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The Intersect of Social Justice and Children's Right to Participation: Implications for the Field of School Psychology

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Abstract: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the first human rights treaty with the ultimate goal of providing conditions conducive to child health and development. The CRC is grounded on four guiding principles: (1) non-discrimination; (2) best interests of the child; (3) the right to life, survival, and development; and (4) respect for the views of the child. These CRC principles are consistent with a social justice approach within the field of school psychology. This article highlights implications for school psychologists and encourages school psychologists to be at the center of the process of measuring, advocating, and actualizing all rights under the CRC, including the right to participation, in schools throughout the world. A summary of the Rights Respecting Schools initiative is offered to provide a concrete example for school psychologists and other school-based professionals.

Keywords: *Social justice, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), children's right to participation, school psychology.*

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Introduction

Advancing the development and well-being of children is the central objective of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2001) emphasizes:

Children do not lose their human rights by virtue of passing through the school gates. Thus, for example, education must be provided in a way that respects the inherent dignity of the child and enables the child to express his or her views freely in accordance with Article 12 (1) and to participate in school life. ... The participation of children in school life, the creation of school communities and student councils, peer education and peer counselling, and the involvement of children in school disciplinary proceedings should be promoted as part of the process of learning and experiencing the realization of rights. (p. 4)

Optimum child development is defined under five main domains of physical, mental, social, spiritual and moral development (UN General Assembly, 1989). School psychologists and allied education professionals share this commitment to promoting the development of all children (Lansdown, et al., 2014; Nastasi et al., 2020). The National Association of School Psychologists "recognizes that school psychologists play a pivotal role in promoting respect for and the realization of child rights and that their contributions are best made in partnership with parents, educators, schools, and their communities" (NASP, 2012, p. 3). Moreover, around the world, school-based professionals are particularly well-positioned to advocate for and implement the CRC as they are with children during most of the day in many countries.

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Literature Review

The quality of children's experiences within their environments plays a key role in their developmental outcomes. There is a large body of scientific evidence showing the associations of children's health (Ellis & Boyce, 2008), development (Ellis et al., 2011), and proxy indicators of their health (Vaghri et al., 2013) with the quality of their environments. In short, evidence reveals that if the conditions under which children grow up, live and learn can be improved, more children around the world would have a better chance to thrive in all domains of development, such as physical, social, emotional, and cognitive (Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, 2008; Vaghri et al., 2020). Improving these conditions requires a strong commitment from governments in the form of systematic and ongoing investment in child-friendly policies and programs, and a strong commitment from professionals who work with children in schools.

Implementation of the CRC in schools is highly related to the application of a social justice framework. The optimal role of public schools is to prevent gross inequalities, and to promote the learning, adjustment, and healthy development of all children. As noted by Shriberg et al. (2008, p. 464), school psychologists highlighted the importance of "ensuring the protection of rights and opportunities for all". Similarly, Bardsley (2007) highlights that "socially just schooling in a global era must attempt to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty that entrenches disadvantage by providing students with the capability to seek a future wherever they choose" (2007, p. 497). Schools also play a role in shaping children's social justice values and interactions throughout life (Peppin Vaughan, 2016). The CRC reflects this in Article 29 when it obligates States parties to direct the education of the child to "...the development of the child's personality, talents ... and preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin..." (UN General Assembly, 1989, Article 29 section, para. 5). It is apparent that a social justice framework is consistent with the CRC emphasis on meeting the needs of children and involving children as participants, with the ultimate goal of providing conditions, opportunities and environments conducive to promoting the health and development for children. The following briefly describes the principles of child participation and social justice, and highlights some important implications for school psychologists and other school-based professionals.

