

# Children's Human Rights Education in Swiss Curricula An Intercultural Perspective into Educational Concepts

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*Over the last few years, Switzerland has introduced three new curricula for primary and lower-secondary schools, one for each linguistic region. On several occasions, Switzerland has claimed that these curricula meet the required standards of children's human rights education as conceptualized in international documents such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child or the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. The aim of this article is twofold: first, to provide a conceptual study of the theoretical frameworks related to children's human rights education and other close related educational forms; second, to analyse how these different concepts are translated and implemented through the three regional curricula.*

## Introduction

Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted in 1948, every State should ensure the right to education which is directed to:

the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace (UDHR, 1948, art. 26(2)).

Over the years, the international community has agreed on an array of documents that reiterate the right of everyone – children included – to enjoy education on human rights. In parallel, scholars and practitioners have contributed to developing a theoretical framework related to human rights education, addressing questions of aims, contents, methods and assessment. Taking into account the differences between human and children's rights, a debate started on how and how much human rights education and children's rights education differ. Also, many scholars have started theorising commonalities and differences of human

rights education and children's rights education with related educational concepts such as (global) citizenship education, democratic education, peace education, and education for sustainable development (for an overview see Brantefors, Quennerstedt & Tarman, 2016; Tibbitts & Kirchsclaeger, 2010).

The policy framework in Switzerland is largely influenced by two aspects that distinguish the Swiss educational system from other systems. First, mandatory education is within the competency of the 26 cantons. Second, multilingualism and -culturalism require specific contextual adaptations for each linguistic region. In 2007, the cantonal governments adopted the *Intercantonal Agreement on the Harmonisation of Compulsory Education* (HarmoS Agreement). This agreement aims to harmonise formal schooling across the cantons. The agreement does not explicitly refer to human rights, children's rights or children's human rights education, nor does it specify that learning environments should be rights-based. Based on the HarmoS Agreement, three curricula for primary and lower-secondary schools were developed, one for each region: the «Plan d'études romand» (CIIP, 2010) for French-speaking cantons, the «Lehrplan 21» (D-EDK, 2014) for German-speaking and multilingual cantons and the «Piano di studio» (Dipartimento dell'educatione, della cultura e dello sport [DECS], 2015) for the Italian-speaking one. In 2015, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child called upon Switzerland to strengthen its efforts in the area of human rights education, concerned by the fact «that human rights education for children at school is not carried out systematically in all cantons». It called Switzerland to «ensure that mandatory modules on the Convention and human rights in general are included in the harmonised school curricula for linguistic regions» (Committee on the Rights of the Child [CRC], 2015).

In this article, we aim to analyse if and how children's and human rights education are integrated into the three curricula and what similarities and differences exist depending on the three cultural contexts they were developed for. We thus use the term curriculum to refer to written policy documents adopted by the competent authorities and outlining the overall mission of the school as well as subject matters and competencies to be acquired. The analysis will be exclusively devoted to the explicit or intended curricula; questions of hidden, implicit or implemented curricula will not be addressed.

We will discuss two key concepts that guide our analysis: children's rights and human rights education. Since in Switzerland these two concepts are closely related to citizenship education, we will also look at this latter form of education and the connected emerging concept of global citizenship education. We will then outline the methodology applied to analyse the curricula and present our findings. Finally, we will compare the way children's and human rights education is conceptualised in Swiss compulsory schooling with the theoretical concepts.

## Theoretical foundations

Human rights education, whether for children or not, has become an independent field of education and research. Scholars across the world analyse the understanding and conceptualisation of human rights education, its integration into curricula and its implementation in formal schooling, its impact, and its relationships with other educational concepts. In this paper, we will discuss some of this scholarship to provide an analytical framework for the analysis of Swiss curricula. The aim is not, as for instance Reynaert, Bouverne-de Bie and Vandevelde (2009) suggest, to problematise the content of legal documents, such as the UNDHRET. Instead, we focus on the question of whether these documents translate or not into Swiss policy documents, with what level of variation, while enriching the analysis with scholarly debates around the theoretical frameworks.

We will first present different understandings of human rights education and children's rights education and their relationships with other educational forms. Then we will look at the concept of (global) citizenship education, which also plays an important role in the Swiss educational system. To conclude, current debates around these concepts will be outlined as well as critical points that have been raised by both scholars and practitioners, in order to see how they translate in the various Swiss contexts.

### Children's and human rights education

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR, 1948) is often perceived as the birthmark of human rights education. In respect to children and as a legally binding document, the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC, 1989) holds that education should be directed to: «[t]he development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations (art. 29(1)(b))». More recently the international community agreed, through the *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training* (UNDHRET, 2011), that human rights education comprises education *about*, *through* and *for* human rights (art. 2(2)).

