

Chapter 1

Introducing Human Rights for Young Children



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Abstract Thirty years ago, world leaders made a historic commitment to the world’s children by adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC marks a new way of looking upon children: children are not just objects who belong to their parents and for whom decisions are made. Children are not just training to become adults, they are human beings, citizens and, individuals with their own rights. The aim of this book is to use the 30th anniversary of the UNCRC as a reason to analyse “What do the children’s rights mean today?”. How are the goals of provision, protection and participation implemented? Are children’s voices heard, and do children now participate in their societies as actors and agents for change?

A wider purpose of this book is to elevate the obvious links between the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the UNCRC. Almost all of today’s children will be adults by 2030, or very soon after. As a theoretical framework for performing this analysis, Davis’ theory about five dimensions of rights for early childhood education is used.

The authors in this book come from 14 countries and all regions of the world. They write about their own country through a lens of their own professional field and expertise, which for most of them is within Early Childhood Education (ECE). Thus, the contributions may serve as contemporary, complementary, and rich examples of early childhood. By comparing the lived rights of the child in various contexts, we want this book to be a source of knowledge and an inspiration to many child rights activists, students, and professionals.

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This book presents the UNCRC from three different perspectives, policy, children's perspectives, and education, which at the same time make up three parts in the book. In this introduction, we introduce the UNCRC and present the different chapters.

Introduction

Thirty years ago, world leaders made a historic commitment to the world's children by adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereafter UNCRC) – an international agreement on childhood' (UNICEF 2019). This convention is a treaty, an international legal framework, between the UN member states. The UNCRC marks a new way of looking upon children: Children are not just objects who belong to their parents and for whom decisions are made. Children are not just training to become adults, they are human beings, citizens and individuals with their own rights. The Convention has become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, and today 196 member states have ratified the UNCRC. Following the UNCRC, childhood is separate from adulthood, and lasts until 18; it is a special, protected time, in which children must be allowed to grow, learn, play, develop and flourish with dignity.

The aim of this book is to use the 30th anniversary of the UNCRC as a reason to analyse "What do the children's rights mean today?". Freeman (2011, p. 21) shows that the language of rights 'makes visible what has too long been suppressed'. We are asking what the rights of the child make visible today and what is important today, in the modern world, in some of the countries that have ratified the UNCRC. The UNCRC has helped transform children's lives and great progress has been made over these 30 years. It has inspired governments to change laws and policies and make investments, thus *promoting* children's wellbeing. Precautions have been taken in order to *protect* children from violence and exploitation and State parties are *providing* more education and health care and of higher quality. Additionally, one major contribution is that the UNCRC enables more children to have their voices heard and to participate in their societies as actors and agents for change. State parties must, to the maximum extent possible, do all they can to ensure children's survival and development (Article 6), and to protect them from all forms of exploitation and violence.

However, as will be shown by the authors of this book, there are also many issues left to be resolved, to reach out to all children in their best interests (Engdahl 2019). The UNCRC is still not widely known, not by all children and not by professional working with children, a fact that this book may help to change (UNICEF 2019). Additionally, as we write this book, the coronavirus COVID-19 has spread around the world and caused the largest pandemic in our times. Most countries have responded with harsh measures, as e.g. lockdowns of many important sectors of society, including education. In most countries, also preschools are closed, and young children are too often spending their time in-doors, and in isolation. This rapid development of a pandemic is mentioned here and reflected upon in the

concluding chapter. However, the invited authors had already written their contributions in February, when WHO declared the Corona a pandemic.

We live in times of great global changes, where e.g. climate and environmental change, pandemics, prolonged conflict, and mass migration change and challenge the existing childhoods (IPCC 2019). Today's children face new threats to their rights, but they also have new opportunities to realize their rights. Thus, a wider purpose of this book is to elevate the obvious links between the Global Goals (UN 2015) and the UNCRC. All the Global Goals are relevant for children, not only those which specifically refer to children. Almost all of today's children will be adults by 2030, or very soon after. Children have the right to directly engage in achieving the Global Goals. Thus, the distinction between child- and adult-specific approaches is very fluid. The intention is to bring out comprehensive connections beyond the most obvious links between the UNCRC and the Global goals (UNICEF 2016). The relationship between the two international treaties and their potential for mutual advocacy and implementation will be elaborated on in the concluding part of this book. As a theoretical framework for performing this analysis, we will introduce Davis' five dimensions of rights for early childhood education in the light of the challenges of sustainability (Davis 2014).

