



SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Teaching children's human rights in early  
childhood education and school  
Educational aims, content and processes

Ann Quennerstedt (Ed.)



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## Abstract

Setting out from the metaphor of a greenhouse, this project has explored education as a site for children's and young people's development as holders and practitioners of human rights. Drawing on a Didaktik research approach and terminology, the core scientific interest of the project has been to examine *the aims, content and working methods in the teaching and learning of children's human rights* in early childhood education and compulsory school. The current report explores and answers the research questions:

- What aims are strived for through the teaching in, through and about human rights? What is the content of the education, and which working methods are used?

To answer these questions, classroom research was undertaken in four age groups: in early childhood education and in early, middle and late school years in Swedish compulsory school. The researchers studied teaching about children's human rights, and data was collected by means of interviews with teachers and children and observations of ongoing teaching. The analysis drew on didactic theory, and an analytical tool based on the three didactic questions of why, what and how was developed and used.

The report first provides a background to the role of early childhood education and school to educate children and young people in and about human rights. *Human rights education* is introduced and elaborated, and placed in a Swedish policy and curriculum context. An account of previous educational research on children's rights and human rights education in school is given, and the study's theoretical and methodological framework presented. The findings from the four studies undertaken within the project are thereafter presented in four chapters, each presenting the results from a specific age group. The final chapter presents a concluding analysis and discussion of the collated findings.

*Keywords:* children's rights, human rights education, HRE, Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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A list of other project publications can be found after the references.

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# 1. Project aim and frame

Ann Quennerstedt

## Introduction

Being guided in our actions by the principles enshrined in human rights is highly valued in our society. In recent years, the world has come to realise that a continued allegiance to human rights, and their proliferation, can no longer be taken for granted. In view of how we value human rights, and the threats against them that we are currently witnessing, an important question to ask is, *how people come to embrace human rights* as guidance in their interactions with others. The research project that is reported on here aligns with the conviction of the international community (UN, 2006) that education plays a vital role in the upholding and spreading of human rights. Setting out from the metaphor of a greenhouse and John Dewey's theory of education as growth through experience, this project has explored education as a site for children's and young people's development as holders and practitioners of human rights. In a greenhouse, you strive to create the best possible conditions for growth, and in the project we have sought to study how education provides (or does not provide) experiences that are necessary for growth as a holder of human rights.

The study draws on several theoretically informed viewpoints on rights, children and education. A didactic research approach and terminology have provided a robust theoretical frame. The core scientific interest of the project has been to examine *the aims, content and working methods in the teaching and learning of children's human rights* in early childhood education and nine-year compulsory school in Sweden. In the project, attention has been directed both to what we label *direct* teaching (when the teacher undertakes planned conventional teaching about rights), the learning that this gives rise to, and to what we call *indirect* teaching (the unplanned and often unconscious 'teaching' and learning that occurs in all educational interactions). Making this distinction between direct and indirect teaching is not given or unproblematic, since there is always unplanned and unconscious (i.e. with our terminology *indirect*) elements in planned (*direct*) teaching. We have nevertheless found the distinction to be a useful means to separate planned/conscious and unplanned/unconscious teaching.

The overall aim and research questions of project are:

- What aims are strived for through the teaching in, through and about human rights? What is the content of the education, and which working methods are used?
- How does the education give children and young people opportunities to grow as holders and practitioners of human rights?

In this report we largely focus on the first research question (aims, content, methods), although the report also considers the second (opportunities for growth) in the discussion. Further, it only reports on the examination of direct teaching. Accordingly, the report focuses on the *educational aims, content and working methods in the direct teaching of children's human rights*. This means that the teaching perspective is highlighted and attention primarily given to the role and work of the teacher. Readers who are interested in the learning perspective, the indirect teaching of children's human rights, or more elaborated explorations of the consequences of the identified teaching and learning of children's human rights are therefore referred to other publications resulting from the research project.<sup>1</sup>

The report is organised in the following way:

This introductory chapter provides a background to the role of early childhood education and school to educate children and young people in and about human rights. It introduces and elaborates on *human rights education* and places this in a Swedish policy and curriculum context. It also gives an account of previous educational research on children's rights and human rights education in school and presents the study's theoretical and methodological framework. The three theoretical legs of this research are described and the design of the study, including the data collection and analysis, is outlined. The findings are thereafter presented in four chapters, each presenting the results from a specific age group. The final chapter consists of a concluding analysis and discussion of the collected findings.

### **Education and human rights**

Education is a human right. As an important vehicle for the upholding and proliferation of other rights, education plays a particularly important role. Educational institutions are expected to educate children and young people

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<sup>1</sup> See the project publication list after the references.

*about* human rights, often by providing a human rights infused environment. In recent decades, international incentives supporting and calling for such education have increased. In this, the United Nations (UN) has been and is a central actor, particularly through its *World Programme for Human Rights Education* (UN, 2006). According to the UN, a complete human rights education (HRE) should include the following three elements:

- knowledge and skills – learning about what human rights are and being able to practise rights in everyday life,
- values and attitudes – understanding and embracing the values and attitudes that are inherent in the human rights and
- capacity for action – developing action capacity to sustain and defend human rights (UN, 2006).

From 2005-2009, the UN programme concentrated on incorporating HRE into formal schooling. When the programme was evaluated (UN, 2010), efforts to include human rights in national curricula documents were noted, but no conclusions were drawn on the progression of integrating HRE into actual teaching practices. The evaluation pointed to the need to examine the extent to which, and how, human rights are taught in schools.

The UN has accordingly emphasised the significance of national curricula stating that education about human rights should be provided within the formal school system, and also that little is known about whether this education actually takes place. Scholarly studies of how HRE has been included in curriculum governing documents have shown that human rights are often expressed as a *cross-curricular* issue (Cayir and Türkan Bağlı, 2011; Cassidy et al., 2013; Phillips, 2016; Robinson, 2017). The fact that the responsibility of education for human rights is spread over several school subjects can be both a strength and a risk. If human rights are approached from the perspectives of different school subjects, students are given opportunities to develop rich knowledge. However, if no body or entity is pointed out as responsible, the risk is that no school subject will take responsibility for the teaching of human rights. Moreover, studies from some countries have shown that human rights only appear marginally in the national curriculum or other governing documents. For example, Bron and Thijs (2011) find that human rights are not mentioned at all in the Dutch primary school curriculum and only have a cursory mention in the secondary school curriculum. Similarly, Phillips (2016) concludes that despite initial high ambi-

tions, the first Australian national curriculum only addresses HRE to a limited extent. These authors highlight that if national regulation is weak, human rights education will rely on the interests and knowledge of individual teachers or school leaders.

Quennerstedt's (2015) examination of the Swedish national curricula differs from the above mentioned analyses. Revisions of the national curriculum for the compulsory school in 2011 considerably increased the scope for human rights. First, human rights were included and explicitly stated in the *value base* that was to permeate and guide Swedish schools, and second, human rights as specified *knowledge content* were strengthened, with most responsibility clearly placed on civic studies. Sweden accordingly seems to have observed the UN's call for HRE to be included in the formal schooling curricula and is therefore an interesting setting in which to examine the actual teaching of human rights.

Parker (2018) addresses the slow pace at which HRE is introduced in schools from a different angle and argues that the main problem is the lack of an HRE curriculum. In this context, curriculum does not denote national school governing documents, but "a disciplinary structure created in a field of specialists" (p. 4); an *episteme*. Parker maintains that in its *World Programme*, the UN calls for a curriculum that includes knowledge, skills, values and action, but does not develop one. He argues that if HRE is to be included in schools, there is a need to elaborate on the subject matter and the learning goals (in other words, on the *what* and *why* of HRE). Further, Parker emphasises that the necessary disciplinary structure needed must include a knowledge development trajectory: an idea has to take form about what constitutes a basic – as well as an intermediate and advanced – level of knowledge and understanding of human rights. Parker emphasises that if HRE is to be brought into schools and have the same institutional stability as other school topics, such as algebra or grammar, a disciplinary structure that supports teachers' choice of content and working methods has to be developed through scholarly work. According to Parker (*ibid.*), the main task before us is to develop and institutionalise such a *curriculum of human rights education*. The researchers involved in the project reported on here agree with Parker, but add that this endeavour also has to include teachers' and students' perspectives. The research carried out in the project is therefore an attempt to fill the curriculum void identified by Parker. In our view, the North European didactic research tradition provides particularly fruitful tools for the task of formulating an HRE curriculum that is both expert driven and rooted in concrete educational practice.

## **Education about human rights in Swedish educational policy and curricula**

In order to forward human rights in Sweden, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education examined how human rights are included in higher education (2008). The results showed that in most of the higher education programs that so require, human rights are included. However, some problems were identified: human rights often appear as a ‘perspective’, without any educational goals set for required knowledge achievement. Further, human rights are rarely connected to Sweden or Swedish circumstances, but instead to international contexts and primarily to the third world. A certain lack of higher education teacher competence were also noted.

In the particular case of early childhood and school teachers, Swedish policy actors have highlighted that knowledge about what human rights for children mean in different areas of society is insufficient. Concerns have been raised that teachers’ knowledge about human rights and the role of education for human rights appears to be limited (Regeringskansliet 2007). An official report even proposes the mass education of Swedish teachers in human rights (SOU 2012:74). In the Education Act of 2010, and also in the revised curricula from 2011, the importance of human rights is strengthened by placing them alongside democracy, thereby together forming the value base for the Swedish education system. Other amendments in the Education Act also connect to a rights perspective, for example a clarified limitation of parents’ possibilities to request that their children are exempted from certain educational content. Such limitations are politically justified with reference to the child’s right to education (Björklund and Sabuni, 2009). Also, aspects of equality and human diversity, such as gender issues and issues of culture and ethnicity, have been discussed as part of education’s responsibility for human rights (SOU 2012:74; Ds 2013:2). These two official reports argue that education faces a number of challenges if the work to forward human rights and combat inequality between the sexes and hostility towards strangers is to be successfully achieved.

As in many other western countries, Swedish education policy is greatly influenced by international trends, including those focusing on competence, standards and assessment. The Swedish curricula are what Sundberg and Wahlström (2012, p. 348) call *standards-based*, i.e. “a curriculum framework that gives precise accounts of the knowledge and skills that students are to achieve; [and] a focus on assessment criteria that are aligned to this framework”. The national governing of educational content in schools is thus seen to be performed by policy actors who formulate the educational objectives. The teacher is commonly seen as a transformer of the curriculum

into practical teaching (Alvunger, Sundberg and Wahlström, 2017). In a standards-based curriculum system such as that in Sweden, the teacher is responsible (or accountable) for organising an education that enables pupils to achieve the set standards.

In the following we demonstrate how the standards in the Swedish national curricula for early childhood education (Lpfö 2018) and for the compulsory school (Lgr11) reflect the three elements of HRE expressed by the UN: (i) knowledge and skills, (ii) values and attitudes and (iii) capacity for action. We also examine the extent to which the two Swedish national curricula offer support in the establishment of what Parker (2018) suggests as a curriculum for HRE. In other words, we here examine and demonstrate whether central subject content and a knowledge development trajectory for HRE are indicated in the governing documents.

### Early childhood education curriculum

A revised curriculum for early childhood education in Sweden has just been published (Lpfö2018), replacing the earlier curriculum from 1998. The introductory parts of the early childhood curriculum are similar to those for formal schooling and contain the value-base for Swedish education, the overall assignment of the school form in question and general goals and guidelines, including educational goals for the formation of values and norms. However, thereafter the early childhood curriculum differs, in that it does not contain any subject syllabuses or specify any required knowledge achievements. Instead, the curriculum defines the areas, topics and goals towards which children are to be given opportunities to develop. The specific assignment of early childhood education to *merge* care, development and learning affects how the educational goals are formulated.

As already indicated, the revision of the curricula for formal schooling in Sweden in 2011 significantly increased the presence of human rights in the compulsory school and upper secondary school. This can be understood as an effect of the increased international attention and pressure on states in the first decade of the 21st century to include HRE in their educational systems. The early childhood education curriculum from 1998 predates this raised awareness and only marginally refers to human rights. Therefore, since 2011 the early childhood curriculum has not matched other Swedish curricula in terms of the significance given to human rights and the responsibility assigned to educators in relation to children's human rights. Lpfö98 has been less clear than other curricula about how human rights are relevant

in early childhood education. In the 2018 curriculum revision, this difference has been somewhat reduced through a changed goal formulation now explicitly stating human rights (bold in the curriculum excerpt below). However, other goals pertaining to the development of knowledge, values or action capacity within the area of human rights are still somewhat vague. The following educational goals relating to human rights can be identified in the curriculum for early childhood education:

The preschool shall give each child opportunities to develop:

- openness, respect, solidarity and responsibility,
- ability to discern, reflect on and take a stand in ethical dilemmas in everyday situations
- respect and understanding for the equal value of all persons and the human rights,
- ability to understand rights and obligations,
- ability to listen to and reflect on others views and reflect on and express own views (Lpfö18).

A separate section in the curriculum addresses the matter of children's influence. The responsibility of early childhood educators to ensure that children are given real influence over everyday activities is clearly stated. Compared to other rights matters, influence is therefore the most visible and emphasised right in the curriculum. In recent decades in Sweden the attention paid to children's influence has been significant: influence has been highlighted as a main children's rights issue in education. This focus has had a dual effect, namely that influence has been firmly put on the educational agenda and that rights for children have almost been equated with influence, particularly in early childhood education.

Reflected against the three elements of HRE, several goals in the early childhood curriculum shown above can on the one hand be said to connect to the elements *knowledge and skills* and *values and attitudes*, but on the other hand can be argued to be too abstract or vague to provide any real guidance for early childhood teachers. How might children be helped to understand the principles of equal value or rights/obligations (knowledge)? Also, what is included in work to develop children's abilities to respect the equal value of all (values and attitudes)? And what is meant with developing respect and understanding for the human rights in this age group? The statement above about the ability to express thoughts and views can be more

easily related to the third element of HRE action and capacity, and being able to express an opinion is also directly related to influence.

No indication of a trajectory for knowledge/values/capacity development can be distinguished in the national curriculum. Children in Swedish early childhood education are aged between 1 and 5 years and their development during these years is extensive. Despite this, early childhood educators are provided with very little guidance on how to construct the initial teaching of 1-year-olds in the matters mentioned in the curriculum as being related to human rights and how this could be expanded and deepened in the pre-school years.

### Compulsory school curriculum

The Swedish compulsory school comprises 9 years of schooling. The national curriculum for the compulsory school (Lgr11) is divided into two parts. The introductory part states the value-base for Swedish education, the overall assignment of the school and general goals and guidelines, including those for the formation of values and norms. The second part of the school curriculum presents subject syllabuses, all of which specify the central subject content to be studied and the knowledge required in the different age groups. Human rights appear in both parts of the curriculum: in the introductory section and in several subject syllabuses. However, civics is assigned a particular responsibility for the topic of human rights and the civics syllabus specifies the educational content and knowledge requirements relating to human rights for the different age groups:

Year *Educational content*

1-3 Basic human rights such as the equality of all people and also the child's rights as laid down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

*Knowledge requirements*

Pupils have a basic knowledge of some human rights and the rights of the child, and show this by giving examples of what these may mean in school and home settings.

Year *Educational content*

4-6 Human rights, their meaning and importance, including the rights of the child under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.



*Knowledge requirement for 'pass'*

Pupils give an account of the meaning of human rights, the rights of the child, and give examples of what these rights may mean for children in different parts of the world.

Year	Educational content
7-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Human rights including the rights of children as laid down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Their meaning and importance and what constitutes discrimination as laid down in Swedish law.</li><li>- Work of different organisations in promoting human rights.</li><li>- How human rights are violated in different parts of the world.</li><li>- The national minorities and the Sami status as an indigenous people in Sweden and what their special position and rights mean.</li><li>- Democratic freedoms and legal rights, as well as obligations for citizens in democratic societies. Ethical and democratic dilemmas linked to democratic rights and obligations.</li></ul>

*Knowledge requirements for 'pass'*

Pupils give an account of the meaning of human rights, and their importance, and provide examples of how such rights are violated and promoted in different parts of the world. In addition, pupils can give an account of the national minorities and their special status and rights.

The civics syllabus states the content that is to be taught and what pupils should have learned at the end of each three-year period. The syllabus can be said to meet the HRE element human rights *knowledge and skills*, and provide fairly detailed guidance on which human rights knowledge that should be included and aimed at. Further, the national curriculum communicates how the scope of the topic should be increased over the school years. The Swedish national curriculum provides guidance to teachers in their choice of subject matter relating to the HRE element knowledge and skills and can accordingly be said to contribute to the establishment of an HRE curriculum in the sense that Parker (2018) calls for, by specifying *which knowledge* students of *different ages* are expected to achieve, i.e. a subject core and an idea about basic-intermediate-advanced knowledge levels.

However, when scrutinised further, the knowledge development trajectory that is offered is inconsistent and vague. The basic human rights that are expected to be covered in years 1-3 are exemplified only by equality; the

same right that is mentioned in the early childhood curriculum, i.e. no expansion is provided in the example. The continuation of the sentence separates human rights from children's rights: "Basic human rights... and also the child's rights as laid down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child", which can be compared with the formulation for the two older age groups: "Human rights including the rights of children..." Whether this difference is the expression of steps in an educational trajectory – first addressing human rights and children's rights as separate matters, then merging them – or whether it demonstrates a curriculum inconsistency is unclear. The specification for years 4-6 regarding knowledge about human rights is a tremendous jump in comparison with that for years 1-3: the teaching should cover "human rights, their meaning and importance". If understood literally, this stands out as significantly more advanced than what could be expected at an basic/intermediate knowledge level. The extension of human rights knowledge towards a more advanced level in years 7-9, addressing discrimination, human rights violations, indigenous people and the relation between human rights and democracy, can be seen as reasonable. However, in years 7-9, *grading* is a significant part of the education. The subject syllabuses therefore include grading support, which clarifies the differences in the knowledge requirements for the different grades. It can be noted that the knowledge requirement for human rights knowledge is not differentiated for various grades in civics, as the same formulation occurs in all the grade definitions. This communicates that differences in achieved human rights knowledge are not expected and are not to be evaluated when grading. Taken together, while the Swedish national curriculum for compulsory schooling contributes to the establishment of an HRE curriculum when it comes to central knowledge content and an idea about basic-intermediate-advanced curriculum, there are a number of passages, inconsistencies and issues that need further clarification and elaboration.

Pertaining to the second element of HRE – *values and attitudes* – the standards that are expressed in the national curriculum are mainly found in the introductory 'Overall goals and guidelines', for example:

Each pupil:

- can consciously determine and express ethical standpoints based on knowledge of human rights and basic democratic values,
- respects the intrinsic value of other people,
- rejects the subjection of people to oppression and degrading treatment (Lgr11).

The objectives set for human rights value formation are described in a cross-curricular manner and, accordingly, align with research findings from curriculum analyses undertaken in other countries. The responsibility for fostering human rights values and attitudes is thereby assigned to all subjects, with the ensuing risk that none of the subjects will deal with them. No educational content in the work with human rights values and attitudes is stated, only the goal for the work. Similarly, no development trajectory is suggested for value formation or attitude building in terms of breaking down the set goals for the different age groups (as is the case with subject knowledge). The support that is provided in the national curriculum for values and attitudes is highly limited, as is the contribution to the formulation of an HRE curriculum in a wider sense.

With regard to the third element of HRE – *capacity for action* – standards are even more difficult to locate in the national curriculum. Only in a few cases, namely the capacity to act in relation to non-discrimination, freedom of expression and students' influence, is some direction given in the introductory part of the curriculum:

- Each pupil rejects the subjection of people to oppression and degrading treatment and *assists in helping other people*.
- The school should be open to different ideas and *encourage their expression*.
- [Each pupil shall] gradually *exercise a growing influence* over his or her education... (Lgr11, italics added).

As mentioned earlier, student influence has in Sweden been highlighted as a main children's rights issue in education and in recent decades the attention given to this has been significant. As for value formation, the guidance provided to teachers to transform the curriculum standards relating to the capacity for human rights action into practical teaching is weak. The cross-curricular expression blurs the responsibility for action capacity education, in that no educational content is specified (again only the goals) and the curriculum does not indicate a development trajectory for human rights action capacity or clarify how the set goals relate to different age groups. Also concerning the action capacity element, the Swedish national curriculum contributes very little to the elaboration of an HRE curriculum.

## Conclusions – curricula

The educational assignment on human rights that is formulated in the Swedish curricula includes all three elements of HRE as the UN defines it, albeit it to a varying degree. In some parts these elements are difficult to detect and interpret. This is particularly the case in early childhood education, where teachers are given vague guidance in the curriculum. The Swedish curriculum for the compulsory school provides teachers with a significantly more workable guidance for the teaching of human rights *knowledge* than for human rights *values and attitudes* and human rights *action capacity*.

Regardless of the varying curricula support for HRE, teachers involved in early childhood education and school are responsible for planning and delivering an education about and through human rights that enables preschool children to develop attitudes and abilities and school students to achieve the set knowledge, values and capacity goals. An important question to raise is *on what* teachers' selection of central educational content and their organisation of this content in a comprehensible trajectory of knowledge development should rest, when the national curricula do not suffice? Parker's (2018) plea for the necessity of an HRE curriculum can be reflected against the *selective traditions* identified in other school subjects (Sandell, Öhman and Östman 2005; Sund and Wickman 2008) as the real bedrocks for content selection and ideas about basic and advanced knowledge within the subject in question. From the viewpoint of didactic theorising, an important part of teacher professionalism lies in the specific competence to design teaching. Schulman (1986, p 13) expresses this concisely: "The teacher is not only a master of procedure, but also of content and rationale, and capable of explaining why something is done." In terms of human rights education, such a teacher professionalism needs the support of "a disciplinary structure created in a field of specialists" (Parker, 2018, p. 4), i.e. subject specific selective traditions in the field of children's human rights education (Brantefors and Thelander, 2017).

## Previous research on children's rights in education

Educational children's rights research has grown since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989. A few of the themes that have attracted particular research interest are indicated below.

*Children's right to participation* in society and its institutions is identified in several research reviews as a main focal point for research (Quennerstedt, 2011; Hägglund and Thelander 2011; Brantefors and Quennerstedt, 2016). Participation can be said to refer to children's civil rights to freedom of

speech and information and to their political rights to take part in the formation of will and influence the exercise of power (Quennerstedt, 2010). The participation research in education has primarily paid attention to children's influence, 'voice' and agency in early childhood education and school (Robinson and Taylor 2007; Thelander, 2009; Bae, 2010; Armstrong, 2011; Theobald et al., 2011; Hudson, 2012; McCowan, 2012). Interest has mainly been directed at how children understand their right to participate in school, how teachers understand children's right to participate/have a say and at how early childhood centres and schools have organised children's participation. A large part of this research portrays a rather gloomy situation – the results indicate that real participation for children is still a challenge to education.

A significant body of research has explored educational institutions as *human rights communities* – places that are permeated by the values and principles expressed in the human rights. These studies have examined whether schools are infused with mutual respect, tolerance and equal value and how the relations between children and adults take shape (Lebedev et al. 2002). Educational tradition has been pointed to as a barrier for change, for example unequal power structures assigning children subordinate positions (Murriss, 2013; Allan and P'Anson, 2004). Robinson (2017) found that teachers interpret and implement their responsibilities for children's human rights in education in different ways, depending on how they socially construct notions of children, their values, beliefs and prejudices and how school leaders encourage this work.

Research that raises key educational questions in terms of the *teaching and/or learning of rights* (which is the specific interest in this research project) is surprisingly limited. A few studies have approached education about rights from the explicit viewpoint of HRE. For example, Gerber's (2008) research on schools in Australia and the USA and Lapayese's (2005) survey of secondary schools in Japan, Austria and the USA have established that education about human rights tends to be implemented in the form of small-scale and localised initiatives and, if embedded at national policy level, the implementation in classrooms is generally limited and weak. Lapayese (ibid.) also found that of the countries included in his study none required HRE to form part of teacher education or professional development requirements. A study by the Australian Attorney General's department reported similar findings in relation to the Australian context (Burridge et al., 2013).

