of this school].”

Jae-Eun: “Ah... the owner can basically listen to what teachers are saying, and teaching in the classroom.”

Ahlam: “Yeah, and he also interferes. Imagine he was scolding me in front of the kids. And once a child’s parents did not pay his fees, so he was punished to stand the whole day outside his classroom on the wall, you know, in front of the wall. And that did really, really drove me nuts ... he gets punished because his parents did not pay the fees. So that is why I left teaching.”

“The whole atmosphere was very horrible and uneducational” she recalled. “So, it really struck me that no matter how qualified teachers we have if you are not in a comfortable environment that really respects the child and the teacher, you cannot have very good growth experience.”

All other research participants had their own stories about the pervasiveness of human rights violations that they had experienced and/or witnessed in their HRE environment and in their larger societies.

b) Teaching HR issues of political nature

Most of the research participants also pointed out that teaching human rights is quite difficult, due to the political nature of human rights issues in any given society.

Halim from Turkey recognized that “any issue might be quite sensitive when you talk about human rights.” Therefore, in his case, “the most difficult thing is dealing with the reactions of the people” because his own attitude or behavior as an instructor “can be quite offending somebody without realizing.” Although he tries to have maximum information about his course participants before the training session, he confessed that “this is very challenging because that is not always possible.” Therefore, he was aware of

a possible danger when human rights educators go to “some little towns for a training and insert something new for the participants there and, you [a human rights educator] know that it might be quite empowering for those participants. But, after the training course, you leave and if you are not living there and if you leave those participants without enough equipment, without realizing themselves as well, then they might be even more demotivated than before the training.”

Some other research participants also gave very concrete examples of how political aspects of HR issues can hinder their HRE work.

According to Zhen, who has managed an emergency education program (i.e., a program to replace the failing state educational system in the context of armed conflict) both in Afghanistan (2001-2003) and in the Occupied Palestine Territories (2003-present), the most striking difference in these two countries was “the political situation,” which made his HRE work more or less challenging. Compared with a relatively stable political situation in Afghanistan, for example, the politics in the Occupied Palestine Territories “changes from time to time, and that affects the school situation” by having “the checkpoints,” “the curfews,” and “the military operation.” This has made the schools closed from time to time and therefore added difficulties in his HRE work. Not only in the Occupied Palestine Territories but also in many other parts of the world, he emphasized, “human rights is very much considered as a sensitive terminology.”

Lema consistently identified the politicization of HRE as the main barrier he faced in his work in Ethiopia. “It’s very difficult to work with the government. Because government wants non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to involve in providing services but don’t want these organizations to involve in human rights issues and democratization process.” “So instead of considering these organizations as development organizations, if they [NGOs] involve in this democratization process, government may consider them as an opposition political party or a political maneuver,” which makes his teaching about human rights through development activities really difficult.

Fayola also shared a story about how the upcoming elections in the United Kingdom made her HRE work “quite volatile because a lot of the things are quite political.” This would also apply to the United States, as Emily described the political climate in Kansas which is “a fairly conservative state”. She explained that “it has an all Republican, Republican-dominated Congress. If the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was to come up as an issue to ratify in Kansas, it would not fly because of the issue of abortion and reproductive rights.”

To sum up, a first difficulty faced by the research participants in teaching HRE in their settings was that it challenged established power relationships in their respective societies. First, HRE courses expose the reality that many learners’ social situations (e.g., as obedient wife who is not supposed to have agency in her own) are “not right” according to international standards. Second, HRE courses unavoidably touch on sensitive political debates.

2. Prejudice, discrimination and oppression

The second theme that I identified in my research participants' account of their difficulties in teaching HRE was the existence of prejudice, discrimination and oppression in their respective societies, which they presented as a major source of the controversial or sensitive character of HRE. My data contained numerous references to prejudice, discrimination or oppression on the basis of hierarchical social structures such as age, gender, race, and level of education. I again distinguished two sub-themes: the research participants referred many times to oppression based on hierarchies of social status, but also to the acceptance of these hierarchies by most people in society, whether they found themselves at the bottom of the hierarchies or at the top, as if it was part of their cultural heritage, which obviously made the work of HRE educators even harder.

a) Hierarchical social structures

When I asked Ahlam about the reactions of her fellow teachers about the unethical treatments at her school that she had described, she disclosed some interesting points about why other teachers could not respond to the principal in the same way that she did:

Jae-Eun: "When you had these conflicts and difficulties in the school, was there anyone who shared your views, your values, and tried to facilitate... or you really felt that you were on a completely different planet from the other teachers?"

Ahlam: "You know I felt alone because, even those who a bit believed what I did, they were too scared because, you see, he is a real monster, the principal, so they did not dare challenge him or his views. And because most of them really need the money badly or they have their kids at the school, so they cannot afford a fight with him, or an argument. But my position was strong because I don't really need the money and I did this because I really believe in teaching and my salary was not really something. So... I could afford to challenge him but they could not."

Ahlam therefore realized the implicit yet significant issues in her colleagues' lives, such as having their own kids in the school and needing their salaries so badly. At the same time, she also gave another explanation of her separation from the other teachers in the school. "Because other teachers were from the village, I was the outsider and I was like 'a Westerner or a colonizer who tries to bring your values to us [the other teachers]. We don't want your values. We have our values.'" To me, this story revealed a kind of cultural and ideological clash between the local population, including the principal and other teachers, and Ahlam who was so different from them in many aspects. For example, she came from the capital city, was educated in liberal and privileged American institutions, and therefore acquired rather liberal and western values. At her rural Lebanese school, Ahlam was a relatively young and novice female teacher, requiring her to be submissive in her conservative culture and explaining her feeling of oppression. Yet, it could be possible that other teachers might have felt oppressed by Ahlam's privileged social and educational backgrounds.

Based on her own testimonies, I have noticed that she was indeed aware of her privileges and could see how they affected her relationship with the local people at the school. If so, what is interesting to me is that, regardless of her own desire, Ahlam simultaneously took the role of both the oppressed by the principal and the oppressor towards other teachers who did not have her privileges. In my view, this situation may well be a common one for a majority of human rights educators. On the one hand, they could face various oppressions by the government or any group of people who they would challenge through

their HRE work. On the other hand, they typically deal with the most deprived and the most disadvantaged people in society and therefore carry their own privileges into their HRE setting – whether they are aware of it or not. In many places, just being a teacher means superiority and authority, which instantly creates hierarchical power structure in a HRE environment. More importantly, as both Halim and Ahlam described above, educators also bring their own experiences and values that would not be welcomed or in the worst case could be rejected by their learners.

Sometimes, a teacher's very identity can undermine his or her credibility as a human rights educator. Allison is a white American, well educated, and works in a famous international organization in the United States. All these characteristics can be perceived as privileges. Yet, she told me the following story.

“I went to a public school in Boston, where I walked into the classroom and I was the only white woman, the only white person in that classroom [with all Black students]. And, when I was speaking about general [missions of her organization], because I was invited to speak about general [missions] and what we do, I went in and I had prepared to speak about women's rights, using the case example of the gender apartheid actually 'cause it was just during the Taliban and everything. I quickly had to change my examples, my case studies because of the audience. I wanted them to latch onto something. So, I was thinking of some domestic issues that really affect Black populations, and one is the US prison system and death penalty: how it is wrongfully executed more times on Black individuals than Whites. So I was trying to, change my case studies so it would bring in more like of an interest to people. So there's definitely that, not my backyard attitude like people want to hear it, they're interested in stories that they have some sort of impact upon them. So I did and it was just a complete failure, and it was a failure on my part because I felt really unprepared for this, and it was a failure on their part because they weren't going to listen to anything I had to say no matter what, because of who I was when I walked in.”

She continued that

Allison: “When I talk about, integrating human rights education to diverse communities, it’s really difficult sometimes to go in especially being a white female to go into an area where I’m the minority, and to come and try to teach my audience about human rights education. Because it’s so important that this is completely domestic: I’m talking about in the United States. I’m finding more difficult to do here, than I did when I was in Guinea in West Africa, because my experience of workshops in West Africa is that I went up to rural villages and, I spoke about HIV-AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases and so forth. But I find it more difficult to do, workshops here in diverse communities just because ... a lot reflects, you know, US culture [laugh] and the fact that there are so many segregated minds that are still clearly drawn between all sectors. I mean I feel like that. So sometimes it’s difficult to me to go into these communities and talk.”

Jae-Eun: How do you characterize what you call “segregated minds”?

Allison: “I think they are negative stereotypes. There are just stereotypes, you know. I mean, stereotypes can be good and they can be bad. I think these are just bad stereotypes that exist.”

She told me that these “negative stereotypes” exist “all over” whether you are a white or a black in the US society.

Fayola also recalled how this kind of “negative stereotypes” deeply affected her self-esteem as a black girl in her home country, Zimbabwe. What was interesting in her story was also the effect of tragic historical events that took place in her country such as colonialism and civil war, which were also common in other developing countries.

“I grew up in a country which was a British colony at the time. So I grew up in an environment where I was told that there were other people who were better than me. So, that means that my people, my race were inferior. ... You had the White people at the top, and then, second, followed by the Asians and Indians, and then there were colored people who were of mixed race, and then you had the Blacks at the bottom. So, that’s the kind of environment that I grew up with. So, at that stage I wasn’t even aware, you talk about human rights, I mean, that wasn’t a part of me growing up. Above or on top of that, I also grew up in a background where the culture itself oppresses women in that, again, women have no rights and if you

are a girl in the family, your rights are not equal to your brothers or, you know, that as well, I had to content with in my own family.”

She then carried on describing how she as a girl was discriminated against even in her own family.

“It was very evident in the way I was growing up. In fact, there were 4 girls, 5 girls, one died before my mother could have a boy. So, you could see her desperation. It was so important for her to have a boy. So the boys came and, when we were growing up, boys had better than girls, if you like. And, we came to accept that, we thought that was normal. So, you’re growing up, thinking, boys are better than me. So if you are growing up in an environment whereby because you’re Black you’re... you’re... you’re inferior, you’re not, you’re not intelligent, you are denied a lot of opportunities.”

At least, Fayola’s parents “recognized the need for an education,” and therefore she could attend primary and secondary schools in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, her schooling had to be interrupted by the liberation war (1972-1980), which made schools shut down. Even when she worked as a Captain in the Zimbabwean Military, “it was very very clear that women could only get to a certain level in terms of the ranking ... promotion and all that.” This so called glass-ceiling phenomenon made her see “no future in the army” and therefore “that is how I eventually ended up coming to England.”

Furthermore, school textbooks also perpetuate the acceptance of gender discrimination in many countries including Bangladesh, as Rana portrayed below.

“There are stories in the textbook of the formal schools, on which we have debated for years, we particularly the women activists, the whole group. We have said *so* much that there are stories which are *so* much gender-biased, gender insensitive which talk, you know basically projecting a girl like a flower something very soft and sweet, submissive, and the boy like someone very strong, confident and everything. You understand this thing. So, you know, portraying that traditional girl’s characteristics and boy’s characteristics, and various stories like that, in the textbook published with the textbook board. So we had been

fighting with the ministry of education, primary education, and also with the textbook board, asking them 'please review your stories'. Even in the mathematics, you will be surprised to know that, for example, it says that, if a man can do a work in one day and a woman can do that work in three days, tell me how many days will be required if one man and three women do the work. From the very childhood, they [the children] are told that men can do three times more than a woman. You know that orientation they get."

This pattern of gender discrimination then happened at the various levels of education, Rana claimed. "As I grew up, I see discrepancies and disparities in enrollment in education, even in the education institute. You see lots of men teachers, but not many female teachers, for example. You grow up, you go to university, you see the number of girl students is much less compared to the boy students. And, when I was in the university, I started seeing that all my friends, the girl friends, were gradually getting married. Many of them dropped out from education, for example. But men, the boys, were like, told to be 'the future bread for the family'. And that's how things started becoming very clear that this is a very gender-biased society: men and women, the girls and boys are treated differently."

b) Cultural acceptance and support of oppression

Not only the research participants talked a lot about prejudices, discrimination and oppression based on social status, but some of them also insisted that these phenomena were deeply rooted into the cultural practices of their societies.

Fayola explicitly pointed out that

"I think that the problems that we face are issues around culture. For instance, a lot of people want to stay within their communities, maybe it's because they feel

safe that way? So, they don't integrate, which means, they are kind of limiting themselves how far or how quick they can go [to achieve their human rights]. But also because people have got this fear of officialdom, you know they are so scared of putting themselves forward, ... to seek help or to question things because culturally people don't question things in some cultures. People just wait to be given things or things to be done for them. So, I think we need to overcome cultural barriers, in that make people more aware that they can actually initiate change within themselves."

She believed that "in every culture, there is good and bad," and therefore "we need to be able to recognize those things and take good things from other cultures." "For me, that is really the key. That is the driving force because, as an individual, I have actually suffered some of these things that women of my community suffer. So I am talking from experience. And that's why I am very passionate about it," Fayola acknowledged her empathy toward her learners.

3. Lack of Awareness

Although such discrimination and oppression existed, there often seemed to be a lack of awareness about them, either on the part of the victim and/or of the perpetrator, which added to the difficulty of teaching about these issues.

While addressing the importance of "in-depth understanding of human rights as far as they apply to everyday life or to every people," Fayola challenged an assumption that "being in a democracy, you can say, obviously, 'oh, this is a free country, everybody has rights, everybody.' But, 'do people really have rights?' If they do have rights, but are they aware of what kind of rights they have? That is the question." She has worked with

African women immigrants and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom and found it troublesome that these women simply do not know about their rights, which makes them more vulnerable even in a democratic society.

“To be honest with you, human rights have not been readily available unless if you go looking for it. So, it’s an area which to me has not been given the priority that it should have.” Therefore, she wondered, “whether people actually see them [their human rights] as something that should be mainstreamed [in a democratic society].” To her, “this is because of a lack of awareness of the importance of everybody learning human rights.”

As a human rights activist, she asserted the importance of learning about human rights

“to mobilize people to raise awareness amongst our communities, and to find ways to work together in our communities. ... It’s basically because I realize that a lot of people of my community are not aware of their rights, especially women. I am really frustrated by what’s going in my own community for a start, in that women find themselves in very difficult situations that actually they could come out of, for instance things like domestic violence, rape, sexual health. AIDS is endemic in our community, but because of culture in our society it is important for women to be married. So, what I want to try and do is to raise awareness among women that, ‘look, you are no less of a woman if you don’t get married or don’t have kids.’ Now what we are finding is that a lot of women just go and get married to anybody just for the sake of getting married and having a baby. Just because that’s what society expects them to be. So, what I am trying really here is to equip myself with the knowledge and skills that I need to be able to then teach others, to say ‘look, these are your rights,’ and to make them aware that actually they do have alternatives, that they should sometimes question.”

Both Lema and Zhen echoed this lack of awareness as one of the major hurdles in their HRE work. Lema, for example, said “a lot of Ethiopian people don’t know their basic rights and their democratic rights. They don’t know about the rule of law and democracy, so they are afraid of the government and they always say that the government is right, so they don’t want to involve to work with you in this [human rights education].” Especially

in societies that are highly hierarchical or where people are poor and not educated, Zhen found people asking “What? The right of children?” which showed their ignorance of human rights standards.

The lack of awareness of human rights issues was also observed by my participants teaching in the United States.

Allison, for example, identified a main difficulty in “trying to get everyone on the same page” when she conducted a HRE training with US students because “some students have never been exposed to any of these [human rights] issues. They then really have a hard time, grasping on to it, unless I use a case that has been overexposed in many ways [in the United States].”

Emily even confessed that, when she was young, she “was certainly not thinking about what human rights might have to do with me in the United States or with the broader US society. That wasn’t even a question. Human rights were things that, other countries had to deal with, not with my own country.” However, since her university, she has worked “on an area of the world that is highly contentious and, most Americans know very little about like the Middle East, or Islam, or these things which they just see as being very other.” She then realized that “their [Americans] ignorance, I think is a barrier to a deeper understanding about people in these areas.”

Jean clearly remembered a moment, what she called “a rude awakening,” when she saw the cover of Saturday Evening Post which portrayed “a little Black girl in the South [of the United States] walking between the two Marshals, with the tomatoes thrown against the wall” during the period of mandatory bussing in 1960’s. “I don’t know how old I was when that came out but all that really made an impression on me. And I couldn’t believe that something like that happened in my country, because as a young kid I was very patriotic and my parents were very patriotic. I thought that the United States was this sort of ... wonderful, democratic place in the world that was leading the world and had achieved all, accomplished all of its democratic principles. As I grew up, I realize that, that wasn’t quite true [laugh].”

4. Resistance

The last theme that emerged from my data on prejudice, discrimination and oppression based on social hierarchies was that, even when people were aware of or knew about these issues around them, there was often resistance to accept this knowledge or to act on it by changing one’s behavior. This resistance seemed to appear at two levels: one was denial (e.g., they know, but do not want to acknowledge), and the other was silence (e.g., they know and accept, but consciously keep silence about the known violations).

a) *Denial/Disbelief: Know, but do not want to acknowledge*

Rana provided a vivid story about how people use an act of denial as a form of resistance.

“There are many resistances ... a lot of resistances, and big resistance. We had a project to address the rights of adolescents engaged in sex work, in floating sex work. So, to address their rights, basically we are working not only with the adolescents but also with police, magistrate, also journalists and hotel management, because these adolescents go to hotel to have sex, and they basically run their business in hotel. We hear that hotel management exploits them a lot. They keep one third or half of their [girls'] earnings. So, that's how we had to work with all these various groups, and interestingly when we are sitting with the group called police, they were saying that 'no, there is nothing, it does not happen'. This is the resistance. Usually in a gender discussion, you will always face lots of resistance from men, particularly. There are some women also who will resist, who will not understand women's rights and human rights, but it is more from the men, even from a man who might seem to be very progressive, even from a man who works in an international organization. It is amazing, it is really amazing. We then had gender training for staff of our office, and if you had seen the level of resistance, that was interesting. So it is there, Yeah.”

For Emily, this act of resistance appeared through her students' "disbelief". When we were doing this Early-Course Interview, which was the first time we spoke to each other, she had just had this very experience in her class on women and globalization.

“In the [globalization and women] class today, I posed a question [in her face-to-face classroom] that many of them [her students] wondered 'how can we [Americans] do things differently if we know that some of the IMF policies and the World Bank policies are causing such drastic changes in women's lives so they have really negative effect in the long run?' First of all, there's disbelief that these organizations must be good and must be operating in the best interest of people. So like there's one level at which some people can't accept that there's a negative side, it must not be real. But then beyond that people wonder 'well, it's just a huge institution and we have no way to get our voice heard to try to affect change. So what could be done?' So I tried to offer some concrete alternatives that had been thrown around by some scholars about, just trying to set up regulatory mechanisms for multinational corporations where they had to have basic minimum standards of labor practices and... What was interesting is that the students, many of them, almost immediately rejected that this would ever be possible. So there was like a level of inability to imagine how that might work. They immediately felt so skeptical and so pessimistic that this wasn't even going

to ever happen. So, in a sense I walked away from the class today realizing that, people can take in and hear and understand that there is injustice, but they feel much less empowered to try to do something to change that.”

b) Silence: Know, accept, but consciously keep silence

Like Emily’s students, even when people knew and accepted the existence of human rights violations, they were susceptible to consciously keep silent about it. As the following excerpts illustrate, one of the major reasons of this silence seemed to be the level of emotional engagement – often negative feelings described as “overwhelmed,” “sad,” “guilty,” “depressing,” “angry,” “pain,” “intimidation,” and “stigmatization.”

After the previous quote, Emily continued explaining how her undergraduate students typically reacted when they first realized about human rights issues in her course.

“My students are nineteen, twenty, twenty-one years old. Just trying to get across to them, how the global economic system, the free market system is supposed to work and what the policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are around transforming different states’ economies and how that impacts women and children, that’s already a huge task. Because they really have very little background and most of them feel overwhelmed, they are sad, they feel guilty. You can see them opening up and then shutting down and then opening up again and then shutting down and feeling overwhelmed with the kinds of ideas they’re learning.”

Some of her students confessed that “it was very depressing,” and, in her view, “that is a common response for American students.” “They get overwhelmed once they start realizing their privilege, then they shut down” Emily explained.

She also found a similar level of emotional engagement by her colleague’s students learning about social welfare systems in the United States at the same university. “We

[she and her colleague] go to coffees and teas and we will talk about our triumphs and our frustrations. And I really respect the way in which he challenges his students to think and he tries to do it in his lecture halls of three hundreds. And he ends up with a lot of angry students actually because he is working from an indigenous Americans' rights perspective. So, I think that he is a target for a lot of anger.”

Allison also underwent many of her students' emotional reactions in her HRE training.

“Another very difficult issue to deal with is US foreign policy because I think, a lot of the students that I speak with, really depends where I'm going. If I'm going to a rural high-school in New Hampshire vs. an inner-city school in Boston, there's just, completely different audiences but a lot of the students are completely influenced by their community and what they may think. Last spring [in 2003], I was speaking about the situation in Iraq and [my organization's] position which is basically it's not an anti-war position nor is it condoning war. So that was a very difficult position to take because people accuse you of being anti-war and accuse you of being anti-American and so forth where I was just completely trying to label it as, we are concerned about the human rights situation that exists and, then also trying to link them to the rules of war and conventions, and trying to make sure that US abide by those conventions. People were very ... it was just a passionate issue that people became very argumentative over it and very defensive over it.”

To sum up, the research participants insisted that it was hard for them to teach HRE in their settings because this subject matter exposed unjust (according to international standards) hierarchies in their societies. These hierarchies manifested themselves in their teaching environments through prejudices, discriminations, and oppressions. But it was hard to talk about them because many people, whether victims or perpetrators of discriminations, were either not aware of them or resisted to accept them. What struck me most during my data collection and preliminary analysis, was that I found the same themes when I analyzed the online course itself. There too, as I will show in Chapter 7

(Processes), hierarchies of social status hindered full engagement in the course. Before moving to that argument, however, I will continue to analyze data pertaining to the research participants' own teaching settings, now focusing on the strategies the participants used to overcome the difficulties they encountered in teaching HRE..

C. STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THE DIFFICULTIES IN HRE

I inquired about the research participants' strategies to overcome their difficulties in teaching HRE in their own settings as a way to assess their overall HRE training needs, which itself shed some light on their goals for taking this particular course. I wanted to know whether their overall approaches to HRE (their "educational philosophies") were congruent with that of the instructors, which itself, as I showed in Chapter 4 (Methodologies), was congruent with the literature I reviewed in Chapter 2 (Theoretical Context). It turned out that there was a high congruence. I did not initially intend to delve deep into this part of my data but I found that the research participants collectively started this online course with a substantial baggage in HRE pedagogy, and that many aspects of the strategies they were using in their face-to-face teaching in their own settings were valid for online HRE teaching as well. However, as I will discuss in Chapter 7 (Processes) and again in Chapter 10 (Recommendations), the online environment does add some complexity in applying those strategies.

When asked about how they were trying to overcome the difficulties they had identified in teaching HRE in their own settings, the research participants explained a wide range of

strategies, which I have categorized along the following six themes (see Appendix 10). Each of these six strategies addresses one or several of the four difficulties presented in the previous section.

1. Raising awareness
2. Integrating HRE into education
 - Integrating HRE into formal education
 - Integrating HRE into informal & non-formal education
3. Learner-centered approaches
4. Dialogic learning process
 - Using scaffolding
 - Balancing open-ended and structured instructions
5. Action-oriented approaches (Activism)
6. Collective and/or Collaborative approaches
 - Group learning
 - Team teaching
 - Partnership among all the stakeholders

1. Raising Awareness

“I cannot teach clearly unless I recognize my own ignorance, unless I identify what I do not know, what I have not mastered. (Freire, 1996, p. 2)”

Many research participants identified raising awareness as the first step in HRE. Zhen pointed out that “how to educate the people to know the basics such as what is a human right?” is a really critical step, because there were many people who would accuse others by saying “you invaded my human right, even without understanding the details.” Over time, he observed that “the more you know [about human rights], the more you feel that

you need to learn, to discover, and to find out more,” indicating the importance of awareness-raising.

Fayola, who addressed the lack of awareness as her major difficulty in teaching HRE, also emphasized that HRE should be available to everyone everywhere. Rana called it “sensitizing” people, and one of the main reasons of this approach was because, for many countries like Bangladesh, “human rights education is something very new. [...] We have done very little work, but lot lot lot needs to be done” She also addressed the role of women in this awareness raising step with an example of domestic violence. “Women have also a big role to play to break the silence of violations to promote their rights because it is transferred from the family. If mother treats both son and daughter equally, that is the start, and I think both parents, mother and father. But we used to tend to blame the father, or the male members in the family. But it’s not always the male member.”

One way to increase people’s awareness of HRE was to make an explicit link to international human rights standards, both at individual and governmental levels.

At an individual level, Allison described her own path to HRE.

“I have always been interested in human rights education and I always thought that what I was doing as a grassroots organizer, social advocate was... there was a lot human rights education in the work that I was doing and I always felt that I could call myself a human rights educator. As I start to learn more and more about the history of human rights and the various documents that exist, I start to see that, in my past, I was not always consistent with relating those instruments to specific case examples.”

Once she made that connection, she then realized how human rights issues were interrelated to one another especially at an international level. For example, when she uses a case study to highlight human rights issues to her students in the United States, “they just look at this as just this one case and now it’s over and we won’t have to worry about that again. Whereas there’re a hundred of cases that have taken place with similar consequences [in the world]. I realize that in my talks maybe I wasn’t really making the connection to, sort of the social economic and cultural rights, that were also being violating here [in the US] or being manipulated here. That kind of impacted me and I realized that my presentations, when I go out and speak on women’s rights and on children’s rights, I need to really make the connections to some of these roots of human rights. And that’s why I see human rights education really being instrumental and not just instrumental I see human rights education being so important.”

Zhen also recalled the moment when he first heard about human rights in his home country, China. In particular, he addressed the importance of a country’s ratification and implementation of international human rights standards such as United Nations conventions and treaties. “In term of human rights education to me, 1990 is a landmark because the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was approved by the UN in 1989, and then China was actually one of the first countries who ratified the convention. I remember well, in April 1990, the Chinese government signed the document. After signing the document, because you had to go through the ratification system by the People’s Congress in China, I think in 1991 the complete ratification for the CRC in China happened.” At that time, he worked as an education officer in the China country

office of an international agency serving children. “By doing advocacy for what the convention is all about, I start to get involved to learn about international laws that very much related to human rights.”

Lema gave a recent account of how his government (of Ethiopia) was also warming up to human-rights related issues once it came under international pressure. Moreover, this change in the government’s attitude then affected its citizens’ understandings of human rights issues, which he considered as one of the strategies for his organization to employ.

“One good opportunity is that other bilateral and multilateral organizations start to influence government to work toward democracy, human rights, and issues like that. So I think government officials at higher positions start to realize that democratization process and this transparency downward accountability. They start to appreciate these things and they start to realize that the role of NGOs, the role of civil society organizations in this activity can play a great role. ... They [government officers] start to change their attitude and to allow civil society organizations to involve in such activities. ... Because the government is working with these civil society organizations, people start also to accept these organizations and hear these organizations and work with these organizations.”

2. Integrating HRE into education

In order to achieve this universal level of awareness among citizens, many of the research participants claimed that HRE should be integrated into all levels and sectors of education: formal education (i.e., schools), non-formal education (e.g., workshops

organized by non-profit organizations), and informal education (e.g., on-the-job training, mentoring).

a) Integrating HRE into formal education

According to Fayola, HRE “has to be mainstreamed and available from primary school, high school to university, by making it as a mandatory subject so that “everybody understands human rights.” Zhen echoed this notion and added that HRE can be started even from “the kindergarten stage” if educators start from easy to more complicated concepts of human rights. Over time, this “step-by-step approach” will make people “leap into more complicated or complex concepts of the human rights.”

At first, Rana acknowledged that she “never thought of involving, including human rights education into formal schools in Bangladesh” before our Early-Course Interview because “Bangladesh is a very conservative society.” She then gave an example of its gender-biased textbooks as described in a previous section. When I asked what can be done in that case, she was able to offer a very concrete picture on how she could approach this sensitive matter. “I think I will recommend for the national textbook board to think to review their textbooks and also incorporate HRE-related materials into that because I understand the necessity of incorporating it into the textbook. Because children need to learn it [HRE] from the very beginning of their life, otherwise they don’t develop respect for other people, respect for themselves and respect for the right of other people. So it is necessary.” Yet, “I don’t think that immediately something is going to happen,” she doubted.

Allison also agreed that “there is very little room in public schools [in the US] for anything outside what is the mandatory curriculum,” what she called “a shame.” In her view, school teachers can integrate various aspects of human rights issues into their curriculum. For example, a math teacher could use the number of prisoners of conscience into their problem solving activities, and an English teacher can teach kids how to write a persuasive letter for human rights protections in their writing classes. “It definitely exists. I also put together activist training for educators and we all come to the table and talk about what we are doing. A lot of them share that they design these math problems with human rights, equations or something to that effect. But it’s not going on in any more extended method. ... It would be nice to have some sort of, collection of how people can use that as a resource.” She explained that one of the barriers in outreaching into US public school systems was the state-mandatory tests such as the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS).

Jean from California could not agree more. “I don’t think anything happens in public education [in the United States] unless you deal with things like states standards and teacher preparation programs. And I don’t think you can deal with them until you have a product and a curriculum that is tried and can show results, not only in the content substantive [but also] show improvement in students’ educational skills.” Her current work aimed at “interjecting human rights into the ninth grade program” in a public high school in her community, involving an English teacher, a history teacher, and an elective-course teacher. They wanted to develop a curriculum “through a human rights lens,” but

at the moment they were “sort of improvising and developing” as they went along because they did not have any curriculum already developed. “I’m really searching for tested curriculums and things that would fit in what they [the three teachers] are trying to do but I have not discovered comprehensive curriculums and that’s why I am looking for them.”

Jean also found that “some of the teachers [at the high school] were a little skittish saying, ‘well, isn’t this political or going to be controversial?’ and I just put out the state educational codes and said ‘look at this.’ We xeroxed that for everybody and that made everybody comfortable.” In the long term, Jean wanted to demonstrate that this HRE program “can raise academic performance levels and proficiency” which is “a very important ingredient to all” in her school. “So that’s a real driving force for what we are looking at because ultimately that is going to be the thing that will sell this program. Everything is so driven by tests now” she concluded.

One thing that Jean was very cautious about was not to let her program be what she called a “light house experience,” meaning that “an inspired teacher some place is doing something.” She believed that “it’s ultimately through an organized long-term project that would truly change the face of education in terms of human rights in this country, which I think is absolutely essential.”

In fact, a number of research participants, especially from developing countries, reported that their governments actually tried to integrate human rights principles into their

educational systems. According to Lema, the Ethiopian government recently introduced HRE through the civic education curriculum in schools. “Even though they don’t put all the human rights issues, they start to teach students about human rights issues. So the students start to change and at least start to know a little about human rights and the issue of democracy and the rule of law and etcetera.”

Ahlam was also proud of the Lebanese revised curriculum because she believed that “just the fact that government incorporated human rights into our Lebanese curriculum is a very good sign.” When she taught English in her rural school, for example, she used the speech of Martin Luther King to teach units on human rights. She recalled that her students were “very receptive, and they came up with very nice ideas. We discussed it and talked about racism.” At the same time, as Allison and Jean experienced, she was also aware of the fact that Lebanese schools and teachers were “only interested about who got 100% and who got the highest scores [in the national exams]. They did not really care about what children enjoy or learn, or values children learn. They only cared about the test scores.”

While teaching in an oppressive school environment, for example, Ahlam appreciated even more the important outcome of her own educational experiences.

“Coming from an American school, the teachers communicated with us [students] in very positive ways, and we were always respected and given freedom and choices... unlike other schools [in Lebanon] where the focus is on discipline. And the school I was in, the focus is on personal discovery, on how to be assertive, on learning how to make choices, and how to be critical, a critical thinker. So... I found it a bit difficult to adjust to other schools if you wanted to teach or other universities which are not American. But even in an American school I have had very touchy experiences in human rights. We had a psychology teacher who was

always advocating about women's rights and empowering us, as female students. And once we decided to have an exhibit about how women are accused and while we were preparing [it] the administrator went into the class and he scolded the teacher, saying that he is teaching unethical practices, and that the community at large would refuse what he is trying to incorporate in us. As a result, the teacher lost his job."

Even in her pre-service teacher education, she read "different theories like Erickson, Piaget, and Vigotsky... and Bandura. So we got a general view of most of them."

Moreover, as a graduate student majoring in health education, she studied about Paolo Freire. Once I heard about this experience, I could understand better why she had to quit her teaching job. At a classroom level, she believed that students would learn language "by reading interesting stuff not by memorizing the grammar of the language, which he [the principal] would not get it." "So, my style of teaching was not welcome because the school was more result-oriented. So, I was very out of place and I had to leave," she concluded.

b) Integrating HRE into informal and nonformal education

At the same time as advocating the integration of HRE into formal education, some participants were also calling for the integration of HRE into informal and nonformal education, and several of them were actually working in that area. Halim clearly saw the gap in Turkey's formal education sector "because I didn't feel that school education, even university education is enough for me, for my personal development [in HRE]."