1.1. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The CRC, which defines a child as anyone below the age of 18 years, was established by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 44/25 of November 1989 and enacted September 1990. The CRC has been ratified by all countries in the world except the United States of America (UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2020). The CRC aims to enhance children's health, development and wellbeing through improving the quality of their environments, as articulated in 41 substantive rights, which are grounded on four guiding principles: the principles of non-discrimination (Article 2); best interest of the child (Article 3); respect to child's inherent right to life, survival and development (Article 6); and respect to the views of the child (Article 12) (UN General Assembly, 1989). These principles have bearing on and must be considered during implementation of all CRC articles to fulfill every child's rights. Importantly, the CRC elaborates the aims of education in terms of promoting the fullest possible development of each child, and helping each child acquire the values, skills and confidence necessary to contribute to their community and society. School psychologists and allied education professionals have an opportunity to emphasize and practice the CRC principles throughout their daily interactions with children.

Promoting Non-Discrimination

Relevant to a social justice emphasis in school psychology, CRC Article 2, which articulates the principle of non-discrimination, is both a substantive and a procedural right and is pertinent to the realisation of all other rights (Abramson, 2008). Article 2 authoritatively obligates States parties to safeguard all rights, including the right to education and the right to health, for all their children without discrimination and regardless of the child's or parents' "race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status" (UN General Assembly, 1989, Article 2 section, para. 1) or other grounds for discrimination. It is important to reiterate that the CRC also protects children from discrimination based on their parents' or guardians' associations, origins, actions or beliefs.

Promoting Children's Best Interests

Article 3, the principle of the best interests of the child, confers to the child the right to have their best interests given a primary consideration in "...all actions or decisions that concern him or her, both in the public and private sphere" (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013, p. 3). Clearly these spheres include the educational sphere and the environment of the school. Relevant to this principle is that the rights of the child precede the "best interests" standard and as explained further in General Comment No. 14 of the CRC, "no right could be compromised by a negative interpretation of the child's best interests" (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013, p. 3).

Promoting Children's Development

Article 6 of the CRC guarantees the child's inherent right to life while linking it to the child's survival and holistic development. Implementation of the entire CRC centers on the fundamental notion of survival and maximum development possible, and that governments have the obligation to create an environment that enables all children under their respective jurisdictions to grow up in a healthy and protected manner to develop their "personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential" (UN General Assembly, 1989, Article 29 section, para. 2) consistent with their evolving capacities. The duty for the upbringing and development of the child is a shared responsibility of the parents and the State (UN General Assembly, 1989). Article 2 in combination with Article 28 mandates the education system to serve as a means to promoting the maximum development of the child (Lansdown & Vaghri, 2021).

Promoting Children's Participation

Article 12 of the CRC, in recognition of children's lack of legal autonomy in decision-making, asserts that children are capable of forming opinions, therefore they must be provided with opportunities to express them and to have them given due weight (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009). This article reconstructs the image of the child from a passive recipient of care to an active participant in their own care and protection, and obligates duty bearers to provide safe spaces and relevant information to children to prepare them for meaningful participation (van Bueren, 1995, p. 136).

Lansdown and colleagues (2014) highlight:

It [Article 12] recognises that, although for children, unlike adults, there is no automatic presumption in favour of autonomy or independent decision-making; they are, nevertheless, entitled to respect as human beings, with rights to be involved in decisions that affect them. As such, it provides a balance between, on the one hand, the engagement of children as active agents in their own lives, and on the other, their entitlement to additional protection during the period of childhood. (p. 4)

For school psychologists, this is particularly important to consider within the school context. Article 12 in combination with Article 28 obliges the educational professionals including school psychologists, to provide opportunities for children to participate meaningfully in all decisions concerning education (Lansdown & Vaghri, 2021).

The Committee emphasises the significance of Article 12, commonly known as the right to participation, and views it as a means of civic engagement through which children can advocate for their rights and hold States parties accountable (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016). Article 12 has particular relevance and significance to Article 6 as a convincing body of evidence from the science of child development has demonstrated the empowering role of active listening and participation on the developmental outcomes of childhood (Vaghri et al., 2018).

Child Participation: A Matter of Human Rights and Social Justice

1.2. Child Participation as a Human Right

While the CRC may be criticized for its compliance shortcomings, it is also widely commended for its conceptualization of children as active agents instead of passive objects of care. One of its most unique and innovative aspects is the articulation of children's right to participate and to be given opportunities to express themselves (Casas et al., 2006; Grugel, 2013; Kilkelly & Lundy, 2006; Lundy, 2014; Stasiulis, 2002), as articulated in Articles 12 and 13, respectively, and as described above.