The authors in this book come from various countries and regions of the world, albeit of course they do not represent the whole world. They were asked to write about their own country through a lens of their own professional field and expertise, which for most of them is within Early Childhood Education (ECE). Thus, the contributions may serve as contemporary, complementary and rich examples of early childhood. Following Neuman (2011), we argue that a comparative orientation can improve conceptualisation through the detection of hidden biases, assumptions and values underpinning local/national conceptualisations and performances of certain phenomena. The legal phenomenon, the UNCRC, is ratified by 196 nations, resulting in multiple and diverse socio-cultural, institutional and interpersonal contexts for its implementation. By comparing the lived rights of the child in various contexts, we want this book to be a source of knowledge and an inspiration to many child rights activists, students and professionals.

This book presents the UNCRC from three different perspectives, policy, child perspective and education, which at the same time make up three parts in the book. Although the contributions sometimes touch on more than one of these perspectives, we have assigned the chapters to the most relevant part of the book. In this way, comparisons may be supported. Together we may also detect and highlight obstacles, sometimes hidden within discriminating assumptions. Adopting a critical approach, we may reveal issues that unconsciously are blocking real implementation of the UNCRC, of special interest is our commitment to unpack different understandings of children's right to participation. Liebel's (2012) perspective on the rights of the child strives at getting close to how the children themselves perceive the rights. However, we balance this approach by pointing at the adult responsibility of organizing the societal institutions with the perspective of the child in mind. Early Childhood Education (ECE) settings could thus be seen as societal institutions that on a daily basis balance the adult perspective of organizing a service with the children's direct presence and right to participation, placing the children's best interests at the core.

A Treaty About Human Rights

Article 1 in the *Universal Declaration of Human Right* states that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” (UN 1948).

The UNCRC is a treaty about human rights, directed towards children. Human rights treaties state that everyone, everywhere has the same rights as a result of our common humanity. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. Human rights belong to each and every one of us equally. Human rights are standards that recognize and protect the dignity of all human beings. These standards honour the following principles:

- **Universality and inalienability:** All people everywhere in the world are entitled to them
- **Indivisibility:** Whether civil, political, economic, social or cultural in nature, they all have equal status as rights. There is no such thing as a ‘small’ right. There is no hierarchy of human rights.
- **Inter-dependence and inter-relatedness:** The realization of one right often depends, wholly or in part, upon the realization of others. For instance, the realization of the right to health may depend on the realization of the right to education or of the right to information.
- **Equality and non-discrimination:** All human beings are entitled to their human rights without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, ethnicity, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, disability, property, birth or other status as explained by the human rights treaty bodies.
- **Participation and inclusion:** Every person and all peoples are entitled to active, free and meaningful participation in, contribution to, and enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural development, through which human rights and fundamental freedoms can be realized.

Short History About Children’s Rights

During the twentieth century, there were many initiatives to promote children’s wellbeing, and many philanthropists working for children and for a common understanding of children’s rights. One of them was Eglantyne Jebb, who during the First World War founded of the Save the Children Fund. In 1924, the League of Nations (The predecessor to United Nations) adopted the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child, drafted by Jebb. The rights included in this declaration were for all people to owe children the right to: means for their development; special help in times of need; priority for relief; economic freedom, protection from exploitation; and an upbringing that instils social consciousness and duty.

During the first part of the twentieth century, Janusz Korczak, a Polish-Jewish doctor, educator and child rights protagonist, wrote many books about children’s

rights, and especially about children's rights to full participation in their lives. His books are still of outstanding value, especially *How to Love a Child* (1919) and *The Child's Right to Respect* (1929). Korczak lived according to his views, and during the Second World War, he founded homes for children, where he practiced children's rights, before they were all marched off to concentration camps and death.

After World War II, the United Nations were formed (1945), and with special responsibility for children, UN established in 1945 *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO) and in 1946 *United Nations Children's Fund* (UNICEF). In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly passed *the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, in which Article 25 entitles mothers and children to 'special care and assistance' and 'social protection'. In 1948, Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire (OMEP, World Organisation for Early Childhood Education) was founded as one of the first NGOs linked to UN with the aim to defend and promote the rights of the child (from Birth to 8) with special emphasis on the right to education and care worldwide.