His HRE interests therefore developed through his NGO experiences by getting involved in the human rights issues on the ground. When I asked how he would define these

experiences, he elaborated that “[w]hat I mean by the informal is when you learn in an unorganized environment like, for example, you get active in a NGO and while you do, without realizing, you get some skills. Non-formal means learning taking place not recognized but then organized like a training of one week or one week-end.” Although all these educational sectors operate differently, his “key concern” was to maximize “the complementarity of the formal, informal, and non-formal aspects of education.”

Moreover, he addressed the importance of teaching methods through “group learning and participation learning” in order to “use all the participants’ or learners’ experiences for the collective development of the person or group.” He also emphasized the role and the attitude of a trainer or a teacher, who should not be “just dictating or imposing something, some pre-defined information but more using the space, using the process and using learners’ past experience. So, teacher, trainer or whatever you name it shouldn’t be like the dictator of the class, but more like another participant with responsible for organizing this process and space.”

By acknowledge various limitations of HRE in the formal schooling sector, Rana in Bangladesh identified that her “best opportunity is to work with the NGOs” because “they are less resistant compared to other groups of people, and this is a group of people who are basically making a lot of change in the country.” From her own experience in HRE, the NGOs are “the change agents, change makers” and therefore “they can have the best, the most effective, and widest impact [on HRE] most quickly and effectively.”

3. Learner-centered approaches

A third strategy the research participants used to overcome the difficulties in teaching HRE in their settings was to adopt learner-centered approaches.

For Rana, the first step in preparing a HRE workshop would be carrying out a needs assessment in order to understand the learners' current needs and available support and resources. "It is choosing the context" Rana explained. "Because human rights education is so broad and so wide, it could be anywhere, you can fit it anywhere. So, basically it depends on which group of people you are going to reach. How best this group can address human rights? And basically focus on their needs." Based on a needs assessment, she would choose a particular set of human rights topics and design the course. At the same time, she would try to be "as realistic as possible because they [her learners] should be able to address or to incorporate whatever the lessons they learn, and it should be not just the theory. It should be something they can practice. So, for me it will depend on the group of participants - for the journalists, for the lawyers group, for the social workers, for government officials, for young people, people who work for HIV-AIDS, for example."

Some research participants also illustrated various ways in which they tried to relate their HRE teaching to their learners' own interests by using case studies and/or movies.

Ahlam insisted that “the best way to learn the language is to read interesting stuff and not just get fixated on grammar quizzing about verbs and adverbs. By watching movies they [the students] can learn, by talking they can learn, and by listening. That’s how you learn a language by reading interesting stuff not by memorizing the grammar of the language.” She continued that “my focus is on learning, on them learning, not much on doing homework or on how much they get at the [governmental] exams. And I used to give them interesting stuff beyond the curriculum, beyond the text books.” For example, she used a movie to teach about “the values of persistence and perseverance” and asked the students to analyze and think about them afterwards.

Allison explained how she chose a case study or a particular human rights issues to address in her workshops.

“Every year, [her organization] works on about ten different issues, some of them being ranging from gay lesbians, to women’s, to children’s rights. So what I try to do is to choose issues that I know are of interest to young people, and those issues usually have to do with women and children, and now there’s a growing interest towards what’s taking place in the US. So an example of a specific case study that I’m actually fairly knowledgeable about and I have spoken on panels and I have incorporated into my workshops, is the issue of child soldiers, basically children’s rights.”

For Jean, relating to her learners’ own interests was very important. “If we can make this human rights personal, if we can have the students embrace it as their own human rights and how they are connected to other people whose human rights are being abused and denied, that there’ll be one of a motivation for them to be engaged in what they’re studying. And that’s what we are hoping. We can make it so engaging and so personal for the kids, that they will be more involved and motivated.”

Another way to raise learners' interests in HRE was to appeal to their feelings, such as feeling respected and compassionate. Ahlam felt a real difference in her students' attitudes toward her as a teacher because "before even teaching and mentioning the word human rights, I come in the class and respect them and they are not useless. Respect them as individuals even if they make mistakes. At least, I enter in the classroom with a smile and a positive attitude."

Allison also remembered that one of her successful HRE teaching happened when her learners were emotionally engaged in the human rights issues with which they were dealing:

"For the last eighteen months, I was going around [as a spokesperson of her organization] and got into a lot of community settings, high-schools, and colleges. One of the cases that I would always talk about with young people, because it seems to be a very popular case that they knew about, was the Amina Lawal case and for most people, they feel compassionate about her because she is a mother and the horrific father wants her being stoned to death, but waiting for the baby be weaned. I mean that really hit home, really sort of hitting to the compassion of a lot of young people. And, when her sentence was commuted, just a few weeks ago, a lot of the young people that I talked with previously were just like 'oh, this is wonderful. This is great, I'm so excited.'"

4. Dialogic learning process

Even when human rights educators find HRE topics of interest to their learners, they need to teach them through a dialogic learning process rather than a didactic process. Among the research participants, Emily particularly highlighted a dialogic learning process as her major teaching strategies for her college students. During my analysis of her explanations

on this issue, I noticed two sub-themes that seemed to be very important to her as a human rights educator. They were using scaffolding as a teaching method, and realizing the difficulty in balancing open-ended discussions with more structured instruction.

a) Using scaffolding

As a relatively new teacher of HRE, Emily felt that her educational philosophy with HRE was still developing. “From the very beginning,” however, she tried to “engage students in a sustained and serious conversation, a kind of dialogue where questions are posed and, there may not be answers for everything but that we grapple with the problems and the ideas, and that I create enough interest in learning more, that they would take some of those basic principles that they learn and carry them beyond the classroom to continue to inquire about them because they are going to forget the facts. They are going to forget even what we may have studied for an exam.” As a teacher, she wanted her students to “remember a particular mode of inquiry, a way of trying to question or challenge what they think of as normal, and trying to figure out how it is that they came to think those things.” By questioning one’s own assumptions, each student would have a chance to reflect upon various privileges that they had been taking for granted.

Upon my question about actual learning activities in her classes, Emily described various things that she tried in detail. When I tried to analyze her teaching style, however, I started recognizing a set of three iterative steps: observing and/or reading about human rights issues, individual writings upon reflection, and collective discussions. To me, the most interesting aspect of this teaching pattern was ways in which she used the idea of

scaffolding to build her students' knowledge and understanding of often complex human rights issues. I assumed that one cycle of these steps would happen based on one particular topic of the class, offering her students multiple opportunities to experience these scaffolding instructions. Below, she explained each step in more details.

Step 1: Observing or reading about human rights issues

Emily said, "I'm continually trying to introduce them [her students] to things in the class that they might not have access to or might not have ever thought of consulting. ... I use a lot of films because I think a lot of the students really effect they learn more deeply when they can relate it to cases that they see on film. Like PBS' "Rich World, Poor Women" raises some very profound questions about women's place in the world economy and the exploitation of their labor and some very difficult examples of how their lives are changing. So, they have the motivation to go beyond the easy sources of information to ones that offer more complex realities."

Step 2: Individual writing upon reflection

Emily indicated, "most of what they do in my class is writing. I emphasize a lot of writing, they usually write response papers. For students who feel insecure, I pose a couple of questions and they can choose one. For students who are more secure in their ability to analyze the readings, I let them do what they want to do. I don't tell them for those who are insecure but I just put it out there that they can choose a question or choose a topic of their interest. And then, I have them do a larger more structured writing assignment that grows out of the readings and the discussions and the films, at the mid-

semester and the end-semester. So, I don't use like objective exams for the most part." To her, this writing step is very critical because "if they can work on their ideas in writing, it will help them to develop their ability to also communicate those ideas more clearly in their speaking, in the way that they interact with each other. The response papers that I assign are to give us a platform for a better discussion in class." Her act of scaffolding went further. "Instead of discussing it right away, we have only a fifty-minute period we didn't have time and, sometimes I find it better to have students write like reactions. There is no right answer. I don't pose a question for them but they just react to the film in a page. I give them time in class to write it. And then, I take them all and read across them for themes and questions and usually make up a handout where they go back and look at all of the comments that were made." Her class used Web-based discussions on Blackboard and, based on this online discussion happening between classes, she also drew further themes for the next class's discussion.

Step 3: Collective discussions

Emily described that one of the reasons why she tried to find out some common themes among her students was because she realized that, if they just started talking without these preparatory steps, it made some students "uncomfortable and people don't want to say a lot." "I put together some of their ideas and, when we start to talk through the handout, then it starts bringing people into the conversation. For example today, a lot of people spoke up who hadn't spoken up before and part of that was because they were freed from saying the first scary thing that they might have expressed in their writing. And it was totally anonymous because I just put it out there as an idea someone had said.

So then it allows people to pick up on those ideas without being identified.” In this way, she tried “not to lecture too much but to present material in a way that’s more dialogic”, as well as “to open a space for people to really talk about how they’re thinking about the readings.”

Through this cycle, she had observed that her students increased their openness and tried to “really grapple with varying degrees of sophistication in terms of how they can think through complex human rights problems.”

b) Balancing open-ended and structured instructions

However, Emily often found it challenging to balance her open-ended instruction with a more structured one.

“I think some students would prefer to have straight up lectures where I stand and I show on the PowerPoint all the main important points and they can kind of, grab the knowledge that way and they can identify what it was they were supposed to have learned. That makes them feel more comfortable. ... In my particular class, people feel so uncertain about the basic ideas so that I have had to drag in the PowerPoint [presentation] a couple times and go through, explaining what some of the basic concepts are and then raise questions about what they think of the idea. Because that was just too big for them to try to learn on their own, I actually had to sit and kind of lay out some ideas and have them respond to it.”

During our interview, Emily confessed one thing that she could have done better in this process.

“I’m not so sure I’ve been effective in explaining to them why, in my style of teaching, it’s messier than that [a conventional class] and there isn’t necessarily going to be closure on issues. It might be more openings to further questions and showing me that they are seriously thinking about these questions. So, I think that degree of uncertainty for some students is just too troubling. But the more mature

students can probably handle it. So I'm still learning about how to balance that. ... I'm just still living through and I'm feeling a little frustrated actually."

During this interview, I wondered about Emily's own educational experiences in relation to her own progressive teaching methods in her currently more conservative university.

Jae-Eun: "Just by hearing what you describe over the phone [about how she teaches her HRE classes], I am wondering how you have become kind of progressive in terms of your ideas and your teaching methods. What kind of schooling experience you had as a student?"

Emily: "I would say probably, you're right on target [laugh]. My undergraduate experience shaped how I teach. My graduate experience was very unsatisfying on a lot of dimensions ... interestingly enough I think I had better teachers as an undergrad than I did in graduate school. ... As an undergrad, ... there were many many positive things about it and one was that we had wonderful teachers and [her undergraduate college] kept the class size down so most of my classes were between 15 to 20 students. Many of them [the classes] were run in a format that I try to emulate in this larger university setting. And the only reason I am able to do that is because I have the privilege of teaching women's studies which has fought hard to maintain small class size, about thirty students. ... Sometimes, I feel like I want to tell the students ... 'you don't understand how impoverished this [lecture] form of education is, and that, you could be gaining so much more, if you would really take advantage of the opportunity to come and see your professors, to work with each other amongst the students, to join in some of the other activities, to take advantage of studying abroad, and to tackle the kind of classroom set-up that I set up that probably very different from most of their classes where it's mostly lecture.' But, it's all as if many of the students the way they were trained in high school, they don't even imagine an environment like I experienced at [her college] where so much more of the initiative is put on the shoulders of the students as capable learners who can shape the direction of the discussion. They noticed that there is a real reliance on me to carry things, even at the Masters level. So I find myself feeling like, maybe we [the teachers] need to help them [the students] to see how they can be more active participants and creators in the process. It's harder to do it that way. It's more comfortable to have somebody tell you what you need to know."

This case of Emily shows that some research participants had considerable background in pedagogy. More importantly, I delved in depth in the dialogic approach to HRE teaching and learning because it is the aspect of the online course that I was most interested in

analyzing, considering my research question on how diverse educators dialogue or debate among one another about sensitive issues in an online environment. I will therefore come back to this discussion in Chapter 7 (Processes) and 10 (Recommendations).

5. Action-oriented approaches (Activism)

Another common strategy that many of the research participants described was to employ action-oriented approaches to HRE. This mainly related to what many described as changing people's attitudes or behaviors toward human rights issues which, according to Lema in Ethiopia, is "the hardest part of HRE." He criticized that "when we [human rights educators] see the impact of a HRE program, we don't see much difference because we may teach people about human rights but it's difficult to change the people's attitudes or behaviors. We can't change people's behavior ... beyond understanding or recognizing human rights. It's very difficult for people to implement what they know and to fight for the realization of human rights."

Halim in Turkey agreed on the importance of taking actions in HRE. "For example, my understanding of learning and training HRE is not simply teaching or telling some ... it's more like an organizing and learning process. When I say learning, I mean like acquisition of knowledge, values and attitudes mainly, and getting equipped of course to take action. Both during my actions and being a reference point [of his trainees] I can contribute to the core human rights education."

According to the research participants, a next critical step after developing a basic awareness of HRE should be for people to demonstrate their understandings through their actual activism, what these participants called a capacity building at an individual, a professional, and an institutional level.

For an individual's activism, Emily recalled the way in which she first stayed away from, but then later realized the significance of an activist component in HRE through her own experience.

“There is one teacher that I had as an undergraduate who scared me so much that I didn't take any more classes from him. He didn't scare me, the ideas [of his class] did. It was a sociology class called Global Inequality, and he had us do a service learning project where we had to volunteer somewhere in [the local] community. So I volunteered for [an organization], an activist group for elderly people. But the readings like we did, we read Paulo Freire and a lot of different things that Oxfam was doing. He had done his work in Africa, so he was very much rooted in the issues of food and famine and many of the students in that class to me seemed much more passionate and much more understanding is like needing to take action and not just to read and theorize about things. For some reason, I just wasn't mature enough to think about that there are lots of different kinds of action and you can work in many ways. So I really retreated from that more activist stance and I kind of leaned toward a high intellectual pursuit for a long time. And then it took a while for me to come back around and, really value teaching in a women's studies program which promotes both activism and scholarly pursuit that you have to find some way to make them be part of the same whole that they aren't separate tasks. So, actually there was one class that I can kind of go back to and think of as being very transformative, a very positive experience but in that moment I didn't understand it as such I was very scared of the ideas because it made me, have to be critically self-aware. And it felt like too much was being asked. Like if I really invested in the ideas, but I would have to give up a lot of my comforts and privileges. So, I went running away from these ideas for a while.”

Due to this experience, she could now understand her current students better, especially those who did not feel comfortable with her request for activism in her HRE class. When I asked why some of her students would feel like this way, Emily pointed out that “there

is too much to deal with psychologically and in terms of their identities even when they do not want to think about.” “Especially if you’re teaching people in a place of extreme privilege, like even amongst working class people in America, we are still talking about people who enjoy, a great amount of privilege, how do you teach in a way that doesn’t alienate your students?” Emily asked herself. Moreover, through her action-oriented approach in her class, she wanted to “empower” her students to “try to want to pressure their very own government to make changes. Like how do you overcome or how do you challenge the notion, that self-interest is natural and it is a biological given?”

At a professional level, Rana offered concrete examples concerning her HRE work with youth in Bangladesh.

“People from every profession should be oriented on the human rights and they should be motivated and sensitized to address it, to advocate for it and also to integrate in their own area. ... And try to see how we can basically build that capacity. And when I talk about capacity, I don’t not only mean their way of dealing with children young people and women, particularly those who are in need of special protection, for instance the street children or adolescents engaged in sex work, or women who are destitute. But also what I mean is their ability to plan, monitor, and report, from human rights perspectives. Because, sometimes people might have an understanding of what human rights is, and then maybe in their behavior they try to be more sensitive on various aspects of human rights, but we sometimes miss to incorporate it into our work. ... I can give you a specific example that, with very little talk to the right holders, we rarely talk to the children and women when we plan for them, and we think that we know the best, but that’s not right so. Right at the moment I’m working with three NGOs to prepare their next phase projects and I have asked them, all of them to talk to the children and to the women, particularly the group for which they are going to work, and get their ideas on what their priorities are and what they would like to solve or what they would like to address during next two years. So, like that all the NGOs are working with their stakeholders the children, and other groups of people, for example, police, judges, magistrates, lawyers, advocates, journalists, government officials, local elite, social leaders people like that, who will also influence a lot in the environment where the women and children live. So that’s how we are getting, we are trying to get their views and perceptions into consideration when we are developing the project. I tell you so much because, just

to tell you how human rights issues should be incorporated right from assessing the needs, to plan, and also even when we are monitoring, certain projects, when we evaluate, when we record or document. . . . It's all the question of ethics, one's values and principles. It is not just that in my personal life, I just follow human rights educational things like that. That's how I see. It should really go in deep of our thought and our discussion, a part of our every day work. That's how I see and that's why I told you that basically building capacity [in professionals] is not just sensitizing them on human rights but something more that needs to be done. We need to sensitize government, and also try to build that capacity to address human rights in every day of certain projects.”

Fayola also conducted various capacity building programs for immigrant African women in London at both an individual and an institutional level. What she found a key in her HRE workshops was that they should focus on “personal empowerment” and also incorporate “the cultural background that the women are coming from.”

6. Collective or Collaborative approaches

To make their HRE more successful, many research participants also applied either collective or collaborative approaches to their teaching. I identified three strands under this category: group learning, team teaching, and partnership among all the stakeholders.

a) Group learning

Emily articulated how and why she used collective or collaborative learning activities in her two different HRE classes.

In her undergraduate class on women and globalization where her students were dominantly young white Americans, she tried to link activism with small group works.

“I’m having them [her students] work in their own organically-formed small groups to research a feminist organization, a transnational NGO that is mobilizing around a women’s rights issue and have them [her students] look at and research it understand what their platform is, understand what they’re working toward, and try to look at how they’re making connections across nation-states boundaries to bring more attention to their issue. I’m hoping that if I have my whole class of students doing their small group work, that they can find that there are people who are passionately, expanding their energy to try to make change, that might give them the hope that there is something they can do.”

After finishing their collaborative works in these small groups, her students come together to present their learning experiences to the entire class as a part of the collective learning process. However, “it has not been very effective,” Emily confessed. “I have noticed in the last few classes that I have used [this method]. I am not sure whether it’s the culture of our school or what, but many students do not like small group work because they feel like if a couple of students didn’t do the reading to prepare, then it’s the other couple that’s carrying the burden, and it’s not a very productive environment.”

One of the strategies that she used to overcome such difficulty was to form a sense of learning community and therefore “to allow people to have more voice” within each small group. She explained that “from the beginning, you have to establish a relationship and create a space with one another, that’s one of trust. It’s hard to balance some of the voices, some of the people who want to speak too much and the people who feel nervous that they’ll be hurt to say something, if they say something that other people see as dumb or uninformed. So one thing that I try to work on is trying to get the people to speak and realize that they aren’t going to be penalized in anyway for even the most basic questions.”

On the contrary, her graduate course was “very different” because she had “students from Guinea, who is Algerian from France, Turkey, Korea, China.” She admitted that this diversity “actually takes the pressure off of me for having to present positions from other places in the world and other standpoints. I don’t always have to be the spokesperson for other people [laugh]. Students aren’t familiar with thinking through so, that’s a luxury like for them to carry the debate and the discussion and to, just talk to one another. That’s a real luxury.”

b) Team teaching

In our interview, Halim in Turkey emphasized the role of team teaching in his HRE workshops.

Halim: “I never go to trainings alone. ... Usually if I am to conduct a training of one day, two day or one week, I never go alone. And that’s kind of principle as well.”

Jae-Eun: “Can you explain why you think it’s important and who are usually within the team?”

Halim: “First, some other person in a team brings more richness. It is more diverse. ... If you are accustomed to be a solo player, then it’s also more probable that you will be sticking in your own methodology and own framework all the time, so you cannot adapt yourself and you cannot develop yourself as well. Second, it’s very tiring as well. If you want to act as a good trainer in that sense, then you have to be very caring toward participants not only toward what they have said but also all the reactions they have with their emotions and the expression on their faces. So you have to be always like measuring participants. So it’s very tiring. Just one workshop of like 3 or 4 hours is very tiring. So you cannot handle this, I cannot handle this myself. ... Third is the kind of crisis management. As I said, the process is very intense during these trainings. So you might be kind of overwhelmed or swamped, then when you feel like falling, there should be some other people to catch you. That’s why I always prefer working in team.”

c) Partnership among all the stakeholders

In addition to group learning and team teaching, many research participants also pointed out that human rights educators should form a strong partnership among all the stakeholders, to make their HRE work more effective and more successful.

Lema called it “a multiplier effect,” meaning that he wanted to first start with “very small groups of people like a community-based organization or social institution in different parts of Ethiopia, who can be our partner organizations, provide civic education programs, involve in monitoring human rights violence, report to us different violations of human rights, and collaborate with us working in human rights programs.” Based on this collaborative approach, he can see how his HRE work would be a first step “to teach these people about human rights, so that these people can teach other people and involve other people in such activities.”

In order to overcome “resistances,” which was the major difficulty in her HRE work, Rana illustrated some other strategies for people to “work together from the very beginning” by forming “a core group included government, NGOs, and civil society members.” Since “particularly government people such as police, magistrate, traditional bureaucrats, high-level government officials” tend to be more resistant in Bangladesh, she emphasized that human rights educators “have to really be very diplomatic to get them [government people] convinced on doing something [with HRE], which is so

progressive and which is sensitive.” When I asked her to give some concrete examples, she told me the following – rather comical – experience.

Rana: “There were many resistances, even saying there is no sexual abuse in Bangladesh, you know? People will tell you that there is no discrimination. We have given women so much that there is nothing left to be done. Now you need to work to promote the right of men! Because there are many examples that men are violated. They sometimes will talk to you like that.”

Jae-Eun: Then, how do you deal with such situation?

Rana: “Then we organized a joint meeting with police magistrate, hotel management, journalists, and other progressive groups, social leaders, ... and you need to tackle those experiences particularly in a workshop. How you tackle that usually... when someone says that ‘woman’s rights are not violated’ or that ‘there is no problem of sexual abuse’, then as a instructor you just ask another participant to give his or her views and opinions on this very statement and that’s how you manage the resistance. ... When other groups started saying that ‘yes, I know this is happening,’ and then police had no alternative way except accepting that this is happening. And then we are like openly discussing ‘why do you think it is happening and what to do about it.’ And that’s how gradually we came to know. At the beginning, police was saying that, if girls are doing sex work in the hotel then we should raid the hotel, and we should arrest them. We find it, you know that’s not right, so we tried to convince the police that it’s not the fault of the girl, why are you going to arrest the girl because they have to decide on their own life. Let them, you know you have no right to arrest them, what is their fault? So they said that they will then go and arrest the hotel manager [laugh] or those who are allowing the girls to do sex work in their hotel. So those kinds, various resistances...”

I noted that some research participants usually said “I” (i.e., Ahlam and Emily) when describing their HRE work, while others mostly said “we” (i.e., Rana, Halim, and Fayola). Now knowing more about each participant’s HRE situation, I see this as a sign of how they view themselves in their specific HRE settings. For example, both Ahlam and Emily taught their HRE courses individually – not as a part of an organization, for example – and did not have any or enough colleagues to work together. In contrast, some participants described themselves as a member of certain groups or a part of collective

movements. More specifically, Rana talked about “we, the women activists” when she explained about how she wanted to react against gender-biased textbooks in Bangladesh, while Fayola’s “we” indicated either immigrant African women which she identifies herself or a member of her organization who worked for these women in the United Kingdom or a person from developing countries. Throughout my interview with her, I found her strong sense of community-based approaches to HRE through her use of “we” all the time.

I also wondered whether Ahlam’s departure from her teaching might have been due to her “loneliness” in her school, as she named it. As we can see in the data above, most human rights educators’ works prove to be against the mainstreamed culture and/or the status quo in their own societies. Therefore, if a human rights educator is or feels alone in this struggle, it would be harder for the person to keep going. Rather, s/he might choose to become submissive or, like Ahlam, to leave the place.

To sum up this section on the research participants’ strategies to overcome the difficulties they faced in teaching HRE in their settings, I was struck by the sophistication with which these HRE educators described constructivist approaches to teaching and learning HRE. Throughout my research period, I did not even mention my interest in constructivist approaches to HRE, yet these educators were actually carrying out many ideas that I presented in Chapter 2 (Theoretical Context) in their own HRE settings.

To summarize this whole chapter on goals, the key conclusions that are relevant to my dissertation-wide argument are that:

- HRE is indeed a sensitive and difficult subject matter to teach because it involves challenging established power relationships, which manifest themselves through prejudices, discriminations and oppressions based on these prejudices, lack of awareness about these prejudices and discriminations, and resistance against learning about these prejudices.
- The research participants considered constructivist pedagogies such as learner-centered, collaborative, and dialogic approaches as the best means to overcome these difficulties.

Moreover, I also found that the difficulties encountered by the research participants as HRE educators in their own settings were mirrored in the difficulties they encountered, as learners this time, in engaging this online HRE course. By delving deep into the face-to-face teaching environments of the research participants, I therefore gained some insights into the dynamics of the online course as well. But I will show in the next chapter that the online nature of the course added another layer of complexity in teaching and learning HRE.

VII. ANALYSIS OF ONLINE LEARNING PROCESSES

Research question: *How did the eleven research participants communicate about the course content in the online learning environment, and how did they describe their online learning processes?*

In this chapter, I analyze the research participants' learning processes in this online course, with an emphasis on how they communicated about sensitive HRE issues in an online environment.

The main learning processes in this course were reading the course materials, reflecting upon them, and writing individual assignments relevant to one's HRE interests. One-on-one feedback from the instructors on the written assignments was also an important source of learning. The instructors conducted an End-Course Survey to evaluate each of these learning processes. The response from the research participants was very positive. My interviews confirmed that the research participants found the readings, assignments and instructors' feedback overall very helpful. Appendix 13 provides some data in that regard. However, I do not delve into those learning processes because they are not central to my research interests explained in Chapter 2 (Research Context): they do not require new technology (the readings and individual written assignments could have been mailed like in traditional distance education courses), and they integrated constructivist principles only to a limited degree (the main such principle being the learner-centered approach manifest in the tailoring of the final assignment on the participants' specific

goals for taking this course, and in the discussion board where participants were invited to reflect upon the readings through their own HRE practice)..

Rather, this chapter focuses on the learning processes involving online interactions among research participants. As I explained in Chapter 2 (Theoretical Context), HRE is very much about learning to debate, to explore alternative points of view and to critically reflect upon one's own preconceptions. Human rights are not only the subject matter of HRE, but should also be modeled in the learning process, by providing a democratic environment that allows for respectful exchange of diverging opinions. The research participants themselves explained that it was difficult to teach HRE in authoritarian environments and through didactic pedagogy. Rather, I showed in Chapter 6 (Goals) that they explained that active participation, collaboration, and learning through dialogue – all elements of constructivism – are very important to HRE teaching and learning.

The diversity of the group was also a tremendous resource to apply two other elements of constructivism: the exploration of cross-cultural and multidisciplinary perspectives. But again that resource could be harnessed only through interactive learning processes. (Some readings did include cross-cultural and multidisciplinary perspectives, but readings could not exploit the knowledge that was in the group.) Other elements of constructivism, like the development of creative and critical thinking and problem-solving skills, can also be facilitated by interactions among course participants, although individual assignments, readings, and one-on-one interactions between instructors and course participants can also involve these dimensions.

All these considerations explain my focus on online interactions in this chapter. As explained in Chapter 3 (Research Questions) and 4 (Methodology), I anticipated that the very subject of human rights, coupled with the diversity of course participants, would open the possibility of spirited debates, misunderstandings, and disagreements. I planned to analyze in depth how these exchanges would play themselves out through computer-mediated communications. However, my main finding about online interactions among participants in this course was that there was fairly little of it, and no one could report any instances of misunderstanding, disagreement, or back-and-forth negotiation of different perspectives. Interaction with fellow course participants was also the learning process that ranked the least well in the End-Course Survey. And my interviews revealed that course participants were even less satisfied with the online interactions than what they reported in their surveys. Course participants and instructors alike seemed almost *too* polite in the online discussion board throughout the course, meaning that they hardly challenged each other but rather limited themselves to positive feedback. As I had barely any interactions to observe through virtual ethnography, I used my two last interviews with each participant to investigate why that had been the case.

In the first section of this chapter, I present some data about the extent of interactions that the research participants had with each other. I then investigate in the next two sections how they explained and made sense of their online behaviors based on the data from my End- and Post-Course Interviews. The latter two sections refer to two broad categories of explanations provided by the research participants to make sense of their online

behaviors: explanations linked to the nature of the subject matter (HRE), and explanations linked to the online nature of the course.

As to explanations linked to HRE, I realized that the main difficulties that the research participants identified for the paucity of interaction within this online course were similar to those they had named when asked about their challenges to teach HRE in their own settings. The second section of this chapter therefore mirror the second section of Chapter 6 (Goals), and I present the data along the same sub-headings:

- **Controversial and sensitive nature of HRE:** The research participants avoided stirring controversy on potentially sensitive subjects by exercising some degree of self-censorship in their communication.
- **Prejudice, discrimination and intimidation:** Given that they had very little information about each other, many research participants made assumptions about each other based on the few pieces of social status information that was available on the online course website, and those assumptions inhibited interactions. (I used the word “oppression” in Chapter 6 (Goals) to describe relationships in my course participants’ societies; this word is definitely too strong to describe what happened in the online course, and “intimidation” is a softer and more accurate way to describe a similar idea.)
- **Lack of awareness:** The research participants were unaware of others’ prejudices, discriminations, and sense of intimidation in the online learning environment.

- **Resistance:** Even when they became aware through their conversation with me, some of the research participants did not think that they should have changed their online behaviors.

As to explanations linked to the online nature of the course, I identified five categories of them, which I present in the third section of this chapter:

- Lack of face-to-face contact and emotional bond
- Lack of time
- Language difficulties and writing styles
- Lack of clarity of course design and delivery
- Lack of adequate access to the Internet

A. INTERACTIONS AMONG THE COURSE PARTICIPANTS

Before analyzing some of the reasons why research participants did not interact much online, I first analyze the extent of interactions that did take place.

The course design allowed for three kinds of interactions among the course participants:

- Exchanges between buddies (on the course discussion board or by e-mail).
- Peer reviews of final projects (by e-mail).
- Weekly contributions to the online course discussion board.

In addition, some course participants spontaneously exchanged emails outside of the course environment with others who were not their buddies.

1. Exchange between buddies

Buddies were matched by the instructors at the second week of the course and were supposed to pay particular attention to each other's contributions to the discussion board, by referring to their buddies' ideas in their own messages. All research participants agreed that the system either did not work at all or turned out not to be very useful.

Emily: "You were supposed to respond to in some way, something that the person you were paired with said. I tried to do that a few times. It just didn't work out very well."

Halim: "The buddy system didn't work." "I couldn't see much reference to their buddies. So I think the instructors are also aware that the buddy system didn't work for this course."

The following table summarizes the level of interactions among the Buddy pairs.

TABLE 3: Interactions between buddies

Buddy Group	Level of interactions
Jean – Rana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reference to each other on the discussion board. - Some email communication outside of the course environment, but both felt it was not enough. - Since Jean dropped out in early November, their interactions stopped.
Zhen – Emily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emily did try to regularly refer to Zhen on the discussion board (5 times) but did not feel reciprocity (explaining she was posting messages too late in the week). - Zhen referred to Emily once and did not feel he got much feedback either. - No attempt at contacting each other.
Padam – Lynn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reference to each other on the discussion board. - Lynn initiated contact, but got no reply.
Lema – Helene*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reference to each other on the discussion board. - Lema initiated contact but Helene did not reply, making Lema believe his buddy was too busy.
Halim – Donna*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Halim referred to Donna one time and Donna referred to Halim twice. - No attempt at contacting each other.
Ahlam – Tom*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reference to each other on the discussion board. - No attempt to contact each other.
Fayola – A**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reference to each other on the discussion board. - Fayola initiated contact but got no reply.
Allison – B**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No reference to each other on the discussion board. - Allison initiated contact but got no reply due to a misunderstanding (her buddy did not believe they were matched because the name that appeared for her on the course web site was wrong).

* Passive research participant. ** Not a research participant.

2. Peer reviews on final projects

Except for Ahlam and Tom, all other research participants were assigned different counterparts for their buddies and for peer reviews of final papers. Jean was not matched with anyone because she dropped out.

The following table summarizes the level of interactions among the research participants within their peer review groups.

TABLE 4: Interactions between peer reviewers

Peer review groups	Level of interactions
Rana – Zhen – Lynn	Rana and Lynn got some feedback.
Emily – Donna* – B**	
Ahlam – Allison – Tom*	Ahlam reviewed papers of both her peers but got feedback from only one of them
Lema – Padam – Eva*	Lema reviewed the papers of both his peers and got useful feedback from Padam but nothing from Eva.
Fayola – Halim – A**	Fayola received feedback from both her peers and was very satisfied; she initiated e-mail contact with each of them, and they agreed to mentor her in the future.

* Passive research participant. ** Not a research participant.

[NOTES] I unfortunately did not always ask exactly from which of their peers my research participants received feedback.