Scholars across many disciplines have identified children's participation as critical and have agreed that children have the capacity to participate in matters that affect their lives (Davey & Lundy, 2011; Lundy et al., 2015; Vaghri et al., 2018). Enabling children to participate in decision-making builds their capacity, promotes personality and moral development, develops their communication skills and assertiveness, empowers them, and may support neurological development (Andersen & Dolva, 2015; Bruyere, 2010; Collins, 2015; Lundy, 2007; Lundy et al., 2015; Shonkoff, 2009; Sutherland, 2013; Vaghri et al., 2018). Additionally, the experience of participating and expressing views prepares children to take active roles as adult citizens in a democratic society (Rehfeld, 2011; Sutherland, 2013). Child participation also improves wellbeing at the community level (Graham et al., 2014). Finally, research and policy informed by children's views are more likely to be sensitive to children's needs, lead to effective change, and challenge assumptions about childhood (Collins, 2015; Graham et al., 2014; Sutherland, 2013).

Beyond these benefits, it is the duty of adults to facilitate children's right to participate and to be heard, especially in the context of research, programs, and policies that affect them (Collins, 2015; Graham et al., 2014; UN General Assembly, 1989). The literature reiterates that participation efforts should be centered on the best interests of children (Article 3) and the intention to further their rights, rather than on politics or NGO and university agendas (Lundy, 2014; Skelton, 2008).

A rights-based approach to child participation not only assists children in voicing their opinions, but also supports children in forming those opinions as well (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012). One of the prerequisites to meaningful and

effective participation that young people have identified is capacity building (Lundy, 2007). The CRC also outlines the importance of imparting information in an appropriate format through Article 17, as well as in the CRC's General Comment 12 which articulates: "It is not necessary that the child has comprehensive knowledge of all aspects of the matter affecting him or her, but that she or he has sufficient understanding to be capable of appropriately forming her or his own views on the matter" (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009, p. 7). For example, the Lundy model of child participation (2007), depicted in Figure 1, uses a rights-based approach and accounts for these issues. The essential components of this model are: (a) providing safe (Article 19), inclusive and non-discriminatory (Article 2) space for participation; (b) helping children to both form and express their voices (Articles 5 and 13); (c) helping to bring their voices to the relevant audience; and (d) giving feedback to children about the extent of influence they have had.