The next international treaty was adopted in 1959 by the United Nations General Assembly: *The Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, which recognizes, among other rights, children's rights to education, play, a supportive environment and health care. UN declared 1979 as the International Year of the Child. Following this special year and an initiative by the Polish government, a working group with representatives from governments, NGOs, experts and UN specialized agencies developed the treaty to become the UNCRC.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly and widely acclaimed as a landmark achievement for human rights, recognizing a wider image of human rights for children, civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, and the children as actors. The Convention guarantees and sets minimum standards for protecting the rights of children in all capacities. The UN has later made three amendments to the UNCRC. In 2000, the General Assembly adopted two Optional Protocols, obligating State parties to take key actions to prevent children from partaking in hostilities during armed conflict (176 ratifying State parties) and to end the sale, sexual exploitation and abuse of children (170 ratifying State parties), and in 2011, an Optional Protocol about the right to field complaints of child rights violations and undertake investigations (46 ratifying State parties).

This is the UNCRC

The UNCRC is an international treaty with 54 articles. Articles 1–42 describe children's rights and articles 43–54 describe what the State parties must do to fulfil their obligations after ratifying the UNCRC. The human rights stated in the UNCRC are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and to be interpreted in a holistic way. This implies that all articles together make up the rights of the child. You cannot pick and choose between the articles; they are all important. Since

1989, the UN General assembly has made three amendments in three *Optional protocols*. With an optional protocol, UN may regulate in more detail, than in the UNCRC, a specific issue. Some years after adopting the UNCRC, it became possible to expand children's rights in a certain field. An optional protocol does not automatically become valid, for this to happen, the State parties must ratify the optional protocol. The optional protocols elaborate on three different topics:

OP 1 (2000) on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography,
 OP 2 (2000) on the involvement of children in armed conflict and
 OP 3 (2011) on a communications procedure.

There are four articles known as the *General Principles* through which we can interpret all the other articles and realise all the rights in the UNCRC. The guiding principles of the UNCRC are non-discrimination (Article 2); the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all actions concerning children (Article 3); the child's inherent right to life, and State Parties' obligation to ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child (Article 6); and the child's right to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting the child (Article 12). Of special interest for us are also Articles 28–31 about children's rights to education, leisure, play and culture.

In Articles 43–44, the monitoring body and process are described. Within the *Office of the High Commissioner for Human rights in Geneva* UN has appointed *The Committee on the Rights of the Child* (hereafter CRC). CRC is the body of 18 independent experts that monitors the implementation of the UNCRC by its State parties. All States parties are obliged to submit regular reports every 5 years to the Committee on how the rights are being implemented. The Committee examines each report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of *Concluding observations*. The CRC also publishes its interpretation of the content of the UNCRC with *General comments* on thematic issues and organizes days for general discussion. As of today, there are 24 General comments that further explores the content of the articles in the UNCRC. Of special interest for this book are No 7 On implementing early childhood (2005), No 12 On the right of the child to be heard (2009), No 14 Article 3 On in the best interests of the child (2013) and No 17 Article 31 On leisure, play and culture (2013).

Part One: Policy Perspectives

Broadly speaking, the UNCRC addresses children's interests across three Ps, children's rights to provision, protection and participation. Theobald (2019, p. 252) describes as a paradox a tension because 'the framing of rights – being individualistic or with a group focussed standpoint'. The UNCRC promotes a view of the rights as *shared rights*, not rights in a self-interested manner. Theobald points out that children's rights are intertwined with adult knowledge and continues: "There is an underlying assumption that children, in order to have rights recognised, must have some kind of responsibility associated with their allocation of such rights"

(2019, p. 253). This is a common layman misconception. Human rights, as e.g. the children's rights, are not contingent on obligations or responsibilities. Engdahl (2019) analyses what we know about the effects in legislation, policies, and curricula in different parts of the world from the first 30 years with the UNCRC. She argues that the position and the status of the child has changed, and that as a result of the 30 years with UNCRC, children today are recognised as citizens. 196 countries have ratified and to various degrees integrated and implemented the UNCRC, and 94 nations have also incorporated it as national law. This decision has further strengthened the overall position of the child, and makes a real difference, especially for vulnerable children, and for the children most in need of support.