Thus, findings from the above studies suggest that educating children about rights is not a well-integrated feature of schools or national education

systems. The results of an investigation into 12 countries' implementation of UNCRC (Lundy et al., 2012) support this argument. The study showed that educating children about rights was not considered an important factor with regard to implementing UNCRC. Even though most countries included some aspects of human rights and children's rights in their school curricula, the inclusion of this was often optional, unsystematic and not mandatory and therefore rarely led to any substantial education about rights.

Specific school-focused rights-based programmes, such as Amnesty International's *Human Rights Friendly School* project, Save the Children's *Global Peace Schools* and UNICEF UK's *Rights Respecting Schools* programme, have been launched. These aim to make human rights an integral part of everyday school life and to help children and young people to understand how rights apply to their own lives. Robinson (2017) found in her examination of the UK's RRS programme that even when schools integrate a programme with a rights-based focus, the nature and amount of rights education that is provided is often inconsistent. A number of researchers have examined and discussed the benefits of children being educated about their rights. These studies do not initially (Covell and Howe, 1999) connect to HRE, but instead talk about 'children's rights education'. Some studies demonstrate how children can develop knowledge about their own and others' rights and understand the responsibility that accompanies rights. In such cases, children are able to learn about general human rights principles. When these are practised in the educational environment, children develop the skills and capacities to take positive action as rights holders (Howe and Covell, 2005; Covell et al., 2010; Wallberg and Kahn, 2011; Tibbitts, 2009). A shift in vocabulary concerning the naming of education about and through rights in this research towards HRE terminology can also be noted. In this context, Mitchell (2010) argues for a reconstruction of children's rights education within the framework of human rights, whereas in a later work, Covell et al. (2011) rephrase their former wording to 'children's human rights education'.

Some studies have examined how teachers understand the responsibility to educate about human rights. In these studies, a number of barriers to the undertaking of HRE have been identified. One problem is that teachers seem to be largely unfamiliar with HRE – they are often unaware of its existence and the consequent responsibility placed on teachers and schools – and there is a lack of professional development in both introducing the topic and educating the teachers (Tibbitts and Kirchschräger, 2010). A further difficulty that is mentioned in several studies is that teachers' own

knowledge about human rights seems to be weak, in that it is often of a common-sense nature, rather than having legal and historical depth (Cayir and Türkan Bağlı, 2011; Cassidy et al., 2013). Teachers also express insecurity about teaching human rights, largely because they see human rights as a complex and multi-layered issue, are unsure about *what* to include and focus on and *how* to teach them (Cassidy et al., 2013). An effect of the limited knowledge and insecurity is that teachers become highly dependent on externally produced teaching materials, in which the educational content and processes have been chosen and designed by others (Wing Leung et al., 2011). Some studies have examined how teachers view the aims of HRE. The primary aim of the education seems to be to develop responsibility for others and empathy for people in difficult circumstances (Waldron and Oberman, 2011; Wing Leung et al., 2011). According to these authors, teachers rarely formulate educational aims that relate to children's and young people's ability to support or defend rights, or to claim their own rights.

Although the research on education about children's human rights in formal schooling that has been undertaken thus far is limited, and more or less absent in early childhood education, important aspects of such education have been explored and discussed. These are that human rights are often marginalised in curricula, that education about human rights does not seem to be well-integrated in schools, that teachers' knowledge about human rights is insufficient, that teachers are insecure about the content and undertaking of HRE and that the purpose of educating children about human rights is more regarded as the development of understanding and responsibility towards others than the ability to claim your own rights. The collated earlier findings indicate a worrying situation for HRE in early childhood education and school. The limited scope of research is also a problem, in that the complex and multi-layered educational responsibility that is assigned to teachers has not been supported by knowledge development. We accordingly agree with Garnett Russell and Suárez (2017) that "further research is needed on the mechanisms through which human rights curricula and policies are implemented" (p. 39). The need for basic research that maps and examines the teaching and learning of human rights is great.

## Theoretical framing, research design and method

### Theoretical framing

As the objective of this research project lies at the intersection between political philosophy, sociology and education, a combination of theorising from these academic areas has formed the basis for the research. In the following, we elaborate on the theoretical viewpoints that have shaped the project.

At the centre of the research is human rights for children. Human rights have been theorised in several academic disciplines, such as law, history, political theory and philosophy, from which have stemmed multiple and rich perspectives on the origins and development of and the current situation for human rights. An often referenced classification of rights is Marshall's (1950/1992) historically well-founded and elaborated division of citizenship rights into *civil*, *political* and *social* rights. The UN's definition of human rights in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights uses the same categorisation, but extends the third category to include economic, social and cultural rights.

In this report we limit the theoretical account of human rights to the specific view of human rights for children that has guided the project. We assume a perspective of rights in which children's rights are understood as included in the human rights. We accordingly see rights for children as *children's human rights* and argue that the same rights apply to children and adults. For this reason, we employ general human rights vocabulary to discuss children's human rights: civil, political and socio-economic rights. This is a theoretical standpoint that is important to clarify, because a significant part of children's rights research constructs and conceptualises rights for children in terms other than the sharper human rights language. Rights for children are then primarily described and categorised as 'provision rights', 'protection rights' and 'participation rights'. Critics of the latter wording of rights for children have been concerned that it, first, lessens the actual rights claims and, second, that using a separate set of words for children's rights separates children's rights from human rights (Quennerstedt, 2010).

Bobbio (1996) argues that rights for children, as we now understand them, have evolved over time in parallel processes. For children, who were initially excluded from rights, these processes have meant (1) that they have eventually been acknowledged as legitimate rights holders and (2) that children and young people have been identified as a group whose status and specific circumstances need to be considered when their human rights are



interpreted. Based on the perspective described above, our standpoint is that children are legitimate holders and practitioners of all human rights, but that these rights have to be understood as embedded in the life conditions of children and young people. Our view of human rights and children as fully fledged holders and practitioners of human rights informs our approach to human rights education. It has, for example, directly affected how we have communicated with the teachers included in the project, where we have consistently talked about ‘children’s human rights’ rather than ‘children’s rights’.

Sociological theorising provides another important theoretical leg for this research in guiding our view of the child. Childhood sociology has been a catalyst for changing views of children and childhood in social science. Leading childhood sociologists (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; James and James, 2004) have highlighted how earlier prevailing views of children tended to objectify the child, where the child was understood as an object for natural development (psychological perspective) or socialisation (sociological perspective). With such a view, the child’s value is located to the future and interest is directed towards what the child will become, rather than what s/he is in the present. In contrast, the sociology of childhood argues that children have full human value in the present and are competent and knowledgeable actors in society. Childhood sociologists have further claimed that the dominant views of children depoliticise childhood. A perception that the child is ‘nature’ rather than ‘culture’, and that childhood is a natural (rather than culture infused) phase in life, places children outside the political (Bühler-Niederberger, 2010). Sociology of childhood scholars argue the contrary, namely that children and childhood cannot be understood as separated from society and politics and that childhood is indeed a political phenomenon (Mayall, 2001). The arguments put forward in a sociology of childhood context shed light on children’s positions in societal power structures and adults’ perceptions of and relations to children – matters that all provide important insights into and tools for the design of this project, the ethical considerations before and during the data collection and for the analyses that have been conducted.

Theorising on rights and on the child, as described above, have been important when approaching the field of research. However, an educational knowledge interest lies at the heart of our study. The educational theorising we draw on has had a profound impact on the formulation of the research questions and design of the study. In this, the educational philosophy and

theorising of John Dewey and didactic perspectives on education have been merged with the basic understanding of rights and children.

Dewey's view of education as a process of *growth* is central to the project (Quennerstedt and Quennerstedt, 2014). Dewey rejects the idea that the aim of education is to prepare the child for the future and instead argues that the real value of education lies in the very process of education – education does not *have* an aim, it *is* the aim (Dewey, 1916). He further opposes views of the educational process as the accumulation of knowledge and maintains that education is a constant process of reconstruction and reorganisation of knowledge. If the inherent aim of education is *growth through the reconstruction of experience*, education has to be organised and given a content that will offer a range of experiences (Dewey, 1938/1997). In line with Dewey's thinking, the project assumes the position that children and young people will grow as holders and practitioners of human rights *through their experiences of human rights* in education. This may include direct instruction by the teacher, indirect learning through the attitudes and actions of teachers and other children or students, of being or not being invited to practise human rights in early childhood education and school etc. We accordingly argue that investigating the kinds of experiences that are available in education, through educational content and processes (direct or indirect), is important in discussions about the role of education for children's growth as holders of human rights.

The design of the study and the analysis are based on didactic theorising. Didactics is defined as the *theory and practice of teaching and learning* (Gundem, 2011). Didactic theorising emphasises that different elements are always included in an educational situation – the educational content, the teacher and the student – and highlights the importance of examining and understanding the relation between them. Didactic theorising offers a professional base for teachers by providing a systematic structure and an elaborated language for the deliberation and planning of teaching and learning (Uljens, 1997). However, didactic theory also provides a particular gaze, concepts and tools for a scientific analysis of teaching and learning (Hudson, 2003) and is an established educational scientific approach in non-English speaking continental and northern Europe, but is less known in Anglo-Saxon countries (Meyer, 2012; Hudson, 2003, 2007; Hudson and Meyer, 2011; Gundem and Hopmann, 1998). In recent years, the English term 'didactics' has nevertheless become increasingly used to designate the research field (Ligozat and Almqvist, 2018).

The research field of didactics covers a knowledge interest in the aims and methods of teaching and learning, but also in curriculum construction processes in the classroom and beyond (ibid.). The principal object of inquiry in didactic research is relations between the teacher, the learner and the educational content (e.g. Gundem, 2011; Uljens, 1997). In didactic examinations of how the three elements consociate, one of them is often foregrounded (e.g. Gundem, 2011). Analyses in the didactic research tradition frequently approach the said relations from the three questions of *what*, *how* and *why* (Klafki, 1963/1995). *What* addresses the content used in the educational situation, *how* concerns the processes and the forms of teaching and learning and *why* relates to the motives for why something is considered important to learn, or why a certain educational content or method of teaching is chosen.

The part of the project reported on here is anchored in the didactic research field's interest in the close examination of educational content and working methods in early childhood and school classroom practices and the teacher's role in the choice of content and methods. Content can be understood as including the two dimensions differentiated by Klafki (1963/1995) in terms of *Bildungsinhalt* and *Bildungsgehalt*. Klafki discusses the relationship between the two dimensions of content and emphasises that teachers must be aware of both in their educational preparations. The difference between these has been explained in several ways. Hillen, Sturm & Willbergh (2011) argue that in the concept pair *Bildungsinhalt- Bildungsgehalt*, Klafki addresses educational content in the light of the intricate relation between teaching and learning. The authors find that translating *Bildungsinhalt* into the English term *matter*, and *Bildungsgehalt* into *meaning*, can capture the two dimensions of content: subject matter and subject meaning. Uljens (1997) maintains that the content of education, the *Bildungsinhalt*, always has to be chosen and that the reason for this selection is the *educative value* of the content, which is the *Bildungsgehalt*.

We find that these explanations of Klafki's two dimensions of content (1963/1995) contribute to qualifying an understanding of educational content that is highly fruitful in research examining children's human rights education. In this project we include both dimensions of content and argue that this didactic approach will provide new knowledge that will contribute to the formation of an HRE curriculum (Parker, 2018). By exploring the content taught/the chosen subject matter in the different age groups, we can capture teachers' ideas about the what-question throughout the knowledge development trajectory and answer the question of what is considered to be

central HRE subject matter (*Bildungsinhalt*) at basic, intermediate and more advanced levels. Further, by adding questions about *why* this content has been chosen, we can (in comparison to Parker's call for a curriculum of HRE) further extend the interest in central HRE educational content by connecting the matter to be taught to conceptions of the educative value of this matter – the wider meaning and conceived learning effects of a certain subject matter (*Bildungsgehalt*).

### **Research design and data creation**

The research was undertaken by means of fieldwork in two early childhood education groups and six school classes consisting of two year 2-3 classes, two year 5 classes and two year 8 classes (see the table below for the class breakdowns). Four researchers carried out the research, each of whom was responsible for the data collection and analysis in an age group. The fieldwork was carried out in a similar way in all the groups. During a total of approximately 60 hours of fieldwork per group, ongoing teaching was observed and interviews with teachers and children/students were conducted. The direction of the observations and the focus in the interviews were designed in advance by the project team and employed in all the groups. The observations were documented using field notes and video recordings, while the interviews were audio recorded. Adaptions to the particular group of children or students and to the different contexts became necessary and is why there are some differences between the groups in the data collection and the data. The similarities in the data between the groups is predominant and the total project material provides satisfactory conditions for comparative analyses.

The eight locations for the data collection can be characterised as ordinary Swedish early childhood centres and schools and together the selected locations represent rural and urban settings, institutions of different sizes and an equal gender distribution in the groups. The ambition to include several groups with ethnic diversity could not be satisfactorily met and is why seven of the eight groups are heavily dominated by children and students with a Swedish ethnic background.<sup>2</sup>

The participants in the study were:

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<sup>2</sup> The difficulty of finding ethnically diverse schools willing to be included in research is of concern. This issue cannot be further pursued here, but should be given serious attention in the Swedish research community.

Early childhood education	1-3 year olds	15 children	4 early childhood teachers
	3-5 year olds	21 children	2 early childhood teachers
School, classes 2-3	Class 2-3a	18 students	1 class teacher
	Class 2-3b	23 students	1 class teacher
School, class 5	Class 5a	22 students	1 class teacher
	Class 5b	22 students	1 class teacher
School, class 8	Class 8a	26 students	1 civics teacher
	Class 8b	24 students	1 civics teacher

The teachers in the respective groups were asked by the researcher to plan and undertake *work with children's human rights*. The studied work was accordingly researcher initiated; a fact that needs to be taken into account. The researchers did not provide any further explanations or instructions concerning the work, but emphasised that the teacher was free to decide on the time frame, content and working methods. What the teachers chose to do differed between the groups. A first significant difference was the character of the work in the early childhood education groups and school groups. In all the school groups, traditional teaching and student work were planned and undertaken. In the early childhood group with children aged 3-5 years the teachers planned and carried out thematic work. No planned work took place in the early childhood group with children aged 1-3 years. A second difference was the length of the work, which varied greatly from no work (early childhood 1-3 year olds), two weeks in classes 2-3 and 5, eight weeks in one class 8 and six months in the early childhood group with 3-5 year olds. The respective group work with children's human rights is described in the result section for each age group.

The planned work with children's human rights was filmed. One video film camera was used and was either hand held by the researcher or placed on a tripod with the researcher beside it or further away to reduce researcher impact. Different kinds of activities were filmed and the researcher continuously chose what to document. In the early childhood groups the researcher walked and sat with children and teachers and filmed individual children or small groups of children and their teachers, as well as whole group gatherings. In the school groups, different kinds of classroom work were filmed. During direct teacher instruction the camera was generally focused on the teacher, but when the instruction included student voices and discussion, the entire class was filmed from behind (with the students' backs

to the camera). On some occasions, whole class discussions were filmed from the front of the classroom with the teacher out of the picture. In student group work, a single group was sometimes filmed through the entire lesson in order to capture the working process from start to end. Audio recording equipment was placed in several locations in the classroom to enhance the sound quality and to collect data from the student groups that were not being video recorded.

The teachers in all the groups were interviewed in close proximity to their work, in most groups twice – before and after the undertaking of the planned work. The didactic approach of the project formed the basis for the interview questions, which sought to clarify the planned educational content, working methods and the aims of the work. In the pre-interviews the teachers were therefore asked to describe their plans and explain why they had chosen a particular content and working method. The teachers then reflected on the work in the post-interviews. For example, they identified elements which they thought had been successful or not and considered what they could and would do differently next time. Interviews with the pupils were also conducted, but these have not been used in the current report.

The ethical considerations included a carefully designed process for informed consent in line with the Swedish regulations and the changing views of what constitutes sound research ethics in research involving children (Graham and Fitzgerald, 2010; Harcourt and Quennerstedt, 2014). Information about the purpose and design of the study, that participation in the research was voluntary and about the right to withdraw at any time was communicated to all the participants and guardians. Consent was collected individually, albeit in different ways for the different participants. The teachers were informed orally and in writing and gave oral consent to their participation. The guardians were informed by letter and for children and students under the age of 15 their guardians either gave consent or denied participation on a return slip. All the children and students were informed about the research in an age appropriate way. The right to change their minds about participating in the research was particularly emphasised in the information to children and students. Consent from children in the early childhood groups was sought at each separate filming occasion by asking them if they agreed to be filmed. The school-age students gave their written consent or denial individually at the start of the research.

Confidentiality has been ensured by procedures that prevent the identification of people in the project report – by using pseudonyms or no names

at all, not mentioning institutional names or anything that could possibly identify the early childhood centre or school taking part in the study, and omitting any utterances that could reveal someone's identity. Further, information about which early childhood centres and schools have participated in the project has not been shared between the researchers involved in the project. As confidentiality is particularly difficult in research with video documented data, the protocol for analysing, storing and disseminating the data and its future use was carefully designed and included in the information provided to the participants (Fitzgerald, Hacklin and Dawson, 2013). The video data has been stored on separate hard drives and has not been shared between the researchers in the project via email or other web-based means. At the end of the research project all the data will be stored in accordance with the host university's regulations and will not be accessible to non-authorised persons.

### **Analytical procedure**

The current study has specifically examined the direct teaching of children's human rights, and didactic theory has provided the basis for the analysis. The three didactic questions of why, what and how formed the starting point for the analysis. Drawing on Lindström and Pennlert's (2012) work on educational purposes, content and methods, an analytical tool was developed. The main concepts in our tool are in several aspects close to Lindström's and Pennlerts conceptual framework, but have been developed and adapted to fit the study. The analytical tool separates the aims of education from the educational content and the methods used, and enables one of them at a time to be examined. Deconstructing the teaching into these aspects facilitated a more detailed scrutiny. In the following the analytical tool and the analytical work are described in more detail.

The following aims were formulated in order to analyse the *aims* of the education:

Cognitive aims	Acquiring knowledge and understanding, but also cognitively based applications such as comparison and explanation.
Ethical aims	Acquiring the ability to ethically reflect and evaluate and take a stand for ethical principles.
Emotional aims	Acquiring the ability to feel and empathise with people and situations.
Social aims	Acquiring the ability to listen to and cooperate with others while still taking one's own place in the interaction.

Bodily aims	Achieving bodily ability and the ability to express through bodily means.
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The following types of content were formulated in order to analyse the content of the education:

Fact-oriented content	Content providing information about facts and actual state of affairs.
Understanding-oriented content	Content aiming at deeper insights into thought structures or human actions, for example understanding complexity or causal effects.
Value-oriented content	Content displaying norms or aiming at value judgements.
Skills-oriented content	Content that includes practical application, intellectually or bodily.

The following types of methods were formulated in order to analyse the processes and methods:

Transmission	Presentation and explanation of a content predetermined by the teacher. Children/students mainly passively receive the transmitted content; listen, watch, read.
Interactive work	Student participant discussion and problematisation of a content in order to process it. The interaction is the point; understanding is to be deepened through interaction.
Explorative work	Careful examination of a topic or material in order to identify and clarify complexity and/or unknown matters.
Aesthetic work	Methods that gives life, form and meaning through visualisation or other aesthetic expression.

The analysis aimed to answer the research questions:

- What are the perceived aims of the work with children's human rights and the chosen content?
- What are the content and working methods in the teaching in, through and about human rights?

The interviews with the teachers and the observation data were analysed in several steps. Initially, the question of why HRE should be included in early childhood education and school was addressed. The instances in which motives for HRE were expressed by teachers, either in the interviews or in their teaching practices, were located and reflected against the above aims. The educational content was then analysed. The planned content, as described in advance by the teachers, and the content observed in the teaching were identified and examined in relation to the different types of content defined in the analytical tool. Finally, the working methods, mainly those observed



in the teaching practices, were examined in relation to the types of methods explicated in the tool. The identified aims, content and methods were then related to each other. Finally, the various elements of the teaching and the totality they formed were conclusively examined.

When several researchers work with different groups and empirical material, and an ambition is to make comparisons between the data sets and groups, it is necessary to agree on an analytical framework and tool. In order to reach a high degree of similarity in the analyses of the data from different age groups, thereby attaining ground for comparison, the established analytical tool was mainly used without changes during the analytical work. This means that the researchers did not actively search for other types of aims, content of working methods during the analysis, but instead delimited the analysis to the agree types. This kind of analysis loses in flexibility and openness to the unexpected, but provides possibilities to examine the material in whole, and to make comparisons.

The findings from the analysis of the teaching in the four age groups is presented in the following four sections. For each age group, a contextualisation is provided that illuminates the particular educational situation of the age group in question and highlights matters of specific importance in the setting. A description of the two locations and their work with children's human rights is also given. In addition, the adaptations of both the design and the data collection that were considered necessary are described in more detail.

## 2. Teaching about and through children's human rights in preschool

Britt Tellgren

When teachers in preschool teach human rights it is expressed and formed differently than it is in school. The Education Act (2010:800) states that the teaching in preschool should both impart and establish respect for the human rights and democratic values on which Swedish society is based. The early childhood education curriculum (The Swedish National Agency for Education 2018, p.5) emphasises that education in the preschool should reflect the values and rights that are expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and should therefore set out from what is judged to be best for the child, that children have a right to participation and influence and should know what their rights are. A holistic view of the child is emphasised, where children's needs, care, development and learning complete the circle. At the same time, the preschool should give children opportunities to develop "respect and understanding for every person's equal value and for human rights" (The Swedish National Agency for Education 2018, p.12).

In previous research, both in Sweden and internationally, the motives for teaching children's rights in early childhood education have been found to be vague. In most cases, rights learning has been transformed into human relations and interactions. Preschool teachers consider that children have the right to influence and develop their own rights, but that they are not expected to teach children about these rights (Brantefors and Quennerstedt, 2016).

The concept of teaching has been included in the latest revision of the curriculum (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018), 'teaching' has up to now not been used in a Swedish preschool context (see for example Doverborg et al., 2013; Rubinstein Reich et.al., 2017; Palla et.al., 2017). It is therefore imperative to widen the knowledge about how the concept of teaching can be understood in the preschool context in relation to children's human rights.

## **The Swedish preschool context**

In the preschool there is a strong tradition of Friedrich Fröbel's pedagogy, which emphasises the idea that children's lives should contain freedom and development without too much guidance from the teachers. In this tradition it has been important that preschool teachers should not teach in the same way as in school by relying on curriculum goals and performance requirements (Jonsson, 2011; Thulin, 2011; Due et al., 2018). Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century dominant discourses have strongly emphasised that “play is children’s work and children’s kindergartens/preschools should not be like school” (Tellgren, 2008, p.93). According to Fröbel, children should “grow up like plants and be given care and attention” (Tellgren, 2008, p.269) and the instrumental transmission pedagogy, which the school was considered to stand for, was strongly criticised (Tellgren, 2008).

For this reason there is a lack of clarity amongst preschool pedagogues and preschool managers about what teaching means and how it should be carried out in the preschool (Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2016). One possible way of clarifying the concept of teaching is based on the idea that teachers in the preschool should “understand, be able to challenge and support children in meaning-making learning processes” (Doverborg et al., 2013, p.10). A distinctive feature in Swedish early childhood education is the combination of care and pedagogy and that the tension between them shapes the practice (Johansson, 1992). The mutual relation between education and care is mentioned for example in the OECD reports ‘Starting Strong II’ (2006) as *educare* (see also Siraj-Blatchford, 2010). Sara Dalgren (2017) refers to the teaching concept in the preschool context as *embedded teaching*, which is defined as teaching strategies that are incorporated into everyday preschool activities and routines, such as playtime or mealtimes (Dalgren, 2017). Embedded teaching is explained as the opposite of direct instruction (transmission) and means that learning can be intertwined with play, education and care in the preschool’s everyday activities.