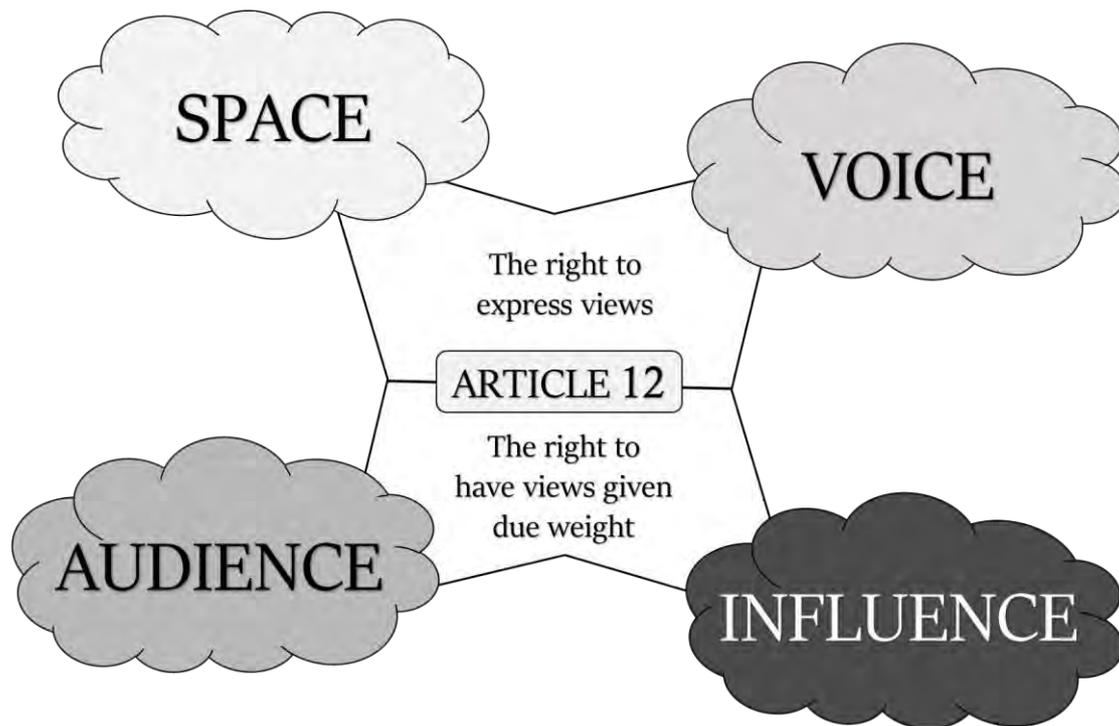


Figure 1. Lundy's model of child participation (2007), adapted from Ireland's National strategy on children and young people's participation in decision-making, 2015-2020 (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015).

In spite of the recognized benefits of child participation, efforts to include children at international and domestic levels have often been viewed by critics as unsatisfactory [Child Rights International Network (CRIN), 2016; Vaghri, 2018]. While some European countries have legislated children's participation rights, participation is often tokenistic or minimal in practice (Lundy, 2007; Stasiulis, 2002). Canada has been praised for articulating participation rights in the juvenile justice system; however, it has also been criticized for failing to implement participation rights more broadly (Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children, 2012; Stasiulis, 2002). Overall, child participation requires significant attention from the academic and policy communities (Tisdall, 2016), as presently this right is routinely violated.

Promoting Child Participation and Social Justice in Schools

Child participation supports educational institutions in achieving their mandate to actualize social justice in schools. Schools have the capacity to attenuate some of the circumstances in children's lives that might leave them vulnerable to disadvantage or discrimination, and to their other rights being violated. Such circumstances vary from living in a low-income household or belonging to a minority group, to having a disability or identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ²). Schools can support all children by providing safe spaces to participate and to voice their opinions on different issues at their schools. By providing equitable opportunities for children to participate, grounded on all four guiding principles of the CRC, schools can promote social justice. The following highlights the interplay of child participation and social justice, beginning with a brief overview of social justice within psychology, education, and school psychology.

In the field of psychology, *social justice* is a term that has been a core principle of the multicultural competency movement (Arredondo et al., 2008; Vera & Speight, 2003). Shriberg et al. (2008, 2011, 2013, 2020) describe how the concepts of cultural diversity, multicultural competence, and social justice are directly linked. In the field of education,

social justice is a term that is associated with the idea that all individuals and groups must be treated with fairness and respect and that all are equally entitled to the resources and benefits that the school has to offer (North, 2006). Shriberg and colleagues describe social justice as a framework to address societal ills (e.g., institutionalized racism, sexism, and homophobia), such that “Social justice is the aspiration, culturally competent advocacy is the strategy, and human diversity is the context” (2008, p. 454). In the schools, “The essence of the argument is the philosophical stance that teachers, schools and the state have responsibilities to provide education opportunities for all children to meet their potential” (Bardsley, 2007, p. 494). Understanding children’s perspectives is essential to this process, and child participation is an important means of engaging, learning from, and understanding the perspective of all students.

The field of school psychology has a tradition of advocacy and reform in supporting the needs of diverse children and families (Shriberg et al., 2008). It has been well documented that the social determinants of health influence educational outcomes and opportunities later in life, and that disadvantage in early years can persist throughout school years and beyond (Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, 2008). For example, students who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to have home environments that are not conducive to learning, to have lower school achievement, to leave school early, and to go on to lower-paying jobs (Bardsley, 2007). Since in many regions of the world, most children attend schools most days throughout the year, school-based supports afford opportunities to meet the needs of all children, thus facilitating the social justice objective of addressing societal ills. Encouraging child participation is imperative for the field of school psychology and will enable it to serve as a catalyst to actualize social justice (Mulser & Naser, 2020, Shriberg & Desai, 2013).

