



# The child's right to be educated about rights

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# The right to rights education

*UN International Covenant on Cultural, Economic and Social Rights, Article 13*

*Education shall:*

- promote a sense of human dignity,
- strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms,
- enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society,
- promote understanding, tolerance and friendship.

*UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29*

*Education shall:*

- develop respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.
- prepare for a responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, tolerance, equality and friendship.

# Why should children and young people learn about their human rights?

Knowledge about rights is the fundament for all other rights.

Important for the individual child in the present and in the future.

Important to society in the present and in the future.

1995-2005	Decade of Human Rights Education
2005-2011	World Programme for Human Rights Education <i>UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training</i>

# Human Rights Education

## – UN activities

HRE should include:

- Education **about** human rights: knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection;
- Education **through** human rights: learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners;
- Education **for** human rights; empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others.

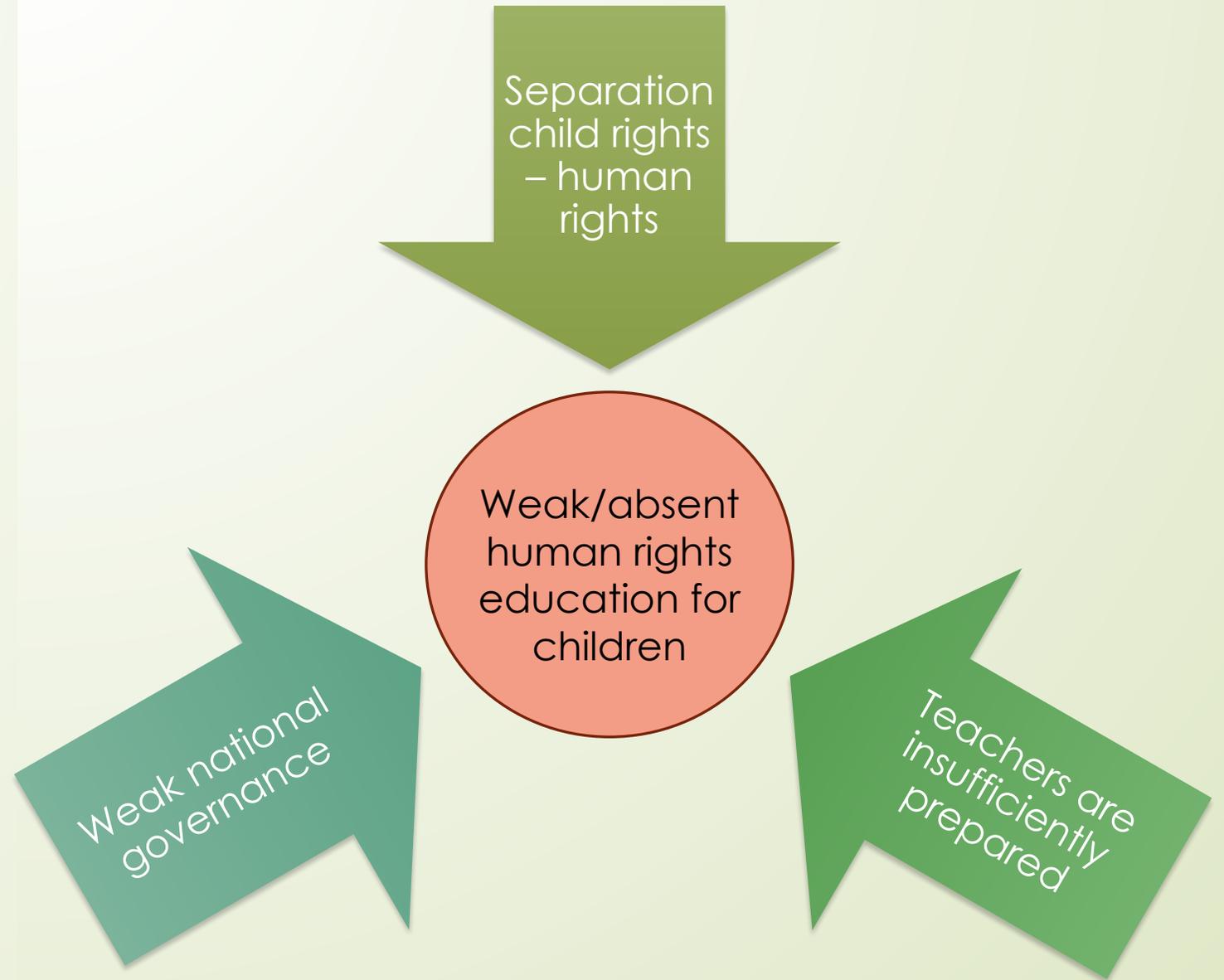
- International law states rights education to be a part of the right to education – signatories are duty bound.
- There are good reasons to why such education should take place.
- UN activities to spur and support states: HRE declaration, ‘decade’, ‘world program’, etc.

**And yet... rights education for children and young people does not seem to take place in schools as hoped for!**

**WHY?**



## Three explanations



# Explanation 1

## Separation child rights – human rights

Separation upheld through treaties, vocabulary, research fields.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Children's rights  
Protection, provision, participation rights.

