Focus

'THEY SHOULD BE GRATEFUL TO GOD': CHALLENGING CHILDREN'S PRE-CONCEPTIONS OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Rowan Oberman and Fionnuala Waldron

Abstract: This article proposes the value of using human rights as a foundation for exploring development issues in the classroom. The article draws on research exploring children's engagement with issues of global justice. The research was conducted with seven to nine year olds in three school settings in the Dublin area. The research explored children's responses to photographs set in different global contexts and to the concepts of money, fairness, decision making and the environment. The findings highlight a tendency amongst the participant children to characterise poverty as extreme deprivation, to marry their understandings of poverty and of developing countries so that one is synonymous with the other and to perceive the relationship between Ireland and developing countries principally in charitable terms. The findings further indicate that, for some children, there was an expectation that people living in developing countries should show gratitude where they have basic facilities, perceiving these facilities as exceptional in developing contexts. Human Rights Education (HRE) provides a basis from which to address these problematic assumptions and perspectives. Promoting universal entitlement to civil, political, cultural, social as well as economic rights, it provides a premise against which these preconceptions can be challenged. This article proposes that HRE might be used to re-orientate children's conceptualisations of 'developing countries', advancing perspectives rooted in solidarity and universalism.

Key words: Human Rights Education; Development Education; Universalism; Research with Children; Stereotypes; Empathy; Education and Poverty.

Introduction

> "I think it's not fair because, they have a house and they have lots of things. They have things to eat, to sit on and they have things to do they they're not happy. They should be grateful to God" (Andy, aged 8 years).

This quotation is drawn from the data collected as part of a research project exploring seven to nine year olds' engagement with issues of global justice. Andy is in second class in a suburban all-boys school outside Dublin, Ireland. In a previous session, Andy and his class had been shown three photographs. One showed a child under a tap in Myanmar; one depicted a Kenyan family eating their main meal of the day and one was of two boys running in an urban setting in Guatemala. The children had been asked to discuss the images, considering their focus and context. Having then engaged in whole class discussion of four concepts (who decides, fairness, money and the environment), the children were asked to place labels, each representing one of these concepts, somewhere on the three images. Andy placed his *fairness* label on the photo taken in Kenya. As the quote above illustrates, however, Andy perceived that this photo represented *unfairness* because the people in the photo did not look adequately grateful, even though they had 'things to eat, to sit on and things ... to do'. This explanation suggests some complex aspects of Andy's thinking. It suggests that, in thinking about fairness, Andy's frame of reference never extended beyond what he considered to be the African context of the photograph to include a comparison with his own or his family's lives. It suggests also that his analysis of the photograph was influenced by his expectation that people living in an African context would have less than those pictured, prompting him to see the family depicted in the image as having 'lots of things' for which they should be grateful.

While children in the study had different understandings and applications of the concept of fairness, Andy was not exceptional in the perspective he took. The response of Andy and others draws together several concerns for development education. Firstly, it reminds us that children come to school with preconceptions regarding developing countries (Ruane

et al., 2010; Barrett and Oppenheimer, 2011; Weldon, 2010; Augoustinos and Rosewarne, 2001; McKown and Strambler, 2009). Secondly, it not only demonstrates the characterisation of Africa as ubiquitously poor but illustrates an understanding of poverty as extreme deprivation. Thirdly, the perception held by Andy and others in the study suggests that concern for those living in developing countries is premised on an assumption that people only need basic survival. Andy's approach to fairness differentiated between his own situation and that of the people photographed. This suggests that values of universalism and equality cannot be assumed and need to be foregrounded in global education.

Literature Review

Human rights arose from the dehumanising experience of the Second World War and are grounded in the principles of universalism, solidarity and equality (Osler, 2015; Osler and Starkey, 2010). In its preamble the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises 'the inherent dignity' and 'the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family' (United Nations, 1948). Overall, the human rights framework foregrounds principles of equality and non-discrimination and provides for equal entitlement to a range of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. Article 29b of the Convention on the Rights of the Child also establishes the right to education which develops 'respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms' (UN, 1989). Human Rights Education (HRE), then, is itself a right, presenting all signatories with an obligation to embed it in school systems as a matter of course. This right was further endorsed by the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011) which defines HRE as education *about*, *through* and *for* human rights (UN, 2011). HRE is education *about* human rights in that it supports learners' knowledge and understanding of human rights conventions, their values and implications. It is education *through* human rights because it uses methods which 'humanise' learners and make real rights-based concepts such as voice, agency and diversity. It is education *for* human rights because it empowers learners to claim and promote rights and to take action locally and globally (Struthers, 2017).

