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DRAMA IN CHILD RIGHTS EDUCATION - DEVELOPING A PEDAGOGICAL MODEL

Marja-Liisa Hassi[a]*, Hannu Niemelä[a], Ari Paloniemi[a], Jouni Piekkari[a], Kaisa Wolde[a]

[a]*The Finnish National Committee for UNICEF, Lautatarhankatu 6, 00580 Helsinki, Finland*

Abstract

Education has been suggested as the key to tackle the anticipated challenges of the global world. Abilities such as problem solving, collaboration, and social responsibility represent skills for a sustainable future featured by equity, wellbeing, and peace. However, the traditional teaching and learning methods still prominent in most classrooms do not support the development of such skills. In order to increase children's knowledge and skills in fostering human rights and equality, the Finnish National Committee for UNICEF has developed a holistic and participatory model of human rights education applying a process drama method. First, the authors target at human rights and child rights education as the important context in applying the pedagogical model. After this, we offer results from an action research project studying and further developing the model in collaboration with teachers and students in two secondary schools. The results on students' activities and experiences derive from a mixed-method approach and data from surveys, observation, and feedback sheets. The findings reveal the potential power of the drama-based model for engaging students in active collaboration, creativity, and powerful experiences needed for deep learning about child rights and fostering child rights approach in regular school classrooms.

Keywords: Action research, child rights education, drama education, human rights

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* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: tuulike.kivestu@ut.ee

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1. Introduction

In introducing the Global Education First (GEF) initiative in 2012, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon portrayed the necessary changes in the goals and methods of education for preparing students to face the future challenges of the global world.

> *Schools have traditionally prepared people to pass exams, proceed to the next level, and graduate into the workplace. We now face the much greater challenge of raising global citizens... Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive societies. It must give people the understanding, skills, and values they need to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21st century (Education First, 2012, p. 20).*

In addition to knowledge and competence in different subject areas, students more than before need to be equipped with a will and an ability to collaborate with people reflecting various cultural backgrounds, life styles, and values. Students need to be prepared for global citizenship featured by active participation, collaboration, and reinforcement of human rights. This calls for increased attention and allocation of resources to the pedagogy of human rights education. Increased understanding, skills, and personal strength for sustaining and further strengthening peace, equity, and wellbeing are needed for a sustainable future. However, research indicates problems in implementing human rights education, and child rights education in particular. This calls for more knowledge about the pedagogy of human rights education.

Learning and teaching about child rights are not systematically embedded in curricular frameworks and teachers are rarely familiar with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (DICE, 2010). For example, even though respondents in the recent international UNICEF baseline survey identified teacher training as the most important area for action, such as academic freedom and de-regulation of higher education seemed to refrain from achieving coherence in the area (Jerome, Emerson, Lundy, & Orr, 2015). On the other hand, opportunities for children's participation in decision-making in school were widespread but the number of schools and type of participation were mixed in most countries. Notably, child rights education was explicitly and consistently monitored only in a few countries.

This paper report results from an action research project and study that aimed at testing and further development of a drama based model in child rights education. The study aim at clarifying teachers' and students' experiences and gains from the implementation of the model, exercises, and materials on child rights education developed by the the Finnish National Committee for UNICEF. The authors first outline a theoretical basis for human and

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child rights education, which is followed by an introduction of drama as a powerful pedagogical method of learning about, through, and for human rights. After this, we will focus on an action research and some results from a study that engaged regular secondary school teachers and their students in implementing the pedagogical model for child rights education.

2. Human rights education

Human rights education is informed by and consistent with The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 but also with other international human rights agreements. In their definitions, researchers and agencies tend to lean on the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, which was the first official international definition of human rights education. It has been said to "represent the current conception on the content of human rights education and training in the international law" (Kouros & Vainio 2014, p. 6). It lists three components of human rights education. First, education about human rights includes provision of knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the underpinning values and the mechanisms for the protection of human rights. Education through human rights entails the ways of learning and teaching that should respect the rights of the educators and learners. The third component comprises education for human rights, which refers to the empowerment of persons to enjoy and exercise their rights as well as to uphold and respect the rights of others (UN, 2012, 3). A change of perspective from "educating about human rights" towards "creating a human rights culture" features contemporary understanding of human rights education (Matilainen, 2011, p. 32). Such human rights based approach to education shifts the perspective from theme-centred conceptions towards a more holistic approach in which the form of education deserves increased importance. Human rights are then embedded in all educational activities, that is, from educational planning and creating a learning environment to communication in classrooms and assessment of learning.

