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Reflections on implementing Child Rights Convention in Education in a global perspective 2003-2011

 Per Wickenberg, Agneta W. Flinck, Ulf Leo, Bodil Rasmusson and Bereket Yebio

ABSTRACT

The International Training Programmes run by Lund University Sweden and sponsored by SIDA - "Child Rights, Classroom and School Management since the last eight years have been put for an evaluation. Through the training programme, the mentors have together gained a lot of experience from the local work done in projects and schools in 28 countries all over the world. Mentors have gathered a great amount of important empirical materials of what has been tested, elaborated and applied during 8 years in those 28 participating countries by their 150 participating teams. The present evaluation reveals that the change agents (Participants) in different countries have undertaken various activities on Child Rights and School Management. Mentors also reflect on the limitations that they observed during the implementation of the programme.

Introduction

In this article we as mentors and teachers in the Advanced International Training Programme "Child Rights, Classroom and School Management" run by Lund University, Sweden, and sponsored by Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) are doing the following interpretations and reflections from our experiences and academic disciplinary perspectives. The overarching idea here is, in our own right, to summarize and reflect on reported results and experiences from the programme.

We combine the reflections using material and texts from the different country teams' (three participants per country are always appointed) Final Project Reports written when completed the first year of the training programme. But also using notes and reflections from our own Mentor Reports, written over the years when visiting the different project sites and participating teams in their home countries and own educational contexts. During these 8 years of work in the CRC Programme with 15 batches in training (batch

number 14 started in May and number 15 will start in September 2011), the mentors have made more than 100 field visits in developing countries all over the world and 13 follow-up seminars in as many countries (but two times in Tanzania) including school visits – that makes a lot of experiences. Some field visits were added during summer 2011. At this stage of the training programme (September, 2011) the mentors thus have together gained a lot of experiences of the local work done in projects and schools all over the world. Due to these fact – and the progression of this international training programme, ITP, still with another years and batches to follow – it has now reached a critical mass of participants in many countries. The mentors have met the participants more than 3 times - in some cases 6 or 7 times – during this training programme and in most countries now there are strong national or local CRC Networks continuing their work on CRC in education.

This is not always a complete picture on what has happened in relation to implementation of

The Mentors writing this article are Per Wickenberg, Agneta W. Flinck, Ulf Leo, Bodil Rasmusson, and Bereket Yebio (Bereket Yebio batch 1-11) at Lund University, and Lena Andersson (batch 12 and onwards). The writings are a common work compiled of individual reflections drawn from a common, same theoretical basis described in the Introduction above. For further reading about the CRC training programme - see: <http://www.education.lu.se/o.o.i.s/2686>

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CRC in the countries respectively. The reflections sometimes cover the country as a whole and sometimes only a small part of a big country depending on the size of the country and of how many teams that have taken part in the programme. Nevertheless the mentors have gathered a great amount of important empirical material of what has been tested, elaborated, applied and done during 8 years in those 28 participating countries and their – now - 150 participating teams and more than 400 participants - or Change Agents.

Points of departure

In the reflections three levels of education in society – connecting to the recruiting principles for the three participants forming the country teams in this ITP – has been used as one of the starting points: the local school and community level; the provincial/regional level; and the national/state level in society.

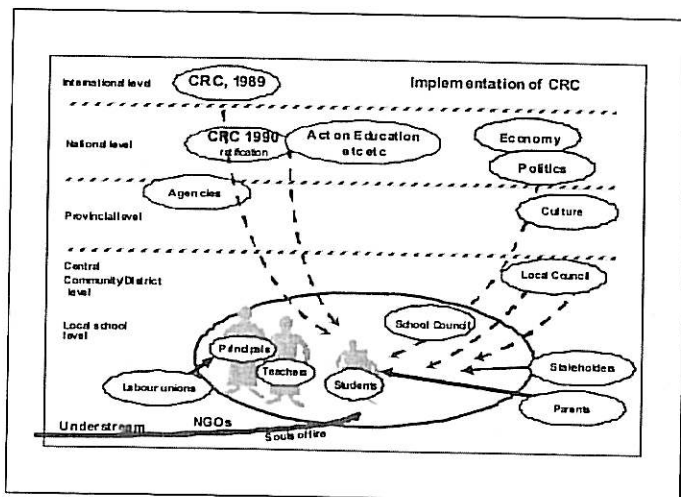


Figure 1. Implementation of CRC at three levels: National/State; Provincial/Regional and Local School level (elaborated after Wickenberg, 1999/2004).