Children's rights education also encompasses learning *about*, *through* and *for* rights. The first dimension is devoted to the acquisition of knowledge about rights, norms and principles and the critical analysis thereof. It refers to a cognitive level. Education *through* rights – often also referred to as children's rights-based approach to education – denominates educational practice that respects and promotes children's rights as well as the rights of educators. Education *for* rights summarises the basic idea that rights education should not only foster knowledge about rights, but also attitudes, values and behaviours that are consistent with the rights of the child, as well as skills that allow them to claim their own rights and the rights of others (Krappmann, 2006; Moody, 2019; Rinaldi, 2018).

Within the scope and limits of this paper, we use the term children's human rights education to reflect our understanding that rights education in schools generally starts with children's rights education, but is not restricted to it (Krappmann, 2006; Gollob & Kraft, 2009). Children also learn about human rights and are taught about why the rights of the child have developed as specific rights. If debates remain vivid on a conceptual level, a comprehensive understanding of rights education for children avoids looking at children's rights as distinct from human rights, while taking into account their particularities and more importantly the specificities of children as learners. Finally, this focus allows us to look at how these two closely intertwined concepts relate to others depending on cultural contexts, in Swiss curricula.

### Citizenship education

Democracy and human rights are inherently linked. Human rights are not only legal and moral rights, but also have a political component. They are discussed in the political arena and are the basis for political participation. Although children in Switzerland do not have voting rights, it is recognised that they have a right to participate in decision-making processes and to have their voices heard (UNCRC, 1989, art. 12). The relationship between children's human rights and citizenship education therefore merits due consideration.<sup>1</sup>

According to the *Crick Report* (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority [QCA], 1998), which examined the implementation of citizenship education in the United Kingdom, the objective of this educational concept is threefold: social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. As several scholars have pointed out (Audigier, 2005; Fritzsche, 2008) this focus on social and political challenges as well as social cohesion is a feature that citizenship and human rights education share. Also, both concepts emphasise the importance of an educational process that mirrors the educational goals.

While Osler (2013) conceives human rights education as a part of political education, others argue that citizenship education is an integral part of human rights education because it «aims to uphold democracy by creating an awareness of rights which need to be recognised and enforced» (Irish Human Rights Commission [IHRC], 2011, p. 62). Moreover, «it can support social and political transformation» (p. 62) and helps raising awareness of the political dimension of human rights (see Fritzsche, 2008). Differences between the two concepts are also pointed out. If rights education concentrates on individuals and their rights, citizenship education focuses on society as a whole. Traditionally, political education only addresses civil and political rights, and the entire spectrum of human rights is left to rights education. Furthermore, some argue that citizenship education has a national scope, while rights education looks at the global system (Hung, 2012; Keating, Hinderliter, & Philippou, 2009; Marshall, 2009).

Over the years citizenship education and human rights education have approached conceptually. Examples of this development are the *Council of*

*Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education* (2010) – which states that they are «closely inter-related and mutually supportive. They differ in focus and scope rather than in goals and practices» (§ 3) – or the emergence of the concept of *Global Citizenship Education*, pushed by UNESCO.

### Global Citizenship Education

According to UNESCO (2013), global citizenship education is a multi-faceted umbrella concept which includes «human rights education, education for sustainable development, education for international/intercultural understanding, and education for peace» (§ 2.2.2). Overall, it «aims to empower learners to engage and assume active roles, both locally and globally, to face and resolve global challenges and ultimately to become proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world» (UNESCO, 2014, p. 15). Global citizenship education thus aims at transforming all levels of society, from local to global. Just like children's human rights education, it is a holistic concept encompassing cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural components. In order to achieve its manifold aims, it relies on active and participatory learning approaches to critically think about complex global issues. Teachers accompany learners in a process leading from exploring their local context to discovering other realities and different possibilities. This learning takes place in safe and inclusive environments (UNESCO, 2015).

Global citizenship and children's human rights education have some further commonalities. First, the two concepts share the view of a more peaceful and just world, trying to tackle global issues and set global aims. Second, in order to achieve these global aims, both work on a continuum between the local and the global, assuming that action at the local level will lead to change on a global level. They thus share transformative aspirations. Third, they take a holistic and multidimensional approach to education. These commonalities testify of close proximity between the concepts, as also reflected in Bajaj's (2011) concept of «human rights education for global citizenship education», which emphasises «individual rights as part of an international community [which] may or may not be perceived as a direct challenge to the state» (p. 492). Furthermore, a tendency to include the notion of global citizenship in human rights education materials is observed (Monaghan & Spreen, 2016).

