

The politics of critical citizenship education: human rights for conformity or emancipation?

Helen Trivers and Hugh Starkey (Institute of Education, University of London)

ABSTRACT

Claims that whole-school human rights education (HRE) projects have been particularly successful have been made in the UK Parliament and in research studies focusing on the Rights, Respect, Responsibility initiative in Hampshire and the UNICEF UK Rights Respecting Schools Award. Such claims have encouraged schools to join these programmes, attracted by expectations of positive impact on behaviour and general school improvement. However, a close examination of the literature and the evaluative studies suggests that whereas relationships between children and their relationships with teachers may well be perceived as improving, what is actually happening may not be HRE as it is defined and recognised in authoritative international agreements. HRE does not simply consist of learning about human rights, but also involves learning in an environment where the principles underpinning human rights, such as equality, participation and respect, are practiced and lived. HRE involves the meaningful participation of pupils in school decision-making, and enables pupils to explore power relationships in society through supporting them to identify and take action on real human rights issues. We find, however, that some schools implement the programmes as behaviour management projects, focusing on responsibilities over rights, and equating human rights with good behaviour and obeying rules. In these cases a lack of political content and analysis, coupled with token participation fails to

provide children with their right under the Convention on the Rights of the Child to learn about their rights. The article concludes with suggestions for ensuring a more critical edge to implementation.

Introduction

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (Freire, 1970:16)

Human rights are the core element of an international endeavour aimed at promoting human dignity in order to achieve freedom, justice and peace in the world. The principles expressed in human rights instruments provide the standards by which governments at national or local levels and their institutions, including schools, may be judged. The articles of human rights charters provide a language for naming injustice, oppression and unfair discrimination. Human rights education (HRE) introduces and explores the implications of these normative standards and one of its purposes is to enable learners to struggle for their rights as members of the human family and to evaluate the extent to which governments and institutions promote a democratic agenda of equity and inclusion. Given that human social systems are inevitably imperfect and given the significant inequalities in any society, HRE is necessarily transformative. It aims to support the progressive realisation of a world where the human rights of all are respected, protected and promoted. It aims to enable people to understand what rights people have and who has responsibility for upholding those rights. It encourages active engagement in struggles to effect change.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) defines participation rights for young people. It challenges the historical development of schools as places where children are

treated as citizens-in-waiting rather than as citizens with agency here and now. Recognising children as citizens with rights to expression and participation is the basis for whole-school human rights education projects. Such projects aim not simply to teach children about rights, but to integrate human rights into the school system, enabling children to learn about human rights and develop skills for acting on rights in an environment where human rights are practiced and lived.

Two projects in the UK have attracted particular attention, namely the *Rights, Respect, Responsibility* (RRR) initiative of Hampshire County Local Authority (school district) in the South of England and the *Rights Respecting Schools Award* (RRSA) of UNICEF UK, which has been piloted in five local authorities across England. Initial evaluations of these programmes have been very positive and findings from the research have been used to support claims that these projects contribute to general school improvement. Particularly notable was a parliamentary report endorsing these projects as contributing to citizenship education, improving behaviour and reducing bullying and school violence (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2007). There is even a suggestion that such initiatives may counter social disadvantage (Covell, Howe & Polegato, 2011).

However there have been concerns that some schools are implementing the programmes for the purposes of behaviour management rather than as transformative projects. If schools focus on responsibilities over rights and equate human rights with good behaviour and obeying rules they lose the connection to struggles for justice (Osler & Starkey, 2010). This chapter reports on an examination of the evaluative studies of these HRE programmes and argues that whereas relationships between children and their relationships with teachers and other adults may well be perceived as improving, what is actually happening may not be HRE as it is defined in authoritative international agreements (Council of Europe, 2010; United Nations Human Rights Council, 2010). We suggest that lack of political content and analysis, coupled with token participation fails to provide children with their right under the Convention on the Rights of the Child to learn about their rights.

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What is HRE?

The importance of educating people about human rights is articulated in the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):

Every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms (United Nations, 1948).