Again, the research participants were by and large dissatisfied by the level of interactions with their peer reviewers in this learning activity, as several of them received no feedback at all from some of their peers and very succinct feedback from others. However, at least some participants who fortunately got feedback were very satisfied like Fayola.

Fayola: “I was fortunate that the people that reviewed my project, for instance, were people who were quite experienced. So I got a little very good, very positive feedback, which I’m very grateful for. And I actually managed to contact them separately from the main list serve. And we were able to sort of strengthen the relationship that we developed and in fact they both agreed to mentor me and that I could always contact them for further help, further support, which I really appreciated. But I initiated that and maybe that’s because I’m that sort of a person anyway. So I wanted to capitalize on the contacts that the course had made.”

Rana who got feedback from her peers, however, was not very satisfied by its quality, saying that “though I have received some feedback, I expected some...I mean, detailed

feedback, which I did not get. I don't know the reason, maybe... myself also was quite delayed in forwarding my comments.”

3. Contribution to the online course discussions

As shown in Appendix 14, the research participants contributed to the online discussion board regularly, with the exception of Jean who was late from the beginning and then dropped out of the course in mid-way. However, most research participants did skip the discussion board a couple of times and/or contributed late a few times. Some tended to contribute in time for others to react to their contributions before the end of the week, but others tended to contribute at the last minute such that there was no way for the other participants to react, nor for the instructors to take their contributions into account in the end-of-week summary of online discussion.

According to the research participants, there was no real “discussion” on the discussion board. Rather, each participant responded to the one or two questions asked by the instructors at the beginning of the week. Each participant thus posted only one message per week with one exception: one passive research participant posted two messages in two sessions. Since there was no one course participant posting a response to another participant's message in addition to his or her own message in each week's session, there were literally no threaded online discussions in this course. (A threaded discussion is when an online conversation evolves between several participants on a given subject, with participants responding to each other in several iterations.) Rather, the course participants only occasionally referred to messages of other participants in their own

messages. (Of course, they only referred to messages posted before their own.) For each of my research participant, I indicate in Table 5 to which course participants they referred during the whole duration of the course.

In only two cases did some course participants post messages not directly related to the questions of the week. One was posted by Halim in the aftermath of a terrorist attack in his home city Istanbul. Two other course participants responded with their sympathies. In another instance, Padam posted a farewell message at the end of the course, to which nobody replied.

Instructors did not intervene in the course discussion at all, but posted the discussion question(s) at the beginning of each session and then simply synthesized the posted messages at the end of each session. However, the instructors gave individual feedback to some messages by e-mail. They explained me that they did this in order to avoid exposing their assessments of individual learners to the view of all participants. While this concern for privacy has some merits, it is not a standard way to facilitate an online course discussion. In fact, instructors usually provide feedback in the online course environment precisely as a means to stimulate debate. For the entire duration of the 12-week course, there was only one request for clarification from a course participant posted on the web as a response to the week's question. The instructor replied within a day.

Table 5 summarizes the pattern of online discussion postings for each research participant, and more detailed information including the exact date of postings is shown in Appendix 14.

TABLE 5: Participation in the discussion board

Name	Total number of postings ¹	Number of weeks skipped	Number of weeks late ²	Timing of Post during the week ³	Participants to which they refer
Ahlam	12	2	2	Early (1) Late (11)	B** (Wk. 6)
Padam	9	4	1	Middle (1) Late (8)	None
Halim	14	0	3	Late (14)	Donna/buddy* (Wk. 5) Ahlam (Wk. 11)
Allison	7	4	3	Middle (1) Late (6)	None
Emily	15	0	2	Middle (1) Late (14)	Zhen/buddy (Wks. 2, 4, 8, 9) Allison (Wk. 2) Tom* (Wk. 3) Donna* (Wk. 10) B** (Wk. 11)
Lema	12	1	2	Middle (1) Late (11)	None
Rana	11	3	5	Middle (1) Late (10)	None
Fayola	11	3	3	Early (3) Late (8)	Rana, Donna*, Ahlam (Wk. 6)
Lynn	14	1	0	Early (2) Middle (2) Late (10)	None
Zhen	15	0	1	Middle (7) Late (8)	Emily/buddy (Wk. 3)
Jean	5 (dropped out)	8	1	Middle (2) Late (3)	None

* Passive research participant

** Not a research participant

[NOTES]

1. The total number of required postings was 15 because the first four sessions had two questions.
2. The number of online discussion messages posted after the instructor's end-session synthesis.
3. Early posting means a message that came on the first or the second day of the session; Middle posting means a message written between the third and fifth days; and Late posting means a message sent on the last two days of the session or even later.

As the summary table indicates, there were big variations in the number of discussion postings, and most postings came late during the session, making the buddy interactions even more difficult. Moreover, only Emily consistently referred to others' postings in her messages (more than three times during the entire 12-week period). Thus, the lack of interactions on the discussion board was overall a disappointment for most research participants.

Ahlam: "If you remember the first interview we had, there's no interaction, there's no direct interaction. And this I think was one of the limitations of the course. Because people just cared to really post their messages and that's it. And maybe some people read other people's messages, but you rarely see interaction." "Yeah, it's like a bunch of people studying separately, but put in the same course."

Allison: "There was definitely something missing. I can't really put my finger on it. There was some glue missing between the communication because everyone would respond, and every now and then someone would sort of piggy back onto someone else's comment by bringing up something that was said. That was always nice to read because you can tell that people are reading each other's comments, but that didn't happen a lot and I wish that happened more."

Despite this disappointment about lack of interactions on the discussion board, course participants were quite happy to have at least the possibility of reading others' messages. That is understandable because the very exposure to a diverse set of HRE educators was one of their motivations to take this online course, such that even passive exposure was interesting to them.

Jean: "I needed to find, you know, some way to put my foot or my hand in a stream to participate with people who are already doing this [HRE] work, because I'm isolated in a way, because [my organization] doesn't do human rights education per se. It becomes an incidental part of it. And I really wanted to be involved in dialogues with people who were really doing that work."

Halim: "I know that it's not possible to reach everybody. So it's not easy to have like an egalitarian approach when doing training. So it felt...it was quite interesting for me to meet with people from all over the world, especially from

developing countries. Just on the virtual media, not from the real media. So it was exciting but I think that not much interaction could be possible.”

Emily: “I liked to hear the voices of different people enter into their ideas.” “I think it truly...even with the reservations I had about the discussion groups, I think what I appreciated was being able to read different people’s ideas.”

Rana: “About discussion questions and views from other participants, I think this is something which I was looking forward, because I wanted to listen to the different experiences from other countries, how people work and how things are really moving, how effectively we can implement the projects. So that opportunity (Inaudible) was created through the interaction, through the dialogues and the discussion threads. And I think it was a learning experience.”

Zhen: “I learned quite a lot from other people’s comments, their participation, their discussion. I would say it has provided the opportunity to define the human rights related to their own setting. When I say their own setting, is their cultural background setting, their social background setting and also even their economic development setting. And perhaps human rights is really focused on different groups, just because of their background. Some people talking about the women issues, some people talking about the racial issues and some people talking about the school education issue. So in that way I would say it’s quite... much diversified.” “Also it [this diversity] really changed your impression, because some people think that in terms of human rights standard in the US must be much higher than in terms of understanding or in terms of the practicing. Much can be better [in the US] than in the other countries. And then, through the discussion, I feel that which is not the case. To a certain extent, I mean in terms of the human rights in the developed world, is no better than the developing world. So it’s good to know. I mean the discussion really is good, ...opened your vision to change your impression, in a way to change your conceptual ideas.”

4. Interactions outside the course context

A few of the research participants took the initiative to contact other course participants by e-mail (and in one instance by telephone) outside of the framework of the buddy system, peer reviews, and online discussion board (see Table 6). Two course participants, Emily and Tom (a passive research participant), were actually domestic partners, and so could exchange their perspectives on the course in everyday conversations.

I report their explanations of their motivations to initiate such contacts and the learning experiences they derived from it in the next section that explores why there was not more interactions among course participants.

TABLE 6: Interactions among participants outside the online course environment

Participants	Description of interactions
Jean – Fayola	1 phone conversation + some e-mail exchange
Emily – Tom*	Live together
Emily – Halim	Some e-mail exchange; Emily planned to visit but it did not happen
Emily – Donna	Some e-mail exchange; Emily plans to keep contact

* Passive research participant.

B. DIFFICULTIES IN INTERACTING LINKED TO THE SUBJECT MATTER

(HRE)

Now that I have established the fairly low degree of interactions among course participants, I analyze their explanations for this situation in two parts. This first section deals with reasons related to the nature of the course, which directly relate to the difficulties linked to power relationships that my research participants had identified in the context of their teaching in their own face-to-face settings (i.e., controversial nature of HRE; prejudice, discrimination and oppression, lack of awareness, and resistance). The next section will deal with reasons linked to the online nature of the course.

1. Controversial and sensitive nature of HRE

As discussed in Chapter 6 (Goals), HRE addresses controversial and sensitive topics that are difficult to discuss, which can either inhibit interactions among course participants, or to the contrary lead to spirited exchanges that force people to consider alternative perspectives. The research participants identified some of these topics. For example, Ahlam explained that she very consciously avoided political debates in the course because it was not safe for her. She also got upset about a particular set of reading materials but did not share her feelings with the rest of the group, again to protect herself. The following conversation from our End-Course Interview unpacks her assumptions on this issue and highlights her strong sense of self-identity as an Arab.

Ahlam: “And there’s something more I wanted to say. But you know, Tom [her buddy] was...he tried to steer like a political debate, he was very critical about the US and human rights in the US, and I valued this. But I didn’t want to add to it because you know, it’s very easy to stigmatize and (Inaudible) in the US policies and, you know, I don’t want to get into that.”

Jae-Eun: “Why?”

Ahlam: “First, I think discussing with foreigners about other country’s human right issues is futile. And besides, you know, I get emotionally charged and I don’t want to. ... It’s better to criticize your government than any other government, you know. It’s safer. I mean there’s corruption everywhere in the world but I don’t think it would be appropriate for me to comment on the US government’s internal affairs, just as I would not like someone to really critique without really understanding the politics of my country.”

Jae-Eun: “Before, you briefly mentioned about situations that brought up a lot of emotions in you, and I remember from our various conversations that you were saying lots of emotional engagement in your experiences in teaching human rights. In my view, human rights education inevitably brings a lot of emotions from literally everyone involved, so I would like to hear more about that. How would you deal with such situation where you are so emotionally charged? What about in this online course?”

Ahlam: "I think... No, I lock my emotions, because...no, nothing was really new to me [in the online course]. I know about most of the issues discussed. And even though, for example, I felt when we took the social studies and the humanities articles about news from Auschwitz...I mean it gets on my nerves that eventually any human rights or values course about tolerance or human rights ends up with the stories about the Holocaust and with...disregarding other rights or the plight of Palestinians. While the Holocaust was committed many years ago and people who committed it were trialed, and while people are suffering injustice on a daily basis and nobody cares. So I don't think I would be teaching my kids about the Holocaust while our rights are being violated."

A couple of other research participants identified controversial topics they would have liked to discuss. They could not explain very well why they did not bring them up. I shared these suggestions of topics with some other research participants, and they all confirmed their interest in discussing them. These two topics were: (i) how to deal with the dilemma between universal rights and diverse cultural traditions, and (ii) whether human rights are political or not.

Allison said that "what would have been interesting too would be to have a group discussion on universal cultural rights vs. cultural relativism, that whole debate. Because, I mean, that's an issue that I think all of us as human rights, activists and educators deal with, when especially if you go into a local community that and you try to, you know, talk to them about something very local. There's always that, other side being presented and I would have really appreciated like how other human rights educators deal with this argument. Even what their positions are."

Emily even gave a concrete example from her own teaching experience.

"That particular topic that the other participant has questions on, I do too, because I had an absolutely disastrous experience teaching female genital cutting in my

intro to women and globalization class. I used two excellent essays that really got at the issue of relativism and trying to understand the practice in context. And you know, it was really...it was excruciatingly difficult to teach that topic. And the students found it very difficult, some of them, it was the best thing they did all semester, others thought 'oh my gosh, I didn't really want to know about this and I don't want to have to think about the implications of universality versus cultural relativism'. So I need to be better equipped to teach and to even think about it myself. And I realize that even the position of UNIFEM or some of the main documents isn't in line with some of what feminists are saying. So especially anthropologists, according to them, it's not something to be worked on, it's to be hands off because you do more damage than help if you do it in a particular way. So I think that issue of cultural relativism versus universality is really crucial to talk about more and no, we didn't get into a very deep discussion [in this online course]. In the human rights education course, I don't remember ever reading a message where I felt strongly that I had to step in and bring up another point."

Moreover, she remembered a particular moment of disagreement about one of the course readings, but confessed that she did not share it with others in the course. "I think that trust...like that level of trust is hard to build even in four months. So in a sense...and it also might be culturally determined, like what people are willing to say. I generally am pretty willing to...like, I didn't feel constrained to be honest. I didn't feel like I wanted to tear anybody down or anything. But like I told you, I don't remember things that were said...I mean the thing that stuck out the most to me that needed to be discussed was whether or not human rights work was political work because I didn't actually agree with that in the readings. But then you know, why I didn't bring it up. Maybe it was because of the structure of the course, maybe it was because the week of reading was already done. I don't know why. I should have."

Because one of my main interests in this research was to investigate how the course participants could engage in potentially heated discussions on controversial topics, I was therefore surprised that such discussions did not take place at all. None of the research

participants could identify even one moment of misunderstanding, disagreement, or even of spirited back-and-forth debate of ideas occurring on the online discussion board in my interviews. Indeed, the research participants illustrated their overall impression on the online discussions in the following way.

Allison: "People were very polite." "The full group definitely wasn't engaged together."

Emily: "It was a pretty civil discussion."

Ahlam: "Yeah, because it [the online discussion] was very positive and diplomatic. So I didn't find the arguments for things I could be disagreeing with." "We had very nice ideas coming up. And... but as I told you I didn't feel there was a debate. It's like people posting and for me just...you speak your mind, you write and you post it and if you're interested enough you read other people's writing. But there was no sharing. I didn't see sharing." "Yeah, it's more of expression. Like expressing your opinion or your experience or how you feel about certain issues. But I very rarely saw debate going on or stimulating discussion."

Zhen: "Yeah, this is a hard question and also really touched the heart of the matter. And the people really discuss about the human rights in a very polite and accepted...not the kind of...to tell you the truth I would say even though I mean at the beginning of the course, you know, I was prepared myself. I would say well, because this is a human right worldwide, it can be a political, controversial issue. And also there might be some of the hard argument, debate, etcetera. And then, not to my great surprise, I would say to my little surprise, in the end, it did not happen that way."

Ahlam made it clear that she avoided some issues to protect herself, because the issue of the Holocaust, for instance, was just too sensitive. Other research participants explained that they were being politically correct to protect others, to the point that they exercised some degree of self-censorship, which can also inhibit enriching exchanges of ideas. I probed this issue by asking them how they approached writing the messages in the online discussion board. I found that three American female participants (Allison, Emily, Lynn)

were particularly conscious of the danger of dominating the discussion or imposing their views on others.

Allison: "I definitely did [feel comfortable to write discussion messages] but I felt myself censoring some of the things I was saying and just making sure that it was as clear as possible. ... When you write you're always, you're much more in censorship mode - make it more direct, brief-flowing thoughts.... Being from the United States, I want to make sure that I wasn't throwing out this Big Brother perspective which I think a lot of people, a lot of times, a lot of the attitudes toward Americans sometimes just because the way Americans may speak in. I definitely was aware of not to throw out this Western perspective of 'speak for all'. ... I was trying to answer the questions with my personal experiences, not a human rights activist but just as a citizen living in the US."

Jae-Eun: "Why do you think that it was important to take that perspective?"

Allison: "It's a real, patchy issue sometimes to go in and speak about human rights especially about another person's country. Especially being from the West and especially being a Western feminist, sometimes you can throw out your own perspective and you have to be careful, and mindful that you're not... presenting or interpreting something from your own Western feminist perspective, which is very different from other perspectives. But, I was trying to be aware of that when I was responding to some of the questions. ... I think that people [the course participants] relied on their own personal experiences because they were afraid to [be] like ... if they are representing [their own country], if you're one person from Bangladesh taking this course, you don't want to come out as representative. I think people were reluctant to try to represent their country, and that's why I think a lot of the experiences tended to be very personable. Which I kind of wish that it was not that a lot of people felt more empowered to speak about bigger issues. It's interesting I guess, I don't know, if that makes sense."

Jae-Eun: "So, being very personal means, in the same token, that they are kind of avoiding to get into larger structural human rights issues..."

Allison: "Right."

Emily echoed this sentiment by saying that "I did do some self-monitoring in terms of how the language came across. I think sometimes when I raised questions it was trying to be critical or get the conversation jump started, or bring a new kind of idea to it." So did Lynn.

Lynn: “I’m always trying to be very cogniscent of when responding on e-mails to be very, very cogniscent of the fact that I am talking to people from very different backgrounds and cultures. And I don’t always do it but always trying to make sure that I say things in a way that would not offend anyone. Like I might say something in a way that I wouldn’t mean to be offensive but, you know maybe it could be taken that way. So I try to always like ... kind of sip through what I’ve written and look at it from that perspective before I send it off and a lot of times I change [laugh]. So, I think one of the things I have the biggest concern or fear of is that I would say something in a way that is offensive to someone and I am not meaning it to be that at all.”

And this political correctness was appreciated.

Ahlam: “I felt some examples [in the online discussions] were really culturally aware, especially... because many of my colleagues were working in different cultures than their originals. And I thought also the examples about respecting or at least trying to understand other cultural aspects. So I valued this, especially people who were working in development agencies.”

By contrast, women of developing countries were less concerned with political correctness. It was more important for them to be assertive in the group. However, they fell short of being provocative. As the quotes at the beginning of this section indicate, the online discussion remained very civil.

Fayola: “I felt quite comfortable right from the beginning because I believe that that’s the only way to raise awareness. That’s the only way to educate people. These people are aware of what’s going on in other parts of the world. Sometimes they would not understand why our communities are the way they are. All they talk...they know are stereotypes of people, people of different communities. So sometimes I think we need to confront certain issues that even maybe within my own community I would find resistance because sometimes people don’t want to talk about certain things that can be very painful. But unless we challenge those, myths and stereotypes actually confront the issues, we will never learn. And that’s what has held people behind [in the online discussions], I think, in some ways.”

Rana: “I did not even edit. [...] because of I have so much to read and write during week-ends.” “In my first interview I told you that I have a kind of strong passion to work for human rights, to establish the rights of those whose rights are violated. So I work in [an international agency] and it is almost 7 years and before that I worked 4 years with [a local human rights NGO]. I always keep my voice quite high for things which I think that the justice is not ensured. So through my

work in [the current organization], particularly with the government, I really built, I think, my confidence quite a lot. And I don't feel worried to raise anything because I know if I can raise my point with justifications and with logic, [Inaudible] are going to accept what I say because I'm not going to say wrong things. And when I say something I know clearly what I'm pointing and I have enough justification on my points. So this was not at all a difficulty for me. I mean it is easy. For a few of the other participants I think also mentioned about government and views and civil society, but not all of them, definitely not, yeah."

Ahlam: "I try to write on top of my head after...I write on scratch and then I type it. And it's a little bit of editing. I don't kill myself to produce it because already, when I read the question at first, I think of it all week. But because I'm a procrastinator so it takes me time to actually write something. But I like writing, and that's why... I don't like to go on and on, so I like to be concise and brief because when somebody writes long messages you tune out."

One way for me to confirm these accounts was to examine all the actual time of postings, especially in Sessions 1 to 4, when the instructors asked two discussion questions in each session. As shown in Appendix 14, the actual gap in posting time between the first and the second discussion answers allowed me to speculate whether a particular research participant wrote the two discussion messages in advance and then simply posted online together (showing almost no time differences in two posting times) or that person seemed to write the discussion answers on the spot (showing a longer gap between the two posting times). For example, Padam (Wks. 1 & 2), Emily (Wks. 1, 2, & 4), and Fayola (Wks. 1 & 2) seemed to post two discussion answers at the almost same time, while Halim and Lynn seemed to have some time gaps between two postings. Rana, who claimed almost non-editing in writing the discussion messages, also posted two discussion answers at the very same time for the week of 1 and 2.

Reinforcing the normal concern of course participants to be polite and not offensive toward each other, the instructors modeled a culture of positive feedback and conflict

avoidance. Both instructors gave one-on-one feedback to the course participants through private e-mails only, instead of posting replies on the discussion board to stimulate the use of the threaded discussion tool. They also focused on positive feedback in both these one-on-one messages and in their weekly session summaries. I assume that they facilitated the course that way to avoid exposing people, and to model what they perceived as the human rights norm of respect into their HRE practice, being well aware that disputes on controversial issues could be very detrimental to the course dynamics. I believe that modeling human rights norms into HRE practice means adopting a fine balance between challenging critical thinking and respecting diversity of thoughts among participants. On the one hand, the instructors' facilitation style did succeed in bringing comfort within the group. On the other hand, some of the research participants regretted that it failed to challenge them to stretch their thinking and learning.

Rana: "I think we had quite a lot of discussion, and about the relationships between the peers, I think it was all respectful and it was very good. I think one of the advice given by the instructors was quite interesting and quite useful, is that at the beginning they said don't use a word in a way which might hurt other people. So we all were quite respectful to this advice. And I have not seen anyone really expressing aggressively or making their points in a quite strong way. I found everyone polite and gentle and...they're too polite, actually. Not hurting anyone, not commenting badly on anyone's points. Whether once or twice someone commented on one or two of my points, quite...very positively and I felt quite good about it, actually. Someone was differing too and said that person agreed with what I had said. And then added some more...from her/his own perspectives. It was quite interesting."

Emily: "The instructors were incredibly nice. They didn't ever challenge in the feedback. They only drew out the positive. So it was like they were trying to model what they consider to be good human rights education. But in a way it never pushed us." "I think it wasn't only the students that set the tone for being, you know, only pretty much constructive in our comments. The instructors also, pretty much when they did their feedback it was only in a very positive way."

Zhen: "I also feel that the instructors of the course, they are extremely polite. They are very polite. However, I do feel that if sometime they can take a little bit

harder, you know, when I say harder, I would say as a instructor, they can throw on board some of what they think is a hard question to discuss ... and also which can easily generate some kind of debate. That might be a help, to ... diversify a little bit from the political correctness. And so that would be more useful. That is how I felt. And certainly the participants have to follow and have to really think and then to forward their viewpoints."

Course participants did follow the instructors' tone and exchanged essentially positive, non-critical feedback to each other.

Halim: "I got some private messages, supporting my views. Not reaction to the opinion."

Fayola: "I remember Eva from Albania actually responding to say that I had almost spoken her situation, the situation of women in her community was exactly what I had articulated in my contribution. So it was affirming. It was good to know that somebody felt... to say. So to me, also that kind of really motivated me to do more because I felt that... I knew that there are people there who'd want to say a lot of things but they're afraid to do that. It's good for someone to just be out there and say things as they are and not be afraid not to say. Actually we have to be advocates for women's rights. We should be able to speak out."

Rana: "First we did this [posting own messages] and other people also responded quite positively about these things and they understood. I mean people understand these things, which is nice."

Ahlam (about the nature of the online discussions): "I think some people were raising questions. And some people were just telling like success stories and both are equally valuable. And critical... I didn't really find some critical or... maybe I'm being harsh on my peers, but on rare instances I felt wow, or this is a point."

Emily: "Nobody explained one circumstance when their work was really unfruitful or dissatisfying or scary." "I can't remember very many messages where people raised a problem situation that they didn't do well with."

I asked Lynn, who had taken two previous online courses on human rights issues from the same organization, to compare the nature and the level of interactions in online discussions among the course participants who used the same online learning environment. Her first online course was about human rights advocacy (I will call it the

advocacy course), the second course was about leadership (the leadership course), and the third course was this Intro to HRE course (the HRE course).

Lynn: "Let's see. I would say that when I took [the advocacy course], I would say that ...this is just my impression, but it seemed to be more passionate, more maybe vocal, but you know, then I'm thinking 'well this is an advocacy course'. So you've got a bunch of advocates, you know, this is what we do. They do get very passionate about issues and have strong feelings about things. So I would have to say that I noticed between that [advocacy] course and the other two that I took, I would say...I don't want to say a different...a little different degree of interaction in that I just felt like ...some of the participants in [the advocacy course] just had sort of a passion or a fire, coming from a deep sense of belief in ...I want to understand what to do to make things be different.

Whereas I would say [the leadership course], it was all women, I found that some of the dialogue was ...well, some of it just sort of lacked...it didn't have sort of the same passion that I was reading about...when I would read just responses to the questions and people talking about different situations, etc. The HRE course, it seemed to be, people just wanting more to understand about human rights, how to integrate human rights into their classes that they were currently teaching. I think some of them were educators. So I think in some of the stories and experiences I just recall the advocacy course being a bit more...it just...it felt like the dialogue was more passionate, more intense.

I would say that...I would characterize this HRE group maybe more as just sort of a listening group as everybody was sort of putting things out there and saying what they had to say. It was much more of a listening group. And I think...perhaps it was just a facilitation style. It seemed like in the last two courses [the leadership course and the HRE course] and that I took there as a tendency to just sort of take all of the comments that were made and synthesize them and just do a synthesis of what everybody had read and said all week. Whereas opposed to [the advocacy course], yes, there was some of that going on, but there was someone with an incredible base of advocacy experience sometimes challenging these ideas 'is this the way to go, hmm, I wonder'. So I think it was done in a way that sort of, for me, inspired deeper thinking around some of this. When I would read the instructors' comments, there just seemed to be more of a...okay, here's what I think is...and I think that when you're doing a class like this, I think to a degree you have to kind of say this is what I think is good about this, but I'm wondering about this other thing over here. And I really didn't get that kind of feedback from instructors in [the leadership course or the HRE course]."

Before closing this section, I should point out that, despite the fact that the group was very diverse in many ways, which opened the potential for misunderstandings and

disagreements, the research participants also felt that the group was pretty homogeneous in some ways, which reduced that potential. All course participants did share some common characteristics: they were dedicating their lives to human rights and were working in NGOs, international agencies, or university.

Zhen: "In fact I would say this [HRE] group was a group of course instructors. And I have no idea, you know, based on what criteria, this [participant selection] was done. And maybe another reason for this is that just because most of the participants, either they are from the university or from the NGO staff. I noticed most of the registered participants they have the university background and the NGO background. And I would say everyone has a project theme behind them."

Halim: "I got sense the group was quite homogeneous. And I might even prefer to have a more diverse spectrum of opinions."

Emily: "After a while everyone says the same thing."

Jean: "I felt that that was very, very ...represented the different kinds of experiences people were coming from and sometimes you know, it would really...I think I'd just leave it at that. It just really varied. I think it reflected the backgrounds that people were coming from. And so it was interesting. Sometimes I felt like it was repetitions and I wasn't getting that much out of it."

In summary, I have shown in this section that the course contained at least three issues that were controversial for some course participants, one of which (the Holocaust) was discussed by the group while one participant remained silent because it was too sensitive to her, and the others (universalism vs. cultural relativism and the political character of human rights) were barely touched upon while several participants would have liked to discuss them more but did not feel like taking the initiative to push them onto the discussion board. As a result, although some participants were in disagreement about some of the things that were written on the board, such disagreements remained private and never materialized into a debate. I have also shown that two major reasons explaining the research participants' avoidance of debate were the desire to protect oneself, and the

concern to avoid hurting others, both resulting in some degree of self-censorship. Finally, I have shown that such self-censorship or political correctness were modeled by the instructors.

2. Prejudice, discrimination, and intimidation

Another difficulty to teach HRE identified in Chapter 6 (Goals) was to overcome prejudice, discrimination, and intimidation relating to hierarchical social structures. This online course faced that difficulty, too. The majority of the research participants (8 out of 11) were very conscious of who they were and where they were located in terms of social status, including age, level of education, level of experience in HRE, employment, and national origin. This awareness was revealed in my Early-Course Interviews, in which they talked about themselves in their societies. But it also strongly came across in the End-Course Interviews, in which they talked about their participation in the course discussions. Several research participants judged other course participants based on these social characteristics (prejudice) and adapted or differentiated their behaviors towards other participants based on these prejudices (discrimination). Some also felt somewhat alienated from the course or felt intimidated to fully participate because of their perception of their own inferior social status:

- Ahlam felt somewhat intimidated due to her young age;
- Padam, Lynn, Fayola and Ahlam felt somewhat intimidated due to their low level of education (although Ahlam had higher level of education than the other three, she felt inferior to holders of PhDs);

- Fayola, Lema, Emily and Jean felt somewhat intimidated due to their lack of experience in HRE;
- Ahlam felt somewhat intimidated due to her employment situation (as a research assistant as compared to professors and officers in international agencies)
- Ahlam and Fayola felt somewhat intimidated due to their national origin, being from developing countries.

Interestingly, gender did not seem to play out as a discrimination factor within the online course, although all the women from developing countries had shared with me their awareness of serious gender discrimination in their respective societies when talking about the difficulties they faced as educators. This may be due to the presence of a majority of well-educated and articulate women in the course. Among the sixteen course participants who successfully finished this online course, there were eleven women and five men.

It is also interesting that the feelings of intimidation were shared mostly by women and to a lesser degree by men, including my four male research participants. It does not mean, however, that due to such feelings women participated less than men. Rather, women (especially the non-American ones) seemed to have been more emotionally involved in the course and seemed to have struggled more than men to overcome what they perceived as barriers to participation – not their gender, as pointed out above, but the other components of their social status: age, experience, education, nationality. At least that is what came across in my interview data: men did not share much about their emotions

during the course at all – and it is possible that the course just did not generate any emotions for them. When asked for the reasons of his own self-censorship, Zhen invokes time constraints rather than anything emotional.

Jae-Eun: “Have you had any of those moments that you wanted to write, but you just kind of have second thought and decide not to write or not to say?”

Zhen: “I would say yes. To a certain extent, I really wanted to put something that I think can be controversial and can generate a lot of different view points. I did feel that way. But then you know, I stopped myself. The reason is that I remind myself, I have to be a little bit careful in that way, because what I’m going to write and what I’m going to post on the board, it will generate a lot of feedback and then at the same time, maybe I have to spend much, much more time, for the answers. I did feel that way, frankly speaking.”

In fact, it is fair to say that men tended to be less engaged in the online discussion, whether emotionally or not. According to the goals set out by my four male research participants, only Halim and Zhen mentioned about their interests in peer interactions. They also both contributed very regularly, and Halim consistently spoke about the importance of learner participation in his own teaching. By contrast, Padam and Lema seemed much less interested in the online discussion. Lema did contribute regularly, but he may have done so mechanically, because it was an assignment. Revealingly, he explained me that, although he spent as much as ten hours reading the materials and writing the assignments in a week, he typically took the time of only reading two or three messages of the other participants. He also repeatedly stressed the importance of reading materials for him, which leads me to believe that he approached this course largely as he did the mail-based long distance course he had taken in the past, which did not involve any interaction among course participants.

Yet another interesting finding is the ambivalence regarding the notion of intimidation that I have put forward. Both Ahlam and Fayola first denied and then admitted feeling intimidated in the same interview. In a sense, that contradiction is not surprising. They are both very strong women, who indeed do not hesitate at times to make bold statements (certainly in private to me in both cases, but also in public as exemplified by Fayola's passionate writing style). They have both struggled a lot to emancipate themselves from their inferior social status (as women) in their societies and have learned assertiveness. On the other hand, the interview data presented below does reveal a certain intimidation, as well as a sense of alienation, as if they had learned to pick their battles and withdraw from participation at times.

The case of Rana – the third woman from a developing country among the research participants – is different. Like Ahlam and Fayola, she has a high awareness of gender oppression in her own society, of which she personally carries the scars. But her current social status is in many ways superior to those of Fayola and Ahlam: being older, she has reached the professional status that Ahlam craves; unlike Fayola, she lives in her own country, and has a stable job in a prestigious international organization. She may therefore feel less vulnerable – and indeed, when she talks about gender discrimination, it is always either in the past or about other (and poorer) women in her country. As a result, Rana projects strength and assertiveness in my interview data in very much the same way as Ahlam and Fayola. But unlike them, she never reveals weakness.

Now, let's let the research participants' comments to speak for themselves.

Fayola: “There were people who were very technical and a bit academic in their responses because there was a very different range of educational levels and people with PhD’s. So that came through definitely. And that sometimes could have been a hindrance in the sense that maybe it was out of my depth. Whereas there were other contributions which were really easy to understand in that group, I could relate better to those.”

“I think there were some things that obviously I wasn’t sure about in terms of the things that I was not maybe exposed to them. For me, I think also the sort of human rights instruments and human rights issues were... although I sort of knew just generally like everybody else, I didn’t have an in depth knowledge of the instruments. So sometimes it became quite technical for me to understand in a full sense the relation between covenants and radicals and all that stuff. So for me it was understanding the actual links between the different instruments...although some people obviously articulated those well, because they had a better understanding of that, which I didn’t have.”

