

Running Head – Education and children's rights

Pre-service Teacher Education
and Support of Children's Rights

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Abstract

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In 1991, Canada signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). As such, Canada pledged to disseminate information regarding children's rights and the CRC to children and adults alike. While Nova Scotia has taken a first step in the area of children's rights education by implementing a children's rights curriculum, it is thus far unknown as to whether teachers and other adults are educated in this area. This study addresses the question of teacher education in the area of children's rights by assessing pre-service teacher knowledge and education of several rights documents. Support of children's rights in the classroom and knowledge of the CRC is also assessed. Due to small sample size, results are largely discussed qualitatively. Few participants in this study were familiar with the CRC, but all were in support of learning more. The implications of adult education in the area of children's rights are discussed, as well as Nova Scotia's obligations under the CRC and the province's *Education Act*.

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INTRODUCTION

From pre-Confederation to current-day Canada, the overall concept of “child” (defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and here, as persons under the age of 18) has changed greatly (Covell & Howe, 2001a; Verhellen, 1994). Early in Canada's history, children were seen as property of their parents. As such, they were provided with the basic necessities of life, but no regulations existed as to the treatment and punishment of children. After the First World War, however, the needs of children were recognized by the Geneva Convention which aimed to provide physical protection from harm and neglect. In 1959, the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child again signified a desire within the general population to protect children from harm. In 1989 a greater step was taken with the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (the CRC). This document identified children as human beings, deserving of respect, and bearers of inherent rights (Verhellen, 1994).

The CRC calls for the dissemination of information regarding children's rights to all citizens, and for legal documents to be interpreted within the framework of the CRC. Documents such as the *Education Act* in Nova Scotia may, therefore, be interpreted under the guiding principles of the CRC (Johnny, 2005). Through such an interpretation, it is clear that teachers are responsible for information regarding children's rights to be disseminated in their classroom. In Nova Scotia, Canada, children's rights have been made a part of the elementary curricula in a limited fashion. However, children's rights and education on the CRC has yet to be incorporated systematically into teacher education

While teachers and other students may choose to study the subject of children's rights through elective courses, no university in Nova Scotia requires the completion of a dedicated course in children's rights upon graduation with a Bachelor of Education degree (e.g., Acadia University, 2009; Cape Breton University, 2009; St. Francis Xavier University, 2009). Therefore, teachers and other professionals often graduate with little knowledge of the CRC (Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, 2007). While teachers are expected to educate children about their rights, teacher knowledge and opinion on the subject has been minimally assessed. This study aims to evaluate pre-service teachers' thoughts on children's rights in general, as well as education in that area. Knowledge of the CRC, as well as pre-service teacher education and support of children's rights was assessed. Pre-service teachers were also asked several questions about their education and their familiarity with particular human rights documents (see Appendix A for questionnaire).

LITERATURE

The History of Children's Rights in Canada

Throughout the history of Canada, society's attitudes toward children and childhood have changed many times. Beginning as objects belonging to their parents, children are beginning to be recognized as subjects, people and citizens. Covell and Howe (2001a) have classed the changes of these general societal attitudes into three stages: "social laissez-faire, paternalistic protection, and children's rights" (p.16).

The first stage existed during Colonial Canada, prior to Confederation (approximately the early 18th century to the mid 19th century). Early in Canada's history,

children were viewed as objects belonging to their parents – namely, their fathers. Much like farm animals, children were part of the family property, all of which belonged to the man of the household (Covell & Howe, 2001a; Hart & Pavlovic, 1991; Volpe, Cox, Goddard & Tiliczek, 1997). In Nouvelle-France, which extended throughout current-day Nova Scotia and into Quebec and Ontario, this was described under the *Coutumes de Paris*. These civil liberties handed down from France afforded the father and husband *puissance paternelle*, making him the overseer of all property and actions of those dependent upon him – his wife and children (Moogk, 2003). While expected to provide the basic necessities of life for their children, such as food and shelter, parents were otherwise free to punish and raise their children as they chose. Children typically entered the workforce at a young age, providing income for the household, or labour on the family farm. When parents were unable to care for their children, it was not unusual for the family to bind the child to a merchant or other employer as a servant for several years. In fact, this practice was so common that in an early census in New France, children and servants were included in the same category (Moogk, 2003). The early years of colonial Canada were a time of social *laissez-faire*, as society and the government rarely stepped in to protect children. It was assumed that parents knew the best course of action for their child, and cultural norms dictated that the majority of family matters were to be taken care of privately (Covell & Howe, 2001a; Hart & Pavlovic, 1991; Volpe, Cox, Goddard & Tiliczek, 1997).

After Confederation, children's labour and contributions to the household continued to be important. For example, in Nova Scotia, young boys worked long hours in the dangerous coal mines, hauling coal and opening the shaft's traps in order to support

their families (McIntosh, 2003). Children were still seen as property; therefore, their voices, opinions and thoughts were not considered important. However, the First World War had left children all over the world in devastating conditions. Poverty, abuse, neglect and the industrial workforce were seen as threats to children's physical well-being. By the early 1900s, mining laws and factories acts restricted child labour (Lorensen & Woolner, 1950; cited in Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2006). In 1924, the Geneva Declaration reminded adults of their duties to provide for children's physical, social and economic needs, and to right the wrongs caused by war (Verhellen, 1994). In Canada, the recognition of these threats resulted in increased protection of children by government bodies. Children's aid societies were given the power and responsibility to remove abused children from their homes in order to protect them. In extreme situations, the state was able to act as substitute for parents who were unable to fulfill their obligations toward their children. However, the concept that families had the right to deal with their children privately often prevailed, leaving many abused children without aid (Covell & Howe, 2001a; Hart & Pavlovic, 1991; Rose & Shelvin, 2004; Volpe, Cox, Goddard & Tilleczek, 1997).

Although children were recognized as being vulnerable and in need of protection during this period of time, they were not recognized as rights-bearing persons. As children were very different from adults (being immature, inexperienced and irrational), they were considered to be inferior. As Verhellen (1994) notes, children were constantly "put in a position of not yet being; not yet knowing, not yet being able to; therefore not yet able to express themselves, not yet responsible..." (p.14). It became the responsibility of the parents and of the state to protect, guide and educate children until they became

mature, experienced, rational beings, and contributing citizens (Covell & Howe, 2001a; Verhellen, 1994).

After the Second World War, however, cultural attitudes regarding children as “not yet” began to shift slowly. Though many argued that children's rights were provided for in more general human rights documents, the concept of childhood as an important and unique period of life led to the development of special legal provisions for children (UN General Assembly, 1989; Verhellen, 1994). In 1959, the importance of children's rights was recognized globally by the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child. In 1989, children's rights were supported worldwide by the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (the CRC) (Verhellen, 1994). Gradually, the child as a person and an inherent bearer of rights is coming to be accepted.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

In contrast to earlier declarations, the CRC is a more detailed, comprehensive document which outlines the rights that are to be provided to children worldwide (Woodhouse, 2008). Since its development in 1989, hundreds of nations have shown their support for the belief that children are bearers of inherent rights, and that those rights should be provided for. In 1990 and 1991, Canada was included in the list of countries which signed and ratified the document, and as such, showed its official commitment to the children of Canada (Howe, 2007). By signing the document, Canada is committed to the physical safety and welfare of Canadian children, as well as their psychological well-being (Hammarberg, 1990).

