

XII. Educating for Compassion and Change

The importance of humane education is examined, both for animals and the wider society. However, despite the overwhelming evidence of the benefits of humane education, it is slow to gain broader acceptance by international organisations, national governments and education authorities. This chapter examines different models for humane education activity, and some of the advantages and drawbacks of different approaches. It concludes by highlighting the need for stronger lobbying in favour of humane education, and provides two important UNESCO decades that would provide a timely and appropriate vehicle for successful international lobbying.

Definition

Humane Education can be defined as '*a process that encourages an understanding of the need for compassion and respect for people, animals and the environment and recognises the interdependence of all living things*'.

The aim of Humane Education is to create a culture of empathy and caring by stimulating the moral development of individuals to form a compassionate, responsible and just society. It is a means of introducing children to the reactions and emotions of animals, as well as linking this to an understanding of environmental issues and ecosystems.

From the animal protection perspective, humane education is the long-term preventative strategy that will bring about a lasting, large-scale improvement in the quality of animals' lives. It can be an effective – and relatively low cost – strategy for dealing with animal abuse.

This chapter also deals with education at higher levels (not just children) and vocational training both for animal protection societies and individuals who work/or will work with animals.

The Need for Humane Education

There is increasing recognition of the serious impact the destructive and self-obsessive nature of mankind is having on the environment, social relationships and global harmony. Various projects and campaigns are developed in an attempt to address these problems, usually on a piecemeal basis - save this tree, this species, promote peace in a particular region. But in reality, the way to tackle these problems is *at source*, by beginning the process that will teach children - the citizens of tomorrow - a personal sense of responsibility and a compassionate and caring attitude towards others, animals and the environment. This is the essence of *humane education*.

Our survival depends on a change in our attitudes; we can no longer greedily exploit the earth for our own purposes, but need to learn to value the limited resources we

have and use them in a responsible manner to guarantee a future for new generations. This includes recognition of the fact that we are just one of the species living on this planet, and the need to respect other living beings and nature in general. Never has this need for harmony and acceptance been more crucial than today.

There has always been anecdotal evidence supporting the connection between animal cruelty and violent behaviour against people, some of which is quite shocking. The 'Son of Sam' murderer in New York City, for example, was reported in the press (Washington Star, 1977) as hating dogs and having killed a number of neighbourhood animals. Another newspaper article (Washington Post, 1979) reported a mass killer as having immersed cats in containers of battery acid as a child. Albert De Salvo, the notorious Boston Strangler, trapped dogs and cats, placed them in orange crates, and shot arrows through the boxes (Fucini, 1978).

However, in addition to this circumstantial evidence, there have now been a number of authoritative psychological studies carried out which demonstrate a clear correlation between childhood cruelty to animals and later criminality, and in some cases, such acts were a precursor to child abuse. Some of these reports were commissioned by humane societies in an attempt to persuade Government authorities of the seriousness of animal cruelty cases, including the Kellert/Felthouse study on 'Childhood Cruelty Towards Animals among Criminals and Non-criminals', which was sponsored by the World Society for the Protection of Animals.

The Kellert/Felthouse study, in addition to confirming a strong correlation between childhood cruelty to animals and future antisocial and aggressive behaviour, stressed the need for researchers, clinicians and societal leaders to be alert to the importance of childhood animal cruelty, and suggested that the evolution of a more gentle and benign relationship in human society might be enhanced by our promotion of a more positive and nurturing ethic between children and animals.

Such path-finding studies are of pivotal importance for society and educators alike. Amongst their findings are: -

- In one community in England, 83% of families with a history of animal abuse had been identified as having children at risk from abuse or neglect;
- Of 57 families treated by New Jersey's Division of Youth and Family Services for incidents of child abuse, pets had been abused in 88% of cases, usually by the parent;
- A behavioural triad of cruelty to animals, bed wetting and fire setting in childhood is strongly indicative of likely violent behaviour in adulthood; and
- There is a significantly higher incidence of behaviour involving cruelty to animals, usually prior to age 25, in people who go on to commit mass or serial murders.

A book published in 1999 brought together useful research in this area and charts some actions already being taken to address this problem. It is titled: 'Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Animal Abuse: Linking the Circles of Compassion for Prevention and Intervention'.

