

Chapter 2

A Rights-Based Approach to Children's Quality of Life

Abstract

Quality of life is a multi-faceted concept, translated in pragmatic terms as a continuous effort in various domains in order to achieve adequate levels of well-being and prosperity for all children. One way to analyse the concept is through the lens of human rights treaties. As such, Chapter 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) enables the reader to understand quality of life from a rights-based approach.

The first part of this Chapter contains a theoretical background, providing a thorough description of CRC and its principles and how these relate to quality of life: The Principle of Non-Discrimination focuses on practices and procedures that ensure that all children experience high levels of quality life; the Principle of Best Interest defines that in all decisions taken that relate to a child or a group of children a procedure has been applied demonstrating that the decision was the best one for the current and future life of the child; the Principle of Participation ensures that children participate in any process that affects them by expressing their opinions, enhancing their quality of life; the Principle of Life, Maximum Survival and Development, ensures that basic needs of the child are fulfilled in order to develop to the possible maximum extent, a requirement for the child to experience higher levels of quality of life. An analysis of various other Articles of CRC, and especially of Article 27 (adequate standard of living), Article 29 (the aims of education) and Article 31 (leisure, play and culture) follows, demonstrating the extent to which quality of life is affected by the efficient and appropriate exercise of children's rights.

The second part of Chapter 2 entails five lesson plans aiming to provide teacher trainers with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to understand children's quality of life from a rights-based perspective and to become able to apply that knowledge in real case scenarios.

Although assessment is embedded in the whole process, an additional Quiz is presented by the completion of the Workshops, as it serves the aims of the Chapter.

Aim of the Chapter

To analyse children's quality of life through the perspective of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Objectives

Teacher trainers will become able to:

- Acquire basic knowledge for the historical path that led to the formation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and become aware of its basic features as a legal tool for the application of children's rights.
- Legally analyse the term 'quality of children's life' with reference to the four Principles of CRC.
- Reflect on links between certain Articles of CRC and the quality of life.
- Become familiar of and develop skills regarding the methodology of human rights education.
- Strengthen the significance attributed to children's quality of life from a rights-based approach.

Part 1: Theoretical Background

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

In the midst of World War II humanity was surpassed by degrading human behaviours and practices, questioned values and ideals that had been respected for centuries, while the end of the war left humanity speechless in front of the level of committed atrocities and in a state of shock as to how far inhumanity can reach. A major need emerged that demanded the collaboration of all States, in an effort to adverse the consequences of World War II and to prevent a similar future disaster. As such, with the guidance of Eleanor Roosevelt, in 1948, the United Nations formed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)¹, a historic human rights document. Despite the fact that UDHR is an excellent document that prescribes the universality, inalienability and indivisibility for human rights, its non-binding character led to the formation of two Covenants: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights² and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights³. Concurrently though, it was observed that specific groups within the societies continued to experience human rights violations based on specific aspects of their identity, such as the gender, age, disability and so forth. One of those groups was the group of children, a group that its treatment and contribution to the society was historically based on alternating visions for childhood (Pehtelides, 2015). The Convention on the Rights of the Child⁴ (CRC) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in November 20, 1989, a date proclaimed to be celebrated since then as the World Children's Rights Day.

The CRC (Appendix 1), a UN document ratified by all but one state worldwide⁵, became the most acknowledged UN binding document. By ratifying the document, the States abide to implement the CRC in the area of their jurisdiction and to harmonise their legislation to be in accordance to its elements. Once ratified, the CRC becomes a legal document for the respective State, above any national law. States are obliged to submit to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee)⁶ a report every 5 years, describing the progress made at a national level, along with possible violations that still exist and need to be dealt with. Various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), along with independent institutions, such as the Commissioner for Children's Rights which operate in a number of European countries, are invited to submit a supplementary report to the CRC Committee, expressing their own concerns and viewpoints on the application of children's rights on their jurisdiction.

