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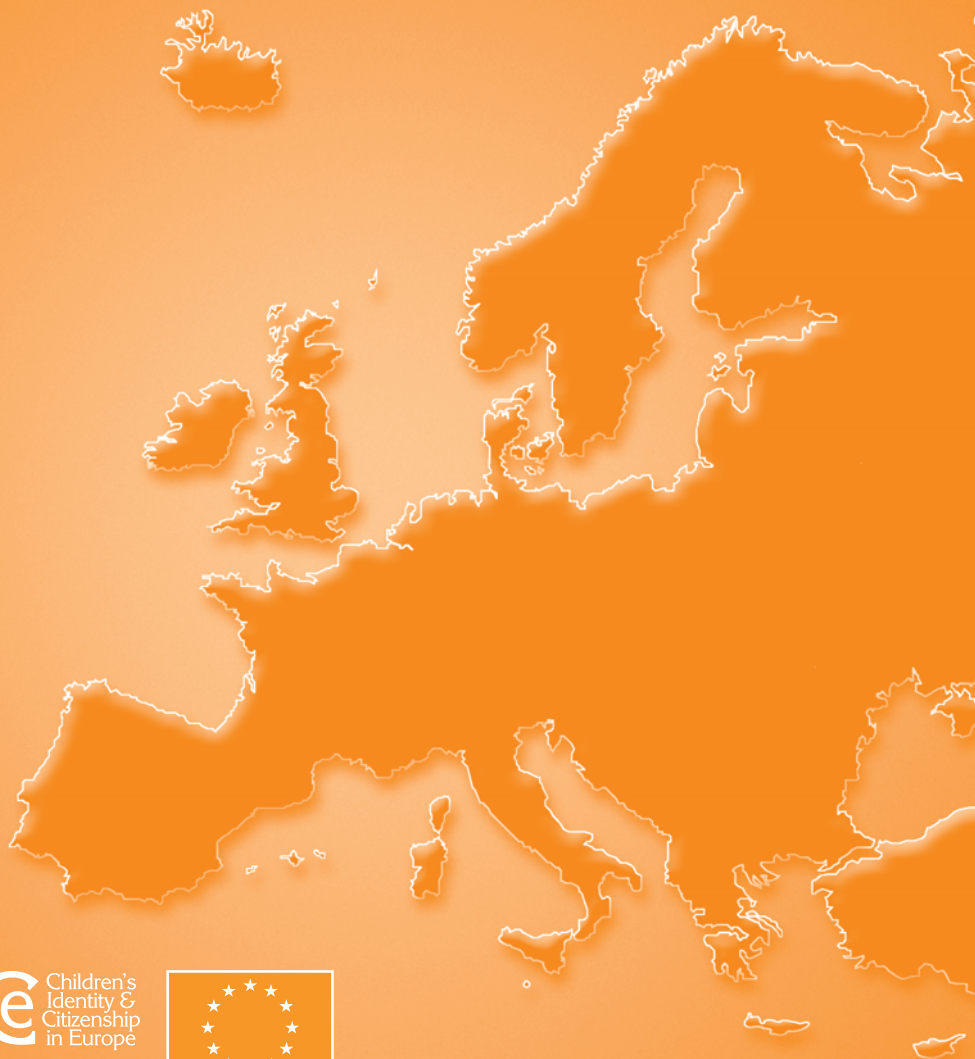
This Guide has been written and prepared by a CiCe Network Working Group

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Informal Education and Human Rights

Eveline Le Roy and
Pete Woodcock

Contents

Introduction

The use of informal educative methods (i.e. the use of learners' social experience and media such as television and films) is thought to help students to explore and understand key concepts of human rights by rooting them in their everyday lives an thus helping them achieve a deep holistic understanding of the topic.

This booklet aims to highlight good practice in using informal educative methods in teaching human rights and to make recommendations based upon these methods and ultimately, it is hoped, promote the use of such methods when teaching and discussing human rights.

In the first chapter we will define informal education and relate it to the concept of human rights. In the second chapter we describe eleven examples of informal education methods, in order to illustrate some good practices. Finally we offer conclusions and recommendations to give guidance to regular self-evaluation of the quality and intensity in education on human and children's rights.