Issues of power, dominance and victimisation are shared concerns of the peace movement, human and animal rights movements and humane educators. When

someone is ill treated or relegated to a demeaning position in society, they often respond by venting their frustration on someone whose societal position is even lower than their own. By destroying or tormenting the weak, such as an animal or a child, the oppressor becomes the master who has, in turn, tortured them. The anger is directed at an innocent instead of the perpetrator of their own victimisation, and it is difficult to break the cycle of abuse.

Humane education is needed to develop an enlightened society that has empathy and respect for life, thus breaking the cycle of abuse. The aim is to create a culture of caring. It is also a sound investment - working on the prevention of criminality and antisocial behaviour, which can have a massive societal cost, both in terms of reduction in 'quality of life' and in financial costs incurred through criminal damage, maintenance of law enforcement systems, court costs, prison systems and juvenile work.

The following claims were made for humane education by the US National Parent-Teacher Association Congress in 1993: -

"Children trained to extend justice, kindness, and mercy to animals become more just, kind and considerate in their relations to one another. Character training along these lines in youths will result in men and women of broader sympathies; more humane, more law-abiding - in every respect more valuable - citizens. Humane education is the teaching in schools and colleges of the nations the principles of justice, goodwill, and humanity towards all life. The cultivation of the spirit of kindness to animals is but the starting point toward that larger humanity that includes ones fellow of every race and clime. A generation of people trained in these principles will solve their international difficulties as neighbours and not as enemies."

The practice and reinforcement of kindness, of care and compassion towards animals, through formal and non-formal educational processes is, thus, viewed as having a range of positive spin-offs in terms of pro-social attitudes towards people of a different gender, ethnic group, race, culture or nation.

The case for humane education is overwhelming, so it is surprising that it has not been more broadly accepted by international organisations, national governments and education authorities.

Which Approach When?

Kim Stallwood (Founder of the Institute for Animals and Society) has made an interesting observation of the animal protection movement. He says that there are five stages in the growth of the movement: -

- Acceptance building (education)
- Awareness/consensus building
- Legislation
- Legal action to embed legislation (enforcement, test cases etc.)
- Functioning system of protection

It is my view that in the first stage, humane education is the **only** effective way to improve awareness of animal protection issues. At this stage, campaigns, demonstrations and advocacy work are simply too far removed from public

perception/understanding to be effective. This is the stage where humane education is most necessary to beneficial change.

First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.

Mahatma Gandhi

The National Curriculum

The objective of education (used in the UK Education Reform Act of 1988) is to: -
"Promote spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepare them for adult life".

Other educational systems around the world have similar objectives.

Humane Education has an essential role to play in providing the moral education desirable in developing children into considerate, responsible adults. Although most governments would acknowledge the importance of a moral dimension to education, few put into practice any real mechanisms to ensure this is actually delivered. One of the most valuable tasks an animal society can perform is to work towards establishing humane education as an integral part of the ongoing school curriculum, convincing governments, school authorities and teachers that humane education is vital to society.

Humane education as part of the curriculum would encompass lessons such as environmental awareness, citizen education and animal protection. An important part of the process of getting humane education formally built into the education system is the development of consolidated course materials covering all of these areas. Commitment to Humane Education is often a big strength within animal societies and there are excellent and plentiful materials already available in this area to be used as a basis for the animal protection course modules.

The education could readily be developed and presented in a way that enables the children to reach their own conclusions, rather than as indoctrination, offering different viewpoints and philosophies. As Konrad Lorenz, an eminent behaviourist pointed out a vital function of education is " the presentation, to maturing humans, of sufficiently abundant and varied material facts to make it possible for them to perceive all the values associated with the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad, the healthy and the sick".

Until the aim is realised whereby humane education is given a place of its own in the National Curriculum, there is scope for its introduction through other foundation subjects such as English or Science, or any relevant existing cross-curricula themes such as environmental education or education for citizenship. It should, however, be stressed that humane education is a more advanced, all-encompassing discipline than environmental education, so appending it to these lessons is not desirable in the long-term. The best results in this field have been achieved through a dedicated place in the

curriculum, with official support for teacher training development and course materials.

