

# **Human Rights Education: developing a theoretical understanding of teachers' responsibilities**

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### Abstract

The United Nations (UN) asserts that children and young people should have access to Human Rights Education (HRE) and that schools are one of the key means through which HRE should be made available (UN, 1993; UN, 2006). However, there is currently limited knowledge about the presence and form of HRE in school contexts, and there is no established means through which HRE provision within schools is evaluated. This paper proposes a theoretical framework to support the classification of teachers' responsibilities in relation to HRE and argues that systemic change is needed within education systems if HRE provision is to be realised in more extensive and consistent ways. The curriculum documents of three nations - Australia, England and Sweden - were analysed to determine teacher responsibilities for educating pupils about human rights. The viability of the developed framework was then tested through applying it to the outcomes of these analyses. The theoretical contribution made by the paper deepens knowledge and understandings about the nature of responsibilities placed on teachers to educate pupils about human rights, and provides a foundation from which to stimulate debate about what constitutes effective school-based HRE practices.

Keywords: human rights; teacher responsibilities; human rights education

### **Introduction and Aims of paper**

The United Nations (UN) asserts that children and young people should have access to Human Rights Education (HRE) and that schools are one of the key means through which HRE should be made available (UN, 1993; UN, 2006). However, there is currently limited knowledge about the presence and form of HRE in school contexts, and there is no established means through which HRE provision within schools is evaluated. This paper aims to address these issues and argues that systemic change is needed within educational systems if HRE provision is to be realised in more extensive and consistent ways.

Specifically, this paper aims to develop a theoretical framework for HRE that supports the classification of responsibilities placed on teachers to educate pupils about human rights. We apply the developed HRE framework to the curriculum contexts of three different nations - Australia, England and Sweden - to enable a more 'robust' testing than would have been possible if it had been applied to the educational context of only one nation. The decision to focus on these particular nations was steered by the fact that an initial analysis of these three nations' curricula had already been undertaken, and ambiguities around teacher roles and responsibilities for HRE identified in previous papers written by the authors. Within these earlier papers, the school curricula documents of the author's respective nations - Australia (Phillips, 2016), England (Robinson, 2017) and Sweden (Quennerstedt, 2015) - were analysed to determine which human rights were expressed, and what expectations were placed on schools and teachers to educate pupils about human rights. This paper builds on and extends findings reported in these earlier papers; the aim is for the proposed HRE framework to have the potential for application to different curricula and to the examination of practices regarding the role of the teacher in HRE across diverse nations. Throughout the paper, HRE is construed in broad terms as education that transforms pupils' understanding of, and relationship with, human rights.

The involvement of multiple nations in one study inevitably raises questions about appropriate terminology, especially where similar terms used across the nations denote slightly different meanings. For example, the terms 'teacher', 'practitioner', 'educator', 'pupil', 'student' and 'learner' all have slightly different connotations within the three nations referred to in this study. To minimise misunderstandings, throughout this paper, the term '*teacher*' is used to denote teachers, practitioners and others working with children and young

people in school settings; and the term '*pupil*' is used to denote children and young people, pupils or students with whom educators work in school contexts.

### **National contexts**

The three nations included in this study share similarities in terms of their social and cultural characteristics, and are all developed, industrialised nations with ethnically diverse populations. All three nations have a well-developed compulsory education system, and they each have their own central government which directs educational policy. Furthermore, there is also evidence of similarities in terms of pupils' academic achievement, for example, the 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores for 15year olds across the three nations were found to be similar for Maths, Reading and Science (OECD, 2018). While these parallels between the nations suggest similar educational contexts, disparities were found between the nations in terms of the character and form of curriculum documents, and in terms of expectations embedded within central government education policy relating to HRE in schools.

#### *The Australian context*

In Australia, the first national curriculum began a staged implementation in 2010, with individual states and territories determining the extent and timing of uptake. The compulsory Australian Curriculum is designed to provide a developmental sequences of learning content and learning expectations for the compulsory years of schooling, it covers both academic curriculum areas and other capabilities which teachers are expected to incorporate into their teaching. Aspects of HRE are embedded in the compulsory curriculum through the General Capability of Ethical Understanding. Within this, there is a specific focus on identifying and examining values, and exploring rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups in a range of contexts and practices (ACARA, 2017b).

#### *The English context*

In England, a statutory National Curriculum for schools, which outlines the content of compulsory subjects to be taught to pupils was introduced in 1988 and has since undergone several revisions, with the latest version published in 2013 (DfE, 2013a). The subject content outlined in the National Curriculum document must be taught to all pupils in mainstream state schools. The English Government also requires teachers to follow statutory guidance relating to the teaching of Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) (DfE, 2013b), a non-compulsory subject which is not included in the National Curriculum. To meet the requirements of the PSHE guidance, there is an expectation that there will be some teaching about human rights. The English Government also requires teachers to put into practice statutory guidance outlining overarching principles relating to teachers working in non-discriminatory ways, treating pupils as unique individuals (DfE, 2013a), and providing opportunities for pupils to express themselves and take part in decision-making (DCSF, 2008; DfE, 2014).