## **Sample, data and data collection**

The study was carried out in two different preschools following recommendations from two preschool managers, who were aware that the teachers in these preschools worked with children’s rights in a successful way. The preschools were located in different parts of a middle-sized Swedish town in a mixed area mainly consisting of blocks of flats but with some terrace houses and detached or semi-detached houses.

The field work was conducted between October 2014 and May 2015, 2-3 days a week. The study began with field notes and observations. A pilot interview was conducted in which the pedagogues described their plans. After the field work, semi-structured interviews were held with all the pedagogues, each one separately, about the aims, content and working methods used in their teaching of children's human rights.

The everyday situations that were observed were teacher-led classes and small group work, the children's free play both indoors and outdoors, change of clothing situations, mealtimes and outdoor occasions. As a researcher I alternated between passively observing and filming without interacting with the children and actively interacting with them by, for example, playing with Lego or reading stories. Altogether, the data consists of 6 interviews with the teachers, 20 hours of film and 40 hours of observation.

## **Results**

The result of the didactic analysis in the two preschools is presented below. The analysis method that was used in the project addresses a school context, but has here been used in the preschool context in order to make the study comparable with that of the school. The aims that are presented emerged during the interviews and discussions with the pedagogues. The identified content has been analysed using the data from the participant observations and video observations, whereas the working methods are based on what emerged during the interviews and observations.

As the age range in the preschool varies greatly and a radical development takes place during the preschool period, the question arises how the children's ages affect the implementation of the education and teaching of children's human rights. In view of this, individual accounts of the two studied preschools are provided below. The preschool for children aged 1-3 is called *Preschool 1* and that for 3-5-year-olds is called *Preschool 2*. The interviewees are preschool teachers and childminders and are here called pedagogues. In *Preschool 1* they are called Pe 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d and in *Preschool 2*, 2a or 2b.

### **The teaching aims in Preschool 1**

Instead of planning a special content or theme for special weeks, the interviewed pedagogues in *Preschool 1* describe their work with children's human rights in all the everyday activities. However, the theme that emerges when they talk about the aims of the teaching is children's participation in

decision-making, which they understand as a knowledge goal relating to children’s human rights:

[...] this about participation in decision-making, it’s perhaps not the same thing as rights, but an attempt to say yes instead of no, that you reflect a bit more and that you reason with the children that we can’t do that now, but later, and that it’ll be a learning in “later” but not now. (Pe 1a)

When the pedagogues talk about teaching in and about children’s human rights in the preschool it is mostly about human relations in terms of attitudes and approaches between the children and the adults, but also between the children in different situations.

Table 1 shows the aims that emerged during the interviews with the four pedagogues. The emotional aims are the most prominent, where the aim of developing linguistic skills is of major importance for children’s possibilities to express their needs and influence their day in the preschool.

Table 1: Preschool 1 (1-3 years)

Cognitive aims:	- To develop linguistic skills so that the children can make themselves understood and are able to articulate their feelings and emotions
Ethical aims:	- To gain insights into principles for how people behave towards each other
Emotional aims:	Each child should <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- feel safe in the preschool</li> <li>- receive the care they need</li> <li>- be able to influence their day and their needs</li> <li>- be seen</li> <li>- be listened to</li> <li>- have fun</li> <li>- understand their own value and worth</li> </ul>
Social aims:	Skills to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- interact and interplay in group situations</li> <li>- manage conflicts in group situations</li> <li>- play with their friends</li> </ul>
Explorative/aesthetic aims	- Be able to test different aesthetic expressions

### Cognitive aims

The pedagogues attach great importance to linguistic knowledge, i.e. developing children’s linguistic skills with the aim of being able to articulate their wishes, feelings and needs. One of the pedagogues expresses it as “the children must be helped to articulate their sadness or their anger” (Pe 1b). It is

clear that the values goal in the curriculum is strongly integrated with the knowledge goal in this context.

### Ethical aims

As these children have only just begun their education, the pedagogues express the need for them to understand how to behave towards other children and to gain insights into “if I am kind to other children then they will also be kind to me” (Pe 1c).

### Emotional aims

In the toddler department, the children’s, and in most cases the guardians’, first encounter with early childhood education takes place. The pedagogues refer to the children’s right to their need for care, such as food, sleep and nurture. The emotional aims are of great importance, in that the pedagogues clearly refer to the values goal in the curriculum. A safe and secure environment, especially in the children’s first year at preschool, is strongly emphasised as a human right and is something that early childhood education is then expected to build on further in the children’s ongoing lives and education. One of the pedagogues expresses it as “the children’s needs will be met” and that they should have the right to “feel good” during their time at preschool.

### Social aims

Like the emotional aims, the social aims are also regarded as very important for the realisation of children’s human rights. One of the pedagogues considers that in most cases the children are seen as individuals in their home. For this reason, a natural knowledge assignment is to teach the children to integrate by interacting and playing with other children in the group and at the same time learn to deal with different conflict situations in the preschool. The goal that is highlighted is that children should learn to be in group situations in the preschool environment and eventually in society.

### Explorative/aesthetic aims

The theme that the pedagogues highlight as a rights theme is an aesthetic theme about children having opportunities to “test” as many aesthetic activities as possible for their age group and that they should regularly be able to choose the aesthetic activity that they are most interested in.

## Teaching content in relation to aims in Preschool 1

The pedagogues in Preschool 1 do not talk very much about the content in rights teaching. Through the pedagogues' descriptions, but mainly based on analyses of the observations, it is clear that the content develops from the goals and aims the pedagogues express. Table 2 thus shows the content of children's human rights in relation to the aims indicated above.

Table 2: Preschool 1 (1-3 years)

Aims	Content
Cognitive aims: - To develop linguistic skills to make themselves understood and articulate feelings and emotions	<i>Fact-oriented:</i> - To learn to express themselves using new words and concepts - To make themselves understood and claim their rights through speech and/or body language - To articulate their feelings and their own opinions
Ethical aims: - To gain insights into principles for how people behave towards each other	<i>Value/Understanding-oriented:</i> - Norms about and understanding of how to behave towards their friends in real-life situations
Emotional aims: - to feel safe in the preschool - to receive the care they need - to be able to influence their day and their needs - to be seen - to be listened to - to have fun - to understand their own value and worth	<i>Value/understanding-oriented:</i> Gain experience of - feeling safe and cared for - being listened to and respected in most situations - initiatives, needs and expressions being recognised - integrity being respected - being physically and mentally close to the pedagogues - having fun
Social aims: - skills to integrate and interact in group situations - skills to manage conflicts in group situations - the ability to play	<i>Skills-oriented:</i> - To learn how to behave in a group - To learn how to manage conflicts - To learn to play with other children
Explorative/aesthetic aims: - Being able to test different aesthetic expressions	<i>Skills-oriented:</i> - The children try painting with different colours, working with different kinds of clay, dancing and moving to music, singing and puppetry

### Fact-oriented content

The fact-oriented content, with direct teaching about children's human rights, is not altogether clear in the observations. However, in both the interviews and the observations linguistic development appears to be a key aspect of the teaching on and for children's human rights with a view to achieving the aim that young children need to learn to articulate their needs, wishes and opinions.

### Value/understanding-oriented content

In the analysis the value-oriented content merges with an understanding-oriented content, which is why they are connected here. In order to achieve the ethical aims the children are expected to understand how they should behave towards each other and how they should treat their peers. This content includes learning to share toys with others and that other children will be sad when they are pushed or when things are taken away from them. By allowing children to meet attentive adults throughout the day, they will experience feeling safe and cared for and that their initiatives will be recognised and respected.

### Skills-oriented content

Skills-oriented content can be understood in connection with both the social and explorative/aesthetic aims. In everyday situations that also include routine situations, the children can test and gradually learn how interaction, interplay and play are enacted in the preschool group and, at the same time, learn how to deal with conflicts in real-life situations. The explorative/aesthetic content involves being able to test different kinds of expression, such as painting with different colours and playing with different kinds of clay. One example is that of Shila, aged 2, who for a while was very inspired to paint with water colours. When the activity was over she wanted to continue to paint, even though it was time to be outdoors. She was allowed to stay inside and paint instead of going out into the playground. Movement and dance are also recurring content.

### **Working methods in Preschool 1**

When the pedagogues in Preschool 1 talk about the goals and aims they work with in connection with children's human rights, a very rich narrative emerges about how they do this and which methods they connect to their goals and aims. The working methods that are accounted for below are based on the analyses of the interviews and the observations.



The working methods with children's human rights in focus are mainly described by the pedagogues in terms of *approaches* in the daily activities. Below, these approaches are divided into and analysed in relation to *transmission, interactive, aesthetic* and *explorative* methods. In the analysis of the interviews and observations, the transmission methods are more difficult to identify and have therefore been included in *interactive methods*, given that the children are active and co-creators in almost all situations. The aesthetic methods and explorative methods are integrated and ranked equal in this preschool and are therefore regarded as one and the same in the analysis.

### Interactive methods

There is an idea about teaching the children different ways of how they should manage different situations in play and communicate with the other children. However, in most cases this message is related to interaction with the children. In order to educate the children in their right to their own value one of the pedagogue's talks about the work team's common approach:

We are there, help them, guide them ... that you are worth something and you are you, no-one has the right to insult you, nobody has the right to abuse you ... even when we change nappies, when we put their clothes on. (Pe 1 b)

This working method can be understood as the children needing to be made aware of their rights by experiencing them. Instead of talking with the children about their rights, the pedagogues strongly associate children's human rights with closeness and safety. The approach in which interaction, play and conversation are prioritised is also linked to care and security. One strategy is to sit on the floor with the children and meet them there with both verbal and non-verbal communication. Pe 1a says this:

I say that I do my job well when I sit on the floor with the children and just be there, and can drop the prestige a bit, I don't need to do very much, I don't need to be busy and I don't need to write anything [...] but like A did this morning [...] the fact that she's there, those who want contact can come to her and she's there for them and kind of catches and cuddles them a bit. (Pe 1a)

The pedagogues work a lot with explanations in conflicts and try to understand and solve them, as they express it "from the children's perspective in the situation". At the same time, the children are taught how they should

behave in different group constellations and especially in dealing with conflict situations. An example of this is when Fia (aged 1.5), a new child in the preschool, climbs up on Leo's (2.5 years) newly constructed cushion trail:

Leo reacts strongly and says: no, be careful BE CAREFUL ((approaches Fia))  
The pedagogue who is sitting on the floor beside them says: What are you thinking now Leo?  
Leo points to Fia and says: Fia ...me ((turns to the pedagogue))  
The pedagogue says: she's only going to climb up and collect some things there (on the bench)  
Fia says something inaudible and points to the CD-player on the bench next to the cushions.  
Leo says: Fia shouldn't ...  
((Fia climbs up and jumps on a cushion and looks up at the CD-player on the bench))  
The pedagogue says: do you know what I think? She wants to listen to some music ((Fia stands and jumps on cushion beside the bench)) you see  
Fia: mummy, mummy  
Leo: she's saying mummy  
Pedagogue: yes, she is, who is she calling for do you think?  
Leo: he he ((Leo looks at the pedagogue thoughtfully by putting his fingers to his lips))  
Fia ((looks at Leo))  
Pedagogue: it's not very easy for her to say our names you know, so that's why she says mummy ((the pedagogue creeps closer to the children)) that's what little children do.  
The pedagogue switches the CD-player on, Otto joins them and both Leo and Otto jump on the cushions. Fia looks at what they are doing and also starts to jump. Before long another child join in and does the same as the others.

Leo does not understand what Fia wants to say. The pedagogue then conveys to Leo what Fia is trying to say based on her verbal and body language, thereby averting a potential conflict. Even though Leo's cushion trail is forgotten, he at least has a lesson in what Fia is trying to say and what her

initiative might mean. As the pedagogue is sitting on the floor with the children, eye contact is also maintained with the other children in the room. This also means that the pedagogue can see how conflicts arise and can either intervene or supervise the children in them.

The pedagogues can be said to teach the children through their explanations, e.g. how to manage conflicts. This happens on the spot and having eye contact with the children in the room can mean that it is easier to both explain and stop a conflict:

[...] then you can stop it with just a glance and that's often what happens. There will always be conflicts of course, but at least you are there [...] close by, just being there (Pe 1d).

Rights promotion work is depicted as having the courage to be in the present at the same time as the pedagogues try to capture the children's initiatives and interests in order to lead and guide them further. Valter (2.5 years) wants to learn what the colours are called in English and is helped in this by means of coloured pens, encouraged by the pedagogue.

One clear strategy is to give the children a lot of time, not just in the different activities, but in most *routine situations*, where time is devoted to conversations between children and adults, but also that the children are given time to test and try things out for themselves. This is most visible when the children dress and undress in the hallway, mealtimes, rest and have their nappies changed. The pedagogues try to be present and listen to the children's views and wishes in most of the observed everyday situations, which also include routine situations. The children are often divided into smaller groups so that every child's voice can be heard. An example of this is when one of the groups goes for a walk to explore the local community. When changing into their outdoor clothes one of the pedagogues asks one of the children what he wants to look for on the walk, to which the child replies that he wants to look at mopeds. This wish is satisfied by finding different kinds of mopeds to look at on the walk, which they later document. Several observed situations in the playroom show that the children encounter adults who dress up, joke with the children, hug them and are there just for them.

An interactive method can also be understood by means of the work team's agreement, which in the everyday situation draws attention to the children's positive- rather than negative behaviour. They make reference to trying to indicate that it was "wrong or silly" and why this was so. In addition to the children understanding their own rights, they are expected to be

rights practitioners by modelling themselves on how the pedagogues treat *each other* in front of the children.

### Explorative methods

When it comes to giving children opportunities to investigate their surroundings and experience different aesthetic expressions, such as playing with clay, dance and painting, the pedagogues understand this as a rights theme. Within these themes, which are led by the pedagogues, small groups of children can sample different aesthetic expressions, such as painting with different kinds of paint, using different techniques and testing different materials like clay or sand. Song, dance and movement are also things that can be done with small groups of children.

### The pedagogues' routines

One method that falls outside the didactic analysis tools, but that can be understood as having a bearing on the rights theme, is that the work team in Preschool 1 demonstrates a very structured way of working in its daily routines. The pedagogues' times and routines are displayed in some detail on a noticeboard in the kitchen. Pe 1a describes this working method in the following way:

I know what I have to do each day, but there's also a lot of room for flexibility and spontaneity. We don't stand there and wonder who will go out first or who will set the table, it just flows nicely and means that there's more time for other things. (Pe 1a)

The pedagogues who have worked together for several years say that if they do not know who is doing what they cannot work flexibly. As the work tasks are divided up they can spend more time with the children, especially in routine situations, without wondering how the tasks will be divided up during the day. This structure is also regularly updated in order to fit the context that prevails at the time.

### **Preschool 1 summary**

The pedagogues describe their teaching of children's human rights more in terms of attitudes and approaches than planning and thematic content. The aims that are highlighted by the pedagogues in Preschool 1 are not expressly connected to rights teaching, in that they do not mention anything about children's rights. Instead, there is a greater connection to participation and decision-making in both their aims and the preschool's everyday activities,

but which can anyway be understood as rights teaching. In the aims that can be discerned it is the emotional aims that are the most obvious, often in connection with the social aims. Through the emotional aims the individual child is taken into consideration on the basis of the goals relating to care and security and as important human rights for the youngest children in early childhood education. The emotional aims are also integrated with the social aims in the first encounter with other preschool children who need to acquire knowledge about and insights into interaction such as play and interplay with other children in a group setting. The integration of explorative and aesthetic aims is made visible as a rights theme in which the children can sample the activities that are usually on offer in the preschool. However, the most central aspect of working with children's human rights is the development of children's linguistic knowledge and skills. In this way they are given more opportunities to express their needs and opinions.

The pedagogues appear more as co-creators and guides than formal teachers. At the same time as the pedagogues talk about aims, they describe their working methods and approaches for achieving their aims rather than the content.

The fact that the work team in Preschool 1 adopted a very structured schedule gave them flexibility and security in their everyday routines. This created more time for the pedagogues to be present in the here and now, both physically and mentally, in most of the activities and routines. The pedagogues can be said to have created a structure and a way of working in which children's decision-making is regarded as a right.

### **The aims of the teaching in Preschool 2**

The two interviewed pedagogues in Preschool 2, where the children are between the ages of 3 and 5, planned a theme that was expected to be based on children's human rights. The background to the theme was that they had previously observed that in their play the children were inspired by a number of popular characters from social media.<sup>3</sup> The children who chose the role of Transformers and/or Ninja Turtles played in a tough and physical way that resulted in conflict, whereas the roles of My Little Pony and Frozen resulted in "kinder" yet very one-sided play. According to the pedagogues, the overarching aims of the theme were to understand the children's own play and peer culture and the children's immediate interests in order to work

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<sup>3</sup> Spiderman, My Little Pony, Ninja Turtles, Transformers, Yoo-Hoo-Ninjago and Elsa in Frozen.

together with them on common values. The question that they wanted to follow was: *How can we explore the characters' qualities in order to talk to the children about norms and values?*

The following table is a compilation of the aims that the pedagogues talked about in relation to children's human rights in Preschool 2.

Table 3: Preschool 2 (3-5 years)	
Cognitive aims:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing linguistic skills in order to express opinions and be understood</li> <li>- Verbally reflecting on the interplay with friends</li> </ul>
Ethical aims:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insights on principals for ethical dilemmas in relation to their peers</li> <li>- Insights into norms and values</li> <li>- Feeling for other children's values</li> </ul>
Emotional aims:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Daring to speak in a group</li> <li>- Feeling what it is like to be an expert in an area</li> <li>- Becoming aware of their own value</li> </ul>
Social aims:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acquiring tools for managing relationships with peers in play and interplay</li> <li>- Acquiring tools for managing conflict</li> <li>- Acquiring tools for developing play</li> </ul>
Explorative /aesthetic aims:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing the ability to dramatise</li> <li>- Developing the ability to use images, film, theatre and dance</li> </ul>
Bodily aims:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing the ability to set limits for physical play</li> </ul>

### Cognitive aims

Developing linguistic skills is regarded by these pedagogues as a central goal so that the children can practise and defend their human rights both in the early years setting and in the future.

### Ethical aims

By means of the theme of popular characters, which the pedagogues talk about as a rights theme, the aim is that the children will learn to reflect on values and norms in the form of ethical dilemmas, life issues and attitudes and approaches to their friends. Pe 2a says that:

We are curious about how we can work with these characters in our values work. How do we treat each other, what strengths do they have – what are our strengths? What do we do with them? [...] what do we do when we are bad and good? (Pe 2a).

### Emotional aims

The emotional aims are often connected to the social aims in the pedagogues' descriptions. The pedagogues express the aim of the theme as each child learning to form his/her own opinions and being able to express them in group settings, as well as being listened to and seen by their peers. A clear aim with the rights theme is that the children are expected to understand their own value in relation to others.

### Social aims

Throughout the interviews the social aims are named as the point of departure for the teaching and learning of rights. The pedagogues want the children to develop tools in order to manage and develop their relations with their peers both in play and interplay. Giving children tools so that they can solve their conflicts themselves is regarded as important in order to defend and practise their rights. Without talking directly about children's human rights, it is clear that children have the right to their own play and to develop it. Pe 2b refers to play that has been far much too physical and says:

The children are so wise and it is clear that when they start to reflect they stop and think. No, but I don't want anyone to push me – no, what can you do then? You can pretend to push someone and then when they talk about it they can turn it into a game that works and I can see now that they can play physical games. (Pe 2b)

In addition to physical conflicts, the preschool teachers also want to teach the children to deal with the invisible intrigues and exclusions that take place in play and other activities.

### Aesthetic aims

The pedagogues refer to the fact that the children like to dramatise for each other and make up their own stories based on a rights content. One aim is that the theme should develop into drama, film or dance.

### Bodily aims

With reference to the social aim that the children have the right to play, an aim is expressed that the children should learn to play physical games without being too rough and injuring each other, which often leads to the play being abandoned.

## The teaching content in relation to the aims Preschool 2

The pedagogues in Preschool 2 make reference to the right theme with popular characters, where the content is more visible than in Preschool 1. However, even in this preschool it is clear that the content develops from the goals and aims expressed by the pedagogues. Table 4, below, shows the children’s human rights content in relation to the aims reported above.

Table 4: Preschool 2 (3-5 years)

Aims	Content
<p><i>Cognitive aims:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop linguistic skills in order to express opinions and be understood</li> <li>- Verbally reflect on the interplay with peers</li> </ul>	<p><i>Fact-oriented content</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To describe the characters’ qualities</li> </ul> <p><i>Understanding-oriented content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In small groups understand that peers have different interests</li> </ul> <p><i>Skills-oriented content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use new words and concepts</li> </ul>
<p><i>Ethical aims:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insights on principals for ethical dilemmas in relation to their peers</li> <li>- Insights on norms and values</li> <li>- Feeling for other children’s values</li> </ul>	<p><i>Value-oriented content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflections on the value of different qualities in oneself and others</li> <li>- Reflections on norms and values based on own values</li> <li>- Reflections on the value of helping others</li> </ul>
<p><i>Emotional aims:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dare to speak in a group</li> <li>- Feel what it is like to be an expert in an area</li> <li>- Become aware of own value</li> </ul>	<p><i>Skills-oriented content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How you claim your own rights</li> <li>- Dare to talk in small groups based on own interests</li> </ul> <p><i>Understanding-oriented content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- See yourself as knowledgeable in an area</li> <li>- Reflect on your own and other’s behaviour</li> <li>- Reflect on the concepts of “good” and “bad”</li> </ul>
<p><i>Social aims:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acquire tools for managing relationships with friends in play and interplay</li> <li>- Acquire tools for managing conflict</li> <li>- Acquire tools for developing play</li> </ul>	<p><i>Understanding-oriented content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to manage relations with peers in play and interplay</li> <li>- Reflect on intrigues and exclusions</li> </ul> <p><i>Skills-oriented content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to manage conflicts</li> <li>- How to play so that it works</li> </ul>
<p><i>Aesthetic aims:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop the ability to dramatise</li> <li>- Develop the ability to use</li> </ul>	<p><i>Skills-oriented content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Portray the different popular characters</li> <li>- Play with self-made popular characters</li> </ul>



images, film, theatre and dance	- Animate films on the basis of the characters' qualities
<i>Bodily aims:</i> - Develop the ability to set limits for physical games	<i>Skills-oriented content</i> - Playing too hard will hurt your friend <i>Skills-oriented content:</i> - Learning to pretend to wrestle

### Fact-oriented content

The rights content that emerges most strongly through the theme is to urge children to develop their language by giving them rich and frequent opportunities to talk in small groups and formulate and express themselves on the basis of their own interests. The children teach other children by describing the characters and their qualities. In this way, the language becomes a medium for practising rights based on linguistically strengthening activities and as a thread in the work with children's human rights.

### Understanding-oriented content

In small groups the children listen to their peers' interest in and knowledge about the popular characters and at the same time are able to understand and experience that they have some expertise in an area. Reflections are also based on relations with their peers, such as: How can we play so that the game is not abandoned? How can we help each other in different situations? The concepts of "good" and "bad" that appear in the popular characters' qualities are discussed. An understanding of your own and your friends' rights are that no-one needs to be excluded from a game or suffer pain in hard physical games.

### Value-oriented content

In small groups the children regularly discuss ethical dilemmas based on their own cultures and interests. Reflections on which qualities the children value in themselves and in others recur in the rights theme.

### Skills-oriented content

The children listen to and try out new words and concepts in small group discussions. The children appear as experts on the characters they know best. At the same time, they practise talking about and describing a content for their peers. One example is Staffan (aged 4) who seldom talks in a group setting. He dared to talk about Ninja Turtles, which he knew most about in his group. Staffan was able to practise talking to the group and express himself by using new words and concepts.

