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30 researchers from non-western countries

Per Wickenberg, Bodil Rasmusson & Ulf Leo (eds.)

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Children's Rights in Schools: from International Initiatives to Local Implementation

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Introduction

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a human rights treaty adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, which has had a major impact on children's rights, policies and legislation in many countries around the world. This paper describes longstanding experiences of running a Sida-funded training programme on children's rights at Lund University. The authors have participated in the programme as teachers, and have, over the years, visited around 20 countries and gained deep insights into change processes at different administrative levels of these countries' education systems. These experiences from similar projects in other countries and continents help put developments in Sweden into perspective.

The aim of the present chapter is firstly to gain an understanding of how the CRC can be used to bring about change in schools and in the classroom. The chapter's secondary aim is to analyse and reflect on, from a norm perspective, how the Convention on the

Rights of the Child (CRC) has contributed to bringing about change at different levels of the participating countries' education systems.

The chapter consists of five sections. Each one begins by describing the programme's background, goal and objective. This is followed by a description of the changes implemented in the participating countries since 2003, which are based in three key CRC perspectives: 'Participation', 'Protection' and 'Provision'. The third section introduces norm-theory and the importance of norms in change processes, both in an international as well as as a Swedish context. The fourth section deals with change processes from the local to the national level and can be initiated both from the bottom–up as well as top–down. The final discussion addresses how some school problems, seen from a Swedish perspective, could be discussed in terms of changing norms in areas where children and students are able to exert a degree of influence. [6]

The terms "children", "pupils" and "students" are used variably throughout the text. The Swedish Education Act adheres to the CRC and defines children as "every human being below the age of eighteen years" (the Swedish Education Act 2010:800, Chap.1 §10). Additionally, the student is also defined as "whomsoever participates in education under this act, with the exception of children attending preschool" (the Swedish Education Act 2010:800, Chap.1 §10).

The Sida training programme

For more than a decade (2003 – 2017), Lund University has been responsible for running the international training programmeme, "Child Rights, Classroom and School Management", which focuses on practical implementions of the CRC. The program adheres to the priorities determined by the Swedish government in connection with international development cooperation programmes, i.e., human rights projects, the development of democracy, and the fight against poverty. The overarching goal of the program is, according to Sida:

> To improve participating countries' capacity to offer and ensure everyone´s right to relevant and quality education, an education that is safe and secure, inclusive, student–centred, democratic, and problem solving, and that creates opportunities for all, regardless of background, to participate in community life as active citizens (www.sida.se/itp, Sida 2010).

[6] This chapter is an English translation of our chapter in the Swedish anthology on the Convention on the Rights of the Child edited by Lina Ponnert & Anna Sonander (red. 2019). "Perspektiv på barnkonventionen". Lund: Studentlitteratur. The publishing house – Studentlitteratur, Lund, Sweden – has accepted that we are using this article in this context.

The main goal has been to provide tools to further develop the participants' competency when initiating change processes based in the CRC in their own countries. Sida has provided funding for the programme but has not funded any of the change processes implemented in connection with the programme. As a result, the participants have started their own organisations to provide material and personal support. In all, approximately 600 participants from 29 developing countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Central and South America have received training through this programme. 30 participants from 10 different countries have participated in each training cycle, and each country has been represented by a team consisting of three representatives from different administrative levels within the education system. Additionally, geographical proximity places certain restrictions on the participants ability to establish important networks. The programme consists of four weeks training in Lund, during which time the teams put together their own project plans, with the support of their instructors, to be implemented upon returning home. Six months later, the 30 participants convene for 10 days in one of the participating Sida countries. The main point of this is to hold seminars and discuss developments in the school projects in these 10 countries under the motto "Give and Gain". After a further six months, the teachers visit their teams in situ to observe and analyse their successes and failures, and to support writing for their final report as part of their school project.

All project reports and other documentation from the training programme are collected and published on the digital platform, Global Child Rights Online (www.globalcrconline.org). The development of this platform, administrated by the Child Rights Institute at Lund University, is the result of fruitful and extensive networking, established and developed nationally and internationally during the 15 years the programme has been running.

A description based in the three Ps of the CRC

Our experiences show that at an international level, children, parents, teachers and others are often unaware of the existence and contents of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The actual intent of the CRC is often misunderstood. This means that the pedagogical challenge we face, within the context of this international programme, is to provide tools to implement change processes in the best interest of the child in environments that initially pose many obstacles. Pedagogically, the programme has consistently focused on an interactive approach in which the exchange of knowledge, experiences, values and attitudes between the participants is seen as an important part of the learning process. Efforts to understand and implement the CRC from different perspectives and in relation to different target groups continued throughout the study period. This meant that one of our main pedagogical tasks has been to create a holistic

and easily understandable interpretation, and practical implementation, of the contents of the CRC. Throughout the programme, we take our starting point in the three Ps (Qvortrup 1993; Verhellen 2000). Together, these three Ps reflect the main contents of the articles of the CRC and can be explained as follows, with the articles in brackets:

- Participation: The child's right to participate e.g. in providing information and expressing his or her views, as well as participating in decisions in matters that affect the child. (Articles 12-17)
- Protection: The child's right to be protected from physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, and all forms of exploitation. (Articles 19, 20, 32-36)
- Provision: The child's right to get their basic needs fulfilled, e.g. access to food, healthcare, education and social welfare. (Articles 6, 24, 26, 27:1, 28-29, 31)