#### *The Swedish context*

In Sweden, the first national curriculum for compulsory schooling was introduced in 1962, with the most recent revision of this being in 2011. The compulsory Swedish curriculum comprises three parts: (i) fundamental values and tasks of the school, (ii) overall goals and guidelines for education, and (iii) subject syllabuses which are supplemented by knowledge requirements. Within it, there is a strong and explicit emphasis on children's rights, including requirements for schools to 'impart and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values' (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011, 9). The Swedish curriculum also requires schools: to apply democratic working forms in practice (Ibid., 10); to prepare pupils for participating in, taking responsibility for, and applying the rights and obligations that characterise a democratic society (Ibid., 17); and to enable pupils

to ‘consciously determine and express ethical standpoints based on knowledge of human rights and basic democratic values’ (Ibid., p14).

These fundamental differences between the three nations in their approaches to school-based HRE will be taken into consideration when discussing findings relating to the application of the HRE framework to curriculum documents.

### **Human Rights Education: the stance of the United Nations**

The universal entitlement to human rights, which applies to all individuals globally, was acknowledged in the Universal Declaration of Human rights (UN, 1948). In 1993 the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, affirmed that “States are duty-bound...to ensure that education is aimed at strengthening the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms [and that] ...this should be integrated into the educational policies at the national as well as international levels” (UN General Assembly, 1993, Part I, para 33). Following this, the UN Decade of Human Rights Education (1995-2004) was launched (UN Commission on Human Rights, 2000) and, in 2006, the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education (World Programme) was presented (UN, 2006). Both programmes encouraged nations to develop national structures and processes for HRE. The Decade of HRE ran from 1995-2004 and set out guidelines for national plans of action for HRE. The remit of the World Programme, however, was much broader. It started in 2005 and is still on-going today; the programme defines HRE as “education, training and information aiming at building a universal culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and moulding of attitudes” (Ibid., p. 1).

The World Programme was divided into three consecutive phases, each with a specific focus. The first phase ran from 2005-2009 and focused on integrating HRE into primary and secondary school systems (UN, 2006). The evaluation of this phase (UN General Assembly, 2010) acknowledged that most member states were implementing HRE

programmes but with varying degrees of influence. The commonly identified gaps in school-based HRE included: “absence of explicit policies and detailed implementation strategies for human rights education and the lack of systematic approaches to the production of materials, the training of teachers and the promotion of a learning environment which fosters human rights values” (Ibid., p. 295). Following the identification of such gaps the UN Coordinating Committee on HRE recommended that Governments gave attention to:

The need for educational policy commitments explicitly referring to the human rights framework; development and implementation of policies on teacher training which make human rights education part of mandatory teacher qualification requirements; review of the national curricula to clarify how and to what extent human rights education is dealt with, including through integration of human rights in other subjects which are assumed to address them (Ibid).

The second phase of the World Programme (2010-2014) focused on developing HRE within higher education, and on human rights training for teachers and educators, as well as other sectors (UN, 2012). In 2011 the Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (UN General Assembly, 2011) was adopted, declaring access to HRE and training as a fundamental right in all levels and forms of education, from preschool to university. The Declaration highlights three key dimensions of HRE:

- education about human rights, which includes providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection;
- education through human rights, which includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners;
- education for human rights, which includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect the rights of others (Ibid., Article 2).

The Plan of Action relating to the third and current phase (2015-2019) stresses the need to re-engage and strengthen the work of the first two phases (UN General Assembly,

2014). It emphasises the importance of increasing the presence of HRE in national curricula and the need to investigate how, and to what extent, human rights are integrated within school curricula.

In this paper we explore the application of a theoretical framework of HRE that supports the classification of responsibilities placed on teachers to educate pupils about, through and for human rights. The paper incorporates, and adds to, the features of HRE advocated within the World Programme, it therefore has direct resonance with the recommendations made within the three phases of the World Programme.

### **Previous research focusing on Human Rights Education in schools**

A small number of international studies have focused on school-based HRE, however, these provide only a limited insight into the presence and form of HRE in schools, and do not add significantly to our understanding about teachers' responsibilities for HRE. For example, Gerber's (2008) research of schools in Australia and the USA, and Lapayese's (2005) survey of secondary schools in Japan, Austria and the USA established that HRE tends to be implemented in the form of small-scale and localised initiatives and, if embedded at national policy level, the implementation in classrooms is generally limited and weak. Lapayese (Ibid.) also found that, of the nations included in his study, none imposed mandatory stipulation for HRE to form part of teacher education and professional development requirements. A study by the Australian Attorney General's department reported similar findings in relation to the Australian context (Burridge et al., 2013).

