

The Right to Education

**In ‘International human rights, social policy and global welfare: Critical Perspectives’,
in G. McCann & Féilim Ó hAdhmaill (Eds.). Bristol: Policy Press.**

Benjamin Mallon, PhD

benjamin.mallon@dcu.ie

Dr. Benjamin Mallon is a post-doctoral researcher in the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education, Institute of Education, Dublin City University. His doctoral thesis, funded by the Irish Research Council and the Department of Foreign Affairs, explored school-based peace-building education programmes across the island of Ireland. Ben's research interests are centred on the relationship between education and conflict.

Introduction

In 1924, in the aftermath of WWI, English woman Eglantyne Jebb led Save the Children International Union to draft the ‘Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child’. Within a year, this declaration, expressing children's rights as a universal concern, had been adopted by the League of Nations (Cohen, 1990; Jones, 2006; Marshall, 1999; Starkey, 2018). This enactment represented a significant attempt to universalise children’s rights into an agreed document and an important collaboration between multilateral institutions and non-governmental actors in pursuing agreements aimed at protecting the rights of children in times of peace and war.

This chapter considers the development of children’s rights from this point, charting how the evolution of educational multilateralism alongside the work of non-governmental organisations has shaped how the right to education became conceptualised in global policy, in particular through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Drawing on analysis of the global drive towards Education for All (EFA), the chapter explores how children’s rights, and in particular education rights, are affected by violent conflict. The chapter explores the involvement of schools within processes of violence, identifying how educational practices may limit the education rights of children and in certain cases may be directly implicated in large scale violence. Finally, the chapter considers how the education rights of all children can be met - firstly, through collaborations which seek to address all forms of violence; secondly, through the employment of critical perspectives on education rights, which foster the inclusion of marginalised perspectives; thirdly, the pursuit

of children's rights education which supports children to understand and experience their rights within schools and within wider society.

'Educational Multilateralism and the Right to Education'

The United Nations (UN) was established on October 24, 1945 as an international intergovernmental institution focused on maintaining global peace and cooperation after WWII (Page, 2008). As multilateral institutions, coordinating relationships between three or more states, the UN and the Bretton Wood UN agencies (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) became "central pillars of post-war multilateralism" (Mundy, 1998: 452) and would go on to have a significant impact in the development of a universal right to education.

The UN founders expressed clear belief in the importance of NGOs within their institutional structure (Cohen, 1990) and NGOs were initially involved in the development of several UN agencies and programmes (Mundy, 1998). The constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisations (UNESCO), a legally independent agency of the UN, was signed in November 1945. By 1948, UNESCO had recommended that Member States make primary education, free, compulsory and universal (Bailliet and Larsen, 2015; UNESCO, 2010). Another body concerned with children's lives, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was created in December 1946 to provide nutrition, clothing and healthcare to the many European children facing post-war poverty (UNICEF, 2018). As a UN fund, UNICEF is financed through governments, private organisations and the general public (Jones, 2006). Both UNICEF and UNESCO would play important roles in shaping children's rights.

The UN developed an extensive range of 'conventions, declarations, recommendations, charters and programmes of action' (Bailliet & Larsen, 2015: 419) which espoused the moral expectations for member states, and, when ratified and signed into law, set legal obligations. It was not until 1959 that, with the support of the International Union for Child Welfare, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) drafted the 'Declaration on the Rights of the Child' (Cohen, 1990; UNGA, 1959). This declaration espoused free compulsory elementary education, education for children with disabilities, a focus on the child's best interests and the promotion of moral and social development within "conditions of peace and security" (UNGA, 1959: 2). Hammarberg (1990) suggests that this text added little to the 1924 Declaration and, with no legal obligation on member states, remained of limited power.