In many cases, the content of the aesthetic aims develops as a result of the children's interests and initiatives. Examples of content are drawing the characters, making up their own characters and singing songs written by some of the children together with one of the preschool teachers. At the end of the theme work the children made animated films with the characters they had created themselves.

A key skill in the rights theme is playing without ending up in conflict. The children are taught to argue for their own rights in play and interplay. In the everyday interactions the children talk about pretending to wrestle and about telling the other if it hurts.

### **The working methods in Preschool 2 in relation to the teaching content**

In Preschool 2 the rights teaching occurs interactively in the theme of popular characters, even if the pedagogues to some degree steer the agenda so that the theme will develop in the planned direction. Individual deliberations in the form of solving conflicts and correcting attitudes are common in the everyday situations. However, most of the teaching takes place collectively, which means that interactive methods dominate.

#### **Interactive methods**

In order to achieve the aims for the teaching and learning of human rights, the rights theme was carried out in small group settings in which the children were encouraged to talk about the popular characters and their qualities and where each child was given space to talk. The strategy was to develop the children's language by encouraging them to talk about their own interests.

Instead of forbidding the children in their tough and/or one-sided play with elements of intrigue inspired by social media,<sup>4</sup> and instead of showing films, buying these characters and so on, a theme was initiated with the starting point in the children's own perspectives on the popular characters. Through the theme the children were given opportunities to show and talk about what interested them also outside the sphere of the preschool and what fiction in social media meant to them. The documentation based on the theme was in most cases done together with the children. The children's creations and the pedagogues notes were displayed on a so-called "reflections wall", where the children could both influence and follow how the

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<sup>4</sup> Spiderman, My Little Pony, Ninja Turtles, Transformers, Yoo-Hoo-Ninjago and Elsa in Frozen.

theme progressed. In small groups the children were given opportunities to listen to their peers' stories based on their knowledge of the popular characters. They practised finding words and concepts that described the characters' qualities and discussing norms and values in small groups.

The rights content is most obvious when the children are encouraged to reflect on their own and others' behaviour by articulating the popular characters' different qualities. Using support words from the children's own stories, the children and the pedagogue agree on a number of key words (angry, kind, help etc.) that mirror their reflections on the stories. One example from circle time is when the children and the pedagogue sit in front of "the reflection wall" on which the children's work and the different characters are displayed. The pedagogue asks each of the children questions:

Pe 2a: Who would you like to be and why?

Agust: Blixten, because he's fast and kind

Mari: Elsa, because she's strong. I've got an Elsa-dress at home.

Pe 2a: Who would you like to have as a friend?

Agust: I would like to have Transformers. They help people and can be turned into cars.

Mari: My little pony car, I've got it at home, it's big and nice.

The qualities the children identified in the groups were *help*, *fun*, *kind* and *strong*. What these might mean in everyday situations such as play and interplay were then discussed.

A significant part of the rights teaching takes place in the everyday activities, such as free play, where on several occasions the pedagogues return to the key words that are displayed on the reflections wall. In conflict situations the pedagogues wait a little to see whether the children can solve them themselves. In other cases the pedagogues support the children by encouraging them to talk about what has happened and then asking them how they want to solve the conflict. For example, when playing "Ninja Turtles" the children are encouraged to talk about it as training camps where they jump, run and do somersaults. They are warned about playing too hard and are instead encouraged to "stop at each other's bodies", that is to say not overstep the mark and cause pain or injury. The rights teaching can thus be said to be *indirect* but at the same time *direct* when the discussion about the popular characters is steered by the pedagogues towards talking about how to behave towards their peers, what they expect from each other and what happens in conflicts.

## Aesthetic methods

Creative ways of expression were manifested in different ways. At the beginning of the theme the children drew pictures of the popular characters. Some children and one of the pedagogues wrote two songs about the popular characters based on how the children had perceived them. As the theme progressed the children reinterpreted the popular characters and their qualities. This was made clear at the end of the theme when the children, with the help of a pedagogue, wrote the manuscript for and created two animated films about whether the different characters were kind and helped each other in different situations. The characters were those that the children themselves had created during the autumn term, and the original popular characters were given different roles than those in social media.

## **Preschool 2 summary**

Instead of planning a special content in certain weeks, the pedagogues in Preschool 2 worked with long-term themes that took new directions and changed over time. The work with human rights was created with human relations as points of departure and was especially based on the children's own perspectives of their own cultures. The aim here was to help the children to understand basic human rights by making use of their own experiences and knowledge about the different characters from social media outside the preschool. According to MacNaughton, Hughes and Smith (2007), it is usually adults who act as experts in what the children are trying to say and initiate. In contrast, the pedagogues in Preschool 2 tried to get the children to act and regard themselves as experts based on their own peer- and play cultures. The theme also gave the children opportunities to develop their language based on their own interests, for example by inviting them to talk about and interpret things they knew something about and were part of their own cultural world (see Qvarsell, 2003).

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) makes reference to "making well balanced decisions, solving conflicts without using violence and fostering good relations, social responsibility, encouraging creativity, critical thinking and other relevant life skills" (p. 315), which can be identified in the theme of popular characters. This includes learning to solve conflicts, develop good relations, social responsibility, creativity, critical thinking and other knowledge about life within the theme. In most of the preschool activities the idea is to integrate as many different subjects as possible in one and the same theme (see Sundberg et al., 2016; Due et al., 2018).

Throughout the theme the aims, content and working methods for developing children's language are used to help the children to defend and practise their rights. The rights teaching also includes social rules, responsibility, knowledge about life, morals and ethics at the same time as the children's interests and initiatives are made use of.

## **Discussion**

In line with Brantefors and Quennerstedt's (2016) results, the study shows that pedagogues in the preschool work with children's human rights in different ways and different forms than in school. The teaching of children's human rights includes very little direct teaching, but is characterised more by understanding, skills and practical action. The learning of rights becomes a more indirect learning about human relations and interactions, especially starting out from the children's perspectives on their own cultures.

Even though children's human rights are stated in the curriculum, they are not something that these preschools include as clear goals in their own goal descriptions. Neither are they expressed for the children in the activities relating to the theme of children's human rights. On the other hand, children's influence and participation are included in all the goals both at the national and local level and are high up on the agenda in the studied preschools.

In their research review, Brantefors and Quennerstedt (2016) found that there was a difference between school teachers and preschool teachers in terms of the teaching and learning of human rights and that this was to do with how old the children were. There is also reason to emphasise the preschool's strong tradition of "not being like school" and not teaching in a traditional, intermediary way. In this study the two preschools include education on children's human rights here and now and do not include content outside the preschool domain. In the two different preschools no learning *about* rights is visible, only learning *in and through* rights.

According to Pramling and Pramling (2008), pedagogues in the preschool, have fewer opportunities to plan their pedagogic activities in advance than teachers in school. However, the pedagogues do have clear goals and aims, even if the content and their working methods vary according to the ages of the children, whereabouts the children are in the education system and the needs that arise. There is a tradition and an intention in the preschool to follow the children's initiatives and interests as far as this is possible, which can also mean that certain predetermined goals are changed or disappear over time (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010; Sundberg et. al., 2016).

What is most tangible is that the pedagogues in both preschools prioritise linguistic skills so that the children will learn to find words and use concepts for what they want to say. Supporting children's linguistic development is understood by the pedagogues as teaching about children's human rights, in that every child should have good possibilities to speak and be listened to.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child constructs children as a solitary individual child. Both the preschools adopt a group-oriented way of working where the interaction between children and between children and adults are central. Not only the individual child, but also the group thus becomes a rights subject and it is in a social context that the learning and experiencing of rights takes place. Social competence is advocated in both preschools, i.e. teaching children to communicate with other children and adults. A content that follows these skills-oriented goals is that the children are offered a number of tools in order to be able to play with each other without interruption or conflict. However, conflicts do arise in the children's interplay and here adults act as intermediaries and supervise how the children can best solve them. From that perspective, the teaching in the preschool can be seen as a social action that is based on the pedagogues' choice of knowledge content (Wahlström, 2016). The knowledge content is not then understood as predetermined or as a fixed knowledge mass, but as something that the children and the pedagogues develop together.

Sara Dalgren (2017) suggests that teaching in the preschool could be regarded as *embedded*, where teaching and learning are intertwined with play, upbringing and care in the everyday life of the preschool. In that way we can see the social interplay in the everyday activities as embedded teaching. Teaching *in and through* children's human rights can thus be said to be about human relations and approaches and contain linguistic development, influence and participation. There are several aims, content and working methods that say that the children are expected to be aware of their rights and to be rights practitioners, and in that way be able to practise theirs and others' rights in the preschool context by experiencing them (see Dewey, 1938/1997). It is therefore important that children are given experiences of rights based on different aims, content and working methods. Instead of children being seen as meaning-recipients, they become meaning-makers when it comes to their own and others' rights, in that they will be able to grow as rights owners and rights practitioners (Englund, 1997). When children are able to experience and practise their own rights, they are at the

same time expected to become aware of them. If we, like Dewey, see education as a process in which teaching, learning, socialisation and subject-making happen simultaneously, then this “rights education process” can also be described as growing.

Even though in the early childhood education tradition there is a definite resistance to the teaching concept, this study shows that teaching in the preschool can be seen as a *right for children* (see also Jonsson, Williams and Pramling Samuelsson, 2017). When it comes to children’s human rights, in this study the teaching concept in the preschool is directed towards content and working methods in a group setting, where pedagogues and children practise rights teaching together from a children’s perspective. In the Swedish Schools Inspectorate’s (2016) examination of the Swedish preschool, it appears that the work with children’s learning is in several cases ill-conceived and spontaneous and “That the staff’s approaches, knowledge and awareness in relation to the task need to be developed in many preschools” (p. 7). This study has examined two preschools that the preschool managers regard as working with children’s human rights. The result cannot be generalised, but can give an insight into the aims that form the grounds on which content is chosen and how pedagogues together with the children can work with children’s human rights in two Swedish preschools.

### 3. Teaching about and through children's human rights in early school years

Ann Quennerstedt

The two primary school classes taking part in the study were a year 2 class (in the spring) and a year 3 class (in the autumn) in different schools. Both schools are located in an area dominated by semi-detached and detached houses, socioeconomically strong families and a low proportion of inhabitants with an ethnicity other than Swedish. Each class consisted of some 20 pupils, the gender balance was equal and only one or two had an ethnicity other than Swedish. In order to protect participants' identities, the classes are referred to as class 2-3 A and B. Both class teachers participated in the study, in class A all pupils except one, and in class B all but three took part. The two teachers' professional experiences differed: teacher A had many years' experience and teacher B some years. The teachers were responsible for most of the teaching in their respective classes, and only the teaching of the class teachers was observed.

The field work was conducted over a five-week period for each class. During this time the researcher observed the ongoing classroom work in different subjects and interviewed the class teachers and pupils. During two of these weeks the planned work with children's human rights was carried out within a social science framework. In this text, observation data from the planned work is used, as is the data from the pre- and post-interviews with the teachers, altogether amounting to 7.5 hours of film, 28 hours of audio recordings and 4 teacher interviews.

In class A the work with children's human rights consisted of two content themes: *rights* and *forced migration*. The themes were alternated during the two weeks of the work – lessons 1, 4 and 5 focused on the theme forced migration and lessons 2, 3 and 6 on the theme rights. The teacher had different reasons for choosing the themes – rights because the curriculum specifies that pupils should acquire certain knowledge about rights, and forced migration due to its topical nature.

In class B the work was carried out over a period of two weeks (five lessons) and began with general facts about children's rights. After that three rights areas were selected for three separate lessons: *rights and the school*, *boys and girls* and *children's right to a privacy*. The teacher chose these three rights areas because they touch on children's everyday lives and are concrete and comprehensible for the children.



For both teachers this was the first time that they had planned and undertaken teaching about children’s human rights in a more systematic way, although other thematic topics, such as ‘waste disposal’ and ‘the space’, had been worked with previously in a planned and organised way. Prior to this work, children’s human rights issues had only been dealt with event-based form, such as a UN gathering on UN Day. This meant that the observed teaching of children’s human rights was a first attempt and was not based on earlier teaching experiences.

## Results

The results of the didactic analysis of the work in the two classes are presented below and are accounted for in two parts. The first part presents the *aims and content* and how these relate to each other, while the second accounts for how the *content and working methods* interact in the teaching.

### The aims and content of the teaching

The following section presents and develops the aims that the teachers state for the planned work with children’s human rights and the teaching content that is linked to each aim. The aims are mainly identified in the interviews with the teachers. How the aims are presented to the pupils is also examined. The content is that which is observed in the ongoing teaching.

### Aims

Table 1 presents the aims for the teaching of children’s human rights as they are expressed by the teachers. The content of the various aims is then developed.

Table 1. Aims for the teaching of children’s human rights.

Teacher A	Teacher B
<p><i>Cognitive aims</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Knowledge about rights</li> <li>- Insights into the circumstances of people in different parts of the world</li> </ul>	<p><i>Cognitive aims</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Knowledge about rights</li> <li>- Awareness of social injustices</li> </ul>
<p><i>Ethical aims</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ability to reflect ethically on the basis of human rights</li> <li>- Taking a stand for human rights as an ethical framework</li> </ul>	

<i>Emotional aim</i> - Empathise with people living in difficult circumstances	
	<i>Social aim</i> - Ability to listen to others and express an opinion

### Cognitive aims

Both teachers state that the pupils should develop *knowledge about children's human rights*. They each also state an additional cognitive aim: Teacher A's being that the pupils should *learn about people in forced migration*: "this major refugee catastrophe that is happening in the world now, we need to focus there now", whereas Teacher B's is to develop *awareness of problematic social conditions*: "they should be aware [of gender differences], more aware of how it is... what it's like in society". In the interviews the teachers develop their motives for these cognitive aims. Knowledge about rights are motivated by curriculum requirements, the refugee theme that is topical at the time and gender differences in society from a citizenship point of view.

It can be noted that when the teachers introduce the coming work for the pupils, the cognitive knowledge aims and the reasons for these appear rather vague. Both teachers indicate that knowledge about rights is an aim with the coming work, in that they present what constitutes the goals for the work and what the pupils should know when it is complete: "you should be able to talk about some human rights ... and you should also know about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and be able to talk about what children's rights can mean to you ... in school and at home" (teacher A). The aims are not motivated in either of the classes in terms of explaining why you should know these matters, or why children's human rights should be studied.

### Ethical aims

Teacher A points out that ethical aims are important in the work. The teacher claims that in the long run, the teaching of human rights aims to develop pupils' *abilities to reflect ethically* and *themselves take a stand for* the ethical framework that human rights constitutes: "They should want to keep an open mind and so on. Human rights are about every person's equal value ... that differences are respected" (teacher A). The teacher refers to the curriculum statement that the pupils should be able to "express conscious

ethical standpoints based on knowledge about human rights” (Lgr11). The ethical aim is not mentioned at all to the pupils when the work is introduced.

### **Emotional aim**

Teacher A also highlights an emotional aim in the form of developing *empathy for people living in difficult circumstances*: “I want them to be people who care about others, and people in other parts of the world” (teacher A). The pupils should empathise with people who are suffering and imagine what it is like for children living in war conditions and fleeing for their lives. This aim is not presented to the children either when the work begins.

### **Social aim**

Particularly teacher B, but to some degree also teacher A, highlights *the ability to listen to others and express their views* in discussions about social issues as an important aim with the work. This aim is made clear for class B in the introduction to the work: “You should quite simply be able to talk about it. You should be able to say what you *think* about it, and *talk* about it” (teacher B), but why this is important is not explained.

### **Summary of the aims**

In the pre-interviews the teachers express relatively well thought through aims with the work and give reasons for them. Both teachers consider the cognitive aims – the development of cognitive knowledge about and insights into rights – to be central: through the work the pupils are to expand their knowledge about rights. How much emphasis is placed on *other* types of aims than the cognitive differs between the two teachers. Teacher A maintains that ethical aims are just as important as the cognitive, whereas teacher B mainly articulates cognitive aims. Both teachers also mention more subordinate aims, i.e. teacher A to emotional aims and teacher B to social. Bodily aims are not mentioned by either of the teachers.

A comparison between the aims referred to by the teachers in the interviews and those that are presented to the pupils when the work begins shows that all the aims are not communicated to the pupils. In class A, one of the cognitive aims is not mentioned (develop knowledge about forced migration) and neither are the ethical and emotional aims. Only knowledge about rights is presented as an aim. In class B, one of the cognitive aims is not presented (becoming aware of social injustices). None of the aims are further explained to the pupils.

## The teaching content

Table 2 is a compilation of the aims that the teachers refer to in the interviews and the teaching content that was observed in the teaching. The content is thereafter developed.

Table 2. Aims and content in the work with children’s human rights.

Teacher A		Teacher B	
<i>Aims</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Aims</i>	<i>Content</i>
<p><b>Cognitive aims</b> Knowledge about rights</p> <p>Insights into how people in other parts of the world live</p>	<p>Fact-oriented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- what the rights are</li> <li>- Convention on the Rights of the Child</li> </ul> <p>Understanding-oriented: what are rights and what are not rights (and why)</p> <p>Skills-oriented: assessing the importance of different rights</p> <p>Fact-oriented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Being a refugee and coming to a new country</li> <li>- The function and role of the UN</li> </ul> <p>Understanding-oriented: how circumstances affect life</p>	<p><b>Cognitive aims</b> Knowledge about rights</p> <p>Awareness of injustices in society</p>	<p>Fact-oriented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- what the rights are</li> <li>- Convention on the Rights of the Child</li> <li>- every child has the <i>right to go to school</i></li> <li>- children have rights <i>at school</i></li> <li>- equal treatment is a right</li> <li>- children have the right to privacy</li> <li>- The function and role of the UN</li> </ul> <p>Understanding-oriented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Every child in Sweden does not go to school, despite having the right to so</li> <li>- Unfair treatment occurs, despite equal treatment being a right</li> <li>- Inequality exists in society</li> <li>- What the right to privacy means</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ethical aims</b> Ability to reflect ethically based on human rights</p> <p>Take a stand for human rights as an</p>	<p>Value-oriented: Human rights are good and important</p>	<p><b>Ethical aim</b></p>	<p>Value-oriented: Human rights are good and important; Human rights offences are wrong</p>

ethical framework			
<b>Emotional aims</b> Feel empathy for the vulnerable	Understanding-oriented: how circumstances affect life  Value-oriented: we should sympathise with vulnerable people and, ideally, help them		
		<b>Social aim</b> Ability to listen to others and express own opinions	

### Fact-oriented content

In both classes *facts about rights* are a central component in the teaching. The most explicit fact-oriented content is *what rights are* – being able to name rights. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child constitutes the most important reference frame for this, in that the teachers use the Convention as a list of rights and a definition of the terminology. Class A works with the entire Convention in order to learn the rights, whereas class B meets a number of rights chosen by the teacher. The *existence and function of the Convention* can also be said to constitute a factual content in the teaching.

In both classes the teaching contains facts *about the UN*. In particular, in class B the UN and its role in the world is addressed. In class A the pupils also learn a number of facts about *being a refugee and coming to a new country*: what forced migration is, refugee camps, the UN’s aid to refugees, asylum and Swedish asylum policy.

### Understanding-oriented content

In both classes there is teaching content aimed at deepening the pupils’ insights into rights. This is done by highlighting the complexity of the aspects that are taught. Various difficulties surrounding the rights issues are accordingly made visible, which facilitates a deeper understanding. In class A the teacher makes use of an exercise about differentiating between *what is a right and what is not*. The added complexity is the distinction between human needs and desires, and the connection between needs and rights. The

teaching content also facilitates a cognitive understanding of why something is classed as a right.

Another understanding-oriented content in class A is about understanding *how different circumstances affect children's lives*, for example if they live in a war zone and forced migration, or in peace and prosperity. The teaching content is directed towards emotions: what it might feel like to live in a war setting, to flee, to live in a refugee camp and be exposed to the dangers and difficulties of forced migration. Imagining what it is like to be a refugee supports that the pupil develop understanding of different life circumstances.

In class B, the teacher chooses to deepen the pupils' understanding by *expanding on three selected rights areas*, one at a time. By focusing on the complexity of these issues, the pupils encounter different *problems around*: (i) the right to education (children who despite living in Sweden do not go to school), (ii) the right to equal treatment regardless of gender (and despite this, the occurrence of unfair treatment of people of different sexes) and (iii) the right to privacy (and adults who do not respect this for children). The teaching content facilitates an increased understanding of the meaning of the selected rights, but also the difference between the existence of rights and how they are observed in society.

### **Value-oriented content**

In both classes the value that *human rights are good and important* is communicated. That children have certain rights is also portrayed as something normatively good. In line with this basic value, *violations of and crimes against human rights are constituted as normatively wrong*. How rights violations are made visible in the teaching differs somewhat in the two classes. Class B discusses violations of rights in Sweden; Roma children who do not attend school even though they have the right to do so, or teachers in school who treat girls and boys differently even though they have the right to be treated equally. In class A violations of rights are dealt with more indirectly within the theme forced migration. There, exposure to war/violence and different kinds of coercion are discussed.

In class A, the theme of forced migration contains additional values: *empathy, sympathy, generosity and willingness to help*. The values are communicated through information that appeals to the emotions; what it might feel like to live in a war zone, or to flee and live in a refugee camp, and the greater risks and hardships that people are exposed to when fleeing.

### **Skills-oriented content**

Teaching content that is directed at skills only appears on one single occasion. In class A one of the tasks is for the pupils to make *judgements about the importance of different rights*, i.e. reflect on and assess the importance of different rights in different places (at home and in school)

### **Summary of the content**

Fact- and understanding-oriented teaching content dominate the teaching. The pupils encounter a fact-based material, which gives them good opportunities to increase both their overall and detailed knowledge of the different themes that are pursued in the two classes. The teaching includes almost as much understanding-oriented material, which expands and problematises the fact-oriented content. Values are also communicated in the teaching, but the value-oriented content is given relatively little space. The values that are communicated are in keeping with those that according to the curriculum should be transmitted and rooted at school. Skills-oriented content, i.e. that relating to some kind of concrete realisation of rights, is almost completely absent.

All in all, the cognitive aims in both classes are well matched with a teaching content that supports the pupils' achievement of them. Content that veers towards ethical aims is given much less space, despite teacher A rating ethical aims as important as the cognitive. The social aim expressed by teacher B does not appear in any of the teaching content.

### **Working methods and their relation to the teaching content**

The didactic analysis also directs attention to *how* the work with children's human rights is carried out in the classroom and specifically focuses on the kind of working methods the teachers choose. During the analysis it became apparent that a working method affected the actual teaching content and consequences were identified in terms of enabling, changing and sometimes counteracting the intended content. The next section describes the working methods that were observed in the teaching and discusses how the work with these methods enabled, changed or counteracted the teacher's planned teaching content.

#### **Working methods**

The classwork is dominated by transmission and above all by interactive working methods. Explorative work is employed to a much lesser extent. Both teachers thus choose collective working methods, which probably

means that they see human rights as an area in which reflection and discussion together with others is the most fruitful way of achieving the intended aims.

### **Transmission**

*Transmission* of a predetermined content occurs on a number of occasions in both classes. Transmission means that the predetermined content is presented and explained to the pupils, who mainly passively listen, watch or read. Transmission, especially of factual content, occurs in both classes mainly with the aid of films. The teachers thus make use of the benefits of the film media – moving pictures, sound, music, dramatisation, the subtle transmission of facts, understanding and values. Only on very few occasions do the teachers hold classic teaching briefings, where they assume an expert position and present and explain key facts. In the pre-interview, teacher B states that using films is rewarding with that age group because they like watching them. This is also confirmed during the observations – almost without exception the pupils watch with interest the films that the teachers have chosen. Using film for transmission purposes introduces dimensions that the teachers would otherwise find difficult to inject. The films also transmit facts and facilitate understanding.