“I was kind of disappointed in that in fact clearly there were a certain group of people that kind of dominated the whole thing. To me, it wasn’t necessarily negative. It just reflected the fact that these people were more experienced and worked in that field, and had a lot to say. And I felt that that was the case because on some occasions, once or twice, somebody who hadn’t contributed would just sort of come up and say oh, like I agree with what so and so has said. And so, to me, it meant that some people sort of held back because maybe that’s how they learn or they didn’t feel confident to say something. I would have expected a bit more from other parts of the world, so to get more contribution. I didn’t feel that that necessarily came through. Considering that there were about 24 or 25 of us, I think only half were (Inaudible) and half kind of dominated these discussions.”

“I felt that that sort of emerged in an elite group of people. And I think this was sort of reflected also...again, in the educational standards. That’s what I think it’s down to. I feel that they sort of actually in the end communicated amongst themselves, sort of excluding the rest of the group. Not intentionally, but I think that’s how sort of things developed.” “[People in this elite group] sort of took over, really. And they sort of kept it to a very high level. And I think people felt intimidated by that. I think that’s why most people never actually got involved in the end. Because I think they felt that some of the level at which they kept their contributions was probably out of their depth. That also was my feeling. I don’t know.”

Jae-Eun: “So were you feeling kind of intimidated by...”

Fayola: “Sometimes I did, yes.”

Note how this last sentence contrasts with her assertiveness in the quote on page 158.

Note also how she starts by describing her own feelings as if they were shared by many

others in the group, especially those from developing countries, which is an assumption, a prejudice.

Jae-Eun: How could this course have been more meaningful to you?

Fayola: "I think it's not so much the course itself, it is the people, I think, that makes things happen as well. I really expected to hear a lot more from people from developing countries, who probably would have more experiences that were similar to my ones. But I didn't feel that there was a lot coming from that end. For me, I think that people needed to do more, participants needed to contribute more as well, to make the course really meaningful. We needed to hear different perspectives, different experiences from different parts of the world. And I felt that that didn't actually come through from a certain group of participants, they could have done more."

Jae-Eun: "What might have been the reasons that people from developing countries were not speaking as much as they should or could have done?"

Fayola: "I'm not sure, to be honest, what could have been the reasons, except the ones that I've mentioned that some were just not confident. But also, some might have felt intimidated. So I think there's the issue of levels of participation in terms of maybe criteria for the course, like who qualifies to be in the course. ... But again, also I don't know, maybe it's also a cultural thing, you know."

Jae-Eun: "What do you mean by a cultural thing?"

Fayola: "I find that sometimes people just get intimidated when working with people from so-called sort of Western countries. And I don't know, it shouldn't happen at this level, though. But I mean like for instance I get feedback from one of the [course participants] from [a developing country]. And I really wrote to her hoping that she would respond and make contact cause she works with women as well. And I mean I would have really wanted to maintain contact with her, but she never responded, not even once. Not even to acknowledge my e-mail. Whereas I got a very good response from the people that reviewed my thing and I wrote back to them and thanked them and established some kind of relationship. But I didn't get that from the other [participant]. So it's hard, because again, I'm thinking oh, I hope I didn't upset her."

Ahlam echoed Fayola's intimidation related to being from a developing country, as well as age, educational level, and profession.

Ahlam: "I was very cautious when critiquing Tom [the professor who was her buddy and also her peer reviewer]'s final project, because after all he's a

professor. So I tried to be as diplomatic as I can, but I didn't skip...if I had a comment, I put it. My concern was how to put it. And at some point I felt intimidated because my proposal was not as academic as the others. It was like just an outline of a workshop. Whereas others proposed courses, they raised courses with bibliography, with the... I didn't think it was expected. I don't know if it was expected, actually. But when I saw the people's work I felt a bit intimidated."

Jae-Eun: "Do you feel some of this... how can I describe, kind of power structures even within this online course, where you cannot see the faces, but just knowing some of the very little background, did it make you feel that way?"

Ahlam: "Yeah, I felt because as I said, they work for development agencies which are...you have to be really qualified and it's something prestigious. And also the age factor. And also maybe the cultural factor."

Jae-Eun: "What do you mean by cultural factor?"

Ahlam: "Well, culture meaning coming from a developing country. Although to be fair, it was not done consciously. I never felt intimidated. But because you feel that if you try to contact them they think you want a job or you want a favor or...because most of them, you know, are ...work in highly prestigious jobs."

Jae-Eun: "So you didn't want to be misunderstood by..."

Ahlam: "Yeah. And even sometimes I felt that really I hope they don't think my messages are silly because they go on and on and use...okay, I am articulate, but I don't use the UN language. And I don't talk with foreign experience. At some point you feel people [in international development agencies] are trying to make a change, but sometimes I feel like they're patronizing, they have a patronizing approach to human rights. Like, we're going to teach developing countries about human rights and blah, blah, blah, you know. So that's something I'm most concerned about, related to organization and whatever you can call it, to westernization. So I don't think...I don't know how to put it in words. But when people from developing countries talk about human rights, I feel there's a lot of cultural differences in the definition of human rights and how it should be taught."

Lema, who was also from a developing country, echoed Fayola's intimidation based on lack of experience in HRE, though to a lesser degree.

Lema: "I think what I feel is that most of the group participants have...what I'm feeling from my inside is that most participants have a lot of experience in human rights, unlike me. I have a little experience but most of them have got I think a broad and wide experience in human rights issues and human rights projects. I got

the chance to read the comments from some participants and I realized that most of them have a wide and broad experience in teaching human rights and being human rights advocates and everything. And that's what I'm feeling."

Interestingly enough, some American research participants were also sharing this feeling of intimidation due to a lower level of education (Lynn), and lack of HRE experience (Lynn and Emily).

Lynn: "I feel like, I'm probably very very new to this field. I mean I am in this class, I have to admit I'm very... I feel like I'm probably the least educated [laugh] person taking this class and sometimes when I read some of these answers they all sound very, very dissected and very academic ... and very ... I don't know what. I think 'well maybe you're not used to think in such high-level terms or something' that ...I don't know. Sometimes I think 'gosh these people are probably reading my answers and thinking 'what an idiot!' [laugh]. I don't have a great deal of experience in this field you know. I don't have a really high formal education level. I know that I am a pretty analytical person and do not have a problem figuring things out. But, ... that is my one thing that I think about, and I've noticed in this human rights education class more so than I did in the advocacy class or in the participatory leadership class [which were also offered by the same course provider]. This class seems to be a very, very much of a higher education level of people who are participating in this so, 'oh Lord!' [laugh]. I may just really be entertaining everyone, I don't know [laugh]. Sometimes, I think 'well, I see maybe things in a more simplistic way,' I don't know. That I guess is the thing that strikes me about the other participants."

Emily: "I think sometimes if anything I was careful about...it was what I call human rights talk or human rights language because I'm not so familiar with those basics. It's not second nature to me. So I would always be thinking okay, is that a convention or a treaty. You know, that kind of thing. So more mechanical. But in terms of actually expressing my ideas, probably on most of the messages I would sit down, sometimes I would respond directly to the reading. Sometimes it was more to where the discussion was going."

As I mentioned above, the intimidation felt by Ahlam and Fayola is ambivalent, as they both admit and deny it in the same interview with me. Their attitude was also ambivalent in another sense: they seemed to be the victims of intimidation and the perpetrators of discrimination at the same time. In fact, none of the research participant pointed to any

action done by other participants that directly intimidated them. Rather, they were *feeling* intimidated by their own assumptions about other's perceptions of their inferior social status.

As the quote below demonstrates, Ahlam made an assumption about her buddy, a prejudice based on his social status. This prejudice resulted in her discrimination: she failed to work with him as she was supposed to. (As her buddy was only a passive research participant, I do not know whether he was himself failing to contact Ahlam based on the prejudice that she was inexperienced, as Ahlam feared.)

Ahlam: "My buddy never contacted me."

Jae-Eun: "Did you then contact the person?"

Ahlam: "I contacted him at the end of the course when I sent the evaluation of his project, that was the only contact. But because I felt he's senior and he's a professor, so it would have been more... I didn't want to push him, you know. Maybe he's too busy. So I waited for him to send. And that did not happen, so..."

Jae-Eun: "So, you didn't feel comfortable to initiate the contact because he is a professor?"

Ahlam: "I think maybe ...I don't know, maybe the professor did not like to be matched with me or someone my age, I don't know. It's not personal but maybe he would have rather communicated with someone...a Ph.D. holder or a professor, equally. Or maybe it's simply he was too busy to do this. I don't know really. I don't know why my buddy did not contact me. And another thing if you notice most of them [course participants] are either professors or UN staff. So maybe that's the reason [of being very polite in the online discussions], but behind the diplomacy and very positive answers and trying to play it safe, not raising issues."

Even though the feeling of intimidation was in a sense the making of the intimidated persons themselves, I do not mean to judge them by concluding that the intimidated research participants ought not have felt that way. The reality is that they have suffered

discrimination in their own settings (not just imagined it), and that it is therefore understandable that they would fear discrimination in this online course setting, and feel intimidated pre-emptively, so to speak, as a result.

The lessons for HRE instructors is that even if a course environment itself seems to be safe, educators will bring their prejudices acquired from their own settings and life histories into the virtual learning community. Therefore, instructors should be aware that a safe learning environment is not simply an environment where educators remain polite towards each other, or in other words where no action susceptible to intimidate fellow educators takes place, but it is an environment in which instructors pro-actively address issues of power relations within the group of human rights educators, such that educators do not feel the need to “pre-emptively” withdraw participation. Such pro-active management of prejudices might involve one-on-one conversations with course participants, particularly with those who are likely to have suffered from a high degree of discrimination in their own lives, as well as careful management of possibly sensitive group discussions, such as the Holocaust issue given the presence of an Arab educator. (I will come back to this point in Chapter 9, Conclusions, when I will write about the emotional aspects of HRE; see page 213.)

In the quote below, Ahlam displayed another prejudice that clearly points to this “import” of past discrimination into the otherwise safe online community. She implicitly assumed that Americans in the course might behave like Americans she was confronted within a totally different online environment. From my first Early-course interview, Ahlam was

very open to say that she would avoid any political discussions in this online course because she as an Arab resented unjust discrimination by non-Arabs. But an online experience completely unrelated to this online course shaped her behavior and constrained her participation. This quote is also an additional illustration of how the high sensitivity of HRE issues inhibits interactions (see previous section).

Jae-Eun: “But, did you feel kind of safe to talk ... these things [politics] to the course participants?”

Ahlam: “Yeah. As long as I don’t get into Arab-US issues or Arab-Israeli issues, I felt comfortable.”

Jae-Eun: “Do you think the people will... I just want to understand more about why you were avoiding certain things. For example, let’s take the relationship between Arabs and Israelis, which is very very sensitive in many ways. What do you think that ... if you talk about these issues as an Arab [in the online discussion], how would you feel about that? What worries you in this kind of situation?”

Ahlam: “First, because people have enough background and excess baggage. So you’d be wasting your time because they already made up their minds and they are too influenced in absorbing the idea of the bad, ugly Arab. So no matter how logical you try to be and say facts, still they either think you’re brainwashed or ...I don’t know. So I think it’s a waste of time and because it would lead to uglier discussions, which I don’t like to be involved in, about religion and you know, it’s...when you’re discussing something with someone not really informed about the issue, it can get on your nerves. When people start saying rude comments like...you know, racist comments and about Islam as a religion of violence and terrorism. And you don’t...I don’t really need to hear this. And no matter what people say, they think what they see on TV is this is all Arabs, we live in tents and we have camels and we shoot each other for fun and shoot everyone with blue eyes and blond. You know, so...I wouldn’t like to be engaged in discussions with people who are racist or prejudiced.”

Jae-Eun: “So, do you feel that the Arabs have been misrepresented in other parts of the world?”

Ahlam: “I haven’t seen it (inaudible) with Asians for example, to see what they really think of Arabs. But from my interactions with foreigners ...I heard a few positive examples, but I usually see very ugly examples, like calling us rag-heads, camels...you know, the F word. And very disgusting stuff. So I wouldn’t be...it

defeats the whole experience of trusting and making friends, you know, when people come into (inaudible) insulting others.”

Jae-Eun: “When you say ‘my own interactions’, where those interactions happened?”

Ahlam: “Like, for example, the Yahoo news, they have message boards. And you see all sorts of disgusting messages, like nuke the Arabs, kill all Arabs, their god is Allah and Allah is a terrorist. And disgusting stuff to read. And even in chat rooms. For example if I’m minding my business in the Arab chat room, some Americans come in and insult us, then leave.”

It is interesting to contrast Ahlam’s fear of being drawn into discussions with racists to the following well-intentioned statement by Tom, her buddy whom she had not felt comfortable to contact. The following quote is extracted from his course application about his expectation on participating in this online course, which was only shared among the course instructors, and therefore I feel it was very unfortunate that Ahlam had no way to know about it. (Tom was my passive research participant, so I could not interview him.)

“I anticipate that my participation in the course would be as an active and constructive contributor/instructor to group discussions. I am a critical thinker, and am very interested in gaining greater exposure to human rights themes and their application to education. Thus I would come to the class prepared to learn from other students and the instructors, and to ask critical questions designed to deepen group dialogue about human rights issues. My professional background as an educator, as well as my current (and past) involvement with international solidarity issues, will also allow me to draw on experiences that have direct relevance to this course. For example, as part of an independent academic fact-finding delegation, I traveled to Iraq in January [of 2003] to witness firsthand the situation facing the people of Iraq on the eve of war. I anticipate returning to Iraq next month on a follow-up delegation designed to help rebuild institutions in higher and elementary education, medicine, public health, and cultural resources. Given that issues of human rights and development are central to the immediate and long-term situation facing Iraqi citizens, I believe that this experience will prove useful to course discussions of both education and advocacy activities.”

Therefore, I wonder what might have happened if Tom had a chance to share his stories with Ahlam, and how her knowing about his work for Arab people in Iraq might have produced a quite different – almost opposite – attitude on her part. After all, they were two very committed HRE educators.

Fayola also tended to make assumptions about other people. She tended to distinguish between people from developed countries and people from developing countries. She regularly referred to the latter, and particularly to women from developing countries, as “we”. She spoke in their names, assuming they felt like herself.

Fayola: “Speaking from my own experience, we [people in developing countries] don’t have a culture of democracy, which allows freedom of speech, but also in our culture, as a people, we’re not supposed to challenge either people who are senior to us or who are in authority or who are in positions (Inaudible). Or even challenge people who are supposed to be very educated because we make assumptions that they know everything. So I feel that that could be the case because people feel like oh my goodness, you know, these are people with PhD’s and they live in America. And oh, you know what everybody thinks about America, you know. And so they think that maybe these people know it all, but actually they don’t, because some of them have never been to this part of the world. And I remember when I was talking to [an American course participant], how much s/he appreciated my contributions, you know, and how much s/he learned from what I said. And this is somebody who’d been [in a leadership position in a HR organization]. So I don’t know, it’s very difficult. But I think there is an element of the fact that sometimes we [people from developing countries] don’t...because we’ve never really experienced true democracy sometimes it’s difficult for people to express themselves.”

In summary, I have shown in this section that most research participants were very conscious about their social status and, given the paucity of information they had about each other, made assumptions (or prejudices) about each other based on the few social cues they had at their disposal. These prejudices influenced their behaviors, as they differentiated (or discriminated) their actions based on their assumptions (e.g., Ahlam not

contacting her buddy), or as they reduced their interactions overall based on a sense of social inferiority or intimidation.

3. Lack of awareness

I discovered about prejudices, discrimination and intimidation in this course through my interviews. These thoughts, attitudes and feelings were not apparent on the discussion board. So I was not very surprised that none of the research participants was aware of others' prejudices, discriminating behaviors, and sense of intimidation in the online learning environment. I got a confirmation of that lack of awareness by sharing a collection of anonymous excerpts from my End-Course Interviews with the research participants before my Post-Course Interviews, and then by asking their reactions to that sample data during the interviews.

For example, only through my interviews did the research participants discover that others seemed to share their feelings that the quality of interactions was not optimal.

Allison: "It seems that a lot of people felt a little bit misled about... maybe it wasn't misled by anyone. I think just, it seems that a lot of people weren't, able to keep up with, the readings and with the, questions, and then responding to other people through that buddy system which seemed to be a complete failure. But it just was kind of interesting to see that other people, sort of felt, the same way. And it wasn't, anything that was set up, or I don't wanna say misled, I think for many for myself included it was like the first time ever getting involved in an online course and definitely I felt that was more difficult. Because oftentimes, I have always relied on classroom participation."

Emily: "it seemed like there was a lot of resonance and a lot of people feeling dissatisfied by the discussions or with the discussions. ..."

4. Resistance

Even when they became aware, however, some of the research participants did not think that they should have changed their online behaviors. In fact, I was surprised by the research participants' fairly bland reactions to the data sample I sent to them, which did reveal the issue of intimidation (as well as some prejudices if one read them carefully). It is worth noting, however, that this finding is based on data from only three research participants, as some of the others had not had the time to read my data sample, and as the record of the telephone interviews of the remaining participants was unfortunately inaudible for that section of the interview.

Jean in particular was not struck by the prejudice and intimidation issues. I had to ask increasingly leading questions to stimulate a reaction, which in the end put back the responsibility for the feeling of intimidation onto the intimidated person. (As I indicated above, there was good ground to think that way, since no actual intimidating action had taken place, but on the other hand the intimidated educators also had reasonable grounds to feel intimidated due to what they had experienced in their lives.)

Jae-Eun: "Just after reading others' perspectives about their experiences, would you consider any or some of your answers in different ways?"

Jean: "I'd try to be more articulate. Not repeat myself so much. That's such an overwhelming feeling, it's hard for me to think of anything else. Would I consider my answers..."

Jae-Eun: "Or in another way, did you feel that it was kind of, pretty much everyone was sharing such levels of emotions or feelings or understandings?"

Jean: "Well, there was one, somebody commented on the fact that they didn't think that... well, they felt that everyone was being so polite, and there wasn't more of a charged discussion that might have been, you know, [Inaudible] had some differences in it. But then somebody else also commented that the composition of classes is always different, whether it's, you know, on line or in

person. And the personality of a class can just be so different, and easily this could have been a different kind of e-mail exchange had there been certain kinds of personalities reflecting certain opinions or feelings in their discussions on line.”

Jae-Eun: “Do you agree with that?”

Jean: “Yeah, I think...you know, somebody could have been really outspoken and taking a different position or stance from some of the group and if there had been somebody else who wanted to take issue with it, there might have been a very sprightly conversation. I don’t know if sprightly is the right word. A very animated conversation. I’m not too sure if that was the objective. It didn’t seem to me that that was the intention of Linda and Julie, but...because they themselves were so polite and correct and careful in their own discussions.”

[...]

Jae-Eun: “How did you feel about when you read the transcripts, when people say, you know, Westerners, Americans, U.S. point of views. How did you feel about it?”

Jean: “Oh, I think it’s certainly understandable. And I think... I don’t know who talked about it, but the person who said about a lot of Ph.D.’s. I don’t know, were there any Ph.D.’s in the group? I thought it was an interesting feeling that they must have had.”

Jae-Eun: “It didn’t come to your radar, but it came to the other one’s radar, about this degree.”

Jean: “Well, somebody commented in the transcripts about Ph.D.’s. I mean, [Inaudible] that they knew more of the language and knew more of, you know, whatever it was, and so I thought whoever that was, was ...well, it was unfortunate that they had, that there might have been a little bit of intimidation from that, because I’m sure that... I mean I don’t know if there was anybody with a Ph.D. in there, but some of these folks that they thought might be Ph.D.’s or higher up, all needed, you know, probably to learn more from whoever that was that was speaking. And would have liked to. So that’s again where I think knowing more about each other’s backgrounds it would have been so helpful.”

Another research participant (which I prefer not to name in this case) perceived that one of his/her coursemate was intimidated based on the data that I shared. Like Jean, (s)he thought that it was unfortunate that the person felt that way, and (s)he even seemed a little upset about the person for feeling that way. (S)he interpreted that the person was perhaps feeling less articulate or knowledgeable himself or herself, and was therefore complaining that others were writing too long messages.

Research participant: “There was one person who was really interesting, who I think was quite negative. Like if I had that student in my class, they would be

someone I would be concerned about or not happy to have, I guess. You know, I just thought this is the person who said that people seemed to be just...they were enjoying sitting at the keyboard and were just going on and on and on. I would say as far as feeling like I had a relationship with anyone in the course, I don't feel like I had a relationship with anyone in the course. To me, when I read something like that, I think that person needs to do some self reflection. Because you know, so many of the messages were written...you know, somebody else talked about how they felt intimidated in that context, like others were so knowledgeable and they just felt like they needed to be quiet. They [Inaudible] need to be quiet. And I suspect that there was more of that going on than somebody just rambling, you know, endlessly about their own ideas. I guess I didn't read so much ego in the messages. But... so it's kind of weird to read this after the class, because ...it gives a sense that people...you know, that there were at least a good number of people who weren't very happy with it."

"It was so sanitized on the message board." "I noticed that in our e-mails back and forth within the course I felt like people were being very civil. And I noticed that several other people commented on that. One thing that really struck me is somebody kept commenting about how people would just go on and on and want to hear themselves. And I don't think that was reflective at all of the interviews. I mean, or of the responses. People seemed to have very short responses. Almost like they were just doing their assignments. So it was an interesting perception. I almost found myself wondering are they responding to the same course that I took."

Another finding demonstrating puzzlement and some degree of resistance about the data I shared is Emily's reaction to Fayola's assertion that there was an elite group among the course participants. Emily attributed the perception of an elite group to mere timing of message postings: the course participants who looked dominating were simply people who contributed early to the discussion board. As Emily contributed late herself, I infer that she did not feel part of the elite group herself. (Fayola had identified Emily, Tom, Halim and Pam as the elite group, but I had not shared that information with the research participants.)

Emily: "And I think that was interesting, another person on this topic said that they felt like a few people dominated, or there was like this elite group that dominated. I honestly couldn't even identify who the group would be that dominated. What it felt like more to me, and maybe this is because this is what I was doing, it felt like there were a few people who were really good about doing

things right away, and then the rest of us were great procrastinators or really busy. And so we would wait until after you know, the last moment or even after the deadline to submit our message. So ...and it's interesting, reading through the collection of excerpts, there seemed to be a lot of dissatisfaction about the on line discussions."

Ahlam did not read my extracts, but I brought up the issue of the elite group during our post-course interview.

Jae-Eun: "So what I was interested in is that a lot of people kind of said that there was a dominant group in the online course. There is always a couple of people who's already talking, and there's a lot of people who would just keep silent and just kind of put in from time to time. And one person said that the person felt that the dominant group are Westerners. The silent groups are the people from developing countries."

Ahlam: "No, I felt that yeah, some of them maybe, but not only Westerners, they are people who have been active in western organizations and international organizations. But yeah, it's true. But it didn't annoy me. It didn't bother me, because there were some who were not westerners who also had a lot of valuable stuff to say."

To summarize this section, research participants' accounts of their behavior in the online course environment point to issues of power relationships among them, involving prejudices leading to discriminations and intimidations, lack of awareness about these prejudices, and resistance about changing one's behavior to alleviate discriminations and intimidations. I will show in the next section that these barriers to communication – which could exist in face-to-face courses as well – are compounded by the online nature of this particular HRE course.

C. DIFFICULTIES IN INTERACTING LINKED TO THE COURSE'S ONLINE NATURE

The second category of reasons why research participants did not interact a lot in the online environment is linked to the online nature of the course. Research participants tended to name reasons in this category more readily when I asked them directly why there was little exchanges on the discussion board. (By contrast, I identified reasons linked to the nature of the HRE subject matter from their responses to more indirect questions, as shown in the dialogues reported in the previous section.) Nevertheless, I do not believe that it is possible to completely disentangle these two categories and identify which mattered most in producing the low level of interactions. Reasons linked to the nature of HRE would play themselves out in any HRE course, and reasons linked to the online nature of the course would manifest themselves in online courses of any subject matter. In this particular online HRE course, it is the combination of sensitive issues and online communication environment (including the course design and facilitation), that produced a low level of interaction.

1. Lack of face-to-face contact and lack of emotional bonding

All the research participants identified the lack of face-to-face contact as a major reason for their paucity of interactions. It was typically the first difficulty to interact that they identified. They quickly jumped from the lack of face-to-face contact to a lack of emotional bond, the former causing the latter.

Zhen (about the lack of interactions among course participants): "My preliminary analysis for this might be the time [three months] is a little short... or people to

get to know each other. If people get to know each other pretty well and then I'm sure that the harder questions and the most heated debate will come out. ... Because also this [is an] on line course, there is always a difference between what you write and what you say. And if you're running a course [in] a face to face manner and as you know each other, getting more closely and closely, and then the attitudes, and also then the atmosphere will change accordingly. And since this is an on line course, in some way, I would say is a kind of a fixed environment in which everybody just tried to... you're discussing and sometimes you feel that you discuss with computer. And then you know you tend to elect your audience. That might be true, that might not be true. But what I'm saying is that the on line course after all can be different from the face to face interaction course."

Rana (about the level of trust among the participants in the discussions): "Okay. I think this course, there is no (Inaudible) on trust, I never thought, but what I sense is that if you were interesting, sitting in the same room, a kind of care and compassion you develop, a kind of empathy. But that was possibly...no, not adequate in the on line course participants. That is...because we don't see each other, we don't meet, we don't physically talk too, that could be the reason. I don't...my feeling is that there was lack of compassion, lack of empathy and those things. But trust, I'm not sure. I think people may not have even thought that degree."

(about how to be an online learner) "It is nice, except that I need direct interaction within [the course]. Because my most favorite form of communication is interpersonal communication. That's what I missed. And I wish that at some point, if we can really make an arrangement to meet together, maybe for a short duration, three or four days, but if we all could meet at one place and could review the training and maybe demonstrate one or two exercise or a selected number of people, that would be really good."

Fayola: "Well, it's difficult when you've not met the person, you've not spoken to them. You don't know how they're feeling about you."

Allison: "It was very challenging because you're not, in a physical group setting where you can exchange ideas you can meet the other participants and you can sort of feed of each other. That definitely is missing, was missing and even though, the instructors tried to address that by having us do weekly discussions where we could read everyone's response. I think that's the best you can do with online interactions. But it was difficult for me not to be able to be in the room with all the participants and really engage in each other's ideas and thoughts, and also to have the professors summarize it all within a two-hour session. Sometimes when it's carried over a week it was kind of hard to keep the flow of information going. Because one day you would read some else's response and two days later someone else's response and then, by the end, you have the professors' response. But it wasn't like that in between time you're doing a bunch of other things in your life so it wasn't like this consistent flow."

The following conversation in my End-Course Interview with Jean also pointed out the lack of face-to-face interaction.

Jean: (about why she did not see any new ideas in this online course) "I think that's because of this sort of distant, impersonal...had we been in person in the classroom or something, I'm sure that that would have been a...you know, a different experience. But when you don't even know somebody and also the course work, what we were reading. I think that we were coming from lots of different backgrounds."

Jae-Eun: Do you think, if this course was face-to-face, things would have been different?"

Jean: "Well, you know, it's difficult to answer that because...when something does click or when there would be a reading that really worked, or when I made contact through the list serve about something that was very specific, and I would get turned in the right direction, then it would just be marvelous. And they happened, not face to face. They happened via e-mail. So face to face maybe helps you get to the specifics that you want...also, when it's face to face, people with very strong objectives or strong opinions can very often influence the direction of a course. More so than you do on an e-mail. And that could be good or bad, I think. It all depends on the teacher. But it might be easier for a course to follow the needs of a student if it's face to face because maybe you get past this politeness that people maintained in the e-mails."

Some research participants noted that the lack of face-to-face contact was made worse by the total lack of knowledge of other participants, which was partly due to a poor bonding period (the very beginning of the course). Several course participants did not provide any bio at all, and many others were quite succinct or were not accompanied by a picture. In fact, I heard one research participant referring to another female course participant of different nationality as "he".

Emily: "It might make sense that rather than having people post little bios on the web site, that the first thing we all do is introduce ourselves on the discussion group. Like the first message we all send is a little bit about who we are, what we do, where we're from. And why we took the course. And like our expectations."

The research participants also explained the failure of the buddy system largely with this lack of bonding at the beginning of the course. Confronted with the difficulty of engaging with their buddy, of whom they typically knew very little or nothing at all, the research participants made a lot of assumptions about their buddies' lack of response. (See also the quote of Ahlam about Tom on page 169.)

Lynn (about contacting her buddy Padam): "We [she and her buddy] really didn't seem to have a back and forth. He didn't seem to be a real regular responder." "So I'm thinking there's a lot of conflict in that [her/his buddy's] country right now.... I'm thinking well, you know, maybe e-mail access isn't so good or getting on the Internet may not be the easiest thing. I was trying to imagine what...how different it would be living there, as opposed to what my life is like Nepal. So I thought oh, well, I'm sure that challenges are many on...probably many different levels."

Allison (about contacting her buddy B in China): "That completely failed because, you know this is this is interesting this is totally – I think culturally too, I was listed as [a wrong name] which is not my name. So, I wrote to my buddy and said my name is Allison and I think that you are my buddy and we are supposed to be in communication. And [the buddy] wrote back to saying, no my buddy's name is [a name], sorry. And I never heard back from her. And I wrote back saying no that was a misunderstanding but, I never heard back. I think that was just a complete misunderstanding. So, the buddy thing did not seem to really [turn] out too well."

Fayola (about contacting her buddy A): "They [the course participants] were like observers although they were participants but they were also like observers because hardly...I mean, I was partners with somebody from [a country], made contact with her, she never responded up till today and even...I don't know what happened to her. Whether she...cause she never even contributed right from the beginning. So I don't know whether she kept up with the course or not. So that's one of the things that you learn with people when you don't see them."

Jae-Eun: "Did you talk about this with the instructors?"

Fayola: "Yeah, perhaps I should have actually raised this with the course instructors but I never did. I just assumed that maybe they were not very keen to get in touch."

Halim (about contacting his buddy Donna): "Replying to at least my buddy's questions, that was too much for me. And I also felt that ...I don't know how to articulate these words. Not artificial, but I don't know, I didn't feel the sense. ... We didn't have much information about ourselves on the web site as well. So I think the information on the web site about the participants were also quite limited for us to have a push to get interacted with each other."

Lema (about contacting his buddy Helene): “We had one buddy, discussion friend. And we only had a chance to communicate once or twice, not more than that. Unfortunately my buddy was not able to reply all my questions because she was moving from Germany to Angola. I think she had some time constraints in replying and doing these things because s/he was moving. So she told me that she had some time difficulties. And after that I sent her two messages and I didn’t get reply, maybe I don’t know...”

Jean (about contacting her buddy Rana): “I did [communicated] with my buddy. We had some conversations, but because I didn’t post on the discussion board very often, I didn’t give much opportunity for Rana for the communication.... And so we did have some conversations, a couple of times. Actually I think she was late and did a lot of hers at one time, so there was some conversation but I think not the way that [the instructors] were hoping that there would be these sidebars developed, that would be kind of ongoing. And then I also had communication with somebody else off of something that I had posted, that was interesting. And so when I think that works for the on line course is people have the time to comment personally and develop these little sidebar discussions, that’s much more personal and becomes much more specific to your needs and your interests.”

Although I do not always know the perspectives of the counterpart buddies, these quotes probably involve many misunderstandings, which were not negotiated on the online discussion board or resolved by the instructors. Rather, they resulted in lack of interactions.

For some of the research participants, lack of knowledge of their peers was a real handicap not just to initiate communication, but also to understand what they meant.

Jean: “I never ...obviously the people here in the US, I could figure out their things, but I felt pretty clueless about what the international participants were doing. I just...in fact the one from China is totally fascinating to me cause I can’t believe she’s doing that [HRE] in China. I didn’t understand her role very well, but I was just... I was dumbfounded that she was able to be going forward with human rights education. So I just...I didn’t understand what folks...”

Ahlam offers a contrasting picture of presenting herself to others and seeking to know others. On the one hand, she failed to provide a bio of herself to post on the online environment, and she was concerned about being intrusive. On the other hand, she would have liked to develop more intimacy, even what she called “e-friendship”. This example illustrates the difficulties associated with the online environment, where it is difficult to approach peers in subtle, non-verbal (or rather non-written) ways. Ahlam also again shares her concern of not being the right partner for people of higher social status.

Ahlam: “But some people have patterns. Whether it’s their writing styles of the examples they give from their communities. But I mean I did not go a step further to get to know them because I don’t want to invade anyone’s privacy. I was very careful about it. But I think if we had weekly chats, it would have been nice.”

Jae-Eun: “Did you have any interactions out of the course with any participants?”

Ahlam: “No.”

Jae-Eun: “No.”

Ahlam: “I wanted to build friendships or at least e-friendships. But coming from...you know, when you’re younger and you’re working with people in important agencies, I feel like if they’re not interested, they’re just professional, you know, and they just want to take this course and they don’t want to interact with anyone. Although I’m a friendly person and I’d like...I’d like to stay in contact with some of them.”

The emotional bond certainly increased for participants who contacted each other outside of the course online environment. However, very few such contacts occurred (at least as far as the research participants are concerned), and then only among people who already felt somewhat close to each other for various reasons.