Given these commonalities, the lack of explicit references to human or child rights-based approaches within the leading documents on global citizenship education is all the more striking. While UNESCO (2015) stresses the importance of «safe, inclusive and engaging learning environments» (p. 51), there is no notion of the duty to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights within education. In general, global citizenship education makes little reference to human rights, giving the impression that human rights can be integrated into global citizenship education at the teacher's discretion, just like any other «topic».

### Current debates

The development and promotion of children's human rights education and other education forms that address global and societal issues has led to intense debates. While many believe in a huge potential of such concepts, they also have been harshly criticised. Some critics focus on the global governance system. The question of whether «global» citizens can even exist in an international system composed of sovereign states and in which individuals have, if at all, voting and election rights only at a national level versus global (Archibugi, 2012). While some scholars put forward the concept of «cosmopolitan» citizens who act at many different levels of society (Osler & Starkey, 2010), the issue has not yet been solved and pedagogy continues to struggle with the continuum of the local and the global.

Cardenas (2005) has doubts about the role of the state – in charge of the formal schooling system – arguing that they have no interest in fostering critical and transformative educational processes that might question existing power structures and state action. While UNESCO is aware of this challenge, it does not offer any solution to it: «The role of education in challenging the status quo or building skills for activism may be a concern for those who see this as a threat to the stability of the nation state» (2014, p. 20).

Another set of criticisms addresses the objectives of rights education. Critics hold that such approaches prescribe what people have to think and how they have to act. These criticisms are often linked to a specific perception of rights education as a tool to «impose» a specific ideological – often leftist – worldview, incompatible with the mission of State schools to provide «neutral» education.<sup>2</sup> Pais and Costa (2017) ask whether global citizenship education, which strives for global justice and peace, can be compatible with a school system based on individual success and competencies. Keet (2012) affirms that proponents of human rights education themselves have contributed to this perception: a «declarationist» approach is often taken and human rights presented as something absolute which must not be criticised. Monaghan and Spreen (2016) show that global citizenship education as well teaches human rights in a way that promotes Western liberalism and marginalises diversity. They also point that rights education should be «grounded in a view that frames rights as struggles of disadvantaged groups and in practice is seen as a collective struggle for improved social conditions and human relationships» (p. 43). Such an approach allows to raise awareness that the understanding of human rights changes constantly and is subject to cultural and locally constructed interpretations. Finally, Ahmed (2018) points to the risk of states abusing rights education in order to entrench state power by appropriating human rights language: «human rights education as sovereignty» (p. 8).

## Methodology

Based on this broad understanding of the concept of children's human rights education, of its links with citizenship and global citizenship education and aware of the debates in the field, our study aims to analyse how they are translated into three culturally different curricula, within a same country. The study is based on a content analysis, to highlight how much weight and space is given to this kind of education as well as how it is related to other forms of education depending on the context. Due to the limited scope of the paper, teacher's practices are not taken into account, nor are issues related to the hidden curricula. A full-fledged analysis of implicit links to children's human rights education will not be provided. Instead, the comparison focuses on a set of children's human rights education-related keywords, selected on the basis of the theoretical framework proposed hereabove. Keywords associated with citizenship education and global citizenship education are searched for, in respect to the theoretical proximity they share and since they are often not clearly distinguished in the documents.

Table 1 shows the keywords used and their English translations. For each curriculum, the keyword frequency (literal occurrences) is searched, be it in the subject-matter, in the cross-curricular or in the general part. This quantitative data provides a first idea of the weight given to the different educational concepts. We then analyse the excerpts containing one of the keywords in order to get a more complex picture of how they are defined, and how they relate to children's human rights education or (global) citizenship education as defined above.

*Table 1: Keywords in four languages*

English	French (FR)	German (DE)	Italian (IT)
children's rights education	éducation aux droits de l'enfant	Kinderrechtsbildung	educazione ai diritti dell'infanzia
human rights education	éducation aux droits humains/de l'homme	Menschenrechtsbildung	educazione ai diritti umani
citizenship education	éducation à la citoyenneté	—	educazione alla cittadinanza
civic education	éducation civique	bürgerschaftliche Bildung	educazione civica
political education	éducation politique	politische Bildung	educazione politica
democratic education	éducation démocratique	Demokratiebildung	educazione democratica
right(s)/law	droit(s)	Recht(e)	diritto/i
legal	légal/juridique	rechtlich	giuridico, legale
children's right(s)/the rights of the child	droit(s) de l'enfant	Kinderrecht(e)	diritto/i dell'infanzia