However, the positive effects of transmission via film are accompanied by certain problems. The films often address more things than the intended focus. For example, the film that introduces the work in class B is more about the UN and its work than children's human rights. In addition, films that are about something other than the intended content are also shown. The teacher in class B introduces the theme 'rights and the school' by saying: "Today we will concentrate on the school, children's rights in school". The class then watches a film about the right *to* education exemplified by a Romani boy in Sweden who does not go to school. After the film the pupils discuss in groups and answer the following questions: *What rights do you have in your school?* and *Are there any rights you don't have?* The introduction and the questions point to children's human rights *in* school as the focus of the lesson. The film, on the other hand, presents facts, understanding and values around the right *to* education. In the above two examples the chosen film influences the teaching content negatively; in the first case by a loose focus and in the second by a slide in the rights content.



### **Interactive work**

Interactive work is used to a large extent in the work with children's human rights in both classes and includes teacher-led discussions and group and pair work. In many of the interactive class discussions the teacher has prepared a theme for the discussion with a view to covering a specific content. However, the interactive nature of the discussion means that the content is constructed by the teacher and the pupils together. Both the teachers and the pupils are active; the teacher leads the discussion and continuously asks for pupils' input. The pupils respond to the teacher's questions and inject their own associations and thoughts. These interactive class discussions combine the treatment of a certain content with an active pupil role and are intense and often concentrated teaching situations with a good potential for strengthening and expanding knowledge and understanding.

A consequence of the working method is that the pupils strongly influence the content of the discussions. The teachers tend to adapt the discussion to the pupils' input and follow the threads introduced by the pupils. This constitutes both a possibility and a risk for the content. The interaction makes it possible for the teacher to see how the pupils understand the teaching content and whether it needs to be reformulated. Another strength is that the aspects and angles that are relevant for the pupils are included in the teaching and seriously addressed. The risk is that the discussion will successively deviate from the intended content, as happens in the following example:

Teacher A: In the week before the holidays we talked about people in forced migration. We talked about human rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. But... what are human rights in actual fact?

Pupil 1: What you have a right to.

Teacher A: Yes. What might you have a right to?

(Lots of pupils raise their hands and one pupil is asked to respond)

Pupil 2: All children have the right to health care.  
(The teacher repeats the answer and then asks another child)

Pupil 3: All children have the right to go to school.  
(The teacher repeats)

(After this a number of other children list other rights, all beginning with 'all children have the right to' and the teacher confirms by repeating.)

Teacher A: Now you list a lot of things that are to do with rights, there were lots of things you find in this strange thing Convention on the Rights of the Child...

We worked with that before the holidays and decided that there were quite a lot of things that every child has a right to.

The teacher asks *what human rights are*. When a pupils answers ‘what you have a right to’ the teacher adapts the conversation, which then steers away from human rights as a phenomenon to *which rights children have*. The original question is lost in the interaction. This kind of dislocation of content through adapting to the pupils’ input is common – the envisioned content fades out and the discussion ends up being about something else. The interactive class discussions that deal with a determined content make the pupils active co-creators of the teaching content. However, to avoid deviating from the planned teaching content, the working method requires the teacher to sensitively and consciously lead the interaction.

A different kind of class discussion is also observed – a conversation with no planned content that instead aims, through an open interaction, to capture the pupils’ ideas, associations, own experiences or feelings and allows the content to grow organically from them. Many discussions like this take place after watching a film.

Class A have been watching a film about children who fled without their parents

Teacher A: What do you think about when you see these girls?

Pupil 1: I wouldn’t want to flee myself.

Pupil 2: Can you really drive a car across the Sahara Desert with 30 people in it?

Teacher A: It might be a small lorry, not an ordinary car.

Pupil 3: But why don’t they make any friends at school?

Teacher A: Yes, why don’t they make any friends at school? What do you think?

Pupil 4: Because they have fled from a country where there is war, and perhaps because the children are afraid of them... because they don’t come from Sweden.

Teacher A: That the children in school are afraid of them...? What do you think about that Pupil 3? Do you think that it can be like that?

Pupil 3: Yeah.

Pupil 5: I would never want to flee without my parents.

Teacher A: Do you think that these children wanted to flee without their parents?  
Several pupils: Nooo.

The discussion does not summarise or specify the film's main message. Instead, the teacher allows the pupils' input to steer the direction of the discussion. In the example the discussion darts from one thing to another, the point being to air thoughts and ideas. These open, interactive class discussions fill an important function in the teaching. The pupil's thoughts can be given free rein for a while and completely unexpected aspects can be discovered and turned into teaching content.

Interactive work in the form of group- or pair work occurs in almost every lesson, where the pupils undertake an exercise or task based on material provided by the teacher. Discussion and the presentation of arguments are central in interactive work. For example:

Teacher A has chosen an exercise from UNICEF's study material on children's rights (UNICEF 2014) which aims to help the children understand the difference between a need and a wish and see the connection between needs and rights. In the first part of the exercise the children have to imagine that they are moving to another planet. The space inside the space rocket is limited, so they are forced to gradually eliminate a number of things (such as food, freedom of expression, sweets, education, computer, home, freedom of belief, healthcare etc.). The children work in groups of 4-5 and after discussion and argumentation in the group decide which things to leave behind and what to take with them. The determining factors are things that 'you need' or 'must have', while other things are 'unnecessary' or 'can be done without'. At the end of the exercise only 8 of the original 24 things are left. During the exercise the teacher allows the children's discussions to flow freely and does not make any comments about the choices the groups make, but goes round the room and supports without steering.

In this type of group exercise there are good prerequisites for discussions that expand understanding, and on several occasions groups are observed

in which an in-depth interaction takes place. However, groups are also observed in which only a few members take part in the work, and groups in which no interaction around the intended content occurs. Interactive work can thus both facilitate and counteract the possibility of reaching an in-depth understanding, depending on how the group work takes shape.

### **Explorative work**

Explorative work is used on one occasion in each class. Class B undertakes explorative work in the rights area of girls and boys, where they count pictures in newspapers of women/men.

The pairs concentrate on the counting. Towards the end some of the children express surprise at the result: "There are mostly guys!", "We found mostly guys!" Teacher B asks why they think this is. It's a tough question for the pupils, but two of the pairs suggest that (i) in the past men were worth more than women, and (ii) men are more famous than women. The teacher listens and nods but does not comment on the suggestions. When everyone has finished, the results are displayed on the board: the pupils have found most pictures of men.

Teacher B: My question is then: Why do you think it is like this?

Pupil 1: Because in football... the world's best footballers that are women aren't paid very much.

Teacher B: Are you talking about footballers' wages? You think that a male soccer player earns more than a female one... and that's why people write more about them in the newspaper?

Pupil 1: Yes. Perhaps.

Teacher B: Who produces the newspaper? Who decides which pictures should appear in the newspaper?

The teacher has the idea that based on their exploration the pupils should reflect on *why* there are more pictures of males in the newspaper. She asks the pairs towards the end of their work and then repeats the question to the whole class when the final results are displayed. But after only one suggestion of what the reason might be (footballers' wages), she stops and does not proceed with any further in-depth reflection or ask for any more possi-

ble reasons. Instead, she asks a new question about who decides which pictures should appear in the newspaper, which gives the discussion a new focus. The consequence of not pursuing the main question of the exploration is that it remains unanswered.

Class A undertakes an explorative exercise in which the pupils eliminate things that are not essential for a journey into space. In pairs the pupils compare the final choices with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The teachers gives brief and concise instructions to “check whether what they have chosen is there”. During the exercise teacher A seldom uses the term ‘rights’. The follow-up discussion after the exercise goes like this:

Teacher A: Now you have compared your choices and come to the conclusion that many of the things you have chosen, well they match with what is stated in the Convention. What might that mean, do you think? (Brief silence). Have you chosen good things?

Several pupils: Yes

Teacher A: Have you chosen bad things?

Several pupils: No.

Pupil: If what we have chosen is mentioned here, then we have chosen good things.

The teacher does not say that they should compare their choices with the rights in the Convention, but instead uses euphemisms that preclude the term rights. For example, the word rights is replaced with ‘good things’. The aim of the explorative exercise is to link basic human needs with rights, but the pupils’ possibilities to make this connection are negatively influenced in that the rights terminology is not used.

The above explorations work well in the respective situations. The pupils are engaged and a relevant rights content chosen by the teachers is highly present in the work. However, on both these occasions the explorations stop just before any real in-depth level is achieved. The exploration is not pursued with sufficient persistence and the pupils miss out on the qualification of the content that would have made a difference in the learning opportunity – in the first case because the teacher does not pursue the question far enough and in the second because the teacher hesitates (?) to employ sharp rights terminology.

## Discussion

This text has highlighted *why* teachers think that children should be taught about rights, *what the content* of rights teaching might be and how it can be *carried out*. The didactic analysis resulted in the mapping of two primary school classes work on children's human rights, as reported above. In the following concluding discussion, some important results are highlighted, considered and compared with the UN's programme for *Human Rights Education* and previous research.

The teachers in the study embarked on an ambitious work with children's human rights. Their aim was that the pupils would not only encounter "basic human rights, such as everyone's equal value and children's rights in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child" (Lgr11, social sciences central content years 1-3), but would also reach further in insight and understanding.

A first clear result is that *the work with children's human rights was dominated by cognitive aims*, even when the teachers stated other aims as equally important. The chosen teaching content was to a great extent directed towards the development of cognitive knowledge and understanding. This meant that in the class in which the teacher affirmed ethical aims as equally important, the actual teaching mostly aimed at the cognitive aims. How might we understand this? The focus on cognitive knowledge and understanding can perhaps be explained by the Swedish curriculum's relative clarity on which knowledge the pupils are expected to develop. In comparison with other countries, where several researchers have noted weak or absent statements about human rights in the steering documents (e.g. Bron and Thijs, 2011), Lgr 11 contains clear knowledge goals in the civics syllabus. Statements that can form the basis for ethical aims are found in the curriculum's introductory section on values and tasks and overarching goals and guidelines, but it is possibly mainly syllabuses and knowledge requirements that are used in the direct planning of the teaching. The pupils in the two classes included in the study were given good opportunities to broaden and deepen their cognitive knowledge and understanding about human rights. Possibilities to grow ethically, emotionally, socially or bodily were less present.

The dominance of the cognitive aims is also reflected in how the teachers presented the work to the pupils – the pupils in both classes were told which cognitive knowledge they were expected to develop during the work. The other aims that the teachers expanded on in the interviews were either not communicated to the pupils at all, or only to a limited extent.

In comparison with the most important motives for rights education highlighted in previous research, the teachers in this study deviate with their focus on cognitive knowledge and understanding. Previous studies have shown that teachers regard the main motive being that pupils should develop an understanding for people in difficult circumstances and a will to take responsibility for others (Waldron and Obermann, 2011; Wing Leung et al., 2011). The UN state that HRE should address all the three areas: (i) knowledge and skills, (ii) values and attitudes and (iii) capacity for action. Both this study and previous research have shown that the teaching has a bias towards either knowledge or values. It could be that all three areas cannot be included to the same extent each time the theme of human rights is dealt with, but the overall education needs to cover them. Insights into the breadth of the task and the most common biases may help teachers in their planning and teaching of rights.

A second important result of this study is *the significance of working methods for the teaching content*. Film is a rewarding and valuable medium to use in the teaching situation, because films can vitalise dense teaching content in ways that traditional teaching cannot. Further, in a rapidly changing world, teachers cannot be expected to be experts in everything and need to look elsewhere for expertise. At the same time, the analysis clarifies some problems of transferring the transmission of central teaching content to films. Finding films at the right level that reflect exactly what teachers seek to communicate is not easy, and choosing a film that is ‘close’ to that can be risky. Some problematic consequences for the clarity and stringency of the teaching content, for example due to a bad match of what is communicated in the films and the lesson themes, are noted in the study. Both the positive and negative aspects of the transmission of content via films need to be further discussed by teachers and education scholars.

The work with children’s human rights had a clear collective and interactive orientation – no individual work or exercises were undertaken in either of the classes. Instead, conversations and discussions in different constellations were the dominant ways of working. This working method also had good as well as problematic consequences for the teaching content. Something that characterised the whole class discussions was the teachers’ responsive approach to the pupils’ input. This promoted an active pupil role, enabled that pupils’ angles were considered in the teaching, and stimulated the pupils’ interest in the topic. At the same time, it was noted that the content and direction of the discussions were often adapted more to the

pupils' input than to the intended lesson content. The teachers did not always stay true to the rights aspect that should have been in focus in the discussion, but instead followed the pupils, which sometimes meant that in the end the discussion was about something other than the lesson's rights theme. Here, an increased awareness on the part of the teachers of the difference between discussing a specific content and conducting more open class discussions to air ideas, would help teachers to know when to steer the discussion or to let it run free.

All in all, it can be concluded that in the work with children's human rights the teachers cannot be described as vessels of knowledge or transmitters of facts. The expert role that the teachers adopted was rather that of an interaction leader. The teachers thus transferred the knowledge and fact functions to the films and instead adopted a clarifying and interactive role. It may be worth considering whether this formation of the teacher's function in the teaching, and also the effect the working methods had on the teaching content, is general. Is it a modern teacher role that is observed, that follows limitless knowledge, and is it always the case that the choice of work method influences the content in a way that has been noted in this study, regardless of work area? Here I would like to raise the question of whether teachers' knowledge about human rights is significant. A number of previous studies have identified teachers' limited knowledge as one of the major barriers for education on human rights (Waldron and Oberman, 2016; Cassidy et al., 2013). For example, it has been suggested that teachers' own weak knowledge makes them highly dependent on teaching material that has been developed by others (Wing Leung et al., 2011). In this study, both teachers describe a feeling of own knowledge limitations. Instead of themselves transmitting facts and producing their own material, they search for and use material from e.g. UNICEF, publishers, or other teachers, and find films on the internet.

But doing this requires substantial subject knowledge. In order to determine whether the material is relevant or not for the intended theme, teachers need to know quite a bit about children's human rights. Good knowledge of human rights is also essential when choosing the relevant content and being able to pursue it, steer the interplay with the pupils and avoid getting sidetracked. Teachers also need knowledge to comfortably use and thereby consolidate the words and terminology that are important in the context. It is possible that some of the problematic aspects that have been identified in the dislocation of content can be clarified as limitations in the teachers' own



knowledge of rights. Teacher education has an important role to play here, as has in-service training for actively serving teachers.

This study has shown what education about children's human rights can look like in the primary school years, and has given examples of good learning potential in the work conducted by two teachers. Several challenges with the teaching have also been identified. The importance of matching aims with content has been made visible, as has the importance of teaching material that communicates what has is envisioned. That the teacher actively uses the term rights and consistently pursues the selected rights content poses another challenge. The hope is that the study will support teachers in their undertaking of children's human rights education and will inspire further research.

## 4. Teaching about and through children's human rights in the middle school years

Lotta Brantefors

The two studied classes (class 5) are characterised by the different environments in which the schools are located. School 1 (S1) is situated in a multicultural area and has 600 pupils. School 2 (S2) is a small monocultural school in the countryside with 100 pupils. The classes consist of 21-22 pupils (P1, P2), with slightly more girls than boys. Sixty per cent of the pupils in S1 have backgrounds other than Swedish, although none of them are new arrivals. The schools are otherwise characterised by more (S2) or less (S1) discipline. In S1 the teaching environment is sometimes chaotic.

The teachers of the two classes are between 28-35 years of age, are both qualified teachers and were educated in Sweden. Both teachers are experienced and confident in their teaching work. The schools operate a subject teacher system, which means that the teachers teach several different subjects: The teacher in S1 (hereafter known as T1) teaches Swedish, mathematics and science, while the teacher in S2 (hereafter known as T2) teaches civics, physical education and English. T1 considers that human rights should be included in subjects other than civics, whereas T2 links human rights with geography and civics. In the planning of their human rights work the teachers state that they have initially "looked at the curriculum" for support and ideas about how to work with the subject. However, they claim that they lack information about how to teach human rights, which means that they have had to rely on their own ideas. Initially, the teachers say that they want to teach human rights in one lesson, but this is later changed to five hours (for both), of which half are joint briefings and the rest group work: "[...] you could do a lot more with this, it's so big [...]" (T1).

[...] yes, and that's also what makes it difficult, I don't know, I thought one lesson, if we think about more we can develop it further. If we only think in terms of one lesson I don't think we can develop it. That's the situation. With a subject like that you can actually take as long as you want (T2).

On the whole, the teachers emphasise the practical side of the teaching: "[...] if you say this and do that, what will happen [...]" (T1). "[...] Of course, the more practical exercises there are in the traditional classroom the more the pupils will learn, for them it's a mini-experience. With all due respect to theory, I think that practice is just as important" (T2).

No special adaptations have been made in the carrying out of this study, but the researcher has taken part in the planned teaching that was offered.

## Results

The analysis has clarified the aims with the work on human rights (why), the dominant content (what) and the working methods (how). These dimensions of the teaching are dealt with below. Regarding the aim, the aims that are used in the planning are named first and after that the dominant aim that emerges in the actual teaching.

### Aim

In their *planning* the teachers highlight three different aims – ethical, social and cognitive – for why they want to work with human rights. T1 emphasises the ethical and social aims rather than the cognitive, while T2 prioritises the cognitive aims rather than the ethical and social. Only T1 refers to the emotional aims. The actual teaching more or less follows the following four planned aims:

1. Ethical aim: T1's aim with the teaching of human rights is open. According to T1, the pupils' needs should steer the work with human rights: "I try to think about what our class needs here" (T1). T2 says that the most important thing is to learn that everyone has equal value: "Yes, that is the important thing, we talk about different life conditions and equal value; we're not as different as we think we are" (T2). The starting point is to "show for example what it is like to grow up here and what it's like to grow up in other countries".
2. Social aim: T1 expresses that the pupils should learn about human rights in order to develop social skills and be able to integrate with others: "they should first of all learn to work together and discuss, practise taking turns and socialising with each other" (T1). T2 especially emphasises the children's own abilities for this. Pupils should be able to form their own opinions, stand up for them and not just react to others' views, "free thinking is important, forming our own opinions, I think that's very important" (T2).

3. Cognitive aim: The pupils should be informed about what human rights are. However, the points of departure for this are different: “What human rights are is difficult to pinpoint, we know what they are, but how much do we know about them?” “I don’t want to say too much, I want to see what will happen” (T1). T2 is more determined that the pupils should know what the different human rights terminology means: “The pupils must also know what the concepts mean” (T2).
4. Emotional aim: The pupils’ capacities should be “expanded” so that they experience something through the work, know what human rights are and be able to express feelings: “for me it’s really something much deeper, because I am so emotionally involved in the class, in them, because I want to help them to improve, we’ll have to see how they will respond to this particular work” (T1).

*The actual teaching* is then dominated by a social and ethical aim, although even cognitive aims, such as information about rights, occur. The most important aim for both teachers is that the pupils should learn to *respect others and be good fellow humans*. The teachers emphasise everyone’s equal value as the basis for all teaching on human rights. According to T1, it is important to understand and respect all people, regardless of background. This can be achieved through knowledge about human rights and by “talking with others” or “exchanging experiences with others” (T1). In a similar way, T2 means that it is important to understand and be acquainted with other people’s life conditions. In S1, the teaching of human rights is linked to previous work with bullying and violations: “[...] this should grow, this should be bigger than just being about violations and bullying because that’s a minor part of our human rights [...]” (T1). In a similar way, T2 emphasises that “hate” must decrease, which means that violations (at all levels) must end. Aims such as developing own views and emotionally, which were discussed in the planning, are not explicitly expressed but are manifested in the implementation and content of the teaching.

### **The teaching content – what**

Despite the aims that are stated, it is the websites that are used in the teaching that partly determine which rights are highlighted and which content is dealt with in the teaching. The societal situation, such as specific events relating to vulnerable people like immigrants, refugees or children/people in

war-torn or developing countries, has also influenced the choice of content. The following content-related themes have been identified in the actual teaching situations: 1) *rights*, 2) *values and democracy*, 3) *discrimination – bullying and violations* and 4) *protection and support – people’s different life conditions*. The themes are either value-oriented or have been the starting points for creating prerequisites for actions towards other people. They have mostly been treated as a content that is oriented towards social skills. Rights are mentioned and discussed, but do not constitute a specific fact-oriented content for learning. At no point in the teaching are the pupils required to explain or describe rights. The same applies to the different life conditions throughout the world, which should lead to the pupils developing solidarity with those who are weak or in need of protection. This means that the teaching of rights is progressivistic in nature, where the learning processes are in focus rather than an active memorising of rights (cf. Englund, 1997). The pupils are informed about rights and use rights as prerequisites for social actions, but do not necessarily develop knowledge about them so that they can describe or explain what rights are.

See Table 1.

Table 1: The WHAT – dominant content themes and forms of content in the teaching

WHAT	Fact oriented	Understanding oriented	Value oriented	Skills oriented	Central concepts
(Children’s) human rights	x		x	x	Equal value
Fundamental and democratic values			x	x	Decision making
Bullying and violations			x	x	Oppression
Negative life-conditions	x	x	x	x	Support and protection

1) *Rights*: When rights are covered in the teaching they are referred to as children’s rights, children’s human rights, or human rights, depending on which context they are used in or which website is used, although rights terminology is not utilised to any great extent. Both schools specifically refer to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989), but the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) is also named. Neither T1 nor T2 use traditional teaching material, such as textbooks, but only make use of

material and information from different websites. T1 has retrieved material from the websites of Amnesty International, the Swedish National Agency for Education, TV4, Kamratposten, UNICEF and BRIS. L2 has gathered material from the Living History Forum, Clowns Without Borders and Save the Children (Life’s Lottery) websites. See Table 2.

Table 2: Rights mentioned on the websites in school 1 and school 2.

Website	Convention on the Rights of the Child	Declaration of Human Rights
Amnesty International (S1)		Freedom of opinion. Religious freedom. Love who you want regardless of gender. Right to go to school. Somewhere to live. Right to flee to another country if you are being persecuted.
BRIS/UNICEF (S1: Group work)	Life and development (6). Origin, identity (7, 8). Take part in decision-making about themselves (12). Freedom of opinion, religious freedom, freedom of association (13, 14, 15). Health and healthcare (24).	
Anonymous sources (S1)	The Convention on the Rights of the Child (all its Articles).	
Living History Forum (S2)		Everybody is of equal value; nobody should be treated unfairly due to who they are. It should not matter whether you are a girl or a boy or are affiliated to a certain ethnic group. Dare to say what you think. Every person has the right to live, be free and feel safe. You have the right to go to school, have enough food to eat and have somewhere to live. Everyone has the right to think and say what they want and express an opinion about whoever they like.
Clowns Without Borders (S2)	All children: Are of equal value and have the same rights. Have the right to play, rest and have	

	leisure time, e.g. play football or cycle. Have the right to be exactly who they are: Speak their own language, believe what they want and be called what they are called. Have the right to go to school and learn things. Should not need to be separated from their parents against their will. Who flee from their homeland should have the right to protection and help.	
Anonymous sources (S2)	The basic principles All children have the same rights and the same value and nobody should be discriminated against. The best interests of the child should always be prioritised. Every child has the right to survive and develop. The child has the right to express an opinion on every issue that concerns it.	

The importance of the choice of website when dealing with the content is shown in the following two examples: T1 explains the origin of rights by referring to 18<sup>th</sup> century racism and colonialism (anonymous sources) and to people’s natural right to be human: “[p]eople should have the right to be human and have rights” (T1). T2 explains the origins using WW2 and Hitler’s dreadful actions (Living History Forum) as the starting point and focuses on the UN’s mandate to create universal rules of conduct from the perspective of different religions and cultures. Both teachers highlight societal conditions as reasons for the origin of rights, but then choose different narratives to explain the starting point of rights.