HRE, as an education *about*, *through* and *for* human rights (UN, 2011) can be understood as a 'cosmopolitan' project premised on 'our common humanity" (Osler, 2015: 245). This idea of a common humanity is expressed through the concepts of universality and inalienability. Human rights, then, are the rights that one holds by virtue of being human, and are inalienable because humanity is 'not something that can be earned or can be lost' (Donnelly, 2007: 282). Although universal implementation is a long way from being achieved, the idea of universality is conceptually and legally powerful in the challenge it offers to states and other duty bearers to respect human rights, becoming a legal and political tool for individuals and vulnerable communities to challenge discrimination and injustice worldwide. Of more relevance to this paper, however, is the argument it presents in an educational context, where it serves as a declaration for global and local justice, equality and non-discrimination. Underpinned by a commitment to a shared humanity, Zembylas (2016) argues that HRE can act to expand who we regard as people like us and challenge arguments based on binaries such as those of them/us and national/foreigner.

The universality of human rights has been questioned and it has been argued that it seeks to standardise culture and impose western values (Baxi, 2007; Spivak, 2004). Arguments defending human rights and HRE against this critique include, firstly, those that highlight the fluidity of human rights, *human rights as fluid*, and, secondly, a pragmatic argument that human rights are useful in alleviating human suffering, *human rights as pragmatic*. The first of these defences, *human rights as fluid*, reminds us that human rights can be interpreted and applied with diverse, contested and evolving outcomes. In turn, HRE is an open and evolving discipline. Bowring (2012), for example, describes human rights and HRE as sites of struggle. Osler (2015) reminds us that the UDHR itself does not standardise culture but allows for its implementation in different specific cultural contexts, remembering that culture itself is subject to change (Appiah, 2007). Building on a similar and nuanced argument that recognises the complex relationship between universality and relativity, Donnelly (2007) argues the case for 'relative universality'. The second defence, *human rights as*

pragmatic, focuses on the benefit human rights and HRE can bring especially to the vulnerable and disempowered. For Zembylas (2016) a critical action-orientated form of HRE, with affective as well as cognitive aspects, can help engage individuals and societies in the alleviation of pain and suffering. However, Zembylas' emphasis on a *critical* form of HRE is key to ensuring that HRE does not conceal historic and persistent asymmetrical power relations. For HRE to be transformational it must engage: with the reality of learner's lives, with power struggles and with human rights as an ongoing rather than a finished project (Osler, 2015; Zembylas, 2016; Waldron and Oberman, 2016).

Advocates of HRE acknowledge that human rights, and HRE, can be manipulated to control and silence divergent voices (Osler, 2015). Indeed, how HRE is practised and experienced in schools may often reflect little of the critical and transformational qualities ascribed to it in theory. A study by Waldron et al (2011), for example, suggested that the understanding of HRE most prevalent in Irish schools located human rights and human rights issues predominantly in distant places, fostering a charity-oriented approach to learning about 'less fortunate others'. Studies have also indicated the extent to which rights are viewed through the lens of responsibility towards others, supporting a culture of behaviour management and teacher control (Howe and Covell, 2010; Waldron and Oberman, 2016; Struthers, 2015). The challenges faced by HRE are paralleled by the classroom reality of development education (Bryan and Bracken, 2011; Niens and Reilly, 2010; Smith, 2004). In terms of practice, Bryan and Bracken (2011), for example, identified a range of constraints and barriers to the meaningful implementation of development education within the second level curriculum in Ireland, such as the dominance of a charity-orientated, individualised, feel-good conceptualisation of action and the phenomenon of celebrity activists, which serve to obscure rather than reveal the structures, practices and relations of power that underpin global inequality.

The findings of Waldron et al (2011) and Bryan and Bracken (2011) suggest a strong correspondence between how HRE and development

education are conceptualised by Irish teachers. Given the role both these studies and others ascribe to teacher knowledge (Niens and Reilly, 2010; Picton, 2008; Holden and Hicks, 2007; Clarke and Drudy, 2006; Lundy, 2007; Martin and Griffiths, 2012; Dillon and O'Shea, 2009), it is, perhaps, not surprising that ways in which development education and HRE are practised may not always reflect either the nuanced differentiations between them or the intentions ascribed to them at the level of theory.