human right(s)	droit(s) humain(s) / droit(s) de l'homme	Menschenrecht(e)	diritto/i umano/i
fundamental right(s)	droit(s) fondamental/ aux	Grundrecht(e)	diritto/i fondamentale/i
civic/political right(s)	droit(s) politique(s)	Bürgerrecht(e) / politische Rechte	diritto/i civico/i
rule of law	état de droit	rechtsstaatlich/ Rechtsstaatlichkeit	stato di diritto
citizen	citoyen/citoyenne	Bürger/in	cittadino/a
citizenship	citoyenneté	Bürgertum	cittadinanza
democracy	démocratie	Demokratie	democrazia
democratic	démocratique	demokratisch	democratico/a
politics	politique	Politik	politica
political	politique	politisch	politico/a/i/he

## Children's human rights education as conceptualised in Swiss curricula: findings

In the following section, we present the results of the analysis of the three regional curricula for primary and lower-secondary schools: The *Plan d'études romand*, the *Lehrplan 21* and the *Piano di studi*.<sup>3</sup> Table 2 shows how many times each keyword appears in the main body of each of the three curricula (excluding titles, footnotes, copyright mentions, etc).

Table 2: Frequency of keywords in the three curricula.

Keyword	Plan d'études romand (FR)	Lehrplan 21 (DE)	Piano di studi (IT)
children's rights education	-	-	-
human rights education	-	-	-
citizenship education	12	-	16
civic education	1	-	13
political education	-	9	-
democratic education	-	-	11
exercise of democracy	14	-	-
right(s)/law*	27	18	15
legal*	-	8	-
children's right(s)	11	2	2



human right(s)	14	35	4
fundamental right(s)	2	2	1
civic/political right(s)	2	-	2
rule of law	1	2	-
citizen	11	2	10
citizenship	37	0	28
democracy	10	35	9
democratic	12	4	21
politics	26	31	2
political	-	22	30

### Plan d'études romand

Within the *Plan d'études romand* (PER) (CIIP, 2010), children's human rights education is never mentioned as such. However, learning about rights is one aim of *Citizenship education*. This latter concept is given due weight: it is operationalised through the main disciplinary approach *Citizenship* and the transversal domain of *Living together and exercising democracy*. Conceived as complementary to *Education for sustainable development*, Citizenship education should «contribute to critical thinking by developing the ability to think and understand complexity» and «prepare students to participate actively in democratic life by exercising their rights and responsibilities in society» (PER, Introduction Générale, 2010). It is therefore considered as having to be taught in an interdisciplinary<sup>4</sup> and collaborative manner: «favouring debate and reinvesting disciplinary knowledge and skills». Also, it is argued that encouraging children to get involved as citizens in their schools primarily provides opportunities to highlight «the need to agree on rules of life and to respect the laws» as well as «the resultant protection and security» (PER, Commentaires généraux pour la Formation Générale, CIIP, 2010).

More specifically, the transversal learning objectives of the domain *Living together and exercising democracy* are based on a progressive age-based/developmental logic. During the first cycle (C1, 4-8 years old), the focus is placed on *Democratic practice* (pratique citoyenne): children mostly socialise and learn to abide by class rules of life (PER, FG 13-14) (CIIP, 2010). Pupils of the second cycle (C2, 8-12 years old) still learn how to live together, «recognising otherness and developing mutual respect in the school community [...] linking the law and rights» (PER, FG 25) (CIIP, 2010).

This progressive logic is also translated in the specific disciplinary learning objectives of *Citizenship*. C1-pupils in French-speaking Switzerland are not expected to go beyond learning to abide by rules: no specific knowledge is taught at this stage. C2-pupils should understand «local political and social organisations» by relating «their rights and duties to those of others» and be able to

«name some rights of the child» (PER, SHS, 24). Teachers are encouraged to use the Children's rights Day to work on this issue and to sensitise children to differences between children «here and abroad» (PER, SHS 24). C3-students will focus on democratic systems, by «reading fundamental texts, identifying the foundations of democratic rights and duties and by making them their own»; again they should be able to «list the main human rights set forth in the Universal Human Rights Declaration» and the teachers are invited to consider achievements as well as rights violations (PER, SHS 34) (CIIP, 2010).