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

⁵ https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRC/OHCHR_Map_CRC.pdf

⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx>

The CRC is defined by 54 Articles, addressing specifically the needs of children, defined as the individuals from the day of birth up to 18 years old. The rights are divided into 3 main categories: protection, provision, participation (Council of Europe, 2012). The boundaries among the three categories may not always be clearly distinct, and as such, any strict categorisation of the rights in just one of the three categories might be inaccurate or unclear and at the same time out of the focus for those working in the field. What the categories stretch out though, is that the CRC does not only address the protection of children as vulnerable individuals, but it also stresses the obligations of the States to provide children with the required means to grow, develop and participate in all aspects of the society. The CRC is also defined by four Principles: a) Non-Discrimination, b) the Best Interest of the child, c) the Right to Life and Maximum Survival and Development, and d) Respect for the views of the child (Hodgkin & Newell, 2007).

The CRC Committee generates guidelines for the States on how to implement children's rights in their jurisdiction, by publishing General Comments⁷. The General Comments legally analyse the Articles, link them with the general Principles of the Convention and other rights, describe the context for the realisation of each right and the challenges to be addressed, they define the specific needs of vulnerable groups that need particular attention to realise their right and describe the State's obligations. Lastly, the CRC is accompanied by three Optional Protocols⁸: on the involvement of children in armed conflict; on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and on a communications procedure.

A Rights-Based Perspective on Children's Quality of Life

Based on WHO's definition about quality of life⁹ and the analysis provided in Chapter 1, it is apparent that various factors are interconnected in determining whether an individual perceives an adequate standard of quality life or not. As such, it can be claimed that the application of all the rights of the child is of paramount importance to achieve a quality of life. What follows is a brief discussion of the four Principles of CRC and their link with quality of life, along with how particular Articles relate to quality of life.

According to the Principle of Non-Discrimination, as explicitly defined in Article 2 of the Convention, States are obliged to respect and safeguard children's rights without any discrimination. Discrimination can occur in different aspects of a child's life and development, but also in the provision of services that may affect access to quality education, health, rehabilitation, preparation for work and entertainment services (Commissioner for Children's Rights, 2018). Children who belong to vulnerable groups

⁷https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=5&DocTypeID=11

⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx>

⁹ WHOQOL Group. (1995). The World Health Organization quality of life assessment (WHOQOL): position paper from the World Health Organization. *Social science & medicine*, 41(10), 1403-1409.

might be affected even further and thus, experience more disadvantaged living conditions and lower levels of quality of life. At a pragmatic level, children who belong to vulnerable groups may not have access to several services provided or they may have limited access, without their actual needs being adequately addressed. As an example, second or foreign language speakers face certain obstacles within the formal educational system and they have restricted access to education, often as a result of inappropriate structures and/or lack of inclusive procedures. Consequently, these children often become observers and not participants in the learning process, being unable to succeed or meaningfully take part in it.

Simultaneously, at an attitudinal level, based on the representations the society beholds, children of vulnerable groups may develop a very low self-esteem, which, in turn, will trap them into very low levels of quality of life. The identification of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of children is essential in developing mechanisms that prevent their marginalisation and ensures their quality of life. It should be noted that, despite the fact that specific groups of children may have higher risks of becoming vulnerable in their childhood, such as children with disabilities, children on the move, Roma children and others, vulnerability is not determined by specific aspects of a child's identity; it is not an intrinsic 'label', but it is determined as a result of the specific social circumstances and/or obstacles that can affect the child's situation during a particular space and time. Lastly, legislation, policy and practices must ensure that no discrimination is exercised against children, so that quality of life be efficiently reassured for all children.

The Principle of the best interest of the child, as defined in Article 3 of the CRC, obliges States to take into consideration both short-term and long-term assessments of the child's conditions and to integrate these in every decision-making process to adhere to the best possible decision for the child (Commissioner for Children's Rights, 2018). The decision must be the best possible for the present and for the future life of the child. In every decision-making process, the possible positive and negative consequences must be evaluated. States must have procedures in place, so that professionals who work with children be able to evaluate the child's best interest, and provide sufficient documentation on how they applied the process and why the specific decision is the best possible for the child/children (Commissioner for Children's Rights, 2017). Safeguarding that processes which evaluate the best interest of the child are in place is a safety net for optimum quality of life for every child.

