

Educating Teachers About Human Rights: Building a Rights Based Culture in Australian Schools.

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Abstract

A well-educated active citizenry is the primary aim of our education systems. An essential component of a well educated citizenry in a civil society is its understanding of the value of human rights and what it means to live with dignity in a community, where rights and freedoms are protected. This paper uses evidence from international and national reports and programs to argue that human rights education should be an essential component of the curriculum in Australian schools. It draws on data from the first national cross-sectoral Australian study investigating the place of human rights education in the school curriculum (Burridge N., Chodkiewicz, A., Payne, A.M., Oguro, S., Varnham, S., & Buchanan, J., 2013). There is a need for both pre-service and in-service teachers to have focused professional training. In order to better engage students to be critically aware of the importance of developing a human rights culture within a school. Also, to adopt a transformative ‘whole school’ approach linked to local, national and global communities.

Keywords: human rights education; teacher education; schools; Australian curriculum.

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The researchers have been very mindful of ethics processes in conducting research with human participants and both projects cited in the manuscript have undergone thorough Organisational Human Research Ethics Committee approval. Each Ethics process involved the submission of a background briefing paper, a set of interview questions, and consent forms signed by all participants. All participants have been de-identified.

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Introduction

As nations across the Asia-Pacific increasingly pursue transnational dialogues and economic collaborations, often with a backdrop of geopolitical tensions, discussions about human rights are sometimes over ridden by national and economic imperatives. Based on a Western tradition of human rights that focuses on ‘the freedoms and liberties of individual and groups against the power of the state’ (Langlois, 2013, p.23), the existence of a vibrant civil society in any emerging economy or developed nation needs to be underwritten by adequate protection of human rights. Within these nations an essential component is an *active* well-educated citizenry that understands the origins of our human rights conventions and their importance in the protection of human rights. Through such an understanding individuals will know and value what it means to live with dignity in a community, where your rights and freedoms are protected.

The first stepping stone in producing a well-educated citizenry begins within our school education systems, and continues through as a lifelong journey. And it is within the schooling system where both the United Nations (UN) and national rights agencies have argued for the inclusion of education *for* and *about* human rights. This

has led to calls for supporting and strengthening the capacities of teachers to offer students opportunities to learn about and understand the importance of human rights issues. This paper draws on data from the first national cross-sectoral Australian study carried out in all eight states and territories, investigating the place of human rights education in the school curriculum (Burrige, N., Chodkiewicz, A., Payne, A.M., Oguro, S., Varnham, S., & Buchanan, J., 2013). It also utilises the findings of a study undertaken in 2013 in a group of low SES schools in one region of Sydney as part of the then Australian Government's Social Inclusion strategy on the professional development needs of teachers (Burrige, N., Zarmati, Scott, & Cook, 2013). This study highlighted the importance of professional development for teacher renewal. In drawing on the findings of these studies and other academic research on the development of human rights education (HRE) in schools, the authors focus on a number of key themes. These themes relate to the purpose of schooling, the work and mission of teachers, the opportunities and challenges available in the school curriculum, and ways of better supporting human rights education. A major tenant of this paper is that education about human rights is an essential component of a young person's education. And that building up a rights based culture is key to engaging young minds to think and act critically and responsibly in their role as members of local, national, as well as global communities.

Teacher identity and mission

The reports noted above emphasise the need for purposeful professional development for teachers in key learning areas of the curriculum, particularly in the light of the introduction of the national Australian curriculum (Australian Curriculum, 2014), and the advances in 21st Century digital pedagogies that encompass the use of technologies and social media that facilitate learning in a global context (Baker,

2009). Of key interest to this discussion on human rights education is not just the nature of the curriculum and what is taught, but the reasons why such knowledge is included within the curriculum, and why teachers themselves see these issues and topics as vitally important for students. It is in this context that teachers should reflect on the purposes of education as a transformative process (Freire, 2005; Apple, 2010), where the teacher's role is to enable students to think critically and engage with the world beyond their own school gate, that includes considering human rights in local, national and international contexts.