In this part of the book, we present authors from Argentina, United States of America, North Macedonia, Uruguay, and China:

Mercedes Mayol Lassalle, first among the authors in the policy part of the book, gives a thorough introduction to the historic background of the UNCRC, including the role of OMEP (World Organisation for Early Childhood Education). The UNCRC states a new vision on the children's citizenship and on the recognition of boys and girls as rights holders. The different nations – the State parties – are responsible for implementing and guaranteeing these rights. In her presentation of the UNCRC, Mayol Lassalle introduces the UN Committee on the rights of the child (CRC), and includes important CRC documents, e.g. General comment No 7 on Early childhood. The chapter then continues by giving the current state and status of the UNCRC in the region of Latin America. The persistence of welfare policies focused only on poorer and groups with violated rights, confirm that arguments, prejudices, and practices associated with old paradigms still persist. In many countries in Latin America, ECE is mandatory or compulsory, however, the access for children under 3, is not as positive. Although the Latin American States have made efforts transforming their legal frameworks and defining public policies consistently with the UNCRC, there are still great inequalities and injustices that raise the need to define more decisive definitions and actions. Therefore, it is necessary to continue deepening the understanding and application of the UNCRC in the development of public policies towards early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Judith T. Wagner examines child rights as a concept and as lived reality for American children from historical, political, and advocacy perspectives. It is of special interest to read about child rights in the United States of America, since it is the only UN member state that has not ratified the UNCRC. Wagner describes that direct and unambiguous references to child rights are nearly invisible in American social, political, and educational discourses, though some related concepts, such as equality and inclusion, sometimes appear. Although human rights were permeating the founding constitution of the United States, this is yet to become the guiding rule for the children of the nation. Wagner reports about unequal conditions for children between different states, and between different groups of children, are disadvantages often due to children's socio-economic status (Articles 2, 3, 6, 22, 28). One major issue has to do with children's status in relation to adults, and the place and space for children. Wagner also touches on the joint efforts made to make the USA someday joining the world community by ratifying the UNCRC.

Alma Tasevska brings up the current status of ECEC in North Macedonia. A thorough presentation of policy and implementation processes of the UNCRC, including the dialogue with the UN Committee in Geneva, gives an insight into plans and progress made in the country. The chapter specifically describes policy goals, the possibility for children to access ECEC (Articles 28–31) and issues depending on split national responsibilities and lack of preschools and educators. There is high expectance of cooperation locally between institutions, municipalities and associations, and opportunities for local initiatives, in order to offer ECEC to all children.

Gabriela Etchebehere Arenas introduces a slow but steady process of implementing the UNCRC in Uruguay. It has been a process of transforming attitudes and actions towards children that respect and guarantee their rights. In the field of early childhood care and education in Uruguay, some research shows that these difficulties are reflected by the low recognition of the teachers. Step by step the history of establishing child rights is described, and in 2008 a path of priority to early childhood (Articles 28–31) began to be drawn. Since then, many educational actions, especially those related to promotion of progressive autonomy, are in line with the principles of the UNCRC. To conclude, the chapter discusses research, programs and policies that mark the advances and pending challenges in order to guarantee the rights of children in Uruguay.

Peng Xu writes about policy and implementation of the UNCRC in China, a multiple process with different influencers from Confucianism and the Soviet Union. Among these discourses, children's rights are viewed as a Western discourse, which has brought new ways of speaking and thinking about young children and their education to China. Taking a historic perspective, Peng shows some contradictions about young children's rights, and how a rights-based approach gradually has been highlighted within policies, establishing a legislative link between children's rights and their citizenship. Key progress has been made within ECE in China, especially from 3 years of age, including national curricula and policy statements. More attempts to construct a context-specific approach to young children's rights are necessary and potential areas for future research are proposed and discussed.