As an international treaty, the CRC is a legally binding document. Over time, signatory countries are required to ensure that policies, laws and practises are in accordance with the articles under the CRC. Although non-compliance with the CRC does not result in immediate punishment for the offending nation, the CRC works on a 'soft law' system of monitoring, reporting and recommendation. After having signed the CRC, signatory states must submit a report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child every five years, detailing its progress with respect to the CRC. After having read this report, along with reports by child advocacy and UN groups, the Committee on the Rights of the Child submits a review of the country's progress, and makes suggestions as to how the country may improve before the next report. It is expected that such reports, along with public opinion and other pressures, will encourage signatory countries to comply with the CRC (Howe, 2007; Stasiulis, 2002).

The promises made to children by the ratification of the CRC are encompassed under the articles of the Convention; often divided into articles of provision, protection and participation (Covell & Howe, 2001a ; Hammarberg, 1990; Landsdown, 1994). Under articles of provision, examples include the rights to nutrition and physical care, recreation, family and culture. Articles of protection encompass the rights to be kept safe from harm, abuse, neglect and conflict. Prior to the Convention, the focus of the care of children in Canada revolved mainly around these rights of protection and provision. Parents were encouraged to provide children with the basic necessities of life, and later, to protect their children from harm, abuse and neglect. It is only with the development of the Convention that the child's need to participate in decisions affecting her own life has been recognized (Leonard, 2004). The articles of participation ensure children the right to

be consulted and to be listened to, as well as the freedoms of speech, information, thought and religion.

While articles 1 through 41 of the CRC describe the rights of the child, the articles following describe the duties of nations to implement the CRC and monitor progress toward being a rights-consistent state (Verhellen, 1994). For example, Article 42 of the CRC states that nations should disseminate information regarding the CRC to adults and children alike, in order to make known the rights of the child to all citizens (UN General Assembly, 1989).

By signing the document, nations around the world have agreed to provide children with the rights outlined above, as well as to teach them about their rights. However, efforts to implement the full Convention, as well as to educate children and adults about the Convention, have fallen short. Perhaps resistance, which has surfaced through criticism and protest (e.g., Duplantier, 1995; Ellis, 2009) can account in part for this failure.

Criticisms Regarding the CRC

While many nations worldwide have formally supported the implementation of the CRC, Alderson (2000a) has identified common criticisms relative to children's rights. These include: "the CRC gives children dangerous freedoms and undermines respect for adults" and "ideas about their rights could encourage children to be greedy, selfish and irresponsible" (p.439). While opponents of the CRC may stand in the way of the implementation of these rights, the criticisms may be challenged by the proper examination of the UN document, and by examining past research.

The criticism that the CRC gives children complete freedom can be countered by properly interpreting the participation articles (generally, articles 12 through 15). Article 12, which is described by Campbell and Rose-Krasnor (2007) as the key article of participation, states that children have the right to express freely their opinion on any matter which affects them. It also states that these opinions should be given due consideration, based on the age and maturity of the child (UN General Assembly, 1989). These restrictor terms (“age” and “maturity”) are both important and appropriate, indicating that the Convention does not call for child self-determination. Rather than calling for children to be autonomous, the CRC recognizes that children have opinions that may be valuable to adults, as well as children.

Furthermore, the articles of participation indicate that these rights are subject to those limitations necessary to “protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others” (a. 14, CRC, UN General Assembly, 1989). Therefore, children are not given permission through the CRC to overpower parents or other adults, but to be involved in decision making that impacts the child. Consequently, the participation articles indicate that a child's voice be taken into consideration, based on age and developmental capacities (Howe & Covell, 2000; Ochiata & Espinosa, 1997).

In order to address the second claim that children may become “greedy, selfish and irresponsible” (Alderson, 2000a, p. 439) upon learning that they have rights, one may examine research findings from schools in which children have learned about the CRC. In a qualitative study, Covell, Howe and McNeil (2008) discussed children's rights with students in Hampshire, England, where several schools have implemented the Convention through explicit teaching and policy development. Children from these

schools discussed not only the rights provided to them through the CRC, but also the important responsibilities that come with these rights. For example, students discussed their responsibilities to provide for the rights of others, to respect teachers and other students, and to keep others safe. Children who are taught about the CRC in detail tend to understand rights in an adult-like manner, and discuss children's rights as pertaining to equality, justice and fair treatment (Howe & Covell, 2002). After learning about their rights, students in one school began a breakfast program for peers who could not afford breakfast (Covell & Howe, 2001b). In another, students chose to address their local government representative in order to express their concerns (DeCoene & DeCock, 1996). Rather than becoming "greedy and irresponsible", examples abound of children who become caring and compassionate for others after having been taught about rights for children.

Criticisms and fears such as those noted above may be obstacles to the full implementation of the CRC in Canada. As Howe (2007) notes, the test of Canada's pledge to its children is whether the rights of the child are put into practice, regardless of obstacles. This would include the dissemination of information regarding the Convention (as outlined in Article 42), such as children's rights education for children and adults alike. Indeed, schools in Nova Scotia have begun this process by creating a required outcome in the area of children's rights, and implementing children's rights teaching in various subject areas.

Obligations of the Education System to Disseminate Information Regarding the CRC

According to article 42, information regarding the CRC, including each of the articles and provisions, is to be made known to both children and adults (UN General Assembly, 1989). In order to uphold article 42, it has been argued that schools across Canada, as government institutions, have legal obligations to educate the public about children's rights (Howe & Covell, 2000). This may include the interpretation of educational documents in a rights-consistent way, and the development of rights-based curricula and policy development (Howe & Covell, 2000; Johnny, 2005). In fact, Article 3.1 indicates that in "all actions concerning children, [...] the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration." (UN, 1989). Therefore, the best interests of the child should be included as a guiding principle in documents concerning the child.

In Nova Scotia, the *Education Act* guides the general behaviour expected of students, as well as their parents, teachers and school administration. Although it does not mention the best interests of the child (or the CRC), the document lists several "duties and rights" of both students and teachers (Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1995-1996). When examined individually, the duties and rights of students and teachers can be best supported by the full implementation of the Convention.