The right to life and maximum survival and development, defined in Article 6 of the CRC, states the obligation of the States to provide all appropriate means to children and their families, not just in terms of preparing children for adulthood, but to ensure the best possible conditions at the moment (Hodgkin & Newell, 2007). The word 'development' is not constrained to the physical one, but also ensures the psychological, mental, spiritual and social development of the child. The development of the child is also defined in other Articles of the CRC, such as Article 29 (The Aims of Education), Article 27 (Adequate Standard of Living), and Article 31 (The Right to Rest, Play and Leisure). All together describe a holistic development of the child, not restricted either to a cognitive or a social

domain. The States must put in place mechanisms to support families in achieving a child's holistic development. Since Article 29 is related to Article 6, the State is also responsible to create such conditions, in order for children to develop the best of their abilities via formal education. Optimum holistic development of the child is a protective factor for his/her quality of life.

Last but not least, Article 12 defines that a child must be able to express his/her opinion to matters of concern to them, and his/her opinion must be taken into consideration according to his/her age and maturity level. As Hodgkin & Newell (2007) note, by expressing his/her views, the child becomes an active participant in various settings that the right is exercised. The same authors pinpoint that a prerequisite of exercising the right is the provision of the necessary information to the child. This is important in order for a child to have an informed opinion, considering all possible perspectives. It also includes providing feedback to the child about the extent to which his/her opinion has been taken into consideration and the extent to which his/her desire has been satisfied.

As indicated above, quality of life is directly linked to development. Besides the analysis of the four Principles of the Convention, an analysis of the quality of life via the Articles 27, 29 and 31 of the CRC is also considered essential, as these Articles relate to child's development.

As quality of life is directly linked to development, the link with Article 27 becomes an obvious one. Article 27 specifically refers to the basic needs of children, such as nutrition, clothing and housing, that must be fulfilled for children to develop and experience a quality of life. The deployment of strategic plans for the elimination of poverty must be an essential component of the State's actions, to fight the adverse consequences of poverty on children, especially during early childhood, which can affect the process of development and can determine the course of quality of life for the individual, as it has been repeatedly underlined by the CRC Committee (CRC Committee, 2005). The CRC Committee also notes that relative poverty undermines the well-being, integration and self-esteem for children and reduces opportunities for learning and development, while extreme poverty has even more serious consequences on a child's life threatening the child's survival and health and undermining his/her quality of life. Article 27 proclaims that parents are the ones bearing the responsibility to provide for the necessary means for the child to develop; at the same time though, the State is responsible to assist parents on fulfilling that responsibility by providing access to social welfare services for all children. Towards that mean, the United Nations (2002) emphasised that the social funds provided for children must not be altered or affected during short-term or long-term financial crises. Finally, children, especially those in vulnerable situations, often fail to receive adequate provisions due to the failure of States to develop strategic approaches (Frazer et al., 2020).

The importance of investing in early childhood has been emphasised by the Council of the European Union (2011), by stating that such an investment can be a mechanism which can stop the cycle of disadvantage that leads to the 'transfer' of poverty from one

generation to the next. UNICEF (n.d.) also pinpointed towards that direction, stressing that even the least deprivation that children may experience can have long-term impact in their future capacities. To pay particular attention to Article 27, States must prioritise budgetary allocations for the implementation of children's rights, initiated by specifying budget that will be contributed particularly towards this purpose.

Article 29 defines the aims of education as the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; the development of respect for human rights; the development of respect for the parents, the identity, the values; the preparation for participation in democratic, peaceful societies; and the respect for the natural environment. By achieving these goals, education can be the cornerstone for children's quality of life.