### Lehrplan 21

No mentions of children's rights education or human rights education are made in the curriculum for Swiss German and multilingual cantons, which however introduces *Political education*, but not as a separate subject matter. On the one hand, Lehrplan 21 (D-EDK, 2014) provides for the transversal idea of *Sustainable development* as a cross-curricular concept. One of the topics to be addressed under this heading is *Politics, democracy and human rights*: Pupils should know about the development and meaning of human rights and be able to identify patterns of discrimination. They are also supposed to tackle issues of power and law, and to discuss values, norms, and conflicts (D-EDK, 2014, p. 33). Education about rights, like political education, is framed as an interdisciplinary topic that should be tackled in various subject matters. So-called «cross-references» are used to indicate when links to *Politics, democracy and human rights* can be made. The curriculum does not specify how education for sustainable development should be approached. It merely defines some general principles, such as orientation towards the future, networked thinking and participatory learning.

On the other hand, Lehrplan 21 defines competencies to be acquired in six subject areas – languages; mathematics; general sciences and social studies (Natur, Mensch, Gesellschaft – NMG), arts, music and sports – and two cross-curricular modules (information technology and media, and professional orientation). Some of the competencies, mainly in the NMG-area, refer to children's rights, human rights, politics and democracy.

For primary school pupils (C1 and C2), two areas are particularly important: *Community and society – shaping living together and becoming active* (NMG 10) and *Fundamental experiences, values and norms* (NMG 11). Competencies to be acquired include understanding «the relationship between power and law» (NMG 10.4), «being able to defend one's own interests and to recognise political processes» (NMG 10.5) and «being able to reflect about situations and actions, as well as to assess them from an ethical standpoint, and to justify their own viewpoints» (NMG 11.4). Competency NMG 10.5 includes «naming rights and duties of individuals in our society» (e), with one single reference to children's rights.

At the lower secondary level (C3), a specific area of competency within *Geography, history and political/civic education* (Räume, Zeiten, Gesellschaft – RZG) is devoted to human rights and democracy. Pupils are notably expected

«to explain Swiss democracy and to compare it with other systems» (RZG 8.1) and «to explain the development and meaning of, as well as threats to human rights» (RZG 8.2). Further references to politics, democracy and human rights are made in *Ethics, religion, society* (Ethik, Religion, Gemeinschaft – ERG): pupils should recognise inequality and discrimination, discuss norms related to this topic (ERG 2.2), and assess the meaning of secular days of remembrance (ERG 4.3).

In its introduction Lehrplan 21 refers to democracy, politics and fundamental rights. It states that based on fundamental rights, values such as democracy, gender equality, non-discrimination and social justice inform the educational process. It however contains no reference to a rights-based approach and what it would mean for the school system.

### Piano di studi

Like the two other curricula, the Piano di studi (DECS, 2015), implemented in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland, does not mention human rights education nor children's rights education. The latter can however be located within *General education* (formazione generale) and some specific subject matters including geography, history, natural sciences, nutrition education (educazione alimentare), and environmental studies. Furthermore, links are made to transversal competences (competenze trasversali).

For cycles 1 and 2, *Living together and citizenship education context* (contesto vivere insieme ed educazione alla cittadinanza) is where children's human rights education can be integrated. Pupils should acquire competencies allowing them to actively participate in a democratic system and find their own way in a globalised world (p. 50). They should therefore learn how to be part of a group, know their rights and obligations as pupils as well as the rights and obligations of their teachers and other people involved in the educational process, and know about political institutions. For the Kindergarten, there is an «area of experience» – *Sustainability, environment and citizenship* – in which children are expected to learn more about themselves and the world they live in.

In addition, C3 specific subject-matter *History, civic, citizenship and democratic education*<sup>5</sup> (DECS, 2018) contains human rights as an object of study: pupils should acquire the competency to debate in a way that takes into account democratic processes and to understand the value of democracy and its historical development, thereby respecting human rights and the interests of minorities (p. 15). It is also stated that meeting other people will help pupils to get a better understanding of what human rights mean in practice (p. 16). Pupils should learn about the development of rights and their meaning for a modern democracy (p. 6). Other prominent aspects are the focus on institutions and respect of other cultures and values.

In the first curriculum published in 2015, this subject matter was called *History and civic education*; the concepts of democracy and citizenship were

added in 2018, indicating a shift from political literacy to a broader educational endeavour. An entire subchapter is now devoted to civic, citizenship and democratic education and within the realm of this concept, pupils acquire knowledge about political institutions, engage with current societal issues, and practice citizenship in school. This will be done across three thematic areas: Forms of aggregation from family to state; forms of governance and institutions; state, society, environment and individual (including rights and obligations of citizens). Four types of processes guide the acquisition of these competencies: understanding and analysis, contextualisation, critical views and reflection, communication and exercise of active citizenship.