1. Definitions: Informal, Formal, and Non-formal Education:

Informal education is that learning which goes on outside of a formal learning environment such as a school, a college or a university, therefore it is learning outside of the classroom/lecture theatre; however more can be said by way of providing a definition of the term. Informal education can be seen as 'learning that goes on in daily life', and/or 'learning projects that we undertake for ourselves' (Smith, 2009). Many also like to distinguish between non-formal learning on the one hand, and informal learning on the other. The former may include studies that take place outside of places of formal learning which nonetheless contain relatively planned curricula, planned stages of learning and perhaps even assessment of learning, whereas the latter is learning that individuals carry out for themselves in their everyday lives. Non-formal education is therefore learning 'which takes place outside the formal system (ex. [sic] Out of school activities) and most of the time does not lead to a recognized certificate, diploma or degree' whereas informal education is the 'learning that goes on in daily life and can be received from daily experience, such as from family, peer groups, the media and other influences in a person's environment' (Oñate, 2006) .The Scout Association of the United Kingdom provides a good example of a non-formal path to education as is not a formal educating body yet it awards its members 'badges' for, amongst other things, Safety, Health and Fitness and safety (Scout Association, 2009a); each badge having certain assessment criteria attached to it. For example for a scout to receive the award of a safety 'badge' they must:

Explain the Green Cross code (road safety)

Explain the Water Safety code

Say what to do when approached by a stranger

Identify possible dangers around the house and say what to do about them

(Scout Association, 2009b)

This is a clearly defined set of learning outcomes; however the provider is a voluntary organisation rather than a school or college and so it is not formal education, yet having such a specific curriculum formalises it more that what we are referring to as informal education in this report. Informal education on the other hand encompasses a vast array of learning that all people take part in, in their everyday lives. Informal education can encompass activities such as an individual undertaking personal research on an issue of interest to themselves using learning resources such as books, libraries, informal trainers, the internet etc. As such this includes aspects of learning whereby individuals seek to learn a specific skill or look into a certain area but do not use formal or non-formal means to learn. The UK Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills (DIU&S) sums up the multifaceted nature of informal education in its white paper designed to promote its use in adult education, by defining it as:

It encompasses a huge variety of activities: it could be a dance class at a church hall, a book group at a local library, cookery skills learnt in a community centre, a guided visit to a nature reserve or stately home, researching the National Gallery collection on-line, writing a Wikipedia entry or taking part in a volunteer project to record the living history of [a] particular community. (DIU&S, 2009: p4)

Informal education is increasingly important to the DIU&S as, it claims, there has been over the past few years a 'learning revolution' with 'people and communities creating and organising learning opportunities for themselves.' (DIU&S: p.2) However whereas this may or may not be true we should not focus our definition of informal education on people who learn knowledge and skills by deliberately aiming to do this as Informal education also includes learning which is done without the learner realising that it is done. Thus information picked up on a subject from the Television, Radio, conversations with family and friends or overhead conversations are all types of informal education. Informal education then is about the learning we do in everyday life without control from educators, as Jeffs et al (2005) suggest '[i]nformal education is based around conversation, formal around curriculum. Informal educators cannot

design environments, nor can direct proceedings in quite the same way as formal educators.' (p.23)

1.1 Use of informal education

The purpose of this study is not to highlight the manner in which people learn informally, but rather to highlight the manner in which the formal educator may use informal methods in their teaching. It is possible to argue that bringing informal methods into formal (or for that matter non-formal) education environments means that it loses its informal methods, however we believe this to be unfair (if accurate) for this study. The purpose of this study is to show how educators might take full advantage of learning that takes place outside of the classroom and asserts this as being a good thing. Most educators at every level of the education system use some form of informal education in their teaching be it the use of television programmes, films, web resources etc. to illustrate points. For example the television programme The Simpsons may be used to illustrate key issues in politics, religion or philosophy, and in so doing educators would be using informal educative methods to reinforce issues in the curriculum (see, for example, Irwin et al, 2001, Pinsky, 2001, Woodcock, 2006, Woodcock, 2008). However whereas this certainly is a use of informal education, more is possible.

Figure 1: uses of informal education:

High use of informal education

Student led discussion

Students use their biography and self learning to complete a project

Work based learning or practical placement where learning is done outside of the classroom/lecture theatre. Increasingly in use by educators.

Use of DVDS/Television shows, Podcasts developed by teachers Often these approaches use informal means – however these still support a transmission mode of education.