These three perspectives have been broadly employed as key concepts in our training programme in Lund, and in ongoing change processes in the participating countries: as a method of identifying areas in need of change, as pedagogical tools used in training programmes for children, parents, teachers and decision-makers, and as a tool to analyse the results of the change process. This has led to the participants in the Sida programme, and the children and adults involved in the local school projects, having developed a mutual language for discussing and implementing children's rights. This has also proven to be one of the programme's main success factors, as we shall return to further on. In practice, the main focus of a majority of the schools' change projects has been on helping the child develop his or her capacity for participation and influence, as laid out in Articles 12 and 13. This also happens to be the same problem area that dominates international research on the CRC, (e.g. Percy-Smith & Thomas 2010; Reynaert, Bouverne-de-Bie & Vandevelde 2009).

Over the years, we have repeatedly observed the same pattern, which indicates that children's participation is seen as the most pressing and challenging issue to address. A number of national teams report a growing awareness of the CRC, not only among children, but also among teachers and parents. People's opinions and attitudes have gradually changed from seeing children as objects to seeing them as subjects.

The following text describes the change processes implemented in the participating countries since 2003, based in the aforementioned three perspectives of the CRC. This description is based on materials retrieved from the participants' project reports on comprehensive national survey studies carried out in each country, and the authors' and instructors' experiences and observations during the course of their many, recurrent visits (see: Rasmusson, Alfredsson, Andersson, Leo, Flinck & Wickenberg,

2016; Leo, Alfredsson, Andersson, Flinck, Rasmusson & Wickenberg 2014; Rasmusson 2011; Wickenberg, Flinck, Leo, Rasmusson, Stenelo & Yebio 2009).

Participation

The reports reveal interesting motives for encouraging children's participation in society. Developing the child's capacity to participate and influence is assumed to contribute to the child's personal development, skills and competencies as well as strengthening his or her self-esteem. One ambition is to give them the space they need to exercise their rights and express their opinions on democratic values, both at school and in their community. We should be putting children's perspectives, experiences and knowledge to use. However, it is also important, within the context of this international programme, to address not only the child's rights but also his or her responsibilities. The CRC lays out the government's responsibilities towards the child, but the Convention does not mention the responsibilities of the child. As an example, the Department of Education in South Africa has introduced the concept of the responsibilities of the child, and has issued national guidelines for developing both the child's sense of responsibilities as well as his or her rights. This shows that it is important to have an awareness of different, traditional, cultural, religious or political interpretations of the CRC, based in different national and local conditions.

A recurrent theme of the change projects relates to the child's right to participate in decision-making processes in education matters. The participation ladder, developed by Roger Hart (Hart 1992), is commonly used as an analysis tool, here. Children have a right to be involved in classroom and education matters, and contribute opinions and knowledge in general school matters, but they also have the right to be given the chance to learn and exercise leadership. One of the main project goals has been to erase the distance between school management, instructors and students, thereby developing school democracy. Allowing children to participate in decision-making processes can be one way of creating a safer school environment and combating discrimination, marginalisation, violence and bullying. Establishing and developing student councils and school parliaments at the municipal or regional level is another way of providing children the opportunity to participate both in formal as well as informal decision-making processes. Peer support and student mentors are other examples of organisations created by adults to help children support each other in exercising their rights. Our analysis shows that these forums and school organisations have also created conditions that are sustainable in the long-term. There are a number of examples of national teams developing new initiatives based on previous projects in the same region, which in turn has contributed to enriching the original project mission and developing

and spreading their methods and strategies. These developments have also allowed us to observe some of the results over an extended period of time.

An interesting example of this can be seen in the developments in Copperbelt, a province in Zambia. Today, the Department of General Education in Zambia views the province as a national role model for student participation in developments in the education sector. These developments were particularly noted by the external evaluators commissioned by Sida (Ljungman, Lundin, Gharbi & Christoplos 2016) to evaluate our training programme. In 2003, the first team from Zambia wrote a manual on student councils, based on their field trips to schools in Lund. This manual developed into a very useful tool for the following national teams, who all have continued to introduce, implement and develop student democracy. The manual has been used to support the establishment of new student councils in schools participating in the project, and by regional instructors. For several years now, all secondary schools, upper secondary schools and in many cases, primary schools in the Copperbelt province have had student councils. Student councils have also been established at the district level to allow school districts to share their experiences. Initially, the change processes faced difficult obstacles. Vandalism, fights, aggressive behaviour, student protests, and worn–down and dirty school environments were common. Children's rights, democratic elections held by student council members, and influence in various school matters were completely novel concepts. In summary, students have repeatedly provided accounts of the changes that have taken place in their school culture, that the learning environment has benefited, that the students and school management have developed good relationships, and that students perform better academically.