The figure above is a help and support in the understanding of the processes of the implementation of CRC in education on different societal-administrative levels and contexts in different countries in this ITP. When starting to

implement some new ideas and policy documents on the very local level of society, you will soon find out that you already have existing social and professional norms and dedicated people (souls of fire) and committed organizations (e.g. NGO:s) working in the issue at stake (forming the local Under-stream). The question is what is happening and has happened on each level regarding CRC in the education sector when the projects in this ITP have continued over the first year of the project in the training programme and then onwards. As mentioned before changing norms (legal, professional and social norms) can be seen as a key feature of capacity building and the empowerment of excluded groups, as they are an important steering mechanism towards values, behaviors, attitudes and action patterns in the society. In this article the mentors are, in the reflections on the countries and projects, using the well-known 3-P: s - Participation, Provision and Protection - as another point of departure and base of organizing the material from the participating countries. These three categories of P: s are usually referred to Eugene Verhellen. The mentors are screening and describing the countries with the CRC-3P: s-glasses and giving a lot of concrete examples from different countries in the ITP on Child Rights Implementation in Schools and Education systems.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this joint and compiled article, based on experiences it is ending up trying to map all our conclusions and findings, based on the ideas in: "Institutionalizing Child Rights: Contending Cultural Perspectives" written by Göran Hydén, University of Florida (2009). When elaborating these steps Hydén writes: "Using the "talk-walk lingo" of international development workers, the process can be summarized in the following way":

These words or concepts could be very different from country to country. The organisational principles of a state or a country, experienced, realised and learned so far, is very contextual. The same goes for Provincial and District levels in different countries.

Do the Talk	Walk the Talk	Do the Walk	Walk the Walk	Secure the Path
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Figure 2. One step does not make a path. From human rights consciousness to sustainable implementation.

Under the five headlines or steps (A-E) the following key words are elaborated by Hydén:

A) Do the Talk - Raising consciousness:

Learn the text, Reflect on it, Begin sharing your ideas...

B) Walk the Talk – Truthful persuasion:

Organize your ideas, Develop confidence in your persuasive ability, Make others listen and respond to your ideas...

C) Do the Walk – Beginning implementation:

Seek out people whom you can work with,
Make them feel part of your network, Test the limits of change...

D) Walk the Walk – Working Implementation:

Get other groups to emulate your effort,
Lobby authorities for change, Enjoy seeing others empowered...

E) Securing the Path - Sustainable implementation:

Organizing Change Agents in..., Continuous training/curriculum, Supporting symbols to tell the local society...

The keywords and ideas above and in the keynote text have been a screening and analytical device – as well as the excellent work done by the teams in the participating countries – in the mentors' writings on the interpretations and reflections of the countries' on their progress in implementing CRC in Education and Schools at different levels of education in society. As a summary the mentors end up trying to use the model above just to illustrate, through some examples, where we can find some of the

participating countries in relation to the 5 steps of progress in work.

South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Colombia, Indonesia, India, Ethiopia, Egypt, Mozambique, and Sri Lanka – so far - have participants working at national/state level with assignment and opportunities to implement CRC in existing structures at national and provincial level. A variety of platforms are used for training of a lot of different target groups. Besides this some teams also have been developing methods on children's participation on local schools. In relation to Hydén's model one can conclude that the participants and teams in the countries so far are roughly between Step B (Walk the Talk) and Step C (Do the Walk).

Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Indonesia and India/Kerala may be example of participating countries which have reached between Step D and E at all three levels, particularly in the area of Participation. Colombia and Sri Lanka are at about Step B at the provincial/city level. On different country levels we have seen many good examples of teacher training and teacher education as an important arena for implementation and application of CRC – examples in China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Colombia, Uganda, India/Kerala, and Vietnam. These are examples on how this model could be used as an instrument for continuous monitoring on where the change process in any country is heading. Then there is the promising and new phase with networking by and between the participants – Change Agents - in many of the countries is in process of establishing on national or sub national/sub state level. Uganda is one example where the network is its own organization with its own programme. Establishing networks is one of the most important steps and a precondition for the last step: Securing the Path – Sustainable implementation.