Used a lot (perhaps by most educators)
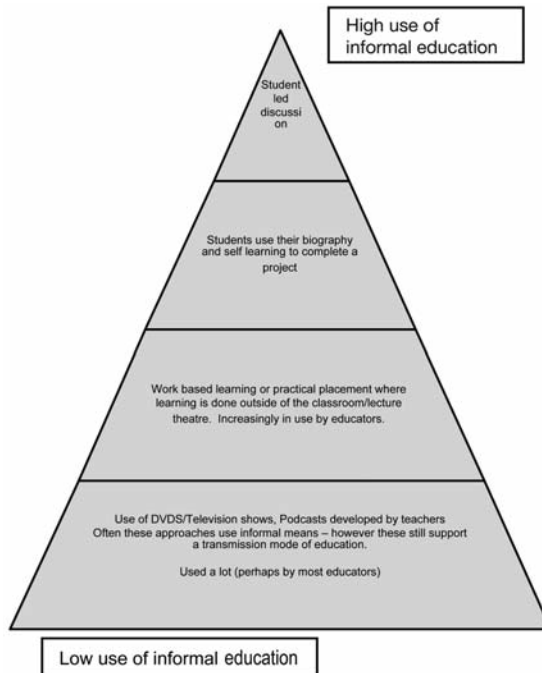
Low use of informal education

Figure 1 shows what we call the 'pyramid of informal education' that seeks to show two things. Firstly it aims to show that even within informal educational means some methods are more informal than others. This does not mean we should chastise educators who use DVDs and Television shows to illustrate points, but rather that we should recognise that there is more to it than simply that. Secondly, it is arranged in pyramid form to recognise the fact that more educators use the forms of informal education at the lower end of the scale than at the top of the scale. As with most educational methods, certain elements of this method are used by most teachers, however sometimes the whole scale of the method is used by only a few practitioners. Take IT in teaching as a comparison; most educators would use PowerPoint and perhaps a Virtual Learning Environment, whereas few would develop pod casts, fewer still wikis and very few will develop distance learning IT materials. The same is true with informal education; most of us use some forms, but there is more that can be used.

The 'pyramid of informal education' does not purport to be exhaustive in listing available uses of informal education, just simply to show that informality has a scale.

1.2   Informal education and human rights

This study does not attempt to look into all forms of education and find examples of informal education (although, no doubt, it is used in the teaching of many different subjects and skills), but rather limits its focus on the teaching of human rights. Happily, we suggest that informal education and human rights education are matched both in content and in form and therefore informal education is ideally suited to human rights.   Cattrijsse (2009) for example, has noted that:

> …the demand for a pedagogy for human rights or for human rights education can not be met with univocal and static models and techniques. *Human rights education is a strong call to make human rights real in everyday life*, over and over again, together with all people concerned, i.e. also with the children. (p.15, our italics)

Informal education is one tool that the educator can use to make these rights real in everyday life. The thrust of informal education is that peoples' everyday lives should be used in education and therefore discussions they have had, things that they have experienced, barriers that they have overcome and even perhaps injustices they have encountered become subjects of informal education. Human rights education is not simply an academic

subject, but rather people should learn about their rights, indeed article 1.3 of the United Nations Charter on Human Rights calls for the promotion of human rights. Whatever can be done for students to bring in examples from their own lives will not only help them to understand human rights but it will also help them apply them to their own lives and learn their lives.

Using informal education within a formal educative setting is not without its problems and its pitfalls. Firstly the educator has to realise that students may be unwilling to talk about their everyday life experiences in the classroom. This might be because of embarrassment, because of fear or because issues discussed might be too painful for discussion and educators must respect this. Students might also resist using their everyday lives in education because of their desire to separate 'learning' from 'life' which, although perhaps not pedagogically sound for our purposes, is a current theme amongst students, who may dislike downloading educational pod casts onto their MP3/4 player as they wish to keep their leisure interests separate from work and study, and likewise pedagogical resistance to the use of informal education might come from the students.