The following decade saw education-related rights affirmed through a number of binding and non-binding instruments, which included the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (CADE) in 1960, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both in 1966 (UNESCO, 2010). In 1979, UNESCO launched the International Year of the Child, celebrating twenty years since the 1959 Declaration with a focus on the importance of primary healthcare (Cohen, 1990; Jones, 2006). Through widespread promotion, Western audiences were exposed to images of childhoods affected by famine, poverty and war which stood in contrast to common representations of children's lives (James & Prout, 1998).

Although UNESCO remained an important intermediary between developing countries in search of funding and those bodies with funds, such as the UN, WB and aid programmes (Mundy, 1998), it was weakened by the withdrawal of the US and UK in the 1980s (Jones, 2006). At a similar time, in response to increasing focus on education within national policies, UNICEF had begun to include education within its expanding provision (Jones, 2006). Less impacted by the political and funding constraints experienced by UNESCO, UNICEF pursued focus on 'basic human needs', which garnered political support from social-democratic member states as well as emerging international NGOs (Mundy, 1998). Increasingly, children's rights became "the normative and operational cornerstone of UNICEF" (Jones, 2006: 601). In this shift from welfare onto rights, UNICEF became actively involved in the drafting of the CRC and pursued the involvement of all nations (Hartung, 2017). The International Year of the Child became the start of a ten year collaboration between governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies, towards the development of a convention on children's rights (Cohen, 1990; Freeman, 2000) and what was to become the "most widely- and rapidly-accepted human rights treaty in history" (UNICEF, 2018).

'The CRC and Education Rights'

Prior to 1989, children's rights were perceived as "a slogan in search of a definition" (Rodham, 1973: 487) with little recognition of children's agency and limited consideration of the importance of children's views (Freeman, 2000). Despite the difficulties in achieving consensus (Johnson, 1992), the 1989 CRC provided the "fullest legal statement of children's rights to be found anywhere" (Freeman, 2000: 277) and the most far-reaching statement of education rights ever formulated (Hammarberg, 1998; Hodgson, 1996; Lundy, Orr & Shier,

2017). The CRC is underpinned by a series of cross-cutting General Principles, which include non-discrimination (Article 2), serving the best interests of the child (Article 3), the child's right to development (Article 6) and respect for the views of the child in matters affecting them (Article 12) (Hammerberg, 1997).

The CRC provides specific engagement with the right to education, particularly in relation to Articles 28 and 29. The former demands that, underpinned by international cooperation, every child has the right to education, with primary education free to all children, secondary education available and accessible to all, and that school discipline respects children's dignity. Article 29 focuses on the goals of education and the development of children's "personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential". Lundy, Orr and Shier (2017) criticise the scope of Article 28, describing it as the "lowest common denominator that falls short of the levels of provision that many states make in relation to education" (p. 365) in contrast to the broad aspirations of Article 29.

Each Article identifies State obligations in relation to children's rights which are considered universal (apply to all children, everywhere, without exception), inalienable (belong to every child and cannot be taken away under any circumstances) and indivisible (part of an inseparable framework). Exemplifying this indivisibility, many of the Articles are directly connected to a child's right to education (Hammarberg, 1997). Tomaševski also argues that the right to education has a significant impact on other rights:

Education operates as a multiplier, enhancing the enjoyment of all individual rights and freedoms where the right to education is effectively guaranteed, while depriving people of the enjoyment of many rights and freedoms where the right to education is denied or violated (Tomaševski, 2001: 9)

Where the right to education is denied, other rights, in the present or future, may be seriously compromised. Whilst the right to education certainly "epitomizes the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights" (UNCES, 1999: 3), Lundy, Orr and Shier (2017) argue that the 'right to education' does not adequately capture how the interwoven framework has "evolved and been articulated in international human rights law" (p. 365). For this reason, they suggest that 'education rights' represent a more inclusive definition of the rights which directly and indirectly influence children's education.