Thus, findings from the above studies suggest that HRE is not a well-integrated feature of schools or national education systems. Consistent with this argument, an investigation of 12 countries' implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Lundy et al., 2012) found that children's rights education was not considered an important

factor with regards to implementing the UNCRC. Additionally, it was found that although most countries included aspects of human rights and children's rights in their school curricula, the inclusion of this was often optional, unsystematic and not mandatory, and hence rarely led to substantial education about rights. Small scale studies conducted by Tibbitts (2009) and Howe and Covell (2011), however, highlighted cases where HRE was embedded within the practices of individual schools; they reported significant gains in terms of participants developing understandings around human rights, the application of human rights principles, and empathy and care for others.

Specific school-focused rights-based programmes include Amnesty International's Human Rights Friendly School project, and Save the Children's Global Peace Schools; they aim to place human rights as an integral part of everyday school life and are available to schools across the world. Additionally, in the UK, UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting Schools programme aims to embed a rights-respecting culture within schools and put the UNCRC at the heart of school curriculums. Common to each of these programmes is the aim to help children and young people understand how rights apply in the context of their lives. However, even where schools integrate programmes with a rights-based focus within their curriculum, there is still concern that the nature and amount of HRE received by pupils is inconsistent (Robinson, 2017). Burrige et al.'s (2013) Australian study found "the implementation of HRE initiatives is largely dependent on the interest and goodwill of individual teachers" (p. 5), and that many teachers experienced a sense of ambiguity towards HRE, which hindered their engagement with HRE. Robinson (2017) also noted that, within England, teachers interpreted and implemented their curriculum responsibilities for HRE in different ways depending on "how they socially construct notions of children, the related values, beliefs and prejudices they hold, and how they are encouraged at school level by school leaders to interpret HRE responsibilities" (Ibid., p. 134-135). A further study by

Tibbitts and Kirchsclaeger (2010) identified that teachers were not familiar with HRE content and lacked HRE professional development. In a recent comprehensive discussion of HRE globally, Russell and Suárez (2017) assert that “further research is needed on the mechanisms through which human rights curricula and policies are implemented” (p. 39), hence, adding to our key argument that HRE needs to be an embedded feature of national education systems. We see an urgent need to clearly explicate and conceptualise responsibilities for teachers in relation to HRE so that measures can be put in place to enable all teachers to assume HRE responsibilities in a more consistent way.

The development of the HRE framework for classifying teacher responsibilities for HRE will draw on two existing and distinctive models of HRE - the World Programme for HRE (UN, 2006); and Tibbitts (2002) model of HRE. Within the following section, consideration is given to the attributes and limitations of each of these models.

### **Existing frameworks of Human Rights Education**

The World Programme endeavoured to identify the fundamental characteristics of HRE for schools and other settings (UN, 2006, 6), while Tibbitts’ (2002) framework illuminated three distinct models of HRE found in practice. The key features of these two frameworks are outlined below.

#### ***The World Programme for Human Rights Education***

The World Programme purposefully promoted the need for, and value of, HRE within schools, and reaffirmed a statement by the Committee on the Rights of the Child that:

the education to which a child has a right is one designed to provide the child with life skills, to strengthen the child’s capacity to enjoy the full range of human rights and to promote a culture which is infused by appropriate human rights values (UN, 2006, p. 6).

It also stated that HRE in schools should be “an integral part of the right to education... [and that] human rights should be learned through both content transmission and experience, and should be practised at all levels of the school system” (Ibid., p. 6-7).

The World Programme comprises three equally important elements:

- i) *Knowledge and skills* - which includes learning about human rights and acquiring the skills to apply them in daily life;
- ii) *Values, attitudes and behaviour* – which incorporates developing values and reinforcing attitudes and behaviour in alignment with human rights; and
- iii) *Capacity for action* – which is concerned with developing capacity to defend and promote human rights (Ibid., p. 12).

Furthermore, the World Programme’s principles for HRE activities advocate a more holistic conception of human rights and assert that this should include the promotion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights (Ibid., p. 14). It also states that educational activities should foster respect for, and appreciation of, differences and opposition to discrimination; they should develop knowledge and skills to enable the protection of human rights; and should create teaching and learning environments free from want and fear that encourage participation and enjoyment of human rights. It emphasises that HRE should be relevant to the daily lives of the learners, engaging them in dialogue about how abstract expression of human rights can be realised in practice in learners’ particular social, economic, cultural and political contexts (Ibid.).

The concepts underpinning the three elements of the World Programme provide some insight into the UN’s areas of priority in relation to HRE outcomes for pupils. When combined with principles and guidelines for the implementation of the World Programme, however, the overall programme of HRE presents itself as highly complex, with weak indications of *how* it can be effectively implemented or achieved. Gerber (2013) suggests

further reasons why the World Programme may not have been successfully implemented, and asserts that the UN's engagement with HRE was largely 'ad hoc and unfocused, lacking coordination, collaboration, resources and strategy, underfunded, and without specific goals and a coherent, long-term overall vision for HRE' (Ibid., p. 179). This points again to the lack of integration of HRE within school and national education systems. Developing a classification of teachers' responsibilities around HRE is an important component of the systemic change we believe is needed if HRE is to be embedded at scale in education systems.

