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# Applying the Lens of Humane Education: An Essential Tool for Today's Educators

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## **Applying the Lens of Humane Education: An Essential Tool for Today's Educators**

A relatively new field of education, Humane Education serves the academic community as much as it does the world as a whole. It can be used as a lens for existing educators, or it can serve as a foundation for future educators. The undergraduate course I am presenting has been developed specifically to support future educators as they strive to implement what they have learned as best teaching practices, along with fine-tuning their teaching philosophies, praxis, and to develop intrinsic motivation for the challenging but rewarding profession of teaching.

Using the lens of Humane Education – that can be applied at any age, level, or ability – provides educators with the practical tools to support teaching real-world issues in ways that instill hope and positive action, without debilitating despair or apathy.

The works presented at the Valparaiso University Graduate Academic Symposium will discuss a brief overview of Humane Education, its impact on future educators and their prospective students, the course I have created, in addition to scholarly research supporting that which I have developed and why it is vital for today's teachers.

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Despite having fulfilled the academic requirements of practicum and study, many education graduates still feel unprepared to enter the world of teaching. While it is important to study the theories of education, it is crucial for preservice teachers to gain practical experience; such as classroom management strategies, differentiation adaptation to learning disabilities, and so on. Humane Education provides the inspiration, tools, and knowledge to support the practical side of

teaching authentic subject content. Its impact works ten-fold on teachers, new and tenured, because it implements best teaching practices and adds the component of teaching meaningful content.

Humane Education is gaining traction in the field of education as a result of its positive impact on the classroom and beyond. It teaches real-world issues through a lens that can be applied at virtually any age, level, or ability. Educators, new and tenured, facilitate principles of Humane Education – that quickly become intuitive – through exposure to meaningful content and accurate information, all the while developing essential strategies such as critical analysis, conflict resolution, and solution-based thinking. It teaches about human rights, animal protection issues, environmental stewardship, and cultural issues as interconnected and integral dimensions of a just and healthy society ([Institute for Humane Education](#), 2016).

Humane Education acts as a tool for teachers; it combines best teaching practices – as established by experts within the field of education – with a Golden-Rule mentality, genuine interactions, discussions, and regular opportunities for self-reflection. The academic implications of Humane Education are invaluable, but its comprehensive approach reaches far beyond the student or classroom. Learning about Iqbal, a child slavery protestor who was assassinated, but whose courage caused a revolution for millions of people to support fair labor practices, instills hope for *real* change. Working with students on a letter-writing campaign concerning prisoners of conscience, such as Raif Badawi, has a real impact on students' learning, comprehension, and sense of compassion and hope, especially when a prisoner is freed and openly thanks those who wrote to him and who kept his hope alive during difficult times.

Grappling with challenging issues is a difficult but inevitable part of life; however, students in the Humane Education classroom learn about reality through an adapted lens, in a safe environment. With their teacher's guidance, students develop intrinsic motivation to act on their values and to find solutions. They themselves become humane educators and in turn, perpetuate a positive perspective of the world. The lens of Humane Education serves to instill hope and solution-seeking behavior, combatting the tendency to become paralyzed from despair and apathy. Its impact on the world is invaluable and critical to building a future that is sustainable, healthy, and just for all.

The course I have developed to teach at the undergraduate level is meant to serve future educators and enrich an educator's approach to teaching. Students of this course will learn about the field of Humane Education, its core values, and how to apply its lens to their curricula. This course's development is supported by ten years of teaching experience as well as scholarly research by means of comparing best teaching practices with a humane educator at the undergraduate level. Studying, observing, and practicing these methods have provided this graduate student with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to teach an introductory course in Humane Education to preservice teachers.