

Hunhu: Making Human Rights Education Discourse Relevant

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Abstract

Discourse on human rights education in Africa can only be relevant if it emanates from or at least is informed by and rooted in the philosophies that emanate from the reality or lived experiences of African people. Hence, in this exercise we use the philosophy of *hunhu* that views humanness in the fullest and noblest sense; the attention one human being gives to another like kindness, courtesy, consideration and friendliness in the relationship between people; a code of behaviour; an attitude towards others and life, and thus a person who upholds the African cultural standards, expectations, values and norms and keeps an African identity. Invariably referred to as *Ubuntu/unhu/botho hunhu* can provide a philosophic base of the discourse on human rights education in southern Africa that can be extended to other parts of Africa.

Key words: Human right, human rights education, *hunhu*, discourse, relevance,

Introduction

The context in which the discourse on human rights education is proceeding in Africa is not conducive to the internalisation of human rights by African people. The discourse is largely mimetic and exterior, the reason being that the philosophies that inform it are alien to the African people (Cobbah, 1987:309) and deny the philosophies of those to whom the discourse is being proffered. At the same time the discourse on human rights education is supposedly liberative. It is our view that relevance and authenticity can only be achieved if the discourse on human rights education is done in the context of indigenous African philosophies which in the case of Zimbabwe is the philosophy of *hunhu*, defined (Samkange 1980) as humanness in the fullest and noblest sense; the attention one human being gives to another like kindness, courtesy, consideration and friendliness in the relationship between people; a code of behaviour; an attitude towards others and life, and thus a person who upholds the African cultural standards, expectations, values and norms and keeps an African identity) which emanates from the historical experiences of the Zimbabwean people. Then the discourse would be truly liberative and invaluable to African people. The present discussion will make use of Zimbabwe as a case study. It is therefore essential, after a brief excursion into the origin of the current discourse on human rights and human rights education to explore the philosophy of *hunhu* so it can be clear how *hunhu* can make the discourse on human rights education relevant in Zimbabwe. Indeed, Cobbah (1987:310) argues that an “Africentric conception of human dignity” is a “valid worldview” that should be harnessed in explicating human rights in Africa. Certainly, *hunhu* provides such an Afrocentric conception of human dignity as explicated in the exposition that follows as our third section engages the discourse on human rights education informed by the philosophy of *hunhu*.

The Western Discourse: Human Rights

In his discussion on human rights, Oyugi (1994) points out that the idea of human rights has been in existence from ancient times. Along the same line of thought, some scholars have traced the idea of human rights to the Ancient world, for example, Asante (2004) and Watterson (2013) locate the origins of human rights engagement in Ancient Egypt. In his book, *The Egyptian Philosophers: Ancient African Voices from Imhotep to Akhenaten* Molefi Kete Asante (2004) shows that Ancient Egyptians were concerned with issues of social justice. Already, in ancient Egypt there were such philosophers as Khunanup, Kagemni, Amenemope who made social harmony the subject of contemplation. The existence of these and other Egyptian philosophers such as Ptahhotep, Duauf, Amenhotep, Imhotep, Amenemhat, Merikare, Sehotepibre, Khunanup, and Akhenaten demonstrates that there is a body of knowledge in rights related discourse that preceded Greek philosophy.

Still on Ancient Egypt, in her book, *Women in Ancient Egypt* Watterson (2013) engages the lives of ordinary women and those who occupied influential positions in Egypt, Barbara Watterson argues that women were accorded legal rights equal to those of a man from the same social class and had the same expectation of a life after death, dating c. 3100 B.C. to 30 B.C. Using written, monumental and artistic sources Watterson (2013) shows that Egyptian women enjoyed more freedom than women of other civilizations in the ancient world. Furthermore, inheritance in ancient Egypt was matrilineal where even at marriage the women maintained their own property which she could dispose as she pleased. If women did the same work as men, they were paid the same as was paid to men. Thus, through her work in *Women in Ancient Egypt* (1994) Watterson demonstrates that the parentage of human rights does not begin in the West, but in Egypt, in Africa. Indeed, this is confirmed by Johnson, (2002) and Masson, (2014) with the latter explaining that Herodotus was perplexed by the legal and economic equality with men that women enjoyed in Egypt to the extent that he said the Egyptians “have reversed the ordinary practices of mankind” (para 13).