Jean (about contacting Fayola): “I corresponded with somebody who was in the UK, who was having trouble in the course too, just because of ...well, for a variety of reasons. So at that time we both discussed the problems we were having staying caught up and the fact that the lack of a personal contact at some point was a little bit of a problem for us and it was just helpful for us to be able to talk

on the phone. Once you've done that, then that e-mail conversation is ...was easier."

As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, Emily had contacts with three course participants – Halim, Donna, and Tom - out of the course context. Here, she explains why and how she made these contacts.

Emily (about contacting Halim): "I did get an e-mail discussion going with Halim who does human rights work in Turkey, just because that's where my research area is. And that was totally outside of what was going on in the group."
 "I e-mailed him initially and just said you know, I looked up where you are at the university and I'm very...you know, I was interested in some of his comments about the work he was doing, the NGO training work. ... And I just e-mailed him and said, you know, I've done work on children's rights in Turkey, both historically and in the present and so I'd like to meet you because I don't know that many people who work on human rights [in Turkey]. And it was pretty interesting. ... So that contact for me with him kind of helped shape and reshape an interest I have in actually interviewing ...they don't really call themselves human rights activists. They (Inaudible) just more like social workers. Sometimes human rights activists, but you get into more trouble if you take that name. So I'm really interested in interviewing people who work with children who work, getting their insights into their understanding of the state's commitment to seeing that change."

Emily (about contacting Donna): "I do know that certain voices, I would really tune into more. So you know, it probably has as much to do with my own interests in research and understanding. So for example I have come to the realization that I know excruciatingly little about Africa and that this is really bad. And that especially I just had no understanding of the consequences of inequalities for an entire continent. Throughout the course I found myself really tuning into the voices of the people who were doing work in Africa. And trying to ground myself, get a better understanding of where they're coming from, so that I can teach more capably about it as well. ... I'm going to try to stay in touch with Donna, like I took her address and I want to send her a picture of my family and just to know more about what's happening in Botswana directly through a person. Maybe in the future I'll actually ask her if my class can e-mail with some people that she knows. So that they can ask their questions directly."

Emily (about working with Tom face-to-face): "We don't have any e-mails back and forth about it, because we just talked amongst the two of us. And his work is in social welfare and mine is in...broadly in women's studies and international studies. So actually it was good and if I did the readings first I could say you know, I think this is going to be really applicable for your work or whatever it

might be. Some of them...actually there was one thing that didn't get...and looking back we should have had a big discussion in the group about it because both Tom and I were surprised and we didn't really understand the perspective. At one point, early in the course, there was a reading that said that human rights workers had to maintain objectivity and not be perceived as taking a side politically. And we both, coming from our perspective, have a hard time seeing how that's possible. Because so often these issues are so highly politicized. And looking back, I wish we would have had a long discussion about that." "If I learned a lesson, we should have raised that question. Say, you know, we just don't really understand this. Could you...as practitioners, what do you think?"

Interestingly, when Fayola was talking about an "elite group" of academics who dominated the online discussion, I asked her whether she could identify people in this group. To my great surprise, she named these same four people: Emily, Halim, Tom and Donna. In fact, I did my End-Course interviews with Emily and Halim before Fayola, so knew about the out-of-the-course interactions among these four participants, although Tom and Donna were my passive research participants. They contacted each other outside the framework of the online course environment because they were attracted to each other in the first place, due to their respective professional interests and backgrounds. And in return their bonding outside of the course environment might have reinforced their interactions within it, making Fayola speculate about it.

2. Lack of time, compounded by low English proficiency

Besides the lack of face-to-face contact, the other major difficulty to communicate in the course that the research participants explained was their own lack of time, or the lack of time of other course participants. The time spent on reading, in particular, was time that the participants could not spend interacting with each other,

Ahlam: "But because I'm a procrastinator so it takes me time to actually write something."

"The weekly discussions sometimes took a lot of time and I think I used to save them till Sundays and they would arrive late, so this was frustrating to me. Because still the time I find time to read, I finished the reading and then answered the questions, it would be by Sunday. So many times my questions were late and yeah, it's frustrating."

Emily: "Often because I was writing in late [of each session] and other people would write in late, just because of our time constraints. It meant that my buddy could never respond to me."

The research participants tended to put blame on themselves rather than on the course design. One of them, Jean, actually dropped out of the course, partly because of lack of time and partly because the course was not sufficiently "specific to her needs."

Emily: "I think if it's a failing, it's a personal failing because ... I had too much going on in this semester. So I couldn't put all the time into it that I wanted to. So it's not an issue of the actual curriculum or the instructors themselves or even the student participants. ... If there was a failing it was that I was always running behind. And I would be doing the readings on the last day for the assignment. So an ideal sense, I would prefer to either take... like if there was some kind of grant or leave that I could have in the future where in the summer if I just pursue human rights education, that method would be preferable because then I don't have to be doing my own teaching and grading and writing papers and grants and all that, which takes up a lot."

Jean: "I don't know how many people would go to the [course web] site, if I wasn't really interested in the topic question, I found it hard to force myself to read the compilations, cause I would get behind in the e-mail and then I'd say okay, I'm just going to read it on the web site. And then sometimes [the instructors] would send out the summary and I'd say oh, that's enough. Unless it was something I was really interested in, and then I would go in and I would try to read all the way through everybody's comments. But as we [Jean and I] discussed earlier in this conversation, oftentimes I didn't get that much from what people had said."

Several course participants were often on the go, which made it hard for them to contribute regularly.

Zhen: “so much work and so many field trips”. He had just got back from Morocco attending a week conference when I interviewed him, so he had “a lot to catch up”.

And the lack of time difficulty was even more pronounced for non-native English speakers, as Lema vividly illustrated his learning process.

Lema: “What surprised me is the instructors mentioned that we would only spend about two hours for the reading and one hour for the exercise and everything within one week. But I found it very difficult because English is a second language for me. And I’m not that much fluent in English reading and speaking. So I had to spend ... I was spending a lot of time more than expected or mentioned on the course. For example, if they mentioned that I would spend about two hours on the reading assignment, on reading materials, and one hour on exercise. Maybe from my experience I had to spend about 7, 8 hours or 10 hours to do this exercise within a week. Maybe I spend one hour per day or one and a half hour per day or something like that, you know, within a week I usually spend about 5 hours, 6 hours, sometimes up to 10 hours. And I used to work during nights and during the weekends. So I found it very difficult. I spent more time than expected and than they [instructors] proposed.”

“And the discussion questions and dealing with others, I had a difficulty to read all the comments and suggestions given from other participants. To be honest and to be frank, I used to read two or three messages, not more than that. And I used to say, yeah, I will read this one later on when I get time, but I couldn’t do that, and it’s frustrating to read all of that discussion question. And I found it very difficult to read all the suggestions, comments and discussion questions from other participants. And I think that part of the course is difficult. The other problem is that most participants, even my buddy friend, they didn’t reply on time, yeah. You expect a lot of messages on the specific question, on that week question, on a specific week’s question, but you can’t get replies within that week. I think participants were a little bit reluctant to ... I don’t know, they’re a bit ... maybe they don’t get time to reply but I didn’t get replies within the specific week. Most of participants reply to discussion questions and exercises after the deadline and it’s a bit frustrating at that point. And I had some difficulties even to reply on time because of some Internet and e-mail problems, which I mentioned to you last time. And that’s it.”

The language barrier did exacerbate the time difficulty for some of the research participants from developing countries. It may also have had a qualitative effect on their communications. Several of the research participants worried that that could be the case

for others. But interestingly, none of them said that language was a hurdle for themselves (except that they needed more time to read the course materials). I personally felt during my interviews that language was indeed a barrier, as I had difficulties in clearly understanding the major points from Zhen and Padam, for example, whose oral expression in English was not so good. However, they may have been more comfortable in writing.

Zhen: “Well, I would say I feel very comfortable in terms of the writing. And I write whatever I intend to write. And also I feel it’s really a pleasure to write all those comments. And that’s why it really makes you to think a little bit before you write. And also you really want to write exactly what you mean.... I would say this course does require good knowledge of language itself...which can limit some people to fully participate the discussion or the course. I can feel that way through reading of other people’s comments. And there’s something without knowing how other people read or see my comments. ... I do feel that some people want to express more, however just because of language limits they can’t. And this is something... can be a very much challenge area. ... To me, I would say I feel pretty comfortable because English has already become some kind of my working language. In a way, it’s no longer considered foreign. For other people I mean, frankly speaking, I do find in this course there is [a participant] from [a developing country], and I think [the participant] is working in a local NGO. And I can see that [the participant] wanted to say a lot of things but just maybe because of language...this is my rough comment.”

Rana: “For me, the difficult thing about discussion is that I think some people really discuss and some people really wanted to make their points to the discussion. But for some others I think it was more like they have to write something there, to relay something because of the course, so they write. Maybe the difficulty is some people are not...everyone is not equally articulate in writing. People have different skills. You know, some people are good in speaking, some people are good in writing. Some people are good in drawing, 3D methods. So the limitation there was, you know, being a trainer you always see these differences. We have to always depend on our writing skills. So that could be a reason that many of the participants...I have seen at least, that have written quite...you know, they took time. It took a longer time for them to really come up with what to write. And most of the writings were quite precise. That is more or less in general.”

Padam: “The reading materials are a lot, if you go through all the things. Yeah entire week to do it. If somebody has a good [English] language speed and other things like, but I don’t think so.” “It usually would take time to go through all of

it.” “I cannot feel that was (hard) doing course in English because I also studied [in English] in college and my schools and other things, too.” “But you see, reading is different. Reading also you have to more (context) and learn English than our mother tongue [in her/his own country]. Actually writing is different. (It takes) more time than reading. So, it’s not that much easier for like developing country who (would not have) mother tongue in English.”

Fayola: “I don’t know whether that would be a solution, whereas I also feel that it could have mixed abilities, people who bring in different experiences, cause I think that’s a positive, you learn from each other. I don’t know whether also it’s a language problem. I wouldn’t have thought so, because everybody did write very good English. Even if grammatically some of the things were not correct, but at least you got the sense of what they were saying. So that was not the issue.”

At the same time, some native English speakers also noticed this difficulty.

Emily: “Some of the weeks there was a little bit of confusion on what the assigned reading was. Like one document was 92 pages long, but I realized hmmm, I don’t think they require the whole document. I just made my own strategic choices and skimmed what I needed to, and just put the rest in the file and marked it well, so that when I need that resource in the future I can go back to it. And I guess I’m curious if a lot of other people did that too, because for me, I’m reading English as my first language. Clearly some of the other participants, if there was a lot of reading for the week, they might have just struggled even with the reading. So I don’t think there was too heavy a reading load for my needs, even within the constraints.”

3. Lack of clarity in the course design and delivery

Some of the research participants also remarked that the online environment and course structure did not invite rich interactions. One issue was the quick succession of sessions (one every week), a rhythm that not everyone could follow. Those catching up on earlier discussions could inadvertently disrupt the current discussion. And those posting late in the week had little chance to get feedback from the group.

Jean: “Well, I found that ... after the first few...it just sort of dwindled from the beginning surge. And it appeared that just about half or less of the class was corresponding regularly or on the discussion board. And then there would be a

burst when somebody would try to catch up. And so in some ways if you were trying to read the burst when someone was trying to catch up, you had lost track of the rest of the discussion and then the summaries that [the instructors] had given, it's sort of like you'd set that discussion aside. So it wasn't too useful to...at least to me, to read the discussion board when people were trying to catch up after the week that that particular issue had been posted. And so sometimes I would just wait and then I would read the whole discussion off the web site, so that I could read the whole thing all at one time, when people had finally caught up. Which meant that I was reading things, you know, later, after the fact."

Emily makes interesting points about how the weekly discussion was conceived and initiated by the instructors.

"Sometimes I wanted us to all be able to be together and talking to each other. I wasn't very happy with the on line discussion because it seemed like when we all had to answer one question, it kind of stifled us talking to each other. So I was wondering...there might be another way to do this on line discussion where you would only bring in the question if we weren't already organically speaking to something. To get the conversation going. But by putting the two questions out, oftentimes after about five people answered, everybody else felt like they were saying the same thing. Like I agree with this person, and this person. So it was almost more like it became an assignment rather than a discussion."

Emily explained that one of the possible reasons on this might be the fact that the online discussion was designed "a little bit too structured around one or two questions that we were supposed to answer." Moreover, she emphasized that "the dynamism of the instructors is key" because she was "a little surprised by the lectures. I thought they would have been longer and more substantive. But what they seemed to be more were orientations to the readings." She then recalled that the instructors actually asked the course participants to write short messages in one or two paragraphs. "Sometimes I just felt like I couldn't say anything useful in such a short message. So I think sometimes people wrote very short messages. So it was hard to know, you know, to get the richness," she continued. "If we were not all responding to the question but we were

more responding to each other, it might provide an opportunity to flesh out...like somebody would ask a question. Well, what do you mean by this, or you know, I think that's really interesting but when I did this it was terrible. Didn't work out at all."

On the contrary, several research participants would also have liked more guidance about the discussion board, and especially about the buddy system. In particular, they were unsure why they had been paired with a particular person and what was the purpose of this particular interaction.

Allison: "What I was unsure of is sometimes the questions. It was helpful for me to read one or two responses before I felt comfortable to make sure I was interpreting the question correctly. Because the questions were really, pretty broad and I didn't want to go off [in that field]. So I would read a few responses before I would respond." "I always try to my responses usually came in mid-way through or towards the end of the week."

"I needed more explanations on the purpose of the buddy, why you have a buddy - it wasn't really clear why we have this person in the first place and what we were supposed to. Also, it seemed redundant, because we are already sharing our messages, with the whole group."

Emily: "I think around week two or week three, they [instructors] sent us an e-mail and said this is what we're going to do - can you try to respond to and integrate ideas from your buddy. And I'm not sure how they picked it out. It probably would have been better for me to be paired with [someone who has similar interests in human rights education]. But maybe they [instructors] had a different reason for pairing me with Zhen. I'm not sure."

Jean: "So maybe the possibility [of more successful buddy system] would be if...because I know when the instructors chose the buddy system, I don't know what system that they used or if it was just sort of random and they were trying to give people diversity experiences or something. But if you're trying to make sure everybody participates, but maybe there could have been an auxiliary or an extra pairing that they encouraged people to do on their own based on what people felt would be you know, an interesting pairing for them. But in order for that to work you would need more information about your fellow participants."

But other research participants also made positive comments about the course design, online environment, and facilitation.

Jae-Eun: “Were the instructions about the buddy system clear to you?”

Fayola: “Yes, the instructions were very good, very clear. I didn’t have problems with that.”

Rana: “I liked the methodologies, like reading the discussion questions and then writing the exercises, which actually keep the track on keeping on reading and learning more about it and also how other people are interacting. So it is good.”

Zhen: “It [the online course] was very well designed in software, which really enabled each of the participants to interchange their ideas and their comments and their thoughts and also to share their experiences. You know, even asking each other questions.”

4. Lack of adequate access to technology

Finally, a last difficulty that one participant faced to interact with the rest of the group was the lack of adequate access to the Internet, although that had been improving by the end of the course.

Jae-Eun: “I do remember you said that you can connect the Internet either in your friend’s house or in an Internet café. Where you usually have access to the course?”

Lema: “Yeah, as I told you I used to connect in my friend’s house, in my friend’s office. And at the end of the course I had the chance to get Internet access in my office. So it was short time, but I used to get that service. And after your [early course telephone] interview, the Internet service was improved here in the country. And it was a little bit fast, actually. Not as fast as the other countries, but now it’s improving, and they can get the service easily and I found it, even in the Internet café, I used to wait to send one message, 20 or 15 minutes before. Now I can send it within five minutes or so. And yeah, at the end of the course I found it appropriate and the service was improved and I got the chance to use other people’s Internet and everything. I still don’t have Internet access at my house.”

To sum up this chapter, the main conclusions that are relevant to my dissertation-wide argument are that:

1. There were few interactions among research participants, which represented a missed opportunity for them to learn more from their diverse HRE experiences.
2. The participants' accounts of their online behavior revealed a combination of two main categories of reasons explaining the paucity of their interactions: the online nature of the course (which hindered participants from knowing more about each other), and reasons related to power relationships among them, which manifested themselves through prejudices based on social status such as country of origin, age, profession, and level of education, which resulted in discriminations and feelings of intimidation. In other words, the type of difficulties encountered by the research participants to teach HRE in their own face-to-face settings hindered them (albeit in a significantly lesser degree) to learn about HRE in this online course, but were compounded by issues proper to the online environment.

I will pick up these themes of power relationships within an online environment and within the participants' own face-to-face HRE settings in Chapter 10 (Conclusions), where I delve deeper into two meta-themes: emotions and culture. But before that, I turn to my last research question.

VIII. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Research question: *How did the eleven research participants describe and make sense of what they learned in this online course about HRE?*

I focused my attention on the learning processes, because getting deep insights into how human rights educators learn online is critical to improve the design and delivery of online professional development courses. But in the end, the learning outcomes or results are what matters. This chapter therefore focuses on the research participants' learning results in this online course.

All participants rated the online course highly in the End-Course survey, which suggests that they learned a lot from it. However, the course had neither grading system nor any other objective benchmark against which to measure learning results by the research participants, which is not unusual for adult professional development courses. Anyway, as explained in Chapter 3 (Research Questions), my purpose was not to assess "how much" they learned or to evaluate how good the course was, but rather to understand how they made sense of their results of this course. I therefore explored the ways in which my research participants explained the results of the course in this chapter. In doing so, I related the results to the categories of goals that I identified in my research participants' responses to the survey and interview questions about their reasons for taking this course, which I analyzed in the first section of Chapter 6 (Goals): knowledge, skills, peer learning, and specific goals.

1. Knowledge

In my Post-Course interview, I re-asked some of the questions I had asked in the Early-Course interview about the difficulties the research participants were facing in teaching HRE in their settings, and the strategies they were using to cope with them. I wanted to see whether there had been any evolution in their stories over the course of the online course and beyond.

As it turned out, I did not observe any striking evolution. Each participant repeated the same theme they had expressed in the Early-Course interview, such as awareness for Fayola, resistance for Rana, the difficult relationship between HRE educators and the government for Lema (for difficulties), and activism for Jean and interactivity for Allison (for strategies).

The continuity in the research participants' perceptions of difficulties in teaching HRE and in their main strategies to cope with these difficulties does not mean that the course did not help them refine their diagnosis or strategies. Rather, had I found some evidence of new meaning-making about HRE in their settings, it would have been a powerful indication of transformative learning.

When I asked them more specifically about what they learned in this online course during my End-Course interviews (3 to 6 weeks after the end of the course) and my Post-Course

interviews (7 to 11 months after the course), most research participants had a hard time to identify specific pieces of knowledge they acquired.

Zhen: “In terms of the literature review, you know without these questions and frankly speaking I would say I have to really think back what I learned from the online.”

“I would say the basic concept is in mind. And also you know it can be, it can be easily in mind you know “Right! I got this one!” and from there you know “this is related in part to the basic human rights.” At least the concept. I mean that is I would say, that if you really want to go to the in-depth, then I have to go, do some homework again.”

Lema: “Generally, human rights standards, the international bill of rights, women’s rights, children’s rights, some part of it.”

Or the course mostly reinforced pre-existing knowledge about how to teach HRE. Both Allison and Jean repeated the importance of learner-centered pedagogy for HRE, which they had already identified during my early course interviews:

Allison: “Well, you know I only think about it, you know in terms of, when I’m planning something on my like a facilitation or designing a workshop. I always think about, you know, I mean I kind of knew this but it’s just kind of... [inside of me] more so the idea that you know, human rights education always needs to be interactive. So that’s sort of, sort of something very key that I always, that I would say I’ve really, just sort of, solidified from the course with the interactivity that needs to take place with human rights education.”

Jean: “But I think one of the things that ...and I actually had pulled it out to look at it again, in thinking about the course that I’m going to teach next fall, was using the experience of the students to ... to teach themselves and to teach others in the class. And I think I’ve always done that. I always pull on those, you know, student experiences. But I think I’m going to really concentrate more on the readings that we had in the course.”

One theme that was expressed by many research participants was that of a “reference library”. Although they had a hard time to identify specific pieces of new knowledge, they knew where they could retrieve such knowledge. They valued very much having access to a corpus of materials that they could use either to read again for their own

education, or to use in their teaching. This theme actually emerged from my Early-Course Interview with Lema, when I got the impression that his own learning style was more didactic than that of the other research participants. I sensed that he was approaching the course much as he approached a snail-mail-based distance education course he had taken in the past, with an emphasis on readings and individual writing assignments, and this was confirmed during my End-Course Interview when he told me that he spent many hours reading the course materials but did not bother reading all the messages on the discussion board (see Chapter 7 on Processes). Here is how he continued the quote presented above:

Lema (Post-Course Interview): “But, when you come and [ask detail] about specific cases like, bill of human rights, bill of rights, women’s rights and you know. I have to, I always have to read from my material. As I told you last time, I prepared two folders, plastic folders and I put all these course materials and I printed all the course materials and put it in that folder. And whenever I want, I [refer] that material you know.” “It’s a reference material for me.”

Other course participants echoed this theme, even though getting access to a corpus of materials was not necessarily a major goal for them. In my view, this corroborates my finding of Chapter 7 (Processes), which is that the strength of the course lay in the readings (and in the instructors’ feedback on assignments, as I will explain later).

Emily: “I mean I think for me, what I learned through the course, I learned certain resources I can use. I don’t know that I remember concretely, you know, particular readings for example.”

Ahlam: “Because I know the basic stuff about human rights, so it didn’t really add to my knowledge. It just provided me with material I could go back to. But I didn’t really learn something new.”

“There’s one reading about work, organizing a workshop. This is the most useful one because I already have theoretical background on what the rights are and different families of rights. And I think mainly they provide material or readings, if I want to give my students...”

Halim (End-Course Survey): “My expectations were mainly getting a deeper and organized insight of HRE and having access to quality material on Internet, and these expectations were fulfilled.”

Rana: “Wonderful resource materials for immediate use.”

Rana explained me that she actually used some content of the course (manual for AIDS on women) when she facilitated a workshop in the Nepal Regional Conference. Although Fayola did not explicitly say so, she probably also valued to have access to the course materials to further her own education later:

Fayola: “Ideally it would have been good to do a follow up course, you know, after this one.... Because right now...I need to do something that would consolidate my learning. I feel that I...there was so much. I mean, the readings especially because I mean one reading leads to another. I felt that I needed to consolidate it, and I’ve not done that. So for me it’s kind of still hanging, really. I need some kind of closure or summary to it.”

The readings were not the only resource that the research participants could retrieve. Jean explained me that she had had frequent contacts with one of the instructors, and that she counted on relying on her again as she needed.

Related to that notion of reference library, is a sense of increased awareness about the existence and purposes of HRE as a discipline, and a greater commitment to learn more about it in the future. Some participants developed such an awareness and commitment to come back to HRE. This was particularly true for the research participants who were new to the field of human rights.

Emily (Post-Course interview): “But what I did gain from the class was a sense that I wanted to be doing that work and I need to push myself to continue, you know, read and learn and try to do.”

“It’s also helped to solidify my commitment to teaching human rights.”

Fayola (End-Course survey): “The course extended my expectations. HRE is an area that I had not had exposure to in a more detailed way. This course helped me to attain a deeper understanding of HR instruments, especially those that apply to my area of work. I feel that I actually experienced some kind of profound emotional transformation as some of the issues that came up had a direct link to my own personal experiences I had growing up in my community.”

Jae-Eun (Post-Course interview): “Has taking this course have affected any of your work?”

Zhen: “Yeah I was generally, generally speaking I would say yes. Because you know, I would say for, in terms of the awareness of the human rights is... I would say it’s more important than the course itself.”

As an example, Zhen explained that he was part of a group tasked with producing performance indicators for emergency education in the Occupied Territories of Palestine, and “automatically I would say the human rights education must be part of these indicators. This has really come out in an automatic way. It’s not something that you try to make it up. [...] It’s something that you feel should be incorporated or integrated into your work.”

2. Skills

Similar to the idea of reference library, several research participants expressed the notion of “check list” of concrete things to pay attention to when conducting HRE courses or trainings.

Fayola: “It was a very well thought out course, in that it takes you through a process of how to plan the kind of things, the kind of key factors one needs to understand in order to be a human rights educator. So it really helps you to get thinking even about sort of little things, basic things that sometimes we take for granted. You know, like remembering to understand the people that you’re teaching, you know, their background. Their level of understanding, trying to understand their situation and where they’re coming from. You know, that really gets you thinking, instead of just making assumptions and saying oh, you know,

are the group of people here to educate, and that's it. So it makes you work more in terms of planning and understanding, so that you come up with the right product, which works better, I guess.

Lema: "And, I remember ah you know some, some matters of facilitating training. You know, how to organize yourself when you organize a training program. And making every participant participate actively in the training, using different methods of teaching for different groups of society, or community. I have learned a lot of things from this."

Halim (End-Course Interview): "On line course, it's a new experience for me, but it was quite useful, not only because of the content but also because I was responsible to conduct... prepare a project of distance learning for our training center. ...it was especially useful for me to see the methodology and what might be needed to run such a distance learning course."

Jae-Eun: "What do you mean by methodology?"

Halim: "Infrastructure, the flow of the course, the facilitators' message, the shaping of the readings, everything is in that methodology. That was what I meant."

"The course helped me to refine the content and the methodology."

3. Peer learning

Several of my research participants had identified peer learning as one goal for taking this course (even though peer learning may also be interpreted as a process to achieve the ultimate goals of acquiring new knowledge and skills). In particular, they were eager to learn from the experiences of such a diverse group of educators. I explained in Chapter 7 (Processes) that most research participants were quite happy that they had been able to read each other's messages on the online discussion board, even though they were disappointed by the lack of interactions (see pages 147-148).

Another goal participants expressed in relation to peer learning was the desire to build a network of human rights educators that could have carried on beyond the duration of the course. However, during my Post-Course interview, the research participants said that

they had not kept in touch with anyone. Only Emily told me she might yet meet Halim, due in large part to her research interest in his country, Turkey.

4. Results about specific goals

Several research participants had taken the course with very specific needs in mind, like designing a course or workshop they knew they had to deliver.

The course's final assignment (designing a HRE project that could be applied in the participants' own contexts) was actually meant to meet a concrete need (see Appendix 15). Lema and Emily explained that the course had been very useful in helping them with their planned projects, and so did Halim (see page 198). Most course participants valued a lot the feedback they got from the instructors on their final assignments.

Lema: "Especially when we're developing human rights aspects of education, we took most of the ideas. [More or less] and that is context and everything. The bill of rights, you know, woman's rights, children's rights. All the concepts we took from the course. You know, the way it was developed was very summarized and you know. And with those erm human rights standards that are wide and broad, the course tried to summarize a lot of points in human rights education in general. And children and women's rights in particular. So we took concepts and ideas from the course. And secondly, regarding the methodology and participation matters, we took a lot of concepts you know, how to facilitate a training course, how to program yourself and develop and organizing training programs. We [his organization's colleagues] took a lot of lessons from the course and it helped us a lot."

Emily (End-Course interview): "The two instructors [their names] were really good about their feedback on the individual projects. And so that, in some ways, had the most immediate concrete satisfying effect. Because I have this class I have to teach in the spring. And so they both offered concrete suggestions about how much material is too much material to try to teach in the college classroom, what are some of the better texts around different topics, and also just broad encouragement to get involved in an association, which of course then I haven't looked at it again, but an association of teachers who teach courses on human

rights in the college. So I'd see those as very important kind of direct effects that I had."

"My big hope was to have a lot of practical assistance getting my course off the ground, since it's a new area for me to teach in. I've been incorporating elements of human rights education in my classes that aren't specifically about human rights. But now I'm teaching a course that's just 100% about human rights. So I was feeling like I wanted more training and I had wished that when I was, earlier in my education career I had pursued either a masters or a certificate or something in human rights. So this is one way to get me started on that path way and I think you know, I've published a little bit on it, so I do academic reading, but learning how to teach it and organize a whole course, and what choices you're going to make, that's challenging. But I'm also realistic. The first time isn't going to be perfect. And so I'll learn how to do this over some time and so I suspect I will try to look for other educational opportunities where I can develop this some more."

Emily (Post-Course Interview): "Now remember, this is the first course that I've taught on human rights where the whole class is on human rights. And actually my project was for the on line course, was to design the syllabus, the readings. And so that was very helpful and I did actually work with some of the comments that [an instructor]...[that instructor] gave a lot of comments. And tailored some of the readings and the assignments with that in mind. Let me think about it. You know, I still have the hardest time teaching material about cultural relativism and especially around female genital circumcision. And that's always the issue that the students want to talk about."

As I mentioned in Chapter 7 (Processes), cultural relativism was one topic that several research participants would have liked to discuss more.

The one research participant who dropped out of the course, Jean, did so in large part because she felt that the course was not meeting her specific needs. This underscores the emphasis put by adult learning theory on tailoring and building some flexibility in a course to address participants' specific needs. In my first Early-Course Interview, Jean showed excitement to create an interdisciplinary HRE project in collaboration with some teachers at a local high school and had a very concrete plan in mind. She already knew the principal and a couple of teachers who were interested in, composed an advisory

committee of local academics and HR activists, and carried out some initial training with the school teachers. In my End-Course Interview, however, Jean explained why she had to drop out from the online course and shared the email she sent to the co-instructors on November 9, 2003. In this letter, she pointed out seven reasons for her dropping out, and I present her main points using her own words below because they illustrate her reasons in a more authentic and more vivid way.

1. I found that I *needed more time than outlined* for weekly assignments.
 2. I found I could not read in short sections here and there, but *needed a block of time to concentrate* on the entire week's reading and discussion board. And this is where I seriously miscalculated. I thought I could grab 30 minutes here and there throughout the week to cover all the material and assignments
 3. I also found I *missed the informal give-and-take of a classroom discussion* or meeting with the instructor, or Q and A after a speaker. Your offer of availability was generous and I did contact [one of the instructors] early on about my project and benefited from her suggestion. In retrospect, I wish I would have made contact more often as small questions arose. I teach a college class that meets just once a week and I use email to try to stay in touch with my students about their work and to sustain the momentum we establish in the class. I know email works for some of my students, but did not heed my own experience!
 4. Finally, I found the class fascinating whenever I could complete the readings or take time to read through responses on the discussion board, summarized so well by you [the co-instructors]. But I had come into the course with such a specific focus on human rights education for U.S. high school level, that *I did drift a bit when discussion or readings didn't seem to fill my need* for concrete examples and critiques of HRE already in place in U.S. high schools.
 5. Fayola, from the United Kingdom, visited LA briefly in late October and contacted me. We didn't have time to arrange to meet, but did speak on the phone and compared notes on our experiences with the course. Fayola had also fallen far behind, but was valiantly trying to catch up during her visit, away from her usual responsibilities. She said she definitely needed some kind of contact and we both agreed on that.
 6. I was paired with Rana from Bangladesh and we have exchanged only a few emails, partly because I haven't written much to comment on. But through our emails, Rana is urging me to make a return visit to Bangladesh. (I was there when it was still East Pakistan in 1968.)
 7. I hope we will have access to the class web site for at least a month or so after the course is completed. I do intend to finally read everything!
- [Jean, Letter, 11/9/03] emphases by me.

In many ways, Jean's letter resonated with the themes that I presented in Chapter 7 (Processes), such as competition for online study time and the lack of spontaneous contacts with the instructors and peers in the online course. In my End-Course Interview, she emphasized her fourth point about the mismatch between what she wanted from this online course (Goals) and what she was actually getting from it (Results):

Jean: "I had very specific reasons for taking the class. Although the class was fascinating, it didn't specifically meet those objectives in the ways that I needed at that time. So that just did not remain at the top of the list of my activities because I was working so hard on a couple of other projects and it did not serve those objectives as closely as I'd hoped it would."

To summarize this chapter, my main conclusions are:

1. Participants could not recall much specifically in terms of content but appreciated having a corpus of resources to which they could refer, and a greater awareness about HRE as a discipline.
2. Participants appreciated the feedback on their final projects, which in many cases was directly useful to their professional needs.
3. The one research participant who dropped out of the course did so because the course was not specific enough to her needs.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

My main purpose for this study was to understand how an online professional development course could, if at all, support international educators' learning about human rights education (HRE), integrating constructivist approaches to learning and teaching. Moreover, I was particularly interested in the research participants' engagement in the online discussions about controversial and context-sensitive HRE issues.

As we saw in Chapters 8 (Results) and 7 (Processes), this particular online course proved to be quite successful in providing a wide range of useful HRE resources as well as concrete applications to some of the research participants' immediate professional needs, yet fell short in engaging its diverse international educators in more open and deeper course discussions about HRE-related issues. Listening to the eleven research participants' reflections upon why they did or could not actively participate in the online discussions, I realized that there were a variety of difficulties that were related not only to the nature of the subject matter itself (i.e., HRE), but also the nature of online learning which was new to most of the research participants.

In particular, I was quite surprised to discover the similarities between the research participants' difficulties in teaching HRE in their own teaching settings (examined in Chapter 6 on Goals) and their difficulties in learning HRE together in this online learning environment (analyzed in Chapter 7 on Processes). The research participants talked about prejudice, discrimination, oppression or intimidation, lack of awareness, and resistance

among their learners as difficulties they faced in the context of their own HRE settings, and I observed that they displayed these same problems as learners in the online course as well. Although the degree to which these problems existed in the online learning environment was very much less pronounced than in the research participants' real work and life situations, they were in my view sufficiently salient to warrant a deeper reflection about what could have led the research participants feel and behave the way they did in an apparently safe online learning environment.