Children's rights research focuses on the child, children's participation a dominant theme.

UN Declaration of Human Rights  
UN Covenants on civil/political, and cultural/economic/social rights

Human rights  
Civil, political, economic, social, cultural rights.

Human rights research rarely focus on the child.

### **Spills over to rights education:**

- *Human Rights Education* is not picked up by children's rights scholars or by children's rights organisations
- There is no distinct idea about Child Rights Education developed to provide a structure for the education.



## Explanation 2

# Weak national governance

- Large differences in requirement of rights education
- Often unsystematically described and non-compulsory
- Rights education or not tend to depend on enthusiastic staff
- NGOs and IGOs often replace the state

# Curriculum direction – example: Swedish curricula

Curriculum for all school forms clearly require that rights education is to take place.

**But difference between direction of knowledge development and values & capacity development!**

## The pupil is to develop **knowledge** about the following (in syllabus for Civic studies)

Years 1–3	Years 4–6	Years 7–9
<p>Human rights, including the equal value of all people.</p> <p>The child's rights as laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p> <p>What freedom of opinion and expression can mean in school and society.</p>	<p>Human rights and their meaning, including the child's rights as laid down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p> <p>The principle of equal treatment, including protection against discrimination.</p> <p>Rights of national minorities and indigenous people in Sweden.</p>	<p>Violations of human rights in different parts of the world.</p> <p>International work to promote human rights.</p> <p>The situation of national minorities in Sweden. The Sami's position as an indigenous people.</p> <p>Freedoms, rights and obligations in democratic societies. Dilemmas linked to democratic rights and obligations, for example the boundary between freedom of expression and abuse in social media.</p>

## The pupil is to develop the following **values and action capacity** (in cross-curricular introductory section)

### Values

The school shall strive to that the pupil:

- Values the inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all, gender equality and solidarity between peoples.
- Is open to and respects differences between humans.
- Has conscious and human rights-based ethical standpoints.
- Has respect for the intrinsic value of other people, and for their bodily and personal integrity.
- Rejects the subjection of people to violence, oppression, discrimination and offensive treatment.
- Has ability to empathise with and understand others' situation and develops a will to act with their best interests at heart

### Action capacity

The school shall strive to that the pupil:

- Respects the intrinsic value of other people, and their bodily and personal integrity.
- Actively rejects that people are subjected to violence, oppression, discrimination and offensive treatment, and contributes to helping other people.
- Can express ethical standpoints based on knowledge of human rights.
- Can gradually exercise increasingly greater influence over their education and the internal work of the school.
- Shows respect and consideration for school staff and other students.



**Result:**

- **Work with knowledge development - good curriculum support**
- **Work with values and capacity building - weak curriculum support**

**Knowledge development**

- Responsibility assigned to specific subject
- Age specific content described
- Evaluation compulsory and criteria provided

**Values and action capacity development**

- Abstract content description for all ages
- Everybody's responsibility
- No evaluation required

## Explanation 3

# Teachers lack the necessary tools

- ❑ Teachers say that they lack own knowledge, and that teaching material is scarce.
- ❑ Teacher education insufficient. Some attention is given to *children's rights*, but little to rights education.

### Study showed:

- Document analysis: National requirement is **diluted** when moving through system – local course syllabi show few examples of what teacher students are expected to learn.
- Survey: Children's rights are **integrated** into other topics, rarely separate content.

- ❑ Absent *selective tradition* for children's human rights education (professionally carried ideas about central content and progression trajectory).

# Undertaking rights education - example

Teacher A – class 3 (8–9-year-olds)		Teacher B – class 3 (8–9-year-olds)	
Aims	Content selection	Aims	Content selection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Knowledge about rights</li> <li>□ Knowledge about forced migration and refugees</li> <li>□ Ability to reflect ethically based on HR</li> <li>□ Take stand for HR</li> <li>□ Empathy for the exposed and vulnerable</li> </ul>	<p>Rights generally, the CRC, understanding of what is a right and not.</p> <p>Conflict areas and flight routes, function of UN, being in forced migration.</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>Understand how circumstances affect life. Compassion with the exposed and vulnerable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Knowledge about rights</li> <li>□ Awareness of injustices</li> <li>□ Ability to listen to the views of others and expressing own views</li> </ul>	<p>Rights generally, the CRC, right to education, right to equal treatment, right to privacy, function of UN.</p> <p>Differences in school attendance in Sweden, injustices in school, gender differences in society.</p> <p>-</p>



# In conclusion

- The separation between children's and human rights has consequences that we need to be aware of
  - National governing is important – curricula provide support to teachers and security to the state by directing the education
  - Teachers need to be given the prerequisites for designing and undertaking rights education – knowledge and a selective tradition to rely on
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# What can be done to promote a full HRE for children and young people in school?

- If you are an academic/researcher: produce knowledge!
- If you are a policy maker: drive curriculum change!
- If you are a teacher educator: provide pre-service teachers with knowledge!
- If you are a school leader: introduce/uphold attention to children's rights!
- If you are a teacher: teach children about their human rights!

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