Implementing Rights Respecting Schools

School psychologists benefit from an exemplar of implementing the CRC in schools. Teaching children about their rights is stipulated in Article 42 of the CRC, thus it is the responsibility of duty bearers (e.g. school psychologists and other education professionals) to ensure that students are made aware of their rights. One example of this in practice is the Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) initiative of the United Nations Children’s Fund (<https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/>), which encourages schools to place the CRC at the heart of their curriculum. The RRS initiative provides a wide range of resources to support teachers with educating children and young people about their rights, participation and global citizenship.

The results of recent research is consistent with previous rights education research (Covell, 2010), revealing that teaching and supporting children’s rights, through a rights education program, encourages students to practice, protect and promote the rights of others within their school (Dunhill, 2018). Indeed, schools that are rights-respecting provide students with meaningful opportunities for participation, for example through joining school clubs or contributing to setting class rules, thereby increasing student engagement (Covell, 2010). School engagement is associated with improved social, behavioural and academic outcomes such as commitment to learning, optimism for the future, school attendance, and feelings of self-determination and self-esteem. Children in rights-respecting elementary schools are more likely to feel safe and cared for at their schools, and to describe their teachers and peers positively (Covell, 2010).

Be it through promoting the protection of one’s own rights or those of others, evidence indicates that informing children on their rights and providing them safe spaces to participate is conducive to child development and achievement, and to better implementation of the CRC (Covell, 2010; Dunhill, 2018). School psychologists who embrace the CRC and would like to implement the CRC in their schools are encouraged to review the materials provided by the Rights Respecting Schools.

Monitoring Implementation of the CRC

School psychologists emphasize the importance of monitoring the implementation of specific initiatives. While the CRC recognizes that improving the quality of children’s environments is crucial to their development and places this as its central objective, it also recognizes the need for monitoring the implementation of all provisions of the CRC by States parties as a necessary step to achieve this central goal. Governments that have ratified the CRC are obligated to make such investments and to report every five years to the Committee (the monitoring body of the treaty) on these investments and their impacts in their jurisdiction. This reporting process provides monitoring and oversight for the progressive implementation of the CRC. Effective monitoring systems can identify avoidable inequities in outcomes over place and time, and point society towards programmatic and societal factors that would be most effective in enhancing outcomes for children (Hertzman, 2009).

Based on the professional preparation standards for school psychologists (e.g., National Association of School Psychologists and International School Psychology Association) school psychologists understand the importance of measurement and data collection. Lansdown et al., (2014) highlight: “*Given their professional preparation in assessment and measurement, school psychologists are well-positioned to provide leadership in measuring and evaluating the extent to which children are able to express their views and have them taken seriously, as well as the nature of that experience and the outcomes associated with the realization of that right.*” (p. 10)

While monitoring is critical for improving developmental outcomes for children, such monitoring requires adequate and ongoing data collection. Article 4 of the CRC encourages adequate data collection to monitor the implementation of all provisions. Adequate data enables the Committee to verify governments' commitments and actions, to assess their impacts on children's health and development, and to advise governments on ways to improve these outcomes. In short, better data can improve monitoring, and better monitoring can result in improved compliance. Indeed, evidence from the last three decades indicates that in spite of the remarkable rate of ratification, both compliance with the CRC and monitoring of its implementation have been less than satisfactory and remain a real challenge (R. Winter, personal communication, July 7, 2019).

Relevant to promoting children's rights and achieving social justice in schools are Articles 28 and 29 of the CRC, right to education and aims of education, respectively. There is a need for a model that can effectively monitor child rights implementation by responding to three fundamental questions: (1) How are governments, as the primary duty bearers, fulfilling their obligations under the CRC (e.g., through laws, policies, and budgetary allocations)? (2) How are education professionals such as school psychologists, as other duty bearers, implementing government commitments (e.g., through policies and programs), according to the four guiding principles of the CRC? and (3) How are children, as right-holders, enjoying the fulfillment of their rights under the CRC?