For example, the *Education Act* states that children should "(a) participate fully in learning opportunities" and "(b) attend school regularly and punctually ..." (Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1995-1996, c.1, s.24, p.1). These requirements are well supported by the CRC. For example, article 28 states that schools should "take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates" (UN, 1989). In addition, children's rights research indicates that students who are taught rights-based

curriculum are more likely to participate fully in their schools. Compared to students in traditional schools, children attending rights-consistent institutions have been reported by teachers to have higher levels of school engagement, which includes “active participation in school-related activities and learning” (Covell & Howe, 2008; Covell, 2009b). These claims by teachers have been supported by student self-reports. In a study by Covell (2010), children from rights-respecting schools scored higher than those from traditional schools on several measures of student engagement, indicating that rights-consistent teaching and policy may increase levels of school engagement. In turn, children who are engaged in school also tend to have good attendance records, and have friends that attend school regularly (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Barber, Eccles & Stone, 2001). Therefore, the implementation of children's rights in the curriculum and school policy may help students to fulfill their rights and duties, such as participating fully, and attending their classes.

Under Nova Scotia's *Education Act*, the student's remaining duties are to “(c) contribute to an orderly and safe learning environment;(d) respect the rights of others; and (e) comply with the discipline policies of the school and the school board” (Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1995-1996, c.1, s.24, p.1). Once again, these duties are best supported by the implementation of the CRC. Research suggests that when children are taught about their rights under the Convention, and these rights are respected, a contagion effect exists. Students who are knowledgeable about their rights tend to better respect the rights of others, learning that each has a responsibility to ensure that the rights of the other are provided for and respected (Covell & Howe, 1999). Wringe (1999) indicates that rights education helps children to learn about moral values in a personal way, “that others, like

oneself, have the right not to be hurt, humiliated or have their possessions damaged or taken is more readily understood and identified with than less personalised injunctions against violence, rudeness, vandalism or theft..." (p.293). In addition, rights-based education results in more prosocial behaviours, better acceptance of minority children, increased perceived support from peers and teachers, concern for fellow students, improved peer relationships, and a decrease in teasing and bullying (Covell, 2010; Covell & Howe, 1999; Covell & Howe, 2001b; Decoene & De Cock, 1996; Howe & Covell, 2005). As a result, harsh disciplinary measures are called upon less frequently. In fact, one school in England reported a significant drop in the number of expulsions (70%) and detentions (50%) after the implementation of rights-consistent education (Covell, 2007).

In addition to duties under the *Education Act*, students are also provided specific rights. The right most pertinent to the implementation of the Convention reads "Students may participate in decisions that affect their schools through representation on school advisory councils or committees in accordance with school board policy" (Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1995-1996, c.1, s.24, p.3). This is in accordance with Article 12 of the Convention, which gives children a voice in matters that affect them. While the inclusion of such a right in the *Education Act* is certainly a step in the right direction, children often report that participation in student councils and committees is tokenistic. For example, when discussing the changes permitted by students, one child said that "the most choice we ever get it which felt pen to use" (Wyse, 2001; p.217), while another indicated that school councils were a way to "make us [students] look like we've got some power, but we haven't" (Morrow, 1999; p.161). Another child noted that student councils tend to "[have influence with] small things such as where a picnic table might go," but that "it is

important that students make the decisions about how they live their school life” (Smith et. al, 2003; cited in Smith, 2007; p.150). Examples such as these can be found throughout the literature on school participation. When asked, children often express the desire to participate in their schools in a more meaningful way, for their voices to be heard, and for their opinions to matter in decision-making (Alderson, 2000b; Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin & Sinclair, 2003; Morrow, 1999; Smith, 2007; Wyse, 2001). Rights-consistent education calls for pupil participation in decisions that affect them. Not only are students encouraged to participate in class discussion, but also in the areas of discipline, budget, policy, and at times, hiring situations (Covell, 2009a).

Along with students' duties and rights, the duties of teachers are also outlined in the *Education Act*. The document indicates that teachers must “(a) respect the rights of students” (Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1995-1996, c.1, s.26, p.1). The rights of the children under the care of teachers may best be respected when they are well understood. Therefore, it may be interpreted from the *Education Act* that teachers in the region are responsible for knowing and understanding the rights of the child, as indicated in the CRC.

Teachers must also “(c) implement teaching strategies that foster a positive learning environment aimed at helping students achieve learning outcomes” (Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1995-1996, c.1, s.26, p.1). As the comprehension of children's rights is included in the grade six provincial learning outcomes, the *Education Act* therefore requires that teachers provide an environment in which these rights can be learned adequately.

In interpreting the *Education Act* in a rights-consistent manner, it is clear that the rights and duties of children in Nova Scotian schools are best supported by the implementation of programming based on the CRC. It may also be interpreted that teachers are responsible for having some knowledge of the CRC, and that they must provide a learning environment conducive to learning about children's rights. The first steps of reaching these goals have begun in Nova Scotia, as rights-based programming has been implemented in a limited way throughout the elementary levels.

Children's Rights Curricula in Nova Scotia, Canada and Hampshire, England

In response Article 42 of the CRC, Covell and Howe have developed children's rights curricula available for students and teachers in grades six, eight and twelve (CBU Children's Rights Centre). After having piloted the grade six curriculum in Cape Breton, beneficial results were noted. Students who were exposed to the sixth grade curriculum had a broader and more accurate knowledge base regarding children's rights than those who were not. In addition, a contagion effect seemed to occur: when children were aware of their own rights, they became more supportive of the rights of others. These students also perceived their teachers and fellow students to be supportive, and accepting of minority children (Covell & Howe, 1999).

After these successful pilot tests, the sixth grade curriculum was implemented to a limited extent in Nova Scotia in 2001. Children's rights education was incorporated into the existing health and social studies curriculum throughout elementary education in Nova Scotia, and knowledge of international children's rights was added as a curriculum outcome for sixth grade students (Howe, 2005; NS Department of Education, 2004). By

implementing a children's rights curriculum, Nova Scotia became the first province in Canada, and one of the first places in the world to do so (Howe, 2005).

This important step was noted by educators in Hampshire, England. After having observed classrooms in Nova Scotia, education officials in England decided to implement their own children's rights education program. The result was the *Rights, Respect and Responsibilities* (RRR) initiative, launched in 2004 in several infant and primary schools in the Hampshire district (Covell & Howe, 2008; Howe, 2005). An extension of the Cape Breton program, RRR focuses not only on explicit children's rights teaching as a formal subject, but as a whole-school reform. Schools in the Hampshire district are encouraged to make children's rights a daily practice through the use of school codes of conduct, policies and practices, student councils and classroom charters, among other activities (Covell & Howe, 2008; Howe, 2005). In these classrooms, children participate in decisions about class projects, school fundraising and field trips, and may even give some input into decisions regarding staff hiring (Covell, 2009a).

The RRR program has shown benefits for students, as well as teachers. Teachers in the RRR schools which chose to fully implement the program reported that students appeared to show higher levels of rights-respecting behaviours. Students of these schools were reported to have understood the values of rights, as well as the responsibilities that are associated with them. These students also reported better relationships with their parents and teachers when compared to students in schools where RRR was less fully implemented (Covell & Howe, 2008).

In addition, these teachers reported higher levels of student engagement and participation. Teachers of the RRR program showed significant decreases in reported

levels of burnout, particularly in schools where the RRR program was being fully implemented. This may be a result of the increased engagement and participation of students in these schools (Covell, McNeil & Howe, 2009).