Summing up

In the reflections on the examples from the different countries' and teams' project for change work, the following have been noted and experienced: Firstly, that the dissemination of CRC as happened horizontally on the local level i.e. outward from the pilot project, partly to other schools and partly to the local community as such: parents, families, politicians, organisations and the media (see figure 3 below). This dissemination is called the horizontal primary dissemination. Here, the local newspapers and television play an important role for the dissemination of results and the ideas behind CRC in schools and education.

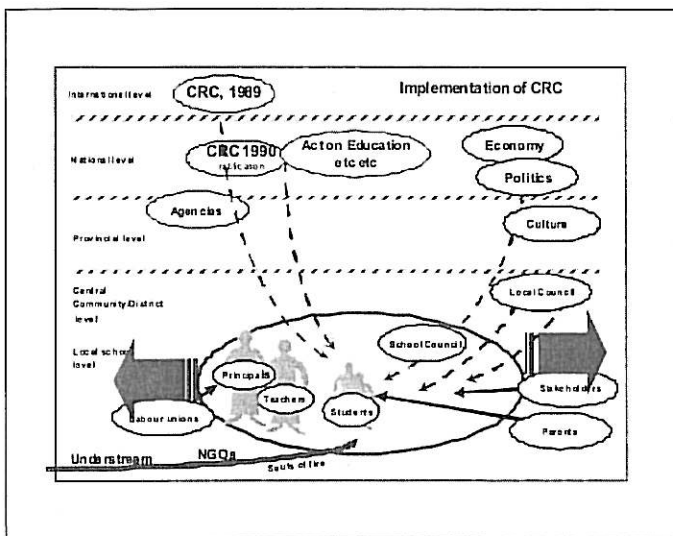


Figure 3. Horizontal primary dissemination on the very local level.

Secondly, there is a vertical primary dissemination, i. e. a movement upwards as an example of "bottom-up" dissemination to a district or provincial level (see figure 4 below). On this level, educational administrators (officers) and politicians have been reached by or have adopted the fundamental ideas and the principles behind or in CRC and have realized the need - or felt the social and/or moral pressure - of a wider implementation, in concrete forms within the educational system on their organisational (district/provincial) level. Also in this process of change - or above all here - have media activities and coverage played incredibly important role in

the dissemination of the ideas and the successful results.

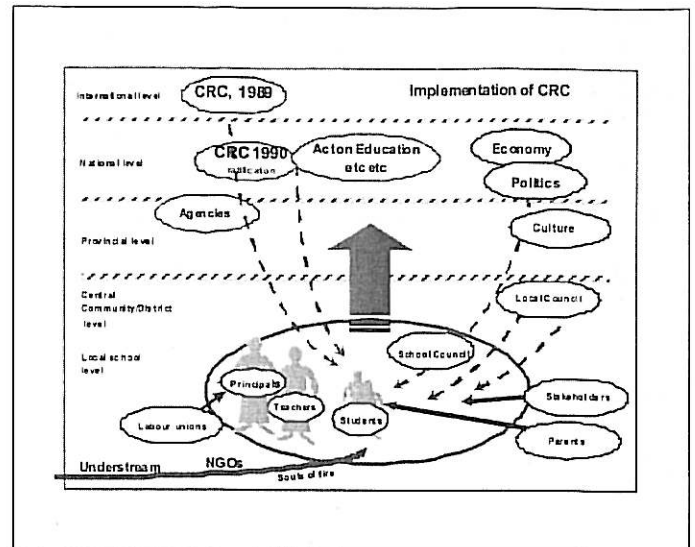


Figure 4. Vertical primary dissemination to the provincial (district) level from the local level.