Curricula is also an issue with informal education. There is a tension between the desire on the one hand of the informal educator to allow students more ownership of class time and to lead discussions and projects themselves on issues they are interested in. This would be fine, had we enough time and space, however curricula, schemes of work and impending exams will always pressurise the teacher at any level of the educational system and as a result some methods of informal education might have to be used, some may say, in a fairly sanitised fashion. And this is a key facet of informal education and the project that we are involved in. Much literature on informal education focuses on the skills which the informal educator might need if taking on the role of a youth worker based in a community centre, or an out-reach worker for a city council or a church perhaps, however this project focuses on the possible use of informal education for people working in the formal educative sphere. As such educators have certain staged educational goals for which they are hoping informal educative means might assist them. Whereas some might argue that this is against the spirit of informal education, we argue that the examples below provide a sensible manner to incorporate informal education into human rights education and, as we noted above, make this learning relevant to everyday life.

2. Examples of informal education methods and technology. A description and some good practices

2.1   Digital natives – technology and human rights

Of course no discussion of informal education and human rights can be carried out without a discussion of electronic resources which have become relevant especially as students in the educational system are, in Prensky's term, 'Digital Natives' due to the 'rapid dissemination of digital technology in the last decades of the twentieth century.' (2001, p.3) Today's students represent, he notes:

the first generations to grow up with this new technology. They have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and other toys and tools of the digital age… Computer games, e-mail, the Internet, cell phones and instant messaging are integral parts of their lives. (Prensky, 2001, p.3)

Indeed a recent UK advert designed to attract recruits to the teaching profession had a teacher, whose class had just been disturbed by a mobile telephone going off, contrasting the situation of children with mobile phones to those used for child labour overseas and asking for students to reflect on their different circumstances. The lived experience of a person from the digital generation being contrasted with those who are less fortunate is an interesting one, as is reflection on the role that digital technologies have played in coordinating protests worldwide, and where they have been subject to censorship by regimes. Consequently, although we shall now show how YouTube and the internet have given resources that students and teachers can use on human rights issues, it should not be forgotten that the digital world should not be regarded as a human rights issue purely for the information it distributes, but that it is pivotal in discussions of human rights in and of itself (see, for example, Ramey 2007 for a discussion of the role of mobile telephones in human rights).

YouTube, the website whereby people can share videos, has obviously proved extremely popular with organisations wishing to promote human rights and has resulted in numerous organisations making short videos to attempt to make human rights issues accessible. Videos places on YouTube by organisations can have (at least) two possible uses with regards to informal education. On the one hand they can be used by educators as an informal way of reinforcing a key theme or discovered by students undertaking a project for school. On the other, young people might come across these videos under their own steam and leave comments and opinions on the discussion boards that follow videos. Consequently these videos are useful not solely in their utility for educators.

Amnesty International: The human rights campaigning organisation Amnesty International, for example, have uploaded a short cartoon entitled economic, social and cultural rights for all that it clearly aimed at the younger viewer (Amnesty International, 2007). It shows an unnamed young character who, along with his neighbours, is removed from his home town by troops when industrialists wish to demolish the down so as to redevelop the area. He then goes to the local courts to achieve redress, to no avail and is despondent until he learns about the United Nations and he dreams of a time when he can take his complaint to the UN, have justice served, and be able to return home and rebuild his life with his neighbours. The video then calls upon the viewers to help 'make this dream a reality'.

Unicef: The organisation aimed to promote and defend children's rights around the world have a YouTube channel (http://www.youtube.com/user/unicef) which contains videos highlighting poverty, hardship and injustice to children around the world, issues which are of immediate relevance to human rights education. Often videos will use celebrities to highlight a cause such as Angelina Jolie issuing a plea that we do not forget refugees on world refugee day (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoGwGGIY2Ko&feature=channel_page), to Desmond Tutu speaking out about the importance of human right on the day that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights turned 60 (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80-kC4QFv1I&feature=PlayList&p=0FE187A366377AD4&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=18).

Schools: It is not simply pressure groups and voluntary organisations that have made video resources, but also some schools have made videos for their students and shared them on You Tube such as Paul Gill of Plumstead Manor School in London, England. His video entitled Citizenship Education Human Rights gives a concise overview of human rights legislation and the need that it answered following world war two for the purpose of using this in citizenship education (Gill, 2008a). Elsewhere, they apply a similar format to the issue of bullying, one which is of obvious relevance to school age children (Gill, 2008b).

Podcasts: Of course YouTube is not the only manner in which organisations can divulge information on human rights (which can then be used in informal education), with podcasting being another form. Organisations such as human rights watch (http://www.hrw.org/en/multimedia-podcast) provide frequent audio files.

