

Learning to Live Together: children's rights, identities and citizenship
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Assignment 1

Implementing a children's rights approach in a school

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0. Introduction

The UN convention on the Right of the Child (CRC, United Nations 1989) is supposed to set the frame for any institutional activity involving children. It has been ratified by practically all member states of the United Nations, and its implementation is subject of checklists and monitoring mechanisms. However, the realisation of children's rights, especially, but not only, within formal education, is far from being achieved, and this is the case in rich and poor countries alike (Harber 2004). Taking a rights based approach to education seriously would require important modifications of the current functioning of educational institutions and politics. Not only individual schools would need to change, sometimes radically, but also the societal and political discourse on the purpose and set up of educational institutions would need to shift to a whole new dimension of emancipatory learning and, consequently, a transformation of the existing social and economical system.

Interestingly, a rights based approach, its emancipatory agenda and the questioning of power relations is increasingly gaining ground also in non-educational context such as the international development discussions. In this paper, I will attempt to apply two different approaches from the context of development policies and cooperation to educational settings: First, the "Istanbul Principles of CSO Development Effectiveness" (Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness 2010), which in their eight provisions show a striking similarity with the child rights agenda and what would be a human rights based approach to education, and Vanessa Andreotti's (2012) HEADS UP checklist, which critically questions mental patterns and established approaches to social betterment. Furthermore, we will use a reflection on rights through, in and to education, and Osler and Starkey's (2005) six "p's" – provision, participation, protection and principle, pedagogy, policies – as a starting point for a reflection on implementing a children's rights approach in schools.

The three proposed tables are meant as reflection tools, upon which a given school (or any other educational programme) can analyse its approach and the question of rights in a systematic way.

1. Getting it right: rights through, in and to education

Osler and Starkey (2005) propose to categorise the rights in the CRC according to protection, provision and participation, and suggest that three other Ps – policy, pedagogy and principle – are paramount in the implementation of children's rights in education. Rights through and in education and the right to education are closely interlinked when looked at through the lens of the CRC: Rights related to protection, provision and participation are necessary elements of each of these aspects, and they overlap largely both in the theoretical reference to particular parts of the CRC, as well as regarding the concrete provisions in their application they require. However, there seems to be a distinction within the discussed triplet when it comes to the other Ps of *principle*, *pedagogy* and *politics*: Rights through education imply putting human rights at the very heart of education, as overarching *principle* regarding content as well as methods and the institution itself. Rights in education refer to the application of rights in the institutional *pedagogy*. And the right to education requires changes in *policies*. Table 1 proposes a set of questions to analyse to which extend a given school or any other educational setting applies rights through education as overarching educational *principle*, rights in education as central element of a rights based *pedagogy*, and the right to education as underlying educational *policy*.

	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Implementation</i>
<i>Rights through education</i>	Does the school embrace human rights as overarching <i>principle</i> of education?	Is human rights education a central <i>provision</i> of the educational programme and practice? Is <i>participation</i> as active learning of human rights systematically implemented? Does the school provide thorough <i>protection</i> from human rights violations?
<i>Rights in education</i>	Does the school apply human rights as central element of a rights-based <i>pedagogy</i> ?	Is <i>participation</i> in decision making streamlined? Does the school <i>provide</i> particular care for students with special characteristics? Are learners <i>protected</i> from situations countering the exercise of rights?
<i>Right to education</i>	Does the school embrace rights-based reforms of the educational system through its institutional <i>policies</i> towards quality education for all?	Is equal access to education <i>provided</i> ? Are learners <i>protected</i> from situations harmful to the right to access education? Is <i>participation</i> as precondition for quality education implemented?

Table 1: The rights triplet and the “six Ps”

2. Rights based education is quality education: eight principles to apply

What are concrete elements and action fields in order to implement a rights based approach to education? The provisions of the CRC show a striking conceptual overlapping with other rights based approaches to social interaction. In particular the *Istanbul Principles of CSO development effectiveness* (Open Forum for CSO development effectiveness, 2010), elaborated through a worldwide consultation process with 1000s of civil society organisations (CSOs) and approved at a global assembly in Istanbul 2010, seem to be a valuable tool to transpose principles of human rights and social justice to educational settings. Table 2 adapts the Istanbul principles (human rights, gender, democracy, environment, transparency, partnerships, learning and change) to schools: Through simply replacing “CSOs” with “schools” and some other minor reformulations, the eight principles raise central questions about the institutional functioning, pedagogic content and methodologies of schools, which seem central to the implementation of a rights based approach. Education is effective and of good pedagogic quality only when it fully embraces human rights, which are the basis of the Istanbul Principles. Addressing these principles in a systematic way can provide a solid and concrete reflection on the quality and effectiveness of learning in a given educational setting.