Though the RRR program clearly incorporates the goals of the CRC in more practical and holistic terms through school policies and codes, both the Nova Scotian and Hampshire programs have shown promising results. While integrating the articles set out by the CRC into daily life can be difficult in practice (Leonard, 2004), the example set in Hampshire shows that it is achievable through education. It seems that the Nova Scotia Department of Education has made a valiant starting effort by implementing elementary-level children's rights curricula, and supporting this with various "rights and duties" under the *Education Act*. However, children's rights education has not been fully implemented in Nova Scotian schools, as it has in over 400 of those in the Hampshire district.

Teacher Education and the Current Study

Several differences between the RRR program and the Nova Scotian curriculum have been noted. Alongside differences to policy and school codes, perhaps one of the most important differences between the two children's rights programs is the lack of teacher education in the Nova Scotia district. In Hampshire, training was provided for 300 teachers in order to properly implement the RRR program (Covell & Howe, 2008). This training was described positively by the teachers, who found the provided resources useful. Teachers also found the training thought-provoking, and some noted that specific

examples of how children's rights may affect policy and behaviour codes were particularly helpful (Covell & Howe, 2005).

As noted in the *Education Act*, teachers are expected to "(a) respect the rights of students" (Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1995-1996, c.1, s.26, p.1), and to create an environment where these rights can be learned (Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1995-1996, c.1, s.26, p.1). Education has been shown to help adults to better understand children's rights and the CRC, and to better support the rights of children (Campbell & Covell, 2001). Such education may help teachers to understand, respect and model children's rights, as well as to provide environments in which students may learn the subject optimally. However, no training in the area of children's rights is provided by Boards of Education in Nova Scotia. This appears to be a violation not only of Article 42 of the CRC, but also of Nova Scotia's *Education Act*.

Although university education in children's rights exists, no systematic teaching of children's rights is included in professional training or degree programs in Nova Scotia. A review of the required courses in Bachelor of Education degrees throughout the province found no mention of children's rights (ie., Acadia University, 2009; Cape Breton University, 2009; St. Francis Xavier University, 2009), though students might choose to enrol in such courses as electives. Because such training is often not provided systematically, teachers, along with other professionals such as doctors, lawyers and psychologists who work with children tend to have limited knowledge of the CRC (Covell, 2009c). In fact, outside of academia and advocacy, there appears to be little knowledge of the CRC throughout Canada (Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, 2007).

The state of Canadian teacher and preservice teacher knowledge in the area of children's rights is currently unknown. Few studies have concentrated on teacher knowledge or support of the CRC and the rights of children. Although the International School Psychology Association has been conducting cross-national studies involving children and teachers, the data provided by teachers has been minimally analyzed (e.g., Hart, Pavlovic & Zeidner, 2001).

This study, therefore, addresses the following questions:

- 1) a) In light of the fact that education degree programs do not require children's rights knowledge, are pre-service teachers in Nova Scotia knowledgeable about the CRC? b) In interpreting the *Education Act* in a rights-consistent manner, teachers are called to support rights in the classroom. Does knowledge of children's rights predict attitudes supportive of rights education in the classroom?
- 2) In order to further explore the knowledge and support of teachers and pre-service teachers in the area of children's rights, how do these participants respond to the idea of children's rights?
- 3) Based on the limited amount of information available regarding teacher education, has teacher education included education in the area of children's rights or the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child? Are pre-service teachers interested in learning more about children's rights?

METHOD

Participants

A third party information letter (see Appendix B) was sent to five education departments in universities throughout Nova Scotia. Three universities responded to the research request by emailing the survey link to past and present Master of Education and Bachelor of Education students. Response rate in this study was low: although each university sent the survey to a large number of students, respondents consisted of only 21 education students (19 female; two male). Twenty students reported being enrolled in Bachelor of Education programs, while one participant reported having a Master's degree in Education. Age of participants were reported in ranges (20-30 years old, $N = 18$; 30-40 years old, $N = 2$; 40-50 years old, $N = 1$).

In an attempt to increase the number of participants, universities were asked to respond regarding the format in which the survey was preferred. Attempts were made to distribute paper surveys in person to participating classes, and the primary researcher visited interested classes at Cape Breton University prior to the distribution of the survey in order to explain the study. However, due to the timing of the survey (July-August), the majority of the universities' Education students had completed their classes for the year. Therefore, all participating universities chose to distribute the online questionnaire. Universities were asked to send an additional "reminder email" including initial research request and the survey link to students after one week.

Measures

The study consisted of an online questionnaire (see Appendix A), hosted by the online program *Fluid Surveys*. In addition to the questionnaire, informed consent forms (see Appendix C) were hosted online. Consent forms indicated the nature of the study and stated that participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time. The form also included contact information for the researchers as well as the MSVU Research Ethics Board.

The questionnaire used in this study was comprised of several measures. All measures were adapted from Dr. Katherine Covell and colleagues, and are used with permission. The questionnaire began with two open-ended questions regarding pre-service teachers' responses to children's rights. A second section of the questionnaire was adapted from Campbell and Covell's *Children's Rights Knowledge Scale* (2001), and evaluated the participants' knowledge of children's rights and the CRC with 19 true/false/don't know statements (e.g., "The CRC has been signed and ratified by all countries in the world").

A third section of the questionnaire included 22 questions addressing teacher support of children's rights in the classroom (e.g., "Students should have a say in classroom rules."). Respondents rated each item on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". The final section of the survey included demographic information, such as participants' age range, gender, education completed and current enrolment (B.Ed, M.Ed or other). In addition, the questionnaire included questions related to teacher education in the area of children's rights, such as whether a formal children's rights course was included in their education. Participants were asked

how information in the area of children's rights was taught in their classrooms in order to fulfill the grade six outcomes, and whether they believed that they would benefit from a children's rights course, staff development, or other information session on children's rights.

RESULTS

Knowledge and Support of Children's Rights

The small number of participants in this study precluded valid inferential statistics.

Consequently, descriptive statistics are used to summarize the data.