Article 29 "expands on the role of education, taking it beyond just the development of children's intellectual abilities, traditionally perceived as the responsibility of schools" (Hodgkin & Newell, 2007, p. 441). The emphasis provided by States and societies for academic excellence reduces the quality of life experienced by children, a repeated finding that derived from focus groups with children. Assessing their daily routine schedules, children commented that those are quite burdensome and, therefore, they do not have enough time to engage in activities of interest to them. They pointed out that, if they had the chance to spend time on a daily basis on something they care about, it would have a positive impact on their psychological and physical health. Teenagers focused on their school obligations and expectations of the society and their family regarding their academic achievements in school and life in general. They commented that success is mainly linked to school performance and career path, which leads children to choices that are expected to enhance their chances of success rather than choices they really need. To sum up, narrowing the aims of education to academic excellence, results in developing children in one dimension and not to the maximum extent possible, which, consequently, restricts them from living a quality life. Article 29 also stresses the need to develop each child to the fullest of his/her potential, and as such, determines the course of methodology that formal education should undertake to achieve it, leaving no child behind.

At last, the CRC in Article 31 recognises play, rest and leisure as a child's right and at the same time obliges States to provide appropriate and equal opportunities for children to participate, as the characteristics of play and leisure and the opportunities for rest contribute to child's development. The inclusion of Article 31 in the Convention recalls the obligation of care providers to include play, rest and leisure in their daily schedule, as the child's daily schedule and his/her involvement in various activities is usually determined by adults. Concurrently, Article 31 is highly important to guide formal education implemented by the States. Play and leisure as a right is not included in the formal educational policies and, as a result, neither early or elementary education receives the necessary attention to promote it, having a direct impact on the quality of childhood and the development of the child. The structure of education also reduces the opportunities for play. For example, the provision/extension of preschool education replaces play with

formal education forms. Moreover, learning time is separated from the time provided for play, rest and leisure, often regarding them as conflicting and/or competing ones.

Additionally, increasing homework demands reduce the time available for play, rest and leisure. Free time is often perceived as opposed to school learning. Although children have a spontaneous need and look for opportunities to play in any environment, General Comment no.17 of the CRC Committee recognises that specific conditions should be ensured that the right be exercised in safe conditions, free from physical and other hazards, without stress or discrimination.

Moreover, two important factors that contribute to the enjoyment of the right to play and leisure are space and time. In every political, economic, social and cultural context, it is essential that the right to play, rest and leisure is guaranteed and promoted through participation opportunities that meet the needs of all children. Policies should be supported with adequate budgets and appropriate legislation. In addition, the State should ensure the co-operation of all relevant bodies and services in order to promote the development of factors that assist and influence the enjoyment of the right to play, rest and leisure. So far, States recognition of the importance of Article 31 is at a low level, exhibited through the failure to create opportunities and spaces for play or through the excessive restrictions indirectly imposed on children's lives. At the same time as the playgrounds shrink, the amount of time children can devote to play is reduced. The increased demands of educational systems, the systematic involvement in organised games, the various family responsibilities and school responsibilities greatly limit the time that children actually engage in play.

According to the Convention, the fulfilment of the child's rights in leisure activities is necessary to protect the unique and evolutionary nature of childhood and a measure to safeguard the child's right to development and resilience, while safeguarding other children's rights. By extension, there is an absence of an institutional framework governing the participation of children in leisure activities, which would ensure their safe participation and would provide opportunities for the development of their talents, character and personality to the full extent, while practicing other rights as well (Commissioner for Children's Rights 2016; 2017a; 2017b; unpublished).

Quality of Life through Human Rights Education

If quality of life is determined by the ways and the extent to which various rights of the child are applied, then teaching about quality of life falls under the spectrum of human rights education. What follows is a brief analysis of the main concepts of human rights education, so that quality of life be taught under those terms.

Human Rights education is a process that strives to build a culture of human rights within the society. As a process, it evolves and at the same time, interrelates with many other fields. When we teach about human rights the focus of the teaching is the child itself; in other words, the child-learner with his/her needs drives the process, while his/her active

participation is an essential component. Experiential learning is the only means that have proven to succeed in teaching about, for and through human rights. Teaching about human rights refers to the knowledge acquisition; teaching for human rights refers to the acquisition of skills and attitudes and values that help the learners apply those; teaching through human rights means that the process we teach is consistent with what we teach (i.e. an authoritarian teaching style is not compatible with the principles of human rights) (Council of Europe, 2012).