Thirdly, it is noted several examples on extending experiences and ideas within and/or between districts or provinces. This has in turn led to changes of basic or further training of teachers. Furthermore, one has on this level created new textbooks and teacher training, which in turn has lead to a new dissemination of CRC in schools in new districts or provinces (see figure 5 below). This dissemination is called a horizontal secondary dissemination.

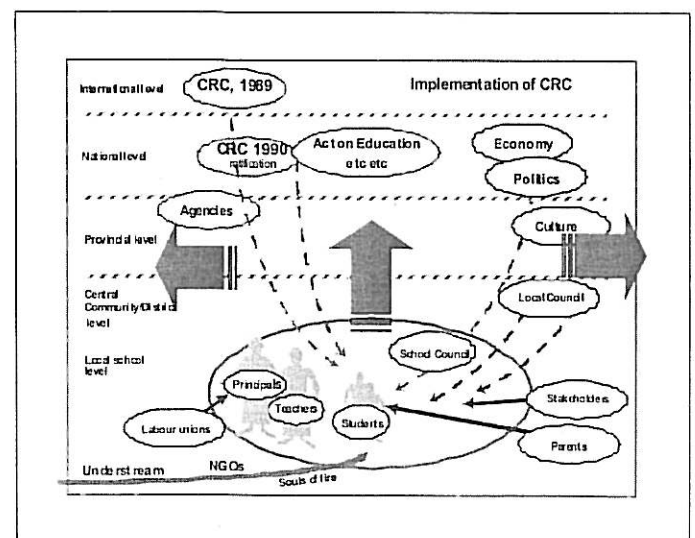


Figure 5. Horizontal secondary dissemination on the provincial (district) level.

Fourthly, it is experienced a new qualitative phase of dissemination from the provincial - or the district level to the national or the State level (see figure 6 below): The vertical secondary dissemination. It is mainly about central policy changes and amendments to law or national curricula and course plans, national examination policies (these phenomena vary very often between the participating countries).

In this context, the national media - newspapers and television - also play an important role, through lifting up the questions on the political and ideological agenda. Gradually, dissemination via the Internet will play a bigger role in this dissemination work.

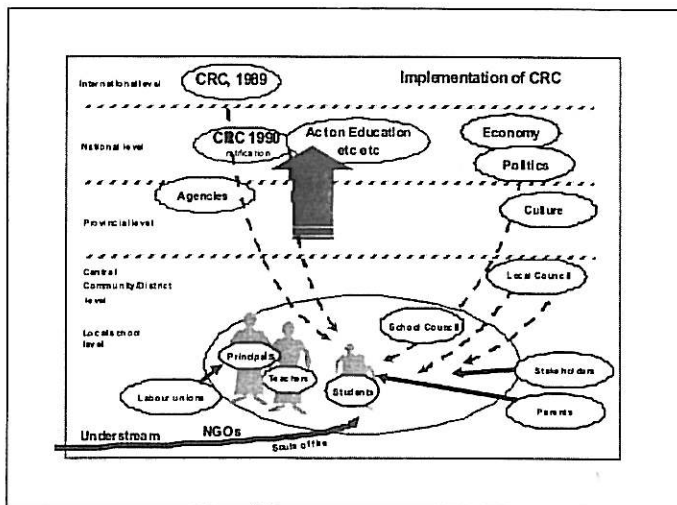


Figure 6. Vertical secondary dissemination to the state or national level.

Finally, although hardly seen clear examples on so far, the question is whether the results or the ideas are disseminated between countries (but in Eastern Africa and Eastern Asia there are processes in that direction). In a way, already there are many examples on how the exchange of experiences has happened among Change Agents and country teams in Lund/Sweden and the countries where progress workshops have been held.

This in itself is, of course, dissemination among nations on individual and international level. It

should be emphasized here that there is no direct causality between these five different stages or dissemination descriptions above. These can happen in different stages, in different consequences and in different kinds of interaction between actors and levels depending on context and background in respective country, level and people involved.

It is also realized that there are connections to empowerment and Legal Empowerment of the Poor, LEP. One social group which is particularly excluded both with regard to law as well as in a social setting, and which provides an especially important perspective on LEP and capacity development, is children. They are dependent on the decisions their parents make for them in their private lives and they often have no separate standing in international or national legal systems. Empowering children will lead to their improved living situation today as well as for the next generation to come, as the empowerment of children is likely to assist in the change of traditional structures and norms (bottom-up approach).