Part Two: Children's Perspectives

Sommer et al. (2010) state that “the UN's *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* has been influential for the growing adoption of the child perspective and for maintaining respect for children's perspectives of their world” (p. 12), which resulted in adopting the UNCRC in 1989. During the last 30 years, children's status and positions as citizens and subjects with their own rights have been widely achieved (Engdahl 2019; UNICEF 2019). For the next coming years, enhancing children's' collective, agentic and ecocentric participation, across generations and cultures, is the most important endeavour to achieve. By this, we mean recognition of children as actors entering and participating in various intergenerational and intercultural settings, but

also recognition of children's perspectives in relation to ecocentrism. Following Davis (2014), we understand ecocentrism as an approach that, in contrast to anthropocentrism, does not put the human regards as the most important entity on the planet, but holds that all Earth's biological species as well as non-living elements (such as carbon, air, water, landscapes) are equally valuable. Adopting the children's perspective here, builds on the fact that children's survival and wellbeing demand a healthy Earth (Davis 2014). How the children's perspectives, as well as various authors' contributions to this part of the book, refer to diverse aspects of sustainability, will be discussed in the concluding part of the book.

In this section, we discuss the UNCRC in relation to the perspective of the individual child and of children. That is why we first need to elaborate over the differences between a child perspective and children's perspective. Sommer et al. (2010) address the differences in the following way: child perspective is seen "as perspective which adults with great knowledge about children and their lives can take up by asking themselves: what is best for children if I take my own knowledge about children into consideration?" (pp. 17–18). Children's perspectives "is not something an adult can take up without children being present. Children act and express themselves and adults interpret what children express as their meaning and their voice" (pp. 17–18). Lansdown (2005) argues, with reference to articles 12 and 13 in the UNCRC, that taking the perspective of the child starts with recognition of children as "experts in their own lives", "skilful communicators, employing a huge range of languages with which to articulate their views and experience", "active agents, influencing and interacting with the world around them" and "meaning makers constructing and interpreting meaning in their lives" (Lansdown 2005, p. 1). She underlines that this refers to all children, regardless of age, as from birth, children, even babies and toddlers, "are capable of both holding and expressing views, although the forms of expression will necessarily alter as the child grows" (p. 1). The reasoning includes the importance of being heard in all matters that affect them as well as being taken seriously.

Child rights researchers are stressing one important aspect, that "child perspectives are created by adults who are seeking, deliberately and as realistically as possible, to reconstruct children's perspective, for example through scientific concepts concerning children's understanding of their world and their actions in it" (Sylva 2010, p. vi). Hence, we may conclude that a child perspective must lean on child-centredness, but we need to keep in mind that it always represents adults' objectification of children. On the other hand, the child perspective may operate as an eye-opener for the adults' objectification.

While trying to realise the intention of Article 3, in the best interests of the child, there is a tension included in the UNCRC. Adults' perception of what is best for a child or for a group of children, may not be verified by the very children themselves. So, the UNCRC, but also this book, represent adult voices, advocating for the children. The voices are trying, with methodologies or conceptual toolkits, to get close to the child's understanding of the world, but still they are adult voices objectifying children. Following this reasoning, the UNCRC may be a treaty of human rights, rewritten from an adult child-centred standpoint, trying to open adult eyes on how the world may be experienced by children. From this standpoint, it is

possible to objectify the child as vulnerable and adult-dependent in terms of survival and development, but also as competent and of equal value in terms of civil rights and participatory rights in the local and global community. The focus on the child as a dependent and vulnerable one, seems to take the child perspective in terms of securing the child's biological and socio-emotional needs, fulfilling of which facilitates development, and brings health and well-being. Focusing on the competent child with her/his own identity, voice and expression rights is on the other hand "an appreciation of the child as an inviolable person whose thoughts and opinions matter and whose interests must be protected" (Sommer et al. 2010, p. 13).

Thirty years after the convention was adopted, in this section we look at how the socio-political, institutional and cultural respect for children and their perspectives may be approached, by showing examples from various parts of the world, Croatia, Poland, and Aotearoa New Zealand:

Katarina Bogatić discusses the children's right to play (Article 31) in relation to research on time use in the ECEC settings and children's homes. Play is highly important for children, it is their way to experience the world, or simply children's way of being (Lillemyr 2013). Asking about safeguarding time for an activity is asking about the implementation of the child's right to play, as well as taking the child perspective. Bogatić thereby takes the child perspective on the structures of children's adult-organized days and their lives. How long the children may play, is a question of great importance in times of academisation of ECEC and of increasing overprotective attitudes among parents, as shown by Bogatić in the context of Croatia.