There are, of course, many areas of overlap, similarity and complementarity between HRE and development education. In terms of knowledge, both adjectival educations consider issues related to global justice. Both seek to develop skills which include critical thinking/ literacy, empathy and cooperation and are premised on active, participatory pedagogies. Both seek to empower learners to take action for a better world and both are underpinned by values of solidarity, justice and respect for diversity. Both draw on Freirean theory of transformative education. Furthermore, like two friends, *tête-à-tête*, wearing reflective sunglasses, each education contains in its 'face' a reflection of the other. Human rights are regarded as part of the values base and knowledge content of development education (Bourn, 2014; Bourn, 2015; Krause, 2010; Oxfam, 2015). Correspondingly, development, global interdependence and global justice give meaning and context to the concept of human rights. Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which can be seen as the cornerstone of HRE as it relates to children, setting out a blueprint for the education which children should receive (UN, 1989), dictates that respect for diversity, for the environment and for peace, should be the foundation of education. In doing so it knits key development education content into a HRE framework.

Recognising the shared spaces and complementarity of these educations, however, is also to highlight their distinctiveness. HRE as a discipline has its own priorities, practices and emphasis. Its content, pedagogy and values remain rooted in the Conventions, an orientation which is not shared by development education. Most evidently, in terms of practice, HRE includes a strong local focus, and embodies a commitment to empower

children to know and vindicate their own rights and to contribute to the creation of a rights-respecting culture in local contexts. It is worth noting, also, that the obligation on states to provide HRE gives tangible support to its implementation at systemic level. Furthermore, while, as discussed above, human rights and HRE can be variously interpreted and applied, they do provide a global ethical and legal framework and, in so doing, go some way towards establishing an idea of how society should be. While generally viewed as compatible with soft approaches (Andreotti, 2006) to development education, theorists who espouse a critical, post-colonialist stance may see this vision as problematic. Critical development education approaches, focused on recognising the complexity, uncertainty and subjectivity of truth and of values, may contend with the ethical clarity inherent in HRE (Andreotti, 2006; Andreotti, 2014).

This article does not seek to resolve these tensions or to promote one adjectival education over another. Responding to research findings set out below, it suggests that principles of global equality and solidarity cannot be assumed and that, in this context, HRE can be a useful starting point and navigational tool for classroom activities looking at development, global or justice issues.

Methodology

The research underpinning this article explored how children aged seven to nine years conceptualised global justice issues. It further investigated the possibility of using critical literacy strategies in global citizenship education programmes. The research was conducted in three primary school settings in the wider Dublin area between 2012 and 2014. Settings were purposefully selected to represent, as far as possible, a diversity of primary classes catering for children aged seven to nine. Setting one was a first class (children aged seven years) in a multi-denominational school with a large majority of children from minoritised backgrounds. It was a designated disadvantaged school in a commuter belt area. Setting two was a second class (children aged seven to eight years) in an all-boys school under Catholic patronage in a suburban area with children coming from a diversity

of socio-economic backgrounds. Setting three was a third class (children aged eight to nine years) in an urban all-girls school under Catholic patronage with children coming from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

The research involved four visits to each setting. Each visit was similarly structured, with a 45 minute whole-class teacher-led session followed by a 15 to 20-minute focus group session with between six and eight children from the class which provided an opportunity to explore in more depth issues which had arisen during the whole class discussion. The data collection methods used during the research visits drew on the Mosaic approach popularised by Clark and Moss (2011). Photographs, drawings with talk and texts, and a PowerPoint story were used to support whole class and small group discussion to elicit children's ideas relating to global justice.

In keeping with the ethical underpinning of the research, care was taken to ensure that the research activities provided opportunities for meaningful learning and for authentic participation of children as research participants and teachers as co-researchers. Connolly (2008) and Waldron (2006) promote emancipatory approaches to research with children, recognising children as socially competent and striving to include children in all stages of the research process. Bergmark and Kostenius (2009) highlight the importance of openness in participatory research including opening to: dialogue, the complexity of experience and possibility of learning from others. Responding to these ethical perspectives, efforts were made to support children's understanding of 'research' and to engage participating children in the research process, particularly in the interpretation of data. The approach taken, with regard to research visits and to interpreting the data, was to recognise the complexity and diversity of perspectives amongst participating children.

In addition, consent was seen as an ongoing process and multiple opportunities to consider their continued participation were provided to the children (Nutbrown and Clough, 2009; Waldron, 2006; Fielding, 2001). Consent was also sought from the children's parents, the participating

teachers and the principals of the schools in which the research was conducted. Before any data collection took place, a full research proposal, including research instruments and participant consent forms, was reviewed and approved by the College research ethics committee.