The right to learn about human rights is inextricably linked with the right to education, a key human right outlined in Article 26 of the UDHR which states not only that everyone should be able to access education, but defines the content and purposes of education, namely to: 'Strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms', 'promote tolerance and friendship', and 'further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace' (United Nations, 1948). Given the universal assent by governments to the UDHR, reinforced by subsequent commitments, including the legally binding Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), there is a strong case in international law that there is a right to human rights education.

As with other rights, the right to education has been codified through a number of international treaties and conventions including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC, arguably the most important human rights treaty for children and young people contains two articles addressing the right to education. Article 28 outlines the responsibility of states for the progressive realisation of the right to education, whilst Article 29 focuses on the aims and content of education. United Nations experts, in a formal General Comment, affirm that the effective implementation of Article 29 requires significant changes to the way education is delivered including, 'the fundamental reworking of curricula to include the various aims of education and the systematic revision of textbooks and other teaching materials and technologies, as well as school policies' (United Nations 2001:18). In other

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words schools need to review their programmes of study, their teaching materials and the regulatory and policy frameworks they develop.

There also have been declarations and programmes developed specifically on human rights education, including a United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, recently adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council. The World Programme of Human Rights Education offered the very general definition that HRE is activities designed to 'convey fundamental human rights principles, such as equality and non-discrimination, while affirming their interdependence, indivisibility and universality' (OHCHR and UNESCO, 2006: 1). The more detailed guidance includes a more active approach including 'combating and eradication of all forms of discrimination, racism, stereotyping and incitement to hatred, and the harmful attitudes and prejudices that underlie them'. It also insists explicitly on gender equality and diversity (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2011). We should therefore expect any evaluation of an HRE programme to keep these dimensions in mind.

The emergence of whole-school approaches to HRE

Whilst articles 28 and 29 of the CRC address education and schooling directly, other rights in the CRC are also highly relevant to education since the CRC requires governments not only to recognise education as a key human right for all children and to provide education for human rights, but also to, 'respect the human rights of children within the education system' (Lansdown, 2001:37). This is sometimes expressed as the right *to* education, rights *in* education and rights *through* education (Verhellen, 1993, 2000, 2001) or education *about*, *for* and *through* human rights (Lister, 1984). Through education *about* human rights, people develop knowledge and understanding about human rights, through education *for* human rights people develop skills for recognising and taking action on human rights issues and education *through* human rights involves experiencing a school climate where the respect of rights is the basis for all activities. This conception of HRE is also taken up in the UN draft declaration where the aim is 'empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to

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respect and uphold the rights of others' (United Nations 2011). Upholding the rights of others is certainly a responsibility and in this sense education for rights and responsibilities is complementary and reciprocal.

Attempting to develop school structures and education systems that embody the concepts of respect, justice and democracy is not a recent phenomenon. John Dewey founded a laboratory school at the University of Chicago at the end of the 19th century and built on this experience to theorise, in his book *Democracy and Education* ([1916] 2002), education based on democratic dialogue and shared values. His principles promote both individual freedom and collective well-being and he was concerned to encourage young people (and their teachers) to look outward to the world beyond their school and their national borders. He also placed considerable importance on the quality of interpersonal relationships within the institution of the school.

Pioneering work on human rights education developed by the Council of Europe in the 1980s was based on the principle that HRE requires a whole school approach. A recommendation of the ministers of education (Council of Europe, 1985) asserted that 'schools are communities which can, and should, be an example of respect for the dignity of the individual and for difference, for tolerance and for equality of opportunity'. It went on to highlight the importance of a climate of human rights.

Democracy is best learnt in a democratic setting where participation is encouraged, where views can be expressed openly and discussed, where there is freedom of expression for pupils and teachers, and where there is fairness and justice.

The last decade of the 20th century saw the development of a global movement to promote human rights education following the global Vienna Conference on Human Rights (UNHCR, 1994). The United Nations launched a Decade for Human Rights Education (1995 – 2005) and subsequent World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005 – ongoing) (United Nations, 2004, 2010). Regional initiatives in Europe have also encouraged strategic thinking about how to ensure sustainable programmes of HRE (Council of Europe, 2010).