As Yehudi Menuhin said:

" Why is compassion not part of our established curriculum, an inherent part of our education? Compassion, awe, wonder, curiosity, exaltation, humility - these are the every foundation of any real civilisation, no longer the prerogatives of any one church, but belonging to everyone, every child in every home, in every school".

When it is not yet possible to achieve this ultimate goal of placing humane education into the curriculum in its own right, then educators have to study the curriculum carefully to integrate humane education resources into different parts of the curriculum (e.g.biology, ethics, English language, religious studies, mathematics etc.).

Methods

Humane Education can be delivered in numerous different ways including non-formal methods such as campaigning and media work, as well as the more obvious and more formal approach used in schools and higher education. Changes in attitude and behaviour have been successfully achieved as a result of powerful campaigns, which are a way of bringing awareness to specific issues relatively quickly. Because of its long-term effectiveness, formal Humane Education in schools is especially important since this is the way to develop caring attitudes for the next generation of citizens.

Non-Formal Humane Education

Any method of delivering information, provoking thought and bringing awareness is part of the education process. Public opinion has immeasurable force and can be harnessed in numerous ways: -

- Media campaigns
- Television documentaries, advertisements, news items, plays, debates etc.
- Videos, books, magazines, newspaper articles
- T-shirts
- Posters
- Advertising
- Leaflets, information packs
- Awareness events (exhibitions, open days, information stalls)
- Demonstrations
- Labelling on products, in supermarkets etc.

Animal protection campaigning is an effective method of humane education. When this has many facets or angles, the message is reinforced (e.g. providing reports, leaflets and other factual materials in addition to more creative/visual mediums, such as media coverage and demonstrations). Other non-formal educational work includes:

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- Promotion and/or articles and coverage about 'humane education'
- Training courses

- Translation/production of materials
- Links with Education Ministries
- Conferences (general)
- University contacts (academics and students)
- Links with local environmental/animal NGOs
- Collaboration/conferences/workshops with other NGOs
- Web Sites and discussion groups

Formal Humane Education (Schools etc)

The ideal Humane Education in the classroom incorporates an exploration of human, animal and environmental rights, to teach children a personal sense of responsibility and a compassionate attitude towards each other, animals and the earth they live on. Children are extremely receptive, their minds are inquiring and active and they have huge supplies of natural enthusiasm. Important messages they receive at school go in deep, yet, this education is the opposite of indoctrination, since the message is not to believe x, y, or z, but to encourage *consideration* of different issues: -

- Thinking about others (including animals) and their needs, feelings and suffering
- Thinking about the effects of your actions
- Thinking about your world and your place within it.

Many animal protection organisations produce humane education materials for children, and promote these to schools and teachers (and through other means such as Web Sites, libraries, conferences etc.). Others give lectures and send speakers to schools and colleges.

Working for Humane Education to become an integral part of each child's formal education is fundamental to the long-term strategy for alleviating animal suffering on a grand scale. Inclusion in the educational curriculum, or specified in part of this (such as 'citizenship studies') would be the most acceptable outcome.

It would appear that in most countries, humane education usually concentrates on animal issues alone, and is done in a piece-meal way, dependant mainly upon the coverage achieved by animal groups, or on the inclinations of individual teachers. The ideal of a broad-based, all-encompassing humane education is important because this consolidation presents an educational package, which is difficult for governments and teaching authorities to ignore. As regards methodology, if animal protection organisations could be training teachers, instead of giving one-off lessons, the educational messages would be far more widely spread. However, as many humane educators are teachers, their comfort zone is often a classroom, rather than teacher training. However, the 'multiplier effect' should always be considered, in our efforts to spread humane values.

In addition to lessons in compassion for children, it is important that animal protection organisations campaign for animal protection to become an essential part of the training for anyone planning to work with animals, apprentice stockmen, slaughtermen, animal wardens etc. Animal protection training for veterinarians is especially important because of their future potential for spreading the welfare message and promoting good practice. In some countries, veterinarians and other

animal professionals are still completing their professional training without any real understanding of animal ethics and welfare. This is clearly an area for animal protection lobbying and influence, and for well-resourced animal groups to play an active educational role.