The five lesson plans that follow aim to transform theory into an educational praxis and provide via case studies and real life scenarios the space to discuss concepts and acquire skills and attitudes for educators to teach human rights in their everyday practice. The aim is to create opportunities for all children to experience higher levels of quality of life.

Part 2: Workshops

Workshop 1: An Introduction to Human Rights

Objectives:

Participants will

- Become acquainted with basic human rights' concepts.
- Understand the interaction of various environmental elements for the adult to be.
- Link quality of life with children's rights.
- Identify obstacles opposed by society on children experiencing a quality of life.

Duration:

3 hours

Methodology-Process

- (40') Read thoroughly Part 1: Theoretical Background of Chapter 2.
Divide the words below (Appendix 2) into one of the following categories: civic rights, political rights, economic rights, social rights, cultural rights (retrieved from Kotziamani, 2010).
 - Questions for consideration:
 - Which of the above categories of rights is the most important one?
 - Is there any difference between civic, political, economic, social and cultural rights?
 - Can you think of other categories not included in the above list?
- (15') Under the images below *[to be attached]*, write the children's right they represent (the images were retrieved from the Commissioner's for Children's Rights website. They can be used only under the terms and conditions referred at the website).
- (15') Place the images under one of the three categories: protection, provision, participation.
- (20') Read the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
 - Question for consideration:

Why should it be a concern to us if children's rights are still violated in certain countries? List 5 reasons.
- (30') A child is just born (retrieved by Kotziamani, 2010):
 - Within the outline of the following baby, write the characteristics or qualities that you would like your baby to have.

- Outside the outline write the elements you think that the baby needs in order to develop and grow to a healthy adult.
- Read Scenario A (Appendix 3).
- Within the outline of an adult, write the characteristics or qualities that you believe your adult will possess according to the given scenario. Outside the outline write how the outside elements have affected the baby while becoming an adult.
- Repeat the procedure with Scenario B (Appendix 3).
- Questions for consideration:
 - Is there a difference between the baby you wanted to have with what your baby came to be? If yes, why is there a difference? If not, why not?
 - Why is it important to be aware of the elements that affect our lives?
- What have impressed you the most from this exercise? What have you learned?
- By using the internet find the following information:
 - how many people live under war or conflicts nowadays?
 - how many reported incidents of domestic violence exist in the world?
 - what is the percentage of the population in the world that lives below the poverty level?
 - how many and which countries have dictatorships now?
 - Domains that women are non-equal to men (domains that women can face discrimination)
- (30') Read General Comment No17.
- (30') According to WHO's definition, quality of life is "An individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment"¹⁰.
Based on General Comment No17 define various obstacles opposed by the societal systems which have adverse effects on children's quality of life.

¹⁰ Whoqol Group. (1995). The World Health Organization quality of life assessment (WHOQOL): position paper from the World Health Organization. *Social science & medicine*, 41(10), 1403-1409.

Workshop 2: The Principles of Non-Discrimination and Participation

Objectives:

Participants will

- Become aware of how specific practices are exclusionary and violate the right of non-discrimination.
- Identify the obstacles opposed by society that restrain the meaningful participation of children.
- Name the prerequisite conditions needed for participation to be meaningful.
- Identify opportunities for children to participate at school.
- Evaluate opportunities for children's participation within the school community.

Duration:

3 hours

Methodology-Process:

- (60') The Principle of Non-Discrimination
 - Read the handout "Integration on the Playing Fields" (Appendix 4) (retrieved from Kotziamani, 2010)
 - Complete the worksheet (Appendix 5).
 - Questions for consideration:
 - What is the difference between same treatment and equal treatment?
 - What is positive discrimination?
 - Look for inspirational stories of people with or without disabilities at the following websites:
<http://www.specialolympics.org/stories.aspx>
<http://www.specialolympics.org/athletes.aspx>
 - What is the link between non-discrimination and quality of life?
- (120') The Principle of Respect of the Views of the Child
 - Participation through the Arts
 - Look at the artwork of children and artists [*to be attached*] on the right of the child to participate. Specify how children and the society experiences children's participation.
 - One of the drawings of an artist was not finished by the time of the exhibition. Complete the drawing.
 - Take an interview from a child and describe his/her experiences on the right to express his/her views.
 - Conditions for Participation: At the table below write the conditions that must be met in order for a child's participation to be meaningful and constructive for him/herself and the school community.