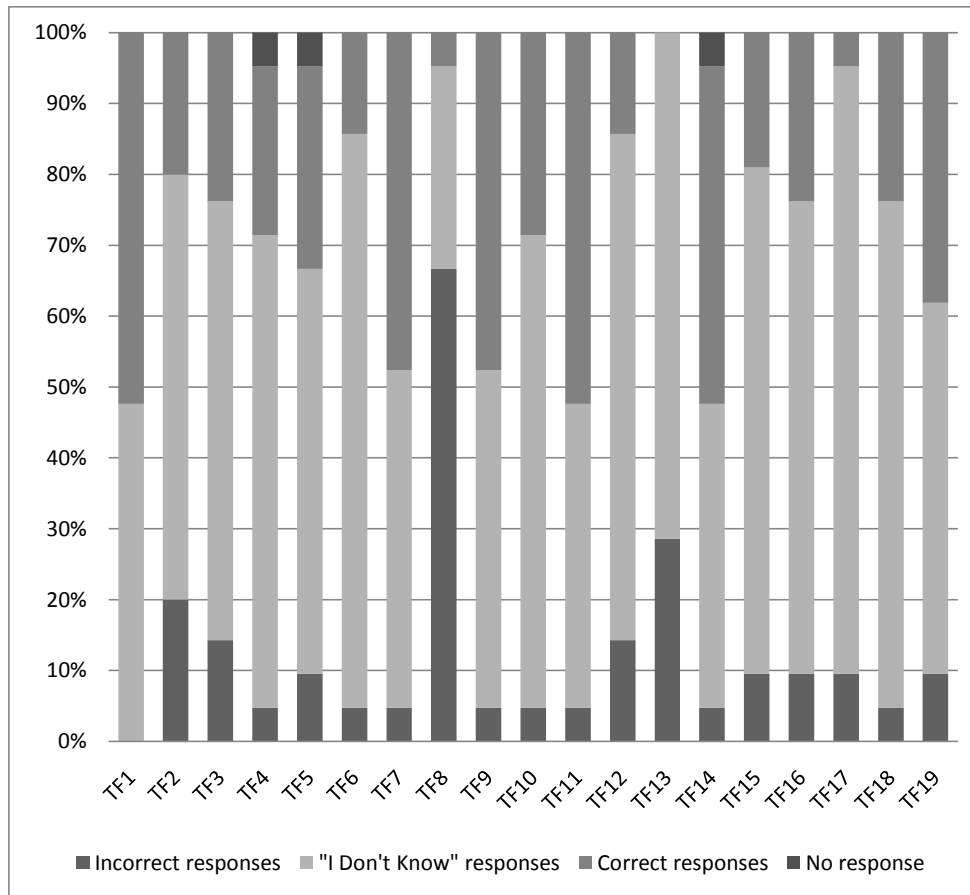
In order to assess the knowledge of the participants, responses were coded as Correct, Incorrect, or "Don't Know". Figure 1 displays the percentage of Correct, Incorrect and "I Don't Know" responses for each question.

Correct answers were scored at three points each, while incorrect answers were scored at one point each. Each "Don't Know" answer was scored at two points each. Most often, participants responded with "I Don't Know". Total scores were summed that greater knowledge of children's rights and the CRC is indicated by higher scores ($M = 40.95$, $SD = 3.65$; total possible score = 57).

Responses to 22 questions which assessed support for children's rights education in the classroom were rated on a five-point Likert scale, and total scores computed ($M = 79.46$, $SD = 5.62$; total possible score 110).

A Pearson correlation identified no relationship between knowledge of children's rights ($M = 40.95$, $SD = 3.65$) and the support of rights education in the classroom ($M = 79.46$, $SD = 5.61$) ($r = 0.143$, $n = 21$, $p = 0.537$).

Figure 1. *Participant Knowledge of Children's Rights*



Children's Rights Learning and Education in Teacher Training

Participants were asked to identify how well they felt that they knew several human rights documents and treaties. Frequency results are summarized below in Table 2.

Table 2. *Knowledge of Rights Documents*

	Not Familiar	Have Heard of the Document	Know Fairly Well	Know Very Well
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms	0	52.4%	42.9%	4.8%
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	9.5%	61.9%	28.6%	0
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	33.3%	42.9%	23.8%	0
Youth Criminal Justice Act	19.0%	42.9%	23.8%	0
UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child	42.9%	47.6%	9.5%	0
Aboriginal Treaty Rights	28.6%	52.4%	19.0%	0
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	90.5%	9.5%	0	0

Participants were also asked to identify where they had learned about each document. Table 3 displays descriptive analyses for these responses.

A final section of the questionnaire asked participants about their specific training in the area of children's rights, and possible future training in the area of children's rights. While 14.3% of participants indicated that some part of their formal education focused on children's rights, only 4.8% of participants responded affirmatively when asked whether their teacher training had involved education regarding the CRC. However, 76.2% of participants indicated that a required course on children's rights would have been beneficial for them as a teacher, and 100% of participants indicated that they would be interested in a Professional Development or other staff training in the area of children's rights.

Table 3 *Education About Rights Documents*

	University Education Course	Professional Development Or Staff Training	Personal Time	Other	Unfamiliar
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms	42.9%	4.8%	14.3%	23.8%	14.3%
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	28.6%	4.8%	9.5%	33.3%	23.8%
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	14.3%	0	19.0%	9.5%	57.1%
Youth Criminal Justice Act	28.6%	0	4.8%	33.3%	33.3%
UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child	14.3%	0	9.5%	14.3%	61.9%
Aboriginal Treaty Rights	38.1%	0	4.8%	19.0%	38.1%
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	0	0	0	0	100%

Qualitative Analysis

In order to further explore the knowledge and support of pre-service and classroom teachers in the area of children's rights, a content analysis was completed on the open-ended questions involving the response to the idea of children's rights education. Two short-answer questions were asked: 1) When you hear the term "children's rights", what comes to mind? 2) When you hear "children's rights education", what comes to mind? In general, participants' responses were short (one to three sentences) and relatively uninvolved. The primary researcher served as the first rater, assigning each qualitative comment to a particular category. A second rater was then asked to assign each comment to the designated categories. Percent agreement is addressed below.

Responses to the Idea of Children's Rights

Content analysis completed on the responses to the short answer question regarding children's rights in general indicated three categories of response: responses that mentioned specific rights (42.9% of participants), those that involved legal references (38.1% of participants), responses that involved both of these categories (4.8% of participants), and "other" (4.8% of participants). Three participants (9.5% of participants) chose not to answer this question. Percent agreement between coders was 82%. Responses to this question generally involved one to two sentences, and were often quite vague (e.g., "The right a child has to certain things. I.e. education, stable home, etc.).

When asked about children's rights in general, participants most often discussed specific rights. Participants appeared to be most familiar with rights deemed necessary for survival and success, or as one participant wrote, rights to "the necessities of life". Rights to nutrition, education and protection from physical harm were often used as examples of rights afforded to children, which were often provided in a list format (e.g., "The right to education, a safe learning environment, the right to food, shelter and the necessities of life."). While the majority of participants answering in this category focused on survival and necessities, one participant indicated that children had the right to be provided not only with food, water and shelter, but "quality food water and shelter. If parents cannot provide a nurturing environment, then the children are entitled to have it provided by another means". Though more rarely, children's rights to participation were also included in responses. One participant indicated that students had "The right [. . .] to speak their minds. . ." , while another indicated that children had "the right to play". A

final participant referenced the rights of participation, protection and provision, as included in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Many participants also discussed their understanding of the legal aspects of rights, indicating that children are protected by “international, governmental, municipal and provincial laws”, or even that they are “part of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*”. Participants described children's rights as “laws that protect children”, or “what children are legally entitled to in order to keep them safe”.