Another theme regarding participation in the change processes in these countries deals with the child's participation in the classroom, in education matters, and in the learning process. This is often related, broadly speaking, to efforts to create "Child-Friendly Schools". "Child-Friendly Schools" is a wide-reaching, global concept developed and implemented by UNICEF (2009) in a number of countries,[7] and has served as a model and a source of inspiration, in addition to the Sida training programme. These schools have developed new methods for bringing about change in student/teacher relationships, as well as in a school setting. The projects invite the children to participate in developing democracy in the classroom, for example, by agreeing on common rules for the democratic process in school. Teaching practices have also changed as a result of student participation; it has helped create an open atmosphere, and student/teacher relationships have developed in a more democratic and interactive direction. One interesting conclusion of the ensuing follow-ups and interviews was that these changes

[7] In Sweden, Unicef uses the designation "rights based schools".

also indicated reduced stress, both among teachers and students, which in turn resulted in a calmer, improved learning environment.

The right for children to express themselves freely is demonstrated through various school activities and in the surrounding communities under the banner "Children's Rights Days", and activities that allow children to express themselves through drawing, music or dancing. During our visits to countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, we have often been invited to dramatic performances in which children portray ongoing problems that pertain to the CRC. In doing so, they have been able to bring up and problematize, for example, alcohol abuse and domestic violence, sexual abuse, and unfair teachers. Previously taboo subjects have been brought to the fore for discussion. This has led to the creation of new forums for discussions on important social issues from which children have previously been excluded.

Protection

Corporal punishment[8] of children is deeply ingrained in many countries. From a global perspective, positive changes are occurring relatively slowly. This is apparent from the annual follow-up conducted by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children. Only 12% of the world's children are legally protected from corporal punishment at home, at school and in children's institutions (Global Initiative 2019).[9]

Corporal punishment, both domestic and in school settings, discrimination, sexual abuse, harmful labour practices, teenage pregnancies, violence and bullying are some examples of the kinds of problems several change projects based in Protection have focused on. Activities in this area are often closely linked to developing children's influence and participation in the projects. The children are involved in discussions and efforts to find solutions to these problems together with the adults, and this work approach has, in many cases, been an important factor in creating a safer school environment and reducing problems. This progress can be seen in national reports that present longitudinal results.

These changes can be seen as the result of increased focus on the problems as well as the development of new methods for managing them. We have met experienced, older teachers who relate stirring descriptions to their colleagues and children of the personal changes they have experienced at a personal level during their work with children's rights. Realising the consequences of the methods of punishment they themselves have been using all these years has been a painful experience, but it has also been satisfying

[8] In international studies, the terms "corporal punishment" or "violence against children" are often used.

[9] *Global initiative to end all corporal punishment of children.* https://endcorporalpunishment.org/

to see the children express their skills and demonstrate their capacity for participation in the new and changed athmophere in school.

This localised, grassroots approach, which has been used in many school projects, has shone a spotlight on children's, and particularly girls', needs. Girls bear a heavy domestic workload in the majority of the participating countries. Several change projects within the training programme have focused on changing norms in teaching and learning environments, norms that guide student participation, and highlighting gender issues. One project focused on the division of household chores. This resulted in boys and girls sharing some traditional and culturally determined tasks.

By implementing change processes that encourage girls to learn more about the natural sciences, and by improving teaching materials to support women in science and research, we are able to create more diverse classroom settings. As a result of prioritising gender issues, discussing myths and misunderstandings, early school leaving rates due to pregnancy have dropped in some of the schools involved in the training programme. Another way of creating a safer and more protective school environment, particularly with regards to girls subject to abuse, is to build toilets on the school premises, or to construct sleeping facilities where girls can stay the night, thus avoiding long and often dangerous walks home.

Provision

The national reports conclude that there are cases of children going without food for an entire school day. In some cases, it is left up to hungry teachers to try to teach hungry students. The reports, which summarize several school projects, note various measures taken by adults to meet the children's basic needs. Such measures often deal with solving everyday needs such as health care, food, water and toilets in schools (see the Protection section), school uniforms, school transport and safe housing for students that live far from school; i.e., measures that support the child's right to education. In some cases, the children themselves have contributed, e.g., by producing their own teaching materials and establishing and maintaining school gardens where they can grow their own vegetables.

South Africa is one of the countries with positive results from projects with a focus on Provision. For example, two schools decided to map the living conditions of children who live without any adult supervision. When the school projects were initially implemented, these children were often seen as aggressive and problematic students, and there was little interest in studying the causes of their behaviour. Neither was anyone aware of how many students live under such conditions, where they live, or

whether they received any support from adults. Some children were under the supervision of a special custodian, and in some cases, the custodians had abused them sexually, or had laid claim to the funds intended to support them. The school principals explained that it was painful to see the conditions the students were living under, and to initiate a dialogue with them. They were more accustomed to spending time in the office and were not used to coming into personal contact with the students. It became obvious to the principals that investing in children's rights and adapting their role as principals to incorporate a child's perspective made an important difference. Practical implementation of the child's rights allowed the children and custodians to describe their living conditions in their own words, thus resulting in a deeper understanding of the matter. The children received increased support in various forms: psychologists, help with school work, and food packages delivered to their homes on the weekends. The students' school performance improved, as did their faith in the teachers who had helped them.

In summary, our experiences show that it is possible to achieve significant results in very vulnerable environments with very limited material resources.

Change processes means changing norms

Theories on change processes and norms can be useful for gaining an insight into, and understanding and interpreting, the processes leading to the results presented in this chapter. Change processes seldom adhere to the same template, and there are a number of theories on change processes that describe different phases or stages of the processes involved.

Initiation, implementation, institutionalisation and distribution are examples of some concepts that can be of help for individuals involved in change projects when establishing roughly whereabouts in the process they are at any given moment. New ideas are presented during the initiation phase, and these new ideas are put into practice during the implementation phase. If these ideas have been incorporated into daily activities, one could say they have become institutionalised – old norms have been changed or replaced by new ones. During the distribution phase, our organisation is prepared to provide our knowledge of change processes to other organisations (Blossing, Nyen, Söderström & Hagen Tønder 2012; Miles & Ekholm 1987).

Lessons learned from the change processes conducted within the framework of our training programme show us that there is an overlapping of phases, that different people arrive at different stages at different points in time, and that it is very difficult to

compose a schedule when it comes to complex changes. There are examples of cases in which opinions, attitudes and norms have gradually changed over several years. However, there are also examples that show visible change within the course of a single year.

During the planning of a change project, it is important to map out the situation at that point in time and focus on the causes of the problem. One success factor in the education programme is that any actions taken by a national team have been preceded by careful planning and mapping of current strategies, policies and ongoing activities in the area. The next stage has been to establish an overall objective, as well as a vision consisting of both long-term and short-term goals. Research on change processes emphasises that the first step of the process is to create a feeling of urgency for the planned changes in all participants, and that the changes are seen as necessary (Kotter 2013;Yukl 2014).

Colombia is currently in the process of upholding a state of peace after many years of civil war, and according to a report from the UN's refugee organisation, the UNHCR (2016), the country is currently housing approximately 6 million refugees. Large groups of civilians and students, with different language and cultural backgrounds, have fled to Bogota for security reasons. This has led to large-scale school problems, and several child's rights school projects have focused, instead, on reducing school bullying, conflicts and abuse.

In Sweden, children and students are protected from abuse, discrimination and bullying by way of the Education Act (SFS 2010:800), Chapt. 6, and the Discrimination Act (SFS 2008:567). In common with Sweden, some of the projects in Colombia focus on promoting a safe and secure school environment for all students and staff. Such promotive efforts consist of ongoing activities to encourage respect for the equal worth of every individual, both during and after class. Students fleeing civil wars are often marginalised upon arriving in the cities, and an important part of promotive efforts, therefore, deals with issues relating to cultural identity and diversity. A school's core values are established during this process. One of the participating schools formulated their vision as, "I will change the world, but first I will change myself". In time, this vision became more tangible as both students and staff developed an awareness of personal changes they would like to make.

A second part of the school projects has been to identify risks and analyse the circumstances and conditions in each school. Individually analysing each school lays the foundation for preventive efforts that specifically target the identified problems, i.e., harassment, abuse and discrimination. This makes areas within the organisation that need to be changed, in the context of the school's vision, more visible.

A third part of the projects is to make decisions on specific actions, such as various discussion models aimed at conflict resolution, together with students and school staff (see also Skolverket 2014).

One obvious success factor in the training programme is that new national teams have continued along the same paths, where new knowledge and experiences can be used and disseminated. A minor project started at one school continues with additional, new goals in several other schools and then spreads to other districts and regions. This is shown, for example, by the aforementioned developments in Zambia, as well as in a district in Malawi. The activities there have resulted in fewer child marriages, fewer teenage pregnancies and fewer children being forced to work instead of study in regions that have been the site of several, consecutive projects. One important conclusion we draw from the project reports is that adults' attitudes toward children have changed. Additionally, as we have seen in other cases, several taboos have been shattered, and it is now possible to discuss difficult and sensitive social problems involving children and youths.

Cultural changes – changing norms with support from the CRC

A key question when practically implementing the CRC pertains to whether the convention actually is a tool that supports change. The aforementioned cases are all basically a matter of demanding and promoting the right to education for all students, and the individuals in charge of promoting these changes – change managers, school administrators or teachers – then use the CRC in their work. The participants from the countries enrolled in the training programme often bring up the subject of culture and the fact that it is difficult to bring about any cultural changes when culture is such an integral part of an individual's identity. The concept of culture is often described in vague terms, and this also applies to the cultural descriptions as laid out in the Swedish elementary school curriculum:

> In a deeper sense education and upbringing involve developing and passing on a cultural heritage – values, traditions, language, knowledge – from one generation to the next. The school should support families in their role of being responsible for the upbringing and development of their children. (Läroplan för grundskolan 2011, p.9).

The present chapter takes its starting point in the argument that norms are a cultural component. By changing norms, we also change cultures. One lesson learned from the training programme is that it is easier to identify specific, problematic norms, and provide tangible solutions, than to analyse entire cultures. Identified norms such as "students should not express their opinions" or "teachers should slap students that do not sit still" are examples of norms that can be adopted as a starting point for dialogue

with various actors. Here, the articles of the CRC can provide support when defining the child's global rights.

The concept of norms is used in very different ways, and therefore, we need to define norms in this context. The first criterion is that norms are rules for action. This is the entire point of norms: they regulate our actions. The second criterion is that they are reproduced, communicated and disseminated within a group (Elster 1992; Wickenberg 1999). The third criterion is that social expectations and social pressure have an impact on our actions, a long-established starting point in sociology (Durkheim 1895; Giddens 1989; Rommetveit 1955). This means that the group's expectations play an important part in the creation of norms; we often tend to act in line with the group's expectations. In other words, norms are rules for action that are reproduced socially or professionally, and, in general, represent the group's expectations of the individual's behaviour (see Leo 2010; Svensson 2008). The present chapter's point of departure, i.e. legal norms, is based in the articles of the CRC.

In a survey conducted in 2014, following the completion of 14 training programmes within the Sida program, and of which the first participants had completed the programme 10 years previously, we asked the participants to answer some questions in order to study the factors underlying the creation of professional norms (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980; Leo et al. 2014). We asked them how their views on children, both in a professional as well as a personal context, had changed, and what motivating forces had driven them to commit to the changes. We asked them how to describe how they had interpreted the external expectations and with whom they had communicated. The survey also contained an open-ended question in which the participants were asked to list three things they do in their role as a change agent. These questions laid the basic groundwork for identifying different patterns of behaviour, and in extension, the norms that guide the group's actions. We use the term "change agents" throughout the course to designate all participants, a "change agent" being an individual who initiates new patterns of behaviour that become norms, thereby helping to change or replace old norms (Ellickson 2001).

Seeing children as subjects instead of objects

A number of the responses to the survey question on whether the participants had changed their views of children expressed changes at both a professional as well as a personal level, as a result of the Sida programme. The following quote is one of several telling examples of such changes:

Personal view: *Initially, my view was that children should not be heard; we, the adults, parents or older persons make all the decisions. I also thought that you can teach children lessons by smacking them. HOWEVER, the programme in Lund changed all of that. These days, I listen to the children, I ask their opinion, play with them and let them participate in daily household chores. I don't call it my home any more, I call it our home.*

Professional view: *These days, I prefer to adopt a student–centred approach, which helps me, as a teacher, to strive to include all students, and I encourage everyone in the classroom to listen to each other* (Leo et al. 2014 p. 173-174).

Many of the responses express a clear understanding of the spirit and intent of the CRC. Several respondents described the importance of adopting a child-centred approach, and of respecting and listening to children. The participants stated (in responses that departed somewhat from the question) that as a consequence of the changes, they have become more aware and have exercised and expressed their rights in a way previously unrecognised. Teachers and parents often worry that classrooms will get out of hand if the children are allowed to have influence, but giving students opportunities to participate often shows the opposite results.

Childhood researchers (Kirby & Woodhead 2003) show that positions on children and childhood are formed by global processes that, in turn, are assumed to have an impact on local practices. They argue that the implementation of the CRC has played a significant part in global developments. Researchers describe a paradigm shift having taken place, from merely seeing children as objects of adult upbringing and care to viewing and relating to them as subjects; that is say, viewing them as creators of meaning and participating actors Verhellen 2000). The results of our survey indicate that the participants in the programme also continue to adhere to this global children's rights discourse (Rasmusson 2016). The programme has played an important role, here, but other factors, such as media, literature and collaboration with other children's right activists, have probably also had an effect.

Motivational and driving forces

We included an open-ended question in the survey in order to find out what motivates or drives the change agents' actions. We identified two main kinds of motives: internal and external motives. Some responses express a high degree of commitment, such as: "As a change agent and as a participant in this programme, I have a moral responsibility to show that we as a society take care of our children and respect their rights". A large number of responses indicate that the respondent is passionate about his or her position: ”Love for my profession”, ”Love for children”, and ”Love for social justice”. Perhaps, one of the most important insights from the responses is that in order to

change others, we must first change ourselves: "I know that I have changed, and if I can change, then so can others." We can conclude that internal motives are linked to external motives for wanting to improve conditions for children. Problems such as overcrowded classrooms, high drop-out rates, and inadequate teaching practices are some examples of external, motivational forces that drive people to participate in change projects.

External expectations

External expectations and peer pressure are important components of the norm–creating process; we often act in line with how people expect us to act. We asked the participants to describe the sources of peer pressure they experienced, and how strongly they experienced external pressure to practically implement the CRC. The responses show that there are several sources of very strong, and widely spread, expectations, which leads to strong pressure on the change agents to meet expectations; they are expected to not just talk the talk – they have to walk the walk, too. There is a pressure of expectations from the legal norms in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), but also another pressure of expectations from the children participating in the change project, from the network with change agents, and their own family. One conclusion, here, is that the CRC´s legal norms do support the establishment or changes of the social or professional norms.

The teachers participating in the programme represent the strongest source of external pressure, which is interesting from a pedagogical perspective. Research has shown that teachers who have high expectations of their students' academic achievements have a strong impact on their academic results (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach 2002), and there is good reason to assume that the same applies to adults: high expectations encourage learning. One conclusion that can be made is that this pattern of high expectations from various parties is a necessary condition for establishing professional norms that support the child's right.

How to communicate to create and spread norms

We included a survey question to identify how often the participants communicated with different actors in their role as change agents. The results show that their personal and professional identities are closely linked, since most change agents discuss child's rights issues with their families on a daily basis. As previously stated, there are many examples of participants who have reconsidered their roles, both in school and at home. According to them, this is a result of having gained increased knowledge and awareness of the child's rights, as well as changes in communication between adults and children. Our interpretation of the results is that communication at the local level, in families

and schools, endows the change process with a stability that is strongly anchored in the change agents. The results also show that the team employees, i.e., programme teachers and colleagues within the organisations, continue to maintain communication. The various forms of communication allow us to see a combination of strategies used at different organisatorial levels of the projects, and this combination, in our opinion, is an important factor when implementing and passing on knowledge from successful and sustainable projects.

The change agents' norms

The implemented measures, motivational and driving forces, and external expectations and communication all play a role when establishing or changing norms. We find that a number of changes have occurred in power relationships between the change agents and the children. As adults begin to see and listen to the child, their relationship becomes more equal, and this is, perhaps, the first step towards becoming a change agent in the education sector.

Many different kinds of norms have been on display among the approximately 600 participants in the programme, but the norm that dictates that change agents should see children as subjects with special rights that must be protected is universally shared. At the same time, change agents need to protect the children, listen to the children and students, and they must allow students to express themselves in school and at home. They also need to have knowledge of childhood development, and about being there for them. Such changes lead to another, more general norm that shows that the adult has fully incorporated the CRC, both at a personal and professional level. – change agents should always be role models for children, students, and for all adults that have influence over children's lives.

To summarise the present chapter's findings on changes in norms, we can conclude that the change and development management requires different kinds of material support, implemented at different levels of society. This especially applies at the local level, where new norms are often created, confirmed, and communicated. This results in a pattern of normative structures (Wickenberg 1999), in which various actors actively support the changes. As previously mentioned, open, social arenas are a salient example of forums for children and engaged professionals and adults to meet, communicate and exchange experiences. Forums for discussions on old and new norms that deal with, for example, democratic participation and influence in decision-making processes. Class councils, school councils and school parliaments are good examples of forums that can support the creation of new norms.

School management and leadership represent other important normative systems, and active support from the school administrators to the change agents in school is very important. Often, it is crucial that the school leadership actively supports committed change agents to actively participate in changing norms in school. For example, efforts to build school toilets for girls only can also provide important support when establishing norms that support the child's right not to be subject to physical or psychological abuse, neglect or exploitation, under Article 19 of the CRC. These kinds of activities support the creation of new norms and have long-term effects, both in school, as well as in domestic situations.

It is also important to take advantage of local resources when changing old norms or establishing new ones. For example, inviting committed individuals from local organisations, associations or religious communities to participate in children's rights activities.

In discussions with actors from various levels of the education system, their experiences of the programme tell us that the change agents are adequately supported by current legal norms such as laws, rules, policies, and curricula aimed at establishing new norms in the best interest of the child.

Change processes from the local to the national level

Many of the projects carried out within the framework of the programme began as small-scale projects at the local level, which then spread to other schools at other levels - e.g., the district or regional level. Some initiatives have been spread at the national level, e.g., national student unions or training programmes for teachers and school administrators. As stated above, these projects are often implemented in poor areas with scarce material resources and communities with major social problems. In these cases, the project teams have actively enrolled parents, traditional and religious leaders and other local actors in the changes, and this has been a crucial factor for bringing about successful change processes.

One lesson learned from the completed change projects is that committed and engaged individuals, both in and outside the school system, are a crucial component of efforts to change attitudes and create more "child–friendly" schools. There are myriad activities going on at the local level, in schools and local communities: workshops, campaigns and festivals intended to create awareness and an understanding of the CRC. At the local, district and national levels, the teacher training programme has proven to be a key to change. This programme, both during basic training and advanced training,

has allowed us to reach thousands of students in the participating 20 countries. Projects at the national level have led to the introduction of the CRC in school curricula, in policies, and also in school materials and textbooks used in courses on children's rights and the CRC, whether as an isolated subject or as an integrated part of other subjects.

Research on schools in Sweden emphasises the importance of having an efficient chain of governance that spans from national reforms to local implementation (Nihlfors & Johansson 2014). Their study shows, for example, that there are shortcomings in the chain of governance when it comes to trust and interaction, which leads to conflicts and negotiations at all levels.

One desirable outcome that has emerged in relation to change processes based in the CRC as a point of departure is that governing policy documents are now interpreted collectively, (and in collaboration) with actors from different levels in the education system.

Basing work in different interpretations of the CRC at the school level, principal level and national level does not serve the students' best interest.

One important factor is that each national team has strived to include participants from three levels of the education system: 1) school principals or administrators, 2) teacher educators and/or inspectors at the district level, and 3) government or state officials. As noted, this has allowed new projects to be based on previous experiences, and a growing number of participants from these countries have created children's support networks to continue to promote the implemented changes in the school system. One example of this is the children's rights network in Kerala, India, which encompasses 10 of the 14 administrative districts in Kerala, and consistently includes change agents from the aforementioned three different levels. This has, in turn, enabled new children's right projects to take their starting point in activities and projects previously conducted and tested in other areas, the results of which have been disseminated during the network's regular meetings. Each national team has also had constant and rapid access to various forms of competency and experience to help them find both new and tried–and–tested ways of approaching the project. This has allowed school principals, teacher educators and inspectors to exchange experiences, both within the national teams as well as within the network.

Toward the conclusion of the final cycles of the Sida programme, the network held strategic discussions to establish whether they had included the most important key persons and institutions in Kerala's education system. In discussions with the programme instructor, it was concluded that there were not enough change agents enrolled in the programme from the central government level in Trivandrum. Therefore, for the remaining applications to the programme, we focused on people in

key positions in close contact with the state government and the Department of General Education in Kerala. This allowed local experiences to be introduced at the national state level and have a direct impact on curricular, syllabi and teaching materials in later projects at the national level.

Furthermore, in 2013 the children's rights network started up an independent organisation, the Association for the Protection & Promotion of Child Rights in India, (APProCh India). Based in this independent organisation, Kerala has recently begun to set up a children's rights training programme to train school principals, teacher instructors, inspectors, and other administrators from the school systems in Karnataka, Telangana and Tamil Nadu – in other words, the three Indian states that have not participated in the Sida programme. The instructors in these children's rights programmes are change agents from Kerala who are long–time members of the children's rights network. The intent, here, is to implement parts of the new and open training platform, the Global Child Rights Online Platform,[10] and use it to further develop knowledge gained from the aforementioned programme, ”Child Rights, Classroom and School Management”. There are also examples of collaboration across state borders within the framework of the programme. The geographically very closely related children's rights networks in Kerala in India and Sri Lanka have enjoyed close, personal relationships for several years, which has made it easy to plan school trips to each other, and share experiences.

In summary, we assess that the combination of skills from different levels of the education system has made it possible to combine professional and experience-based perspectives in both extensive as well as complex change processes. Representatives from the entire chain of governance, from the national to the local level, have participated in a number of teams, and in total, there are approximately 30 – 50 participants per nation, and approximately 600 participants that have the necessary training to support each other via local, national and global networks, and to develop their own children's rights activities.

[10] http://www.globalcrconline.org/

Concluding discussions

The experiences gathered from the international programme (2003-2017) often relate to specific conditions that may differ greatly from Swedish conditions, but share some important similarities. The Swedish Education Act contains a section that directly relates to Articles 1, 3 and 12 of the CRC:

> *The best interest of the child*
>
> All education and other activities must be based in the best interest of the child. For the purposes of the Convention, a child is defined as every human being below the age of eighteen years.
>
> The child shall be provided the opportunity to express his or her own views, as far as possible. The child shall be provided the opportunity to express his or her own views in matters that affect him or her. The child's views shall be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
>
> (The Education Act, Chap.1 §10)

Changing school norms in the best interest of the child

What do we mean when we say that all education must be based in the best interest of the child? To summarise, we will highlight three relevant problem areas in the Swedish education system that require changes in professional and social norms, if the child's rights are to be fulfilled, in accordance with the CRC.

The number of complaints of abusive treatment to the The School Inspectorate and the Child and School Student Representative is increasing each year (see: Skolinspektionen.se). The school's value system mission is to combat discrimination and in other ways promote equal rights and opportunities, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, transgender identity or expression, sexual orientation or age, i.e., the seven grounds of discrimination regulated under the Discrimination Act (SFS 2008: 567). Abuse and discrimination are covered under Article 2 of the CRC, which lays out that all children have equal rights and worth. No one may be subject to discrimination. School officials need to continuously address the norms that underlie abusive treatment and discrimination, and promote efforts in preschools and schools to prevent, discover and address school bullying and abuse (Skolverket 2014).

Another social problem is that one in four students lacks education above the grade 9 level (see: Skolverket.se). The question, then, is whether these students have received

the support and schooling they are entitled to, as laid out in the Education Act, Chap. 3, and Articles 28 and 29 of the CRC. A key issue, in this particular problem area, is how to identify the professional norms that govern school administrators, teachers and student healthcare professionals responsible for the school's compensatory mission. Research has shown that school administrators experience that the staff's expectations, as previously mentioned in this section, often exert a stronger force than the students' expectations (Leo 2014), and that resources are not always distributed according to the students' needs, but rather, according to templates that require a "fair" distribution of resources – meaning that an equal amount of time must be spent on each team, regardless of the students' actual needs (Leo 2014).

Yet another example of problems in Swedish schools is the high rate of student non-attendance in many schools; rates of both random non-attendance and longer periods of non-attendance are rising both in elementary and secondary schools (see e.g. Skolinspektionen 2016). Although the reasons for non-attendance differ between the countries thus described and Sweden, the student faces substantial obstacles in exercising his or her right to education. In Sweden, too, the issue of non-attendance has been raised, and a number of schools are implementing activities to improve school attendance. Some reasons for non-attendance can probably be traced to the above-mentioned problem areas: i.e., that the student does not receive support, or is subject to abusive treatment from adults or other students.

The importance of student participation and influence at school

The child's right to freely express his or herself is, as previously mentioned, based in the "best interest of the child", as laid out in the Education Act (the Education Act 2010:800, Chap.1 §10), which also contains an entire chapter on *quality and equity.* One example from the chapter, that strongly relates to the CRC, is the following excerpt:

> *Participation and consultation*
>
> *General information on child and student participation*
>
> Children and students must be allowed to exert influence in education matters. They must receive continuous encouragement to actively develop their education and keep them informed of relevant matters.
>
> The information and methods used to provide children and students influence should be adapted in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. The students must at

> all times be allowed to take the initiative to address issues that are within their area of influence within the education system.
>
> The Education Act 2010:800 Chap. 4 §9)

Research shows a strong link between student participation and influence in school matters, and significant improvements in knowledge and well-being (Manger & Novak 2012; Skolverket 2015). However the Swedish Schools Inspectorate's five-year report (Skolinspektionen 2014) indicates that schools should focus more on participating and consulting with the students. Students feel that they do not have any influence over issues that really matter to them: i.e., the contents of their education, and the teaching methods used in the classroom. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate argues that this is partly due to teachers worrying that they might lose a degree of control over the teaching process.

The international projects presented in the present chapter contain several examples of how to promote participation through class and student councils. This could be described as allowing students to have influence over decision-making processes (Skolverket 2015), or decision-making processes seen as political participation (Elvstrand 2009). Another important factor is implementing activities in which students can actively participate (Skolverket 2015), and influence the contents of their education. This means that there is reason to presume that increased student participation and influence may be related to improved well-being, less abuse, performing better at school as a result of being afforded equal opportunities, and improved school attendance among those students that for various reasons now choose not to attend school.

Success factors for school changes in the child's best interest

Finally, we present some factors that have been important when successfully implementing international change projects for schools in the best interests of the child. One fundamental aspect that has become obvious during the projects is that both personal and professional commitment are necessary qualities. Successful participants share in common that they are highly committed individuals, in addition to working as change agents, (see Wickenberg 1999, 2013), and are capable of leading both adults and children.

Professional change agents from the international education programme involved in the change projects have developed a professional language and terminology that helps us understand the core values of the CRC and how to implement them. Some concepts, particularly "Provision", "Protection", and "Participation", have been well received by

the students, parents and other actors involved in the change processes. An important pedagogical aspect of the programme has been to provide a space to address dilemmas, ethical issues, and personal perspectives and views on children. The change agents have in many cases radically changed their views of children, both at a personal as well as a professional level. This has greatly benefited their credibility, particularly in their practical encounters with children. Furthermore, we confirm that solutions to complex problems require careful planning and systematic quality assurance control. The importance of having a vision and clear, concrete goals that are understood to be imperative is, of course, a fundamental starting point, but the change managers must also invariably be prepared to adapt their plan according to developments that occur during the change processes.

It is also important to involve participants from different levels of the chain of governance, i.e., at the local, district and state or national level, for changes not only to be implemented but also entered into policy documents. This also creates a measure of sustainability. Projects that have implemented both national and local strategies have often succeeded in reaching their set goals. In these areas, the CRC and other documents that regulate efforts to enforce the child's rights at both the national and local level have provided support for the change agents, and the change projects are always based in local needs and issues. Efforts to bring about change in schools are influenced by different school cultures, and cultures are governed, among other things, by norms. One important aspect is to bring both desirable as well as undesirable norms up for discussion and shine a spotlight on them. Creating arenas for public debate on the child's rights, and participating in discussions, therefore, is an approach we recommend everyone concerned with promoting the best interest of the child. In following up the international projects, we see that children's rights networks have been organised within the education sector, and countries in which strong networks have developed have also experienced the most substantial changes, not only in schools at the local level, but also throughout districts, regions, states and at the national level. Networks provide support, and this helps the change projects develop reach and sustainability. We believe that networking is a necessary component when implementing change processes.

There are currently a number of ongoing activities within the education systems, both at an international level as well as in Sweden, to promote the implementation of the child's rights, and to ensure that the CRC is implemented, in practice. However, our research shows that international studies that specifically examine the child's rights in schools and the education system are few and far between (Urinboyev, Wickenberg & Leo 2016). There is a great need for further research and follow-up studies of ongoing activities to ensure that implementations of the CRC are based in a scientific approach,

that is to say an approach based on knowledge and theories of methods and implementation, and of children's needs.

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General Comments on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearchap.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=5&DocTypeID=11https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx (accessed by 2019-07-19)

International Studies on Enactment of Children´s Rights in Education

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a human rights legal document decided and adopted by the UN General Assembly in November 1989. This international convention has had a major impact on children's rights, policies and legislation in many countries around the world. Another prominent feature of the development, however, is the lack of research in many areas on implementation of children's rights. This underline the importance of a book like this with contributions from countries seldom represented with research in their own context.

This book has been initiated by researchers at the Child Rights Institute, Lund University, a research network with the aim to act for and support the rights of the child in different contexts, national and international, in research, in education or in other relevant practices. The Institute gather researchers to stimulate and to support new and continued research with a point of departure in the CRC. It provides an open and suitable arena for researchers to publish new material on implementing CRC in society. Invitation of researchers from our global network to contribute to an anthology was therefore fully in line with this ambition.

Fifteen new international studies on the enactment of children's rights in schools and education are presented in this book. The authors are researchers from Colombia, Zambia, Viet Nam, Egypt, India, Kenya, Indonesia and China. They are researchers and scholars active in many different academic environments as research universities (Indonesia, Zambia, China, Kenya, Egypt, and Sweden), teacher training universities (China and India), National University of Education (Viet Nam, Colombia), Institute of Social Work and Health (India), District Teacher Training Institution, DIET (India).

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