### ***Tibbitts' models of Human Rights Education***

Tibbitts (2002) asserts that HRE is ultimately about building human rights' cultures within the communities in which individuals belong. She identified three, equally significant, models to classify HRE practices, each based on the premise that HRE is achieved through bringing about attitudinal and behavioural change.

- i) ***Values and awareness.*** Within this model, the main focus of HRE is "to transmit basic knowledge of human rights issues and to foster its integration into public values" (Ibid., p. 163). The Values and awareness model typically fosters critical thinking amongst learners and the ability to apply a human rights framework when analysing policy issues. It places relatively little emphasis on the development of skills such as those related to conflict-resolution and activism. In relation to HRE in schools, Tibbitts argues that the transition of knowledge of human rights must avoid the 'banking' model of education outlined by Freire (1990), in which the learners risk "superficial exposure to the human rights field" (Tibbitts, p. 164), and do not develop an understanding of the value or meaning of human rights.

- ii) ***Accountability.*** The Accountability model places responsibilities on professionals to “directly monitor human rights violations... [and take] special care to protect the rights of people (especially vulnerable populations) for which they have some responsibility” (Ibid., p. 165). Within a school context, the assumption is that teachers will acknowledge and have an interest in upholding and protecting the rights of pupils and in taking action when rights are violated, and that pupils will be directly involved in the protection of individual and group rights.
- iii) ***Transformational.*** The Transformational model aims to empower individuals to understand their rights and to “recognise human rights abuses and to commit to their prevention” (Ibid.). The model assumes that pupils have had personal experiences of human rights violations and, within the school context, this model is evident when violations committed against children and young peoples’ human rights are recognised, discussed and, where possible, acted upon to redress the violation. Tibbitts (Ibid., p. 167) acknowledges that the Transformational model is the most difficult to implement and requires support by teachers on an on-going basis.

Within school contexts, each of Tibbitts’ three HRE models focuses on outcomes for pupils. The associated implied responsibilities for teachers are, therefore, to develop educational programmes that will enable the realisation of these outcomes. However, the models give very little guidance in terms of what an educational programme might include, or how the outcomes might be achieved, thus Tibbitts’ model takes us no closer to embedding HRE system wide within and between schools.

It is worth noting here that Jennings (2006) also proposed a HRE framework; this was in the form of a set of HRE standards for classroom teachers. He acknowledged that HRE cannot be accomplished by simply adding human rights content to an already overburdened curriculum, but must go further towards reform “by shaping the curriculum content of schools and teacher education, shaping classroom methodologies for instruction and management, and encouraging teacher-students and students-student interactions not only *about* human rights but also *embody* human rights” (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, n.d., in Jennings, 2006, p. 290). Jennings (2006, p. 292-294) advocates six HRE standards for teachers: 1) Engages and supports all students learning about human rights; 2) Creates and maintains effective environments that embody the principles and concepts of human rights; 3) Understands and organises subject matter to promote student learning about human rights; 4) Plans instruction and designs learning experiences for the HRE of all students; 5) Uses assessment strategies that embody human rights concepts and principles; and 6) Develops as a professional human rights educator.

Although these standards helpfully begin to identify facets of teaching practices and responsibilities related to enhancing HRE more systemically, they are largely presented as processes to be followed, rather than focusing on the broader, conceptual understandings of the underlying principles pertaining to school-based HRE. Within Jennings’ standards, there is also a relative lack of emphasis on empowering pupils to take action in cases of rights violations. For these reasons, and due to the fact that each of Jennings’ standards could be incorporated into the elements within the World Programme and/or Tibbitts’ model of HRE, we decided to place relatively less emphasis on these standards when developing the HRE framework for teacher responsibilities.

## **Developing a Human Rights Education framework for teacher responsibilities**

Drawing on central elements of the World Programme (2006), and Tibbitts' (2002) models of HRE, we developed a framework in which teachers' HRE responsibilities were categorised into three fundamental areas - *Knowledge and values; Attitude and environment; and Agency and action*. The three areas of the framework are elaborated below.

***Knowledge and values.*** This element of the HRE framework is concerned with a responsibility for teachers to inform pupils *about* human rights declarations and conventions and the nature and content of the articles within these, and to develop pupils' understanding of the values inherent within human rights principles. Thus, this aspect of the framework encompasses two main responsibilities placed on teachers. One is to transmit knowledge and raise pupil awareness of human rights through directly teaching about rights - this responsibility reflects Tibbitts' (2002) *Values and awareness* model, and the *Knowledge and skills* component of the World Programme (UN, 2006, p. 12). It also reflects Jennings' (2006) HRE standards relating to supporting and promoting pupil learning about human rights. The second responsibility is to increase pupil awareness and understanding of human rights values. This responsibility reflects the *Values, attitudes and behaviour* component of the World Programme (Ibid.), as well as aspects of Tibbitts' *Values and awareness* model, which supports children and young people to understand what human rights are and to think critically about them (Tibbitts, 2002). In brief, the teaching responsibility within the Knowledge and values element of the HRE framework is primarily concerned with teaching pupils *about* human rights and raising pupils' understanding of the values inherent within human rights.