Responses to the Idea of Children's Rights Education

Participants were also asked about their understanding of children's rights education. Analysis indicated that responses to this open-ended question could be placed into four categories: educating children about their rights (38.1% of participants), educating adults about the rights of children (19.0%), educating both children and adults about children's rights (19.0%), and those that misunderstood the question (14.3%). Two participants chose not to answer this question (9.5% of participants). Percent agreement between coders was 80%.

When asked about children's rights education, participants' responses most often referenced the teaching of rights to children themselves. As one participant noted, “students should be informed about their rights”. Responses often indicated that children should be taught about their rights in school. One participant noted that teachers are responsible for distributing such knowledge, stating that “Children should be aware of what rights they have. If teachers are doing their job in the way they should be, having children understand what their rights are will [*sic*] not be an issue (. . .)”. Responses

indicated that children should be taught about the responsibilities that come along with rights, or as one participant stated, "Children's rights education would mean the practice of teaching children what their rights actually are, and how rights differ from privileges". Other responses discussed teaching children "how they should expect to be treated by others", and how to advocate for themselves.

Participants who referenced the education of adults in the area of children's rights largely discussed the responsibility that adults have to protect and provide for children in the community (i.e., "the training and learning of adults as to the laws that preserve the health, education and safety of children"). Some responses indicated that children needed special consideration, and that adults need to be "educated about children's rights in order to protect them". Responses indicated that further education for adults is necessary in order for adults to respect and provide for the rights of children. As one participant stated, "Children's rights education is making people who have an influence on children aware of what the children's rights are. It is the responsibility [*sic*] of these influential people to ensure that the rights are being respected."

Responses which referenced the education of both children and adults discussed the need for students and adults to understand which rights are being met, as well as those which are not. Respondents also discussed the importance of the awareness of adults, in order to children the ability to advocate for themselves, "informing children of their own rights and where to seek help". One participant noted that teachers are especially important in this process, as teachers "need to know how to protect and enable (their) students. In turn, (teachers) are able to teach children what their rights are and what steps they can take to protect and enable themselves."

DISCUSSION

Early in Canada's history, children had few rights, and were considered property of their parents (Verhellen, 1994). However, the concept of "child" has changed greatly throughout Canadian history, along with the rights and privileges afforded to children (Covell & Howe, 2001a; Verhellen, 1994). In 1990 and 1991, Canada was included in the nations which had signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. As such, certain promises were made to Canadian children, including rights to provision (i.e., nutrition, education and physical care), protection (i.e., from harm and abuse), and participation (i.e., freedom of speech, thought and religion). By signing and ratifying the document, Canada also promised to disseminate information regarding the CRC to adults and children alike, as outlined in Article 42 (UN General Assembly, 1989).

Through Article 42 of the CRC and the *Education Act*, the Nova Scotian education system is called to distribute information regarding the CRC and children's rights, and to support those rights in the school setting. It follows, then, that teachers are called to be knowledgeable and supportive of children's rights, and to disseminate such knowledge to their students. However, children's rights courses are rarely taught systematically in Nova Scotia's universities, and dedicated children's rights courses are do not appear to be required in any of Nova Scotia's Bachelor of Education courses (e.g., Acadia University, 2009; Cape Breton University, 2009; St. Francis Xavier University, 2009). Few participants in this study reported children's rights as being part of their formal education. In addition, over half of the pre-service teachers in this study indicated that they were unfamiliar with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Although

pre-service teachers appeared to have some knowledge of specific rights that are afforded to children under the CRC, these rights were namely comprised of those included under “provision” and “protection”, or as one participant stated, “The right to the basic needs of life”. The participant went on to describe such needs as “shelter, food water and clothing. As well as the right to an education, the right not to be neglected, abused, or harassed...”. Five participants described children's rights as providing the “basic necessities of life”, each including examples such as “...food, shelter, clothing, medical care...”. Participation rights were rarely discussed by respondents in this study. Without recognizing the rights of participation, teachers cannot be expected to give children the meaningful participation they desire in the area of school councils, school policy and education in general (e.g., Morrow, 1999; Smith, 2007; Wyse, 2001). In addition, participants appeared to be under the assumption that children's rights have been integrated into the laws and policies of the country. Participants indicated that children's rights were “laws that protect children”, and that children are “legally entitled” to these rights “in order to keep them safe”. Although the CRC calls for legislative action for the implementation of children's rights, Canadian law has yet to directly implement specific legislation where the CRC is involved. Rather, existing laws, as well as the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (CCRF)* are assumed to encompass children's rights (Standing Senate Committee on Children's Rights, 2005). In fact, one participant appeared to agree with this, stating that children's rights were “a part of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms”. Thoughts that these documents encompass children's rights are reminiscent of opinions that were voiced prior to the development of the CRC, which argued that more general human rights documents included rights for children (Verhellen, 1994). However, the *CCRF*

does not include special provisions for children. Rather, the *CCRF* appears to apply to children only where language of instruction is concerned. In this case, children are referred to only in relationship to their parents. While adults are referred to in the document as "Canadian Citizens", children are referred to only as the offspring of these citizens (Canada, 1982). In contrast, the CRC indicates that children are independent bearers of rights on their own, which is not recognized under the *CCRF*. In addition, childhood is a particularly vulnerable time in one's life, and therefore requires "special safeguards and care" (UN General Assembly, 1989), which are not afforded by the *CCRF*. It appears that many of the participants in this study were not aware that the CRC has not been introduced into Canadian legislation and other documents. Taken with the lack of discussion regarding participation rights, the researchers in this study must emphasize that a broader knowledge base of children's rights is important, particularly for those who work with children.

Fears and criticisms may stand in the way of the full implementation of the CRC in Canada, including education on the subject. Criticisms of the CRC include that the document gives children complete freedom, or that it enables children to become "selfish, greedy and irresponsible" (Alderson, 2001a; p.439). However, those arguments have been countered in this dissertation by examining the CRC and past research. Similarly, criticisms and other challenges may stand in the way of children's rights education for children and adults. Additional responsibilities, limited resources and teaching techniques are challenges faced by teachers when implementing any new curriculum (i.e., Howe, 2005). In addition, teachers may support the criticism above. For example, one participant stated that children's rights education must teach children "how rights differ

greatly from privileges". Despite these challenges, children's rights education is attainable, as shown by the Hampshire RRR program, and is beneficial for students, as well as teachers. Students tend to be more fully engaged in the classroom, have better relationships with parents, and demonstrate increased rights-respecting behaviours (Covell & Howe, 2008), while teachers report a decreased rate of burnout (Covell, McNeil & Howe, 2009). While a children's rights curriculum for students is important, and has shown beneficial results (i.e., Covell & Howe, 1999; 2001b; 2008; Covell, Howe & McNeil, 2008), education for adults must also be incorporated into a balanced learning approach. Children's rights education will not only prepare teachers for the children's rights curricula in Nova Scotian schools, but will likely encourage support for those rights in the classroom (Campbell & Covell, 2001). Each of these goals are supported not only by the CRC, but also Nova Scotia's *Education Act*.