Yet, there are others who find the origins of human rights in the codification of laws that are expressed in religious documents that form the pillar of the religious beliefs and practices of the adherents, for example in the Bible, the Ten commandments (Melechinsky, 2007, Tierney, 2004) or the laws in the Quran (Rehan, 2013). There are also scholars who trace the origins of human rights to the code of Hammurabi (King, 2008, Courtney, 2013). This Sumerian King’s tablet makes reference to individual rights against arbitrary persecution and punishment.

Still other Eurocentric philosophers argue that the idea of human rights was first explicitly expressed by philosophers in Ancient Greece who presented it in the form of natural rights (Marq. L. Rev. 1972, Young, 2011, Markovic, 1981). These natural rights were believed to emanate from natural law.

Socrates and Plato presented natural law as “law that reflects the natural order of the universe, essentially the will of the gods that control nature” (Kanmoy, 2010:4). However, Rhodes (2009) argues that the Greeks believed in citizens’ rights rather than human rights. Oyugi (1994) contends that the concept of human rights has its origins in Greek philosophy. There were rights which were possessed by all citizens.

The Stoics formulated the doctrine of natural rights, arguing that these belonged to all people at all times. Stoic philosophers propped up the principles of liberty, equality and brotherhood. "Every human being was entitled to these rights by virtue of the simple fact of sharing humanity and rationality with everyone else" (Oyugi, 1994:57). For instance, the word *isogoria* was employed to refer to equal freedom of speech while the word *isonomia* referred to equality before the law (Ndondo, 2014). The Romans as well held that natural rights belonged to everyone whether Roman citizen or not. However, in both Greece and Rome it was accepted as normal to have enslaved people who were not accorded the same rights as free citizens. However, each of the greats of Western philosophy contributed to the development of the notions and understandings of human rights.

To Plato is attributed the idea that human rights are *universal*. This can be traced through reading his views on universal truth and virtue. He argues that such *eternal truths* are above what individuals and the state can establish as the law. Aristotle on the other hand, having distinguished between natural justice and legal justice, was of the conviction that legal *justice* should be the guiding principle for the state and the individual in the conduct of their affairs (Marq. L. Rev., 1972). Furthermore, he regards natural justice, which he views as ‘universal’, ‘eternal’, ‘unchangeable’ and ‘fundamental’ as superior to legal justice (ibid, 54-55). Rights which belong to legal justice could only exist among those who were free and equal before the state, that is, the citizens. Important to note is Aristotle’s support for slavery and argument that some human beings are incapable of rationality and therefore could be subjected to the will of others. The theologian and philosopher, St Thomas Aquinas adopted Aristotle’s distinction between natural justice and legal justice. However, he established natural justice in the Divine, God, identifying the law of nature with the law of God. He viewed natural law as superior to human law and as the primary law from which all other laws are derived (Marq. L. Rev. 1972). He regarded fundamental human rights as essential for basic human needs such as self-preservation, based on rationality. On his part, Hobbes regarded the idea of *natural law* as ‘vague and hollow’ as well as susceptible to a variety of construals (Sabrahmanyam, 2014). Instead, Hobbes proposed the idea of positive law in which human rights are not absolute. They can be given, taken away or modified by the society concerned. In his *Leviathan*, Hobbes argues that the right to life is fundamental but can only be guaranteed through social contract.

Jeremy Bentham also shared Hobbes view of human rights. Bentham argues, “Right, the substantive right, is the child of law: from real laws come real rights, but from imaginary law, from laws of nature ... come imaginary rights” (Monteiro, 2014:65). Locke contented that the laws that the state produces come from a constitution which is the legal framework of society. The constitution itself is based on natural law among which is the natural right to self-preservation. It is then deduced that the power of the state is still subject to inalienable human rights. The state is there to protect the rights of its citizens. The citizens retain the right to revolt against the state if it was abusing the power vested in it. Along similar lines of argument, Rousseau proposed the idea of a social contract in which free and equal individuals agree to create a civilised society with the state ensuring equality among all people.

On his part Kant, through the categorical imperative argues for treating human beings always as ends in themselves and never simply as a means. In explaining this Kantian maxim, Young (2011: 1) argues that it arises from Kant’s belief that, “We human beings have intrinsic value, not mere instrumental value.” In other words, every person has an inherent dignity that needs to be respected by all other human beings. Human beings possess dignity, rights and inherent moral worth or value. From this Young concludes that Kant’s moral theory provides a foundation for human rights. Indeed, Maliks and Føllesdal (2014:1) share the same view adding that many of the most significant philosophical contributions in the field of human rights “reach for Kant in justifying human rights”.

Some notable philosophers in this category are James Griffin, John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas and Thomas Pogge. Kant further argues that no person's freedom should interfere with the freedom of others. According to the *Marquette Law Review* (1972), influenced by Aristotle, in Kant's system on freedom of the individual by virtue of his/her humanity becomes central to his discussion of ethics. However, what Kant says about Black people confounds his moral theory. Indeed, he viewed African people as vain and stupid, incapable of being educated except to become an enslaved people. He further argued that Black people were so talkative that they needed to be driven apart by thrashing. As the lowest of all races, they had not invented anything. The conclusion is that the Black people could not be the same with white people; hence, they could not enjoy the same rights (Very, 2012). Such reasoning which also permeates Hobbes' and Hume's thinking lent credence to the fact that when the West referred to human rights discourse, they did not have all human beings in mind. Influenced by Kant's moral theory John Stuart Mill argues that individual liberties should not be absolute. Individual liberties should be such that they do not prevent other people from enjoying their own liberties. Differing greatly from others are Marx and Engels who were of the view that *equality* was more important than any other rights. The only *fundamental right* they observed was *revolution* that would lead to political emancipation.

For Markovic (1981, para 4), the “issue of human rights emerges in history in its practical political form at the moment of open conflict between a revolutionary bourgeoisie and state absolutism”. Referring to the French revolution, he argues that it was in the French Constitution of 1793 that human rights were explicitly stated, protecting citizens' personal liberties against oppression by the rulers. Such liberties included freedom of thought, expression, assembly and religion. It was in the French Constitution that freedom was recognised as a “natural, inalienable right” (Markovic, 1981, para, 4). The law emerges as the protector of citizens against the excesses of the state.

Following his Marxist perspective, Oyugi (1994) appears to reject human rights as bourgeois ideology. He points out that, human rights are claimed against society, alienating individuals from society, and, in the process, negating the individuals' social being. He further maintains that human rights always reflect class interest. They are expressions of the general will of the classes that espouse them. Thus, they cannot be eternal truths or supreme values. Neither can they claim universality. Thus, they are always the expression of those in a position of power.

The move from natural rights to human rights set in motion by some of the philosophers we mentioned above is reflected in subsequent documents. This move was necessitated by historical experiences such as the holocaust of enslavement and slavery, colonialism whose abolition was a result of the realisation that the enslaved were human and had rights and therefore needed to be freed. This struggle again pushed the frontiers of the development of human rights.

It was also these efforts that resulted in the internationalisation of human rights by the League of Nations which held the Slavery Convention (1926) ratified by members to end global slavery. The United Nations through Article 4 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) clearly banned slavery. It is through the process of internationalisation of the discourse on human rights and human rights education that these discourses in their current form came to Africa. However, as is argued by Markovic (1981, para. 2), human rights even in the west “express only abstract possibilities”.

In all of the above, we would be incorrect to not mention human rights in other societies such as ancient Egypt, the Mali, Ghana and Songhai empires in West Africa, etc., and other notable African civilizations. We acknowledge this, and wish to add to its discourse, however not here, but perhaps in another paper.

The Philosophy of Hunhu

Since 1973, a number of attempts have been made to explore the philosophy of *hunhu* (Gelfand, 1973; Samkange and Samkange, 1980; Mhundwa, 1982; Makuvaza, 1996a, 1996b; Shutte, 1993; Prinsloo, 1998; Ramose, 1999; Nziramasanga, 1999; Panse, 2006; Swanson; 2007, Van Eck, 2010; Hapanyengwi, 2011), also known through its variants: unhu, ubuntu, botho, thus, we are going to engage a few of these attempts. In defining *hunhu*, Samkange and Samkange (1980:34) wrote, “*Hunhuism* or *Ubuntuism* is therefore a philosophy that is the experience of thirty five thousand years of living in Africa, a philosophy that sets a premium on human relations.” They further argue that the philosophy of *hunhu* “inspires, permeates and radiates ... regulates our well-planned social and political organisations” (Samkange & Samkange, 1980:34). In further explaining the meaning of *hunhu*, Samkange and Samkange (1980) content that *munhu* in some instances entail more than just a biological physical person or human being (Samkange and Samkange, 1980). For instance, when the Mashona see a Black person and a white person walking together, they would normally say, *Hona munhu uyo ari kufamba nomurungu* (There is a *munhu* walking with a white man). Samkange and Samkange (1980:80) then infer:

So there is a sense in which the word *munhu* or *umuntu* stands for much more than a person, human being or humanness because a white man (*murungu* or *umlungu*) - is always a person, a human being, and therefore always has his humanness. Yet we say, “There is *munhu* walking with a *murungu*”.

Samkange and Samkange (1980) then try to identify that what a white man does not have, but a Black man has that justifies the distinction referred to above by making recourse to Black Americans. They argue that among Black Americans, this something is *soul* which is found only among Black Americans.

This *soul* is indefinable, yet identifiable among Black American people. Yet even Black people from Africa do not automatically possess that *soul*. *Soul* is apparent in perseverance, empathy, helping one another, and solidarity among Black Americans (Samkange & Samkange, 1980:80). A reading of Eldridge Cleaver's (1968) *Soul on Ice* confirms the view of *soul* as that which humanizes or restores humanity to those whose existence is characterised by alienation. According to Cleaver, *soul* is what makes people fully human, what brings wholeness and leads to authentic existence. But the *soul* remains unintelligible to the outsider. In this context, soul becomes culture bound.

In the case of Zimbabwe and southern and central Africa Samkange and Samkange (1980) maintain that this something which is indefinable yet identifiable is *hunhu*. The white person mentioned above does not possess *hunhu*, does not subscribe to the philosophy of *hunhu*, hence, in that sense cannot be described as a *munhu*. A paradox arises when a *munhu* (person) is described as *munhu asiri munhu* (a person who is not a person). This paradox is resolved when it is recognised that the self that constitutes a *munhu* and goes through stages of initiation into the values and norms of society. In other words, as is argued by Menkiti (1984:122), the nature of being among African people is *processual*. What society regards as important and valuable is what it prescribes and imparts to the self. The development of the self involves the assimilation of these values and norms which result in the acquisition of *hunhu*. Still a thorough grasp of what constitutes *hunhu* remains illusive.

To make the concept of *hunhu* more intelligible, Samkange and Samkange (1980:39) elucidate:

The attention one human being gives to another: the kindness, courtesy, consideration and friendliness in the relationship between people, a code of behaviour, an attitude to other people and to life, is embodied in *hunhu* or *ubuntu*. *Hunhuism* is, therefore, something more than just humanness deriving from the fact that one is a human being.

We will, therefore, describe more accurately what we are talking about if we use the words *hunhu* and *ubuntu* or *hunhuism* and *ubuntuism*, instead of the word *humanness*.

Following Greenberg and Guthrie's postulation of the unity of *Bantu* people of Southern Africa, Samkange and Samkange (1980:39) conjecture that these people share, "a common concept of *hunhuism* which varies only to the extent that individual groups have undergone changes not experienced by others". Hence, *hunhu* reflects a fuller realisation of being.

Hunhu means a more humane existence, selflessness, a realisation of a common destiny and a striving for upholding and respecting human life before anything else. *Hunhu* expresses the ideal and yet an attainable state of being. Thus, Louw (2001:1) describes *hunhu* as "a unifying vision or world view" which serves as "the spiritual foundation of African societies".

Makuvaza's (1996a, 1996b) builds on Samkange and Samkange's (1980) reflections. For Makuvaza (1996a; 1996b) *hunhu* encompasses respect and concern for other people especially elders. At another level, after realising that there is something fundamentally wrong with the Zimbabwean education system, he argues that *hunhu* should provide the aim for Zimbabwean educational institutions that would enable them to provide relevant education. His main concern is the inability of the present system of education to impart to the learners those moral and social values cherished in *hunhu* and its clear negation of the philosophy of *hunhu*. This inability was by design rather than accident when the colonial administration put the education system in place (Makuvaza, 1996b).

In explicating *hunhu*, Ramose (1999:49) wrote:

Ubuntu is the root of African philosophy. The being of an African in the universe is inseparably anchored upon *ubuntu*. Similarly, the African tree of knowledge stems from *ubuntu* with which it is connected indivisibly. *Ubuntu* then is the wellspring flowing with African ontology and epistemology. If these latter are the basis of philosophy then African philosophy has long been established in and through *ubuntu*. Our point of departure is that *ubuntu* may be seen as the basis of African philosophy.

Linguistically, the word *hunhu* comes from the word *munhu* (ChiShona) which defines being. *Munhu* is singular; the plural is *vanhu*. The corollary to the above question is: What constitutes being? For Anschwanden, (1982), being implies the possession of *mweya* (spirit/soul) and *muviru* (flesh/body) as well as *mumvuri* (shadow). The shadow emanates from and is at the same time independent of the body. The triad constitute the wholeness that is a person. Thus, the human person is a composite being. The shadow manifests itself in two parts, *mumvuri woupenyu* (the shadow of life) that outlives physical death and is immortal, which is only visible when a person is alive, and the ordinary shadow resulting from and, therefore, disappearing with the physical body.

The spirit and the shadow of life constitute the immaterial dimension of the human person that survives bodily death. It is the shadow of life that often is said to be visible if the deceased was wrongfully killed or is not happy about something. When it thus becomes visible, it is a sign that there is need for relatives to investigate the cause of death if the soul of the departed is to rest in peace. The being, that is the individual self, is in the process of continuous unfolding and becoming. Birth is the point of departure, and *hunhu*, is a terminus ad quem.

The *munhu* continuously mutates socially, morally, psychologically and even metaphysically, ultimately attaining the status of a *mudzimu* (spiritual being), an ancestor (Ruwa'ichi, 1990), the living-dead (Mbiti, 1989). But, in the process, *munhu* exhibits *hunhu*, as evidence of gravitation towards fuller realisation. *Hunhu* becomes qualitative, and the manifestation of the attainment of a higher level of being. *Hunhu* is therefore being itself, an unfolding of the individual's spirituality and materiality.

Ramose (1999) takes Samkange and Samkange (1980) to task for making an option for *hunhu-ism*. We agree with Ramose (1999) when he argues that *hunhu* is always a *-ness* and not an *-ism*. An *-ism*, he contends, suggests an ideology which *hunhu* is not. He proceeds to argue:

The *ism* suffix gives the erroneous impression that we are dealing with verbs and nouns as fixed and separate entities existing independently. They must function as fixations to ideas and practices which are somewhat dogmatic and hence unchangeable. Such dogmatism and immutability constitute the false necessity based upon fragmentative thinking. This latter is the thinking - based on the subject-verb-object of the understanding of the structure of language-which posits a fundamental irreconcilable opposition in becoming. On the basis of this imputed opposition being becoming is fragmented into pieces of reality with an independent existence of their own (Ramose, 1999, p. 51).

The same criticism can also be extended to Makuva (1996a, 1996b) who, in his papers already alluded to, also adopts Samkange and Samkange's (1980) use of *hunhuism*.

Tutu describes *ubuntu* thus:

It is the essence of being human. It speaks to the fact that my humanity is caught up and is inextricably bound up in yours. I am human because I belong. It speaks about wholeness, it speaks about compassion. A person with *Ubuntu* is welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share. Such people are open and available to others, willing to be vulnerable, affirming of others, do not feel threatened that others are able and good, for they have a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that they belong in a greater whole. They know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are. The quality of *Ubuntu* gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them. (quoted in Swanson, 2007:54)

To lose one's humanity is to lose the penultimate purpose of life. One can lose one's humanity through failing to relate to others as human beings, through failing to identify and place one's self in appropriate relations with others. In this context, *hunhu* is life affirming. The focus of *hunhu* is on the welfare of the community and the person as an organic component of the community. Indeed this emphasis on "groupness, sameness and commonality" is characteristic of many African communities (Cobbah, 1987:320).

Human Rights Education Through Hunhu

Ramose (1999:181) could not have been far from the truth when he argued that:

All theories of human rights regard the fact of being human – humanness - as their starting point. Human rights theories proceed to ascribe value to or determine the worth of the fact of being human. It is precisely at this level of valuation that disputes arise concerning the meaning of human rights. Accordingly, it is value orientation to humanness which constitutes the foundation of conflicting theories of human rights.

In discussing human rights in Northern societies, Oyugi (1994) argues that the term human rights is a 20th century designation of a phenomenon that has existed since classical times and has manifested itself in various forms. The various forms of manifestation have been both in terms of "content and social function" (Oyugi, 1994:56). One of the essential points he raises is that the change through which human rights have gone has been facilitated by "the rise of individualism in the theory and practice of modern Western societies as informed by the Calvinist and protestant spirit" (Oyugi, 1994:56).

This is quite evident given that human rights, as perceived in the Northern capitalist societies, are individual and are claimed against society. Indeed, Cobbah (1987:314) has argued that what characterises Western conceptions of human rights is that they suggest the equality of all human beings, are inalienable and are individual – leading to individualism. Current human rights discourse therefore, arose as a result of historical experiences of certain groups of people in Europe. On this basis, Oyugi (1994) concludes that it is erroneous to posit human rights as being universal and uninfluenced by historical experiences of the people concerned. Consequently, human rights are always a product of the historical experiences of the people who espouse them and are inevitably shaped by the philosophy of the people concerned.

As argued above, human rights in the Northern capitalist tradition are claimed against, and in opposition to society. This is because of the individualistic nature of capitalist society. They are an expression of the alienation of the individual from society, a negation of the social character of being.

The reasoning that justifies individualism is premised on the view that characterise the individual as overwhelmed and threatened by the larger society. The individual is thus presented as desirous of protection against society. Such a view is rooted in *umbimbindoga* (individualism), which Khoza, quoted in Prinsloo (1998:44), defines as “that social and political philosophy that places high value on the freedom of the individual and generally stresses the self-contained and comparatively unrestrained individual or ego”. In emphasising individualism, the main focus in capitalism is on what is good for oneself, aptly stated as “self-preservation is the first law of life” (Prinsloo, 1998:45). Such reasoning cannot be reconciled with the African conception that identifies the individual with the society, hence, the aphorism, *kunzi munhu vanhu* (we are who we are through other people). Ramose (1999:193) aptly elucidates this aphorism after providing its Sepedi rendition, *Motho ke motho ka batho*, when he wrote:

To be human is to affirm one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis establish humane relations with them. Accordingly, it is *botho* (*hunhu*) understood as being human ... and a humane ... attitude towards other human beings that constitutes the core or central aphorism: *Motho ke motho ka batho*. Neither the single individual nor the community can define and pursue their respective purposes without recognising their mutual foundedness; their complemen-tarity. Wholeness is the regulative principle here since what is asserted is that the single individual is incomplete without the other.

Umbimbindoga (individualism) then, cannot be the foundation on which human rights education discourse in Zimbabwe is anchored. Such grounding can only serve to alienate those informed by communitarian philosophies. There is, therefore, a need for the philosophy of *hunhu* to contribute to the desideratum of the discourse on human rights education that is relevant to the people of Zimbabwe.

The above argument is especially essential if we realise that human rights *per se* are not new in Africa. Human rights have always existed in Africa from Ancient Egypt to the present but expressed differently, given the philosophy that informed the different groups. Human rights have existed in the context of *hunhu* in Zimbabwe and it is in this context that the discourse on human rights education should take place for it to be relevant to African people. What the above means is that human rights education discourse in Zimbabwe must be reoriented so that it revolves around the production of *munhu ane hunhu* (a complete person). The production of *munhu ane hunhu* makes human rights discourse from a Northern perspective meaningless as *hunhu* has always respected and nurtured the individual.

If the production of *hunhu* should be the primary goal of Zimbabwean education, it will not only infuse human rights education but contribute towards the whole process of educational reform in Zimbabwe. This will result in the fostering of a holistic approach to the Zimbabwean education system. All other moral attributes can be developed through the education for *hunhu*, for *hunhu* demands the acquisition of both know how and propositional knowledge, the universal brotherhood (sisterhood) of humankind, thus, treating other people as human beings, “sensitivity towards the needs and wants of others ... the understanding of others’ frame of reference ... and man as a social being” (Prinsloo, 1998:41). *Hunhu* further encourages recognition and respect for the humanity of others, kindness and consideration for their welfare. Furthermore, *hunhu* emphasises cooperation, harmony and reciprocity, hence, *chindiro chinopfumba kunobva chimwe* (one good turn deserves another). The Mashona have a saying, *Mupfuuri haapedzi dura* (a passerby on a journey does not spend all your stores of food: so offer him as much as you can) that stresses the value of hospitality. In *hunhu*, instead of emphasising the rights of the individual, there is an emphasis on the duties of the individual in the community. *Hunhu* subsumes human rights education discourse in that it encourages respect for each person as a social unit.

Cognisance must be taken of the fact that the acquisition of *hunhu* does not come simply because one belongs to the family of human beings; it is something individuals have to strive for. It of necessity is a process of the development and the cultivation of socially desirable attitudes and skills among the educands, taking into cognisance that human beings are first and foremost social beings who have to appreciate their relatedness to others so that the violation of the being of the other becomes intolerable. But this is only possible if we identify ourselves as *vanhu vamwe* (a community) which is more than just a group of numerically counted people, and aim at that which contributes to the well-being of the community. This requires *kubatana mukuuta*, *mupfungwa*, *zvinangwa nemugwara* (consciousness of oneness, commonness of purpose and direction) and *humwe* (organic unity). The community therefore becomes of utmost importance, that for which individuals work to preserve. Hence, Mbiti (1989:106) captures this spirit when he singled out the maxim, “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am” as the best philosophical expression of the being of an individual among African communities.

Individuals must be encouraged to work for the edification of the community, to be conscious of the communal nature of their being. The Mashona have proverbs which explicitly reflect intimate ontological relationships, for example, *Chara chimwe hachitswanyi inda* (One thumb cannot crush lice), or *zano marairamwa; zano ndoga akapisa jira* (advice is to be shared; I know it all burnt his blanket); or *rume rimwe, harikombi churu* (one man cannot surround an anthill). All these proverbs place primacy in human relations on a communal approach to social and personal problems, reflecting an awareness of a collective destiny.

A discourse on human rights education informed by the philosophy of *hunhu* would impress upon the learner that every member of the community is important to him or her. The awareness of these relationships creates in the learner a consciousness of his/her proximity to others and instils a sense of identification with the community, culminating in a relationships which can best be described in terms of the “I-We” that characterise *hunhu*.

Conclusion

The philosophy of *hunhu* makes relevant discourse on human rights and human rights education in Zimbabwe in that it is informed by the philosophy of life that the Zimbabwean people identify with. Thus, it places discourse on human rights education within the context of the experiences of the Zimbabwean people. The people are therefore comfortable with the issues that are the focus of human rights education discourse for *hunhu* (humanness in the fullest and noblest sense; the attention one human being gives to another like kindness, courtesy, consideration and friendliness in the relationship between people; a code of behaviour; an attitude towards others and life, and thus a person who upholds the African cultural standards, expectations, values and norms and keeps an African identity), and its maintenance has always been the concern of the Zimbabwean people in education, socially, economically and politically. Hence, the production of *munhu ane hunhu* (a complete person) becomes central to the provision of education in Zimbabwe, resulting in an education that produces individuals who respect human life.

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