Higher Education

It is appalling that animal ethics/animal behaviour/animal welfare are not studied systematically in veterinary, agricultural etc. courses and degrees. Any professional training where individuals will be working with animals should include such aspects too. It is iniquitous that professionals working with animals are able – in this day and age – to remain oblivious to factors affecting their welfare, behavioural indicators and fundamental animal ethics. This far, studies at higher level have been patchy, with few comprehensive initiatives. And this applies to ‘developed countries’ as well as ‘developing’.

Some initiatives worth mentioning are: -

- The ‘Concepts of Animal Welfare’ resource produced by WSPA, which is probably the most comprehensive animal welfare resource globally. This has been designed specifically for veterinary schools or universities.
- The resource on ‘Animal Welfare Aspects of Good Agricultural Practice’, which is currently being produced by CIWF. This is designed for future farmers, with various channels including agricultural universities.
- Vocational training on slaughter, held internationally by Bristol University in the UK. Excellent classroom based interactive training, based on meat science presented accessibly. Designed for slaughterhouse workers, managers and inspectors.
- Welfare in transport training and advice prepared jointly by CIWF’s French office (PMAF) and Animals Angels. This is designed specifically for enforcement authorities, based on EU legislation and animal welfare science.

There are doubtless other examples, but these are a selection of good examples of the important role played by animal protection organisations in this field.

Use of Animals

Another level of humane education tackles the use of animals either in classrooms (classroom ‘pets’) or in scientific education (as ‘model’ or for dissection etc.). In the first case, some groups try to dissuade against keeping animals in classrooms, whereas others try to improve welfare (such as the RSPCAs). There is now an international movement against the use of animals in scientific education, coordinated by an organisation called ‘Interniche’, which supports and resources people and groups seeking to replace the use of animals and press for ‘conscientious objection to experiments on animals in education.

Enforcement

Many animal protection organisations undertake enforcement work, either official or unofficial. It is well known that enforcement is usually about 90% education and advice. So, enforcement work is an excellent educational opportunity. Indeed, many

enforcement bodies have a range of educational literature that they use in their enforcement work. There is nothing like personal contact and reinforcement to press home educational messages.

Pilot Projects

An excellent approach to use in trying to gain acceptance for humane education programmes is to organise a pilot project, in order to demonstrate – in tangible ways - the potential benefits of the project being proposed. To maximise effectiveness, a pilot project must be effectively monitored and measured.

A good example of the use of a pilot project was in the Humane Education Trust (HET) in South Africa's battle to try to have humane education included in the curriculum. HET lobbied in favour of humane education and received polite responses, but no practical change. So Louise van der Merwe, the Director of HET, set about instituting a pilot project in the Western Cape. She won the agreement of the Western Cape education department, arranged the development of a full set of educational materials, arranged teachers workshops, and built in expert psychological assessment. The result was a monitored pilot project that won the backing and approval of all involved. This could then be put to the national government, with Western Cape backing. The result is that humane education is covered by the South African national curriculum from 2004.

Co-operation

In 1993 WSPA hosted a highly successful humane education study visit to the UK for delegates from throughout Central and Eastern Europe. This involved leading UK and US societies working on humane education and was a 'model for co-operation'. A set of suggested resources was produced, workshops were led on all major issues and practical sessions were carried out where delegates put new skills into practice. Co-operating societies co-funded, produced materials specifically for the course and led workshops on their own experiences and methodology.

The Dogs Trust and North Shore Animal League co-host international companion animal educational conference, the most recent of which attracted 250 delegates from 80 different countries.

WSPA and CIWF worked together with the Humane Education Trust in South Africa on the 'All Africa Humane Education Summit' in September 2003. This included practical workshops and highlighted educational initiatives from around Africa, as well as WSPA and CIWF resources. They also worked together on training sessions in South Africa in July 2001, when CIWF opened its South African office.

It is to be regretted that there are not more cooperative ventures in the animal protection movement, as the complementary skills and cultural approaches enrich the work enormously.