2.1. Child rights education

Child rights education is an area of human rights education (UNICEF, 2014a). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) is used in defining child rights education, or children's human rights education. The UNICEF's Child Rights Education toolkit (UNICEF, 2014a) describes child rights education as:

> *… teaching and learning about the provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the 'child rights approach' in order to empower both*

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> *adults and children to take action to advocate for and apply these at the family, school, community, national and global levels.* (p. 20)

According to Krappmann (2006), deeper knowledge of childhood and adolescence plays a significant role in making a difference between children's human rights education and human rights education for adults. Due to lack of theoretical understanding of complex moral dilemmas, adoption of solutions to these dilemmas is challenging for children. Consequently, from the three components of human rights education (about, through, for), the perspective of through (i.e., the ways of learning) should be given high importance in children's human rights education. Pedagogy implemented in classrooms constitutes a significant aspect of this perspective. Children, like adults, need to be compensated for their limited experiences and incomplete but evolving capacities in networks of exchange and common efforts.

2.2. Human rights culture and child rights approach to education

The Child Rights Education Toolkit (UNICEF, 2014a) emphasizes capacity building of adults and educators in conducting child rights education. Child rights education is not only about children as an object of education activities, but it is also importantly associated with the qualities of children's social learning environment. A significant goal of child rights education is thus to further and support the human rights culture in the society. However, the Human Rights Centre in Finland recently reported (2014) that the contents and operational culture of human rights education are not interlinked and that people do not have equal access to human rights education.

'Child rights approach' to education means that child rights guide the communication and behaviour of school staff and children as well as choices of teaching materials, teaching methods, and learning assessment. It is important that children's human rights are respected and acted out in everyday activities of a school community. In this approach, education is considered through child rights at all levels of management, implementation, and assessment of education. Schools should represent communities where models for active citizenship and rights holding are displayed and acted out for children by the examples of adults. The approach broadens the perspective of child rights education to fostering the realization of child rights; use of child rights standards and principles from human rights instruments to guide behavior, actions, policies, and programmes; and capacity-building of children as rights-holders and adults as duty-bearers (UNICEF, 2014a). According to Krappmann (2006), it is important that human and child rights are recognized as priority aims of

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education by the school administration, curriculum experts, teachers, and others involved in children's education, as well as by children themselves.

3. Drama as a pedagogical model for human rights education

The reform of the National Core Curricula for compulsory basic education in Finland was completed at the end of 2014 and the implementation of the local curricula based on these standards will start in fall 2016 (Finnish National Board of Education, 2015). The new standards aim to focus on the global world and the changing needs of a future society in competences, knowledge, and skills for life and work. The new curriculum aims at developing schools as learning communities, emphasizing the joy of learning and a collaborative atmosphere, and promoting student autonomy in studying and in school life (Halinen, 2015). These together with the core values of each child's right to quality instruction, humanity and democracy, multiculturalism, and sustainable lifestyle call for new pedagogical approaches to basic education. It suggests drama both as an independent school subject and as included in other school subjects. For the first time, all schools also will have an obligation to provide human rights education in regular classrooms.

3.1. Drama as an effective pedagogical tool

In addition to traditional theatre classes, drama can be considered as a tool to strengthen the functional, experiential, expressive, and aesthetic aspects of any school subject. Drama education is suggested to represent holistic education that supports students' personal growth through increased creativity, self-esteem, and enhanced cognitive, emotional, and social skills. As a pedagogical tool, drama can support the development of students' intellectual and linguistic competence, but it also helps them understand different perspectives and increase their emotional skills (Maley & Duff, 2005). It creates an opportunity to probe concepts, issues, and problems central to the human condition, and it provides space for reflection to gain new knowledge and perspectives about the world (Bowell & Heap, 2001; Heikkinen, 2002). Even more importantly, drama in regular classrooms seem to increase creativity and enjoyment of learning but also to foster reflective thinking and transferable basic skills necessary for life in a post-modern society (Bowell & Heap, 2001; Laakso, 2004; Toivanen, Halkilahti & Ruismäki, 2013; Wagner, 1998). For example, the DICE (Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education) project conducted a cross-cultural research on the effects of educational theatre and drama on the Lisbon Key Competences. The analysis of both quantitative and qualitative identical data from almost five thousand young people aged 13-16 years in twelve countries indicated

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significant positive effects of drama and theatre on youngsters' learning, well being, participation, active citizenship, and attitude to inequality (DICE, 2015).