While the majority of pre-service teachers in this study reported that they were unfamiliar with children's rights documents, participants were interested in learning more: 76.2% of participants indicated that a required course on children's rights would have been beneficial for them as a teacher, and all participants indicated that they would be interested in a Professional Development session or other staff training in the area of children's rights. Further adult education, therefore, is not only necessary and beneficial, but desired by those who work with children.

Professional Development sessions, staff training and short workshops may not provide adequate education for the appropriate implementation of programs such as *RRR*. However, such education may be the beginning of an interest in children's rights, and my help teachers to support the rights of children in their classrooms in some way.

A limitation involved with this study was the small sample size, which precluded the use of valid inferential statistics, and may have contributed to the lack of relationship between knowledge and support of children's rights (in contrast to results by Campbell and Covell [2001]). Due to circumstances involved with the procedure of the study, the questionnaire was administered in the months of July and August. The majority of the Education programs involved with this study had concluded classes for the summer term. As a result, the questionnaire was administered solely online. This likely contributed to small sample size. A larger study is planned in the future to address issues with inferential statistics and may allow for more varied responses. The questionnaire will be distributed throughout the school year, and efforts will be made to administer a paper survey in Education classes. In addition, the survey will be made available to current elementary school teachers, which may contribute additional information regarding the education and knowledge of teachers in the area of children's rights.

Future research may also focus on the practicality of implementing children's rights courses into existing Bachelor of Education programs. Research devoted to measuring the best way to educate pre-service teachers and other adults, whether through workshops, dedicated courses, or coursework implemented in existing Bachelor of Education courses, may encourage practical distribution of the information, as called for under the CRC and the *Education Act*.

The results of this study, as well as Canada's responsibilities under the CRC, call for additional adult education in the area of children's rights. Although the focus of this study was on teachers, few professionals enter the workforce with knowledge of children's rights (Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, 2007). While the

concept of “child” has progressed greatly since pre-Confederation, the recognition of children as equal, rights-bearing persons has not yet been reached. It is likely that the recognition of children as citizens may be slowed by the lack of awareness shown by our adult citizens. The overall lack of acceptance of children as rights-bearing citizens, and lack of awareness of children's rights in Canada, is evidenced in Canadian law: under the criminal code, Canadian citizens are prohibited from harming one another (Department of Justice Canada, 1985; s. 265); as well as animals (s. 264.1). However, Canadian legislation continues to allow parents and authority figures, including teachers, to use corporal punishment as a way to “teach” the child, “as long as force does not exceed what is reasonable for the circumstances” (Department of Justice Canada, 1985; s. 43). Gurevich (2010) provides an overview of American law and policy which indicates that the “legal handling” of adult abuse toward children reflects the changing conceptions of children by society. If current Canadian law reflects the conceptions of children in society, it may be understood that children are not considered to have the same rights as adults or domestic animals. It is clear that documentation and policy must be updated in order to stay in line with Canada's promises under the CRC.

Because adult education has been shown to increase support for children's rights (Campbell & Covell, 2001), it follows that overall recognition of children as rights-bearing citizens may be encouraged by such education. Pre-service teachers are interested in courses, workshops and Professional Development sessions centred on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Other professionals and Canadian citizens in general may also be interested in children's rights education - a possibility which should be explored through future research.

Currently, information on children's rights is desired by pre-service teachers, and will likely be beneficial in the classroom. Responsibility now lies with universities and with the Nova Scotia Education Department to implement programs and offer courses that can answer the needs identified in this study.

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APPENDIX A:
QUESTIONNAIRE

Some teachers support children having rights, and think that they should be taught in schools. Other teachers think children already have too many rights and that it would be foolish to teach rights in schools.

We really want to know what you think. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. When you hear the term "children's rights", what comes to mind?

2. When you hear "children's rights education", what comes to mind?

Please note that you may withdraw from this study, or omit any answer to any question, at any time without penalty

Please answer the following questions. For each item, please circle "T" for True, "F" for False, or "D" for Don't Know. Please note that throughout this survey, "CRC" stands for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. The CRC has been signed and ratified by all countries in the world. | T | F | D |
| 2. The CRC is a moral statement and future goal. Canada is not obligated to comply with the CRC. | T | F | D |
| 3. If Canadian laws conflict with the CRC, the CRC is to take priority. | T | F | D |
| 4. The CRC does not address the issue of whether a child has rights prior to birth. | T | F | D |
| 5. Under the CRC, unless they are negligent or abusive, parents have the right to care for their children. | T | F | D |
| 6. Under the CRC, children have the right to provide their opinion in custody disputes and their input must be taken into account, even if one or both parents disagree. | T | F | D |
| 7. According to the CRC, parents have to allow time for their children to engage in play and leisure, even if they think their child's focus should be on studying. | T | F | D |
| 8. Under the CRC, children cannot be used as military soldiers – 18 is the minimum age at which you can join the military. | T | F | D |
| 9. Although children have many rights under the CRC, it states that children do not have to be educated about these rights because they are unable to understand them. | T | F | D |
| 10. The CRC requires Canada to implement more labour laws and standards to protect children in the workplace. | T | F | D |
| 11. The CRC does not undermine the family – it makes Canada responsible for helping families to raise their children. | T | F | D |
| 12. The CRC makes Canada responsible for ensuring that pregnant women have access to good prenatal care and information. | T | F | D |
| 13. The CRC gives children the right to express and have their opinion heard regarding family decisions such as vacations and budgeting. | T | F | D |

Please note that you may withdraw from this study, or omit any answer to any question, at any time without penalty

14. Although Canadian law makes it illegal to produce or sell pornography involving children, Canada is not obligated under the CRC to prevent children from being used in pornography, as this is a common practice in some parts of the world.	T	F	D
15. The CRC gives the child the right to access information via the internet, subject to parental guidance.	T	F	D
16. The CRC makes countries obligated to protect refugee children, even if that country's immigration laws forbid the entry of such refugees.	T	F	D
17. The CRC does not prohibit arbitrary locker or backpack searches.	T	F	D
18. If any child has broken the law, the CRC indicates that it is appropriate to have the child serve jail time and undergo judicial proceedings in order to best teach them about right and wrong.	T	F	D
19. Under the CRC, Canada is required to inform adults about the rights of children.	T	F	D

Based on your teaching experiences, please answer the following. If you are a pre-service teacher, please answer based on your current beliefs. Please answer as honestly as possible – there are no right or wrong answers. Please place the appropriate number by each:

- 1- Strongly disagree*
- 2- Disagree*
- 3- Sort of agree*
- 4- Agree*
- 5- Strongly agree*

1. It is very important that the teacher be in charge of all aspects of the classroom and that the students know this.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Students should have a say in classroom rules.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Children's rights should be taught at home rather than at school.	1	2	3	4	5
4. A good classroom is one that allows for a lot of peer interaction.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The teacher, not the students, should decide how free time is spent.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Teachers are the best people to teach children about their rights.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Students should be rewarded in some small manner for all accomplishments, no matter how small.	1	2	3	4	5