Here the notions of teaching as a moral practice (Pring, 2001) and the teacher as an 'activist professional' (Sachs, 2000) are central. This means viewing a teacher as a person with a moral mission to help create a better world by educating young people about issues of equity, social justice and rights, not just in their local context, but also in the wider global sphere. Martha Nussbaum (2009) extends the discussion, focusing on educators helping students to become critically aware, decent world citizens. Nussbaum writes of the importance of education for 'human development', whose goal is 'producing decent world citizens who can understand the global problems ...and who have the practical competence and the motivational incentives to do something about these problems' (2009, p. 6). Ensuring a focus on human rights education in the school curriculum is one way to enable this process. The paper explores how the issues noted above play out within the Australian school education context, in the light of UN initiatives, a national consultation on human rights (NHRCC, 2009), subsequent reports on human rights and education, and efforts to implement a national Australian curriculum in eight key learning areas.

Human Rights and the United Nations

The development of modern human rights theory has evolved from a Western natural law tradition and liberal political theory, ‘all fundamentally linked by their regard for the individual human subject’ (Langlois, 2013, p.17). It was in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Nuremburg trials and the creation of the UN that brought a worldwide focus on human rights. Central to the study and understanding of human rights in schools is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights passed by the UN General Assembly in 1948. Since then further support has been provided by introducing other UN conventions and covenants, such as those relating to civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; women; racial discrimination; and other humanitarian rights including the rights of the child and women (AHRC, 2010). Together they do provide a practical platform for defining specific rights, for their legal enforcement and for the engagement of individuals and communities, including in schools, in the discussion of, learning about, and taking actions to address key rights based issues.

Human Rights Education: an emerging field

As part of the post war focus on universal human rights, Human Rights Education (HRE) has emerged as a field of educational theory and practice linked to global political and education movements that seek to embody transformative politics and transformative education. It is well aligned to the critical pedagogy as espoused by Freire (2005), McClaren (1995) and Apple (2010). A key concept is Freire’s *conscientization* or *critical consciousness*, which involves the education of people in communities through critical reflection and dialogue, together with a conscious desire through praxis to implement change. The development of an international HRE movement, according to Tibbitts and Fernekes (2010, p.111) is the outcome of efforts

by the UN, other international human rights bodies, non-governmental organisations, and governments over the last 20 years. A key UN initiative encouraging the teaching of human rights in schools was the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1996-2004), which specifically focused on education in primary and secondary school years. This was followed by the UN World Program for Human Rights Education (2005) and importantly in December 2011 the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, which defined HRE as:

all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus contributing... to the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviours, to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights (Article 2.1) (OHCHR, 2011, p.3).

The Declaration highlighted three key dimensions of human rights education, education: *about*, *through* and *for* human rights. Education *about* human rights, includes knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection. Education *through* human rights involves learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners. Education *for* human rights is about ways of acting and empowering people to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect the rights of

others (Article 2.2). The training of teachers and others involved in education in human rights principles was identified as a key strategy (Article 3). The Declaration stated that HRE needed to be based on the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant international treaties and instruments, as well as relevant regional and national standards and principles (Article 4). Nation states were identified as having the primary responsibility for promoting HRE and training (Article 7).

Value of UN initiatives

While Gerber (2011) has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, the importance of this UN initiative needs to be acknowledged. Building on UN declarations and conventions, UN HRE policies and programs supported by good practice guides and resources, have for over twenty years, provided national and state agencies, educators and teachers with a focus and a support for HRE in their various jurisdictions and school systems. Recent national reviews of HRE in schools have reported on the take up of HRE in Scotland (BEMIS, 2013) and schools in Europe, Central Asia and North America (OSCE /ODIHR, 2009). In Australia, Gerber (2008) mapped the nature and extent of HRE in schools, while Lapayese (2005) assessed initiatives in Japan, Austria and the United States. Further, Gerber (2010) considered the obstacles to more widespread HRE in schools and proposed a 10-step model to support a ‘whole school’ approach to HRE (p.189). Despite the patchy record of these efforts overall, schools in various countries have engaged with human rights issues, and students have been able to learn about and act on human rights issues, even if these efforts are often only to be found on the margins.

Human rights education: Australian school system and recent rights initiatives

A feature of Australian school education is its complexity, which impacts on the curriculum and teacher education programs. Like most federal systems, it exists as a multi-layered system, funded by the national, state and territory governments, yet administratively schools remain a state/territory responsibility. Importantly, teachers are employed by their respective state based school sectors, which include Government, Catholic and Independent sectors. Pre-service teacher education in Australia is largely carried out in university-based courses, while professional learning (or in-service training) remains largely a state and sector based responsibility.