In the group work the task is to specifically work with the rights. The pupils in S1 work with the Articles that the teacher has chosen from the UN’s Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989): Life and development (Article 6), Origin, identity (Articles 7 and 8), Participate in decision-making referring to themselves (Article 12), Freedom of opinion, religious freedom, freedom of association (Articles 13, 14 and 15) and Health and healthcare (Article 24). In S2 the pupils are free to choose the rights content

for the group work. One group works with the principle of the child's best interests, another focuses on the rights of girls and the third group produces a factual report on children's rights. What is interesting is that despite this span, the pupils in both schools interpret the rights as a violation of rights in their accounts. They show for example how pupils are forbidden to meet a parent, how a girl is prevented from taking part in two boys' ball game, how pupils are ignored by their teacher, or how a boy from Nigeria is bullied. Only in one case do the pupils talk about the fulfilment of rights, and that is the right to a name (Abdullah Karlsson). In all the other examples rights are treated on the basis of whether they are violated or lacking.

Even though rights are named in the different briefings (and in the films/programmes) and in the group work, it does not necessarily mean that they constitute a content that the pupils should learn (cf. Englund, 1997), but are mostly used as a starting point for discussion. Rights, which are often interpreted in terms of absence, as something that is violated or missing, are therefore things that are worked around but are seldom regarded as subjects for learning.

2) *Values and democracy*: The work with children's human rights is connected to the school's work with values and its duty to communicate and consolidate human rights. T1 points out that human rights are about "our dignity, our values" and "our outlook on mankind and our values". For T1, values and democracy constitute the framework for human rights, where democracy means that "everyone has the right to decide" (T1). T1 refers in the teaching to a text from the National Swedish Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2015) dealing with democracy and human rights in the curricula. Here, values and democracy are discussed, but not primarily human rights. The relation between democracy and human rights is not investigated either, but human rights are assumed to be part of the larger theme of values and democracy.

T2 ties the work with human rights to democratic ways of working: "We have the student council and the class council. There we talk about different subjects. If something happens at break-time we talk about it." Most of the things to do with having respect for others, participation in the decision-making process and shared responsibility are not in the first instance related to rights, but to democracy. The importance of having your own opinion and not simply repeating what parents and teachers say is emphasised.



[...] then it's good if the children understand the overall picture and start to realise what's happening here, criticising the sources and not always buying what the media says, not always buying what I say, or what Mum and Dad say. Free thinking is important for creating our own understanding, I think that's very important. (T2)

Throughout the work with rights the pupils are encouraged by both teachers to have opinions and express them. In order to be able to “decide” as part of a democratic approach, the pupils must have opinions and be able to take a stand.

3) *Discrimination – bullying and violations*: The aim of learning to respect each other and being a good fellow human being is more or less always dealt with as a question of bullying and violations. S1 in particular focuses on such a content theme. When the work with children's human rights begins in S1, it is linked to previous work on bullying and violations. However, what follows is very similar to the previous bullying theme, but is now related to immigration and the current refugee situation. The emphasis is on oppression and the violation of rights, with the starting point in cultural background and identity. For example, in a discussion about President Trump's election campaign, the pupils state that he breaks human rights: they state that “he is racist” or that “you'd feel like an outcast if you were a Muslim”.

You have the right to say what you want as long as you don't insult anyone. He says what he thinks, but he insults others. He says it in a way that makes people sad [...]. How can you vote for someone who insults someone else? (P1)

Another example shows an abhorrence of IS: They “want to force people to think like them” (T1). In a further example, the question of sorting people on the grounds of religion at a border-check is discussed. Through the different examples the pupils are offered knowledge about how discrimination and oppression were or are conducted, although violations are specifically connected to cultural rights/issues.

In S2, T2 refers to everyone's equal value, which means that nobody should be bullied or unfairly treated. “We talked about not being bullied even if you come from another country.” It's about “stopping the hate”. T2 tries to engage the pupils and stimulate their involvement: “It's us who create this, isn't it? Individuals cannot solve it. You can't buy peace on earth”

(T2). Unlike T1, T2 does not use immigration and refugee issues to exemplify the violation problem, but rather to exemplify people's life conditions and their need for protection and support. This is dealt with further under theme 4.

All in all, theme 3 shows that the more or less unspecified "bullying and violations" cover everything that to some degree (at all levels) is about conflict or violence ("stop the hate") between people or states/countries (cf. love one another – peace), but that is nevertheless always about human rights or violations of human rights, but is not necessarily communicated using rights terminology (cf. Edling, 2017).

*4) Support and protection – people's different life conditions:* The fourth and final content theme is about understanding children's/people's different life conditions, equal value and right to life and development. This includes all the parts of the Convention on Children's Human Rights, but especially children's need for support and protection. However, rights are never named. S2 in particular has worked a lot with people's life conditions in war-torn countries or developing countries and especially around refugees' life conditions throughout the world. Unlike the previous theme on refugees, with a special focus on violations of cultural rights, this theme deals with how rich countries can help poorer ones: "so that they can also have good conditions" because "everyone has equal value" (P2).

The following three examples of content, all of which relate to life conditions and support and protection in other countries, as well as a fourth example about mental life conditions, clarify how a way of thinking about support and protection can take shape in the teaching. The three first examples come from S2 and the fourth from S1. The first is a film sequence that shows how Clowns Without Borders entertain large groups of children in war-torn areas. The children look happy and clap their hands. The idea here is that "through laughter they will forget thoughts about war and replace them with thoughts about laughter, hope and dreams". The second is a classroom discussion about what Sweden can do about the refugee situation in 2015-16. The majority of the pupils want to take care of and support the refugees: "We should let them live in our country, have food and somewhere to live" (P2), although one or two pupils regard this as problematic: "In the end there'll be more of them than Swedes" (P2). The third example is the Save the Children's TV game Life's lottery, which highlights children's life conditions in the world based on circumstances such as war, forced migration, poverty, malnourishment, homelessness and lack of schooling as

well as child labour and corporal punishment. These conditions are compared to the conditions in Sweden, which are said to be better, with better life conditions and more rights. The aim in the examples is to “influence society for the better” (T2), so that “the others” also have as good conditions as “us”.

The fourth and final example from S1 is about children’s different mental life conditions (material from the *Kamratposten* website) and their need for support and protection. The material focuses on problems such as mentally ill parents, sexual harassment, bullying and what the school and society can do to help children. “It is your right as children that we adults should take care of you here in school” (T1), “[...] we as pedagogues, the school and the activities conducted in it must work with this [...] and you together with us” (T1). T1 points to the relation between adults and children, the work with children’s health and their right to support. It is not only the adults who should be active in this, but also the children themselves.

All the examples in point 4 portray children’s different poor life conditions and their need for support and protection. They also show that life conditions are regarded as being better here in Sweden, but could also be better for “the others” if they have support and protection (from us): Solidarity should be developed with the weak and vulnerable, especially those in other countries or those who come here. The view is that “the others” have difficult lives and that “we” should help them. However, some of the examples show a paternalistic approach that has been common in the Swedish school since the 1980s (cf. Brantefors, 2015; see also Ljunggren, 2011). “The others who have problems” should be helped and supported by “us” or, as in more xenophobic expressions, not supported at all. With regard to the mental life conditions, T1’s relational stroke is interesting: It is not only the pupils who should be supported by the adults. The pupils should also be seen as capable of participating in the process (cf. James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; James and James, 2004).

### **Working methods – how**

Both teachers use transmission, interactive and explorative methods and some of the group work is presented using formative approaches such as role-play. Every class briefing is accompanied by support from different websites, but textbooks are not used.

The teaching takes place continuously in interaction with the children, but in partly different ways: T1 does her briefings in transmission mode,

but emphasises interaction with the children. T1 reads/goes through a content and compares and discusses it with the children. They also do an evaluation exercise in which they reflect/evaluate, make up their minds and discuss together. T2's teaching with the whole class is also characterised by transmission and interaction. T2 makes use of short questions that can be answered with equally short responses. In the interaction the teacher makes use of provocative statements to stimulate new ideas or protests. Small discussion groups are formed in-between the different teaching periods, which end with short presentation rounds. Protests against the different ways of looking at a question are dismissed as being the interpretations of individual pupils: "Any other interpretations?" However, T2 responds to flippant interpretations of e.g. natural disasters and flooding in the following way: "Bathrooms are not the same as societies as a whole".

When it comes to discipline in the classroom, T1 and T2 make use of different strategies. T1 calls for attention by raising her/his arms and counting down: "3, 2, 1." In S2, the same kind of discipline is not necessary, but what is a problem is pupils who incessantly raise their hands. T2 therefore does different things in different situations: sometimes asks a child with his/her hand up for the answer, sometimes asks a child to "put your hand down", or sometimes ignores the pupils altogether.

The group work takes up half of the teaching time and is both explorative and interactive, and also formative during the presentations. Here, the teachers mostly have a supervisory and, at times, guiding role.

The work in the groups is carried out following careful and detailed instructions from the teachers. The pupils have to learn to work together, agree and solve everyday problems without the teachers' help. They also have to practise finding information. The groups are formed randomly by the teachers using name sticks or name balls. When it comes to presentations, both classes are free to choose: "You can do a play, a factual text, sing, you are free to do what you want" (T1). "Do it in your own way" (T2). In order for the group work to function well, it is introduced in transmission mode with reviews of how a group process should work. T1 emphasises the democratic work process, while T2 works from examples of cooperation. T1 points out that the pupils should first choose a discussion leader and a secretary. They should "cooperate", "listen to each other", "not shout" and "respect the person". They also have to think about the volume, which is repeated several times. Even the discussion leader must be respected and T1 writes "respect the discussion leader" in the digital work instructions. T1 also makes a comparison with how the work in the teacher

team is carried out: “You can’t just sit and talk all the time.” Someone has to say to the quiet ones: “What do you think, you haven’t said a word?” Having a discussion leader is good because “it’s good to practise that already now”. In S2 the pupils learn about the group process through different examples of cooperation presented by the teacher, such as how a class 6 solved a similar problem (on human rights) and how they, in the interaction with each other, dealt with the obstacles that arose. The teacher describes the different obstacles that were encountered, which group the teacher had to help the most and how the process progressed. T2 emphasises that group work is a goal-oriented and interactive process where everyone has to do their best. This means that the pupils are urged to solve the problems that arise in order to arrive at the finished product. “Everything is possible if you want it to be”(T2). The teacher encourages the pupils to overcome the obstacles and praises and thanks the pupils when they succeed. “Thank you for a good week, there’s always a few obstacles in the path and I think that you are getting better and better at dealing with them yourselves, you’re making good progress” (T2).

In both S1 and S2 the pupils have a lot of personal responsibility when it comes to the group work, but the teachers continually supervise or guide them. Despite all the instructions and all the help, coming to an agreement takes time. Not everyone can concentrate or focus on the task. If the pupils cannot agree they try to solve the problem by voting, using name balls or playing the “rock, paper, scissors” game so that chance can decide. A lot of time is spent discussing minor things related to the process and it is not unusual for the discussion leader or the informal leader to drive the process forward, or be the person who decides and does the exercise. The time is not always spent on working with the children’s human rights content.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

The ambition with this didactic study has been to clarify the aims, content and work processes in the teaching of children’s human rights in two year 5 classes. The study shows that the specific aim of the work is that the pupils will learn to respect others and be good fellow human beings. The ethical and social aims are emphasised and the interest is mainly to put rights knowledge into practice. The cognitive aims are mainly that the pupils should be informed about human rights or be familiar with the key concepts.

The teaching content is dominated by four identified themes: rights, values and democracy, discrimination – bullying and violation, and support

and protection – people’s life conditions. The main focus is on the violation of rights and children’s need for support and protection. In the main it means that the interpretation of rights is always negative. Which rights and which content should be dealt with in the teaching is determined by the teachers’ and the pupils’ choice of website, the teacher’s (T1) choice of articles for the group work, and also the actual social situation with an emphasis on refugees’ and immigrants’ life conditions. With regard to rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its basic principles are prioritised, rather than the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948). However, there is no consistent use of rights terminology, but depending on the situation or website concepts such as children’s rights, children’s human rights, or human rights are used. The study also shows that interactive democratic work processes dominate, together with an independent yet supervised group work on human rights.

Four main conclusions can be drawn from the study: i) the rights content is cognitively weak, ii) the choice of media steers the rights content, iii) rights are mainly for “the others” and iv) rights are mixed together with democratic attitudes.

i) The rights content is cognitively weak: In much of the teaching rights are not named, but constitute a minor part of the content (or are completely invisible) in order to motivate the ethical and social stances. Rights are named in the teacher’s transmission briefings, or in the different film sequences that are shown, but are not a knowledge content that the pupils should learn. There is no expectation that the pupils will be able to describe or account for the rights more than being able to present their findings or conclusions from the group work. The way of working is progressivist, where the pupils are active in their search for knowledge without (essentially) being required to report on what they know about rights (cf. Englund, 1997). This means that rights *have* a weak position as knowledge content, which means that there is no expressed goal or defined content when it comes to knowledge about rights. Neither is there any clear picture of “now we have learned this about rights”. Most of what the pupils achieve is “good”. This does not necessarily relate to the teaching of rights in itself, but can be to do with the pedagogy that is used. Gert Biesta (2013) has described constructivist pedagogy in which learning is prioritised rather than the teaching. He maintains that the consequences of such a pedagogy are that pupils do not always know what they should learn. It is rather the processes - how you characterise or shape an unspecified content - that are

central. This is also very visible in the study. The pupils work with a content, which they largely define themselves based on the teachers' different briefings. However, as the aim is to treat people well, and the way of working focuses on cooperation, the chosen way of working achieves the aim of the rights teaching, which is to cooperate and integrate with others. For example, T1 emphasises that human rights are not primarily a content, but a *vehicle* for social interaction.

ii) The choice of media steers the rights content: The study shows that the choice of website determines the rights content. It also shows that there is a lack of insight into the significance of conscious choice in the teaching (cf. Uljens, 1997; Hudson and Meyer, 2011). For example, this becomes clear in the choice of Amnesty International's film about human rights, which shows the refugee's perspective on rights, which in this case is about freedom rights. With a different website as the point of departure other rights could have been presented. Without a critical analysis of the choice of material and content, the teaching will be imprecise and unclear and could simply be about what appears to be most suitable at the time. Asking didactic questions about the aim, content and working processes is therefore of great importance. In addition to placing demands on the teachers' critical abilities, it also implies a selection paradox: if the teacher chooses websites based on interest, or possibly aim, but with an uncritical focus, the pupils will simply be offered the content that is represented on the website together with suggested ways of working. The media's role in how critical/uncritical choices are made is significant for the work that ensues. This lack of awareness of the importance of conscious choices on the part of the teachers also applies to concepts. The study shows that human rights, children's rights or children's human rights are used in parallel depending on the situation or website. All this together could also be interpreted as a lack of knowledge about rights.

iii) Rights are mainly for "the others": Both schools deal with refugees and immigration in order to discuss rights. The rights issue therefore does not concern friends and relations, but is mostly about very vulnerable people and those needing protection (especially in S2), or those who are far away. Rights are something that others either have or lack. When it comes to "ourselves", it is assumed that our rights are already respected and fulfilled. This means that rights will be treated as a question of *the lack of rights*. This could also partly answer the question about why the teaching has had a

particular focus: rights are something for those whose rights are not respected. “We” are assumed to already have them and therefore take them for granted. This is also why life conditions in different parts of the world are more important to deal with than what happens here. It is noteworthy that children’s life conditions in other parts of the world are highlighted to a lesser degree in the multicultural school (S1) than in the monocultural school (S2), which may mean that the world is already represented by the pupils themselves (S1).

iv) Rights are mixed together with democratic attitudes: international overviews of the teaching and learning of children’s human rights (Brantefors and Quennerstedt, 2016) reveal differences in the teaching. The Scandinavian countries have a greater focus on democracy in relation to rights, which is not reflected to the same extent internationally. There, the teaching is more specifically oriented towards rights and it is therefore easier to talk about rights teaching, rights pedagogy, human rights education (HRE) etc. Instead, in Sweden the emphasis is on values and democracy, and here rights teaching has been shown to be a part of, or even replaced by, teaching about values.

In a previous study of teaching traditions based on the concept of curriculum emphases (Brantefors and Thelander, 2017, cf. Roberts, 1982) four teaching traditions are described, each of which have a different aim, such as *participation*, *empowerment*, *awareness of rights* or *respect for rights*. In comparison with these four traditions, there are marked differences in relation to this study. The aims (in this study) do not correspond with any of these traditions, but aim at a content that is to do with *democratic education*. Rights are a part of democratic education, which is not particularly surprising. In several different contexts, the significance of the situation is observed. This result shows the importance of seeing and understanding the teaching on the basis of the context – in this case the Swedish school. The question is whether it would even be possible within the framework of a Swedish educational tradition to develop the teaching into a more specific rights teaching.

Finally, it can be ascertained there are shortcomings in the teaching of human rights, especially with regard to what should be dealt with in the teaching of rights. The curriculum gives overall directives, but in principle human rights lack an adequate curriculum (cf. Parker, 2018). In order to



remedy this, rights teaching needs to be developed further in both teacher education and in school.

## 5. Teaching about and through children's human rights in the later school years

Nina Thelander

This chapter presents the results from year 8 and accounts for the teachers' motives for why the pupils should learn about human rights, which content dominates the teaching and which work methods are used.

The data collection in year 8 was carried out in two different classes in two different schools and towns in Sweden. Both schools are located just outside the town centre, but within the respective town boundary and close to housing areas. School A is a year 7-9 school with approximately 500 pupils. There are 24 pupils in the studied class. The gender division is equal and the pupils have the same ethnic background. School B is what is known as a preschool to year 9 school, with approximately 850 pupils. The studied class consists of 26 pupils, also with an equal gender division, where four pupils have an ethnic background other than Swedish. The two teachers are class mentors and teach social science in combination with another subject. One of the teachers, in school A, has around 20 years of teaching experience and the teacher in school B has some years of professional experience.

The teachers' previous experiences of teaching human rights have only been in the form of "occasional theme days or similar" (teacher A) and not as a specific planned area. As all the pupils have worked with children's human rights before at the schools, the teachers therefore decide that the planned teaching will focus on general *human rights*. The teachers' ambition is to invite the pupils to participate in the planning of the work and to allow their knowledge about rights, views and interests to shape the teaching. Teacher B says that "... I [am] very open ... what the [pupils] find and think, so on the basis of that I build and shape my planning". Despite this ambition, the pupils do not participate to any great extent when the teaching begins.

Social issues are readily used as a stimulating introduction to a work area, or for example in order to place different aspects of the subject in an actual and, for the pupils, understandable context. By departing from social issues, the content and what is done in school are also related to discussions that take place outside school, in the media and in the home. The teachers also emphasise that it is important for pupils to acquire knowledge about what is happening in the world so that they understand other people's life conditions and can reflect on their own life situations and appreciate them. In

school A the planned work is conducted in the subject of civics and the class mainly works with rights in the civics lessons for around seven weeks. The teaching of human rights in school B is part of an ongoing project in geography on “poor and rich countries”. This work is carried out in just under five weeks in the civics lessons.

### **Why learn about human rights?**

In this section the teachers’ stated aims with the teaching are presented. The main reasons why the pupils should learn about human rights are *ethical*. The teachers also express *cognitive*, *emotional* and *social* aims with the teaching.

Ethical aim: The main aim is to teach the pupils tolerance and understanding of other people, especially those who are in difficulty. For the pupils it is essential: “... to learn more about ...every person’s equal value and that everyone should be treated with respect. ... [that you] don’t need to *love* everybody, but that you should behave like a decent fellow human being” (teacher A). Further, it is important to practise feeling empathy with and respect for other people. It is therefore the ethical aims that the teachers emphasise in the work with human rights. For both teachers, the starting point for the teaching is *every person’s equal value*, which is also the fundamental idea behind human rights. Every person’s equal value also constitutes the framework for the work as a whole.

Another ethical aim is to allow the pupils to reflect on and make up their own minds about ethical aspects of human rights so that they can discuss the importance of the different rights ... “can any [right] be removed... do we all have human rights and which could we imagine being without?” (Teacher B.) Taking a stand in discussions about the ethical aspects of rights is also seen by the teachers as an opportunity for the pupils to practise expressing their own views, discussing and... “working together on, ... and [being able to] compromise” (teacher A).

Cognitive aim: One of the teacher’s cognitive aims is for the pupils to develop knowledge about the historical background as to why we have human rights and why we need knowledge about them. In school B, which works with the main theme of “poor and rich countries”, the main goal is knowing how rights are observed in different countries, so that the pupils can ... “be informed about the world” (teacher B). Another cognitive aim is related to refugees and is about developing the pupils’ knowledge of people in forced migration and people’s different life conditions and vulnera-

bility. Here, knowledge about rights and people's life circumstances in different countries are prerequisites for the pupils being able to make comparisons between countries, in time and in space, understanding others and being able to see and discern different connections, such as the relation between democracy and human rights.

**Emotional aim:** Both teachers express an emotional aim with the teaching. They want to encourage the pupils to get in touch with their feelings so that they feel involved in human rights and will develop an interest in rights issues. The hope is that the pupils will be touched by inequalities and injustices and be able to imagine other people's life circumstances in different parts of the world – partly to understand that life in Sweden is good, but also to realise that many people live in conditions that are completely different to theirs: "... think... it's a lot to do with emotion. And then I think that there'll be: Aha, isn't it like that everywhere?" (Teacher A.)

Feeling empathy and sympathy for vulnerable people in a far-off country and for those fleeing to Sweden are important aspects of the emotional motive.

Another central motive that is both a *cognitive* and an *emotional* aim is to allow the pupils to widen their perspectives of people's different life conditions and situations outside Sweden, especially when rights are violated, and of vulnerable people in Sweden. When the data was collected huge numbers of refugees were on the move in both Europe and Sweden.<sup>5</sup> This was well covered in the media and in the public debate and was a topical social issue for the pupils and teachers to relate to. Knowledge about refugees and their movement was transformed by the teachers into a special motive and example in order to increase knowledge about human rights and especially about people in forced migration.

**Social aim:** The teachers also have a common social aim with the teaching, which is to work in groups, practise working together and creating opportunities for the pupils to discuss and agree with their classmates. The pupils should "... be able to agree... and compromise" (teacher A) and "... have good discussions in groups" (teacher B) in order to practise cooperating and discussing. Teacher A formulates yet another social aim, which is that the pupils should understand that general human rights are a joint international agreement that demonstrates global cooperation, "it's not just

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<sup>5</sup> The data was collected in the autumn term in 2015 and the spring term in 2016, when the influx of refugees to Sweden was at its height.

us in little Sweden, but that the world has come together and tries to work for this”.

As with several other work areas in school there are parallel aims as to why learning about human rights is important. For example, at the same time as the pupils learn about rights they also practise cooperating with others in the class. This in turn not only reflects this specific knowledge area, but also the complexity of the school’s assignment as a transmitter of knowledge and values. The teachers’ joint response to the *why* question, which is the strongest motive for the pupils learning about human rights, is about being a good, loyal, fellow human being. It is particularly important to train the pupils to act in accordance with the values in the rights’ ethical guidelines. In short, it is the ethical aim of showing tolerance and understanding for other people and that every person is of equal value that is the dominant motive for the teaching. This, together with the pupils feeling empathy with people in vulnerable situations and acquiring knowledge about other people’s different life conditions and vulnerability, determines the direction of the content in the teaching for the pupils in year 8.

## **What is the content in the teaching of human rights?**

The teaching content is dealt with in three parts. Part I describes the different types of teaching content. This part ends with a table showing the aims and content. Part II addresses the main themes in the content and work forms. Part III is a summary of the results.

### **Types of content**

The teaching content is consistently characterised by a large and voluminous teaching material that, to varying degrees, relates to different aspects of the content, such as *fact-oriented*, *understanding-oriented*, *skills-oriented* and *value-oriented* content. Both the teaching content and the motives for the work areas are strikingly similar in both schools. All the aspects of the content have been identified, albeit to differing extents.

On the whole, the teaching is mainly dominated by an understanding-oriented content. Most of the aims formulated by the teachers also correspond to the understanding-oriented content, such as developing an understanding of why we have and need human rights. Broadly speaking, the content coincides with the previously expressed motives that are especially directed towards the ethical and cognitive aims. Only one emotional aim, in school A, does not correspond to any content. After the introductory fact-related lessons the content is dominated by understanding-oriented teaching

material that is more or less used for the entire teaching period. The teaching specifically relates to the aim of people's different life conditions and situations, where people are discriminated against and rights are violated. In these contexts the pupils have an opportunity to develop their understanding of the meaning of human rights, especially in societies where they are not observed. A recurring content is also directed towards understanding that people's life situations and conditions are different, especially when compared with those in Sweden. Understanding and seeing the connection between e.g. rights–social structures–governance and people's life conditions emerge as clear aspects in the teaching.

The fact-oriented content that has been identified mainly appears in the introduction to the work. Here the knowledge content is mostly directed towards cognitive aims and includes e.g. facts about the historical background that takes its starting point in World War 2, a general explanation of human rights (1948), its Articles and basic information about the UN system. Together these aspects constitute the factual knowledge of human rights in the teaching. In this context, every person's equal value is also highlighted as a clear factual content, which is specifically directed toward ethical aims. Other examples of fact-oriented content are explanations of basic concepts relating to the topical social issues of people in forced migration, migration and asylum. On the other hand, it is clear that when they are dealt with and discussed there is often no direct connection to rights. Instead, the concepts orientate around the aim to learn about people's different life situations and vulnerability. In short, the fact-oriented content is a minor and obscure part of the planned teaching.

In addition, the teaching contains several elements of skills-oriented material that allows the pupils to use rights in concrete assignments, both individually and in groups. The skills-oriented teaching material is mainly directed towards the ethical aim, which consists of being able to assess and prioritise different rights. The cognitive aim, about the pupils referring to different rights when rights are violated, also has a skills content.

Value content is also identified in the teaching. This is specifically directed towards cognitive aims and is to some extent, although not explicitly, related to human rights. On the other hand, the value aspects are concretised by xenophobia, the oppression of poor and vulnerable people, democracy, solidarity and tolerance. In this way, the value-oriented content is rather related to the basic values on which the Swedish school rests than to the knowledge field of human rights.

Overall, the planned teaching is dominated by an understanding-oriented content that is mainly directed towards ethical aims. Central aspects are showing tolerance and understanding for other people and every person's equal value. These are often concretised by situations and examples of where rights are not followed. The teaching's fact-oriented content is mainly directed towards cognitive aims, such as offering the pupils facts, mostly based on the Declaration text, which does not result in any in-depth knowledge about human rights. In both schools the emphasis is on assessing and prioritising rights – an activity that is directed to the ethical motive – taking a stand on different ethical aspects and conflicts of interest that are included in human rights. The skills content is further seen as a way of achieving the overall central ethical aim with the teaching of showing tolerance and understanding for other people and every person's equal value. In a similar way, the value-oriented content also supports the overarching purpose of the teaching.

Table 1 compiles the teachers' motives and the content aspects that dominate the teaching.

Table 1. The teachers' motives and teaching content

Teacher A		Teacher B	
<i>Aims</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Aims</i>	<i>Content</i>
<p><b>Ethical aims</b> Show tolerance and understanding for other people - every person's equal value</p> <p>Be able to reflect and take a stand on different ethical aspects of human rights</p>	<p><b>Facts:</b> every person is born free and has equal value and rights <b>Understand:</b> every person is not treated as having equal value <b>Understand:</b> that different rights interests can collide <b>Skills:</b> assess and prioritise different rights together with others</p>	<p><b>Ethical aims:</b> Show tolerance and understanding for other people - every person's equal value Be able to reflect and take a stand on different ethical aspects of human rights</p>	<p><b>Facts:</b> every person is born free and has equal value and rights <b>Understand:</b> every person is not treated as having equal value <b>Understand:</b> that different rights interests can collide <b>Skills:</b> assess and prioritise different rights together with others</p>
<p><b>Cognitive aims</b> Knowledge about rights</p>	<p><b>Facts:</b> Background Human rights – universal rules <b>Understand:</b> why we</p>	<p><b>Cognitive aims:</b> Knowledge about rights</p>	<p><b>Facts:</b> background, rights, violation of human rights <b>Understand:</b> why we</p>

<p>Knowledge about other people's different life conditions and vulnerability – in the world and here at home</p>	<p>have and need human rights  <b>Skills:</b>  Refer to different rights when they are violated  Prioritise rights  <b>Values:</b> In Sweden we comply with the rights but other countries do not. They need help.</p> <p><b>Facts:</b> The world situation, migration, forced migration  <b>Understand:</b> that many people in the world find life difficult, people in forced migration need help  <b>Values:</b> We must work to combat anti-democratic currents and xenophobia</p>	<p>Knowledge about other people's different life conditions and vulnerability – in the world and here at home</p>	<p>have and need human rights. Connection between geography, poverty, governance and human rights  <b>Skills:</b> prioritise rights  <b>Values:</b> In Swede we comply with the rights quite well but many other countries do not</p> <p><b>Facts:</b> The world situation, migration, forced migration  <b>Understand:</b> that many people in the world find life difficult, people in forced migration need help  <b>Values:</b> we must work to combat the oppression of the poor and unequal social and economic conditions</p>
<p><b>Emotional aims</b>  Understanding for people in vulnerable situations  Create interest and engagement for work with rights and rights organisations</p>	<p><b>Understand:</b> that people cannot always influence their own situations</p>	<p><b>Emotional aim:</b>  Understanding for people in vulnerable situations</p>	<p><b>Understand:</b> that people cannot always influence their own situations</p>
<p><b>Social aims:</b>  Work in groups, compromise with each other  Understanding for human rights as a</p>	<p><b>Skills:</b> agree in groups about rights  <b>Facts:</b> In the UN everyone is agreed on human rights</p>	<p><b>Social aim:</b>  Work in groups, compromise with each other</p>	<p><b>Skills:</b> agree in groups about rights</p>



joint international agreement			
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### **Content themes and how they are used in the teaching**

Two main themes appear in the taught content: *human rights* and *when rights are violated*. The first, *human rights*, is expressed in a similar way in the two schools. The second theme, *when rights are violated*, is exemplified somewhat differently in the schools.

#### Human rights

The work is introduced in a similar way in both classes, with basic facts about the historical background and what human rights are. The work forms that are used are interactive class discussions together with short films retrieved from the internet and/or different news excerpts. An overall review of the UN system is also included in the introduction, where the international responsibility for human rights is pointed out. Both the teachers and the pupils highlight the crimes that were committed against people during the Second World War as a decisive factor for the establishment of the UN and also that international documents stipulating human rights are aimed at avoiding and combating similar happenings in the future.

The most important content in the teaching is the basic idea behind human rights – *every person’s equal value*. After a class discussion aimed at discussing what human rights are, teacher A summarises it like this: “... it’s about every person having equal value and about our rights and that it’s about democracy and people”.

Human rights are presented to the pupils as good universal regulations that should be observed, but that the governing powers in many countries do not follow them. This results in people in different parts of the world being treated badly and not being able to claim their rights in the same way as people who live in Sweden. The fact that we *have* rights also means a responsibility to support and help those people who do *not* have human rights.

The content that is explicitly related to knowledge about rights is expressed to a limited extent in the teaching and, for the most part, is included

in the introduction. The Articles in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* are read and explained. Both schools carry out different variations of interactive group exercises, in which a number of rights are selected as being particularly important, in order to then prioritise them in order from the most to the least important. In the exercise the different rights interests that the pupils need to take a stand on clash with the intention to open up discussions that can give a deeper understanding of the conflicts of interest that are inherent in the human rights.

School A uses material from Amnesty International for the exercise. The pupils imagine that they have landed on a desert island and together have to create a new society where the constitutional rules and ethical/moral guidelines are based on human rights. After group discussions the pupils have to choose and prioritise ten rights Articles and then answer a number of questions about how different scenarios relate to the constitutional rules they have chosen. A similar exercise is conducted in school B. The pupils are divided into fictitious countries, created by the teacher, and discuss which five rights they prioritise as important in their country. Prioritising different rights is not easy for the pupils. Examples of when two interests clash are: "... is it important to vote if you can't? If you don't go to school ... The thing is that I don't know whether it's more important to go to school than to vote" (pupil, school B). Based on the knowledge the pupils have about human rights they find it difficult to prioritise or even argue for one or the other prioritisation. Even though the teachers go round the groups it seems difficult to capture the pupils' views of different conflicts of interest and deepen the discussion with them.

The time that is spent on the prioritisation exercise differs considerably between the two classes. In school A the exercise takes up most of the lesson time over several weeks. The pupils have plenty of time to deepen the discussions about which rights should be prioritised and why with their classmates in small groups. The discussions are guided by the instructions in the Amnesty material and the responses are presented orally in the cross-groups when the work is complete.

In school B the exercise is carried out in groups with a very limited timeframe and in one lesson with very few possibilities for in-depth discussion. The result of the priority exercise is discussed in the class; a discussion that is mainly driven by the teacher.

It can be ascertained that even though the priority exercise often leads to discussions in the groups about the importance of different rights, no in-depth or well-developed argumentation occurs in any of the classes. Instead,

most of the pupils in school A, and similarly in school B, focus more on coming to an agreement and solving the exercise as quickly as possible than deepening the discussions about human rights.

Even though the knowledge content is deepened somewhat in the described groups and class discussions, rights become increasingly unclear in these fora. Instead, the rights content is linked to the absence of democracy and that there are socioeconomic injustices between people. In particular, the relation between human rights and democratic governance is highlighted in the discussions, where democracy is regarded as a prerequisite for the realisation of human rights. Also in the discussions human rights are regarded as a democratic system's constitutional and ethical guidelines that determine how we should treat each other.

All in all, the human rights knowledge content is mainly about the Articles in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and being able to prioritise different rights. As the teaching proceeds, rights tend to become less visible and explicit. Instead, the teaching changes to mainly deal with when rights are violated, i.e. different discrimination issues (see the next section). The dominant way of working in the first theme is mainly interactive, such as discussions between teachers and pupils in the class as a whole or between pupils in groups. Transmission also constitutes a significant part, especially in the form of films, such as short information films or news excerpts.

### When rights are violated

The second theme, when rights are violated, has two sub-themes. In school A these are people in forced migration and anti-democratic currents and in school B people in forced migration and socioeconomic injustices and oppression.

The content for both schools consists of people's different life conditions and vulnerability in different parts of the world and here at home and those who in different ways have their human rights violated. In addition, the content can be less related to the pupils themselves and more directed to people outside the school, of different ages and in other places.

In school A the theme content *when rights are violated* is connected to people's different life conditions and vulnerability, which among other things are related to war, the ongoing stream of refugees and non-democratic governance. The pupils work individually with different *cases* in Amnesty's educational material, such as how people in a different country are imprisoned due to their sexual orientation and are subjected to inhuman

conditions. Here the task is to apply human rights by being able to show which rights are violated in the different cases and discuss possible measures.

In school B the pupils work individually with an assignment about people's different life conditions and vulnerability. Here the task is to examine and compare two countries, "a rich and a poor country", their geographical conditions and the different life conditions of the people who live there. The pupils are allowed to consult the "Globalis" website for information and atlases. Part of the task is to ascertain which human rights are violated in the two countries and why. Reasons why people's rights are violated include war, undemocratic governance and the prevailing socioeconomic and geopolitical conditions. The work with the themes consists of individual assignments that are alternated with interactive working methods in traditional class and group discussions. Individual assignments later become more dominant in the classes, which can probably be explained by the fact that they are mainly used for evaluation purposes. Transmission activities, such as films or news excerpts, are also common. News excerpts are used regularly in school A to introduce a lesson, usually without any subsequent discussion or follow-up. Short informative films mostly dealing with concepts related to migration and forced migration are also shown.

### **People in forced migration**

In both schools the refugee crisis is an example of *when rights are violated*. In the teaching content very little is said about which rights are violated, although the refugees' situation and life conditions are transformed by the teachers into a knowledge content about rights. The most central content is about people in forced migration needing protection and support. Also, that those of us who are able to help need to understand their life situations and make sure that they have the protection and support that they need.

Films feature regularly in the theme, especially news excerpts (school A). Both schools also make use of short films dealing with migration and the global flow of refugees from a more general perspective. Among other things, the films emphasise that migration is not a new phenomenon and that the direction of migration- and refugee flows has changed over time. Basic concepts like migration, refugees and asylum are taken up and discussed in the classes. When migration and the refugee crisis are dealt with the teachers do not often explicitly relate to human rights. However, an example of when they do comes from school B when the class discusses basic concepts – in this case asylum.

Teacher B: How do you think that it works today, in Sweden, the refugee crisis has eased off. In March, tougher border controls were introduced, was that good, or why do you think we had tougher border controls? What purpose did they serve?

P1: Perhaps to not let people in who would go and fight for IS and stuff.

P2: Yes, like after Paris and Belgium.

Teacher B: And down there in Malmö, there were no more mattresses. People had nowhere to sleep - those who came. ... if you look at the human rights we should help people who are in difficulty, who are vulnerable in the world and flee from atrocities, it's obvious that they should be able to come here. But as it turned out, we couldn't take them, but the way... It's probably better than where they were, but it would have been better if we'd been prepared for it. But do you restrict people's human rights with the right to asylum? And say, no, you'll have to seek asylum in another country. What do you think? It is right or wrong? There's no correct answer to it, but I'd like to discuss it a bit.

P3: I don't know.

TB: But say what you think!

P3: ...it's not nice.

TB. Even if there were no mattresses or houses or whatever, for those who came ..

P3: I mean, it's not their fault, you know those who fled here, it's not their fault that their country is at war and they want to escape, but it can be a bit of a violation.

P4: I think that you should take people to the extent that is possible. You can make it so that the refugees have it better and send them to a country where the refugees have a roof over their heads and food. ... like you said perhaps it's better to send them to a country where things are better.

Teacher B: it's a difficult question and at the same time we've got Articles 27 and 28 which are about everyone, children and adults, having a decent standard of living, but then it's like this: if you reject people you violate the right of those who flee to go to another

country and seek asylum, and if you reject them you violate that human right. But, then if they come in and we take so many that they don't have a roof over their heads or mattresses to lie on, can you call that a decent standard of living, or should we think that it's a temporary problem and that we can solve it..? Do you see the clash? Which human rights are most important? The right to seek asylum or the right to a reasonable standard of living? How should we think here? (Asks P4 what she/he thinks)

P4: Right to seek asylum.

TB: Seek asylum, good!

P5: Decent living standard.

TB: Good, as I said, there's no right or wrong here. That's what makes it so difficult as well. Human rights are very good, we've got these rights and we should try to follow them, but when there's a crisis then it's difficult to see that everything is observed. But now I've stood here and talked about a decent living standard. What is that?

The example shows how the teacher relates to rights, but also to how different rights interests clash, which opens for a more in-depth discussion. However, the teacher does not lead the discussion forward and deepen it, but switches, together with the class, to instead wondering what the right to a decent living standard means.

Transmission/explanatory and interactive methods are used in this theme. The basic knowledge content is collected from the films and news excerpts that are shown and the interactive elements mostly take place through class discussions. As in the above example and through the films the teachers try to capture the pupils' interest and engagement for people in forced migration. Trying to imagine yourself in a similar position is a recurring feature of the conversations with the pupils.

Overall, the theme is dominated by people who are in forced migration needing protection and help. It is also about understanding and empathising with refugees' situations and conditions.

### **Anti-democratic trends**

Human rights and democracy are strongly connected to each other and lack of rights is often related to lack of democracy by both teacher and pupils.

In connection with the mass movement of refugees, there is also a national political discussion about anti-democratic trends and xenophobia, which the teacher in school A highlights and discusses with the pupils:

The Sweden Democrats are extremely clear about us not taking in so many... The Christian Democrats... they are starting to discuss the question of whether we really should take in as many immigrants as we do today... they change their position a bit and don't really know what they think because they haven't been prepared for this. So, therefore you can change your minds a bit depending on the situation. This very subject raises a lot of questions and can stir up lots of feelings. (Teacher A)

As with the theme *people in forced migration*, the theme *when rights are violated* is an example of the teacher in school A also including the ongoing public debate on anti-democratic trends and xenophobia.

The content in this theme is collected from news excerpts and even uses popular TV programmes with no clear connection to human rights. The films are not usually followed by any real discussion, but are mostly limited to brief comments about what was included in the excerpt – before it is time for the pupils to continue working with the group or individual assignment. The discussions that do take place are mostly about showing understanding and tolerance for other people – especially for those in difficulty. The relation and strong connection of human rights' to democracy is made very clear in the theme.

All in all, this theme is characterised by educational elements where people who dare to stand up for democracy and are against xenophobia are described as strong and courageous. The teacher herself takes a clear stand against anti-democratic trends and xenophobia and encourages the pupils to do the same. She also points to the importance of the pupils daring and being able to express their opinions, not just in school but also outside it.

### **Socioeconomic injustices and oppression**

In school B the teacher leads the discussions in the class about vulnerable people's socioeconomic life situations. Questions are discussed about how and who exploits our economic resources in the world and how people, especially in poor countries, have been and still are oppressed by rich countries and companies, e.g. "... it is companies that are down there [Congo]

and still control the gold trade. That make sure that people still work as slaves, for slave wages, live at subsistence level” (teacher B).

The pupils work with an individual written assignment which they are expected to submit. There they have to describe a “rich and a poor country” and then compare the countries on the basis of different aspects, such as population, natural resources, living standards and how human rights are observed. Interactive class discussions are held in which the teacher simultaneously transmits fact-oriented and understanding-oriented content. For example, a comparison is made between Norway and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where it is ascertained that both countries are rich due to their access to natural resources. On the other hand, it is stated that people’s life conditions and the possibility to make use of their human rights are quite different. In contrast to Norway, DRC is extremely poor and offers poor life conditions to people living there. The differences are explained as the oppression and exploitation of DRC by for example former colonial powers. One pupil also develops this into the lack of a functioning democratic state government: “... they had no leaders, no land, no system” (pupil, school B).

In the same way as there is a clear connection between human rights and democracy, the violation and lack of rights are related to poverty. The message that is transmitted is that many people are vulnerable and live in difficult circumstances and are furthermore exploited by multinational companies and people in richer parts of the world. This violates human rights. Those of us who live in a richer part of the world have the possibility to share and therefore need to take responsibility to help so that people in poorer countries will have a better and more decent living standard.

### **Summary of the results and conclusion**

To sum up, the overall aim in the teaching of human rights in year 8 is about teaching the pupils tolerance and understanding for other people, especially those in difficulty. A central motive is to practise the ability to feel empathy with and develop a willingness to help people living in difficult circumstances in different parts of the world, to combat discrimination and to protect and work for every person’s equal value.

The teaching content forms themes with two main emphases: *human rights* and *when rights are violated*. The latter constitutes the dominant content in the teaching and is divided into three sub-themes: *people in forced migration* (in both schools), *anti-democratic trends* (in school A) and *socio-economic injustices* (in school B). People living in difficult circumstances



do not have their rights recognised. They need help and protection. A clear principle that appears in the results is that we in Sweden *have* rights, and the reasons why rights are violated in different parts of the world are explained by undemocratic governance and/or poverty.

The results of the study can be summarised in the following way: In the teaching knowledge about rights is limited and lacks precision and stringency.

The knowledge content mainly consists of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and the content in the Articles. It is mainly the violation of rights and vulnerable people's need for protection and help that dominate the teaching content. Thus, one right is especially in focus – the right to non-discrimination. This means that negative rights that do not require action by anyone else are most evident in the content.

Every person's equal value is pointed out in the work as a whole and used both as a knowledge content and a basic value that calls on the pupils to help and protect those who are in need of it. Beyond that no deeper discussion takes place on for example different rights perspectives or the problematisation of human rights in the classes. For the pupils it means that they are not offered any in-depth knowledge content about human rights in the teaching.

Human rights are regarded as an international democratic framework that includes ethical guidelines and rules for how we should treat each other, rather than a knowledge area of individual human rights. Democracy and human rights are closely linked and difficult to separate. Human rights are regarded as part of democracy and as a prerequisite for realising human rights. For the pupils it means that being able to act in accordance with the democratic and ethical guidelines that are included in human rights is of greater significance than knowing very much about rights.

Moreover, rights are more for “the other” than for the pupils, which promotes an ‘us’ and ‘them’ perspective. Rights are mainly related to another country and context and are to do with people of different ages in countries that are far removed from the pupils' context, life conditions and everyday lives.

At first the work is dominated by interactive and transmission work methods that later become dominated by different individual written assignments. The transmission method mainly consists of brief information-oriented and fact-oriented films and/or news excerpts that to some degree are adapted and discussed in relation to human rights. Prioritising different

rights is an interactive exercise that is used in both classes in slightly different ways and extent. Hence, different ways of working are used in the teaching of human rights, especially when the work begins. Gradually, and especially in the theme *when rights are violated*, it is mainly individual written assignments that dominate.

Based on the results of the study, the answer to the question of possibilities and limitations for the pupils to grow as rights bearers is interesting. The planned teaching that is studied does not, to any great extent, offer possibilities to grow as rights bearers. However, the pupils' knowledge of basic democratic values is strengthened, such as showing tolerance and understanding, especially for vulnerable people, and in that way makes it possible for them to grow as democratic citizens, rather than as rights bearers

## Discussion

The results of this study show that the teaching of human rights in year 8 is characterised by a weak and vague knowledge content. Without sufficient knowledge of the work area it becomes particularly difficult for the pupils to conduct deeper discussions about human rights. This is made visible for example in the prioritising exercise that is undertaken in both classes. Due to the absence of central concepts and perspectives that can support the pupils in their discussions, the exercise becomes more a matter of “thinking and conjecturing” and coming to an agreement in the group than a discussion about the content and meaning of different rights. In the most recent curriculum reform, Lgr 11, the requirement for the development of pupils' subject-related knowledge and skills has become more prominent, which is also the case for the knowledge field of human rights. It therefore places more demands on the teachers. A didactic study of how teachers interpret and understand the requirement shows that teachers' understanding of content is especially significant for developing the pupils' subject-related knowledge and skills (Florin Sädbom, 2015). Like Florin Sädbom (2015), the results in this study show that teachers' knowledge is very important for the development of pupils' subject-related knowledge and skills. Hence, a question that is necessary to ask in this context is: What are the basic subject-related knowledge and skills in the subject area of human rights?

The relation between human rights and democracy emerges as strong and clear in the teaching content. It is also in line with an international study that shows the differences in the teaching of rights, where the Scandinavian countries show a stronger focus on democracy in rights teaching than is the case in other countries (Brantefors and Quennerstedt, 2016). Democratic

values, such as tolerance and understanding for other people, together with every person's equal value, thus weigh heavily in the Swedish Constitution and school. This is also confirmed in the latest international study of 14-year-olds' knowledge, values and engagement in civics, democratic and social issues, ICCS (Skolverket, 2017), which shows that Swedish pupils are very knowledgeable in these areas. Also, Swedish pupils express a strong support for the principle of every person's equal value in the study. Democracy and human rights are closely linked, but when it comes to basic knowledge and skills in human rights they appear as both limited and vague in the teaching.

In the teaching, human rights are mainly directed towards other people than to the pupils themselves and often at the same time as it is pointed out that we in Sweden *have* rights. Similarly, as was previously ascertained in an interview study with schoolchildren in Sweden and Kenya (Thelander, 2009), human rights mostly seem to be directed towards "the other"; someone who is far removed from the Swedish pupils' daily lives. With a dominating 'us' and 'them' perspective, the risk is that the teaching of human rights will be reduced to those rights that determine the right to protection and support. In this way, the pupils' possibilities to grow as rights bearers are limited.

Finally, it can be ascertained that the planned teaching probably meets the central aim formulated by the teachers, namely to teach the pupils tolerance and understanding for other people, especially those who are in difficulty.

## 6. Synthesising discussion and conclusions

Ann Quennerstedt

The research questions that have been addressed in the current report are: What aims are strived for through the teaching in, through and about human rights? What is the content of the education, and which working methods are used? Previous research on rights education has highlighted the lack of knowledge about human rights education in formal schooling (Suarez, 2017; Parker, 2018). Basic research that maps and examines HRE is accordingly needed, and the findings in this research project offers knowledge about education in and for human rights by providing a close-up picture of rights teaching in four different age groups in early childhood education and school in Sweden.

The report consists of four ‘case study’ chapters. The results of these studies are compiled in this final chapter and, by means of a synthesising discussion, a comprehensive picture of the collated findings is presented. With the ambition of moving beyond the separate studies’ analyses of rights education in a specific age group and *identifying the main characteristics and central aspects*, the aims, content and working methods are explored across the age groups. Being more than the sum of its parts, the comprehensive picture thereby provides a fruitful basis for further studies of rights education for children and young people. We also hope that the report will contribute to the formation of a HRE curriculum as called for by Parker (2018), given that it traces teachers’ ideas about the aims and content in rights education over the various age groups and indicates what teachers view as basic, intermediate and advanced levels of HRE. The working methods used in the four age groups are also examined and related to the aims and content. The comprehensive picture drawn in the chapter is reflected against the three elements of HRE as expressed by the UN (2006) and against some of the central findings in previous research.

### HRE in four age groups – a synthesis

#### Aims for rights education

Educational aims are part of *Bildungsgehalt*, which is one of the dimensions of content as understood by Klafki (1963/1995). This is in turn intermeshed with the other content dimension, namely the concrete teaching content

(*Bildungsinhalt*). A teaching content can never be chosen without a perception of what is to be achieved and cannot be understood or valued if it is not reflect against the stated aims. In the interviews, the teachers involved in this project describe the aims for their work with children's human rights and the learning and development they hope to achieve. Although the teachers emphasise different aims, some common traits can be distinguished.

One aim that stands out in all age groups is the ethical aim to *promote children's/pupils' ethical development*. This involves gaining insights into ethical principles. In early childhood education, the ethical principles that the teachers say they want the children to understand are principles for social interaction in their own settings, i.e. the norms for how they behave towards each other in the preschool. The teachers of the different age groups emphasise that every person's equal value is the most central ethical principle of human rights. As equal value is the cornerstone of equal rights, they want their pupils to embrace this principle. Central ethical principles also need to be connected to people's differing life conditions. By understanding these different aspects the pupils are equipped to problematise the ethical principles against e.g. war, famine, or forced migration, or the absence of these.

Acquiring knowledge and developing understanding appears as a central aim of rights education in school. The teachers of all the studied age groups highlight *increased knowledge about rights* as significant. However, which rights knowledge should be developed about is not specified. Many of the teachers also consider it important that the pupils increase their knowledge about life in forced migration<sup>6</sup> and in the places in which life conditions are difficult. The motive for regarding this knowledge as vital in the work with children's human rights can be found in another knowledge aim, namely that the pupils should acquire knowledge about the connection between human rights and poor living conditions. However, during the interviews the teachers struggle to conceptualise or pinpoint what this connection consists of. The early childhood teachers scarcely discuss knowledge development as an aim in the work with children's human rights. The only rights relevant knowledge development they indicate is increased language skills so that the

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<sup>6</sup> The field studies in this project were undertaken when the number of refugees coming to Europe peaked and the attention in the media and Swedish society to the refugee situation was at its most intense. The fact that many teachers in the study chose to include migration and refugees in the work with children's human rights can be explained by its topicality during the field study period. Forced migration might not be addressed to the same extent if the study is repeated.

children can influence their own situations by making themselves understood.

The social purpose of *interacting with others in a respectful manner* appears in all age groups, with minor differences between early childhood education and school. The teachers emphasise the ability to interact, listen to and collaborate with others as essential social skills. The teachers in the school setting largely highlight respectful interaction in school and primarily refer to interaction in conversations. The early childhood teachers, on the other hand, refer to all kinds of interactions in the everyday activities. All the teachers highlight this aim, albeit with a vague link to rights. How rights are connected to respectful interaction is therefore not clarified.

The teachers of all age groups also identify emotional aims for rights education. In school, emotional aims are toned down and are not expressed as frequently as the ethical and cognitive aims. In contrast, in early childhood education they are perceived as highly central, particularly in the youngest group of children, where emotional aims are paramount. However, a more significant difference between early childhood education and school can be distinguished. The emotions that the early childhood teachers want the children to develop and experience are aimed at feeling safe, being seen and listened to and experiencing their own value. The teachers' overall emotional aim is thus the *building of a safe and secure self that recognises its own value*. The emotions that the teachers in school want their pupils to develop also build a self, but here it is a self that feels and takes responsibility for others. The emotions that are highlighted are empathy and compassion for vulnerable people who suffer injustices. With the aid of emotions, a willingness to take responsibility for others is to be developed and a commitment to human rights kindled.

The overall picture of the aims of rights education shows that there are some common features in all the observed groups, but that there are also differences between early childhood education and school. The teaching planned by the early childhood educators places rights in the children themselves and their own lives, and the aims of the rights education are clearly linked to this starting point. The teaching is intended to promote growth as a rights holder, ethically, emotionally and socially, thereby expanding the children's ability to interact with respect for both themselves and others in their lives. In early childhood education, children's human rights are not considered as a cognitive knowledge area and the opportunity to acquire

knowledge *about* rights is not part of the planning or provided in the teaching. Direct instructions on rights or explicit uses of rights terminology do not occur in early childhood education.

The school's rights education partly places rights in the pupils themselves by establishing that everyone has rights. However, in the teaching it is mainly vulnerable people in difficult circumstances, often far away from Sweden, who are given attention as rights holders. The direction of the prioritised ethical and cognitive aims to understand ethical principles and to know about rights and the connection between rights and living conditions is in line with this. The growing rights holder that is promoted by the teaching is someone who is able to identify rights violations, especially those on vulnerable people, and to take responsibility for the rights of others. The emotional aim also primarily serves this purpose. Overall, the pupils' own lives and their own rights receive very little attention in the teaching (with the exception of one 2-3 class where this is central). Own rights appear as though they are already catered for (because the pupils live in Sweden) and the teaching provides little support for the children to be able to claim rights for themselves or identify rights violations in their own lives. This view of the central aims of rights education corresponds with the results of several previous studies of teachers' perceptions of education for human rights, i.e. where the primary purpose is to develop responsibility for others and empathy for those in difficult circumstances (Waldron and Oberman, 2011 ; Wing Leung et al., 2011).

Compared with the UN definition of HRE, where the three elements of knowledge, values and action capacity together form a full HRE, for early childhood education it can be noted that the work with children's human rights aligns with the values and action capacity elements. Acquiring and developing knowledge about rights is not included in the rights work undertaken in the two studied early childhood groups. For most of the school classes the third element, action capacity, is not incorporated in the work. The teaching supports (a certain) development of knowledge and values, but hardly promotes the ability to act as a rights subject. This may be due to the fact that the rights holders focused in the teaching are not the pupils themselves, or even people close to them. The agency thus indicates efforts to help vulnerable people living in difficult conditions. There are exceptions to this, however. In the year 5 classes rights-oriented action in the pupils' own context is promoted.

The teachers' aims are in line with those expressed in the national curricula. Responsibility for ethical development and value formation in accordance with human rights is an assignment for both early childhood education and school and the knowledge development that is stated in the syllabuses largely matches the knowledge aims formulated by the teachers in this study. Curricular governing may also explain why there is little difference in the teachers' ethical, emotional and social aims for the different age groups, where, in principle, the same aims are repeated regardless of age. For these aims, it is therefore not possible to distinguish any different levels for the different ages, or what increasing depth or qualification might include. Only with regard to the cognitive aims are there indications of a joint idea of increased or deeper knowledge over the years. Differences in the curricula accordingly appear to affect rights-related value development and knowledge development, as demonstrated in the introductory chapter. The cross-curricular, non-age specified and general statements about value formation contrast with the subject specific and age divided knowledge content detailed in the subject syllabus.

### **Content of the rights education**

In order to achieve the aims envisioned for the rights education, the teachers have to choose a concrete educational content - what Klafki (1963/1995) refers to as *Bildungsinhalt*. The question is, what kind of educational content do the teachers choose to promote the children's/pupils' ethical development? In one of the early childhood groups, the activities consist of content that clarifies norms for how to behave towards peers in the preschool, through which the children are given the opportunity to understand how a person's characteristics and behaviour relate to companionship, play and socialising. For example, helpful actions are given a strong positive valuation. In the school classes, the teachers present human rights as positive and as an ethical compass that all people should use. An understanding of human rights as an ethical compass in your own life is to some extent developed in the two older school classes by connecting rights to bullying and democracy. However, the most common content for promoting an understanding of rights as an ethical compass is human rights crimes and violations of rights far away from the pupils' own daily lives, such as religious extremism and terror that eliminate people's rights, conflict and war that threaten the right to life, girls who are denied education, slave labour etc. Aided by human rights as an ethical compass, it is envisaged that the pupils will be able to identify these and similar situations as ethical transgressions.



Teaching that has an ethical content often begins with explicit rights terminology, although here it is notable that the concept of rights tends to be progressively toned down and, in some instances, is gradually replaced by the concept of democracy. The teacher then refers to democratic values as the basis for the ethical positions that are advocated, rather than human rights values.

An educational content that achieves the cognitive aim of increased language proficiency in early childhood education is difficult to distinguish. Some new concepts, such as 'evil' and 'good' are discussed, and the children practise expressing their opinions and feelings. In the school classes, factual knowledge about rights is a prominent knowledge content – all the school classes address what the rights are and where they are declared (i.e. in different UN documents). The UN organisation and its history and function are also in focus to a greater or lesser extent, with most qualification in year 8. Facts about migration and refugees are also a significant content in half of the school classes, for example conflict areas in different parts of the world, migration routes, refugee camps, the reception of refugees in Sweden and the right to asylum. The above-mentioned facts also provide a basis for developing a wider understanding and insight into the complexity of human rights and causation. The fact that rights are not respected even though they apply to everyone is discussed in all school classes: the two older age groups consider how violations of rights are related to living conditions and societal contexts, and in year 8 the pupils look at the link between the governance of society, societal structures and human rights. Concerning knowledge content, a qualifying trajectory can consequently be observed over the age groups, but mainly in terms of a broadening of facts. It is difficult to discern any real deepening of the knowledge content. For example, all age groups devote time to the naming of rights, i.e. pinpoint what they are called, by reading lists where rights are stated. None of the classes spend time investigating or elaborating what the rights actually mean.

In the early childhood education setting the educational content aims at the development of a safe and secure self that recognises its own value. The content is primarily found in everyday activities, such as playing, putting on or taking off outdoor garments, mealtimes, conflict resolution etc., where the early childhood teachers through their own actions and responses to the children's actions communicate feelings of security, care, being listened to and respected. However, planned activities that are part of the work with children's human rights include content that is aimed at supporting the children's emotional development, such as putting a child at the centre of the

group's respectful attention. In school, the emotional aim of developing an empathetic and responsive self towards others is supported by an educational content that exposes difficult living conditions and vulnerability and activates the pupils' own feelings. The value content that is clearly communicated through the teaching content is compassion and sympathy.

The social aim of interacting with others in a respectful manner forms an explicit teaching content in most of the age groups. Both in early childhood education and several school classes a great deal of time is spent on discussing what is included in respectful interaction: how to behave towards each other, how to play with each other, how to work together in a group, how to divide work, how to come to agreements, how to resolve conflicts etc. Significant content is also present in the group work itself, where the practice of the interaction carries educational content.

To summarise, the educational content in early childhood education and in school can largely be attributed to the teachers' stated aims. The chosen content largely facilitates the development and learning the teachers seek to achieve. However, at the same time, the extent and quality of the content does not always match the envisaged aims of the individual teachers. One example is class 2-3, where the ethical aims are equally important as cognitive knowledge development, but where only a limited ethical content can be observed in the teaching. It can also be noted that in all school classes limited time is allocated to content that deepens knowledge about rights. For example, teaching that explains rights and their meaning hardly occurs at all. The teachers pass quickly through such content in all classes. It might be the case that the teachers in the early school years think this is a matter for later years, whereas the teachers in the later years assume that pupils have already developed this knowledge. Here it is apparent that a joint idea among teachers (a curriculum, Parker 2018) about *when* to learn *what* would support the teaching. As the pupils lack basic knowledge about rights, the potential of observed teaching content, such as the prioritisation exercises or where two clashing rights are discussed, is not reached. If the pupils do not really know what the rights mean, it will be difficult for them to prioritise between rights or discuss rights that collide.

Something that has been observed in previous research (Cassidy et al., 2013; Wing Leung et al., 2011), and which is also evident in this project, is the importance of the educational material used by the teacher. The teaching content – facts, understanding and values – is largely carried by the material that the teacher chooses: films, UN documents, websites and exercises. The materials that the teachers in this study select are often relevant and support

the intended rights learning, although this is not always the case. Sometimes the material only marginally contributes to achieving the aims. Above all, material that adds depth to the teaching is lacking. In two of the classes (one year 2-3 class and one year 8 class), material from UNICEF and Amnesty is used, which appears to be rather too difficult for the pupils to work with. The material used in class 2-3 is intended for classes 3-6, and that used in class 8 (pupils aged 14-15 years) is meant for use in the upper secondary school (16-17 years). The significance of the teaching material for what is actually taught cannot be underestimated. In order for the content to support the aims, the material should address the correct matter and be at a level that is appropriate for the age group.

In general, the teaching content that has been observed can thus be said to support the stated aims. However, it is clear from the study that there is a need to strengthen and develop the teaching content. Educational content that supports language development could be made more explicit in early childhood education, e.g. what specific language capacity that should be prioritised from a rights perspective. In order to provide pupils with sufficient basic knowledge about rights, factual content and content that broadens understanding need to be expanded and clarified. Ways that deepen and qualify rights learning also need to be developed. This in turn puts the spotlight on teaching materials – the choice of which require extensive knowledge on the part of the teachers.

### **Working methods in rights education**

We have also investigated the working methods in children's human rights education. A key finding is that interactive working methods dominate in all age groups. Very little individual work has been observed and only occurs in year 8. In the school classes two interactive working methods are used most: teacher-led whole-class conversations and group work. Although the teacher-led class conversations to some extent are intended to transmit facts, the main function is to broaden understanding through joint consideration and discussion. Thus, the educational value primarily resides in the interchange between the pupils and their teacher, with input from both parties. An extensive part of the work with children's human rights in school is undertaken by means of pair or group work. The pairs or groups are given a task by the teacher, which they then carry out independently. Discussion and problem-solving are common features of the tasks and include prioritising rights, investigating the meaning of something, or seeking

facts for later presentation to the class. In early childhood education, interactive working methods dominate, with play and physical action as central elements. In school, the interaction is primarily verbal. The interactive methods used by the early childhood teachers to teach about rights are also more spontaneous than in school. Here the teachers seize the rights content in the things that happen on the spot. More prepared interactive activities also occur, where the children tell, show and listen.

The transmission of facts, understanding and values is also a relatively common working method in the school classes. However, more time is spent on interactive work than transmission. It is striking that transmission is mainly done through films downloaded from the internet. The transmission of facts or other content by teachers giving lecture-like talks is not very common, and when it does occur is brief. Therefore, in the work with children's human rights, the teachers do not stand out as vessels of knowledge, but instead frame the films by introducing and leading a discussion after the film has been shown.

There are elements of explorative work in all age groups. In early childhood education, the explorations are of a test-and-see nature, where different characteristics and traits and what they might mean are tested and verbalised by the children. In school, the pupils explore demarcated areas of rights, or a particular rights issue. These explorations often include searching for information about the chosen topic in groups, or individually as in class 8, noting the findings and then presenting them to the class. In the explorative work observed in school, a qualification trajectory can be distinguished in terms of the requirements of the work. In classes 2 and 5, the requested explorations are elementary in nature and no in-depth work is expected or required. A difference between class 2 and 5 is that the older pupils have to search for information themselves on the internet, while in class 2 the pupils are provided with material by the teacher. In class 8, the questions to be explored are rather more complex and it is only here that the pupils are required to carry out individual explorative work and report in writing. However, this seems more related to the assessment of pupils' performances than viewing individual written work as a method that promotes rights learning.

Aesthetic methods in the work with children's human rights are used in early childhood education and in the two class 5 groups. Artistic expression is generously included in the work by means of drawing and film-making, but also musical and bodily means of expression are employed, for example in the form of role play.

Taken together, the teachers seem to be convinced that interactive work is important when working with children's human rights. Whole class and group conversations and discussions, group exercises and so on are the most popular ways of working. Also, when the pupils in school present their final pieces of work, it is done in groups and is mainly oral (with class 8 pupils being required to submit written accounts), whereas in the preschool this is done by visual exhibitions on the wall. Individual work is not employed at all with the younger age groups. Group work does have the potential to deepen knowledge and understanding by means of discussions and the exchange of ideas and opinions. But other aspects of group work should be considered. In all school classes it is noted that a substantial part of a group's working time is spent on solving process-related issues, such as getting started, agreeing, apportioning work and so on. In some cases the groups hardly spend any time at all on the rights issue that is in focus in the lesson. The time that is spent on process issues promotes the achievement of the social aim that is intended for the rights theme, but may contribute very little to the other aims. Here, the question can be raised as to whether interactive and group based working methods need to be complemented with other ways of working in order to reach the intended aims in the work with children's human rights.

The knowledge material that pupils have at their disposal for group work is, above all, what they learn in the films they watch. Most of the groups use a very limited textual material that investigates and develops the rights content – the pupils in classes 2-3 and 8 hardly read anything about rights while those in class 5 read some online text material. Film is a powerful medium that can make use of communicational dimensions that are not achievable in teacher talk or texts. In particular, emotions that mediate central educational content can be created. But the films' rights content is transient compared with text; when the movie is over it's difficult to backtrack for repetition purposes. An interesting question to consider further is why so little text is used in the teaching and why films are instead chosen as the main source of facts and values. Is this because suitable texts are unavailable? Or is it more a matter of teachers' perceptions that the film medium is preferable to texts when dealing with children's human rights? Or does the use of film represent a general shift of emphasis in school that applies to all educational areas – a movement from text to images?

Interactive teaching in the form of teacher-led class discussions is an important element in the teaching of children's human rights. Ethical growth

requires conversation and joint reflection. Reading your way to ethical development is hardly possible. However, some observations of teacher-led class discussions in the school classes need to be highlighted. The first is that the teachers' responses to pupils' comments and associations in discussions can lead the conversation away from the topic of rights. This is evident in the examples used in the various chapters in this report. The second observation is that a distinct rights terminology tends to fade away in the classroom conversations, in that the teacher frequently begins with rights vocabulary, but then often drops the terms and vocabulary as the lessons progress. It is also common for the concept of democracy to be introduced and then become the main topic of discussion. In order for the important interactive class conversations to reach their potential for deepening knowledge and understanding of human rights, the teacher needs to monitor the development of the discussion and the vocabulary that is used.

## **Conclusions**

The close-up studies of children's human rights education in different age groups that have been undertaken in the current project have provided important insights into how such education is carried out in practice. Similarities and common features, as well as differences between the teaching and work in the different groups have been identified. Aims, content and working methods that are in line with the UN's recommendations for HRE and the Swedish national curricula have been discerned, as have the aspects of and in the teaching that appear to be problematic and in need of further consideration and development. In this final discussion, some conclusions are drawn and are briefly discussed in relation to the potential for pupils' growth as rights holders.

The results show some disparities between the observed rights teaching in early childhood education and school. The differences in aims of the education have been more thoroughly examined earlier in this chapter and can be summarised as follows. In early childhood education, the dominant aims are ethical, social and emotional, whereas the dominant aims in school are ethical and cognitive. That rights in the preschool context are placed in the children themselves and their own contexts, in comparison with school, which places rights in people living far away, augments the differences in the aims. The basic perception of rights education that is constituted in the preschool and school has a decisive effect on the actual teaching content. The content that is intended to support the children's and pupils' ethical development and growth has differing directions: insights into principles for

being together in early childhood education and into principles for good living conditions in the world.

The question is, how should this difference be regarded? Is it intelligible steps on a continuum in rights education, i.e. that growth as a rights holder starts in your own context and continues by gazing out towards the world? Or is it a matter of different educational projects, separating aspects of rights holding, when they really should run parallel over the ages? Or might the answer be that an overlap between the two is the way forward if we are to support the best possible growth of children as rights holders? It seems reasonable for rights education for very young children to focus on the individual and the close and familiar surroundings and that educating older children and young people should include human rights violations in different parts of the world. It also seems reasonable that rights education for preschool children should include less knowledge *about* rights than that for school children. The problem is that there does not seem to be an overlap – a continuum of increasing knowledge content and qualification of ethical insight and application of rights in your own context could not be identified in this project. In my opinion, early childhood education may include some knowledge development about rights, e.g. more explicit knowledge about a few rights principles, such as every person's equal value and the right to not be subjected to violence. Older preschool children would then commence their growth as knowledgeable rights holders. I also think that schools need to pay more attention to the pupils as holders and practitioners of rights in their own settings. It seems important to offer the pupils the possibility to grow in ethical insight and ability by placing and testing rights principles in their own life situations.

With regard to the knowledge content (knowledge about children's/human rights) observed in the six school classes, the teachers generally choose sound content with substantial breadth. To some extent, the chosen content is more ambitious than the curricula require. It is also possible to distinguish a certain qualification across the ages: the oldest pupils are offered a more complex content and their teachers request more from them in their work with it. However, throughout this report a lack of depth and the absence of any thorough treatment of the knowledge content have been highlighted as areas in need of consideration and development. The question has been raised as to whether the teachers assume that the basic examination of human rights as a phenomenon and what the different rights actually mean is conducted by someone else in a different age group than the one they teach. As the data in this project only covers one single teaching period in each

group, the question has to remain tentative. It is nevertheless a matter that needs to be pursued further.

The lack of qualification of the development of the ethical aims that has been identified is in dire need of further exploration. The teaching invoked by the ethical aims for human rights education lies within what in Sweden is known as ‘values education’, i.e. the task that is assigned to early childhood education and school to support children and pupils in embracing and acknowledging society’s fundamental values. The teachers in the project emphasise ethical aims and are highly aware that education about rights is essential for the establishment of values. Despite this, the elements in the teaching that support ethical development are vague and very little progression with age can be detected. This could be connected to the absence of age-based curriculum support for values education and the absence of a teaching tradition for rights education in the teaching profession as a whole.

An observation in all studied groups is the significance of teachers having sufficient knowledge about children’s human rights. This has also been repeatedly highlighted in previous research. Several of the teachers included in the project expressed that they had to spend a lot of time researching the topic in order to develop their own knowledge before planning the work. The importance of good knowledge has been discussed in relation to the selection of teaching material and the teacher’s ability to stay with the rights topic in interactive class discussions. This implies more responsibility being placed on teacher education and continued professional development to equip future and active teachers with the rights knowledge they need to undertake children’s human rights education.

The research conducted within project *Education as a greenhouse for children’s and young people’s human rights* has contributed detailed knowledge about children’s rights education in Sweden. In this report, the focus has been on the planned teaching of children’s human rights, and the findings provide insights on which continued activities can build. The Swedish case should also be of interest internationally, especially as Sweden has responded to the UN’s call for HRE by contributing fairly far-reaching specifications in the national curricula for human rights education. Sweden is also highly affected by today’s changing political landscape, with an increase in anti-democratic and ethno-nationalist forces voicing opinions that go against the human rights principles of equal value and freedom for all. Teachers in Sweden accordingly work in a tradition of democracy and rights and live in a time when the foundations of society are threatened. What the teachers across the ages in the formal school system choose to teach when



asked to undertake work with children's human rights should therefore be of interest to an international audience. The project team's hope is that this report, and other project publications, will contribute to further research and developmental work in early childhood education and school.

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