7 ways in which a children's rights-based approach supports resilience in schools and 7 ways to make it successful

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Overview of the UNCRC

• The UNCRC, (United Nations (UN), 1989) “is the most complete statement of children’s rights ever produced and is the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in history” (Unicef)

• It comprises 54 articles that are connected and of equal importance and 3 additional protocols
## UNCRC in the UK

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UNCRC in the UK

- Fifth UK government report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2014
  - explicit use of UNCRC not evident

- House of Lords and House of Commons Joint Committee on Human rights, ‘The UK’s compliance with the UNCRC’ 2015
  - The Children’s Alliance statement –
    - Report is too abstract, content is omitted, too optimistic

- Gerber (2008) Lack of top-down procedures to ensure implementation of UNCRC, but bottom-up processes usually instigated by passionate individuals can be effective (Australia)
UNCRC - relevance to educational settings

Articles 28 and 29

– children’s rights to education
Article 28

States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
(b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
(c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
(d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
(e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.
Article 29:
States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
(e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principles set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.
UNCRC - relevance to educational settings

• Lack of research on the implementation of human rights (Coomans et al 2009) and even less in education (Tomasevski, 2003; Lundy 2012)

• Challenge of getting policy to support children’s rights
  Lack of awareness in education
  Scotland only country to contain reference to the UNCRC in initial teacher training

  (Jerome, Emerson, Lundy & Orr, 2015)
UNCRC – relevance to educational settings

- Unicef’s Rights Respecting Schools Award – positive evaluation (Sebba & Robinson, 2010)

- Teachers as duty bearers (Britto & Ulker, 2012)

- The Children’s Commissioner role – statutory duty to promote children’s rights under the UNCRC
  - Need for more awareness in educational settings
  - CYP identified schools as settings who could communicate the role of the CC and inclusion of the UNCRC in the national curriculum (Dunford review, 2010)
What evidence is there for the promotion and utility of rights-based approaches in schools?
Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

• Inclusion of:
  - empirical, peer-reviewed studies
  - taking a rights-based approach in school settings, not just one article from the UNCRC
  - international
  - any publication date (this was not restricted in the searches)

• Number of studies:
  9
SLR - What is the evidence for the promotion and utility for rights-based approaches in schools?

- **Covell & Howe (1999)** The impact of children’s rights education: A Canadian study
- **Covell & Howe (2001)** Moral Education through the 3 Rs: Rights, respect and responsibility
- **Covell, Howe & McNeil (2008)** ‘If there's a dead rat, don't leave it’. Young children's understanding of their citizenship rights and responsibilities
- **Covell, McNeil & Howe (2009)** Reducing Teacher Burnout by Increasing Student Engagement: A Children’s Rights Approach
- **Veiga, Garcia, Neto & Almeida (2009)** The Differentiation and Promotion of Students’ Rights in Portugal
- **Lyle (2014)** Embracing the UNCRC in Wales (UK): policy, pedagogy and prejudices
- **Covell, Howe & McNeil (2010)** Implementing children’s human rights education in schools
- **Cowell (2010)** School engagement and rights-respecting schools
- **Covell, Howe & Polegato (2011)** Children's human rights education as a counter to social disadvantage: a case study from England.
Positive outcomes for students:

1. Increases in rights-based knowledge;
2. Increases in students’ access to their rights;
3. Increases in engagement and participation in learning and other areas of school life;
4. Increases in pro-social behaviour and decreases in anti-social behaviour;
5. Increases in students’ perceptions of peer and teacher support;
6. Improvements in self-esteem;
7. Increases in attainment (KS2 SATs), particularly for those living in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage.
Positive outcomes for teachers:

Reduction of teacher burn out:

* Increases in personal achievement;
* Decreases in emotional exhaustion.
Positive outcomes for the community:

*A contagion effect is reported, in which parents, other local schools, local communities, children’s services and councils act to support children’s rights after realising the impact of a rights-based approach in one school.
Factors found to be important as facilitators or barriers to implementing a whole rights-based approach include:

1. Leadership – most successful when headteachers are engaged, involved and drive implementation;
2. Access to research evidence and positive statements in Ofsted reports is important to headteachers;
3. Degree of implementation – most successful when embedded across the whole school;
4. Planning and administration – time and resources to plan, act and review implementation;
5. Perceptions of available resources, including quality of training for all staff;
6. Teachers’ views of children – least successful where children are seen as ‘underdeveloped adults’, most successful where children are seen as competent citizens;
7. Pedagogical approaches such as Philosophy for Children (P4C) and the Eclectic Communication Model (ECM) were found to change teacher’s views of children from ‘underdeveloped adults’ to ‘competent citizens, able to participate and act in society’. These approaches therefore support the successful implementation of rights-based approaches in schools.
How can you bring about a rights-based approach in your practice?
1. Increase awareness
   - websites: Unicef, UNCRC Wales, Children’s Alliance, the Children’s Society, children’s commissioner for England
   - read the UNCRC general comments
   - General Comment No 1. The Aims of Education

2. Investigate awareness amongst staff in your schools
   - what do staff including SLT know?
   - is the UNCRC visible in school policies/website?
   - is your school participating in an award such as the Rights Respecting School’s Award?
3. Investigate awareness amongst children in your schools
   - what do children know and understand about their rights and the UNCRC?

4. Visit other schools using rights-based approaches
   - St Mary’s
   http://www.st-marys-mossside.manchester.sch.uk/
5. Encourage SLT in schools to promote children’s rights
   - whole school approach is most effective
   - driven by head teacher and senior leaders
   - all staff including pastoral, support and supervisory staff to have an understanding and be part of the approach
   - cross-curricular, behaviour, school ethos
   - children’s rights training
   - how can parents and the community be involved?

6. In the classroom
   - how can the UNCRC be made accessible to children?
   - how can it be used in daily routines/lessons?
   - how can all children express their views and participate in their learning?
   - is there a democratic system in place?
UNCRC and educational psychologists

7. Involve your educational psychologist

- Distinctive role working across ecological levels of systems around a child; Call for EPs to ‘build a bridge’ between top-down and bottom-up processes to promote children’s access to their rights under the UNCRC (Woods & Bond, 2014)

- School psychologists to support teachers to develop democratic processes in educational settings (Clark Power and Scott, 2014)
Be the change you wish to see in the world.

-Gandhi
Thank you for listening!

If you would like to get in touch with me, please email at jo.williams@york.gov.uk
References


References


References