In the first session, the children examined and answered questions on photographs of three different global contexts, as are described in the introduction to this article. The terms 'fair', 'money', 'who decides' and 'environment' were introduced in the second session and explored with the children, who then applied the terms to the images. In the third session, children were presented with a PowerPoint story, to which they gave oral and written responses. The location of the story was nonspecific and it examined themes such as environmental exploitation, justice, wealth and decision-making. The story approached these themes with moral ambiguity so as to be a stimulus for discussion rather than carrying any principle or messages. In the final session, children interpreted each other's stories, thus ensuring as far as possible the avoidance of what has been described as adults interpreting 'student speak' (Morrow and Richards, 1996). The focus groups provided an opportunity for deeper probing of children's understandings and responses to the themes and were researcher-led. All sessions were recorded and transcribed with pseudonyms given to protect children's anonymity. The data were analysed using a grounded theory approach (Glaser, 1978).

Findings and Discussion

The findings from this research were varied and multiple; however, this article focuses on two key themes: firstly, how children conceptualised the wider world and, in particular, people living in developing countries and, secondly, children's engagement with wider power structures.

Children conceptualisations of the wider world

As in previous studies (Ruane et al., 2010; Bourchier, Barrett and Lyons, 2002; Holloway and Valentine, 2000; Barrett and Oppenheimer, 2011), children's awareness of the wider world appeared to be linked to their personal experiences and to media representations. Children referred to

knowing about a country if they had visited that country or seen something about the country or area on television. The images used in the research depicted places in Myanmar, Kenya and Guatemala and the PowerPoint was deliberately ambiguous as to where it might be set. The countries to which the children referred in response to these photos, however, were, in general, popular holiday destinations such as France and Spain, or else countries to which there is a history of Irish migration and which are often presented in the media (the United States and Australia). In terms of areas in the global South, the children in the study most often referenced 'Africa' with some children of African heritage naming particular countries in Africa, the Congo, Nigeria and Zambia. India and Asia were mentioned a few times and presented with characteristics similar to those used to describe 'Africa'. There was no mention of countries or areas in South or Central America or of Asian countries other than India.

Children's characterisation of Africa, India and Asia were, in general, highly essentialised. Stereotypical images of Africa as poor and arid with people needing to travel far to get water predominated. The references below are typical of the responses elicited in the research.

Jack: I rubbed it out because I put Africa in.

Researcher: And what do you think?

Jack: It's not Africa.

Researcher: Why?

Jack: Africans don't have homes.

(Setting 2, Class Session 1)

Researcher: Okay. And Sally I forgot to ask you what makes you think that the photograph is in Africa?

Sally: Well if you see the background it's kind of like, it's all kind of like deserty.

(Setting 3, Class Session 1)

Helen: I think it's in Africa because it only looks like there's only one water fountain and if he needs to find another one he'd have to walk for a very long time.

(Setting 3, Class Session 1).

These findings not only suggest a tendency amongst children to perceive Africa as ubiquitously poor but to understand poverty in extreme terms. Poverty was presented as extreme deprivation akin, not so much to representations characteristic of a fund-raising campaign, but to those found in emergency appeals. As Jack's explanation above illustrates, he does not *expect* people in Africa to have homes. Other children in the study made reference to people in Africa not having food, clothes, bowls, chairs, tables or radios. The photos used in the research portrayed people living with basic facilities. Frequently the children struggled to reconcile their interpretation of the photos, where people had some of these needs met, and their preconceptions of African poverty. Several children suggested, as Jack does here, that the images were not taken in Africa. Others suggested that the people in the photos were 'lucky' or must have been helped or else had borrowed money to have the provisions.

While these findings indicate the extent to which the children tended to characterise Africa as poor, they also suggest that poverty was understood as being a distant and typically African experience. Although many of the children in the study suggested that the pictures were taken in Africa because they thought the people in the photographs looked poor, others understood the people in the pictures to be poor because they believed that they had been taken in Africa. Indeed, several children articulated a belief that there was almost no poverty in Ireland as the quote below indicates.

James: I don't think it's in Ireland because there's only a bit of poor people… so like five poor people that's

all in Ireland.

The findings also suggest that children understood the relationship between developed and developing countries as being characterised by dependence and deficit. As illustrated below, the people in the photos, commonly perceived to be African, were, in general, represented as being recipients of aid and support.