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In the UK, two substantial projects have promoted a whole school approach to HRE. The first is Hampshire County Council's *Rights, Respect, Responsibility (RRR)* initiative which has been running since 2004 and which has been taken up by some 200 schools including 45 secondary schools (Covell and Howe, 2008). The initiative developed following a study trip to observe innovative work on children's rights being developed at the Children's Rights Centre at Cape Breton University in Canada (Covell and Howe, 2005). The aim is to integrate the values of the CRC into the daily life of the school. It encourages and supports schools to provide an education consistent with article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The project is based on the premise that when children learn about their own rights and the concept of universality of rights, this can lead to more respectful behaviour. The initiative is open to all schools in Hampshire Local Authority in the South of England and involves the training of head teachers and staff on human rights, and the encouragement and support of schools, both directly by the local authority, and through a peer to peer approach.

Many Hampshire schools implementing RRR were also involved in the development and piloting of a linked initiative. The *Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA)*, is a national award scheme taken up by some 600 schools developed by UNICEF UK, an NGO supporting the work of UNICEF. The aim of the Rights Respecting Schools Award is to embed the principles and values of the CRC in the ethos and curriculum of schools (UNICEF, 2008). Schools receive the award when they can demonstrate that the CRC is known and understood by their leadership and integrated into management, curriculum, and classroom climate. Pupil participation in decision-making is also a criterion for the award. Schools can work towards either a Level One or a Level Two award depending on how well integrated rights are within the school. Level One is awarded when they can demonstrate that they have shown good progress in four dimensions. Level Two is achieved when they can demonstrate that they have 'fully embedded' the principles and values of the CRC.

Evaluating the whole school initiatives

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Canadian academics Covell and Howe, whose work at Cape Breton University had attracted the attention of elected members and staff of the Conservative controlled Hampshire local authority, were contracted to assess the initial implementation of the initiative in 2005. This was followed by a three year research project funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Standard Research Grant (Government of Canada) which aimed to assess factors that facilitated and challenged the implementation of the RRR project in schools, as well as to track the impact of the project on teachers and pupils (Covell and Howe, 2007, 2008).

Covell and Howe's initial research (2005) was based on interviews with head teachers and teachers from 15 schools in Hampshire and a subsequent online questionnaire completed by 75 teachers and head teachers. In the three year research project they aimed to evaluate factors that facilitated and challenged the implementation of the RRR project in schools, as well as to track the impact of the project on teachers and pupils (Covell and Howe, 2007, 2008). This research (2006-2009) initially examined 18 infant, primary and junior schools, though this had fallen to 13 by year three. The research consisted of a mixed approach of questionnaires, interviews and focus groups involving head teachers, teachers and pupils.

The evaluation was based on a comparison of schools where RRR was 'fully implemented' (FI) and schools where RRR was 'partially implemented' (PI) (2005, 2008). Teachers were asked to rate how fully their school had implemented RRR on a scale of 1-8, and RRR was deemed to be 'fully implemented' when at least two-thirds of teacher respondents and the head teacher rated the implementation of children's rights at the maximum level of 8 (Covell and Howe, 2007). At the start of the study about a quarter of the schools involved had 'fully implemented' RRR. It is unclear what guidance schools were given about how to base their judgement of where a school has fully or partially implemented RRR, or whether judgements by teachers about the level of implementation were comparable across the sample of schools. However, the evaluators feel sufficiently confident to conclude that, "RRR has been demonstrated to be a very effective means not only of children's rights

education, but also of education" (Covell and Howe, 2008:2). They recommend that this model ought to be replicated in all education systems.