Despite almost universal ratification, and the clear potential for the CRC to support the education rights of all children, it is vital to recognise that the CRC is not without criticism. A lack of clarity within the CRC was judged problematic in early analysis (Hammarberg, 1990) with this vagueness leaving pivotal concepts open to manipulation

(Freeman, 2000). Freeman (2000) criticises the drafting of the CRC, highlighting the lack of input from children (within a document which espouses the importance of respecting their views) as well as a failure to engage with issues such as disability, gender and sexuality. Throughout the development process, conflicts had arisen around concepts related to freedom of thought and religion, adoption, the rights of the unborn child and ‘traditional practices’ (Johnson, 1992). Despite claims of universality several authors question the CRC’s leanings towards Western norms (Burr, 2004; Niewenhuys, 2009; Stephens, 1995).

Despite the efforts of collaborators such as Swedish Save the Children NGO children at risk of direct involvement within violent conflicts remained overlooked within the CRC (Cohen, 1990). Hammarberg (1990) echoes this point, also identifying a failure to ensure that protection from war was explicitly assured. Such criticisms proved prescient when the impact of violent conflict on the rights of children was revealed in more detail during the following decade.

‘Education for All’ and the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children’s Rights

UNICEF had developed its focus on ‘basic education’ since the 1980s, eventually proposing the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand which was supported by UNESCO and the WB (Mundy, 1998). This event launched the EFA goals (UNESCO, 2010) which were revisited ten years later in Dakar, Senegal, as World Education Forum obliged governments to reach the goal of universal primary education by 2015 (Jones, 2006; UNESCO, 2010). Despite the impetus created by these targets, all was not well. By as early as the late 1990s it became apparent that the EFA goals would not be universally achieved, and in particular that the political, social and economic situations in conflict-affected countries were negatively affecting the education rights of many children (Novelli, 2011).

A quarter of the world’s population lives in countries affected by violent conflict (World Bank, 2018). Such conflicts range in size (from minor, through intermediate, to war) and type (interstate, extrastate or internationalised), however the boundaries between categorisations are often blurred (Gleditsch, Wallensteen, Eriksson, Sollenberg, & Strand, 2002). Globally, the number of armed conflicts is decreasing; however the nature of conflict has changed (Danesh, 2006; Smith, 2011; Shields & Paulson, 2015). Contemporary armed conflicts are protracted, increasingly complex and difficult to define (Davies, 2004; Gallagher, 2011; Smith & Vaux, 2003). Modern warfare has spilled from battlefields into homes, workplaces and schools, bringing with it an increasingly direct impact to non-

combatants (Machel, 2000; Smith, 2014). Children are disproportionately affected by violence with tens of millions of children growing up in conflict-affected regions (UNESCO, 2011). Comprehensive human-rights based research has revealed the stark physical and psychosocial impact of armed conflict upon young people. Children are physically attacked, are victims of sexual violence, are forcibly recruited into armed groups, are displaced from their homes and suffer significant disruption to their lives (Machel, 1996; Mundy & Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Novelli & Cardozo, 2008; Smith, 2014).

Attacks on education can be defined as “threats or deliberate use of force against students, teachers, academics and any other education personnel, as well as attacks on education buildings, resources, materials and facilities, including transport” (GCPEA, 2014: 34). Save the Children, now a global children’s charity, estimated that over 3,600 separate attacks on education had taken place in 2012 (Martinez, 2013). The Global Consortium to Protect Education from Attack, a coalition of NGOs and UN bodies, highlighted 30 countries where there had been significant attacks on education in the five years previous, and another 40 countries where isolated incidents occurred (GCPEA, 2014). In their 2018 report, *Education Under Attack*, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack argued that in the period between January 2013 and December 2017, there had been an increase in the number of violent attacks on educational institutions, educators and learners (GCPEA, 2018). Such attacks present a significant barrier to children’s rights including their education rights (Martinez, 2013; Novelli, 2010b; O’Malley, 2007, 2010; Poirier, 2012; Seitz, 2004). Progress on inclusion, educational access, school attendance and school completion are hindered in countries affected by conflict (Mundy & Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Poirier, 2012). In 2013, 50 million children remained out of school in conflict affected countries (Martinez, 2013). Alongside these issues, gender inequality in conflict-affected countries has significant implications for girls’ rights (UNESCO, 2011).