> Researcher: Okay but who decided to put the shower there? Who decided to make that the shower?
>
> Adam: I think that, probably builders over there, or Ireland wants to help them.
>
> Researcher: Okay.
>
> Adam: Ireland probably helped them or other countries.
>
> (Setting 2, Class Session 1).

As is demonstrated here, children made reference to Irish builders working in Africa and to the people represented in the images as recipients of charity from Ireland and elsewhere. When asked why they thought the photos had been taken, and by whom, all of the children suggested that the photos had been taken by someone from a different country 'coming over', either to do research or as a tourist wanting to show others what it was like. No child in any of the research settings suggested that the photo was taken by someone connected to the individuals and communities depicted. Inherent in each of these interpretations is a characterisation of the people who were photographed as passive subjects without agency. The explanations affirm findings elsewhere in relation to the influence of media representations in forming children's impressions of the global South (Ruane et al., 2010; Barrett and Oppenheimer, 2011; Weldon, 2010). It would appear, also, that no child drew on their own experiences of being photographed, suggesting a lack of identification between the children and those pictured.

The them/us binary, inherent in the Western understanding presented by the children of the relationship between developing and developed countries, was also evident in the data relating to children's conceptions of fairness. Children were asked to identify aspects of the photographs that they connected with the word 'fair'. While some children did perceive unfairness in inequalities between those in the photographs and themselves, others located unfairness as existing either in an inequality within the photo or an inequality between those in the photo and others who shared their context but who were less well off.

Zafiya: I think it's not fair because they're, they have food and all and their faces are very mad.

Researcher: Okay so explain that to me. You think it's not fair because…

Zafiya: Yeah because they, they have all that they need and they have a mad face.

Researcher: And what how should they be feeling? What should their faces be like?

Zafiya: They should be feeling happy because they have a house to live in.

(Setting 3, Class Session 2).

This perception, that those in the photographs were lucky and should be grateful for basic provisions, is one that occurred throughout the data in response to different questions.

Researcher: You don't think they look poor. What in the photograph would make you say that?

Evie: Because they have good food and the nice chairs (laughs).

Saoirse: They're lucky that they have like shelter and food.

(Setting 3, Class Session 1).

Saoirse's suggestion that the people in the photo are lucky to have shelter and food echoes Andy's and other comments discussed above. Implicit in their comments is a differentiation between what they themselves and those photographed should be grateful for. Their dissociation suggests that the children who participated in the study didn't relate empathetically with those in the picture. Informed by preconceptions based on charity motifs and stereotypes, they drew on discourses of gratitude and charity rather than those of equality, solidarity and entitlement to interpret the images.

Children's engagement with power structures

In discussing the photographs, the children were asked to consider the concept of decision-making, placing the label 'who decides' somewhere on one of the photos and explaining their reasons. In addition, the PowerPoint story raised questions as to who should make decisions. These stimuli enabled exploration of the children's understanding of power, decision-making and authority.

Across the research settings children were highly engaged in this discussion. In general, decision-making was regarded as a 'treat', with birthdays being seen as a time when you were allowed to make decisions. As the quote below indicates, the authority of parents was generally accepted, with several children indicating that parents know best what is right for you and that bad things could happen if their authority were to be ignored.

Fergal: I think it's best for the parents to decide because the parents know what it was like to be a child so the parents know the most so maybe the adults should make the decisions.

(Setting 2, Class Session 3).

While children enjoyed the discussion pertaining to decision-making, the data suggested that the children who participated in the study had little experience of considering power structures in school, locally or globally. Few children were aware of decision-makers in their lives beyond family relations, with only one child being able to name the board of management as a decision-maker in the school and only one child referencing the government. The only state authority regularly mentioned was the police and in these circumstances the police were conceptualised in almost totalitarian terms dictating, without due procedure, how people should behave. The discussion below, which arose in response to the PowerPoint story, is indicative of these references.

> Researcher: Is there anybody who could stop people taking each other's ideas?
>
> Alex: Like it's only, when you have to like go to the restaurant and do something and then after that you, I think the police might come. You, or you either call the police saying that you're not liking them and they keep copying you.
>
> Researcher: And can the police do something about it?
>
> Alex: Yeah.
>
> Researcher: What can the police do about it?
>
> Alex: Like they can say that you have to, like, go to a different place or if you don't move it, they're going to shut it down and they're going to break it into pieces.
>
> Researcher: And do you think that would be good if the police did that?
>
> Alex: No.