3.2. Drama and child rights education

Quality child rights education presupposes instructional practices that enable students to fully engage in the design and implementation of instructional activities. Interaction and communication have a significant role in establishing such practices. Use of drama represents a promising pedagogical tool to create such interactive and highly engaging environments for holistic instruction (Toivanen, Mikkola, & Ruismäki, 2012). In addition to students' active participation, holistic instructional approaches in human rights education have to do with core human values and value education. In their report, the DICE Consortium (2010) concludes that only when the understanding is felt it can be integrated into people's minds and it can shape their values. Working in the drama mode increases awareness of our self thus helping us to take our personal responsibility in the social activity. Rather than expressing fear towards 'the other', educational drama encourages us to explore how others think and feel. We take a chance to step into the shoes of others. This fosters empathy that is necessary for people to display tolerance and understanding towards 'the other.' Flexibility and change of roles during a drama play helps children to playfully elucidate their own negative experiences and the others' perspectives (Joronen, Konu, Rankin, & Åstedt-Kurki, 2011).

The Finnish National Committee for UNICEF developed a holistic process drama model emphasizing the process instead of a performance and fostering a learning environment and pedagogy appropriate for child rights approach in education. The process drama is the product of a collaborative meaning-making process through negotiation and input by all the participants through the medium of a role (O'Toole, 1992; Stinson & Freebody, 2006). It starts with a cooperation agreement on the aims, practices, and rules thus setting up participants' goals and wishes for participation and highlighting the nature of a process drama as a collaborative act and 'a serious play' (Heikkinen, 2002; O'Neill, 1995). Participants share information, deepen their own understanding and experience, and develop personal and mutual interpretations or enactments of imagination. Drama provides the child an authentic experience along an educational continuum with the focus on identifying opportunities for holistic learning and ways to organize these (DICE, 2010). The roles of a drama session provide protection needed in dealing with intimate and private issues of human rights. The education practice of the pedagogical drama model was designed to be consistent with the core principles of the CRC. Especially, the model emphasizes 1) non-

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discrimination, 2) the best interest of the child, 3) survival and development of the child, and 4) child's opinion and participation. Moreover, it represents an educational approach to child rights that would empower both educators and children.

Evaluation report of the training of educators and testing of the model in different educational settings for children, youngsters, and school students (UNICEF, 2014b) indicate positive outcomes of the model, but a question remained about the possible long-term impacts of the model and the potential benefits of the model compared to other pedagogical approaches on child rights education. Some project participants also considered use of the drama based model challenging due to the limited time available in regular instructional settings. These issues together with the lack of information about the effectiveness of the model called for a more systematic research and further development of the pedagogical model. Consequently, a team of the Finnish National Committee for UNICEF designed an action research project for studying and further development of the drama based model of child rights education in regular secondary school classrooms.

4. Research design, data, and methods

The Finnish National Committee for UNICEF established a research team for conducting a developmental action research study to gather systematic information about the processes, outcomes, and challenges in applying pedagogical approaches and tools to child rights education, with a special emphasis on the process drama method. The aim was to study and further develop the pedagogical model of child rights education by providing teachers with training, learning material, and facilitation for implementing the model. The focus was on classroom activities, students' and teachers' experiences, and teaching and learning outcomes. In this paper, we report results on students' experiences and gains during the intervention.

4.1. Action research approach

For developing genuine and effective pedagogical practices, the study adopted an action research approach. With a reflective inquiry and an interactive method of collecting information, it thus combined education research with educational practice. It consisted of multiple cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, in which outcomes of one cycle were used to revise the process in the next cycle (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990). In addition to gathering data from the schools, classroom activities, and students' and teachers's experiences during the intervention, the project aimed to engage teachers and their students as active developers of child rights education and practices in secondary schools (cf.,

Somekh & Zeichner, 2009). It also strived to empower teachers as child right educators and students as child rights-holders and active participants in the school and classroom life, while also performing the research activities in accordance with the child rights approach and the ethical practice for UNICEF research (UNICEF, 2013).