Academics from the University of Sussex were contracted by UNICEF in 2007 to carry out an evaluation of a three-year pilot of the Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA), which had been funded by the UK government's Department for Children, Schools and Families (UNICEF, 2008; Sebba and Robinson, 2009, 2010). The research aimed to assess the impact of the RRSA specifically on the *well-being* and *progress* of children in participating schools. Wellbeing of children was of particular concern for UNICEF UK since a 2007 UNICEF study on child wellbeing in rich countries placed the UK last out of 21 countries overall and 17 out of 21 for educational wellbeing (UNICEF, 2007). Sebba and Robinson's research involved a wider age-range than Covell and Howe, who restricted their study to the primary schools (up to age 11). The UNICEF evaluation covered twelve primary, middle and secondary schools at varying stages of engagement with RRSA. A mixed method approach was used, including:

- The collation of background information on the population of pupils in each school
- The collection of descriptive quantitative data on pupil attainment in national tests, attendance levels and number of fixed term and permanent exclusions
- Individual interviews conducted with head teachers, teachers, teaching assistants, midday supervisors, parents and governors. Small group interviews were conducted with pupils
- Documentary analysis of policies, staff development materials, teaching resources and pupil work in order to triangulate findings
- In the second year of their research, Sebba and Robinson also interviewed pupils who had moved from a junior or primary school involved in the RRSA initiative to a high school or secondary school not participating in the initiative.

The research focuses on schools participating in the project some of which had not yet achieved the RRSA, and others that had achieved the award at both Level 1 and Level 2. The authors report that all schools involved in the study claim that the RRSA has provided coherence for other policies; increased pupils, staff and parents sense of well-being and belonging; improved engagement; improved behaviour and relationships and supported

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children to make a positive contribution locally, nationally and globally (2009). They also report increased attainment in five schools (41% of those involved), and increased pupil participation in nine of eleven schools (Sebba and Robinson, 2009).

Similar findings from the Hampshire RRR programme have been interpreted as contributing to overcoming social disadvantage. The reasoning is that socially disadvantaged children are at risk of school failure, characterised by low levels of school engagement and achievement. If, as the researchers suggest, the RRR programme provides real opportunities for participation, pupils are 'more likely to feel empowered, develop a sense of their own inherent value and see school as a positive welcoming place' (Covell, Howe & Polegato, 2011: 194). Consequently it is argued that the socially disadvantaged students stand to gain more from the programme than students from wealthier backgrounds who are likely to be well-motivated in the first place. The authors supply strong empirical evidence of the effect of the programme, and there is a logical case to support their interpretation. The deprivation in Hampshire is, however, relative since of the 149 local authorities in England it is in the tenth least deprived (Henry, 2008). Further investigation would be required to identify why the HRE initiatives evaluated were situated in prosperous and culturally relatively homogenous areas and whether this context in any way challenges the validity of the conclusions drawn.

Do these projects constitute HRE?

Human rights education aims at empowering young people to contribute towards a utopian vision of a universal culture of human rights. For young people to contribute to the development of such a culture, they need to have knowledge about rights, skills for recognising and acting on human rights issues, and must be disposed to contribute to this culture of rights. Human rights education in schools therefore necessarily contains a number of elements; learning *about, for* and *through* human rights. Learning through human rights implies a school where the rights of all are respected and a human rights-based approach to education is embodied.

Both RRR and RRSA projects report an increase in an understanding of human rights by teachers and students in the programmes. Sebba and Robinson report increased awareness of the CRC, claiming that there is evidence of it being referred to by adults and children both inside and outside of the classroom (2009). Covell and Howe too claim that children in schools where RRR is fully implemented demonstrated a greater understanding of rights than children in schools where the approach is only partially implemented (2008). There is little evidence in research reports on either of the two projects, or a wider scan of documentation¹, of children learning about the wider concept of human rights or developing understandings of human rights and struggle locally or globally.

Covell and Howe reported that in some schools which had only partially implemented the RRR initiative, rights had not yet been taught as they were focusing on responsibilities first or that, “It had been decided that it was no longer necessary to teach the specific rights in the Convention because they had been absorbed into the school ethos” (2008:11). This suggests that some schools involved in the project did not understand the importance of children developing knowledge and understanding about human rights. In fact it can be argued that such approaches are not human rights education because whilst they promote a moral perspective ‘they do not promote a critical awareness that results from exploring human rights theory, the human rights movement, the possibility of universalized rights for all, and the accountability of all people and institutions for respecting those rights’ (Jennings, 2006:291).