***Attitude and environment.*** This element of the framework is focused on teacher responsibility to adopt an attitude and create an environment in which they themselves acknowledge, uphold and respect the rights of others, as well as provide opportunities for

pupils to do likewise. The responsibility for teachers to develop attitudes which acknowledge, uphold and protect children's rights strongly reflects Tibbitts' (2002) model of *Accountability* which requires professionals to protect the rights of people (especially vulnerable people) for whom they have some responsibility. It also draws on the *Values, attitudes and behaviour* element of the World Programme (UN, 2006, p. 12), which emphasises the need to reinforce attitudes and behaviour that are aligned with human rights, and reflects Jennings' (2006) HRE standards relating to creating and maintaining environments, learning experiences and assessment strategies that embody the principles and concepts of human rights. This responsibility, therefore, requires teachers to create an environment in which human rights are recognised and respected *through* teachers themselves enacting human rights values.

***Agency and action.*** This aspect of the HRE framework refers to teacher responsibility to support pupil development of rights-agency through encouraging pupils to uphold and exercise their own rights particularly when there is a danger of their rights being violated, and to actively protect the rights of others. The *agency* element attends to the possibilities and parameters of what pupils can do in terms of rights' enactment, and reflects Tibbitts' (2002) *Transformational* model of HRE, which stresses the need for children and young people to recognise human rights abuses and to enact actions for change in the context of their experiences. It also draws on the *Capacity for action* element of the World Programme (UN, 2006, p. 12), which is concerned with developing children and young peoples' capacity to act to protect and defend human rights. Thus, this teacher responsibility relates educating pupils *for* human rights, and is primarily concerned with teaching practices that explicitly promote pupil agency and action in relation to human rights advocacy and activism.

### **Assessing the viability of the HRE framework: an analysis of teacher HRE responsibilities within national curriculum documents**

To assess or 'test' the viability of the framework, we undertook an analysis of curriculum

documents within three nations – Australia, England and Sweden - noting expressions of HRE within the curricula. From this, we determined areas of teacher HRE responsibilities within the context of each country’s developed HRE framework. Findings from this analysis, and insights gained, are presented below.

### *Choice of curriculum documents on which to focus*

The curriculum material used for the assessment analysis of the newly developed HRE framework was based on the curriculum documents previously examined in the three papers mentioned earlier (Quennerstedt, 2015; Phillips, 2016; Robinson, 2017) – and on which this paper builds. Each of the national researchers was tasked with identifying which documents to include within the curriculum analyses. The criteria for selection were that the documents would include guidelines and requirements relating to the content and implementation of the respective nation’s national curricula for compulsory schooling. For Sweden this was a relatively straightforward task since the national curriculum is one collated document (285 pages). For the Australian and English contexts, deciding on which documents to include in the analyses was more challenging. For example, with regards to the Australian context, due to the emerging status of the Australian Curriculum, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008) (the current nationally agreed directions and aspirations for Australian schooling), along with several other, more recently published curriculum documents were included in the analysis. For England, the latest version of the statutory National Curriculum, as well as documents covering statutory guidance relating to the teaching of other non-compulsory subjects, and statutory guidance around principles relating to how teachers treat pupils as individual and in non-discriminatory ways were included. While for Sweden, only the most recent, 2011, revision of the National Curriculum document was included in the analysis. The analysed documents for each nation are listed in

Appendix 1; the abbreviations given in brackets throughout the paper to refer to the respective documents.

### *Choice of rights on which to focus*

In the previous papers (Quennerstedt, 2015; Phillips, 2016; Robinson, 2017), references within curriculum documents relating to a range of UN social, cultural, civil and political human rights particularly pertinent to the livelihood and development of children and young people in developed nations were examined. We made a deliberate decision to focus on specific human rights defined under UN legislation in order to ground the analyses in rights that are defined in international law, as opposed to the more common practice in HRE literature of simply referring to the generic yet ambiguous term of ‘human rights’. For the purpose of analysing the viability of the developed HRE framework, we focused on a purposefully selected sample of civil and political rights, drawing on the following UN documents: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948); The International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (UN, 1966); and The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989). The chosen rights are detailed in Table 1.