- Scenarios: Within the given scenarios provided (Appendix 6) decide whether children should be involved in the decision-making process and at what level.
- Hierarchical order: Three cases of participation are provided (Appendix 7). You are invited to prioritize the above cases of participation on the basis of effective participation (from the least to the most effective one). Then, select one of the cases provided and modify it accordingly to better meet the criteria you set for meaningful participation.
 - Questions for consideration:
 - How is the participation rate different in each case?
 - How is participation more meaningful for the child and the school community?
- Hart's Ladder of Participation: The model provided (Appendix 8) is a theoretical model for children's participation prepared by Roger Hart. Identify examples from the school life that represent each step (Appendix 9) (examples/solutions are provided in Appendix 10).
- Question for consideration: Consider the link between the right to express his/her views with quality of life.

Workshop 3: The Principles of Development and Best Interest

Objectives:

Participants will

- Reflect on the impact of poverty on development.
- Explore ways of addressing poverty by examining the roots of the problem, as a means of ensuring development for all children.
- Apply the principle of best interest through a case study.

Duration:

3 hours

Methodology-Process:

- (40') Food savings (retrieved from Kotziamani, 2010 – source Cawagas, 2009): Below you can see two families both residing in the city. The first family earns an income of €4000 per month, while the second family earns an income of €900 per month.
 - Identify the kinds of food that the two families are expected to consume (cost, quantity, where they buy them from); and what other consumer items they can afford to buy after satisfying their basic needs. Complete the worksheet.
- (60') Roots and branches (retrieved from Council of Europe, 2016 and adapted):
 - In order to understand and respond to poverty, we need to see it as a problem with numerous connections to other issues. In particular, when we are trying to eliminate poverty, it can be useful to look at the underlying causes. Addressing these is often more effective than trying to address poverty itself.
 - Upon the tree that follows (Appendix 11) you need to fill in the roots of the tree (causes) and its branches (effects). When you work down the tree, you explore answers to the question “why does this happen?”. One cause can have its own causes. For the branches you need to explore possible consequences of items lower down the branch. In other words, what would happen to an individual or a group of children that experience poverty for a prolonged period of time. What might happen as a result of that?
 - Identify and write down 5 actions that the States can undertake to ensure the right to development for all children.
- (20') Questions for consideration:
 - What impact does poverty have on children and their development?
 - What is the “passport” out of poverty? How easy is it for poor people to break the cycle of poverty?
 - What are the perceptions of other people for those that they regard as ‘poor’?

- To what extent is education a key to reducing poverty in your country?
 - Why is facilitating development for every child to the maximum of his/her abilities a prerequisite for a quality life?
- (60') Placement of unaccompanied children (retrieved from Commissioner for Children's Rights, unpublished internal document): Based on the case study provided (Appendix 12), define the pros and cons of the implementation of the Centre for the Unaccompanied Minors at the village (Appendix 13). As a second step, decide whether the decision taken by the State is in accordance to the Principle of the Best Interest and write a short paragraph stating your reasoning. To evaluate it, consider whether the decision took into account the following:
 - The view of the children themselves, depending on their age and maturity.
 - Child safety and care.
 - Whether the decision fulfils the needs of the children.
 - The factors that result in these children being in a vulnerable situation.
 - Whether all necessary measures have been taken to ensure that the children enjoy all their rights.
 - The child's right to develop to the greatest extent possible.
 - If there are any conflicting interests in what has been presented.
 - The quality of life children will experience.