The teachers participated in two coaching sessions for applying the pedagogical models and instructional materials provided, with a particular emphasis on guiding through the drama process model. Between the classes, the teachers were supported with discussions to facilitate their reflection and implementation of the instructional activities. Discussions and reflection on the pedagogical models and future actions on child rights education followed the intervention. Teachers implemented classroom activities in their regular classes based on the models and instructional materials. They were also encouraged to engage their students in choosing between the pedagogical approaches suggested. Both teachers and students were involved in reflections on the methods and their implementation before and after the intervention.

Teachers collaboratively decided on the pedagogical models in the school and, after slight modifications, implemented one to three of the models in one of their student groups. Three different topics with materials and guidance for planning of instruction were offered, after which teachers prepared their class plans. After discussions on first class sessions, teachers adjusted and revised their instructional plans for the next class (Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001). The approach promoted reflective practice among teachers and students but also aimed to support teachers' professional development, students' and teachers' empowerment, curriculum development, and positive community change as related to child rights (cf., Carr & Kemmis, 2005; Mills, 2003). The adopted action research approach was thus not only about learning why to do certain things but how things could be done better (Ferrance, 2000).

4.2. Data and subjects

The project focused 6 seventh-grade student groups and their teachers in two secondary schools in the Southern Finland. Three teachers from either school voluntarily enrolled in the project. Based on discussions between the teachers, each teacher chose one student group for the intervention. They implemented the pedagogical models in two to three 90-45 minutes lessons in History, Finnish, Religion, or Social Studies within 1-2 weeks. Three teachers had prior knowledge or experience in drama methods, while others participated in the drama training for the first time. After two training sessions introducing the pedagogical models, themes, and materials of child rights education, all teachers chose 1-

2 of the three themes (children's participation, child labor, family and care) and 2 of the pedagogical models (drama, functional, traditional teaching) of child rights education. The functional model applied methods such as small group or whole class discussions and design of reports using photos, video or pictures. The traditional model concentrated on individual work and activities such as reading texts, writing answers on questions, watching a video, and whole class discussion. Two teachers in each school implemented the process drama model while the rest (2) chose the other two pedagogical models. Teachers 1, 3 and 4 applied the functional and process drama models. Teachers 2 and 6 applied the functional and traditional teaching, while teacher 5 used the process drama model and traditional teaching. Implementation of the drama based model and the functional model were based on the exercises developed by a UNICEF project team (UNICEF, 2015).

4.3. Methods

The study applied a mixed-method approach with data from pre- and post-surveys, interviews, observations, and reflective feedback sheets. Pre-surveys were conducted among all teachers and among students participating in the project. Post-survey data was gathered from the participating teachers and students. Semi-structured student surveys examined teachers' and students' knowledge and views about human/child rights or child rights education, student participation in school-related activities, class experiences, learning outcomes, and school atmosphere. Data collection focused on teachers' and students' experiences of the implemented models and their gains in teaching or learning child rights. Here we concentrate on the pre- and post-survey data from students' class experiences and gains from six secondary school teachers' implementation of different models of child right education, with a special focus on the drama based pedagogical model. Data from teachers' and students' pre-surveys is used to clarify the atmosphere and context for child rights and the intervention.

The research team provided teachers with structured instructional plans and materials for their lessons. The research team observed the classes by using an observation sheet. After each class session, the teachers got feedback on their implementation and instructional activities from the observers and their reflections on the models and ideas of further development were recorded. A meeting with the teachers and researchers in the middle and at the end of the intervention made it possible for teachers to further reflect on their experiences and offer insights of the models and materials on child rights education. Both quantitative and qualitative data from pre- and post- surveys were analyzed. Structured survey data was analyzed with the SPSS software package by using descriptive statistics,

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frequency distributions, parametric and non-parametric tests, correlations, and principal component analysis. Inductive and theory-driven content analysis was applied with the qualitative survey data. Information from the reflective surveys after some class sessions further helped in interpreting the results from students' experiences and gains.