Our decision to focus on only civil and political rights was based on our own informed academic assessment of the relative lack of acknowledgement of children and young peoples’ civil and political rights in schools, and was strengthened further by literature which resonated with these views. For example, childhood studies research notes that children lack political, as well as civic rights (James et al., 2008), including decision-making about their education. More specifically, when exploring pupils’ perspectives on schooling in England, Osler (2010) found that pupils’ “biggest single concern was that they did not have a say in the decisions that affect them” (p. 105) (i.e. political rights). Additionally, the

University of Minnesota Human Rights Resource Center asserted (2000) that stronger support for civil and political rights in schools could lead to the greater enactment of cultural rights, as civil and political rights are integrally related and essential to individuals and communities expressing and perpetuating their cultures.

Based on these grounds, we selected the following civil and political rights on which to focus: Civil rights - Right to life and personal security; Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; and the Right to equal value and non-discrimination. Political rights - Right to freedom of expression: and the Right to take part in the conduct of affairs in relation to matters affecting them.

Table 1 here.

### **Applying the ‘Teacher HRE responsibilities’ framework to curriculum documents**

Throughout this section we analyse how the Australian, English and Swedish curricula place HRE responsibilities on teachers in relation to the specific civil and political rights outlined above. References to the specified rights within the curricula documents were noted by each national researcher (see examples in tables that follow) Each researcher then, independently, interpreted which area of responsibility - Knowledge and values, Attitude and environment, and/or Agency and action - was reflected in the references to the specified rights for each of the three national curricula. The researchers’ respective analyses were compared; in most cases there was unanimous agreement about the types of HRE responsibilities placed on teachers. Where there were differences in opinions, these were discussed and debated until agreements were reached.

Examples of each area of responsibility are included in the tables that follow. Within the tables, actual quotes from the curricula documents are shown in italics (see appendix for documents relating to each nation's curricula, and related abbreviations used within the tables).

### ***1. Teachers' HRE responsibilities: Knowledge and values***

The Knowledge and values element of the Teacher HRE responsibilities framework is concerned with teacher responsibility to *transmit knowledge* and teach pupils about the nature and content of human rights declarations and conventions, and to *develop pupil understanding of human rights' values inherent within these*. Table 2 below illustrates ways in which HRE responsibilities pertaining to Knowledge and values are expressed in the curriculum documents of the respective nations.

Table 2 here.

Table 2 above illustrates that the curriculum documents of all three nations place responsibilities on teachers to transmit knowledge about, and develop pupil awareness of the values inherent within the civil *right to equal value and non-discrimination*. In Australia, teachers are expected to support students “to identify and understand ethical concepts such as equality and respect”; in England, they are expected to teach pupils “to identify differences and similarities... and diversity” among different and diverse groups; and in Sweden there is an expectation that teachers will teach pupils about what constitutes discrimination, as well as transmit human rights principles as basic values.

The Australian and Swedish curricula also place responsibilities on teachers to transmit knowledge and inform pupils about the civil *right to freedom of thought, conscience*

*and religion*, and the political *right to take part in the conduct of affairs*. With regard to the *right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion*, the Australian curriculum requires that pupils become informed citizens in the context of a multicultural and multi-faith society, while the Swedish curriculum specifically places expectations on teachers to transmit knowledge about freedom of religion, and to support respect for diversity of values and beliefs. Although the English curriculum documents do not explicitly place responsibility on teachers to transmit knowledge or develop values in pupils about this particular right, teachers are required to teach pupils to respect diversity amongst people of different race and cultures. In terms of the *right to take part in the conduct of affairs*, teachers in Sweden are expected to transmit knowledge to pupils about democratic principles, and in Australia there is an emphasis on teaching pupils about how to be accountable as members of a democratic community. Teacher responsibilities around the Knowledge and values element of this right, however were not explicitly presented within the English curriculum documents.

The remaining two rights examined in this assessment analysis - the civil *right to life and personal security*, and the political *right to freedom of expression* - are not (with the exception of one statement in the Swedish curriculum) reflected in the curricula as key responsibilities for teachers' to directly teach about, or to support, the development of related rights' values.

## ***2. Teachers' HRE responsibilities: Attitude and environment***

The Attitude and environment element of the Teachers HRE framework encompasses teachers' responsibilities to adopt an attitude and create an environment in which they acknowledge, respect, and uphold the rights of others, and provide opportunities for pupils to do likewise. Within this responsibility, there is an expectation that the teachers will, themselves, enact human rights values within the school environment. Table 3 below illustrates ways in which HRE responsibilities, relating to the Attitude and Environment

element of the HRE framework, are expressed within the curriculum documents of the three nations.

Table 3 here.

Table 3 above illustrates that references within the curriculum documents of all three nations emphasise teachers' responsibility to create an environment and adopt an attitude in which the following rights are respected and upheld: the civil rights to *equal value and non-discrimination*, and to *freedom of thought, conscience and religion*; and the political right to *take part in the conduct of affairs in relation to matters affecting them*. With regard to the *right to equal value and non-discrimination*, all three curricula place responsibility on teachers to enact values pertaining to this right through requiring teachers to treat pupils in a non-discriminatory way, with the Swedish curriculum also requiring teachers to actively counteract discrimination. In terms of the *right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion*, responsibilities are placed on teachers in all three nations to adopt an attitude and create an environment in which diversity is respected. In relation to the *right to take part in the conduct of affairs in relation to matters affecting them*, the Australian and English curriculum documents place responsibilities on teachers to provide opportunities for pupils to contribute to school decision-making that affects them. The Swedish curriculum also emphasises this as a fundamental value and teachers are required to apply democratic working forms in practice, rather than simply supporting pupils to take part in decision-making regarding their schooling.

No direct reference was made to teachers' responsibilities relating to creating an environment or adopting an attitude in which the political *right to the freedom of expression*, was respected and upheld. Furthermore, with regard to the civil *right to life and personal*

*security*, only the Swedish curriculum documents placed responsibilities on teachers, within the Attitude and environment element of the HRE framework, relating to this right, with Swedish teachers being expected to create an environment in which human life is acknowledged and respected.

### ***3. Teachers HRE responsibilities: Agency and action***

Within the curriculum documents, references were made to teacher responsibilities to support children in developing rights agency and capacity for action, through expectations placed on teachers *to teach pupils to uphold and exercise their own rights, and to actively guard and protect the rights of others*. Table 4 below provides examples of teachers' HRE responsibilities relating to the Agency and Action element of the HRE framework, as expressed in the curriculum documents in the respective nations.

Table 4 here.

Table 4 above illustrates that, within the analysis, the curriculum documents of all three nations place responsibilities on teachers to encourage pupil Agency and action relating to two of the rights - the civil *right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion*, and the political *right to the freedom of expression*. In terms of the *right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion*, teachers are required to encourage students to express their own points of view (Australian curriculum); to help pupils learn what they like and dislike (English curriculum); and to support pupils to develop the ability to form personal standpoints (Swedish curriculum). With regards to the *right to the freedom of expression*, teachers in all three nations are expected to encourage pupils to communicate and express their ideas.

Responsibilities to support the development of pupils' Agency and action relating to their civil *right to life and personal security* are placed on teachers in Australia and England, however, no overt reference is made to this responsibility within the Swedish curriculum documents. Furthermore, responsibilities placed on teachers to support pupil Agency and Action relating to the civil *right to equal value and non-discrimination* are actively asserted within the Australian and Swedish curricula, but not within the English curriculum documents. For example, the Australian curriculum requires teachers to “challenge stereotypes” and “mediate cultural differences”, and the Swedish curriculum requires teachers to reject “the subjection of people to oppression and degrading treatment”, and to respect “the intrinsic value of other people”.

With regard to the political *right to take part in the conduct of affairs in relation to matters affecting them*, only the Swedish curriculum included explicit examples that reflect teacher responsibility for pupil Agency and action, with an overall goal of the Swedish curriculum being for pupils to influence the “working methods, forms and content” of their education.

### ***Summary of findings in test analysis***

Table 5 below outlines where teacher HRE responsibilities lie (and where they do not) across the identified civil and political rights in the Australian, English, and Swedish curricula.

Table 5 here.

As can be seen from the table above, all five examined civil and political rights are reflected in the curriculum documents of all three nations, with some rights being reflected in all three areas of responsibility within the HRE framework, and other being reflected in only one or two of the areas. The table highlights that two of the examined rights – the *right to freedom of*

*expression* and the *right to life and personal security* – are largely only addressed within the Agency and action element of the HRE framework, with some attention given to these rights in the Knowledge and values, and Attitude and environment responsibilities in the Swedish curriculum.

The overall findings from the three nation curricula analysis indicate that two of the investigated rights – both civil rights – stand out as particularly strongly reflected in terms of teachers' responsibilities for HRE – the rights to *equal value and non-discrimination*, and *freedom of thought, conscience and religion*. In terms of the right to *equal value and non-discrimination*, strong and specified expectations are placed across all three areas of teacher responsibility. Teachers are expected to: explicitly teach about central concepts/principles and discrimination; create an environment that promotes equality and is non-discriminatory; and action discrimination by challenging stereotypes and rejecting oppression and degradation. Although less frequently referenced than the previous right, the right to *freedom of thought, conscience and religion* is present in all three areas of teacher responsibilities, with teachers being expected to have a sensitive and supportive attitude to differences in beliefs and views, to actively support pupil expression of their points of view, and to value and embrace diversity in thought, culture and religion.

The political *right to take part in the conduct of affairs* is also substantially reflected in the curricula. The related teacher responsibilities are apparent within two areas of the HRE framework: Knowledge and values, and Attitude and environment, with teachers having a responsibility to teach about democracy and democratic principles, and for organising opportunities for pupils to practice democracy, mostly in terms of decision-making within school.