### Comparison and critical analysis

This analysis bears some limitations. First, we restricted the analysis to excerpts that contain the keywords defined in the methodology part. We chose this approach to stay as close as possible to the concept of explicit children's human rights education. This means that we did not systematically include some topics related to children's human rights education, such as globalisation, migration and tolerance, if no explicit reference was made to the selected keywords. The limits of this selection can be illustrated with the example of non-discrimination. Although non-discrimination is a fundamental principle of both human rights and children's rights, some references that are made to non-discrimination within the curricula have not been captured because they do not clearly relate them to the selected keywords. A more extensive study would be required to find out to which degree concepts and topics related to children's rights and human rights are addressed within the curricula (see Kirchschräger, Kirchschräger, & Suter, 2015).

Second, due to linguistic differences, a literal comparison is not possible. For instance, the term female suffrage contains the word «right» in German and was thus counted for the Lehrplan 21 (D-EDK, 2014). Finally, our analysis only bears on the region-specific curricula for primary and lower secondary schools. We did not look at cantonal specificities and/or the way the curricula are translated into textbooks, learning materials and practice. The analysis thus sheds light on the policy framework but does not take into account the way children's human rights education is implemented in schools.

Despite these limitations, the analysis provides some important indications that can further inform work in this area. We will discuss the findings based on the theoretical framework outlined above: (1) the curricula overall objectives; (2) the multiple dimensions children's human rights education comprises; (3) links with (global) citizenship education.

### Overall objective

Children's human rights education aims to foster a culture of human rights. Neither of the three Swiss curricula explicitly enshrines the concept of (*children's human rights education*). Instead, they subsume this concept under the umbrella of *Education for sustainable development* and/or *Citizenship education*. Comparing the overall objectives of children's human rights education as conceptualised within Swiss curricula with international documents thus requires broadening the analysis.

Both the French and Italian curricula define that cross-curricular approaches should lead learners to become active and responsible citizens. Within the disciplinary areas, however, the PER (CIIP, 2010) only refers to human and children's rights in the discipline *Citizenship* part of *Human and social sciences*, a rather narrow understanding of the challenges underlying children's human rights education's finalities: to empower learners to contribute to the building and defence of a universal culture of human rights in society. The same can be said for the Piano di studi (DECS, 2015). None of the other disciplinary areas refer to human or child rights, thereby leaving this kind of education to the exclusive responsibility of history and civic education teachers.

Moreover, the comprehensive approach of Citizenship education as conceptualised in these curricula is ambitious and there can be some related pitfalls. Indeed, developing cognitive abilities (critical thinking) and future competences (actively take part in the democratic life) is a complex teaching task while setting also learning objectives. The challenges this poses are multiple: the first is that teachers are not systematically trained to deal with this task's various dimensions (see also Jerome et al., 2014); the second, which is partially offset by the previous, a hierarchical relation between the more disciplinary approach and the transversal one can occur, resulting in teaching knowledge about rights and citizenship exclusively; the third is linked to the progressive logic embraced, giving the idea that young children do not have any rights, nor real citizenship, and that children's rights are purely «exercise rights» while waiting to get fuller rights. The scope of *Citizenship education* can thus be limited to the school, as a space for practicing democratic participation, a fictitious practice.

Finally, although both Latin curricula integrate the Declaration of the Intercantonal conference of public instruction of Ticino and the Western part of Switzerland, which states that teachers and schools must respect human and children's rights, the focus is clearly placed on institutions and rights and responsibilities. Therefore, the opportunity to encourage effective critical thinking can be questioned. In the Piano di Studi (DECS, 2015) a link between critical thinking and the exercise of citizenship is made, however, the strong focus on rules instead of rights indicates that it is more focused on living together than on transforming society.

Lehrplan 21, on the other hand, does not provide for «general education». Instead, the global idea of «sustainable development», which culturally and

explicitly englobes politics and human rights, is designed as a transversal topic. While this is a more global concept stretching over all areas and subject matters of the curriculum, there is no clearly defined understanding of education for sustainable development, which bears the risk of teachers ignoring the rights dimension and of implementing education for sustainable development in a way that does not uphold principles of children's human rights education.