Researcher	No, why wouldn't that be good?
Alex:	Because it's, it could be sad for them but if I was the police I would just move it somewhere else.

(Setting 2, Small Group Session 3).

In summary, this research suggests that children who participated in this study tend to: hold stereotyped understandings of developing countries, particularly Africa; understand poverty as extreme deprivation and as distant; understand the relationship between developing and developed countries in charity-based terms and are unfamiliar with decision-making structures. In particular, the research indicates the extent to which children dissociate themselves from those living in developing countries, articulating different expectations for 'them' and for 'us'.

Discussion

The perceptions and views outlined in the findings are consistent with other studies set in different contexts and with different age groups (see, for example, Fielder, Bryan and Bracken, 2011; Ruane et al., 2010; Niens and Reilly, 2010; Martin and Griffiths, 2012). The findings also go some way to unpicking those perceptions. They consider the dynamics of thought that underpin the views captured in the data, identifying, in particular, the binarised them/us conceptualisations evident in children's thinking and the lack of association with the lives of distant others experienced by the children. Children's measure of what was fair was determined by their expectations of extreme poverty in the locations depicted in the photographs rather than by the context of their own lives. Highlighting principles of universalism and solidarity, and drawing on discourses of entitlement and agency, HRE could provide an effective counterweight to this perspective. Key aspects of HRE, which respond to the concerns raised by the research, are set out here.

Universalism in HRE

The findings outlined above indicate a tendency amongst some children to

differentiate between themselves and others on racial or geographical terms. The them/us binary is strongly evident in how many of the children in the study interpret the photos, understand the relationship between developed and developing countries and in the language with which they express their ideas. Conceptually, human rights are considered to be universal, in that they are held by all, equally, by virtue of being human (Donnelly, 2007). The UDHR, for example, conceives of a 'human family' and of the 'equal and inalienable rights' of all members of that family. HRE provides a framework and a language which expands children's understanding of what it means to be human. It foregrounds our 'common humanity' and challenges these entrenched binaries promoting empathy, alliances and solidarity across classes, cultures, continents, races and religion (Zembylas, 2016).

Rights go beyond basic need

The children in the study often understood poverty as extreme deprivation and starvation. Once the people depicted in the images were seen to have their basic needs met they were regarded as 'lucky'. HRE challenges this perception on two grounds. Firstly, it shifts the language of fortune and charity to that of entitlement. Human rights provides an entitlement for all to have their needs met and therefore can be used to confront an expectation that some people should be grateful for their survival. Secondly, the entitlements provided by human rights go well beyond basic need. The civil, political, cultural and socio-economic rights set out in the human rights frameworks establish universal entitlement not simply to survival but to an agentic, dignified and socially engaged existence. In championing this expectation for people worldwide, HRE can provide a counteracting force to these dominant and pervasive discourses of charity and gratitude.

Rights and agency

The children in the study showed a tendency to project people in developing countries as passive dependents to which help is given and on which research is done. Human rights frameworks provide for citizenship rights, including the rights to freedom of thought, of speech, of assembly and of association.

The history of human rights is a history of struggle, activism and solidarity (Bowring, 2012). HRE involves stories of human agency, resistance and optimism on different scales, at different times and in different locations around the world. In this way HRE recasts the narrative emerging from the research findings. People living in developing countries are not passive recipients of western benevolence. Instead, we are reminded of efforts of people in different locations around the world to improve their lives and the lives of others.

Furthermore, HRE encourages children to be advocates in their local contexts. Through HRE children explore injustices and inequalities in their immediate environment and can take action to rectify these. In so doing, HRE fractures traditional them/ us binaries of class, ethnicity, gender and dis/ability. Supporting greater understanding of justice, it supports lines of affiliation across local and international boundaries.

Rights as political

Concerned principally with the relationship between states and citizens, human rights are inherently political. Children's discussion of the photographs and the PowerPoint story belied the existence of political and other power structures which influence discriminatory and unequal experiences in Ireland and in developing countries. The charity focus of the children's understanding of poverty saw people's suffering as *a priori* and inevitable rather than a political failing. The discussion of decision-making suggested the extent of children's unfamiliarity with power structures. HRE, concerned with how agents of state engage with people, individually and collectively, and explicit in referencing the responsibilities of duty bearers, should support consideration of local and global justice issues in their political contexts (Osler, 2015; Zembylas, 2016).

Conclusion

HRE and development education are both educations aimed at addressing global injustice. This research provides an indication of how children, aged seven to nine years, conceptualise and relate to developing countries. It

raises concerns regarding the predominance of emergency appeal-led characterisations of developing countries in children's thinking and children's tendency to distance and differentiate themselves from people living in developing countries.