Pupils indeed do seem to associate rights with good behaviour and obeying rules. A resource consisting of a PowerPoint presentation developed by pupils from 3 primary schools in the RRR project and posted on the Hampshire website to disseminate perceived good practice asks its audience to determine which features of schools described are and

¹ Including the Hampshire RRR webpage <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/childrensrights/> and participating school webpages

are not rights respecting (Hampshire County Council, 2007). Aspects of a school which the pupils deem not to be rights respecting include a library where children are throwing books around and being loud and a lunch hall which is messy, where children are having food fights and trading food. On the other hand, in a rights respecting school the pupils suggest that that children in the library would be choosing books in a sensible manner, being quiet and calm and doing what they are told. In the dining hall the pupils would have table manners, not push in the line and not shout along tables. In their dining room example, the right which they claim is not being respected is CRC Article 24 which outlines children's right to the highest attainable standards of health, including access to adequate nutritious food. It perhaps trivializes this right to suggest that it is denied when children shout in the canteen. In fact it appears that children are being encouraged to consider rights as an element of a self disciplining process rather than as something to be won through struggle.

In the evaluation visits they conducted in 2008 Sebba and Robinson noted confusion regarding the relationship between rights and responsibilities. They observed that staff and students 'sometimes presented rights and responsibilities as though they corresponded one-to-one' (Sebba and Robinson, 2009:6). This confusion about the link between rights and responsibilities was also raised by Covell and Howe (2008). As a result of this finding UNICEF introduced clearer guidance for schools on the relationship between unconditional rights and learned responsibilities. A globally disseminated UNICEF publication asserts that 'there is no requirement on the part of a child, for example, that she or he demonstrate a responsible attitude in order to 'earn' an entitlement to education (Landsdown, 2007:22). The RRSA guidance was adapted to include a clear statement that 'the rights of the child are not conditional on responsibilities. Rights do imply responsibilities but are independent of responsibilities'. (UNICEF UK, 2010). UNICEF UK concludes that rights may not therefore be withdrawn or withheld. However it may be legitimate to prevent pupils infringing the rights of others.

A whole-school human rights education project requires support for teachers to ensure that they themselves accept and agree with the concept and value of HRE, and that they have the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver effective HRE. It is reported that, in a number of countries, educators, like the general public, lack familiarity with human rights instruments (Osler and Starkey, 2010). The RRSA project seems to have overcome this to a certain extent since in a majority of the schools visited, all staff knew about the RRSA project and staff development opportunities were provided (Sebba & Robinson, 2009). Whilst this addresses awareness of the project itself, there is no clear evidence about the level of knowledge and understanding amongst teachers about human rights content and processes. The confusion noted above about the relationship between rights and responsibilities indicates that there may be further need for professional development opportunities for staff on human rights.

Education for human rights

Head teachers interviewed for the RRR research reported an improvement in students' critical thinking, persuasive-argument, decision-making and collaborative learning skills (Covell and Howe, 2007), all important skills for recognising and acting on human rights issues. The RRSA project also impacted on pupil self-esteem, resulting in pupils having more confidence to talk out in class, resolve conflict and work together and express their own views (Sebba and Robinson, 2009). These are certainly key elements of learning for human rights. However it is unclear whether the pupils necessarily had the opportunity to practice these skills in relation to human rights issues.

Both evaluations found an increase in pupil participation in school decision-making as a result of the RRR/RRSA initiatives. One example of pupil participation is 'input into school spending' (Covell and Howe, 2008:10). However, this seems a slightly exaggerated claim since it did not refer to influencing the overall school budget but concerned the purchase of an aquarium. In RRSA schools there are examples of pupil participation which include school

councils, involvement in teacher recruitment and selection, and evaluating lessons. It is unclear from the reports whether schools had found mechanisms to enable all children to participate through these activities. Indeed pupils raised the issue of the lack of inclusivity in school councils. They were concerned that only the most popular or academic pupils were involved. This suggests that pupil participation may still often be teacher led and tokenistic (Hart, 1992). However the evaluators also reported that schools claimed to be taking measures to increase inclusivity in these areas (Sebba and Robinson, 2009).

The RRSA is said to result in pupils becoming actively involved in upholding or defending the rights of others, however the evidence for this claim is weak. There are references in the reports to school projects on global issues, but these tend to adopt approaches which are traditional and apolitical such as school linking and fundraising. It is not clear to what extent students are actually involved in considering or taking action on these issues from a human rights perspective and the extent to which such work is largely teacher led. Staff in three schools involved in the evaluation suggested that their work supporting pupils to fundraise for issues may simply be tokenistic, providing 'a strong feel-good factor by those involved, but no greater understanding of the effect of their actions (Sebba and Robinson, 2009:10).

Education through human rights

The intention of both the RRR and RRSA projects is that rights are integrated into the ethos, culture and practices of the participating schools. The evaluation of the RRR initiative concludes that the objective of having a rights-based school ethos was met, whilst the RRSA has provided the 'underlying values' for schools (Sebba and Robinson, 2009:1). There is evidence that the language of rights is explicitly used not just in teaching and learning, but also in peer interaction and conflict resolution inside and outside of the classroom. However, much of the focus of the evaluations relates to improvements in behaviour. Both reports claim that when rights are integrated into schools and used as a framework for pupil codes of conduct, behaviour improves, as pupils learn to respect the rights of others.

In RRR schools where the approach is only partially implemented, the focus was in fact more on responsibilities than rights. In these schools it is recognized that RRR 'was used only as a tool for behaviour management' and that children 'understood their rights to be nothing more than the rules of their classrooms' (Covell and Howe, 2008:11). Consequently 'pupils appear to have more understanding of responsibilities than rights' (id., 2008:16). Illustrative of this, one child reportedly claimed that a friend was 'very badly behaved before we learned about rights, respect and responsibilities, but now he behaves' (Covell and Howe, 2008:17-18). As schools where the approach was only partially implemented accounted for eight out of the thirteen schools involved in the evaluation, this issue may be not untypical of the project. It would appear that even in some schools involved in RRR, the ethos is less 'rights respecting' and more 'responsibility respecting.'

This focus on responsibility may respond to legitimate concerns often raised by parents and teachers about teaching children about their human rights, as it is claimed that children already know too much about their rights (Howe and Covell, 2005:3; Alderson, 2008:15). However, other research has demonstrated that knowledge and understanding of rights leads to more awareness of responsibilities (Hudson, 2005). Indeed, when the focus shifts from individual responsibilities to the responsibilities of authorities and governments for upholding rights, then the element of struggle and transformation returns Osler & Starkey, 2005; Pogge, 2005).

Some students in a Rights Respecting School claimed that they 'found it difficult to continue behaving in a rights-respecting way outside of school, saying that it was stressful to behave in a rights-respecting way all of the time' (UNICEF UK, 2008:8). The danger in focusing on responsibilities to the detriment of rights, therefore, is that children fail to see human rights as a mechanism for the advancement of a society based on equality and justice for all and instead associate them simply with compliance. Indeed, the RRR evaluators have come to recognize this as a weakness in the programme as implemented and argue that when

teachers unduly focus on responsibilities this is miseducation about children's rights (Howe and Covell, 2010).

Rights in education

Despite the aims of both projects focusing on the integration of the CRC into the ethos and practice of schools, neither evaluation considered the extent to which schools integrated rights into school policies, whether teaching methodology is rights respecting, or whether the project is having a positive impact on children whose rights are traditionally less well respected, such as refugee children, children who speak English as an Additional Language or children on the register of Special Educational Needs. In Covell and Howe's initial research on RRR (2005), they asked participants to report on impact on pupils' behaviour and understanding and the effect on themselves rather than the extent to which children's rights were being upheld. Teachers and heads were asked to rate the extent to which they had seen changes in pupils in a number of areas including being less confrontational with peers and teachers; use of rights language; more mature debate; more interest in learning; more empowered; more engaged in school; less fighting, bullying, and disruption in class; greater acceptance of personal responsibility (Covell and Howe, 2005).