Ewa Lewandowska, with examples of Polish history, shows the dialectics between the political and ideological climate, and the State's ability to recognize the perspective of the child. Additionally, she presents children's perspectives on their own rights, described in Articles 12–15. In a study, she asks the children both about how much they know about these rights, as well as how they experience their realization both in family and ECEC contexts. Serious consideration of child and children's perspectives and actions is in this chapter linked to sustainability, which requires intergenerational cooperation. Child participation is shown to be linked to children's positive utterances on partnerships with adults in order to 'do good things', especially in relation to social and ecological aspects of sustainability.

Glynn Mackey and **Diti Hill-Denee** approach the child perspective by discussing the implementation of the UNCRC in Aotearoa New Zealand in relation to diverse groups of children, like infants and toddlers, children at risk, and indigenous children. The authors approach Article 6 that entitles the child to life, survival and development, as well as Article 19 that protects the children from violence, abuse and neglect. The Article 26 of social security is not of a lower importance when presenting the reports on children's wellbeing. Moreover, Articles 12 and 13 may be seen as presented when discussing participation rights of toddlers, the youngest children. Article 30 is mentioned when the historical and present perspective on education and agency of indigenous children are discussed. The child perspective is thereby approached by showing interrelations of the rights crossing societal situations of various groups of children. By showing the heterogenic character of the children in a group, and the complexity of everybody's well-being, Mackey and

Hill-Denee indirectly approach Articles 2, 4 and 41, as non-discrimination is about applying the UNCRC to each child, regardless gender, culture, religion, ethnicity, abilities, economy or age. Moreover, the authors here link the discussion of rights to Davis (2014), where collective and biocentric/ecocentric dimensions of rights are important. This again, points at the importance of active recognition of indigenous people.

Ivana Visković approaches the child perspective as objectified in the UNCRC and discusses its implementation in the context of Croatia. The author relates various UNCRC Articles: 3, 6–8, 24, 27–29 and discusses challenges in their realization in relation to the local family and educational policies. Doing this, she relies on another objectification of the child that is delivered by psycho-sociological research, pointing at what is good for the child. Additionally, she relates knowledge presenting important factors for the well-being of a child, including the family socio-economic status and the parenting styles. Within these, the child perspective is double mediated, on one hand by the adult-created rights and on the other by the adult created knowledge on what is good for children.

The children's status and how the rights of children are respected still need to be discussed. Even though "research is often portrayed as objective and value-neutral (...) there's still an ongoing struggle to define and parent what constitutes 'good', 'proper' childhood". "One should bear in mind, therefore, that the interest in the child perspective is part of this struggle for hegemony and the power to define 'the best interests of the child'" (Sommer et al. 2010, p. 14). This section of the book reports about this struggle in socio-historical and political contexts, as well as in the children's own terms of play and their own perception of their rights. In the concluding part of this book, we take up the struggle and critically analyse definitions of 'the good, proper childhood' by relating the UNCRC to the children's agentic participation rights, collective rights, intergenerational and ecocentric rights (Davis 2014).

Part Three: Educational Perspectives

Education has long been considered as one of the fundamental human rights. Children's right to education has individual and societal importance. It may well be presumed that education has impact on the well-being of individuals. Therefore, individuals will contribute to developing a better society. However, society and culture have impact on the understanding and implementing of children's rights. The importance of education in early childhood related to children's rights could be discussed in two ways: (1) as a right to education and (2) as a prerequisite for developing children's ability to enjoy their rights (Maleš et al. 2003). Another approach to child rights in education may be discussed as a devotion to develop children's rights and the values that respect those rights amongst people. Quennerstedt (2011) finds four reasons to discuss an educational perspective on children's rights: (1) education about human rights; (2) education about change; (3) children's right to participation; and (4) differences between children's rights and parents' rights.