Whilst research reveals the impact of violence on the rights of children in conflict-affected countries, it must be noted that the relationship between education and conflict remains deeply complex. Evidence suggests that the impact of conflict may be greater for younger children (Burde et al., 2017), but it is also recognised that conflict may affect girls and boys differently (Burde et al., 2017). Conflict may place girls at an increased risk of violence within schools (Kirk, 2004; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008). Elsewhere, conscription of young males into armed groups presents a barrier to access for boys (Lai & Thyne, 2007). Violent conflict may also have unexpected impacts on certain educational markers. Studies have shown that in low intensity conflict, educational enrolment may indeed increase as

people seek the ability to migrate (e.g. de Groot & Göskel, 2011) or due to the pro-education policies of particular warring factions (e.g. Valente, 2011). Other research questions whether armed conflict is singularly responsible for the denial of education rights. Shields and Paulson (2015) argue that whilst countries affected by conflict are associated with poor educational outcomes, wider societal factors described as fragility, may underpin both the conflict and low educational outcomes. As such, a focus on state fragility may provide a useful lens to consider education rights (Burde et al., 2016; Shields & Paulson, 2015).

Violence within Schools and Children's Rights

An increasing body of research has challenged the idea of education as an unassailable good by illuminating how educational policies and practices have perpetrated violence and undermined the rights of children in various conflict-affected and post-conflict societies, as well as in contexts where war is a distant memory.

Violence within schools was considered a particular issue faced by those seeking to implement the CRC (Hammerberg, 1997). Indeed, schools are recognised as institutions where many forms of violence are sustained (Harber, 2004; Harber & Sakade, 2009; Pinheiro, 2006). With the presence of bullying, prejudice and punishment, schools may be sites of both direct physical and often hidden structural violence (Harber, 1998). Schools may reproduce unequal gender relations and may be the sites of gender-based violence (Davies, 2005; Leach & Mitchell, 2006; Nicolai & Triplehorn, 2003). Racialised violence is identified as a particular issue for schools (Harber, 1998; Harber, 2004). The presence of such violence challenges children's right to be protected from all forms of violence, as entitled within Article 19 of the CRC and, in light of the indivisibility of these Articles, presents a barrier to education rights.

Violent educational practices are, in certain contexts, deeply connected to large scale violent conflict (Davies, 2004; Saltman, 2007; Harber, 2004). Exploring the relationship between education and conflict in more depth, Bush and Saltarelli (2000) categorise the positive and negative effects - or faces - of education in relation to larger scale violent conflict. On the negative face, they argue that the uneven provision of schooling may perpetuate educational and socio-economic inequalities, and in doing so serve to fuel ongoing conflict. On the positive face, inclusive peace-centred practices can challenge violent conflict. Conceptualising such a complex relationship is a tall order, and despite lacking intricacy, the framework has provided a notable foundation for subsequent research in the field (Davies, 2004, 2010). This framework portrays education as either positive or negative, somewhat

neglecting the possibility that complex educational systems or processes may simultaneously prevent and perpetuate violence – for example, an education programme (which challenges violence) taking place in a school where corporal punishment takes place.

In a comprehensive critical examination of the relationship between education and conflict, Davies (2004) analyses several educational approaches which have attempted to address violence, whilst also providing an exploration of educational contributions to violent conflict. Unsurprisingly, in conflict-affected contexts, there is a recognised imperative to move beyond educational practices associated with violence and to create an enduring change (Davies, 2004; Smith & Vaux, 2003; Smith, 2014). Often the scope of such transformation is perceived to be vast: “the existing educational systems, including the overall educational vision, institutional structure within schools, classroom climate and teacher education, need to shift” (Gill & Niens, 2014: 21). As such, creating conditions which make violence less likely might seem like a more realistic aim (Davies, 2013).