This focus on the knowledge and understanding of rights and behaviour of pupils is also reflected in the evaluation of the RRSA. Heads in schools where RRR was fully implemented asserted that there was a 'central place for the rights of the child in policy statements' (Covell and Howe, 2008:10). Sebba and Robinson report that in one of the primary schools, the RRS lead teacher had matched CRC articles to a school policy 'as a means of reviewing the policies to ensure their consistency with the RRSA' (Sebba and Robinson, 2009:14). The fact that this was singled out as good practice in one school indicates that this is not systematically being done across all schools involved, even though this is advised in UNICEF UK's Action Plan guidance (UNICEF, 2010 a; 2010b).

In both research reports, improvements in aspects such as increased participation and improved behaviour are attributed to the RRR/RRSA approaches. However, during the period of the evaluation there were a number of other initiatives such as Every Child Matters and Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) that make it problematic to attribute changes to one factor. Indeed some head teachers were 'uncomfortable attributing positive changes [uniquely] to RRR' (Covell and Howe, 2007:5). Sebba and Robinson also acknowledge that it is difficult to attribute findings to one initiative and consequently attempt to draw evidence from a range of sources to support their conclusions.

Conclusions

It is important that all organisations implementing whole-school human rights education projects, including UNICEF and Hampshire, ensure that they reflect on the broader conception of human rights education and that all elements of HRE are built into their programmes. There is a particular need for the further development of elements of education *for* human rights, encouraging schools to support children to develop skills for identifying and acting on human rights concerns, and human rights *in* education, especially the systematic integration of specific rights into policies and procedures. It appears that whole-school projects such as RRR and RRSA would benefit from emphasising the human rights content so that learning about the CRC is situated within a wider human rights framework and a global or cosmopolitan as well as local perspective.

Internationally it is agreed that there is a need to support and further develop existing work through the delivery of effective teacher training, since this is key to the development of effective human rights education practices in schools (OHCHR and UNESCO 2006). There are a number of useful frameworks outlining teacher competencies for HRE which could be adapted for the particular circumstances of teachers in the UK. These originate in the work of the Council of Europe (Brett, Mompoint-Gaillard & Salema, 2009) and in the USA (Jennings, 2006). These frameworks reinforce the concept that teachers must themselves

develop a good understanding of human rights concepts and laws and develop teaching methodologies and classroom practices that embody rights principles and encourage critical reflection and action.

The very valuable evidence provided by the evaluations about how schools engage with human rights is summarised for sponsors in terms that are politically positive such as impact on behaviour, attendance and achievement. When this message is also communicated to schools, the expectations of the instrumental benefits of the projects may lead to a focus on behaviour management rather than the transformation of schools as institutions and of society. Instead of embarking on the projects because children have a right to learn in an environment where their rights are respected, to learn about human rights and to become empowered to defend the rights of those and others around them, schools may sign up because they think that it will improve children's behaviour and make them more compliant.

We believe that projects such as RRR and RRSA are highly significant examples from the UK that can stimulate emulation elsewhere and provide models of educational reform at school level that can transform the experience of education for children and their teachers (Council of Europe et al., 2009). Since there is now evidence that in these project schools teachers treat their students 'as persons with rights rather than as objects to be moulded' (Covell & Howe, 2011: 203), it is not surprising that the climate of the schools is positive and that disaffection is less pronounced than in traditional authoritarian and strongly hierarchical schools. Perhaps this initial step of transforming teacher / student relationships will open up a space for the acceptance of conflicts as a potentially creative opportunity for exploring different ways of reconciling difference without resorting to violence. The struggle for the dignity of students in schools may lead to engagement in wider struggles for recognition and for democracy in the wider society. The tension between the requirements for some conformity and behaviour management and the transformative potential of human rights education is itself a site of struggle for educators and researchers.

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