1.3. GlobalChild: The Vision for a Global CRC Monitoring Platform

School psychologists understand that progress monitoring is important to understand change. Effective monitoring is key to facilitating CRC compliance and to realizing positive changes for children's rights (Bergman et al., 2014). The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has encouraged the development of indicators to promote monitoring of human rights and to improve compliance through the use of a three-part indicator that has become known as the SPO (Structure-Process-Outcome indicators) framework (OHCHR, 2012). This framework is an effective system for the dual duty of (a) translating the broad provisions of the CRC into concrete commitments and outcomes, and (b) collecting accurate information to monitor States' compliance. The following provides a brief description for school psychologists to understand the GlobalChild CRC monitoring tool.

In 2016, a multinational team began building the comprehensive GlobalChild monitoring tool (<http://www.globalchildnetwork.com>) to support governments and the Committee in monitoring the implementation of the CRC. After four years of intensive work under the auspices of the Committee, the GlobalChild team has created an indicator set for each substantive right following the SPO framework of the OHCHR (2012). Each indicator set is comprised of three different categories: (a) structure-related indicators, which verify the commitments that governments have made (e.g. laws, policies); (b) process-related indicators, which verify the means through which governments act upon these commitments (e.g. programs and their accessibility to all children); and (c) outcome-related indicators, which capture the changes experienced in children's lives as a result of the government's commitments and actions. These indicators have been reviewed by both experts and children, and now form an electronic platform known as GlobalChild (<https://www.globalchildplatform.com>). One of the unique characteristics of this platform is that, in the spirit of Article 12, the indicators were amended based on children's input after a largescale consultation with almost two thousand children from five regions of the globe (GlobalChild & Centre for Children's Rights, 2019).

Discussion

In school and communities around the world, the right to participation is routinely violated (Lee & Krappmann, 2020). Even child rights stakeholders tend to engage children in an incomplete manner, often overlooking the necessity of the fourth component of providing feedback to children on the impact of their voiced opinions (Lundy, 2007). School psychologists and educational colleagues are well-positioned to engage, inform, and advocate for complete implementation of the CRC in schools around the world (Adelson & Brachfeld, 2020; Hart & Hart, 2020). Moreover, school psychologists may use the Rights Respecting Schools resources to further promote understanding of the CRC among youth and to share their insights with education colleagues in their school.

The significance of informing children to form their opinions cannot be over-emphasized (Larkins et al., 2020). Article 12 of the CRC requires the decision-maker first to "presume that a child has the capacity to form his or her own views" (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009, p. 6), and then to ensure that children are "informed about the matters, options and possible decisions to be taken and their consequences by those who are responsible for hearing the child" (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009, p. 8). It is a necessary step and a prerequisite for proper child participation.

Involving children in more aspects of the process is good practice for child participation and realizes children's right to be heard (Collins 2006, 2015; Lundy, 2014). Additionally, such an approach helps balance the distribution of power. Lansdown (2011) cautions that when child consultation is initiated, led, and managed by adults, and lacks any possibility for children to control outcomes, it may not allow for sharing or transferring decision-making processes to the children themselves, and may bring little empowerment to children. Moreover, the literature indicates that successful examples of child participation engage children at the beginning of the process and permeate through all

stages, rather than consisting of a single point of contact and by doing so it adds to the quality and validity of the process, and furthers effective understanding of children's views (Aldridge, 2017).

As noted by Lansdown et al., "school psychologists can play a major role in contributing to the realisation of children's participation rights at all levels of the education system both within their individual practice and within the systems, institutions and agencies in which they work" (2014, p. 9). In their individual practice, school psychologists contribute diverse services (e.g., consultation, prevention, intervention, assessment), with services directed at individuals (e.g., students, parents, educators) and systems (e.g., family, classrooms, schools, school systems, community organizations). Attending to, ensuring, and advocating child rights should be central to the work in each of these contexts and practices. At the systems level school psychologists are responsible for identifying and understanding how the CRC rights can be used positively to promote support services and policies within classrooms, schools, and other child-serving agencies. School psychologists have the responsibility to examine services in these settings and facilitate changes to policies and procedures that ensure the protection and promotion of children's rights. At the local, national, and international levels school psychologists are an important link in translating research into policy and practice. Through individual and collective advocacy, school psychologists can help to promote and protect child rights.