5. Findings

5.1. Child rights in the school context

All teachers' pre-survey responses (school 1: 4 men, 17 women; school 2: 4 men, 21 women) reflected quite a positive climate and safe environment in both schools. Many aspects of the child rights approach and support of students' active participation were reported, such as inclusion, respect for equity, tolerance, and possibilities for creativity and self-fulfillment. Adults listened to students and students were able to participate and have an impact on school activities. Students' pre-survey responses confirmed these views. Students enjoyed their school (M: 2.9, 3.4; scale: 1-4) and experienced the atmosphere clearly positive (M: 3.0, 3.3), with opportunities for creativity (M: 3.0, 3.4) and disparity (M: 3.2, 3.4). However, only slightly more than 10% of the teachers viewed students as often involved in the decisions on learning and assessment practices or development of school environment and practices. Similarly, students considered that their opinions had an impact on the issues and decisions in their school (M: 2.8, 3.1), but they could influence less the teaching, learning, and assessment practices (M: 2.2-2.4, 2.2-2.6).

Students were motivated to foster human and child rights in both school (M: 2.7, 2.8), but girls' motivation ($p<0.01$) and self-efficacy ($p<0.05$) in this were higher than among boys. All teachers and students were clearly against discrimination in school. Teachers reported knowledge about human rights and the CRC to some extent. However, 85% of the teachers in one school but less than 30% in the other applied materials on child rights. Teachers participating in the intervention yet did so more often ($p<0.01$) than other teachers in the schools. Many reported lack of related knowledge, education, expertise, and materials. Furthermore, according to more than a half of the respondents, the schools did not evaluate their child rights educational practices. Students' guidance in exercising their rights also was slightly less important in the schools. Teachers' interest in fostering children's rights was high, but their self-efficacy as child rights educators was weaker. For example, only 20% of the teachers in one of the schools and 35% of the teachers in the other had high or rather good skills in applying child rights to student assessment.

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5.2. Students' learning experiences and outcomes

Students reported clear learning gains from the intervention in knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to child rights (post-survey). Their gains in attitudes were slightly higher than their gains in knowledge and skills, whereas their learning about opportunities and means for exercising child rights was lower. Learning gains slightly differed between the two schools but not clearly between the students (G1, G3, G4, G5) applying drama in their classes and those (G2, G6) concentrating on other activities. Table 1 displays means and standard divisions of the learning gains by student group and statistical differences between the groups in either school.

Table 1. Average learning gains from the intervention by student groups

	Positive attitudes		Knowledge about CR		Opportunities & means for exercising CR		Knowledge & exercise of CR In school		Empathy	
Groups	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
G1	2.7	0.71	2.6	0.74	2.5	0.82	2.3	0.51	2.2	0.59
G2	2.7	0.54	2.6	0.47	2.5	0.56	**2.7**	0.56	2.4	0.57
G3	2.6	0.90	**1.9**	0.73	2.2	0.73	2.3	0.83	**1.8**	0.78
Sig.			**				*		*	
G4	**3.4**	0.39	**2.9**	0.61	3.1	0.68	**3.5**	0.41	2.5	0.72
G5	3.0	0.68	2.4	0.70	2.9	0.67	2.5	0.57	2.6	0.72
G6	2.8	0.74	2.4	0.64	**2.3**	0.81	2.6	0.71	2.1	0.77
Sig.	**		*		**		***			

* Scale of the responses: 1, …, 4; Student groups: N=13-22, N(total)=105.

Open post-survey responses indicated that the intervention succeeded in enhancing many students' interest in child rights. In all, 33 students reported that they wished to have further information of the content or state of child rights or more similar classes. Moreover, most of their own reports of learning outcomes included *knowledge about human and child rights* (28, 25). Within school 1, this applied in particular to Group 2 (69%) but also Group 1 (53%) and Group 3 (42%) reported these gains. Within school 2 this concerned especially Group 4 (72%), while only 23% in Group 5 and 41% in Group 6 reported the gains. Some students also enhanced their *positive attitude* towards (9, 14) human rights, but no student in Group 1 and only 2 students in Group 5 reported such gains. And, some students learned about *child rights in school* (6, 4) and knowledge about the implementation of child rights (4, 9). However, 9 students in school 1 (G1: 5, G3: 4) and 3 in school 2 (G5: 2, G6: 1) reported that they gained nothing. In all, 14 students learned a little or did not learn anything new. These results indicate that self-reported gains did not clearly differ along with the

instructional models applied in the classrooms but was more related to the school context, the student group in question, and/or the teachers' implementation of the process drama model.

In reporting about the *practices* supporting their learning during the intervention, clearly more students in both schools (52%, 66%) mentioned methods based on *student activity* as compared to traditional teaching (12%, 4%). In school 1, active learning methods were favored in Group 1 (59%) in particular, but also by many in Group 2 (50%) and Group 3 (47%). The most often reported practices were group work (21); functional methods (15); drama, play, and improvisation (14); and videos and pictures (18). A few students (3) in Group 1 also reported about independent work as helpful in their learning, whereas 4 students in Group 3 considered video, drawing, and/or pictures as useful. In school 2, all students in Group 4 considered one or more active learning methods helpful for their learning. The proportion in Group 5 was 54% and 45% in Group 6. Students in this school most often mentioned videos and pictures (12) but also drama, play, and improvisation (10). Also, group work (9) and speaking and discussion (8) were helpful for many. Moreover, *acting, improvisation, and playing* (32 marks) were considered particularly fun or good in the classes, but also group work (16) and doing videos, pictures, or movies with iPads (17) were clearly favored. However, some students (7 in Group 3) considered that knowledge about child rights was not clearly presented in their classes.

Clear *gender differences* were discerned in learning gains in attitudes ($p<0.001$), knowledge about CR ($p<0.05$), understanding child rights in school ($p<0.05$), and empathy ($p<0.01$), in favor of girls. Moreover, comparing learning gains along with the *learning style* of the student groups revealed slighter differences within the schools. Group 3 students were selected to the group based on their skills and emphasis on Mathematics, while Group 4 students were specialized in Music. Experimental and social learning style was predominant in the latter group, while Group 3 students emphasized analytical and independent style. On the other hand, students who clearly preferred *social learning and experimentation* reported higher learning gains in attitudes and CR in school as compared to other students ($p<0.05$). Accordingly, Group 4 reported the highest learning gains, whereas Group 3 reported the lowest gains in knowledge about CR and in empathy.

5.3. Reflections and observations about the classes

Feedback was collected in some groups (1, 2, 3, 4) reflecting students' immediate experiences and feelings after the class sessions. After a drama class, children's best was supported very well according to 53% of students in Group 1, 41% in Group 3, and 73% in Group 4, but this also applied to 59% of students in Group 2 with functional methods. In

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turn, 32% of students in Group 1, 53% in Group 3, and 73% in Group 4 after a drama class but only 6% Group 2 students with functional methods experienced the class practices very meaningful. Similarly, 37%, 47%, and 60% of students in Group 1, 3, and 4 respectively but 24% of students in Group 2 estimated the class work very successful. The quality of learning during a drama session was assessed very good by 11%, 18%, and 53% of students in Groups 1, 3, and 4 respectively, while only 6% of Group 2 students reported very good learning experiences with functional methods. These results reflect more positive learning experiences from the classes applying the drama model than in the class where students participated in group-work, expressed their opinions, and answered teacher's questions. They wrote about feelings such as 'joy' or 'empathy' and also 'sadness for Siwa' after the drama acts. Some reported about how the drama-class 'had made you think'. Yet, students' class experiences also differed between the groups applying process drama. Group 4 students' experiences were clearly more positive than among the other student groups. Interestingly, also Group 3 (math) students enjoyed their drama session despite their post-survey reports of weaker learning gains. One student described probably several students' experience of the class: 'I feel good even if we did not learn much.'

Observations from the drama class of Group 1 using the Siwa story about child labor (UNICEF, 2015) indicated students' high participation and interest in class work. Nearly all students listened to their teacher and actively participated in the play. Students seemingly enjoyed the story and activities, while a few students participated less actively and one male group had problems in concentrating on class work. Similar features were observed during the Group 3 drama class on children's participation (UNICEF, 2015) with small group activities and still drama acts. The small groups yet all worked independently and actively already during the warming-up games. However, teachers in both classes followed a clear structure and actively directed the sessions. Students were neither offered opportunities for choices of activities. Moreover, due to the time constraint at the end of the sessions, linkages to child rights or students' own life were not made and also students' reflections on their experiences were few. In Group 3, the warming-up games also took quite a lot of time before the drawing and still acts.

On the other hand, the Group 4 drama work followed a class on child rights with functional instructional methods, where students could draw pictures or make interviews or movies by iPads about child rights in school, family, or in their surrounding. The teacher told about child rights and actively encouraged reflections on child rights in students' everyday life situations. They were well prepared for the drama class on child rights also by watching those pictures and videos prepared by students. In their drama class, the acts and stories

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arouse from students' own ideas and previous experiences. They were encouraged to be reflective by the teacher and the safe, positive learning environment. Issues and problems were reflected on thoroughly and with time. The teacher also emphasized students' own empowerment as related to child rights. Strong engagement and deep learning were revealed in the connections between the class activities and child rights made by students at the end of the class.

6. Conclusion

Based on a prior project of the Finnish National Committee for UNICEF, the study focused on a process drama method as a pedagogical model for effective child rights education in regular secondary school classrooms. We reported results on student experiences from an intervention in two secondary schools and 6 classrooms with teachers applying the drama model, functional methods, and/or traditional teaching. The implementation and experiences of the process drama method were compared with the use of other instructional approaches. The project team offered teachers training and learning materials on child rights but each teacher made their own choices on the themes and implementation of the models. They also got support and feedback after class observations on students' and their own activities. Teachers and students thus participated in the reflective process of inquiry for generating knowledge and improving practices related to child rights and child rights education (cf., Elliott 2007; Mills, 2003; Somekh & Zeichner, 2009). The project honored teachers' pedagogical professionalism and helped them develop their practices and professional skills as child rights educators (cf., Ferrance, 2000). It also sought to empower students by strengthening their knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to human and child rights, thus involving an emancipatory perspective of action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

Teaching and learning human rights was supported by a process drama method that is found to foster creativity and authentic participation (Toivanen, Halkilahti, & Ruismäki, 2013) but also deeper understanding of the self, others, and the world (Bowell & Heap, 2001; Laakso, 2004; Wright, 2006). Playing fictional roles offered students a secure social context for exploring values and sensitive topics attached to human and child rights. High engagement and positive enthusiasm displayed by the drama class students seemed to reinforce their positive class experiences and increase interest in child rights. Moreover, touching and deep experiences are important for deep learning, moral education, and attitude change (Kolb, 1984; Laakso, 2004). Use of the drama model and the Siwa story in particular enabled students' genuine emotional responses that were reflected in their reports of joy and

empathy, for example. Yet, deep reflections on and connections to child rights in general were missing in some drama sessions, which may have contributed to lower learning gains in knowledge about child rights among some student groups. Using process drama in a positive learning environment should reinforce collaboration, understanding of different perspective, and mutual sharing needed in evoking positive responses such as sympathy and care for others (Joronen, Konu, Rankin, & Åstedt-Kurki, 2011). Class observations revealed successful group work and collaboration in many classes, that together with pictures or videos and drama, play, and improvisation were reflected in students' post-survey reports on class activities as particularly fun or helpful for their learning.

Results on students' learning gains did not capture all features such as changes in their skills or attitudes. This was much due to only one longer drama class in most student groups and the limited time (1-2 weeks) of the intervention for generating such changes. Furthermore, according to pre-survey responses, child rights approach and support of students' active participation featured both schools. The teachers in the study were highly interested in fostering student participation, and most students were motivated to enhance human and child rights. Yet, girls' motivation and self- efficacy in learning about child rights were higher than among boys and, consequently, also were their self-reported learning gains in attitudes, knowledge about child rights, and empathy. Furthermore, students preferring social learning and experimentation reported higher learning gains in attitudes and knowledge about child rights as compared to the other students of the intervention. These students, particularly in Group 4, seemed to gain more from the process drama class on child rights as compared to the other student groups. Observation of their class session revealed highly encouraging and safe learning environment with emphasis on students' own experiences and ideas, creativity, and mutual support combined with deep student engagement in the drama and reflections between class activities and child rights. Further study with additional data will help in explaining these results.

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