To analyze the paucity of interactions in an online professional development course such as this one, the typical research approach adopted by scholars in the field would be to adopt the perspective of the course instructors and analyze technological and design aspects of the course. When discussing what was missing to encourage deeper engagement in this online course, however, the research participants in this study pointed to different considerations.

For example, when I asked what could have helped them participate in the online discussions more actively and deeply, Rana said "it is not the message [as they were posted in the online course discussion board], it's the spirit"; and Fayola said "it is not the course [design or teaching methods], it's the people [course participants]." These two particular statements, which have an identical grammar structure by accident, stayed with me throughout the research period.

The first statement pointed me towards exploring the “positive and negative energies” or emotions that research participants brought into the course, and I quickly found that there were many of them. The second statement led me to investigate people’s identities and particularly cultural identities that were brought into the online community, and again I quickly found many references to culture. Although I think that the course design, use of technology, and teaching methods greatly matter, this study has taught me the importance and the need for more in-depth research focusing on emotional and cross-cultural aspects of online professional development from the perspective of the learners, especially for courses about context-sensitive issues in general, and about HRE in particular. In this concluding chapter, I therefore reflect upon these two meta-themes that have cut across my findings in this study: emotional and cultural aspects of adult online learning about HRE.

A. EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF ADULT ONLINE LEARNING

“It is not the message, it’s the spirit.” (Rana)

Throughout my 15-month data collection period, all the eleven research participants expressed various emotions toward both their experiences in teaching HRE in their local settings and their learning experiences in this online course. For example, when I analyzed my telephone interview transcripts of about 700 single-spaced pages, I was surprised by the frequency of strong and emotionally charged nouns such “pain,” “intimidation,” “stigmatization,” “anger,” “vulnerability,” “tension,” “oppression,” “danger,” “power,” “violence,” “discrimination,” and “racism;” verbs like “fight,”

“struggle,” “tackle,” “punish,” and adjectives like “horrible,” “terrible,” “ugly,” and “disgusting”. Using these words, the research participants described how their learners and they themselves as educators got emotionally engaged in HRE. Most emotions that I have just quoted are negative ones, but I would note at the outset that I also observed a positive flip-side to these negative emotions: a passion for change. (After all, passion comes for the Latin word for “suffering”).

Unfortunately, I have found very little literature about the emotional aspects of adult online learning. Although there is a growing literature about the social aspects of online learning and how online instructors could provide learning activities for the course participants to socialize and get to know each other better, and therefore engage in an online course through effective online moderation (Garrison & Anderson, 2003; Collison et al., 2000), my interest is about studying when it is appropriate to let course participants reveal their deeply held emotions, and how it can be done effectively in order to promote active engagement in discussing such issues in an online course. HRE inevitably provokes emotional reactions among course participants whether the course is online or face-to-face. These emotions are related among other things to one’s own identity and social status, and to power struggles about who is right and who is wrong on ethical issues, and they are triggered by prejudices and discriminations that may not be visible in the course environment. I think that a better understanding of this complex issue is critical.

For this very reason, I went back to the research participants in this study and asked them to explain the role of emotions in HRE during my Post-Course Interviews. The research participants described that emotions can play both a motivating and de-motivating role in HRE.

For example, they said that promoting the sense of empathy with those who suffer human rights violations was the primary avenue to generate interest in the subject matter, HRE. More specifically, most of the research participants drew empathy from their own personal experiences as they had often been exposed to, or observed first-hand, human rights violations. They also used empathy as a way to generate their learners' interests in HRE, even when their learners might not have been exposed to human rights violations themselves.

Lynn and Fayola, for example, explain how personal experience and empathy got them to work in HRE:

Lynn: In 1991, I acquired a disability as a result of a car accident and have a keen understanding of the discrimination and social stigmatization faced by people with disabilities in the US. While the challenges we face in the US are much greater than the average American would imagine, the environment for people with disabilities in the developing world is staggering. It is this understanding that motivates me to help others to develop their capacity so they can fully participate in the process of making a difference in their lives. [Lynn, Course Application]

Fayola: As an African woman living in the UK, I understand the struggles, the pain and suffering of African women in this society because I have experienced the various forms of suffering and have lived them. I am a community activist and also a victim of domestic violence, rape, and a woman living with a disability. My own life experience spurred me on to dedicate my life to working with women facing all forms of violence and discrimination. As one of many African women living in the west, our lives are not necessarily better off from those of our sisters back home. Yes, it is true that we at least live in a society that has law

enforcement systems, but it is horrifying to note that actually women still suffer from domestic violence, a problem that cuts across race, class and region. As African women we are brought up in societies that use religion and African culture to keep women down. As black women, we suffer a myriad of different forms of discrimination. ...As an activist and advocate and a survivor of some of the abuses, I will bring to the [online] course my own experience as a victim of domestic violence and rape. I believe that it is important for stories such as mine to be told in order to get the message through. I will also bring my enthusiasm and ability to motivate others through sharing experiences and inspiring each other.” [Fayola, Course Application]

As the course applications were not shared among the course participants in this online course, only the co-instructors and I could understand where the participants had come from to the field of HRE and what were their deeply held emotions and values as human rights educators. In my Post-Course Interviews, some research participants also described emotions as “an effective tool” to motivate their learners about HRE, but at the same time as a continuous challenge to effectively teach HRE.

Jean: “I think it [emotion] is an *attention grabber*. There’s so much going on in our lives, and there’s something about a film or a speaker that has been involved in human rights abuses, that for some moments if people can be brought face to face with that issue and really feel it, it can stir them so that they want to take action and so that they understand the issue in more than a one dimensional way. It’s personal. ... I find that in this crowded world that we live in, that it’s really hard to grab people’s attention. And if I can go to an emotional level, that seems to work. If I have some kind of activism that I can give them while they still feel that, then it’s possible to draw them into the process. ... Emotion is...is a great device for education. ... I’ve found it to be effective, a very effective tool.”

Emily: “I think it is a strength that we actually do grapple with emotions in the [HRE] classrooms. We [she and her students] don’t do it all the time, but sometimes there are just things that come up that bring that [emotion] out... their own prejudices or experiences. ... In my teaching, I really am coming to feel it’s an opportunity to awaken the students’ desire to learn and to be aware. ... I guess I’m always struggling with that [emotion], what does that mean, how do I represent multiple viewpoints, especially if the viewpoint I have hard time with, where do I allow the space for people to speak. ... I got one piece of feedback on a course I taught in the autumn that said ‘we [her students] wish you [Emily] would just tell us what the right thing is or we wish you would be more critical if somebody says something stupid. And I actually find that challenging.’”

At the same time, some of the research participants also acknowledged that emotions can also be overwhelming and therefore inhibit HRE work, for both themselves as human rights educators (Fayola) and their learners (Allison):

Fayola: "It's difficult sometimes because it can be quite overwhelming. You really find that it [teaching HRE] is quite draining. Community work is really hard work, it's not easy. There are times when I've wondered, you know, if it's worth it at all. But I think the way I cope is that I talk to others in the same situations, who are also working with women and basically we try and separate our emotions. It's not easy. I think also with time you get used to it and you try not to get too attached to some of the emotions. But it's not easy. It's really quite hard. So we just have to give each other support. And realize that you cannot do it on your own as well. I think it's also good to bring in others, so that those who go through the process. And you lessen the burden on yourself, then it becomes more manageable. Making it a manageable as sort of chunk of work, not to take on too much because it can be overwhelming."

Allison: "This whole [Bush] Administration that we currently have on the war on terror, is a very emotional issue for people right now. It's a very hot issue and many young people are confused by it, many are angry by it, many are not really quite sure what to think but they may hear from elders' perspectives on it that may be conflicting to their peers and so forth. So, I mean, that's a real, hot issue and, when I talk about the Administration's war on terror, you have to ... very... carefully walk that line very carefully. ... When you talk about Guantanamo Bay, people automatically think that they [the detainees] are criminals or terrorists there, ... which is even hard for us [human rights educators] to do because not many people know who's there. But I just try to give the facts about what we have found through our missions."

Emily, who also used online discussions to complement her face-to-face course about health and human rights, offered her own experience in dealing with emotions online.

Emily: "I set up to do an on line discussion and wrote a short response, sort of like Linda and Julie would do on our [online] course. In fact I was trying to model it a bit on what they were doing and then I posed a couple of questions. And oh my gosh, some of the students who were more a conservative bent really hated the reading. So they started out basically saying... it was about AIDS in Africa and globalization and equality and human suffering. And, you know, a couple students started off by saying well 'if they [Africans] can't be responsible with their sexuality, then why should it be our [Americans] responsibility to help subsidize

drugs.' I think some of the students were so shocked by that as an opening, that it was a very difficult interchange. I actually did feel like I had to step in after about five messages. I was away, so I was going to check the e-mail during my conference and had this just...knot in my stomach, because we weren't face to face and we couldn't grapple with those ideas in a more human way. So when we came back the next week and met together I told them we have to discuss this now for the first part of class and we took it up."

Listening to Emily's online teaching experience indeed confirmed how challenging it is for human rights educators to effectively teach HRE online. Maximizing the motivating and minimizing the de-motivating aspects of emotions seems to be a critical area in HRE, regardless of its online or face-to-face settings.

Among the research participants in this study, Ahlam had been often emotionally engaged in the issues during my first two telephone interviews. For example, she clearly indicated that she wanted "to stay away from politics" with the course participants because that would "be painful to talk" and also "create tension with the [course] participants." "So, I don't open up," she told me in my Early-Course Interview. During my End-Course Interview, I remember the very anxious moments of asking her more about her perceptions of racism on Arabs on the Internet, which she seemed to attribute as a reason why she exercised some degree of restraint in the online course discussions. Since I did not observe such racism in the online course environment and none of the research participants ever pointed out such experience in my previous interviews, I was quite puzzled by her sense-making process. In every step I took in asking further questions, I thought 'oh, my goodness, she [Ahlam] would just hang up the phone and terminate her participation in my study' because she could perceive my questions as an

interrogation, a feeling that I recorded in my research journal after finishing this very interview.

When we met each other in person for the Post-Course Interview, I therefore asked Ahlam about how she made sense of emotions in HRE. She started the conversation by first saying that “I am not good at anger management. I admit.”

Ahlam: “I think in human rights education it’s a special type of education because you’re not only teaching facts, you’re *teaching an approach to life* and to different issues. And it’s a lot in what you do, more than what you say. And your success as a human rights educator is not only to teach. I mean anyone can read the Bill of Rights or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but to teach people to consider the human rights consequences of their actions. And it’s something that you cannot teach about human rights without teaching values. It’s linked to values, to character education, to empathy, to sensitivity. *It’s an emotional experience teaching about human rights*. It’s teaching people to feel with others, to feel for others, to be sensitive and to think...step ahead to go beyond yourself. There is a lot of humanism in human rights. I mean I have enough stress in my life, why should I go worry about people in Mexico and what they do. But no, this kind of connectiveness that you feel with other beings, I think is very important if you want to reduce crime and abuses in the future. [She then referred to her experience of being searched in an airport when she arrived in the United States a few days before our interview, and how humiliating that experience was. She referred to that incident as “being racially profiled.”] For example, I did not feel offended by the [airport] staff who searched me, because that’s their job. They’re carrying out orders. And I don’t have a grudge against them because that’s what they’re supposed to do. But when you talk to the policy makers, and this is where I think I would be motivated to write to a congressman or someone who is superior, that I could analyze it, that...to see the different rights, the conflict of rights, because always you have conflicting rights and it is always an issue of balancing rights and selecting priorities of different people. So there were my right to safety and there’s my right to be free from discrimination and my right to privacy and they were all involved. And I’ve seen all of them are violated. So you learn to distinguish between rights and to see how they are interconnected and you feel responsible, from human rights perspective. Now, I am analyzing my negative experience in a human rights perspective and it’s my right to express about it also.”

According to Ahlam above, “HRE is not just about teaching facts, it is teaching an approach to life.” Julie, one of the co-instructors, echoed this statement in her response to my written question about her educational philosophy relating to HRE. She wrote: “In teaching and learning about human rights, I think it is most important to promote a ‘passion of care’. Training for human rights education should show how the core concept of human rights can empower the teacher and learner to internalize human rights within themselves and promote it within their community and reference group. *Education should lead to action.*” To Julie, “educators who become interested in human rights education do so because of a strong commitment to justice and care for the other. This is what I mean by ‘passion of care’. No human rights education course can create such a passion if it is not already there. However, we can help to focus this passion by providing educators with tools and opportunities to reflect and develop their own lessons and training programs.”

What I also found interesting in Ahlam’s explanation was that she could actually step back from her emotional experiences and then reflect upon and analyze them very rationally from different perspectives. Ahlam also explained how she as a human rights educator wanted to use emotions with her learners.

Ahlam: “I really believe in emotional intelligence as a determiner of success. When you teach the child to accept a huge range of emotions, that it’s not bad to be impatient and afraid and it’s part of being human, but know how to channel it for the child’s own good. ... I want to elaborate education material to teach the kids how to read emotions of others, and I hope that it will reduce violence. When a child can read an angry father, not to provoke him, when a parent also sees a stressed-out kid for an exam, not to pick on silly stuff, why did you leave your shoes in the living room, I mean, you would teach the kids and parents to absorb each other, to understand the different emotions. So this way you would reduce violence and increase communication.”

Linda, the other co-instructor, proposes another way to deal with learners' emotions:

Linda: "I know several human right educators who always work with a psychotherapist on the facilitation team for this very reason: talking about human rights can open old wounds and bring up painful experiences that need to be addressed. But the facilitator cannot herself/himself stop the whole process to make sure that the needs of individuals are met. I have found it very helpful to have some professional or skilled members of the staff who have a special care for this need and can take the time to talk privately with participants who are upset. This kind of interaction can occur in both a classroom setting or an adult training. It is always a challenge to turn these painful experiences to positive learning opportunities – but they can be extremely powerful and positive when handled properly." "It [emotion] is an aspect of HRE that I feel strongly about, but gets very little attention."

All these conversations about the role of emotions in HRE have made me consider the research participants' emotional reactions in their online learning processes as an intentional learning activity in order to figure out their own *comfort zones* online so that they could both ensure their own intellectual safety in the online learning environment and therefore carry out positive learning experiences. In other words, because the research participants could not feel comfortable in revealing or sharing their emotional engagement with the materials and other course participants in the online learning environment, they carried out their online learning experiences as safe and positive as possible by avoiding sensitive questions (e.g. Emily on political aspect of HRE) or "locking" emotions (e.g., Ahlam).

Although I appreciate this, I argue that, if emotions seem to be such an essential yet challenging issue for human rights educators, an online professional development course should provide a time and space for the course participants to reveal, share, and discuss

about how they could deal with their own and their learners' emotional engagement in HRE. This might be especially useful in order to avoid the kind of "pre-emptive" withdrawal of participation, which I observed when analyzing intimidation in this particular online course (see page 170), and which is likely to accompany emotional "locking." Moreover, I would encourage online instructors to put themselves forward in the same situation as their online learners, by sharing their own difficulties with emotions in HRE and by carrying out deep discussions about how human rights educators could successfully deal with the affective aspects of HRE. This kind of modeling in an online learning environment, in my view, will acknowledge and advance human rights educators' capacity to accommodate critical yet constructive online discussions about such issues. In this way, I believe that a successful online professional development course would fulfill the role of education at its best as the most critical source to develop the consciousness of people (Freire, 1999).

To sum up this section, professional development courses on HRE can stir a lot of emotions among educators, due to the sensitive and controversial nature of the subject matter. Although many emotions are negative, they are also the source of the passion for change, the drive to action, which is the cornerstone of motivation in HRE learning. Instructors can therefore harness emotions to foster learning. But there is often a tipping point beyond which emotions become overwhelming and counter productive. Managing that delicate balance is a key task for instructors, who can provide space to reveal and

talk about emotions, and effectively facilitate such discussions by also talking about their own emotions.

B. CULTURAL ASPECTS OF ADULT ONLINE LEARNING

“It is not the course, it’s the people.” (Fayola)

In this section, I examine a second meta-theme that seemed to underpin some of the power relation issues that I observed as impediment to full participation in this online course: culture. I first define what culture is, and then argue that online professional development courses for HRE involve three mediating cultures – the cultures of the educators’ respective societies, the culture of the online learning environment itself, and the universal human rights culture – and that instructors need to manage the interfaces between these cultures.

Throughout my research, the word “culture” or “cultural” not only frequently appeared in all the telephone interviews, but also was identified as a reason why the research participants could not actively engage in the online course discussions (e.g., Ahlam, Emily, Fayola, Rana).

Since culture is a broad and vague concept, I researched some definitions of it. According to Geertz (1973), culture is “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes

towards life (p.89).” By emphasizing the interpretive nature of culture, Geertz argues that culture is “public (p.12)” because it is based on “socially established structures of meaning (p.12)” that belong to a certain group of people. Therefore, when we say we do not understand the actions of people from other culture, we are acknowledging our “lack of familiarity with the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs (Geertz, 1973, p. 13).”

D’Andrade (1992) agrees that culture consists of “learned systems of meaning, communicated by means of natural language and other symbol systems, having representational, directive, and affective functions, and capable of creating cultural entities and particular senses of reality.” He then outlines the criteria used to determine what is called cultural: “to say something is cultural is – at a minimum – to say that it is shared by a significant number of members of a social group; shared in the sense of being behaviorally enacted, physically possessed, or internally thought. Further, this something must be recognized in some special way, and at least some others are expected to know about it; that is, it must be intersubjectively shared. Finally for something to be cultural it must have the potential of being passed on to new group members, to exist with some permanency through time and across space. (p.230)”

To sum up, I understand that culture is essentially a set of shared beliefs, values, and norms which construct the patterns of behaviors and attitudes of a specific group of people that are transmitted from generation to generation through various forms of learning (e.g., formal and informal learning). The relationship between culture and

education thus goes both ways. Culture is learned from interactions within a particular social group, and it also constitutes a frame of reference through which people make meaning of new information.

Coming back to the online course that I observed in this study, the research participants' major reference to culture seemed to be linked to 'who they were' (their identity) and 'how they thought they would be perceived by others' (their social status). When asked to elaborate their understandings of why course participants were not more active in the online discussions, some of them said that it was a "cultural factor" (Ahlam) or a "cultural thing" (Fayola). As I explained in Chapter 7 (Processes), my further exchanges with them and other research participants revealed certain levels of discomfort or intimidation in openly and deeply engaging in an online discussion due to their perceived inferior or superior social status on account of their national origins (i.e., developed vs. developing countries), racial/ethnic backgrounds (i.e., white Americans vs. people of color), levels of education (i.e., Ph.D. vs. vocational), and current work environments (i.e., academic universities vs. international agencies vs. grassroots non-profit organizations).

Knowing and understanding the research participants' high degree of consciousness about their identity was very critical for me to make sense of their individual meaning-making processes throughout my study. Ahlam, for instance, demonstrated her own complex navigations in the online learning environment due to her being a young Arab female. Although nobody else among the research participants or instructors noticed her

struggles over self-identity behind the computer screen, she herself felt somewhat alienated and therefore behaved according to her own norms of dealing with “privileged” and “qualified” people in the online course, such as not initiating contacts and avoiding problematic discussions.

From a social-constructivist point of view, one’s identity cannot be created in isolation, but rather it is situated in a particular social context and therefore the construction of identity and meaning happens through learning together – in both formal and informal settings – in the context of a community (Wenger, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). As Wenger (1998) argues, when individual meaning is negotiated with other people in a learning community, does the meaning becomes one’s knowledge. Without this negotiation of meaning, in other words, we only acquire information or data, not knowledge (Wenger, 1998). Applying this notion of “situated learning” (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to online learning environments, Kirkup (2002) echoes that “identity and learning are inseparable” because when someone learns something new online, this very act of learning will bring a new level of understanding to the learner and therefore enable “new ways of being” (p.182).

A major task for HRE educators in an online course is therefore to negotiate the identities and meanings that they acquired in their local cultures – that is, their “real life” professional and private settings – within a new culture: the culture of the virtual learning community, which consists of a group of people (the course participants and instructors) and of a virtual environment (the online mediating tools that are offered by the online

course, such as asynchronous or synchronous online discussion tools, text-based or multimedia content and so forth).

At first, I thought that a virtual learning community made by a group of people was the only element of the online learning culture because I perceived that only actual people could create and maintain a culture. But then, reflecting upon many artifacts that are also an important part of our real cultures, I decided to expand the concept of the online learning culture by encompassing various online mediating tools or artifacts (e.g., discussion tools) that also influence how a group of people would interact and make meaning of their experiences in an online learning environment.

Based on Vygotsky's socio-cultural development model of learning (1978), for example, the Activity System advocates a fundamental role of social interactions among online learners using various mediating tools available for course activities in order to achieve an individual's full capacity for cognitive development (Engeström, 1987). According to Russell (2002), the Activity System consists of the following six mediational elements:

1. subject(s) – an individual or a group of learners,
2. object/motive – a course topic or raw materials for shared purposes (motive),
3. mediating tools – artifacts such as books or computer tools that mediate learning,
4. community – a wider sense of community of subjects to engage in social relations,
5. rules – both explicit and tacit norms and values that shape subjects' interactions, and
6. division of labor – subjects' different roles in learning such as teacher, student, or facilitator.

What I find useful in considering this particular model is to realize the close connections between socio-cultural and technical aspects of online learning, and analyze their interactions.

Moreover, I believe that there was a third kind of culture that intervened in shaping the research participants' meaning-making processes in this particular online course on HRE: what I will call the "human rights global culture." Human rights principles were what brought the group together, and they were also the main subject about which they had to make meaning. In addition, because of its highly normative and emotional content, HRE is itself a highly cultural subject matter.

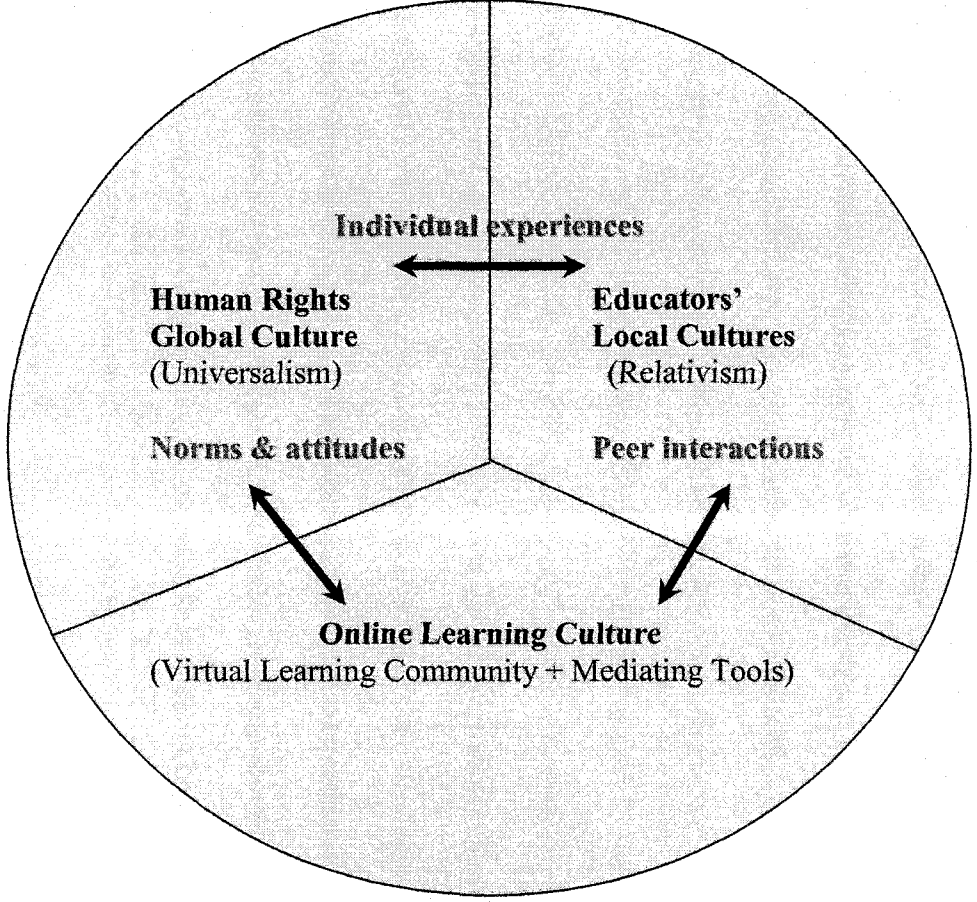
I depict the three types of culture which shaped the research participants' meaning-making processes in Figure 2, and summarize their main interfaces, or points at which two cultures interact, as well as their implications for online instructors in Table 7.

The interface between the human rights global culture and educators' local cultures is the educators' *individual experiences* in applying universal human rights principles to their local HRE settings. An important element of the human rights global culture is indeed its assertion of universality. Universalists argue that "individual sameness or similarity among human beings should prevail over cultural difference when it comes to human rights" (Bell, et al., 2001, p.5). Universalism is reflected in international legal documents such as the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims to be a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations." But the

educators' local cultures are endlessly diverse and therefore tempt a cultural relativist interpretation of human rights. According to Ayton-Shenker (1995), cultural relativism is "the assertion that human values, far from being universal, vary a great deal according to different cultural perspectives," and therefore "cultural background is one of the primary sources of identity." The challenge for human rights educators is to negotiate their personal and cultural baggage with universal human rights norms. The challenge for instructors is to help educators in that negotiation, by letting them integrate their prior experiences as much as possible in the online course and by offering them content that is most salient to their contexts.

The interface between the educators' local cultures and the online learning culture is *peer interactions*. In the context of an online course about HRE, the variety of local cultures come into contact through the various opportunities for interactions among course participants. Human rights educators bring in not only their personal experiences, but also their professional knowledge and experiences based on locally-configured ways to teach universal human rights. The challenge for both educators and instructors is to capitalize on the diversity of experiences to teach the same universal human rights principles in a variety of different local contexts. For educators, that means negotiating identities and meanings within a virtual learning community using online mediating tools. For instructors, it means proposing activities that stimulate critical yet constructive debates on HRE issues among course participants, in order to encourage their negotiations of identities and meaning.

FIGURE 2: Three Mediating Cultures in an Online Professional Development Course about HRE



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TABLE 7: Main interfaces of the three mediating cultures

Overlapping area	Interface	Major task for educators	Major task for instructors
Human Rights Global Culture & Educators' Local Cultures	Individual experiences	Applying universal human rights principles to local HRE settings.	Integrating the educators' prior experiences into the online course.
Educators' Local Cultures & Online Learning Culture	Peer interactions	Negotiating identities and meanings within a virtual learning community using online mediating tools.	Developing activities that stimulate critical yet constructive online debates on HRE issues.
Human Rights Global Culture & Online Learning Culture	Norms & attitudes	Enacting human rights attitudes in the online learning environment.	Creating a safe and supportive online learning environment.

Finally, the interface between the online learning culture and the human rights global culture consists of *norms and attitudes*. As explained above, the human rights global culture was the glue of the virtual community I observed. Promoting human rights constituted the reason why such a diverse group of people got together in the first place. And the human rights global culture provided the group with a common frame of reference to make meaning of the materials they were discussing about. As Zhen noted (see page 160), the great diversity of the group was compensated by some common traits: these were all educators working in NGOs, universities, or international agencies in areas related to human rights. Human rights norms – such as equality, respect for the dignity of every human being – are useful to shape appropriate attitudes that course participants ought to adopt in any online course, and particularly in courses on HRE. These norms are important to contain the peer interactions within a productive range. I claimed in the previous paragraph that it was important to exploit the diversity of local cultures by stimulating spirited debates. But without the glue of human rights norms, or without the

adoption of human rights attitudes on the part of the course participants, such debates can become divisive and harmful – leading to the negative emotions I discussed in the previous section. Instructors must therefore ensure that they create and manage a safe and supportive online learning environment. As Linda pointed out (see page 216), addressing emotions linked to learners' suffering from human rights violations is a balancing act, that can be productive or disruptive.

To sum up this section, I have explored the meaning of culture in order to gain a deeper insight into some of the reasons why educators found it difficult to interact in this online course. I then argued that online professional development courses for HRE involve three types of cultures – the cultures of the educators' respective societies, the culture of the online learning environment itself, and universal human rights norms – and that instructors need to manage the interfaces between these cultures:

- The interface between the human rights culture and educators' local cultures is the educators' *individual experiences* in applying universal human rights principles to their local HRE settings. The task for instructors to manage that interface is to help educators in negotiating their personal and cultural baggage with universal human rights norms, by letting them integrate their prior experiences as much as possible in the online course and by offering them content that is most salient to their contexts.
- The interface between the educators' local cultures and the online learning culture is *peer interactions*. The task of instructors to manage it is proposing activities

that stimulate critical yet constructive debates on HRE issues among course participants, in order to encourage their negotiations of identities and meaning.

- The interface between the online learning culture and the human rights global culture consists of *norms and attitudes*. The task of instructors to manage it is to create and manage a safe and supportive online learning environment to ensure that spirited debate does not lead to overwhelming and counter-productive emotional reactions..

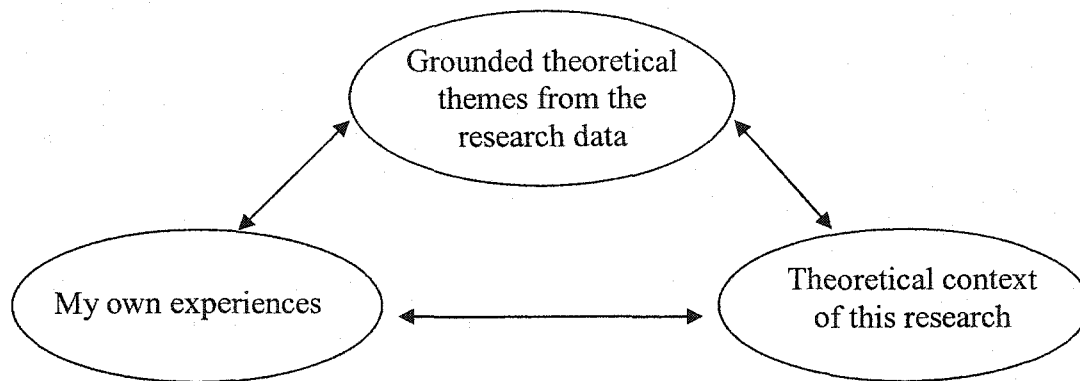
X. RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, I propose a set of practical recommendations for instructors' effective online HRE teaching, focusing on how to manage the major interfaces among the three cultures in an online learning environment that I identified in Table 7. As I explained in the previous chapter, I believe that both the emotional and the cultural issues of HRE exist in any educational setting, whether face-to-face or online, although online elements would raise some specific challenges (e.g., lack of non-verbal communication) and benefits (e.g., diverse learners across cultures) for online instructors to deal with.

Although my recommendations can generally apply to any HRE settings to a certain extent, I propose the following teaching strategies particularly for online HRE instructors, reflecting in some instances upon how an online environment might modify teaching methods recommended for face-to-face HRE teaching (e.g., online moderation for discussions).

As Figure 3 illustrates, my analytic approach to developing these recommendations is to simultaneously consider: i) grounded theoretical themes of effective HRE teaching strategies from the actual research data, ii) ways in which these grounded themes are consistent with my earlier synthesis of literature on effective online professional development courses on HRE, and iii) my own experiences in HRE and online professional development.

Figure 3: My analytic approach to the recommendations from this research



For example, some of the research participants (i.e., Rana, Ahlam, Allison, Jean) emphasized their efforts in relating their HRE teaching to their learners' own interests, which I presented as learner-centered approaches in Chapter 6 (Goals). The same teaching principle was indeed identified as desirable element of successful HRE applying constructivist approaches in the Theoretical Context section of Chapter 2, and has proved to be critical in my own experiences. Therefore, I identified the learner-centered approaches as the teaching principle to accomplish the first major task of instructors identified in Table 7: integrating educators' prior HRE experiences in an online course.

Dealing with the second major task, developing learning activities for critical yet constructive online discussions, I have first identified dialogic learning approaches as the main teaching principle from what the research participants proposed as effective teaching strategies in Chapter 6 (Goals). I then modified it as what I call inquiry-based dialogic approaches, emphasizing the critical role of inquiry to design and teach an effective online course about HRE, as highlighted in various pieces of literature.

The last major teaching principle, collective and/or collaborative approaches, was also pointed out as one of the effective teaching strategies for HRE in Chapter 6 (Goals).

Based on both the literature that I consulted for this study and my own experiences, I believe that online instructors should provide sufficient opportunities for educators to interact and collaborate with one another by providing a safe and supportive learning environment for more meaningful learning experiences.

Moreover, although my recommendations are divided into three categories, I want to emphasize that they should be used together to maximize their leverage. One of the biggest challenges that remain for online instructors is balancing the recommendations aiming at stimulating critical debate with those that aspire to moderate potentially unproductive or even harmful peer interactions. Finding the right balance is an art, not a science.