Workshop 4: Human Rights Education Methodology

Objectives:

Participants will

- Apply the methodology of human rights education to form a lesson plan.
- Develop skills on developing lesson plans for human rights education.
- Gain deeper knowledge on the right to play.

Duration:

3 hours

Methodology-Process:

- (60') Study the document titled "Children's opinions on the right to play" (Appendix 14)

Answer the following questions:

- What is the main problem identified by children-participants of the meeting?
 - List 3 important issues regarding the right to play that children believe adult policy-makers should be aware of.
 - Considering the current situation in your country, write down 3 recommendations as to what could change in the educational setting, so that the right to play be appreciated and achieved.
- (120') Based on the methodology used in human rights education, develop a two-hour lesson plan on the right to play. Take into account the information provided by children-participants of the meeting described in Appendix 14. The lesson plan can be for any level of education and should include the following elements:
 - Grade, no of students, time needed
 - Prerequisite knowledge
 - Objectives
 - Materials needed
 - Detailed description of the course of the lesson plan
 - Any instructional material needed (i.e. handouts)

Note: An optional lesson plan template (Appendix 15) is provided for your convenience if needed.

- Questions for consideration:
 - How do you respond to the common reaction that "teaching about human rights should always be accompanied by teaching about responsibilities"?
 - What form of evaluation should be applied in the case of human rights education?
 - List the benefits of teaching human rights within formal education.

Workshop 5: Case Study

Objective:

Participants will

- Combine the knowledge and skills gained to prepare a Position Paper regarding children's rights violations.

Duration:

3 hours

Methodology-Process:

- Read the case study provided (Appendix 16).
- Spyros' parents submit to the Ministry of Education a complaint about their situation. According to their complaint, the Ministry of Education recommended that Spyros would continue his studies at high school not as a 'regular student', but to keep the status of a 'listener' (as he did in the previous three years of middle school), until he becomes ready to retake all the exams.
- Spyros and his family do not agree with the solution provided by the Ministry. So, they submitted a complaint to the Commissioner for Children's Rights, describing the events that took place during the recent examination period. The Commissioner has to investigate this case and report to what extent there may be any violations of children's rights, based on the CRC.
- You undertake the role of the Commissioner for Children's Rights. As a Commissioner you need to:
 - Write down the educational needs of the child (from parents' description of the events, as presented in Appendix 16).
 - Identify the conditions/characteristics which could describe the child's situation as 'vulnerable/disadvantaged' (Appendix 17).
 - Make a list of the aspects that the Commissioner would investigate further, in order to receive adequate information to examine the case in more detail.
 - Name the rights of the child that may be violated or not adequately respected by the application of the solution proposed by the Ministry.
 - Evaluate the solution proposed by the Ministry, based on the four Principles of the CRC (Appendix 18).
 - Write a Position Paper on behalf of the Commissioner (Appendix 19).

Quiz

Select the year that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was formed.

- 1923
- 1937
- 1952
- 1948

When was the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the UN General Assembly?

- September 20, 1989
- November 20, 1989
- September 22, 1987
- November 22, 1987

How is the child defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

- Individuals from the date of conception up to 18
- Individuals from the date of birth up to 18
- Individuals from the date of conception up to 21
- Individuals from the date of birth up to 21

Please check the four Principles of the CRC:

- Preservation of identity
- Best interest of the child
- Non-Discrimination
- Child's right to protection from violence
- Respect for the views of the child
- Child's right to an adequate standard of living
- Child's right to education
- Child's right to life and maximum survival and development

Human Rights Education should strive for the acquisition of:

- Knowledge, attitudes, values and behaviours
- Only the theoretical background of the field
- Just knowledge on how the rights are applied in real life

Which of the following statements is NOT a challenge for the realisation of children's right to play:

- Lack of the recognition of the importance to play
- Overly structured and programmed schedules
- Limited access in purchasing toys
- Balancing risk and safety

Respond to the following comments for children's participation in the school community:

1. "Educators have worked for years in schools to be recognised or for their views be appreciated and suddenly you say that decisions will be made on an equal basis with the children's involvement. It seems that you cancel them." Can this be overcome without underestimating the educators and without downgrading their social image?
2. "There is a fear that by asking children about their opinion, they may respond with absurd things or express themselves in a wrong way (not politically correct). On the one hand you want to give them the opportunity to express their opinions, but on the other hand, what they have to say may be in contrary to what the school is based on, even democratic values or human rights".
3. "There will always be a discontent because of the huge gap between children's opinions and decisions made by adults, which fail to meet their real needs. There is no way to bridge two completely opposite ways of thinking, so there is no point in listening to children's views".
4. "If we want to get involved properly it will take us a long time and this will be to the detriment of the lessons. There is not enough time to consult the children, there is material to be covered".
5. "Teachers are experts in education, why to involve students? Children are not in a position to judge the work and decisions of teachers".

Summary

This Chapter is a blend of theory and practice on human rights education. A rights-based approach to children's quality of life is explored within the spectrum of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), its principles and Articles that relate to aspects of quality of life, i.e. adequate standard of living, educational aims and leisure, play and culture. Teacher trainers are expected to acquire the necessary skills in order to facilitate a rights-based perspective, gaining information from academic analyses in the field, combined with real-life scenarios and discussions with children. The Workshops escalate through the stages of perception, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and critical thinking, resulting in the demanding task of recognising violations of children's rights and recommending the implementation of the necessary measures, in order to comply with the CRC.

Quality of life is both a process and a product, but it is also a standard.

References

- Commissioner for Children's Rights. (2016). Report of the Commissioner for Children's Rights, regarding the practice applied by two soccer clubs to impose a fee payment to the parents in order to release the child who wishes to register with another sports club [publication in Greek language]. Nicosia, Cyprus: Commissioner for Children's Rights
- Commissioner for Children's Rights. (2017). Report of the Commissioner for Children's Rights, Leda Koursoumba, regarding the need for a child-friendly complaints submission system within the school setting. Nicosia, Cyprus: Commissioner for Children's Rights.
- Commissioner for Children's Rights. (2017a). Participation of children in audiovisual and artistic productions. Manual for professionals and parents. Nicosia, Cyprus: Commissioner for Children's Rights.
- Commissioner for Children's Rights. (2017b). Report of the Commissioner for Children's Rights, Leda Koursoumba, regarding the assessment procedures for children/youth theater performances and the procedures of age classification of those. Nicosia, Cyprus: Commissioner for Children's Rights.
- Commissioner for Children's Rights. (2018). Report of the Commissioner for Children's Rights, Leda Koursoumba, regarding the non-provision of minimum income to children with disabilities, based on the classification of their disability as mild or medium. Nicosia, Cyprus: Commissioner for Children's Rights.
- Commissioner for Children's Rights. (unpublished). Report of the Commissioner for Children's Rights, regarding the absence of an institutional framework that regulates children's camps, and a competent control body. Nicosia, Cyprus: Commissioner for Children's Rights.
- Council of Europe. (2012). Compass. Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Council of Europe. (2016). Bookmarks. A manual for combating hate speech online through human rights education. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- CRC Committee. (2005). General Comment No. 7: Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood. CRC/C/GC/7/Rev.1, para. 26.
- Frazer, H., Guio, A.-C. and Marlier, E. (eds.) (2020). Feasibility Study for a Child Guarantee: Intermediate Report. Brussels: European Commission.

Hodgkin, R., & Newell, P. (2007). Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the child. Geneva: UNICEF.

Kotziamani, E. (2010). Manual for Human Rights Education. A Quick Guideline and Lesson Plans for Implementation at Middle Schools and High Schools in Cyprus. Unpublished master's thesis. University for Peace, Costa Rica.

Pehtelides, G. (2015). Kinoniologia tis Paidikis Ilikias [Sociology of Childhood]. Athens: Hellenic Association of Academic Libraries.

Council of the European Union. (2011). Early childhood education and care: providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow. Council Conclusions 2011/C 175/03 (May 2011), Brussels: Council of the European Union. Available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/122123.pdf

United Nations. (2002). Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly, A/S-27/19/Rev.1, para. 52.