Discussing children's right to education, UNCRC (Article 28–31) points at the four A of education – availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability. All A-aspects are related to the State parties' responsibility to ensure children's right to education. However, governments do not invest enough in education, especially not in early childhood education (UNICEF 2020). Most of the low-income countries do not meet any of these A-aspects (OECD 2020). Even within member states of the European union, there is no universal access to ECE settings (EACEA 2019). In relation to other parts of the educational system, early childhood education faces several challenges. ECE is most often not compulsory or mandatory, although in some countries (i.e. some European and Latin American countries), children should attend some ECE program for at least 1 year before starting primary school. For younger children, attending ECE settings is most often optional. Consequently, attendance in ECE settings is not free of charge. Thus, children living in poverty do not get the chance to attend ECE settings. Most of the socially excluded children (i.e. migrant children, minority children, children who are living in war areas or even in rural areas), do not have the chance to enjoy their rights to education. It may be concluded that, although policy ensures that every child has the right to education, in practice that right does not always exist.

Learning about children's rights and developing behaviour that acknowledge respect and responsibility starts from birth. Among other rights, children's participation in their own learning should be enhanced in educational institutions. Quennerstedt and Quennerstedt (2014) stated that children's participation is one of the main achievements of the UNCRC (1989), but societies commonly reduce children's participation. Limitation of child participation might especially be seen in education, due to the hierarchical organisation of educational institutions, where adults are responsible for delivering knowledge to children, who are positioned as passive recipients. In ECE today, a child is (most) often seen as a competent learner, capable to understand and change the world (MacNaughton et al. 2008). Bašić (2011) also sees the child's capability to develop his/her own theories about the world and therefore organize his/her own learning. Despite the contemporary image of the child, the long-lasting traditional paradigm doesn't recognize children as active participants with agentic rights in their own education.

Turning towards education and national curricula, Engdahl (2019) argues that State parties, such as Finland, Iceland, Korea, New Zealand and Sweden, are aware of the importance of education and care in the early years. References to children's right to play and the importance of listening to young voices in education are also common. While most of the child-oriented curricula in ECE are supporting children's right to play, some curricula are still oriented towards readiness for school, and advocate the usefulness of learning predominantly academic content (Bennett 2009). A respectful idea of child participation should be maintained in all aspects of education. Usually adults listen to children's ideas and thoughts about issues connected to children, but they rarely engage children in decision making related to i.e. the development of the curriculum (Chan 2010). Davis (2014) argues that ECE teachers should offer active participation to children. Educational institutions are mostly adult dominated which is contrasting the participating culture

promoted by the UNCRC (1989). ECE is the first stage of the process of education, well suited for trying to change a participation perspective from top-down to bottom-up (Davis 2014). Changes in ECE institutions could have impact on and lead to changes towards a participating culture in the whole educational system.

Looking through lenses of economy, ECE is the most effective investment for economic development, and therefore the most influential part of education (Heckman 2011). Heckman (2012) especially highlights the importance of ECE for children at risk. While Heckman (2012) argues for investments in education, UNICEF (2020) shows that the investment rate is low, and lowest for the children at risk. Despite the benefits of Heckman's research for the status of ECE (2011, 2012), Vandebroek (2017) suggests that we should rethink the investment approach, and rather step away from an economic discourse of education. The United Nations asserts the importance of ECE in the Sustainable development goal No 4.2 (UN 2015, p. 17), by stating that every child "should have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education". This goal should lead to, not just accessibility, but also to availability, acceptability and adaptability for every child to ECE of high quality.

Following the UNCRC and the Sustainable development goals, all involved in ECE (children, parents, professionals, policy makers) should work towards achieving children's rights. The right to ECE differ across the world. In this part of the book, authors from Australia, Spain, Argentina, Norway, The Republic of Korea, and the United Kingdom give us insight in processes for realisation of children's rights.

Ann Farrell is rethinking challenges in applying UNCRC in Australian contexts of ECEC. In her chapter, she is oriented towards identifying main challenges to ensure provision, participation and protection of children's rights. Australia has a long history of advocating for children's rights in educational policy. Farrell analyses research of different aspects of children's rights in ECEC in relation to the National Quality Framework for ECEC. Children's rights should protect children, and most of all, the vulnerable ones. Despite this policy, the author finds that disadvantaged groups of children usually experience a lot of challenges. The author finds many layers of barriers to respecting children's rights in Australian ECEC. She describes possible enablers proposed to promote children's rights: (1) assurance of equity of access to provision; (2) a systematic approach to teaching and learning of children's rights; (3) competent ECEC professionals. Australia seeks to follow UNCRC requirements for ensuring children's rights in ECEC provisions. To meet the highest standards, there is a need for establishing collaborative partnerships at the level of government, system and ECEC services.