Findings from the test analysis illustrate that English curriculum documents place relatively less emphasis on teachers' HRE responsibilities, when compared with Australian

and Swedish curriculum documents, particularly in relation to responsibilities around Knowledge and values and, to some extent, in relation to teacher HRE responsibilities around Agency and action. Such differences reflect variations in the character of the three nations' curriculum documents as outlined earlier in the paper. For example, within the Australian and Swedish compulsory curricula, requirements to teach about rights and develop understandings around values are incorporated into overarching capabilities (Australian curriculum) and fundamental values (Swedish curriculum) intended to permeate teaching practices, however, no such requirements to teach about values are incorporated into the English curriculum documents.

### **Concluding Discussion**

Within the past decade, the UN has given increased attention to HRE and to integrating human rights concepts and values within mainstream educational settings (UN, 2006; UN 2010; UN, 2014). However, there is no evidence that national legislations developed in response to the various UN initiatives have resulted in HRE being embedded in school-based policies and practices within any nation. Given that HRE ambitions are most likely to be achieved if teachers have responsibilities relating to pupils' HRE, this paper focused on developing a theoretical framework which identified specific responsibilities for teachers to 'educate' pupils about, through and for human rights.

Previous studies found that even where HRE responsibilities are placed on teachers, the ways in which, and extent to which, teachers acknowledge, interpret and execute these responsibilities is likely to differ from teacher to teacher (Burrige et al, 2013, Robinson, 2017). This, coupled with the fact that there is currently a distinct lack of guidance and clarity about effective pedagogical approaches to support HRE, and a very limited acknowledgment of teachers' HRE responsibilities within the teacher training programmes of all three nations

(Lapayese, 2005; Burrige et al. 2013), points to the need for clarity and guidance around enacted HRE practice.

Through testing the developed teachers' HRE responsibilities framework using the curriculum documents of three nations and specified civil and political rights, we have demonstrated how the framework can be used to determine teacher HRE responsibilities. In this final section, we conclude by clarifying how the framework has contributed to advancing knowledge about HRE.

Though others have identified models of HRE (e.g., Tibbitts, 2002) and HRE standards for classroom teachers (e.g., Jennings, 2006), these have not been aligned with specific UN human rights, nor have they assessed evidence for teaching responsibilities in curricula. Analysing curriculum documents through applying the teachers' HRE responsibilities framework served to highlight that the framework is a fruitful tool for identifying opportunities for HRE that already exist in the national curricula, as well as identifying gaps in teacher responsibilities. The generation and application of the developed framework, which comprises three elements - Knowledge and values; Attitude and environment; and Agency and action has extended and deepened understandings about the responsibilities placed on teachers in relation to school-based HRE and provides a starting point for further discussions about this currently under-researched and under-theorised area. The developed HRE framework can be applied to the curricula of different nations, its use could also be extended to other educational contexts, such as policy documents and educational practices, thus making it possible for comparisons to be made in relation to the responsibilities placed on teachers across a broader range of curriculum documents and contexts.

If HRE is to feature more prominently, consistently and extensively in schools and across education systems, a classification of teachers' HRE responsibilities is a vital

component of the systemic change needed. To further develop understandings about the nature of the systemic change that would support embedding HRE within schools, there is now a need to build on the HRE framework developed in this paper, and to identify elements of the curriculum, as well as routine and pedagogical practices in classrooms and schools more widely, which promote educating pupils about, through and for human rights. Aligned with these considerations, we need to find ways of articulating these practices in terms of expectations placed on school leaders and teachers. Thought also needs to be given to leadership and organisational strategies for embedding HRE in schools, and to how HRE can be incorporated into the future professional development of pre-service and qualified teachers.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **National curriculum documents referred to within the analysis**

(The abbreviations for each document, as used throughout the paper are included within brackets)

#### *Australian curriculum documents*

- Australian curriculum: Civics and Citizenship (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, 2017a). Referenced in tables as: (AC-C&C)
- Australian curriculum: Ethical understanding (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, 2017b). Referenced in tables as: (AC-EU)
- Australian curriculum: Information and Communication Technology Capability (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, 2017c). Referenced in tables as: (AC-ICTC)
- Australian curriculum: Intercultural understanding (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, 2017d). Referenced in tables as: (AC-IU)
- Australian curriculum: Health and Physical Education (Australian and Curriculum Reporting Authority, 2017e). Referenced in tables as: (AC-HPE)
- Melbourne declaration on educational goals for young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008). Referenced in tables as: (AC-MD)

#### *English curriculum documents*

- The National Curriculum in England: framework document (Department for Education, 2013a). Referenced in tables as: (EC-NC)
- PSHE Education Programme of Study (Key stages 1-5) (PSHE Association, 2017). Referenced in tables as: (EC-PSHE)

- Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education (guidance) (Department for Education, 2013b). Referenced in tables as: (EC-PSHE Guidance)
- Listening to and involving children and young people (Statutory guidance) (Department for Education, 2014). Referenced in tables as: (EC-DfE)
- Working Together: Listening to the voices of children and young people (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008). Referenced in tables as: (EC-DCFS)

***Swedish curriculum documents***

- *Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet 2011* [Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the recreation centre 2011]. (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). Referenced in tables as: (SC-Lgr11)