### **Children's human rights education as a multidimensional approach**

When one looks at the cognitive dimension of children's human rights education – knowing and understanding children's human rights – it can be said the PER (CIIP, 2010) states that pupils should be able to name the main human rights, and know about rights, obligations and responsibilities of children, in Switzerland, while comparing them to those of foreign citizens. With the exception of the issue of the separation of powers, the historical evolution of the concepts is not explicitly included in the competencies. Instead, human and children's rights are presented as a fact that children have to learn (and not reflect) about. The Lehrplan 21 goes somewhat further: while pupils are expected to name rights and duties of individuals (including children's rights), they should also be able to explain their evolution, meaning and the threats they face (RZG 8.2). Conversely the Piano di studi (DECS, 2015) does not address the cognitive dimension of children's human rights education: it focuses on knowledge required to exercise citizenship, largely restricted to institutional/civic knowledge. As outlined above, the concept of rights is often linked to the nation-state in the Swiss Italian curriculum, obscuring the universal dimension of children's human rights.

This partial inclusion of the cognitive dimension of rights education in the Swiss curricula show how complex it is to address the issue of developing meaningful and useful knowledge about rights: can the simple naming of some be sufficient to understand human rights norms and principles and the mechanisms for their protection as suggested in international documents? Also, this kind of declarative learning (Keet, 2012) does not indicate clearly how children can relate the rights they know, to the values that underpin them and even less how they can enjoy the empowerment that should derive from them.

Kirchschläger et al. (2015) have shown that terms such as solidarity and respect, which are theoretically linked to the right-related values, are omnipresent in the PER (CIIP, 2010). It is however worth noting that they do not appear as practically related in the curriculum. The same can be said about how the Piano di studi (DECS, 2015) brings together the respect of human rights and the interests of minorities without building the links on a conceptual level, or the way the Lehrplan 21 frames the discussion of values, norms and conflicts. An in-depth analysis of the respective wording would be required to get a more accurate insight into whether these aspects are more specifically linked to

children's human rights education. However, at this stage, we can see that the affective and socio-emotional dimensions of children's human rights education, aiming at teaching values and attitudes in conformity with human rights, as well as the behavioural component to empower learners to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others are scarcely developed in Swiss curricula. Also, we note that the latter are much less action-oriented than what is discussed on an international level. The curricula generally focus on the skills required to act – e.g. identify patterns of discrimination (Lehrplan 21) or establish links between one's own rights and those of others (PER) – without putting the pupils in a position to take action.

### **Links with (global) citizenship education**

The analysis shows clearly that in Swiss curricula the concepts of citizenship education and – for the German-speaking part – political education are much more present than children's human rights education which is not mentioned at all. The difference in terminology between the German curriculum and the Latin ones can largely be explained linguistically: *Citizenship education* cannot easily be translated in German, reason why usually the terms *Political* and *Democratic education* are generally preferred. This translation issue however leads to diverse approaches of children's human rights education notably, with a more critical and conceptualised approach of rights and related cognitive abilities in the German curriculum, versus a broader «exercise» oriented approach in the Latin ones, providing some space for the development of rights-related behaviours. Paradoxically these behaviours remain related to a future citizenship and are not conceptually linked to values underpinning the basis of living together and respecting diversity.

Finally, none of the three curricula studied can be considered as having taken the first step towards a global citizenship education. Like the UNESCO framework, they do not take human or children's rights as a framework of reference for the educational endeavours or as a basis to create a rights-infused learning environment. Instead, children are considered as humans in becoming rather than human beings. Furthermore, they have to learn how to become «good» citizens in the future and abide by the rule of law; the transformative element of rights-education is largely overlooked.

## **Conclusion**

In this analysis, we have shown that there are some explicit mentions of children's and/or human rights in the global aims of the regional curricula and some expectations in respect to acquiring knowledge about rights. This shows how Switzerland aims to comply with its international commitments. However, we have also highlighted that two dimensions of rights education, namely the socio-

emotional and the action-oriented dimension are barely present. It can thus be concluded that children's human rights education as theoretically developed and conceptualised is only partially integrated into Swiss curricula. If it can appear that international commitments are respected, the debates and evolutions in the field are barely taken into account.

Two other important aspects of children's human rights education – the use of human rights as a framework for analysis and the human rights-based approach to education – are limited. While all three curricula refer to what is more generally called a «child-friendly learning environment», very little rights-language is used, thus missing the opportunity to affirm that it is the right of all individuals involved in the learning process to have their rights respected. Furthermore, only few explicit references to children's and/or human rights and international legal documents are made and when they do so, a more critical approach is overlooked. Instead, pupils are merely expected to enumerate articles of these documents. It is difficult to see how learners, moreover children, can benefit from rights education under these circumstances.

In conclusion, whereas all three regional curricula do provide opportunities for children's human rights education, the conceptual underpinning is not clearly defined and there are only very limited references to pedagogical approaches and methods that foster the acquisition of specific children's human rights education competencies. No reference is made to international documents – putting aside theoretical work – conceptualising children's human rights education. Implementation is thus entirely left to the teachers. More research would thus be needed to show whether educational practice alone can lead children in Switzerland to become fully aware of their rights, those of others as well to exercise and uphold them in a democratic and diverse society and in a globalised world.