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
<i>Respect and promote human rights and social justice</i>	Schools are effective as educational actors when they develop and implement strategies, activities and practices that promote individual and collective human rights, including children’s rights, with dignity, decent work, social justice and equity for all people.
<i>Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girl’s rights</i>	Schools are effective as educational actors when they promote and practice learning embodying gender equity, reflecting women’s and girls’ concerns and experience, while supporting women’s and girls’ efforts to realize their individual and collective rights, participating as fully empowered actors in the educational process.
<i>Focus on people’s empowerment, democratic ownership and participation</i>	Schools are effective as educational actors when they support the empowerment and inclusive participation of learners to expand their democratic ownership over policies and educational initiatives that affect their lives, with an emphasis on the marginalized.
<i>Promote Environmental</i>	Schools are effective as educational actors when they develop and

<i>Sustainability</i>	implement learning that promotes environmental sustainability for present and future generations, including urgent responses to climate crises, with specific attention to the socio-economic, cultural and indigenous conditions for ecological integrity and justice.
<i>Practice transparency and accountability</i>	Schools are effective as educational actors when they demonstrate a sustained organisational commitment to transparency, multiple accountability, and integrity in their internal operations.
<i>Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity</i>	Schools are effective as educational actors when they commit to transparent relationships with the local community and other educational actors, freely and as equals, based on shared learning goals and values, mutual respect, trust, organizational autonomy, long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship.
<i>Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning</i>	Schools are effective as educational actors when they enhance the ways they learn from their experience, from other educational actors, integrating evidence from educational practice and results, including the knowledge and wisdom of local and indigenous communities, strengthening innovation and their vision for the future they would like to see.
<i>Commit to realizing positive sustainable change</i>	Schools are effective as educational actors when they collaborate to realize sustainable learning outcomes and impacts of their educational actions, focusing on results and conditions for lasting change for people, with special emphasis on poor and marginalized populations, ensuring an enduring legacy for present and future generations.

Table 2: The Istanbul Principles on CSO Development Effectiveness transposed to educational contexts

3. HEADS UP or thumbs down? Double-checking dogmatism

A rights based approach to education has to avoid the trap of proselytization and arrogance in its application. Global education scholar Vanessa Andreotti (2012) developed a checklist in order to analyse if a given initiative reproduces a blind and uncritical salvatorism, which might be contradictory to bring upon aspired positive change. The seven steps of the checklist are *hegemony*, *ethnocentrism*, *ahistoricism*, *depoliticisation*, *salvatorism*, *un-complicated solutions* and *paternalism*, which form the title HEADS UP. It is built on post-colonial theory and takes Andreotti's (2006) concept of critical global citizenship education further. In order to analyse the application of a human rights based approach in schools, the checklist provides a strong tool to analyse deeper questions of power and motivation of various actors. In table 3, I reformulated the checklist for school contexts.

<i>Pattern</i>	<i>Reproduction</i>	<i>Reflection</i>
<i>Hegemony</i> <i>(justifying superiority and supporting domination)</i>	Does this school promote the idea that one group of people (e.g. teachers, or the educational hierarchy) could design and implement solutions for everyone?	Does this school invite people to think about its own limitations and insufficiencies?
<i>Ethnocentrism</i> <i>(projecting one view as universal)</i>	Does this school imply that anyone who disagrees with what is proposed is immoral, ignorant or rebellious?	Does this school acknowledge that there are other logical ways of looking at the same issue?
<i>Ahistoricism</i> <i>(forgetting historical legacies and complicities)</i>	Does this school conceive present educational challenges without reference to why it is like that and how 'we' are connected to that?	Does this school examine educational challenges through a complex historical analysis?
<i>Depoliticisation</i>	Does this school conceive educational	Does this school acknowledge its own

<i>(disregarding power inequalities and ideological roots of analyses and proposals)</i>	challenges as disconnected from power and ideology?	ideological location and offer a robust analysis of power relations?
Salvationism <i>(framing help as the burden of the fittest)</i>	Does this school present children as 'in need' or as citizens to-be, and teachers as capable of leading students towards their destiny of order, progress and harmony?	Does this school acknowledge that the desire to teach others and the imposition of aspirations for singular ideas of progress and development have historically been part of the problem?
Uncomplicated solutions <i>(offering easy solutions that do not require systemic change)</i>	Does this school offer simplistic analyses and answers that do not invite people to engage with complexity or think more deeply?	Does this school offer a complex analysis of the problem acknowledging the possible adverse effects of proposed solutions?
Paternalism <i>(seeking affirmation of superiority through the provision of help)</i>	Does this school portray learners as people who lack education, resources, civilization and who would and should be very grateful for your help?	Does this school portray learners as people who are entitled to disagree with their teachers and to legitimately want to implement different solutions to what their teachers have in mind?

Table 3: The HEADS UP checklist transposed to educational contexts

4. Conclusion

There is no master plan to apply a right based approach to education in a given school or other educational setting. A top down reform of an institution would necessarily not only limit the collective engagement with the human rights agenda, which is essential for the implementation of such an approach and, participation being an inherent principle of human rights, a conceptual requirement. It would also miss out to address the complexity of the CRC and its wholehearted application. The three tables in this paper intend to provide sets of questions to critically analyse and reflect the role of human rights in a school, the effectiveness of foreseen provisions and the underlining question of power and motivations. In a next step, the results of a board and institution wide consultation around these questions could lead to a more concrete action and implementation plan, in order to bring a human rights based approach to learning to live.

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