2.2 Lesson plans and suggestions

School level

The State of Victoria, Australia has produced a document entitled Ideas for Human Rights which is an attempt to disseminate examples of good practice currently taking part across the state (2005). It is divided into three sections, firstly 'Lesson Sparks', which gives non-prescriptive ideas for lessons on human rights, 'Whole School Organisation and Activities' which gives practical tips on how schools can make human rights central to their everyday practice, and finally 'School and Community Partnerships' which shows how schools can look outwards to the wider community in promoting human rights. Distinctive about this document's approach is its snappy 107 points made in the document, giving educators and school administrators inspiration for sessions and ideas. It does not (nor does it purport to) give lengthy discussions of ideas, and encourages all manner of activities to promote human rights education from artwork, poems, rap to reading policy and human rights documents. Typical of suggestions are:

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7. Dramatisation
As a class or in small groups, write a 10-minute story/dramatisation highlighting human rights issues that can be performed with a group of students or class. (State of Victoria, 2005, p.2)

26. An Australian with a refugee background
In small groups, research and profile prominent Australians with refugee backgrounds. (Ibid., p.5)

49. Physical education
As a class, develop a questionnaire to find out what other students think of the sports they play. Present the findings to the school and propose recommendations that would improve students' participation in sports activities. Research the historical, financial, political and cultural reasons some sports are represented and promoted at world events and some are not. (Ibid., p.9).

2.3   Interactive Resources

Various groups and organisations who wish to promote human rights will often provide activities that students can take part in, sometimes these are directly linked to the school curriculum. The BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), for example, provides a set of interactive resources that young students can use to develop their knowledge of citizenship and human rights issues (http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/citizenx/index.shtml). Interactivity is key here, as although YouTube and podcasts provide learners with informal resources that may help support their studies in human

rights, both of these forms still support a transmission mode of education (that is to say a message/information is delivered to a student rather than a student being involved in their learning). The BBC's resources, on the other hand, allow learners to do activities like creating a pop band to learn about personal identity, to complete quizzes on issues such as global institutions such as the UN and the EU, and watch cartoons about asylum seekers moving to a local community which promotes class discussion about these issues and challenges students to consider definitions of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers. Although these resources are aimed at school-aged children, they also contain lesson plans and suggestions for teachers so that they can make use of these resources in citizenship lessons.

2.4   Role playing

Informal education is of course equally relevant in university, however by the time in which a student gets to university, perhaps more is required of human rights education than an understanding of what rights exist, and what one feels about them. It is perhaps at this level that we should cement the idea that human rights are essentially contested concepts, and that political, social and ethical bodies of thought help shape and determine human rights, and sometimes even challenge them. Discussions of human rights at university level (and especially as students advance in their degree studies) will then involve a discussion of wider bodies of thought relevant to human rights such as ethical positions (e.g. utilitarianism and deontology), political ideologies (e.g. liberalism, conservatism, socialism) as well as perhaps social movements (e.g. feminism and 'deep-green' thought). Whereas this will obviously involve lectures, reading lists and much instruction, this does not mean to say that informal educative means might not also be used.

Andrew Schaap's approach (and subsequent article reporting on it) to promote deep holistic learning of 'five traditions of political philosophy and the implications of each for how we conceptualise human rights' involves the use of role playing in the seminar room (Schaap, 2005, p.49). His example suggests that students should be split into five groups, and each group is to be given a philosophical position and asked to imagine that they are the government of a society governed according to that philosophical position (either utilitarianism, communitarianism, socialism, libertarianism and egalitarianism). Schaap then outlines an activity whereby student groups are asked to 'draft a list of the FIVE most basic human rights that citizens of your country would be prepared to endorse. The list you come up with should reflect the ideology of your government.' (Schaap, 2005, p.49) Students are then asked to debate these five basic human rights in a UN style organisation (called for this exercise the 'federal republic of earth'). Indeed by learning about philosophical positions in this manner Schaap acknowledges the

work of Stephen Lukes, who elsewhere has written a Gulliver's Travels style novel entitled The Curious Enlightenment of Professor Caritat that imagines a professor travelling around countries governed by different philosophical position.

2.5   Voluntary Community Work

By doing voluntary work pupils and student can learn, observe and experience the needs of daily life in our society and become aware of the existence and the need for implementation and sustainable conservation of fundamental human and children rights. Different organisations and schools worldwide provide projects with voluntary community work and prove its importance by delivering responsible and socially engaged young citizens. We will now illustrate some good practice taking place in two different countries, namely India and Belgium.

India provides us with the example of the National Service Scheme: (hereafter NSS). The NSS is a youth organisation for voluntary work, related to secondary schools, which aims to bring academic institutions closer to the local community and society, inculcating the spirit of volunteerism among students and teachers through community interaction. It is the largest voluntary student youth organisation in India, implemented by the Government and available in all States and Union Territories. The NSS provides participants with training in democratic living and allows both teachers and students to participate in national development. As such it is non-formal education but we can consider the voluntary work on its own as informal education as the events which occur can be unpredictable and the student will reflect on his experiences and develop social awareness and responsibility. The volunteer operates in social situations, families, local communities often where they can be exposed to painful situations in daily life where human rights are in danger or have to be protected. As such the volunteer can become deeply aware of the problems in daily life, and may then reflect on how they and other people, organisations can contribute to realise a better life for all.

The learning objectives for students on this project are for them to:

- Understand the community in which NSS volunteers work;

- Understand themselves in relation to their community;

- Identify the needs and problems of the community, involve them in problem solving process and develop among themselves a sense of social and civic responsibility;

- Utilise their knowledge in finding practical solution to individual and community problems;

- Develop competence required for group living and sharing of responsibilities;

- Acquire leadership qualities and a democratic attitude;

- Develop a capacity to meet emergencies and natural disasters and practice national integration and social harmony.

The activities in which pupils can participate can be divided in two groups: regular NSS activities and the one hand, and the special camping programme on the other. The Regular NSS activities are the orientation of NSS volunteers via induction activities, campus work, institutional work with voluntary organisations, rural and urban projects, special projects during natural calamities and national emergencies and observation of national/international days .The special camping programme consists of a seven day special camp in an adopted village or urban slum based upon a specific theme (such as developmental works like road construction, cleaning, playgrounds, house construction community surveys/minor studies, house visits, cultural programmes.and awareness programmes).

Students and secondary school pupils from 14 years upwards can decide to become a volunteer. After they have completed their period of volunteering they receive a certificate and some educational credits, so these activities are not seen as 'bolt-ons', but are fully integrated into the curriculum. Every volunteer must participate in regular and special camping programmes, and to complete the programme they must show that they have completed 120 hours of regular NSS activities, and have participated in one seven day special camp.

Every school has some NSS coordinators, whose job it is to promote the NSS to their students, select the candidates to participate, and to match them to the organisations or projects most suited to them. These coordinators also take care of the practical organisation of the NSS, and lead the coaching, evaluation and the administrative organisation for the national certification.

It is clear that this volunteering system in India is immediately related to the situation of the country and its developmental problems and projects, and as such we cannot simply transfer this system completely to the European education system (or any other continent for that matter). On the other hand it can offer ideas and inspiration to initiate some volunteering work for young people in the framework of our educational system in schools and community at local level. It can be especially an added value for pupils in the mainstream of secondary school where practical experience is not part of the curriculum. (see http://nss.nic.in/index.asp for further information on the NSS)

Belgium

In the department of social sciences at the KATHOLIEKE HOGESSCHOOL ZUD-WEST VLAANDEREN - Instituut voor Psycho-Sociale Opleiding (Katho-Ipsoc, hereafter), located in the city of Kortrijk, Belgium, have a good history of co-operation with the city council of Kortrijk and its departments and services. A lot of departments and related organisations (e.g. the Public Centre for Social Welfare), propose a number of projects in which students studying social work and/or social sciences can participate through group work, research work, in relation to their final thesis, and through short term or long term practical placements. For example 'Centre Overleie' belongs to the department 'Citizen and welfare', a co-operation between Centre General welfare, Public Centre for social welfare and the city council. It is an accessible centre for the local community, and in particular provides services for immigrants, vulnerable adults, children living in poverty, homeless people, elderly people and loneliness citizens etc (http://www.kortrijk.be/centrumoverleie)