### Notes

- 1 See also, for instance, the special edition of the Cambridge Journal of Education on *Human Rights and Citizenship Education* in 2012.
- 2 For an overview of teachers' perspective on the issue of «neutral» education see Rinaldi (2016, 2018).
- 3 All citations have been translated into English by the authors.
- 4 On the issue of interdisciplinary children's rights education teaching see Louviot, Moody & Darbellay (2019), Rinaldi, Darbellay & Moody (in press).
- 5 In the original version of the curriculum, this subject matter was called *History and civic education* (DECS, 2015, pp. 199-207). The pages indicated in this paragraph refer to a document titled *History, civic, citizenship and democratic education* (DECS, 2018), which substitutes the original text.



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**Keywords:** Children's rights education; Human rights education; Curriculum; Citizenship education; Global citizenship education

## **Menschenrechtsbildung für Kinder in Schweizer Lehrplänen – eine interkulturelle Analyse verschiedener Bildungskonzepte**

### **Zusammenfassung**

Während der letzten Jahre hat die Schweiz drei neue Lehrpläne für die Volksschule eingeführt, jeweils einen pro Sprachregion. Die Schweiz hat mehrfach bekräftigt, dass diese Lehrpläne die Anforderungen im Bereich der Menschenrechtsbildung und der Kinderrechtsbildung, wie sie in internationalen Dokumenten wie dem UNO-Abkommen über die Rechte des Kindes oder der UNO-Erklärung über Menschenrechtsbildung und -training formuliert sind, erfüllt. Dieser Artikel verfolgt zwei Ziele. Erstens soll eine konzeptuelle Analyse des theoretischen Rahmens der Menschenrechtsbildung für Kinder und anderer «Bindestrichpädagogiken» vorgeschlagen werden; zweitens soll aufgezeigt werden, wie die verschiedenen Konzepte in den drei regionalen Lehrplänen verankert und umgesetzt werden.

**Schlagworte:** Kinderrechtsbildung; Menschenrechtsbildung; Lehrpläne; Politische Bildung; Global Citizenship Education

## **L'éducation des enfants aux droits humains dans les programmes d'études suisses – Analyse interculturelle de concepts éducatifs**

### **Résumé**

Au cours des dernières années, la Suisse a introduit trois nouveaux programmes pour les écoles des degrés préscolaire, primaire et secondaire I, un pour chaque région linguistique. À plusieurs reprises, la Suisse a affirmé que ces programmes respectaient les normes requises en matière d'éducation aux droits humains et aux droits de l'enfant, telles qu'énoncées dans des documents internationaux comme la Convention des Nations Unies relative aux droits de l'enfant ou la Déclaration des Nations Unies sur l'éducation et la formation aux droits humains. Le but de cet article est double: premièrement, proposer une étude conceptuelle des cadres théoriques liés à l'éducation des enfants aux droits humains et de l'enfant et à d'autres formes proches d'éducatifs; deuxièmement, analyser comment ces différents concepts sont traduits et mis en œuvre dans les trois programmes régionaux.

**Mots-clés:** Éducation aux droits des enfants; Éducation aux droits humains; Programme d'études; Éducation à la citoyenneté; Éducation à la citoyenneté mondiale

## L'educazione dei bambini ai diritti umani nei piani di studio svizzeri – Analisi interculturale dei concetti educativi

### Riassunto

Nel corso degli ultimi anni, la Svizzera ha introdotto tre nuovi piani di studio per le scuole di livello prescolastico, primario e secondario I, uno per ogni regione linguistica. In varie occasioni, la Svizzera ha affermato che tali piani rispettano le norme necessarie in materia d'educazione ai diritti umani e ai diritti del fanciullo enunciate nei documenti internazionali come la Convenzione Internazionale dei diritti del fanciullo o la Dichiarazione delle Nazioni Unite sull'educazione e la formazione ai diritti umani. Lo scopo di questo articolo è duplice: in primo luogo, proporre uno studio concettuale dei quadri teorici legati all'educazione dei bambini ai diritti umani e ai diritti del fanciullo e ad altre forme simili di educazione a; in secondo luogo, analizzare come questi diversi concetti sono tradotti e attuati nei tre piani di studio regionali.

**Parole chiave:** Educazione ai diritti del fanciullo; Educazione ai diritti umani; Programma di studio; Educazione alla cittadinanza; Educazione alla cittadinanza mondiale.

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