However, before the empowerment is able to influence development, it needs to exist. The implementation of CRC for this empowerment could follow the ways as described above and that could be summed up in the last and finalizing/concluding figure. Norms they are a 'chargin' and so are policies and laws. Laws and policies also change social norms and vice versa.

Thus it could be seen in this material that there is ongoing interplay between legal norms and social norms regarding CRC.

Verhellen, E. (2000) Convention of the Rights of the Child: background, motivation, strategies, main themes. Bruxelles: Garant. Göran Hydén in Taking Child Rights Seriously. Reflections on five years of an International Training Programme (2009), p.129-150. This is one of the key-notes at the Impact and Dissemination Seminar in Bangkok, January 2009.

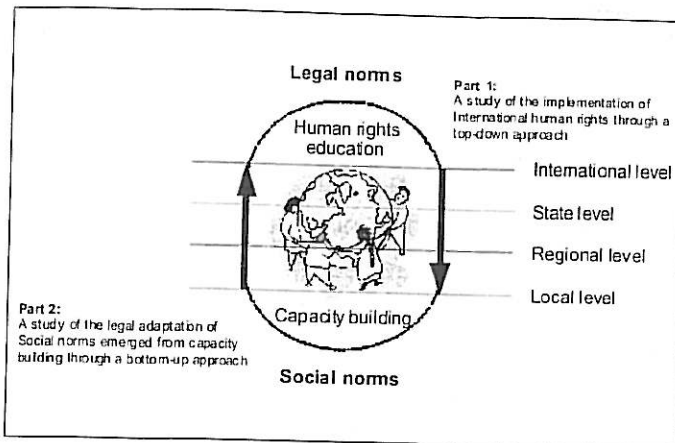


Figure 7. Cyclic dissemination between the local and the state or national level - and vice versa.

Lessons learned by the mentors

Here we are focusing potential and positive examples but we also have experiences of difficulties, hindrances and less successful projects.

1. We have seen that a crucial factor to bring about change is to have people – change agents - who are personally and professionally committed. Such people can be role models and inspire others to join. They do not depend on project money to take initiative and know that much can be done with limited resources.
2. Involving all stakeholders is necessary to bring about sustainable change.
3. Networking among change agents at national/state level as well as networking among change agents and organizations (e.g. NGOs) working in the CRC/HR areas is essential for effective use of manpower and to avoid overlapping and gaps.
4. It is important to motivate and empower people locally to understand their responsibilities and take their own initiatives which are necessary for the sustainability of the change process.
5. The learning process in the training programme is divided in several steps and phases which make real changes possible to be implemented and applied over time.
6. A wide range of content and approaches is offered to the change agents during the programme, which are useful for the implementation and realization of needed and important change processes.
7. To share experiences and learn together in a group of professionals from different parts of the world is both challenging and rewarding. Give and Gain!
8. It has become clear that CRC can be used as a tool for change of norms and attitudes to children and their rights at different levels in society which in turn leads to changed behaviour.
9. Although we have seen examples of changes that have been possible, in spite of poverty, poor infrastructure and structural constraints, the professional competence and support of the organization for educational delivery is of essential importance for the implementation of learning and change process.
10. When understanding your situation, professionally as well as organisationally/structurally, you are in a better position to implement sustainable change processes.

"We first came to Sweden as individuals and soon we formed national teams and saw the global team grow/emerge. Then we met as a global team of thirty to Give and Gain in a new

Furthermore one can see the clear links from this International Training Programme (ITP) on Implementation of Child Rights in Education, funded by Sida, to the work and processes going on in UN called "Making the Law Work for Everyone". Report of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor, UN/UNDP, New York: 2008. Children are often foreseen as a heavily vulnerable group in society but this ITP is to be seen as a strong input in this area of development interventions. After Bob Dylan (1964): The Times They Are a Changin' - from the album with the same name, January 1964.

country. And now we see the impact of our work and realise what we are able to do in the future as Change Agents for Children's Rights." ◊

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