Within the Education for All Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2011), particular consideration is given to the quality of education and the importance of “ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills” (p. 83). Whilst the focus on literacy and numeracy is of importance, research argues strongly that any conceptualisation of educational quality, particularly in relation to international comparisons, should move beyond numeracy and literacy to consider “political literacy, pupil agency, democracy, peace education, human rights education and ecology—and perhaps trilingualism” (Davies, 2005: 368). The inclusion of human rights education (HRE) within this consideration is significant, as it is increasingly viewed as an integral component of education in post-conflict societies (Tibbitts, 2008; Covell & Howe, 2005; Osler & Starkey, 2006). Furthermore, HRE provides a means of grounding children’s educational experiences within the CRC (Osler & Starkey, 2010) and such a focus also compliments the considerable HRE work undertaken multilateral organisations (Waldron et al., 2010).

Conclusion - Challenging Violence towards Children

Commitment and Collaboration

There are extensive human rights frameworks, including humanitarian law and international human rights law, which have been developed to protect children from the negative effects of armed conflict, (UNESCO, 2011) and a belief that children must not lose fundamental rights for living in a conflict-affected country (Smith et al., 2011). However,

there is recognition that there has been collective failure to address the challenges of this violence (UNESCO, 2011). Both violence towards and violence within schools has tremendous negative impact on the educational rights and wellbeing and lives of children throughout the world (e.g. Davies, 2004; Harber, 2004). Within conflict-affected regions, it may be unclear whether conflict itself remains the sole arbiter of rights infringements, but it is clear that in many cases, armed conflict, often connected to globalised networks, lessens enrolment, weakens attendance, reduces school completion, destroys educational infrastructure and reduces the chance for too many children to lead a life of peace and educational opportunity (Martinez, 2013; Novelli, 2010b; O'Malley, 2007, 2010; Paulson & Shields, 2015; Poirier, 2012; Seitz, 2004)

UNESCO has argued for strengthening human rights protection for children living in conflict-affected countries, an increase in funding for education systems through humanitarian aid, more support for peacebuilding and reconstruction and further commitment to developing education systems to challenge the causes of violent conflict and foster peace (UNESCO, 2011). Similarly, Save the Children has called for increased funding as well improved monitoring of attacks on education (Martinez, 2013). Non-state actors have held pivotal roles in shaping the work of the UN and the development of educational policies (Hartung, 2017; Jones, 2008; Novelli & Cardozo, 2008) and the importance of collaboration in the monitoring of education is recognised (Heyneman, 2003). Global collaborations offer important coalitions to challenge the impact of violence on children's rights. For example, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) formed by educators connected to UN agencies and the International Rescue Committee (IRC), held a membership of 11,500 members by 2015 and seeks to research, understand and campaign against attacks of education and a commitment to the Safe Schools Declaration (Burde, Kapit & Wahl, 2016; (Novelli, 2010b). Child Soldiers International, formerly the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers developed by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Save the Children, led a successful campaign for the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2002) limiting the involvement of children in armed conflict. They continue to advocate against the use of children in armed forces (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008). Alongside these developments, exploration of education within conflict-affected countries must be pursued in order to shed light on the complex relationship between fragility, education and violent conflict.