Development education could be seen to respond to many of the challenges raised by this research, by, for example, highlighting the different ways in which the lives of people in Ireland are connected to others around the world; encouraging critique and reflection on learners' assumptions and preconceptions; promoting empathy and exploring historical and ongoing causes of global inequity. Indeed, this research arose in the context of creating development education teaching resources for seven to nine year olds and has been used to inform development education practice in teacher education and in schools (Oberman, 2014). HRE, however, in foregrounding the concepts of a common humanity, universal entitlement to a range of rights, agentic engagement with rights through local and global struggles and the role of political structures is proposed as a valuable orientation for exploring development, global and justice issues.

In conclusion, recognising the influence of dominant narratives regarding developing countries on children's thinking, highlights the need to foreground principles of universalism, equality and solidarity. HRE provides both a pragmatic and principled framework within which to do so.

References

Andreotti, V (2006) 'Soft versus critical global citizenship education', *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 3, Autumn, pp. 40-51.

Andreotti, V (2014) 'Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices in Development Education', *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 14, Autumn, pp. 12-32.

Appiah, K A (2007) *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, New York: NY Norton & Company.

Augoustinos, M and Rosewarne, D L (2001) 'Stereotype Knowledge and Prejudice in

Children', *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 19, pp. 143–156.

Barrett, M and Oppenheimer, L (2011) 'Findings, Theories and Methods in the Study of Children's National Identifications and National Attitudes', *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 5–24.

Baxi, U (2007) *Human Rights in a Posthuman World*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Bergmark, U and Kostenius, C (2009) '"Listen to me when I have something to say": students' participation in research for sustainable school improvement', *Improving Schools*, Vol. 12, No.3, pp.249-260.

Bourchier, A, Barrett, M and Lyons, E (2002) 'The Predictors of Children's Geographical Knowledge of Other Countries', *Journal of Environmental Psychology,* Vol. 22, pp. 79–94.

Bourn, D (2014) 'What is meant by development education?', *Documento-chave*, Vol. 1, pp. 7-23.

Bourn, D (2015) 'From Development Education to Global Learning: Changing agendas and priorities', *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 20, Spring, pp. 18-36.

Bowring, B (2012) 'Human Rights and Public Education', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Vol. 42, No. 1, pp. 53-65.

Bryan, A and Bracken, M (2011) *Learning to Read the World? Teaching and Learning about International Development and Global Citizenship in Post-Primary Schools*, Dublin: Irish Aid.

Clark, A and Moss, P (2011) *Listening to Young Children: The mosaic approach*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Clarke, M and Drudy, S (2006) 'Teaching for Diversity, Social Justice and Global Awareness', *European Journal of Teacher Education,* Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 371-386.

Connolly, P (2008) 'Race, gender and critical reflexivity in research with young children' in P Christensen and A James (eds.) *Research with Children: Perspectives*

and practices (2nd edition), London: Taylor and Francis, pp.173-188.

Dillon, S and O'Shea, M (2009) *From the College to the Classroom: The impact of DICE courses on the inclusion of development education and intercultural education in the primary classroom,* Dublin: Development and Intercultural Education (DICE).

Donnelly, J (2007) 'The Relative Universality of Human Rights', *Human Rights Quarterly,* Vol. 29, pp. 281-306.

Fielder, M, Bryan, A and Bracken, M (2011) *Mapping the Past, Charting the Future,* Irish Aid: Department of Foreign Affairs.

Fielding, M (2001) 'Students as Radical Agents of Change', *Journal of Educational Change*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 123-141.

Flowers, N (2004) 'How to Define Human Rights Education? A complex answer to a simple question', *International Perspectives in Human Rights Education*, Vol. 112, pp. 105-127.

Glaser, B G (1978) *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*, Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Holden, C and Hicks, D (2007) 'Making Global Connections: The knowledge, understanding and motivation of trainee teachers', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 13–23.

Holloway, S L and Valentine, G (2000) 'Corked Hats and Coronation Street: British and New Zealand Children's Imaginative Geographies of the Other', *Childhood*, Vol. 7, pp. 335–357.

Howe, B and Covell, K (2010) 'Miseducating Children about their Rights', *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 91–102.

Krause, J (2010) *DE Watch: European Development Education Monitoring Report*, Brussels: DEEEP, available: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/ge/DE_Watch.pdf (accessed 7 July 2017).

Lundy, L (2007) '"Voice" is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child', *British Educational Research*

Journal, Vol. 33, No. 6, pp. 927-942.

Martin, F and Griffiths, H (2012) 'Power and Representation: a postcolonial reading of global partnerships and teacher development through North–South study visits', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 6, pp. 907–927.

McKown, C and Strambler, M J (2009) 'Developmental Antecedents and Social and Academic Consequences of Stereotype-Consciousness in Middle Childhood', *Child Development*, Vol. 80, No. 6, pp. 1643–1659.

Morrow, V and Richards, M (1996) 'The Ethics of Social Research with Children: An Overview', *Children and Society,* Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 90–105.

Niens, U and Reilly, J (2010) *The Global Dimension: School approaches, teaching and learning in Northern Ireland,* Belfast: Centre for Global Education.

Nutbrown, C and Clough, P (2009) 'Citizenship and Inclusion in the Early Years: Understanding and responding to children's perspectives on "belonging"', *International Journal of Early Years Education*, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 191-206.

Oberman, R (2014) *Just Children II,* Dublin: Trócaire.

Osler, A (2015) 'Human Rights Education, Postcolonial Scholarship, and Action for Social Justice', *Theory & Research in Social Education,* Vol. 43, No. 2, pp. 244-274.

Osler, A and Starkey, H (2010) *Teachers and Human Rights Education,* Stoke-on-Trent, England: Trentham Books Ltd.

Oxfam (2015) *Education for Global Citizenship: A guide for schools*, Oxford, England: Oxfam.

Picton, O J (2008) 'Teaching and Learning about Distant Places: Conceptualising diversity', *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 227–249.

Ruane, B, Kavanagh, A, Waldron, F, Dillon, S, Casey, M, Maunsell C, and Prunty, A (2010) *How Young Children Engage with Issues of Global Justice*, Dublin: Trócaire.

Smith, M (2004) 'Mediating the World: Development, education and global

citizenship', *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 67–81.

Spivak, G C (2004) 'Righting Wrongs', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 103, No. 2, pp. 523-581.

Struthers, A E (2015) 'Human Rights Education: Educating about, through and for human rights', *The International Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 53-73.

Struthers, A E (2017) 'The Underdeveloped Transformative Potential of Human Rights Education: English primary education as a case study', *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 68-84.

United Nations (1948) *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, available: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf (accessed 7 July 2017).

United Nations (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, available: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx (accessed 7 July 2017).

United Nations (2011) *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and Training,* available: http:// www.documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/467/04/PDF/N1146704.pdf?OpenElem (accessed 7 July 2017).

Waldron, F (2006) 'Children as Co-Researchers: Developing a democratic research practice with children' in K C Barton (ed.) *Research Methods in Social Studies Education: Contemporary issues and perspectives,* Greenwich: Information Age, pp. 89-109.

Waldron, F, Kavanagh, A, Kavanagh, R, Maunsell, C, Oberman, R, O'Reilly, M, Pike, S, Prunty, A and Ruane, B (2011) *Teachers, Human Rights and Human Rights Education: Knowledge, Perspectives and Practices of Primary School Teachers in Ireland,* Dublin: The Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education.

Waldron, F and Oberman, R (2016) 'Responsible Citizens? How children are Conceptualised as Rights Holders in Irish Primary Schools', *The International Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 20, No. 6, pp. 744-760.

Weldon, M (2010) 'The Wider World' in S Scoffham (ed.) *Primary Geography Handbook*, Sheffield: Geographical Association, pp. 205–227.

Zembylas, M (2016) 'Toward a Critical-Sentimental Orientation in Human Rights Education', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 48, No. 11, pp. 1151-1167.

Rowan Oberman is a lecturer and researcher in development, intercultural, human rights and citizenship education at Dublin City University (DCU) Institute of Education. She is co-director of the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education and a member of the School of Stem Education, Innovation and Global Studies. She is a qualified barrister with particular expertise in human rights and family law. She has considerable experience in global citizenship education in both formal and informal education contexts and has developed numerous educational resources. Her research areas of interest include children's rights, climate change education, global citizenship education and critical literacy. E-mail: rowan.oberman@dcu.ie.

Fionnuala Waldron is Cregan Professor of Education and co-director of the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education. Located in the School of STEM Education,

Innovation and Global Studies, Fionnuala lectures in history and citizenship education across a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Her research interests include history education, teacher education (policy and practice), human rights and global citizenship education and she has a range of publications across these and related areas.