Please note that you may withdraw from this study, or omit any answer to any question, at any time without penalty

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. Students should look on their teacher as the authority figure, and do as the teacher says, without question. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. It would be better to focus on children's responsibilities rather than their rights. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. A classroom works best if students share power with their teachers. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. It is important that the teacher get to know students and their home situations well, so that the teacher can properly help each student to do his or her best. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Given a busy school day, rights teaching should be given a very low priority. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Students should not question classroom rules or discipline procedures. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. The teacher should focus on basic teaching, not the students' personal situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. It is very important that children are taught about their rights as part of their regular curricula. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Teachers should behave such that all students in the class know that the teacher cares about them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Students do best in a class where the teacher remains distant rather than friendly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Children will behave more responsibly at school if they are taught about their rights. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Students should have a say in the type and amount of homework the teacher expects them to do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Children who are taught they have rights will take advantage of them, and cause problems in the classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Student newspapers should be carefully monitored, and articles censored if necessary. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. All teachers should incorporate rights education into their regular classroom activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please note that you may withdraw from this study, or omit any answer to any question, at any time without penalty

Please indicate whether you are familiar with the following documents, using the given scale. Please write the appropriate number by each:

- 1 – Learned about through university education course*
- 2 – Learned about through Professional Development or staff training*
- 3 – Learned about on personal time*
- 4 – Learned about from another source*
- 5 – Not familiar with this document*

___ Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

___ Universal Declaration of Human Rights

___ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

___ Youth Criminal Justice Act

___ UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child

___ Aboriginal Treaty Rights

___ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Please indicate how well you know each of the following, using the given scale. Please write the appropriate number by each:

- 1 – Not familiar with this document*
- 2 – Have heard of this document, but know little about it*
- 3 – Know fairly well*
- 4 – Know very well*

___ Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

___ Universal Declaration of Human Rights

___ UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child

___ Youth Criminal Justice Act

___ Aboriginal Treaty Rights

___ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

___ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Please note that you may withdraw from this study, or omit any answer to any question, at any time without penalty

Please answer these additional questions, and include any comments you may have below.

Please indicate your age group:

Under 20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50-60 Over 60

Please indicate your identified gender:

Male Female

Please indicate the last acquired degree/level of education:

B.Ed M.Ed BA/B.Sc Other (please indicate): _____

If you are *currently* enrolled in a Bachelor of Education or Master's of Education degree, please indicate the number of years of this degree completed to date:

B.Ed: _____ M.Ed: _____

Did your teacher training (e.g., B. Ed) or formal education involve education regarding children's rights?

Yes No

Did your teacher training involve education regarding the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?

Yes No

Do you think that a required course on children's rights would have been beneficial for you as a teacher?

Yes No

Would you be interested in a Professional Development day or other staff training regarding children's rights?

Yes No

Please indicate the number of years that you have been teaching.

Please indicate the grade(s) that you are currently teaching.

Please note that you may withdraw from this study, or omit any answer to any question, at any time without penalty

Do you currently include children's rights education in your classroom?

Yes No

If yes, please indicate some teaching strategies that you have used in order to convey the message of children's rights to your students (in other words, how do you include rights education in your classroom?). Some examples may include creating a classroom charter or having children create artwork based on specific rights.

Please include any further comments that you may have below:

Thank you for participating in this survey.

Please note that you may withdraw from this study, or omit any answer to any question, at any time without penalty

APPENDIX B:
THIRD PARTY INFORMATION LETTER



Dear (Contact),

I am a graduate student at Mount Saint Vincent University, interested in conducting research with teachers and student teachers. I am working with Dr. Katherine Covell, and we are interested in the knowledge of teachers and pre-service teachers in the area of children's rights.

In 2001, a children's rights curriculum was introduced to the elementary schools in Nova Scotia. Currently, knowledge of international children's rights is included in sixth-grade curriculum outcomes. However, there appears to be limited opportunity for teachers to learn about children's rights during their pre-service education (i.e., Bachelor of Education courses).

This survey will require no more than 20 minutes, and requires no participation involving children. We are interested in learning what teachers and pre-service teachers know about children's rights, and how they came to learn about them. We are also interested in how children's rights are taught in schools. We hope that this research will lead to a better understanding of how teachers and pre-service teachers teach their students about children's rights, and to improved teacher education in the future. While we hope to benefit the education of teachers and students in the future, there is no harm expected to come to participants as a result this study.

Answers will be anonymous and confidential. At no time will participants be asked for their name or the name of the participating institutions. Institutions will be named only in acknowledgement and thanks for their participation in the study.

At the completion of the survey, paper forms will be collected in an envelope to ensure anonymity (this will occur approximately two weeks after delivery of the surveys). Electronic forms may be submitted to alison.jessome@msvu.ca. Any names or email addresses attached to these emails will be removed immediately, and a number will be assigned to each survey. Paper surveys will be collected in person, and stored in boxes, in a locked office. After the data has been transferred electronically, paper surveys will be destroyed. All electronic data will be stored in a locked office, and destroyed within a period of one year.

Further information regarding the study can be found on the survey and participant consent form, which has been attached.

Your participation in this survey is appreciated. You may contact the primary researcher at alison.jessome@gmail.com or the primary supervisor, Dr. Katherine Covell, at (902) 563-1413 for further information.

Sincerely,

Alison Jessome
MSVU School Psychology Student

Katherine Covell, PhD
Cape Breton University

APPENDIX C:
INFORMED CONSENT



Teacher Education and Children's Rights

In 2001, a children's rights curriculum was introduced to the elementary schools in Nova Scotia. Currently, knowledge of international children's rights is included in sixth-grade curriculum outcomes. However, there appears to be limited opportunity for teachers to learn about children's rights during their pre-service education (i.e., Bachelor of Education courses).

You are invited to take part in a survey regarding teacher and pre-service teacher knowledge, values and education regarding children's rights. This survey will require no more than 20 minutes of your time. We are interested in learning what teachers know about children's rights, and how they came to learn about them. We are also interested in how children's rights are taught in schools. We hope that this research will lead to a better understanding of how teachers and pre-service teachers teach their students about children's rights, and to improved teacher education in the future. While we hope to benefit the education of teachers and students in the future, there is no harm expected to come to participants as a result this study.

Please answer the questions in the attached survey as honestly as you can, without research aids (e.g., the internet, books, etc.). It is very important that you read each statement carefully, and answer truthfully.

All answers are confidential and anonymous. At no time will you be asked to provide your name, or that of your school.

If you choose to participate, please place an X on the line below. Please note that you may withdraw from this study at any time, without penalty.

Please tear along the line: Keep the following information for your records.

If you have any questions about the survey or the findings, or would like to make any comments about this survey, please contact Alison Jessome (graduate student) at alison.jessome@msvu.ca or Dr. Katherine Covell (thesis supervisor) at katherine_covell@cbu.ca (phone: 902 563-1413).

If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, at 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca