

EDITORIAL

Extending our understandings of human rights education

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As editors of *Human Rights Education Review*, we get to see a range of writing addressing human rights education from a wide range of perspectives and experiences, from different disciplinary traditions and from different regions of the globe. Probably, none of us could have really anticipated the future shape and content of the journal at its formal launch in 2018, although our Editor-in-Chief set an ambitious target: ‘to be a top international journal but with a special Nordic flavour’ (USN News, 2018). As we publish the second edition of volume three, we are proud to report that, to date, *HREER* has included articles and reviews from 18 different jurisdictions: 23 of our authors are based in eight different European countries, eight in the Americas, and a similar number in Australasia (including Japan, Taiwan and Vietnam).

This volume sees two new developments. First, we include our first paper from what is for *HREER* a new region, sub-Saharan Africa. Second, we introduce a new feature, an opinion piece. We remain, first and foremost, a peer-reviewed journal, interested in publishing original and leading-edge scholarly work. We have, however, included leading Chilean human rights scholar Abraham Magendzo’s reflections on the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for human rights educators, anticipating that his timely thoughts will provoke debate and discussion among both scholars and practitioners of human rights education (HRE). We are grateful to our colleague Kristi Rudelius-Palmer, from the University of Minnesota, for bringing this work to our attention.

The first article in this edition extends our understanding of HRE in a number of ways. In ‘The challenges of teaching for human rights in Nigeria: knowledge, pedagogy and activism’, Adaobiagu Obiagu and Okechukwu O. Nwaubani invite us to consider why, in a country that has an active record in signing and ratifying human rights treaties, where the constitution guarantees fundamental human rights, and where the school curriculum provides for the teaching of human rights principles and concepts across a number of school subjects, everyday respect for rights is poor. Their quantitative and qualitative analysis of data from a survey of social studies teachers in Enugu State, Nigeria uncovers among these teachers a poor knowledge of human rights content, a poor knowledge of participatory pedagogies, and a reluctance to engage in activism. The authors contend that effective human rights educators must necessarily be activists. They suggest that prevailing societal patriarchal attitudes combine with other factors to dissuade a predominantly female teaching force from effecting change. The implication seems to be that the realisation of human rights will only be achieved when, alongside support for teachers and

teacher educators to upgrade their knowledge and skills, teachers are empowered to recognise, highlight and challenge gender injustices in their schools and communities.

Beate Goldschmidt-Gjerløw and Irene Trysnes' article is entitled '#MeToo in school: teachers' and young learners' lived experience of verbal sexual harassment as a pedagogical opportunity'. The authors discuss the pedagogical potential of using teachers' and young learners' experiences of such harassment, and consider the implications for human rights pedagogy. Combining a case and survey with the theoretical framework of HRE and the concepts of intersectionality and recognition, the article addresses the challenges and strengths of drawing upon negative experiences of 'lived injustice' in class, arguing that such experiences can serve as a resource for HRE and for increasing students' legal literacy. In their conclusion the authors call for a more systematic pedagogical approach to harmful sexual behaviour, wherein education can play a key role in ensuring citizens' dignity and recognition of rights.

In her paper, 'Children's rights in Swedish teacher education', Åsa Olsson explores the status of children's rights in Swedish teacher education, on the occasion of the country's incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) into domestic legislation in 2020. Reporting on the findings of a quantitative study among Swedish teacher educators, and on syllabi and course plans, she finds that while teacher educators consider child rights important, there is little concrete guidance on what students should know about human rights and how to apply them. The author concludes that Swedish universities provide future teachers with knowledge of child rights, but fall short of encouraging them to apply these in their professional practice.

In highlighting the Swedish case, Olsson's article serves to remind us how the gradual incorporation of the CRC into domestic law in nations around the globe needs to be matched by opportunities for teachers, teacher educators and other professionals working in children's services to strengthen legal literacy within their professional education programmes. Basic legal literacy is not just a question of extending the knowledge base of teachers and others working in children's services. It must also include the application of this knowledge as a central aspect of their professional repertoire of skills.

In 'The Covid-19 pandemic: a challenge and an opportunity for human rights educators', Abraham Magendzo, with Audrey Osler, urges educators to engage in a dialogue with each other, and with students about the human rights implications of the crisis and of the decisions which governments around the world are making. Magendzo brings together international treaties and instruments to support teachers in this process. While in a crisis political leaders may be tempted to put aside human rights principles, Osler reminds us why this would be a mistake, and argues that since the modern human rights project was a response to crisis, it is eminently suitable for addressing the current crisis. Magendzo concludes with a series of concrete questions designed to initiate discussion.

Today, as in 2018, when the first volume of HRER was launched, two of the special pleasures of editing the journal are to work with a supportive and engaged International Editorial Advisory Board, and to support each author in producing their very best writing. It is exciting to see an article develop in response to constructive peer review, and to observe established and fledgling scholars each make a new and original contribution to the fast-developing field of human rights education. We thank IEAB members and our wider panel of reviewers for their continuing support.

References

USN News. (2018). USN's first scholarly journal is here. Retrieved from <https://www.usn.no/english/news/news-archive/usn-s-first-scholarly-journal-is-here>