

Editorial

Celebrating innovation in human rights education

Audrey Osler,

University of South-Eastern Norway, Norway, University of Leeds, UK

Rachel Shanks

University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom

Christian Stokke

University of South-Eastern Norway, Norway

Here in northern Europe, as winter holidays and festivities fast approach, your editors have another reason to celebrate. December 2022 marks five years of *Human Rights Education Review*. We are celebrating all our authors and book reviewers. With five full volumes, 12 editions and 53 research articles behind us, we believe we have taken important foundational steps in fulfilling the journal's mission to extend and deepen the specialist field of human rights education (HRE) by publishing high-quality research from across the globe. We wish to thank our International Editorial Advisory Board and all our reviewers for the hard work they have put in to ensure high-quality articles of which authors can be proud.

We work hard to be international in scope. Over the past 5 years, we are particularly proud to have included articles and perspectives on HRE from Brazil, Chile, India, Vietnam, South Africa, and especially from Nigeria - where we published what we believe to be the first ever Nigerian research contribution on human rights education, from Enugu State. We are also pleased to feature contributions from Australia and New Zealand, Canada, and the United States.

As an open access journal our content is available to all, not just students and academics with access to a university library, but policy-makers, activists and politicians, whether in high-income or low-income countries. We aim to make more research available from the Global South and ensure that dissemination of ideas in human rights education is not unidirectional.

From 2018 to 2022, around seven out of ten research articles published have been from authors based in European universities. Despite this bias towards Europe, where the core editorial team is based, this statistic masks a high degree of diversity of both authors and topics. Our European authors are based in 10 different countries with hugely varying constitutional, legal, educational and cultural contexts that influence the way HRE has developed. A number have transnational backgrounds and are researching distant regions and countries, including Bangladesh, Iran, and Pakistan.

The articles in *HREER* cover all stages of education, from early childhood through to higher education and community-based learning. At first sight, readers might expect a journal entitled *Human Rights Education Review* to have a narrow range of research topics. However, articles address a variety of issues: various aspects of human rights-based curricula, including social studies, citizenship, language learning, drama and the arts, religious education and history education; policy development; child rights and child safeguarding; equity-orientated questions such as the impact of Covid-19, representations of indigenous people, racial justice, gender equity, sexual orientation and gender identity; post-conflict learning; academic freedom; learning methodologies; and a lot more. We invite you to browse. And, if you are engaging in research addressing human rights learning, to consider *HREER* as a possible home for your work.

This edition celebrates innovation and has a number of firsts. It opens with *Challenges and possibilities for transformative human rights education in Icelandic upper secondary schools* by Sue E. Gollifer. Not only is this the first piece of research on HRE in Iceland, but it also identifies a set of principles the author sees as prerequisites for transformative HRE. Gollifer is effectively highlighting the inadequacy of the permissive Icelandic educational policy framework for HRE, since it is not accompanied by appropriate professional support for teachers. Drawing from the narratives of upper secondary school teachers concerning their HRE practices, Gollifer makes a number of suggestions for teachers: they need to have an explicit pedagogic intention; be ready to engage critically with education policy and the purposes of education; develop a strong human rights knowledge base and a holistic action-orientated approach to human rights and schooling; and develop cosmopolitan perspectives. Effectively, she is arguing for change in teacher education to enable HRE and thereby support teachers in ‘the courageous act of education’.

Concerns about a disconnect between HRE policy and policy implementation are picked up in the following article by Radhika Lakshminarayanan and Dolly Thomas: *From vision to transformation: integrating human rights courses in higher education in India*. Their article represents the first of what we hope will be many articles we publish from India. The authors, inspired by the thoughts of legal scholar and human rights activist Upendra Baxi, see HRE as a means by which guarantees of human rights can be realised so as to achieve social

transformation that will empower individuals and communities 'to resist colonization of the mind'. Having mapped the stated provision of human rights content in syllabi across higher education institutions in Tamil Nadu, they note the discrepancies between intended provision and the on-the-ground perceptions of teaching staff. Among the barriers to effective HRE the authors identify are inadequate staff training and resources, students' lack of awareness of the relevance of human rights to their future professions (for example, medicine), and difficulties in ensuring student safety in NGO and community placements.

An increasing number of countries are incorporating the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) into domestic law. Stephen Daniels' article, *Incorporating the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Scottish education*, provides us with a timely and valuable snapshot of HRE in Scotland at the moment when efforts to achieve incorporation have been postponed by a UK Supreme Court ruling. The author examines the progress of the 2020 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation)(Scotland) Bill which would have made all aspects of the CRC justiciable within Scottish courts, thereby strengthening child rights. Following the Supreme Court ruling, the Scottish Government has declared its intention to amend the bill to ensure that its provisions are in keeping with UK constitutional arrangements. Looking forward, Daniels explores opportunities and potential avenues for HRE, particularly in relation to teacher professional standards. He makes recommendations for how the right to education and the right to HRE might be reinforced in Scotland.

In her article, *UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award as children's human rights education*, Ann Quennerstedt reflects on the role of external organisations working with schools and teachers. Drawing on material from UNICEF UK's website and selected research studies, she asks whether the Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA), has met its aims. From these sources, she concludes that while there is potential for the programme to support successful HRE for children in school, it does not provide a comprehensive curriculum. The article raises questions, both implicit and explicit, about the complementary roles of the State, schools, and teachers in developing HRE and about collaboration between schools and external actors.

In *Human rights education – a republican perspective*, Ole Henrik Borchgrevink Hansen contrasts the liberal idea of freedom as non-interference with the civic republican one, which understands freedom as non-domination. In this philosophical article, the author makes the case that this republican conception of freedom is central to human rights education. He then discusses how this ideal of freedom may strengthen respect for human rights and promote a human rights culture. The author concludes that the republican perspective may contribute with an understanding of human dignity, active citizenship, and civic virtue, but that this requires a multidisciplinary approach to human rights education.