Every year this centre offers to students a diverse range of opportunities to help with the preparation and the organisation of activities . The students realise this as independently from their tutors as far as possible. Depending on the moment of the year there are a lot of possibilities like hosting a brunch on St Valentine's Day, walking or bike riding, a health promotion activity, eastern celebration and cooking classes. Every year some of our incoming Erasmus students work voluntarily in this centre in their spare time on evenings, weekends and holidays. In agreement with the social workers they can define the date, time and kind of activities in which they will be engaged. Once this is scheduled they have the duty to fulfil their commitments. After finishing their volunteer work the students receive an evaluation and certificate and very often, if it can be justified in the students study programme, as this practical experience is part of their Learning Agreement and Transcript of Records for 2, 4 or even more credits under the European Credit Transfer System. The incoming students tell us that this experience has had a great impact and added value on their intellectual and emotional understanding of social problems in our society and human and children's' rights. The students are enthusiastic about the project and feel very useful in contributing to a better quality of life for the visitors and participants of this centre. Very often they return home at the end of their Erasmus period with the intention to continue their social engagement for 'a better world' in their home country.

2.6   Work-based placement or practical experience

Work based placements or practical experience is nearly always part of the curriculum in the vocational and technical stream secondary education as well as in Higher Education for quite a lot of study programmes.

The more these study areas are related to society and human behaviour, the more this practical experience and work-based placement creates a 'live lab', bringing students in contact with acceptable and less acceptable social situations related to human rights and everyday life. Even in more technically oriented placements, human communication and social relationships will still comprise an important part of it. Students observe and reflect on how an individual, a student, a professional, a customer, the local and federal or national government can deal easily or difficultly with these situations and take their conclusions for their own interactions in the future. The students' programme supervisors and educational supervisors are well placed to stimulate this critical and creative thinking in a positive direction.

This can be achieved by asking students to write reports on critical incidents related to human and children's rights using a personal reflection structure (e.g. description, personal comments related to human rights, comments on their own reactions and behaviour now and lessons learned for behaviour and actions in the future). Students can also raise and discuss their experiences in group or individual supervision. Theory and background resources can be linked to it, so that the students will be able to define their personal objectives and actions.

2.7   Study trips

In secondary school and further/higher education, study trips can be part of the compulsory programme or can be organised in a holiday period as an optional extra to support a particular topic. In such cases students may voluntarily choose to participate in a multidisciplinary group.   Study trips are partially formal, non-formal and informal education depending on their link to an aspect of the curriculum.

Study trips may include visits to historical places, monuments, buildings, museums with reference to the denial or just recognition of human rights (For example, in Berlin students can be guided along the Berlin Wall, the Jewish Museum and a deportation prison; in New York a boat trip to Ellis Island, the museum of immigration, can explain the personal tragedy involved in the American Dream). Students can be prepared beforehand but if they can hear, on the spot, the story behind these places and ask questions related to them, the power of and memory on this experience will remain a for long time, especially when they have the opportunity to chat in an

informal way with their peer group, teachers and guests about their observations and thoughts. A study trip can help broaden students' horizons and through preparatory meetings and debriefing sessions there is possibility for parents, friends, relatives and local stakeholders to also participate.

2.8   Study visits

Study visits can be a full or even half day and take place locally. But the objectives, working and evaluation methods can be similar as the study trips above. Study visits are also formal, non-formal and informal depending of the link with your curriculum. During study visits accompanying lecturers or teachers have the possibility to talk on an informal way with the student group whilst walking from one place to the next.

2.8.1   Field visits

In Flanders, for example, it is recommended that all regular students, and certainly all incoming students, visit 'Flanders Fields' in Ypres at least once to experience the battlefields and the war cemeteries, and observe 'the last post ceremony' celebrating and keeping in memory all who lost their lives or loved ones in this place and in the First World War in general. The Human Right to 'life' and right to 'safety' becomes very clear and poignant on such a visit, and learners can reflect on the role war plays in threatening these rights.

2.8.2   Museums

In quite a number of museums the link with human and children's rights are made very clearly. For example, the psychiatric museum Guislain, in Ghent (Belgium), gives focus to the past treatment of psychiatric patients, including treatments that today would be considered as gross violations of human rights. Other exhibitions in other museums and galleries may not address human rights in such a direct way, nevertheless

paintings, sculptures or artefacts can often indirectly express values and human rights and contest unacceptable situations or events, which can be explored by the students.