Set within their wider societal contexts schools are implicated in the doing of direct violence to children, for example as gender-based violence and corporal punishment (e.g

Harber, 2004). Other forms of violence, as symbolic or structural, whilst not so physically damaging, undermine the educational rights of children inside and outside conflict-affected states. Within work exploring children's experiences, Lundy, Orr and Shier (2017) reveal that, indeed, there is no country where all children have their educational rights realised. Despite its recognised shortcomings, the CRC provides "an important and easily understood advocacy tool - one that promotes children's welfare as an issue of justice rather than one of charity" (Veerman, 1992: 184). As the result of 50 years of collaboration and contest between multilateral institutions, states and NGOs, the CRC presents the opportunity for these rights to be met. Most importantly, it provides a mechanism by which State commitment to the UN conventions can be monitored by UN Committees. In relation to education rights, this may include the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Bailliet & Larsen, 2015: 419). In addition, the UN special rapporteur on the Right to Education, reporting to the UNGA, investigates rights violations. These mechanisms provide a significant opportunity for individuals, organisations and broader coalitions to contribute towards the monitoring of children's rights within signatory States (NGO Group for the CRC, 2008) and represents a basis for important research deepening understanding of children's education rights (e.g. Lundy, 2007).

Critical Perspectives on Education Rights

Whilst this chapter suggests that the development of the CRC is demonstrative of a collective commitment toward education as a basic right, it is important to recognise that this perspective is not shared across all multilateral institutions, for example within the World Bank (Klees, 2002). Novelli (2010b) notes that "education systems are embedded in complex social systems and local and global political economies" (p.272) and it is therefore imperative to consider how broader economic frameworks, such as those pursued World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Western governments, frame education, children's rights and violence. Klees (2002) identifies the challenge of such an approach, as "if education is seen as a human right, then examining the obstacles to fulfilling a child's right to an education becomes even more subversive of the economic order" (Klees, 2002: 470).

The development of educational multilateralism has not passed without calls for the inclusion of perspectives which have been traditionally marginalised (Mundy, 1998). Whilst the CRC represents a significant framework, it is imperative that the criticisms of continued alignment with traditional Western perspectives are met with processes that are inclusive of

those voices and perspectives absent in its development. This is particularly pertinent for conflict-affected regions, where deeper understanding of context needed (Burde et al., 2016) but where humanitarian approaches to education rights may represent new forms of imperialism (Okeke, 2009; Baytiyeh, 2018).

Children had little meaningful involvement in the drafting of the CRC (Freeman, 2000). Their participation is enshrined in Article 12, and the potential to “harness the wisdom, authenticity and currency of children’s lived experience in order to effect change” (Lundy, 2007: 941) has important implications for those wishing to understand and challenge the impact of violent practices on children’s rights. A significant project in this regard is Young Lives led by the University of Oxford, an international study of childhood focused on the lives of children in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam and provides significant insight into children’s experiences of violence (e.g. Pells & Morrow, 2018; Thi Thanh Huong, 2013, 2016; Rojas & Guerrero, 2016; Pankhurst & Mulugeta, 2016). Such important approaches provide evidence on children’s experience of violence and offer a means to support their rights.

Children’s Rights Education

An urgent requirement for those concerned with children’s education rights appears to be an honest appraisal of the extent to which formal education contributes towards perpetuating violence and, within regions more directly affected by war, reinforces the foundations of violent conflict and attenuates any attempts to build peace (e.g. Davies, 2004). In short, “education can be part of a solution to injustice in the world, but equally it can promote violence and injustice” (Osler & Starkey, 2010: 129). At the very least, education must ensure that it is not reinforcing the wider societal norms which are causes of conflict, before it may consider operating as a force for positive change (Davies, 2010).

Whilst the focus on literacy and numeracy dominates particular conceptualisations of the right to education, Article 42 of the CRC states that States have an obligation to make the Convention known to children, signifying the need for children’s rights which are grounded within education as “part of an emergent ‘common sense’ and are articulated with social practices” (Hunt, 1990: 325). Even if the barriers towards the realisation of education rights created by violent conflicts, state fragility or educational practices taking place in schools and classrooms can be overcome, it remains imperative that children’s rights must form a central tenet of any conceptualisation of quality education, for “the rights *to* education needs to be

complemented by rights *in* education and rights *through* education” (Osler & Starkey, 2010: 129).

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