TABLE 8: Recommendations for Effective Online Teaching about HRE

Major Task	Major Teaching Principle	Teaching Activities
Integrating prior experiences into online course	Learner-centered approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct a pre-course survey or needs-assessment & integrate the results into the online teaching. - Provide early assignments to share & discuss prior experiences. - Accommodate diverse learning styles. - Offer participatory online moderation of one's own topic on HRE.
Developing activities for critical yet constructive online discussions	Inquiry-based dialogic approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choose salient HRE topics for discussion: "targets of difficulties". - Follow a "less is more" principle. - Promote organic grouping and collaboration. - Provide ongoing scaffolding through active online moderation. - Use case studies and/or role playing.
Creating a safe and supportive online learning environment	Collective and/or collaborative approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reveal & break existing assumptions through online "ice-breaking" exercises at the outset. - Make tacit knowledge and goals explicit. - Co-create desirable norms of online participation. - Encourage individual enactment of such norms. - Offer public feedback on assignments.

1. Integrating the educators' prior experiences into the online course

As I explained in Chapter 2 (Theoretical Context), both HRE and constructivism emphasize the importance of learner-centered approaches to teaching and learning (Bransford et al., 2000; Koenig, 1997; Andreopoulos & Claude, 1997).

According to Ravitz et al. (2000), a constructivist learning approach attempts to make learning “a more self-directed and personally-responsive process, (p.4)” by which educators can identify their own issues and problems and decide how to search a solution rather than simply follow instructors' direction. In establishing such a learning environment, online instructors should assess not only the educators' individual needs and expectations for the online course but also actively integrate the educators' prior knowledge and experiences in the subject matter into the online course activities (Merriam, 1999). As Dede (2000) explains, “teachers [educators] find direct knowledge about others' practices much more convincing than conventional forms of research evidence (p. 173).”

Below, I present a variety of ways to gather and share the information about the educators' prior HRE experiences as well as how online instructors can utilize such information to foster more meaningful learning experiences among the educators.

- a) *Conduct a pre-course survey or needs-assessment and integrate the results into the online teaching.*

As was the case in this online course, instructors can carry out a pre-course survey, or other forms of needs assessment, to learn about each educator's prior HRE experiences. With the approval of the educators themselves, this personal information can then be shared with all other educators in the online course. In this course, the information reported in the application forms and pre-course surveys was not available to the course participants, although it would have proved useful.

More importantly, I believe that the results of these early assessments must be reflected in the instructor's online teaching by including particular topics or perspectives of HRE that a majority of educators teach in the curriculum or by understanding demographic and geographical distributions among the educators. This course, for example, might have put more emphasis on women's rights, since it was the main interest of a large portion of the participants, including Ahlam, Rana, Fayola, and Emily; not surprisingly, the one session on women's rights was the one that witnessed the most activity on the discussion board.

- b) *Provide early assignments to share & discuss prior experiences.*

Instructors can also design some early assignments that would reveal each educator's short-term goals for this particular course as well as their long-term aspirations such as individual passion for HRE or a career plan. Such assignments can also focus on certain issues in HRE. For example, instructors can encourage the educators to share major

difficulties in teaching HRE in their local settings, or to explain how they have overcome such difficulties. I gathered such stories through my interviews, and online instructors could easily design a series of online activities to collect and share such stories as well.

Offering sufficient opportunities for individual educators to describe their own prior HRE experiences and realize what and how they would like to improve their HRE teaching practices will actually help these educators gain “competence in deciding what to learn and how to carry out the learning process and his or her commitment and confidence to do so (Merriam, 1999, p.38).” This process would therefore encourage educators to identify their own agenda in this course that are more grounded in their specific contexts and continuously revisit those agenda with peers, which can make the educators feel equally participated and valued in the learning process. .

c) Accommodate diverse learning styles.

It can also be useful for online instructors to ask educators to identify their learning styles and consider these educators’ answers in providing various learning activities. For example, Allison in my study acknowledges that she learns best through writing reflective journals, and Jean wanted to have some multimedia materials to learn with because she is a visually-oriented learner. Using the course website, online instructors can provide a private space for keeping individual online journals as well as specific multimedia materials or external links that would help some educators learn about certain topics better, recognizing that these sites might not be available to all educators due to technological constraints.

Moreover, instructors can also allow educators to choose their own formats of certain assignments such as arts or photographs. During the session entitled “education through the arts, humanities and sciences” in this online course, for example, some educators could have submitted a poem or a drawing or a picture with narratives on why and how they would like to use such materials for effective HRE.

Although there will always be technical limitations or difficulties that need to be considered, when appropriately employed, online instructors can “fashion teaching and learning so that *all* students [educators in my study] have the chance to learn and to demonstrate what they have learned” (Gardner, 2000, p. 32), using a variety of intelligences, media, and forms of expression.

d) Offer participatory online moderation of one’s own topic on HRE.

Another learner-centered approach is for instructors to offer a self-moderation opportunity for educators who can actually moderate the online discussions among the peers during a particular session of one’s HRE interest.

I think that this task can offer three kinds of learning opportunities:

- demonstrating one’s own expertise in HRE so that they can build more self-confidence and become more self-confident,

- learning how to facilitate critical yet constructive discussions about HRE issues, which is a key skill to acquire as a human rights educator, whether a face-to-face or an online setting, and
- experiencing how to facilitate online discussions in particular because some research participants in this study (i.e., Halim) were taking this online course so that they could either design or teach an online course about HRE later.

As Collison et al. (2000) illustrate, “online moderation is a craft that has general principles and strategies – that can be learned (p.12)” which I explain in the section about the instructors’ online moderation below. Because moderating online discussions is a craft, online instructors need to prepare educators to be ready for online moderation by providing some related readings in advance, by letting them observe instructors’ modeling for a while, and by co-creating online discussion questions for a particular session. Although this will certainly require more time and effort from both instructors and educators, it will provide a good hands-on opportunity for them to contribute their own knowledge and experiences in a more structured way, to learn more about discussion facilitations, and to appreciate and apply online moderation skills for future tasks.

2. Developing activities that stimulate critical yet constructive online debates on HRE issues

In order to achieve this second task, I believe that online instructors should aim to present a series of stimulating questions for educators to deeply engage in online discussions.

From a constructivist point of view, online instructors' key to success is to figure out and maintain a balance between offering direct instruction to keep the focus of online discussions and at the same time accommodating organic dialogues that would explore other related issues.

According to Garrison and Anderson (2003), reflective text-based online interactions are actually one of the most important aspects of what they call e-learning, because these meaningful interactions among the learners will transform both the learning processes and outcomes for higher-order thinking such as critical thinking. Using a conceptual framework called "Community of Inquiry (p.22)", Garrison and Anderson (2003) emphasize online instructors' capacity to understand and create an e-learning environment where a community of learners would be able to facilitate critical discourse and reflection through four steps: a triggering event (puzzling question), exploration (information or experience sharing), integration (idea linking), and resolution (new understanding or application of solutions) (p. 30). Collison et al. (2000) also highlight that online instructors should aim to facilitate "pragmatic dialogue (p.28)" with a focus on inquiry on a specific goal or task within a limited time frame.

One common theme from these suggestions is that online instructors should ask tough yet meaningful questions in online discussions and also actively guide the discussions with focus on supporting educators' intellectual engagement within a virtual learning community.

a) *Choose salient HRE topics for discussion: “targets of difficulties.”*

In order to provide stimulating discussion questions, the online course curriculum or choice of topics is another important decision for online HRE instructors. Yet, determining what topics to teach in a course, both online and face-to-face, can be one of the most challenging tasks an instructor faces. There are so many important and interesting topics to teach, and so little time and resources to teach them. According to Perkins et al. (1995), identifying “targets of difficulty” can produce more meaningful learning activities and therefore better results. A target of difficulty is an issue or concept that is both central to the discipline at hand and difficult to learn and teach.

For example, from the online course of this study, three targets of difficulty for HRE which the educators could have tackled under the guidance of co-instructors among the many that would also have been relevant are:

- the debate between human rights universalism and cultural relativism,
- how to handle the political nature of HRE, and
- how to understand and engage emotions effectively in HRE.

I identified these three issues by keeping track of the themes persistent in my telephone interviews with both the research participants and the co-instructors. In my view, professional development courses are unique opportunities for HRE educators to step back from their daily business and reflect on such salient issues. Specifically, such core yet challenging dimensions of HRE topics in this online course might have allowed the

eleven research participants and the co-instructors to engage in one another's ideas and experiences more deeply and might have allowed them to gain more knowledge from the diversity of experiences present in the virtual learning community. Therefore, one of the challenges for online instructors is to surface these salient yet tacit areas of interests among the educators at the outset of the online course and to adapt course activities and discussions to address such issues.

b) Follow the "less is more" principle.

Another way to select topics susceptible to exploit the benefits of online discussions is to apply a "less is more" principle by delving deeply into fewer topics. Although this online course was an introductory course to HRE and therefore had to cover a wide range of topics, there were some sessions for which the research participants posted longer discussions messages, particularly Session 6 about women's rights. This was not surprising given that several research participants were dealing with women's rights issues in their local HRE settings, as noted above. By extending some sessions that seemed to overlap the interests of a majority of the educators, the instructors might have induced deeper exchanges that could have had direct significance and application to the educators' own HRE settings (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1999).

Another suggestion is to consider extended sessions, alternating weeks of readings and individual assignments with weeks of collaborative activities such as online discussions or small group projects. This kind of strategic focus could address one of the major concerns of the co-instructors in this online course identified: how difficult it was for full-

time working educators to find extended blocks of time to sustain depth in online learning experiences while dealing with competing personal and professional obligations.

For instance, in my own experience in revising an online course for classroom teachers, I faced the same issue with online professional development courses, in the Wide-Scale Interactive Development for Educators (WIDE) World project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. When the very first course of WIDE World was offered in 2000, the teaching team received feedback from learners about their difficulties in engaging online discussions with other course participants due to the time constraints (Joo & Booth-Sweeney, 2001). These learners indicated that they had barely enough time to finish their own assignments and therefore found it very difficult to interact with each other in the online learning environment or provide peer feedback on individual assignments. Since one of the course goals was to promote peer-to-peer collaborations, the next offering of the same course reduced the total number of topics in half and asked course participants to work on their individual assignments during the first week of each session and then to engage in peer interactions during its second week. In this way, the course design freed up time for educators to interact more with each other during the designated course duration, which proved to be quite successful.

c) Promote organic grouping and collaboration.

In designing an online course for adult learners, instructors can apply some key principles of effective adult learning, such as considering the educators as independent and self-directed learners and therefore designing more autonomy into learning experiences. The

Buddy System in this online course, for example, did not offer such independent and self-directed approaches because the online instructors themselves assigned the buddies without clear criteria. As we saw in Chapter 7 (Processes), some of the research participants did not understand the purpose and the process of the Buddy System and also wanted to have a more “organic” Buddy System by choosing their own buddies based on self-interests.

According to Grow (1991), self-directed learners prefer to set their own goals and standards, and to use experts and resources to undertake these goals. They want to follow their own internal motivation and learning preferences, as well as to participate in professional development courses that address their individual needs (Gilbert, 1998). In my view, this does not mean that online instructors simply let the educators make their own initiatives from a scratch, but rather guide them in process to articulate their internal motivations and to set their own goals for an online course.

d) Provide ongoing scaffolding through active online moderation.

According to Collison et al. (2000), the key role of the online instructor is to be a “Guide on the Side (p.34)” meaning that online instructors would share teaching responsibilities with educators and should become a coach rather than a “Sage on the Stage (p.35) whose main role is an information-transmitting lecturer.

As I pointed out above in the section on sharing online moderation responsibilities with educators, online moderation can be learned through observation and hands-on practices

(Collison et al., 2000). According to Collison et al. (2000), two particular goals of online moderation that promote critical thinking are sharpening the focus and deepening the dialogue, which can use the following online moderation strategies:

- For sharpening the focus, online instructors should identify direction, sort educators' relevant ideas, and focus on key points of discussions, and
- For deepening the online dialogue, online instructors should ask larger overarching questions, make connections among the discussion ideas, and identify the values in multiple perspectives that are presented.

(slightly reworded from Collison et al., 2000, p.129)

Considering the controversial and sensitive nature of human rights issues, I also think that online instructors must be sensitive to “nuance, content, and social context (Collison et al., 2000, p. xvi)” and articulate these for educators in the online course. Moreover, online instructors should consider direct instructions to facilitate deeper online discussions, using overcoming misunderstandings among the educators as teachable moments.

e) Use case studies and/or role playing.

As some of the research participants in this study illustrated (i.e., Emily, Allison, Jean), using case studies can help both HRE teachers and learners appreciate multiple perspectives on a particular situation where complex and controversial human rights issues are contested.

Online instructors can therefore consider using real case studies with concrete and detailed information, in order for educators to engage in debating on actual and specific human rights issues rather than on abstract human rights concepts. The concreteness of a case study would help the educators step back from their own contexts and therefore lessen their level of intimidation on a particular human rights issue. The course instructors would also need to pay attention on choosing case studies that would not offend any course participants.

I also think that online instructors can design an assignment for educators to develop their own case studies that will be used in their HRE settings and employ peer feedback to improve their own teaching materials. Moreover, if the online course is offered repeatedly, using case studies developed from previous course participants can also be tremendously effective in generating educators' interests and active online participation.

Another strategy for instructors is to facilitate online role-playing exercises by letting each participant to take on the role of different stakeholders in particular human rights issues and/or to consider multiple perspectives of one specific stakeholder group. HRE usually requires multiple perspectives on a particular issue, and having to defend a certain view would therefore help educators appreciate and value other perspectives.

3. Creating a safe and supportive online learning environment

Creating a safe and supportive learning environment is essential to build respect and promote collaboration in both a face-to-face and an online learning environment

(Garrison & Anderson, 2003; Kallick & Wilson III, 2001). What is important to highlight here is that the very reason of creating such a learning environment is actually for educators to take intellectual risks while bearing a certain degree of discomfort that would allow these educators to learn from “disequilibrium” (Kegan, 1982, p.276). By offering this “holding environment” (Kegan, 1994 & 1982) where instructors offer both challenges and supports, educators can develop increased capacities for negotiating identities and meanings, purposes and values of their learning experiences through critical reflection, which is called transformative (Mezirow & Associates, 2000) or transformational (Drago-Severson, 2004; Kegan, 1994) learning.

This kind of learning emphasizes that people make a conscious and intentional movement to explain and determine their frames of reference, which sometimes contradicts with newly acquired knowledge and experience. When contradictions appear, their own conceptual meaning structure seeks new interpretations of reality, often transforming their current meaning perspectives through critical reflection. By taking their own interests, ideas and preferred modes of learning into account, educators should be engaged in a personal meaning-making process which challenges and transforms ways in which they currently understand and operate (Eastmond, 1998; Kegan, 1994; Mezirow, 1991).

Due to the lack of non-verbal cues for communication in an online course, however, this task requires more sensitivity and thoughtful preparation for achieving a greater sense of belonging and acceptance in the learning community at the outset as well as for

maintaining continuous engagement in one another's ideas and reflections. In my view, online instructors can accomplish this task by capitalize collective and/or collaborative learning opportunities among educators in the online course.

In explaining their Community of Inquiry model, for example, Garrison and Anderson (2003) identify the development of "social presence (p.28)" as one of the most important tasks that an online instructor should put into practice. Social presence in an ideal online course can be developed by adopting specific practices which fall into the following three categories:

- Affective: expressing emotions, using humors, and carrying out self-disclosure;
- Open communication: continuing a thread, quoting from others' messages, referring explicitly to others' messages, asking questions, complementing & expressing appreciation, and expressing agreement;
- Cohesive: addressing or referring to participants by name and to the online learning group using inclusive pronouns (e.g., we or us), and using communication for social purposes (e.g., salutations).

(slightly reworded from Garrison & Anderson, 2003, p.51)

By promoting such social presence in the online learning environment, online instructors should consciously encourage educators to feel welcomed and valued in bringing up challenging questions to one another and openly and deeply engaging in constructive online dialogues.

- a) *Reveal and break existing assumptions through online “ice-breaking” exercises at the outset.*

Most courses, whether face-to-face or online, start with some kind of “ice-breaking” exercises for the course participants to get to know each other and to start developing a sense of belonging. As I discovered in this study, an online learning environment in general, and an online HRE learning environment in particular, cannot be completely value-free or neutral. Rather, the information and structure in online learning environments is experienced differently depending on the diverse social identities and status of the educators, which will influence their online behaviors. Therefore, these exercises should aim at creating opportunities for both instructors and educators to identify and navigate differences in their social power and privileges before the course begins.

What is important in this particular task is that these online “ice-breaking” exercises should happen very early during the online course. One focus should be on revealing and breaking existing assumptions or stereotypes about self-identities, social status, or cultural background among the course participants. For example, instructors can ask each educator to choose another educator who comes from an unknown or unfamiliar country or culture, and ask two questions about ‘what are some stereotypes of your country or culture or people in your view?’ and ‘how do you make sense of these stereotypes as a human rights educator?’ In this way, each educator will have a chance to examine their own assumptions and also others’ assumptions on one’s self- and social-identity, and

hopefully to engage in a more open discussion about how these assumptions should be understood and acted upon as a human rights educator.

b) Make tacit knowledge and goals explicit.

In addition, online instructors need to make their expectations regarding the online course as well as the educators' required learning time for course activities (e.g., course readings and peer interactions) as explicit as possible. They should provide a clear course schedule and the required deadlines from the very beginning, as well as periodically remind the educators about these time-bounded requirements. As was seen in this study, the drawback of 'anytime, anywhere' flexibility of online courses is the lack of clear boundaries to the amount of work and the required time to perform such work. One of the main problems in distance learning, for example, is a high drop-out rate, partly because of the misunderstanding of course purposes or topics or partly because of the wrong estimation of study time. Jean unfortunately fell into both pitfalls in this study. The overall drop out rate of this course was not unusually high, although some online professional development courses achieve drop out rates as low as face-to-face courses.

Another recommendation is to highlight and articulate how the differences among educators, which implicitly operate as a major source of reference for online behaviors, can serve as a source of important learning opportunities for HRE. Making such implicit frame of reference explicit and public in an online course might help both instructors and educators to intentionally break down such hierarchies and to experience the potential value of such an online learning environment. In order to effectively accomplish such

sensitive task, online instructors and educators need to co-create a set of desirable norms of online participation through collective dialogues by discussing ‘what are certain habits of respect and ground rules that we can create and maintain in an online learning environment’ or ‘what kinds of conditions in an online learning environment can make our emotions be heard and held together’.

c) Co-create desirable norms of online participation.

As I have argued, educators need to adopt and internalize attitudes consistent with the universal human rights norms such as respect and equality to effectively teach and learn HRE. Therefore, one of the key tasks for online instructors is to start discussing with the educators about a set of online discussion norms, such as how to balance critical yet constructive tones in online discussions, or how to co-create netiquette, a set of norms for interactions and communications on the Internet, among the course participants.

For example, they can ask how the educators expect to create an online learning environment where they would feel comfortable in taking some risks to recognize and challenge their own assumptions, ask deeper questions, discuss alternative ideas, or reveal new understandings of HRE. I believe that an explicit and collective discussion on how to create such an online learning environment is essential in order for both instructors and educators to develop sufficient knowledge and skills to better understand and enact human rights principles in the online learning environment.

As Concord Consortium (2002) pointed out, online learning through collaboration requires both instructors and educators to take intellectual risks. To nurture a community culture in which participants are supportive and honest, the instructors must establish and shape intellectual and emotional norms, model appropriate behavior and steer harmful input toward more meaningful learning for all in the online course. This can be done by offering several opportunities for the educators to get to know each other and socialize, through ice-breaking exercises as proposed above, through bios and pictures posted on the course's web site, through a chat room (e.g., café) where messages about non-course topics are welcome throughout the course, or through individual assignments in which educators would share their own beliefs and values as human rights professionals with the whole group. This should provide a good foundation for the course participants to appreciate one another and develop mutual trust to be ready for more interactive and collaborative course works later on.

d) Encourage individual enactment of such norms.

I believe that online instructors should create an online learning environment that would move toward increased reciprocity and equality among its members as a whole. Once online instructors and educators recognize the need to learn and the benefits of this “critical friendship” in learning, they can create and nourish desirable norms of dialogue, ensuring that every learner is heard, and establishing new forms of free, full, and democratic participation among themselves (Day, 1999; Mezirow, 1991).

Therefore, it is important for online instructors to continually cultivate and refine active and responsible learning attitudes in themselves as well as in the educators. For example, the co-instructors of this online course might have modeled healthy debates on conflicting views of a certain HRE issue at the beginning of the online course, with explicit explanations on why this is important for human rights educators and how it can be done respectfully. In this way, online instructors can demonstrate best practices of not only critical engagement in HRE principles but also actual enactment of such principles in an online learning environment.

e) Offer public feedback on assignments.

In the online course, the co-instructors only sent out their individual feedback to each educator, making instructor assessment private. Since most online professional development courses do not involve grading, I think that offering public feedback on assignments might serve as a platform where educators would also learn from reading instructors comments on others' ideas. In this study, Jean wished to see the co-instructors' feedback to other educators' final projects in a public area of the online learning environment. I also think that the peer feedback on assignments and/or final projects can be also made public, so that educators can take advantage of an online learning environment that can store and display individual assignments as well as ongoing peer-to-peer assessment.

What is most important, in my view, is to co-create a set of rules on desirable peer feedback so that both the quantity and the quality of peer assessment can be capitalized in an online learning environment.

In the end, developing an online professional development course about HRE should *not* simply duplicate traditional face-to-face approaches to HRE. Rather the aim of such course should be to reach toward previously unreachable human rights educators across time and space, and provide collective or collaborative learning opportunities by negotiating own identities and meanings in the context of a supportive learning community. To me, the capacity of online learning to bring people together, from such diverse backgrounds and experiences, who might never otherwise have taken a same HRE course at the same time is what I and the research participants in this study have identified as both challenging and exciting.

The online course that I studied indeed accomplished what it intended to achieve such as teaching introductory concepts of HRE and providing a range of valuable HRE materials. As both the co-instructors and the research participants told me, the online course also offered a rare opportunity for these human rights educators to tell and listen to one another's ideas and practices in their local HRE settings, which demonstrated a particular strength of online learning. Nonetheless, deeper levels of risk-taking, self-revelation, peer-interaction, and transformative learning, which the educators would have welcomed, did not happen in this online course mainly due to the emotional and the cultural aspects

of online learning about HRE. To take advantage of the opportunities of online learning, online instructors should, as Emily said, understand “the strengths and the limitations of the medium [Emily, End-I, 12/19/03]” to design and teach a successful online professional course about HRE.

As the globalization continues expanding and new and more affordable technologies become ubiquitous, more diverse people will come across one another to learn together. By highlighting the transformative potential of information technology, Castells (1998) emphasizes the critical role of “a responsible, educated society (p.353)” where “informed social action in the pursuit of social change (p.359)” can occur. I hope that this dissertation will help harness such potential, but I am also aware that much more needs to be learned.

XI. APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1: The course introduction and outlined curriculum

The course will introduce the international field of human rights education (HRE), including presentations of programming approaches, teaching and learning resources, and related pedagogical theory. The course is intended for educators and trainers working in both the formal and nonformal sectors. Learners will be assisted in the development of a curriculum, training, or plan to use these skills to further their efforts in HRE. Learners might be expected to apply these skills within formal education settings, for staff development within their own organizations, and for outreach and advocacy.

The course has the following sequence. First, it will introduce the human rights framework and programming approaches and teaching materials in use worldwide. Learners will then explore discipline-based approaches to HRE, examining programming and sample materials that come from the social sciences, the humanities and the sciences. This will be followed by a presentation of interactive teaching methods and related pedagogical theory. This will be complemented by an examination of “issue” oriented education and advocacy approaches to HRE, drawing examples from children’s rights, women’s rights and the rights of minorities. Several sessions will be devoted to building the skills of learners, by reviewing how to develop a learning experience, use the Internet for resources and integrate assessments.

The course involves approximately 60 hours of reading, on-line working groups, interaction among students and instructors, and assignments, and is offered over a 12-week period beginning on 1 September. E-mail will be the main medium for the course, although learners will need to have periodic access to the Web. This course will integrate active and participatory learning approaches within activities and assignments, with an emphasis on reflective and collaborative learning. Learners will do the required reading, prepare interim and final project assignments and participate in group discussions. The maximum number of course learners is 25. Students who successfully complete the course will receive a Certificate of Participation.

Weeks 1-4 Introduction

- Week 1. Orientation to the course
- Week 2. Introduction to Human Rights
- Week 3. Introduction to Human Rights Education
- Week 4. Models and methods of teaching HRE

Weeks 5-7 Discipline-based Approaches to Human Rights Education

- Week 5. HRE and the Social Sciences
- Week 6. HRE and the Humanities
- Week 7. HRE and the Sciences

Weeks 8-9 Practical Tools for HRE

- Week 8. Developing Learning Activities
- Week 9. Finding Resources and Integrating Use of the Internet

Weeks 10-12 Issue-Oriented Education and Advocacy Approaches

Week 10. HRE Approaches for Children's Rights

Week 11. HRE Approaches for Women's Rights

Week 12. HRE Approaches for Minority rights/non-discrimination

APPENDIX 2: Matrix of data sources, data collection, and data analysis

Data Sources	Data Collection		Data Analysis			
	Timetable	Method	Preliminary Analysis		Deeper Analysis	
Main data sources						
Three telephone interviews	EarlyI (9/15 - 10/16/03) EndI (12/19/03 - 1/6/04) PostI (6/17-11/26/04)	Semi-structured telephone interviewing	Recorded on audiotapes & transcribed	<i>12 summary reports^a</i> Items Analysis*	<i>3 synthesized reports^b</i> combining all the data sources Patterns Analysis*	Revisit the entire raw data for final coding & writing Structures Analysis*
Weekly, session-based online discussions	Ongoing (Sep.-Nov., 03)	Virtual ethnography	<i>A set of 5 weekly fieldnotes^b</i>			
Additional data sources		Document analysis		<i>2 summaries^b</i>		
Course applications	June, 03 Ongoing (Sep.-Nov., 03)					
Two course surveys	PreS (Aug. 25-31, 03) EndS (Nov. 17-21)		<i>1 summary^a</i>			
Session-based individual assignments	Ongoing (Sep.-Nov., 03)		<i>2 summaries^a</i>			
Course materials	Ongoing (Sep.-Nov., 03)		As needed			
One telephone interview & one email with the two co-instructors						

Notes:

a. For each learner. b. Each fieldnote, summary of each course survey, and synthesized report covered all the eleven research participants who participated in each data collection activity.

* LeCompte, M. D., & Schensul, J. J. (1999, p.68)

I indicate my intermediate analytic products in *bold italics*. I use the following abbreviations: Pre-course Survey (PreS), End-course Survey (Ends), Early-course Interview (EarlyI), End-course Interview (EndI), and Post-course Interview (PostI).

APPENDIX 3: Protocol of three telephone interview questions for the research participants

EARLY-COURSE INTERVIEW (45-60 minutes each): 9/15/03 – 10/16/03

Individual background and contexts:

1. Can you tell me more about yourself? How did you become a teacher?
2. What kind of life experiences have made you be interested in human rights education?
3. How many years and in which situation(s) have you taught human rights education?
4. What aspects of teaching and learning do you think are most important in human rights education?
5. What is (are) most difficult for you to teach about human rights? Why?
6. Where do you get some help if you find these difficulties?

Goals

7. How did you hear about this online course?
8. What has made you decide to take this online course?
9. Have you taken any online course before?
If yes, how was your online learning experience in that previous course? How do you expect that this online course might be similar or different from your previous online course?
10. In your application, you mentioned that (his/her answer) is/are the main reason(s) why you want to acquire further skills in human rights education. Would you explain more about this/these?
11. In your application, you said that you want to apply your learning in this course to your own teaching practices through (his/her answer). Can you explain more how you expect to do this in your situation and why it is important to you?
12. In the pre-course survey, you identified (his/her answer) as the most important human rights issue for you that you want this course to address. Can you explain why this issue is most important to you?
13. In the pre-course survey, you said that you would like to get assistance on (his/her answer) from the group in this course. Can you explain why you think you need help on this?

Processes

14. How do you feel about learning via the Internet?
15. What do you expect that this online course will help you? In what ways?
16. What is the most exciting part of this online learning to you?
17. What is the scariest part of this online learning to you?
18. How do you want to prevent or deal with this scary part?
19. In the pre-course survey, you explained that you want the instructors and other learners in this course to know about you concerning (his/her answer). Can you explain why you have identified that/those?

Results

20. In the pre-course survey, you explained that (his/her answer) is/are the most important thing(s) you would like to achieve in this course. Can you explain why?

END-COURSE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW (60-90 minutes each): 12/19/03 – 1/6/04**Goals**

1. How has this course met your original goals?
Did you get what you expected? If so, how?
If not, why? What would you suggest to make this course more helpful to you?

Processes

2. How would you describe your experience in this course? (I did not intend to ask their opinions but rather the details of their experience upon which their opinions may be built.)
3. How is it like to be an online learner?
4. Can you describe me how you have actually managed this course according to your daily schedule? (e.g., when s/he first checks the lecture note, and usually spend time to work on assignments or discussions, etc.)
5. What has been the easiest part of taking this online course? Why?
6. What has been the most difficult part of taking this online course? Why?
7. What about the course has made you be most excited?
Can you describe one example to me? Why do you think that it made you so excited?
8. What about the course has made you feel most frustrated?
Can you describe one example to me? Why do you think that it made you so frustrated?
9. Have you expressed your frustration to your instructors or fellow learners?
10. How did they respond to it?
11. How was your relationship with instructors?
12. How about with your fellow learners?
13. How did you find your engagement in the learning activities in this course? Was it easy or difficult? Why?
14. Have you intentionally done anything to make yourself more engaged in the communications with other learners or instructors in this course? If so, what was it? How did you do and why?
15. Have you had any misunderstandings or disagreements with any other learners or instructors in this course? If so, what was about? How did you deal with them? Did you resolve (or not) them?

Results

16. What do you think are the main outcomes or results that you achieved from taking this course?

17. In our previous interview at the beginning of this course, you explained that (his/her answer) is/are the most important thing(s) you would like to achieve in this course. Do you think that you have achieved it(them)?
If so, how?
If not, why do you think these outcomes were not achieved?

POST-COURSE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW (45-90 minutes each): 6/17/04 – 11/26/04

About your experiences with Human Rights Education (HRE):

1. How have you been doing/teaching with HRE since our last phone conversation?
2. What are some most pressing HRE issues in your context? Is there anything new or emerging that you want to share with me?
3. What aspects of teaching and learning do you think are most important in teaching human rights in your setting?
4. In our previous interviews, you described various challenges to teach human rights topics that are sensitive in your context, and hence to raise emotions with your students, and/or in yourself? How do you make sense of these emotions? Are they helping or hindering the process of HRE in your setting?

About your online learning experiences:

5. What do you remember from the online course now?
6. How do you understand your online learning experiences in this course now?
7. How do you make sense of your online learning in the context of your life experience as a human rights educator?
8. What were most important learning experiences for you?
9. What are the most important aspects of HRE that you have learned?
10. Do you find yourself having the same or somewhat different understandings and/or skills in HRE after taking this course?
11. Have you tried to apply what you have learnt from this online learning in your teaching practice?
If so, how has it been so far?
If not, what makes it difficult for you to apply your learning in your teaching practice?
12. Is there anything that you wish you would have learnt from the online course to apply it better to your teaching practice?
13. Have you had any contact with any course participants including instructors or fellow learners?
If yes, what made you contact him/her/them?

About my summary on the end-course interviews:

14. How do you make sense of my summary on the end-course interviews? What were most striking to you and why?
15. After reading others' perspectives on the online learning experiences, would you reconsider any or some of your answers? If so, what and why?

16. If you would be the instructor and/or a designer of an online course on HRE, what would be three most important things to integrate into the online course?

About online professional development courses:

17. Will you take another online course on HRE?
If yes, why?
If no, why not?
18. What kinds of advantages or disadvantages that the online professional development can create in the field of human rights education?

About yourself as a human rights educator:

19. What does it mean to you to be a human rights educator now?
20. What are the most important values or beliefs that you strongly hold as a human rights educator?
21. Has your participation in this online course impacted/changed/challenged your views on these in any way? If so, in what ways?
22. Where do you see yourself going in the future?

About your own questions and/or reflections, which my interviews did not cover:

APPENDIX 4: Protocol of one telephone interview questions for the co-instructors**Educational philosophies**

1. What aspects of teaching and learning do you think are most important in human rights education?
2. What is (are) most difficult for you to teach about human rights? Why?

Rationale for the course design and teaching

3. What were your goals for teaching this online course?
4. In what ways have you tried to design the course to achieve these goals and overcome the difficulties you mentioned?

Self-assessment on the online course

5. How did you feel about the course process?
6. In what ways did it meet your expectations or not?
7. How did you feel about your strategies for engaging learners with one another (e.g., Buddy System, Peer Feedback on final papers)?
 - a. If they worked out as you had hoped, can you share some examples?
 - b. If not, do you have any thoughts about what could be done differently another time?
8. Have you taught any online course before?
If yes, how was your online learning experience in this HRE course similar or different from your previous one(s)?
9. What might be the three most important lessons that you as an online instructor have learned from this experience?