Training and Development

Many of the large international animal protection organisations have recognised the importance of education and development of existing animal protection societies worldwide. This capacity building is probably the best way to ensure the sustainable development of the international movement. Below are some of the initiatives carried out by leading organisations: -

HSUS

Animal Care Expo (2004's was co-funded by IFAW) is an excellent educational and training opportunity for those involved in animal sheltering and control and humane education worldwide. Expo consists of three and a half days of plenary sessions and workshops on topics ranging from adoption programs to fundraising to wildlife issues. There is also a full-scale trade show where societies will find the latest in materials and equipment.

RSPCA

The Society's international training programme ranges from a single consultation for a developing animal welfare group, to residential courses for foreign government officials, welfare groups and teachers.

WSPA & CIWF

Both WSPA and CIWF carry out training and workshops for their offices and member/contact societies.

ASPCA

The ASPCA runs a range of courses in the USA covering issues such as management, shelter operations, legislation and cruelty investigations.

The American Humane Association (AHA)

The AHA also runs training courses, and includes workshops at its annual meeting.

Cambridge University (UK)'s E-learning Institute

<http://www.animal-info.net/edu.htm>

Cambridge University (UK)'s e-learning institute has developed an online course in animal welfare. The post-graduate course introduces students to the main concepts of animal welfare science through online discussions between students and tutors.

Animals and Society

<http://www.animalsandsociety.org/>

'Animals and Society' is a new organisation founded by Kim Stallwood, a long-time activist and writer. It is a 'think tank' carrying out education and training; including a course on 'Animals and Society' that examines the moral and legal status of animals in contemporary society.

Lobbying for Change

One of the reasons why there has not been more significant change in favour of humane education is probably that more humane education professionals have a

teaching or educational background. Thus, they tend to strategise from an educational perspective, rather than a campaign/lobby perspective. If you speak to humane educators about their work, they tend to focus on resource provision and educational establishments (i.e. their direct users). This could mean that lobbying opportunities with vast potential impact are missed.

Two notable high-level exceptions to this were: -

World Animal Net and CIWF lobbying in the preparatory meetings to the Earth Summit and the Summit itself, in favour of humane education as a tool for inculcating sustainable development principles. The second paragraph of the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) political declaration stated: - "We commit ourselves to build a humane, equitable and caring global society cognizant of the need for human dignity for all".

Lobbying by the Humane Education Trust, which resulted in the numerous political commitments made at its 'All Africa Humane Education Summit', including those by UNESCO, the South African Minister of Education and the President's Moral Regeneration Unit.

However, there remains an enormous and potentially worthwhile task campaigning and lobbying in favour of humane education: at both national and international level. It could be said that it is a failure of many animal protection society managers that they have not succeeded in matching the needs and potential of their education department with the skills and abilities of their campaign/lobby departments? It is not too late.

International Opportunities

UNESCO has two decades that are relevant to animal protection organisations: -

2001- 2010 - International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World

2005-2014 Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

These are both initiatives that could be used to promote humane education internationally, in cooperation with the UN.

Mr Ben Boys, UNESCO Windhoek's Project Officer: Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy made the following statement at the All Africa Humane Education Summit that was hosted by Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) and The Humane Education Trust (HET) in September 2003: -

"Humane Education goes beyond the teaching of simple animal-relating content. In my humble view, it is a process through which we, the educators, assist children in developing compassion, a sense of justice and respect for the value of all living beings. Thus, it is the basis for respect and understanding for other human beings and all life. It is important to inform this summit about the forthcoming UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development to be launched in January 2005. I sincerely believe that the outcome of this Summit could make a significant contribution towards the success of the Decade. It is the wish of UNESCO that animal well-being becomes part of Member States and Associate Members' environmental policy. Cruelty to animals is definitely not part of sustainable development. The humane treatment of animals recognises the

oneness of nature and the importance of this synergy for the well being of humans and nature. Therefore, teaching children to respect and care for animals and the wider environment is an important step in sustainable development and the respect for human rights.”

This was a groundbreaking acknowledgement of the importance and acceptance of humane education from a UNESCO official. It is clear that the animal protection movement has a powerful case for the introduction of humane education, and the two UNESCO decades above are wonderful opportunities to press the case. Indeed, the movement will miss unique opportunities and momentum if it does press ahead with a strong lobby without further delay.

Few are those who see with their own eyes and feel with their own hearts.

Albert Einstein