The Australian school curriculum is also state based and each state/territory has its own curriculum authority. Since 2008 efforts have been made to develop and implement a new Australia wide curriculum in eight key learning areas (AC, 2014). They include a staged process to develop Foundation to Year 10 syllabus documents for English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities (History & Geography), Humanities subjects, Economics and Business, Civics and Citizenship, The Arts, Technologies, Health and Physical Education, and Languages (AC, 2014). Any rights initiatives have to negotiate this systemic and curriculum complexity.

The primary responsibility for ensuring Australia's observance of internationally recognised human rights statutes and conventions rests with the Australian Government through its agency, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), with the support of individual anti-discrimination state and territory agencies. Unlike most democratic states, Australia does not have a national Human Rights Act. However, for a period between 2008 and 2013 the Australian Government responded to community calls for a national conversation on the need for a Human Rights Act

and ways of supporting education about rights. In 2008 it initiated the National Human Rights Consultation (NHRCC, 2009) which received some 35, 000 submissions and among its key recommendations was that education ‘be the highest priority for improving and promoting human rights in Australia’ (NHRCC, 2009, p. xxix). The consultation found more than 80% of students did not receive any human rights education at school and overall the approach being taken was largely ‘ad hoc’ and well short of what has been mandated by a number of UN conventions and HRE policies.

Acting on the report, the Australian Government did introduce a *Human Rights Framework* in 2010 and a *Human Rights National Action Plan* in 2012 that provided support for education programs in schools, universities, the public sector and the wider community (Attorney-General’s Department, 2012). These initiatives mirrored the international discourse and highlighted the importance of embedding human rights education within the school curriculum, with the proviso that ‘all pre-service and in-service teachers receive human rights education and training’ (NHRCC, 2009, p. 138). In addition, the Australian Government allocated resources for public sector education programs and a research program to assist the development of a rights culture in organisations, including schools.

To date, across Australia in each school sector, and across most school years, there are no systematic or integrated opportunities for human rights education tied to the curriculum that are available for teachers or students. Rather, there is a mix of both *explicit* and *implicit* opportunities, within topics, in particular subject areas and across various learning stages that teachers can adapt to the classroom (Gerber & Pettit, 2013; BurrIDGE et al., 2013). There is also a range of important extra-curricular

opportunities that can be accessed by schools, which involve partnerships with key non-government organisations (NGOs), parents or local communities (Burrige et al., 2013). This means while opportunities are available, teaching about human rights issues has yet to find a clear identifiable place in Australian school education, either in the curriculum or in classroom practice (Gerber, 2010; Burrige et al, 2013). As a result, education *about, through* and *for* human rights remains a contested part of Australia's public discourse, and teachers face a major challenge in addressing human rights issues in their classrooms.

Given this context, it is important to refocus attention on the place of human rights education in Australian schools and develop a stronger rights based culture. HRE initiatives by the UN, supported by national agencies like the AHRC and key NGOs, who have argued and worked to support the inclusion of HRE across the school years (AHRC, 2011; Gerber & Pettit, 2013), have contributed to improving available rights education opportunities. However, more needs to be done, especially in further development of curriculum opportunities and teacher training. The remainder of this paper will expand on the place of HRE in schools, consider ways of building up a rights based culture in schools, including addressing the professional learning needs of both pre-service and in-service teachers.

Place of Human Rights Education in Schools

The curriculum specialists, teachers and policy makers consulted across Australia by Burrige et al. (2013) noted that education about human rights was not yet part of the mainstream curriculum, nor was it a regular part of discussions about teaching practice. Where human rights topics were being taken up, they were often the result of committed individual teachers finding a place within their teaching program to include

a focus on one or a number of specific human rights issues. In addition, some teachers were linking up with available human rights programs or campaigns run by key Australian NGOs.

It has been argued in this paper that teachers have a broad and important mission as the gatekeepers of the citizens of tomorrow, and a recent review of the Australian curriculum (Department of Education, 2014) points again to an over-crowded curriculum and the need to reduce the curriculum pressures on teachers. However, if teaching is seen as a moral exercise (Pring, 2001) then HRE needs to be included in a more systematic way as a part of a school education (Potaka & Simpson, 2012). This raises the question of which approaches and pedagogies should be used, and which rights should be embedded, taught and discussed in the curriculum? How should contested rights and controversial issues be taught? How can teachers be better supported to take up the available curricular and extra-curricular opportunities? These questions are addressed below, and together they point to ways of building a stronger rights based culture in schools.