Personal interactions with the course participants

10. How did you keep in contact with each course participant during the online course?

If you have any other thoughts that you want me to know, please share them with me. Thank you very much for your generous time and support! Jae-Eun

APPENDIX 5: Course application form

<p><i>APPLICATION FORM</i></p> <p>DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSE</p> <p>"Introductory Course on Human Rights Education"</p> <p>1 September-23 November 2003</p> <p><i>Please read this application form carefully.</i> <i>Incomplete applications can unfortunately not be considered.</i></p> <p>Your application should be <u>received</u> no later than 15 May 2003. Completed applications can be mailed to:</p> <p>Applicants who have been selected will be notified by 1 June 2003. Tuition payments will be due on 15 August 2003.</p>	
<p>Please indicate how you would to participate in the course (by putting an X in front of the option):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> As an auditor (Auditors will: receive the course materials; read the weekly facilitator message; follow the course discussions, exercises and assignments. Auditors will not: be entitled to participate in the course discussion, exercises or assignments; and will not receive a Certificate of Participation. The tuition for auditors is US\$ 200.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> As a regular student who will receive a Certificate of Participation upon successful completion of the course. (Tuition is US \$ 525)</p>	
<p>Please indicate if you are applying for a scholarship (by putting an X in front of the option):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I want to apply for a scholarship. I am a national and/or resident of a country in Africa, Middle East, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe/Newly Independent States or Latin American/Caribbean</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No, I intend to pay the tuition in full.</p>	
LAST NAME(S):	FIRST NAME(S):
NAME OF ORGANISATION/SCHOOL:	POSITION WITHIN ORGANISATION/SCHOOL:
FULL ADDRESS OF YOUR ORGANISATION/SCHOOL (INCL. E-MAIL ADDRESS, IF APPLICABLE):	
DATE OF BIRTH:	CURRENT CITIZENSHIP:
PERMANENT ADDRESS:	
STREET:	CITY:

PROVINCE/STATE:	COUNTRY:
E-MAIL:	FAX:
TELEPHONE:	
<p>Also include with this application the following documents (incomplete applications will not be taken into consideration):</p> <p>* LETTER OF INTENT (a minimum of two pages, maximum of three pages):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Briefly describe your work and your position and responsibilities within your organisation/school. 2. Explain why you want to acquire further skills in human rights education. 3. Explain how you think you would apply the acquired skills and knowledge of this course in your work. 4. Describe what experiences, qualities and skills you would contribute as an active participant of the course. <p>* ONE PASSPHOTO (This will be posted on the course web site)</p> <p>* CURRICULUM VITAE (maximum three pages): listing your education (degrees, etc.); your work experience and, if applicable, a list of publications.</p> <p>IF YOU ARE APPLYING FOR A SCHOLARSHIP, PLEASE ALSO SEND ALONG THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS:</p> <p>* TWO SIGNED LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION.</p> <p>Two signed letters of recommendation should accompany the application and should comment on your professional experiences, capabilities and interests as these relate to the course. One letter should come from the Director or Chair of your organisation/school and clearly state your position and responsibilities. The second letter should come from someone outside the organisation/school who is familiar with your work. Both letters should include contact information of the referee.</p>	

APPENDIX 6: Pre-Course and End-Course course surveys

PRE-COURSE SURVEY (August 25-31, 2003)

1. Full name:
2. How you would like to be addressed on-line (e.g., first name, nickname):
3. Age:
4. Gender: female male
(Please put an X in the box that applies to you.)
5. *What is your native language?* _____
6. What is your highest level of education? (Please underline the letter (A, B, etc.) that applies.)
 - A. Doctorate.
 - B. Masters.
 - C. BA/BSc/Other University Degree.
 - D. University, no degree.
 - E. Diploma/Technical.
 - F. High School/Secondary School Completion.
 - G. High School/Secondary School, not completed.
7. List 2 or 3 of the most important things you would like to achieve as a result of the course – in other words what most do you want to accomplish, what most do you want to learn?
8. Please underline the letter (A, B, C, or D) which corresponds to the answer that most fully responds to each of the following questions?
9. Did you receive any human rights training before? If yes, please list name of training and briefly describe the training:
10. What is for you the most important human rights issue to be addressed in this course?
11. What questions, problems or ideas on human rights education would you like assistance on from the group?
12. What kind of course final project are you interested in pursuing?
 - a) a curriculum for your own teaching
 - b) an educational plan for teacher or staff training in your institution
 - c) other -- please describe:
13. Write down anything that you would like the instructors or other students in the course to know about you. (This will be posted on the course Web site, along with your name, organisational affiliation, country of residence, and passport photo.)

14. Please write below the e-mail address(es) that you prefer for communication in the course:
15. Indicate whether you would like to communicate in this course mainly via e-mail or via the course site on the World Wide Web (please put an X in front of the option(s) you choose):
- e-mail
- via the course web site
16. Please let us know if you have regular access to the World Wide Web or just to e-mail:
- regular access to WWW
- e-mail access only
17. Please let us know how you intend to participate in the course (multiple answers are possible):
- I intend to use a computer and Internet connection at the office to participate in the course
- I intend to use a computer and Internet connection at a public access facility (e.g. cybercafe) to participate in the course
- I intend to use a computer and Internet connection at home to participate in the course
- I intend to participate both from the office and from home
- Other, please explain:
18. Any additional comments you may have:

END-COURSE SURVEY

This questionnaire is intended to assist [the organization] and the instructor/facilitator in understanding if and how the distance learning course has met your needs, and also how it might be improved for future participants. Thank for your participation and for taking the time to complete this questionnaire! In the questions below, please underline, **boldface** or *italicize* the number that best represents your point of view.

Topics

1. The curriculum (series of topics) of the course has....

	strongly disagree		somewhat agree		strongly agree
a. been logical	1	2	3	4	5
b. been well paced	1	2	3	4	5
c. covered the right number of topics	1	2	3	4	5
d. met my needs	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Readings

The course readings have....

	strongly disagree	2	somewhat agree	4	strongly agree
a. had an appropriate level of difficulty (i.e., not too hard and not too easy)	1	2	3	4	5
b. required a reasonable amount of time	1	2	3	4	5
c. provided sufficient illustrations and examples	1	2	3	4	5
d. enabled me to carry out course assignments	1	2	3	4	5
e. helped me to understand the topic at hand	1	2	3	4	5
f. met my needs	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Weekly Discussion Questions

Contributing to the weekly discussion questions....

	strongly disagree	2	somewhat agree	4	strongly agree
a. required an appropriate amount of time	1	2	3	4	5
b. helped me to understand the topics at hand	1	2	3	4	5
c. was interesting/enjoyable	1	2	3	4	5
d. provided opportunities to share ideas and experiences with other participants	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Written Assignments

The Exercises, and other written assignments....

	strongly disagree	2	somewhat agree	4	strongly agree
a. were clearly explained by the facilitator	1	2	3	4	5
b. required an appropriate amount of time	1	2	3	4	5
c. helped me to understand the topics at hand	1	2	3	4	5
d. helped me develop practical skills	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Course Participants

Reading the contributions of other course participants (to discussion, Exercises) has....

	strongly disagree		somewhat agree		strongly agree
a. required a reasonable amount of time	1	2	3	4	5
b. helped me to understand the topics at hand	1	2	3	4	5
c. introduced me to different cultural contexts and perspectives	1	2	3	4	5
d. stimulated my thinking	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Instructor

The instructor....

	strongly disagree		somewhat agree		strongly agree
a. facilitated my learning through weekly Facilitator Messages	1	2	3	4	5
b. built on the work of the group through weekly Feedback messages	1	2	3	4	5
c. created an atmosphere that encouraged learning	1	2	3	4	5
d. was responsive to questions I had	1	2	3	4	5
e. provided helpful feedback on my written assignments	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Technical aspects

Use of e-mail or the course website

	strongly disagree		somewhat agree		strongly agree
a. worked successfully in terms of my access to course materials	1	2	3	4	5
b. worked successfully in terms of posting my written assignments	1	2	3	4	5
c. worked successfully in terms of access to the writings of other course participants	1	2	3	4	5
d. HREA staff responded to my technical questions and needs	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

General feedback

- How well did this course meet your expectations?
- Have you made connections with participants outside of the formal venue of the course? If so, have these been important to you?
- What changes would you suggest for future courses?
- How do you anticipate that your participation in this course affect the work of you and your organization?
- What kind of follow up training, conferences, or other activities would you find useful?
- Additional comments.

APPENDIX 7: An example of ethnographic data analysis on the difficulties of HRE

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS (INDIVIDUAL)		DEEPER ANALYSIS (COLLECTIVE)	
Question-based pre-coding	Items Analysis (concepts)	Patterns Analysis	Structures Analysis
<p>EXP-HRE (experiences in HRE)</p> <p>EXP-HRE-Family</p> <p>EXP-HRE-Schooling</p> <p>EXP-HRE-Work</p> <p>DIF-HRE (difficulties in HRE)</p>	<p>Racial discrimination Political influence on HR</p> <p>Gender inequality</p> <p>Gender inequality Sensitivity of HR issues Level of education</p> <p>Hierarchical relationship Authority Power and Control Conflict with colleagues Feeling foreign</p> <p>Everywhere/Everyone Conflict with governments Not knowing Not accepting Knowing but not talking Fear</p>	<p>Racial discrimination Political issues</p> <p>Gender discrimination</p> <p>Cultural values Social norms</p> <p>Oppression</p> <p>Pervasiveness Political nature of HR Lack of awareness Denial or disbelief Silence Emotion</p>	<p>Controversial and sensitive nature of HRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facing pervasive HR violations anytime anywhere by anyone - Teaching HR issues of political nature <p>Oppression & Discrimination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By hierarchical social structures (i.e., age, gender, race, level of education, etc.) - By cultural acceptance & support of oppression <p>Lack of Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Don't Know</u>: Lack of information & knowledge <p>Resistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Denial/Disbelief</u>: Know but do not want to accept - <u>Silence</u>: Know, accept, but consciously keep silence

APPENDIX 8: Characteristics of the active research participants (in order of age in 2003)

Name	Year (Age)	Sex	Country of Origin	Level of English	Level of Education (major)	Job Title	Work Environment
Ahlam	1977 (26)	F	Lebanon	ESL (studied in English)	MPH (Public Health) BA (Elementary Edu.)	Research Ass. Officer	Private university Local office of international agency
Padam	1973 (30)	M	Nepal	ESL	MA (Anthropology) BA (Population Studies) Currently LLB study	Officer	Local NGO
Halim	1972 (31)	M	Turkey	ESL	MS & BS (Engineering) Currently PhD study	Trainer	Private university
Allison	1969 (34)	F	USA	Native	MA (Dispute Resolution) BA (Anthropology & International Relations)	Program Coordinator	Local office of international NGO
Emily	1968 (35)	F	USA	Native	MA & PhD (Anthropology) BA (Comparative Religion)	Lecturer Assistant Prof.	Public university in Midwest Public university in Northeast
Lema	1967 (36)	M	Ethiopia	ESL (studied in English)	BA in Economics	Dept. Head	Local NGO
Rana	1966 (37)	F	Bangladesh	ESL (studied in English)	MA & BA (English)	Officer	Local office of international agency
Fayola	1960 (43)	F	Zimbabwe (living in the UK since 1985)	ESL (studied in English)	BA (Media & Design Management) in UK Military Academy in Zimbabwe	Officer Founder	local NGO local NGO
Lynn	1954 (49)	F	USA	Native	Vocational diploma	Officer ?	Local NGO ?
Zhen	1952 (51)	M	China (living in OPT since 2003)	ESL (studied in English)	MA (Comparative Edu.) in UK BS (English) in China	Officer	Local office of international agency
Jean	1945 (58)	F	USA	Native	MA & BA (Political Science)	Adjunct Prof.	private college

APPENDIX 9: Individual bios available on the course website

Padam (*Officer, local NGO, Nepal*)

Hope we will accomplish this training course with great success. This is a great opportunity to have communications with friends from different countries. As well as experience facilitators in the field of human rights education.

Halim (*Trainer, private university, Turkey*)

I'd like to be able to serve as a multiplier and reference point on human rights education in Turkey and surrounding regions (Balkans, Middle East, Mediterranean...) and I'm quite confident that this course and all the sharing with the other participants will provide a boost.

Allison (*Program Coordinator, local office of international NGO, Massachusetts, USA*)

I am very interested in refugee issues and I just completed an oral history project focusing on the daily experiences of refugee women living in refugee camps. I conducted research in Ghana, West Africa. Prior to my employment with [her organization] I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guinea, West Africa.

Rana (*Officer, local office of international agency, Bangladesh*)

I am Rana, working in [the Bangladeshi office of international agency]. It is great to get enrolled in this course and to get to know all of you. This has provided us an wonderful platform to establish a network and learn from each other. I am looking forward to share my experiences with you and also to learn from your experiences and good practices, particularly with regard to implementation and promotion of human rights. Thank you.

Fayola (*Officer, local NGO, United Kingdom*)

I work for [a local NGO], an African women's international non-governmental development organization, which coordinates networking, information, advocacy and training forums for African women, and builds their leadership capacities to influence policy and decision making at all levels. Our ethos and principles centre on enhancing African women's leadership capacity, being a focal point for African women in Europe, linking global issues with concerns and providing a critical and responsive approach towards the portrayal of African women. My desire to participate on this course has been inspired by my commitment to the women's movement and to human rights. I also hope that this forum/network will help forge effective partnerships that work towards the exchange and sharing of good practice towards the ultimate eradication of all forms of women's human rights abuse. No society can be truly democratic until all women are guaranteed their rights to freedom, dignity and equality. I strongly believe that as we all gain in skills, resources and status, we ultimately become an effective lobbying forum that promotes women's issues and should engage effectively with all institutions that govern or make decisions that affect our lives.

Lynn (*Officer, local NGO, Washington DC, USA*)

I am interested in learning more about human rights education and understanding how to transition education into advocacy that is relevant to the lived experience at the grassroots level. I believe human rights education is important, but also wonder if providing information centered education that focuses solely on human rights will engage the grassroots in a sustainable movement for social change. I look forward to working with my other colleagues in this course and learning more about human rights education.

Zhen (*Officer, local office of international agency, Occupied Palestine Territory*)

[The international agency's] Officer who worked in Afghanistan emergency programme after September 11th on Back-to-school project and now based in Jerusalem to continue work for the children of Palestine. In addition to that, I have had a great deal of experiences working in the diversified areas in term of social-economy and ethnic minorities cultures.

Jean (*Adjunct Professor, private college, California, USA*)

I am eager to meet the other participants in this course. After six rewarding and intensely busy years as the director of [a local office of an international NGO] for Southern California, I consider it a gift to be able to step away from the deadlines and learn more about human rights education.

APPENDIX 10: Difficulties and possible strategies in their current HRE settings

Difficulties	Possible Strategies
<p>Controversial and sensitive nature of HRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facing pervasive HR violations anytime anywhere by anyone - Teaching HR issues of political nature <p>Oppression & Discrimination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By hierarchical social structures (i.e., age, gender, race, level of education, etc.) - By cultural acceptance & support of oppression <p>Lack of Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Don't Know</u>: Lack of information & knowledge <p>Resistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Denial/Disbelief</u>: Know but do not want to accept - <u>Silence</u>: Know, accept, but consciously keep silence 	<p>1. Raising awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing information & building knowledge - Explicitly linking to international HR standards <p>2. Integrating HRE into education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrating HRE into formal education - Integrating HRE into informal & non-formal education <p>3. Learner-centered approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relating to learners' own interests <p>4. Dialogic learning process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using scaffolding - Balancing open-ended and structured instructions <p>5. Action-oriented approaches (Activism)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity building <p>6. Collective and/or Collaborative approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group learning - Team teaching - Partnership among all the stakeholders

APPENDIX 11: Summary table of goals and results

- **Course Application Question 2:** Explain why you want to acquire further skills in human rights education.
- **Pre-Course Survey Question 6:** List 2 or 3 of the most important things you would like to achieve as a result of the course – in other words what most do you want to accomplish, what most do you want to learn?
- **End-Course Survey Question 8:** How well did this course meet your expectations?

[NOTE: **K:** Knowledge

S: Skills

P: Peer Learning]

Name	INITIAL GOALS		RESULTS (SELF-ASSESSMENT)
	Course Application	Pre-Course Survey	End-Course Survey
Ahlam	<p>K: To have more access on HRE related teaching materials and resource persons</p> <p>S: To develop my skills of preparing materials and to teach the topic in an interactive and stimulating way</p>	<p>K: To learn more about HR laws and mechanisms</p> <p>S: To acquire skills and ideas to prepare for a workshop on health and HR</p> <p>S: To learn interactive methods in teaching about human rights in realistic context</p>	<p>“In terms of covering human rights concepts, standards and instruments, the course was an excellent revision and extension of what I knew. I feel I need training on methodological issues such as Survey and needs assessment.”</p>
Padam	<p>K: To enhance my knowledge in field of human rights and the education work</p>	<p>K: To learn about the syllabus on HRE and course selection, preparation materials and strategies on HRE</p> <p>K: To focus on economic, social, and cultural rights</p>	<p>“Well, this course helps me to understand the role of human rights educator. It's implementation strategies. I was confused about the role of the education and human rights education. The course gave me enormous ideas linking up human rights education in other disciplines.”</p>

Halim	<p>K: To get familiar with theoretical aspect of HRE</p> <p>S: To extend my learning about programming in trainings for HRE & some pedagogical frameworks</p> <p>P: To get in contact with participants, lecturers and other resource persons to establish partnerships for future activities</p>	<p>K: To contribute to my further development as a trainer, bringing in new aspects and conceptual integrity.</p> <p>K: To access more training materials of participative learning for adaptation in Turkish</p> <p>K: To get some clues on working with 'difficult' and 'sensitive,' mainly excluded and disadvantaged groups</p> <p>S: To learn methodology and content</p> <p>P: To serve as a reference point in the region</p>	<p>"My expectations were mainly getting a deeper and organised insight of HRE and having access to quality material on Internet, and these expectations were fulfilled."</p>
Allison	<p>K: To learn about pedagogical theory and the various discipline approaches to HRE</p>	<p>K: Knowledge of pedagogic approaches</p> <p>S: Skills for teaching human rights to diverse communities</p> <p>S: Non-western approaches to teaching human rights education</p>	<p>Not submitted.</p>
Emily	<p>K: To evaluate what key texts are necessary to include in a comprehensive curriculum</p> <p>K: To identify shifting parameters of human rights debates and policies within the international community and at local levels</p> <p>P: To gain much from other students contributing to the on-line discussion</p>	<p>Not submitted.</p>	<p>"I did not know what to expect and had never taken an on-line course. The beauty of such a course is that students can participate from around the world—this is a true privilege. Sometimes I longed for a "face-to-face" seminar, so my next endeavors in HRE may be in short seminar formats. ... I will continue to look for pedagogical support on teaching human rights, as so many issues are really difficult to teach in my educational context."</p>

Lema	<p>K: To have good knowledge in the HR concepts</p> <p>S: To prepare HRE teaching materials</p>	<p>K: Good understanding on human rights concept</p> <p>K: Knowledge of organizing and facilitating HRE training</p> <p>S: Developing teaching material for HRE course for communities at grassroots level</p>	<p>“Very well. It meets 95 % of my expectation.”</p>
Rana	<p>K: To enrich my knowledge on international human rights instruments, its implementation and monitoring mechanism</p> <p>P: To learn through participatory activities and sharing of cross-cultural experiences</p>	<p>K: To develop my knowledge and understanding on International HR standards and their application</p> <p>S: To learn more about how to design, implement, and monitor a human rights base project</p> <p>S: To know about how to design (or adopt) a course/curriculum for a training on HR and what would be effective methodologies</p>	<p>“The course was rich and fulfilled my learning objectives very well.”</p>
Fayola	<p>K: To better equip with HR principles and practices</p> <p>P: To share ideas and the exchange of good practice</p>	<p>K: To acquire methodologies and concepts that will enhance my work in community based advocacy and outreach work within our organizations</p> <p>S: To be better able to use human rights instruments in my training and campaigns.</p> <p>P: To establish lasting friendships and networking opportunities as a result of being on this course with other participants.</p>	<p>“The course extended my expectations. HRE is an area that I had not had exposure to in a more detailed way. This course helped me to attain a deeper understanding of HR instruments, especially those that apply to my area of work. I feel that I actually experienced some kind of profound emotional transformation as some of the issues that came up had a direct link to my own personal experiences I had growing up in my community. “</p>

<p>Lynn</p>	<p>K: To acquire an understanding of HRE S: To become an effective human rights advocate</p>	<p>S: How to impart human rights principles in a way that is relevant to ordinary people’s daily experience? S: How to evaluate the needs of our target audience</p>	<p>“The course met my expectations.”</p>
<p>Zhen</p>	<p>K: To acquire updated information and knowledge on HR</p>	<p>K: Based theory of HRE and related approaches K: HRE and its relationship with UNICEF Education Programming P: Good experiences and understanding of HRE by other colleagues under different cultural or social context</p>	<p>“Fully.”</p>
<p>Jean</p>	<p>K: To learn about existing human rights curriculum and the experiences of other more veteran educators S: To develop my skills in organizing and teaching effective HRE programs</p>	<p>K: To develop a familiarity with a variety of successful approaches to HRE P: To be part of a supportive HRE community of educators</p>	<p>“This was my first online course, and I was pleased with the potential and disappointed to realize it required more time than I had.”</p>

APPENDIX 12: Level of experiences with HRE-related topics and skills in Pre-Course Surveys

(Nine research participants answered.)

Level of Exp. In HRE (Score 1 to 5)	No Experience 1	2	Some Experience 3	4	Extensive Exp. 5	Ave.
a. HR content	Padam	Lema, Fayola	Zhen, Rana, Lynn	Jean, Ahlam, Halim		2.9
b. HRE (general)	Fayola	Lema, Jean, Ahlam, Rana, Lynn	Zhen, Halim, Padam			2.2
c. Writing a lesson/ learning activity	Fayola, Lynn, Padam	Lema	Jean, Halim	Zhen, Rana	Ahlam	2.7
d. Using interactive methods	Fayola	Lema, Jean, Lynn	Padam	Zhen, Halim	Ahlam, Rana	3.1
e. Teaching/training/ facilitating	Padam	Fayola, Lynn	Lema, Jean	Zhen, Halim	Ahlam, Rana	3.2
f. Organizing a training		Lynn	Lema, Jean, Fayola, Padam	Zhen, Ahlam, Halim	Rana	3.4
g. Funding resources on the Web	Jean, Lynn, Padam	Fayola	Lema, Zhen, Rana, Halim	Ahlam		2.3
h. Advocacy		Fayola	Lema, Jean, Ahlam, Lynn, Padam	Zhen, Rana, Halim		3.2
i. Assessment/Survey	Lynn, Padam	Jean, Fayola, Rana	Halim	Zhen, Ahlam		2.1
j. Other				Zhen (girls education & poverty alleviation)	Jean (org. building)	

APPENDIX 13: Summary of End-Course Surveys (1/4) (10 research participants answered.)

1. TOPICS: The curriculum (series of topics) of the course has....

	Strongly disagree (1)	(2)	Somewhat agree (3)	(4)	Strongly agree (5)	Ave.
a. been logical				Lema, Zhen, Lynn, Ahlam	Rana, Halim, Fayola, Jean, Emily, Padam	4.6
b. been well paced				Rana, Fayola, Lynn, Ahlam	Halim, Jean, Lema, Zhen, Emily, Padam	4.6
c. covered the right number of topics				Jean, Lema, Zhen, Lynn, Ahlam	Rana, Halim, Fayola, Emily, Padam	4.5
d. met my needs			Jean	Halim, Emily, Lynn, Ahlam, Padam	Rana, Fayola, Lema, Zhen,	4.3

2. READINGS: The course readings have....

	Strongly disagree (1)	(2)	Somewhat agree (3)	(4)	Strongly agree (5)	Ave.
a. had an appropriate level of difficulty (i.e., not too hard and not too easy)		Padam	Lema	Zhen, Lynn	Rana, Halim, Fayola, Jean, Emily, Ahlam	4.3
b. required a reasonable amount of time		Lema	Padam	Rana, Zhen, Lynn, Ahlam	Halim, Fayola, Emily	3.6
c. provided sufficient illustrations and examples				Lema, Zhen, Lynn, Ahlam	Rana, Halim, Fayola, Emily, Padam	4.1
d. enabled me to carry out course assignments			Halim, Padam	Fayola, Lema, Lynn, Ahlam	Rana, Zhen, Emily	3.7
e. helped me to understand the topic at hand				Halim, Lynn, Ahlam	Rana, Fayola, Lema, Zhen, Emily, Padam	4.2
f. met my needs				Zhen, Lynn, Ahlam, Padam	Rana, Halim, Fayola, Lema, Emily	4.1

Continued on the next page.

APPENDIX 13: Summary of End-Course Surveys (CONTINUED: 2/4)

3. WEEKLY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Contributing to the weekly discussion questions....

	Strongly disagree (1)	(2)	Somewhat agree (3)	(4)	Strongly agree (5)	Ave.
a. required an appropriate amount of time		Lema	Jean, Padam	Rana, Fayola, Zhen, Emily, Lynn, Ahlam	Halim	3.7
b. helped me to understand the topics at hand			Halim, Emily	Lema, Zhen, Lynn, Ahlam	Rana, Fayola, Jean, Padam	4.2
c. was interesting/enjoyable				Rana, Halim, Lema, Emily, Lynn, Ahlam	Fayola, Jean, Zhen, Padam	4.4
d. provided opportunities to share ideas and experiences with other participants		Halim	Lema, Emily	Lynn, Ahlam	Rana, Fayola, Jean, Zhen, Padam	4.1

4. WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS: The Exercises, and other written assignments....

	Strongly disagree (1)	(2)	Somewhat agree (3)	(4)	Strongly agree (5)	Ave.
a. were clearly explained by the facilitator				Lynn	Rana, Halim, Fayola, Jean, Lema, Zhen, Emily, Ahlam, Padam	4.9
b. required an appropriate amount of time			Jean, Padam	Lema, Lynn, Ahlam	Rana, Halim, Fayola, Zhen, Emily	4.3
c. helped me to understand the topics at hand				Rana, Halim, Lema, Zhen, Emily, Lynn, Ahlam	Fayola, Jean, Padam	4.3
d. helped me develop practical skills		Halim		Lema, Emily, Lynn, Ahlam, Padam	Rana, Fayola, Zhen	3.7

Continued on the next page.

APPENDIX 13: Summary of End-Course Surveys (CONTINUED: 3/4)

5. COURSE PARTICIPANTS: Reading the contributions of other course participants (to discussion, Exercises) has....

	Strongly disagree (1)	(2)	Somewhat agree (3)	(4)	Strongly agree (5)	Ave.
a. required a reasonable amount of time			Halim, Jean	Rana, Fayola, Lema, Zhen, Lynn, Ahlam, Padam	Emily	3.9
b. helped me to understand the topics at hand			Lema	Halim, Zhen, Lynn, Ahlam	Rana, Fayola, Jean, Emily, Padam	4.4
c. introduced me to different cultural contexts and perspectives		Lema	Halim		Rana, Fayola, Jean, Zhen, Emily, Lynn, Ahlam, Padam	4.5
d. stimulated my thinking		Lema	Halim	Zhen, Ahlam, Padam	Rana, Fayola, Jean, Emily, Lynn	4.2

6. INSTRUCTORS: The instructors....

	Strongly disagree (1)	(2)	Somewhat agree (3)	(4)	Strongly agree (5)	Ave.
a. facilitated my learning through weekly Facilitator Messages				Halim, Lynn, Ahlam	Rana, Fayola, Jean, Lema, Zhen, Emily, Padam	4.7
b. built on the work of the group through weekly Feedback messages				Lynn, Ahlam	Rana, Halim, Fayola, Jean, Lema, Zhen, Emily, Padam	4.8
c. created an atmosphere that encouraged learning				Lynn, Ahlam	Rana, Halim, Fayola, Jean, Lema, Zhen, Emily, Padam	4.8
d. was responsive to questions I had				Zhen, Lynn, Ahlam	Rana, Halim, Fayola, Jean, Lema, Emily, Padam	4.7
e. provided helpful feedback on my written assignments				Halim, Lynn, Ahlam	Rana, Fayola, Lema, Zhen, Emily, Padam	4.7

Continued on the next page.

APPENDIX 13: Summary of End-Course Surveys (CONTINUED: 4/4)

7. TECHNICAL ASPECTS: Use of e-mail or the course website

	Strongly disagree (1)	(2)	Somewhat agree (3)	(4)	Strongly agree (5)	Ave.
a. worked successfully in terms of my access to course materials				Jean, Lema, Ahlam	Rana, Halim, Fayola, Zhen, Emily, Lynn, Padam	4.7
b. worked successfully in terms of posting my written assignments			Halim		Rana, Fayola, Jean, Lema, Zhen, Emily, Lynn, Ahlam, Padam	4.8
c. worked successfully in terms of access to the writings of other course participants				Halim	Rana, Fayola, Jean, Lema, Zhen, Emily, Lynn, Ahlam, Padam	4.9
d. HREA staff responded to my technical questions and needs					Rana, Halim, Fayola, Jean, Lema, Zhen, Emily, Lynn, Ahlam, Padam	5

APPENDIX 14: Individual submissions for weekly discussions (indicated by date and time)

Week → Name ↓	1 (9/2)		2 (9/8)		3 (9/15)		4 (9/22)		5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total (15)
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	(9/29)	(10/6)	(10/13)	(10/21)	(10/27)	(11/3)	(11/11)	
Ahlam	9/6 2:25	9/6 2:26	9/14 4:38	9/14 5:29	-	-	9/28 8:15	9/28 8:32	10/8	10/16	10/21	10/26	11/9	-	11/13	12
Padam	9/6 11:35	9/6 11:36	9/17 9:31	9/17 9:32	-	-	-	-	10/8	10/9	10/20	-	11/3	-	11/17	9
Halim	9/6 7:32	9/6 7:47	9/15 12:02	9/15 12:08	9/22 3:22	9/22 3:40	9/29	-	10/6	10/23	10/23	10/26	11/4	11/16	11/16	14
Allison	-	-	-	-	-	-	9/26	-	10/6	10/14	10/21	11/4	11/10	-	11/19	7
Emily	9/7 12:07	9/7 12:07	9/14 9:17	9/14 9:18	9/22 1:38	9/22 1:56	10/5 9:53	10/5 9:56	10/6	10/12	10/21	10/24	11/10	11/10	11/18	15
Lema	-	-	9/14 4:07	9/14 4:40	9/21	-	9/28 6:27	9/28 6:54	10/5	10/16	10/20	10/26	11/4	11/13	11/15	12
Rana	9/13 4:26	9/13 4:26	9/13 4:43	9/13 5:09	9/26 2:30	9/26 2:31	10/4	-	10/5	10/17	10/19	11/1	-	-	-	11
Fayola	9/4 8:03	9/4 8:03	9/21 8:30	9/21 8:31	-	-	10/18 2:22	10/18 2:49	-	10/17	10/21	10/22	11/5	-	11/17	11
Lynn	9/4 12:37	9/4 12:48	9/14 3:33	9/14 3:50	9/24 1:13	9/24 1:52	9/29 12:54	9/29 1:12	10/5	10/13	10/19	-	11/2	11/10	11/14	14
Zhen	9/5 8:58	9/5 9:19	9/12 11:49	9/12 2:53	9/21 6:13	9/21 7:22	9/28 7:36	9/28 7:36	10/5	10/11	10/20	10/24	11/9	11/9	11/14	15
Jean	9/5 8:11	9/5 8:13	-	-	-	-	9/29 6:44	9/30 12:04	10/13	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Date of feedback	9/8		9/16		9/24		9/30		10/8	10/15	10/21	10/29	11/6	11/12	11/18	

[NOTES]

- The dates on the top row indicate when the instructor's discussion question was posted and the dates on the bottom row indicate when the instructor's summary feedback was posted each week.
- For the first four weeks of the course, there were two discussion questions per week.
- The red-colored dates and time indicate that these postings were later than the instructor's summary feedback and therefore could not be included in the feedback.

APPENDIX 15: Individual submissions of the course assignments and requirements

Name	Application	Pre Survey	Ex. 1	Ex. 2	Ex. 3	Ex. 4	Final Project (# pages)	End-Course Survey
Ahlam	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (2) training plan	Yes
Padam	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes (5) project plan	Yes
Halim	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes (5) training plan	Yes
Allison	?	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes (3) course curriculum	?
Emily	Yes	?	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes (6) course curriculum	Yes
Lema	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (4) project plan	Yes
Rana	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes (5) project plan	Yes
Fayola	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes (4) training plan	Yes
Lynn	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (11) training plan	Yes
Zhen	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes (3) training plan	Yes
Jean	Yes	Yes	Yes	Dropped out				Yes

*** Course Assignments:**

1. Exercise 1: Developing a Human Rights Education Project (Week 1)
2. Exercise 2: Most relevant human rights themes (Week 2)
3. Exercise 3: Education about the rights of the child (Week 5)
4. Exercise 4: Analyze a lesson plan (Week 7)

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