Concepcion Sanchez-Blanco discusses issues and challenges related to young children's primary needs and care in Spanish nursery schools. Sanchez Blanco points at the importance of welfare and protection, especially during infancy. She problematises the media's approach to bodily care practices as part of ECE. The teacher role may be affected with social attitudes against some care practices, so teachers avoid risky situations. Risky situations aren't just found in children activities but may also be children's initiatives. It is questionable how to respect children's interest and participation while avoiding a child's initiative. Teachers

should promote responsiveness to children's needs and interests. The author promotes adopting an attitude that integrates education and care, with no boundaries between them. A change in education is necessary to implement children's rights. The care showed towards the youngest members of society is a form of education and, as such, should be treated as a global ecological imperative, with agreed collective commitments and goals among all countries.

Analia Mignaton approaches early childhood education through multiple educational scenes and analyses the complexity of its dimensions, its processes, unveiling some ways and meanings of its own. Mignaton highlights respect in education as a right for all children, regardless of their age. The teaching of content in nursery school is a process in which adults and children participate in a joint venture. Adults offer their support and build bridges and children, in an active way, adjust their level of responsibility by participating in the decision process in the situation, as they are conquering new learning. Mignaton discusses the role of ECE institutions as supportive for families and children in parenting, emphasizing both children's and parents' roles, in the concept of parenting. Offering cultural spaces, rich in experiences and exchanges that promote and support integrated (not fragmented) learning processes, would contribute to the subjective construction of each child, and, in this way become an arena for respecting children's rights.

Berit Bae focuses on how children's right to be heard and participate is written into national policy documents and discusses how the legal provision has led to changes in curricular documents as well as in in-service training programs and research projects. Research has shown that in the practice field, children's participatory rights might be understood in different ways. Several pitfalls and dilemmas become visible, as the view of the child, understanding of democracy and the role of play. These and other factors influence the realisation of children's participatory rights in practice. Bae compares legislative acts with practices, questioning whether relationships, interaction and communication in ECE settings are possible, and points to the need for critical thinking about theories on teacher-child relationships. She concludes by asking whether children's rights to be heard and to participate are at risk.

Eunhye Park, Nayong Kim, Hee Kyoung Nam, Inyoung Kim, Sunhwa Park, Jieun Kim and Kyoryoung Kim describe the Korean context for sustainable development goals, UNCRC and International Development Cooperation. This chapter describes a project set out to develop minimum standards for international development cooperation projects in South Korea that reflect children's rights, and to create a toolkit that can be practically applied to projects. It is expected to be used in three aspects of South Korea's international development cooperation projects: (1) to directly or indirectly judge whether children's rights are considered at all stages of South Korea's international development cooperation projects; (2) to raise the awareness of implementing a child rights perspective in projects for those involved in international development cooperation initiatives; (3) to be used as educational data to reflect children's rights in international development cooperation projects. Based on the results, it is necessary to establish minimum standards for children's rights that consider children at diverse levels in the future.

Verity Campbell-Barr approaches the child perspective by discussing the concept of childhood(s), deeply anchored in various historical and local contexts, that has managed to develop the more universal principles of protection, provision and participation. These principles, even universal when it comes to protecting a romantic uniqueness of childhood, advocating for equal access to ECEC (provision) and participation, are not free from tensions. Campbell-Barr discusses the various possibilities of interrelations between these principles resulting in one being upheld by the other. These relates also to tensions between a child perspective and children's perspective, e.g. the perspective of the individual child and that of a larger group. What is the perspective of the child, and which of the rights of the child are the most important to obey in a particular moment? These questions constitute dilemmas and insecurities that professionals working with children meet every day. This happens both when trying to approach the child perspective in the daily context of ECE, and when negotiating their professional knowledge on children with the so-called common sense in society.

This book is a result of a rethinking of and re-questioning children's rights after 30 years of UNCRC implementation. Scholars approach the rights of the child from different cultural, national and societal aspects within policy, children's perspective and education. The common trait of all here presented papers is deliberation, how to ensure sustainability of children's rights in a changing world. This publication does not set out to provide solutions and answers to be copied, but it is a call for creating a world where all children have a possibility to enjoy their rights.

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