Building a Rights Based Culture in Schools

An important step to take is to support teachers and schools to build a stronger rights based culture, not only within the curriculum, but also as part of a transformative ‘whole of school’ approach (Gerber, 2011; Burrige et al., 2013). This means teachers need to: develop skills and understanding to tackle contested and controversial issues; build awareness of the available models and pedagogies they can draw on and have knowledge of the historical context of human rights and the place of human rights in the current curriculum. Also, they need to know about available resources, including ICT resources, and be aware of the agencies, partnerships and programs that can

enrich student understanding of human rights issues locally and globally. This applies for both pre-service and in-service teachers.

Teaching about human rights requires particular skills, considerations and understandings. Rights are contestable and teachers must be skilled in dealing with controversy in the classroom and to make judgements about what, when and how to teach. Teaching about human rights was seen by many teachers as one of a number of ‘controversial’ or confronting issues (such as gay marriage or abortion) that schools were increasingly being asked to address (Burrige et al., 2013). Teachers, across school sectors, said they were often hesitant to address these issues, and it was apparent that many teachers lacked the necessary awareness, knowledge and skills to effectively tackle what are often seen as contested issues. A strong recommendation from the teachers consulted was for the provision of targeted professional learning programs that addressed these concerns and offered them strategies to effectively address rights issues (Burrige et al, 2013).

In the United Kingdom, Leighton (2013) highlighted the need to enhance both teacher confidence and competence in addressing the challenges of citizenship education provision, which focuses on civil and political rights. Reyes (2010) sees that both pre-service and in-service teachers need deeper connections to broader community contexts and worldviews in teaching about human rights. The value of non-formal education methodologies, such as study visits to human rights institutions and meetings with ‘real life’ human rights defenders, have been shown to enhance teaching practice, when incorporated into teacher training and professional development (Ramos, 2011; Kirchsclaeger, 2012).

Pre-service teachers

There is little evidence that pre-service teacher education courses have any explicit recognition of the knowledge or skills required to prepare teachers (either in primary or secondary programs) to address human rights issues (Burrige et al, 2013, p. 47). Often there is an assumption that pre-service teachers who train to teach in the humanities and social sciences areas, for example in History or Legal Studies, will have an understanding of the various UN conventions and have completed some human rights study. However, this is often not the case and for many pre-service teachers their knowledge and understandings of human rights education principles and pedagogies is limited and very superficial.

In-service teachers

The development in the early 2000s of a set of professional teaching standards has contributed to the nationwide focus on teacher quality across Australia. To maintain accreditation and gain employment at any of the higher stages, a teacher must undertake yearly mandatory professional development, which is often linked to best practice pedagogies in key teaching areas. A study of the professional learning needs of teachers in a number of Sydney schools (Burrige, Zamarti, Scott & Cook, 2013) found that teachers wanted up to date information about their subject areas and the Australian Curriculum. However, just as importantly, they wanted professional support in ways to: better address diversity in schools; teach students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds; enhance student wellbeing, and identify and work with students who suffer from depressive illnesses (Burrige, Zarmarti, Scott and Cook 2013, p. 20).

Teachers also sought skills to engage with students beyond the formal curriculum. Currently human rights education is often taught through extra-curricular activities led by an outside agency. One of the main arguments that the authors wish to put is that as well as rights issues being more clearly articulated within the curriculum and embedded within particular learning areas and subjects, they need to be driven by a transformative ‘whole of school’ approach that provides opportunities for partnerships and collaborations with outside NGOs or communities.

Human rights education: Models and pedagogies

Much has been written about the pedagogical approaches required by teachers and pre-service teachers to enable student engagement and authentic learning in the classroom (Hattie, 2003; Rowe 2002). In the context of human rights education, a number of theoretical frameworks have been developed that are pertinent to teacher training. These frameworks also promote particular pedagogical approaches which are focused on developing critical thinking skills in students, as well as a critical consciousness that is often linked to a transformative or emancipatory model of education (Freire, 2005; Apple, 2010). As noted earlier the development of teacher identity is part of this discourse (Sachs, 2000).