Conclusion

Dialogues with youth are an important facet of facilitating communications and engagement, and ultimately informing further efforts to actualize social justice for students in schools around the world. Too often adults discuss and determine what children need, what they think, and the solutions that seem optimal. However, dialogues that actively engage students in reflecting on these important topics, obtain their thoughts and insights, and move their ideas into action capture the essence of child participation as it has been outlined in the CRC. Thus, the process of active engagement and participation of children is fundamental to the efforts of school psychologists and all education professionals working within a social justice framework.

Recommendations

In many countries around the world, school psychologists are engaged in professional activities to promote the development and wellbeing of children (Jimerson, et al., 2007). These responsibilities include promoting children's rights and participation (Hart & Hart, 2020). In addition, school psychologists can contribute leadership in implementing systematic processes to assess and document children's wellbeing (e.g., universal screening processes) (Huppert & So, 2013; Newell, et al., 2020).

As school psychologists progressively incorporate the principles of the CRC into their everyday practice and into their advocacy for policies and programs, it is critical to ensure that the entire professional standards and protocols are congruent with the CRC (Nastasi & Naser, 2014). Additionally, it is equally important to make sure that the school psychologists have a clear understanding of the CRC and how to incorporate it into their work not just with children, but also the families, their peers, and other professional groups (Mulser & Naser, 2020). One potential way to realize both of these—the alignment of professional standards with the CRC and installation of a thorough understanding of the CRC and its use in practice—is to incorporate the CRC into the curriculum of the graduate schools training the school psychologists. This initial pre-service training combined with ongoing in-service training will go a long way in weaving the spirit of human rights into this profession, the school environment, and perhaps even into societies.

Additionally, homes and schools are the two most proximal environments to children and the ones where children spend the majority of their time. What goes on within homes can leave a strong footprint on the developmental outcomes of childhood, impact the school outcome, and hence, have a significant bearing on the work of the school psychologist. Human rights are indivisible and fulfillment or violation of one right can be conducive to fulfillment or violation of other rights. A classic example of this is the right to basic material needs and standard of living and the right to education (Articles 27 and 28 of the CRC, respectively). School psychologists must continue to remain in close contact with the caregivers and make every effort to build a partnership with caregivers and protect this relationship.

Lastly, outcomes for children should be monitored closely and school psychologists can play a great role in this (Newell, et al., 2020). Such monitoring is not limited to ongoing and high-quality formal data collection systems. It can also encompass the daily observations and interactions with children that hold important data and enable the schools to examine the effectiveness of interventions and programs on children. Such data should be documented carefully and shared with the interested and relevant parties while respecting children's right to protection of privacy (Article 16 of the CRC). The cumulative outcome of such systems can lead to policies and programs informed and driven by data.

Limitations

This paper is a theoretical paper that first introduced the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and provided a comprehensive yet concise analysis of the grounding principles of the CRC while drawing their relevance to education. Building upon this foundation, it then discussed the right to participation (Article 12) and its grave significance and relevance to the work of education professionals in general and school psychologists in particular. Subsequently, this

paper introduced an example of good practice for implementing the CRC within the education system. Throughout the paper when opportunities were present, the paper has substantiated the arguments with other supporting documents such as the General Comments of the CRC and the work of school psychologists with children. Such examination has enabled us the identification of a few opportunities for school psychologists to reinforce and implement these rights and principles in practice.

One possible limitation of this paper is that due to the fact that the United State is not a State party to the CRC (Gardiner, 2017), it does not submit periodical reports to the treaty body of the CRC and hence does not receive any Concluding Observations from the treaty body. The Concluding Observations are rich documents through which the CRC Committee highlights the areas requiring improvements within different systems and presents suggestions and recommendations on how to improve them. This paper would have been enriched further if we had the feasibility of examining some of the education related recommendations of the committee and proposing a role for school psychologists in contributing to those improvements. This was an inevitable limitation for this conceptual paper.

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