2.9   Using critical incidents as an initiation to constructive discussion and action amongst students

Conflict, aggression and bullying are unfortunately all too common in schools. To encourage active and responsible citizenship amongst students it is important to encourage them not merely to abide by rules but also to understand them from different perspectives and as appropriate be involved in decision making and creating rules. Making space for students to talk with peers, in an informal manner, regarding critical aggressive incidents is an important aspect of this process. Such incidents may have taken place in the school, a

neighbouring school, or in wider society. Of course the discussion may not focus on certain individuals linked in general to the right of 'safety'. Important is to problematise the idea of the offender being the only 'guilty' party involved and to consider wider social responsibility and associated skills and appropriate actions. The discussion can later be structured by questions such as: was it possible to prevent this? What could I have done? What could others have done? What could be done to resolve this? What can we do to try and prevent this from happening again?

2.10   Portfolios

A portfolio is a document, a file, a 'map' perhaps in which a pupil or student collects materials regarding a certain topic such as 'human rights' over a period of time. These materials may include academic writings on the topic and their own reflections on this, press articles, journalists and personnel comments on the issue, a book or movie regarding children's rights, a documentation found on the web, results of an interactive game, own observations in daily social life, etc. The student is fully responsible and can decide on content and when and how he/she works on this portfolio. It may be linked to formal assessment, perhaps used as a basis for an interview or discussions with a tutor or mentor.

2.11   Working with other agencies

Complimentary to the examples presented above there is great potential to work with other agencies including NGO's. An example of such an agency is VORMEN vzw, a centre expert in human and children's rights education in Flanders, Belgium (http://www.vormen.org/organisatie/index.htm). The centre aims to share their expertise in Flanders and by extension wordwide by sensibilisation, training, information sessions and the development of educational material and interactive websites. In 2008, the 60th anniversary of the Universtal Declaration on Human Rights, they published a series of suggestion ('tips and tricks') with related resources and training, for early years workers, special needs educators, school teachers, community workers, parents and other stakeholders. Some suggetsions are applicable to all ages while others are target specific age groups. So for example, suggestions for early years settings include using stories, songs and games; at secondary school independent research, discussion and presentation are emphasiesd; while at community level guidance includes involvement in civic projects. See also CiCe guidelines on working with NGO's (Kallioniemi et al 2009)

3   Conclusions and recommendations

These conclusions and recommendations are directed to school management, staff-teams, teachers, lecturers and related stakeholders.

–   Check the existence of an expertise centre for human rights education in your area. They will surely offer a wide range of ideas, examples and even readymade tools for formal, non-formal and certainly for informal education on human and children's rights education.

–   Informal education on human rights in schools and educational institutes may be viewed on three levels: macro level (governmental education policy and school organisation), meso level (classroom organisation) and micro level (teaching activities). School organisation and management should provide a good platform for human rights in action, so at the macro level policies and procedures should be reviewed in order to reflect on the messages that they give. Likewise, at the meso and micro level policy and practice with regard to, for example, transversal learning objectives and outcomes, infrastructure and accessibility, classroom interaction, should be similarly reviewed.

–   Such review is best undertaken on a regular basis, perhaps annually, and incorporated into an action plan that reflects on such things as when and where informal education on human rights is located; how it is developed; which stakeholders are involved; and, who is responsible for implementing or overseeing action. It should evaluate strengths and weaknesses to further develop realistic action plans with achievable targets.

–   Education on human rights and Informal education more particularly is not only a task for the school and its teachers and lecturers, but is a responsibility for all stakeholders in society (parents, local community workers, government and governmental organisations, working field and socio-cultural organisations, youth groups etc) The school has to be in close contact with all stakeholders as appropriate, through, for example, listening, providing feedback, sharing dynamic and creative techniques, delivering and attending training, giving reinforcement, project evaluation and mutual development of the offering of opportunity for informal education on human rights. The school is part of the 'broad society' and has to stay in a continuous dialogue with it.

–   The power of informal learning and education is a constructive approach. What pupils and students have discovered and actively worked on personally, is likely to deeply remain in their attitudes, beliefs, opinions, emotions and long-term memory and may be reflected in intentions and (pro) active behaviour that shows

respect for human rights in daily interactions. However, both non-formal and formal education on human rights, have to be seen as complimentary. Non-formal and formal education methods and techniques can still be used in introduction sessions, supportive informative sessions during the informal learning process, plenary and evaluation sessions. The results of the informal learning processes are likely to be even more effective and efficient if used in an integrated approach!

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A cross-disciplinary group, we include lecturers in social psychology, pedagogy, psychology, sociology and curriculum studies, and those who educate various professions such as teachers, social pedagogues, psychologists, early childhood workers and youth workers.