In the emerging theory of human rights education (Tibbitts 2002; Osler & Starkey 2010; Tibbitts & Kirchsclaeger, 2010; Ang, 2010), a typology developed by Ang (2010) focuses on four dimensions: values and awareness; accountability, participation and transformation. The conceptual framework underpinning each model relates to progressive forms of education, which include a focus on values, global (active) citizenship, social justice and participation through social activism. This means that HRE should work to achieve transformation of learners rather than being

used simply to support the current political and social status quo. Ang (2010) argues that transformative learning opportunities are critical for effective HRE.

Transformative learning involves learners in developing autonomous thinking, critically reflecting on their own experiences and changing their specific beliefs, attitudes and emotional reactions.

The Burridge and Chodkiewicz (2010) have argued that the guiding principles for HRE should be transformative and that HRE programs ‘should challenge current thinking on such issues as cultural diversity and emphasise the rights of all peoples, including those who are marginalised or seeking refuge’ (Burridge & Chodkiewicz, 2010, p. 25). Tibbitts and Kirchsclaeger also suggest that inherent within the concept of HRE is the ‘knowledge, skills and attitudes consistent with human rights principles that empower individual and groups to address oppression and injustice’ (Tibbitts & Kirchsclaeger, 2010, p. 4). Whilst acknowledging that transformative learning is an ambitious goal in a school context, particularly given the limited curriculum opportunities for HRE, Ang believes that a number of cumulative transformative learning experiences can significantly impact on student learning (Ang, 2010).

However, given the challenges of Australian school settings, Ang proposes that the ‘participatory model’ is the most appropriate initial approach for HRE in secondary schools. It focuses on learning basic technical knowledge of human rights issues, but also involves students in working through a practical in-depth case study of a human rights violation (Ang, 2010).

Also worth noting here is the importance of taking a ‘whole school’ model to HRE in schools (Amnesty International Ireland, 2013; Gerber 2010), rather than just focusing

on supporting individual teachers to implement human rights initiatives (Burridge et al, 2013).

Pedagogical approaches

Teachers need the skills to select and teach relevant human rights issues that are pertinent to the age and stage of their students, drawing on pedagogical strategies to effectively engage them with human rights issues. Importantly, there is a wide range of pedagogical approaches available to teach students about human rights. According to an extensive survey by Tibbitts and Kirchsclaeger (2010) in schools across Europe they include: experiential and activity centred learning; problem posing; participative; dialectical; analytical; strategic thinking-oriented; and goal-and action-oriented approaches. The experiential and activity centred learning approach involves the solicitation of learners' prior knowledge and offering activities that draw out learners' experiences and knowledge. The problem posing challenges the learners' prior knowledge, while the participative encourages collective efforts in clarifying concepts, analysing themes and undertaking activities. The dialectical approach requires learners to compare their knowledge with those from other sources, and the analytical asks learners to think about why things are and how they came to be. The strategic thinking-oriented approach directs learners to set their own goals and to think of strategic ways of achieving them, while the goal-and action-oriented allows learners to plan and organise actions in relation to their goals (Tibbitts & Kirchsclaeger, 2010 p. 5-6). Teachers need to be aware of these choices and be supported in implementing their appropriate approach(s).

Knowledge and an understanding of the historical context of human rights

Teachers need to be aware of the historical context of human rights, including Australia's role in the creation of UN *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and subsequent covenants and conventions, most of which have been endorsed by the Australian Government. Given the development of an explicit HRE agenda, directed by the UN and the focus on human rights education internationally since the 1990s, it is vital for educators to be aware of this and the current international context.

Knowledge of the place of human rights in the school curriculum

Teachers do need to know about the place of human rights in the school curriculum. It is worth mentioning here a number of the key curriculum dimensions that need to be considered in any teacher education program. They include focusing on opportunities in key learning areas, in each school stage and in specific subjects and topics (Gerber & Pettit, 2013). It is important to identify what are the *explicit* opportunities, and also consider where there are *implicit* and extra-curricular opportunities. BurrIDGE et al. (2013) report and the AHRC guide (2014) provide useful starting points in the Australian context, and offer effective examples to follow for other educational systems. While an Australian curriculum is being introduced, support for HRE and the curriculum content developed so far, have been partial and limited in scope. Even so, some valuable foundations have been laid to enable future generations of students to learn more about human rights in their school years (Gerber & Pettit, 2013).

Which rights to teach?

Choosing which rights to teach remains a highly contested question and is the subject of political and social debate that does impact variously on educators and school sectors. In determining what rights to teach a starting point suggested by BurrIDGE et al. (2013, p.30) is to take into account the existing national Australian human rights

framework. It does provide a valuable guide for teachers on which rights, children and young people can relate to. For example, as the AHRC (2015) notes, the rights and freedoms that must be protected include: *civil and political rights* such as the right to life, liberty, free speech, movement, to vote, sexual orientation, political thought, religious practice; *economic, social and cultural rights*: right to adequate food and water, health care, education, a clean environment, welfare assistance; and *humanitarian rights*: rights of prisoners of war, of the wounded, refugees, civilians, including women and children.

Knowledge of resources

An important way to support teachers in their teaching of specific human rights issues is through access to good quality, up to date and relevant educational resources.

Among the key Australian government funded agencies found to have appropriate educational resources available online to teachers and students across Australia were the AHRC and a national not-for-profit body, Education Services Australia (ESA).

The AHRC has produced a set of high quality human rights education resources and facts sheets to support teachers and students. Among these resources are titles providing an introduction to and an understanding of human rights, Indigenous rights, race and diversity, child rights, disability rights, rights at work and sexual harassment. Importantly these resources are available online, and include links to key learning stages, subjects and topics. The AHRC (2014) has taken up the challenge to support the implementation of these new Australian Curriculum, by producing an online guide for teachers, titled '*RightsEd*', that identifies useful practical examples for the teaching of human rights issues. The examples cover English, History, Geography and Science, across Foundation to Year 6 and Secondary Years 7 to 10. Among Australian NGOs, Amnesty International in Australia, Save the Children Australia,

Refugee Council of Australia, Reconciliation Australia, World Vision Australia and Oxfam are involved with schools on rights issues and are a source of useful online educational resources (Burridge et al. 2013).

Communication technologies

Unlike some Asian countries that have invested heavily in broadband communication networks, Australia has significant disparities in how schools can access communication technologies across states/territories. There continues to be a divide between urban, rural and remote school locations, as well as between well-resourced and poorer schools. Even so, Australian teachers are increasingly able to access a mix of communication technologies and school networks that enable local, regional and international connections and collaborations on rights issues. Some private schools in Queensland are using local school networks to support junior secondary school human rights projects, while others connect with schools overseas. Increasingly, teachers are using social network applications (Facebook, Twitter, Dropbox portals) and blogs to support their own professional development (Dudley & Baxter, 2013).

Knowledge of agencies

Teacher associations, particularly in learning areas such as History, Legal Studies, and Social Studies, have a central role to play in addressing the professional development needs of teachers. Teacher associations can provide a key support role in the implementation of any teacher education strategy, engaging on a state/territory basis, involving teachers in workshops, annual conferences or by supporting social networking or technology based initiatives.

Partnerships with key NGOs

Across Australia NGOs undertake many valuable and wide ranging human rights campaigns and education programs. Some are able to include as part of their work, engagement with schools, involving both teachers and students, in rights issues. These community based school initiatives include one-off visits, special events or in some cases involvement in projects, campaigns or programs, as well as school excursions and camps. In recent years the main issues addressed by NGOs working in Australia include civil and political rights, children's rights, economic rights, humanitarian rights, refugee and asylum seeker rights, and Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights (Burridge et al. 2013).

Conclusion

Given the value and support provided by various UN initiatives and recent Australian government efforts to promote a rights agenda, this paper has provided a broad overview of the issues, opportunities and challenges involved in promoting a stronger rights culture in schools. In particular, focusing on ways that both pre-service and in-service teachers can be better supported to more effectively incorporate human rights into their classroom practices. And importantly to move towards a more transformative learning experience where students are learning about, through and for human rights.

Much has not been covered, including the different pedagogical skills required in teaching primary, as opposed to secondary school classrooms. Indeed, more must be written about the strategies and sensitivities required to address particular controversial human rights issues that are deemed contestable. Further, in these times of heightened geopolitical tensions, more emphasis needs to be put on the moral mission of the teaching professional and that a teacher's role should include, to use

Nussbaum's words, the capacity to produce 'decent world citizens who can understand global problems ...and who have the practical competence and the motivational incentives to do something about these problems' (2009, p. 6). What is important to note in conclusion is that in order to build a culture of rights in schools, human rights education needs to be based on a transformative educational practice that adopts a 'whole of school' model, connected to its local and global communities.

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