

# AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO TRAINING ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN EDUCATION: TOWARDS "CHILD- FRIENDLY" SCHOOLS

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# INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND EDUCATION

- Children's rights are complex and require an interdisciplinary approach (Moody & Darbellay, 2019)
  - A multidimensional perspective goes beyond access to education to include how rights are lived in schools (Louviot et al., 2019)
  - This approach fosters child-friendly schools that support participation, engagement, and well-being (Moody, 2020)
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# REGIONAL CONTEXT: FRENCH-SPEAKING SWITZERLAND

- Children's rights are not formally embedded in initial or continuing teacher education curricula.
- A past collaboration between HEP Valais and the Centre for Children's Rights Studies existed but lacked institutional anchoring.

## Enhancing Children's Rights Education in French-speaking Switzerland: An Interdisciplinary Collaboration

### Theoretical Context

The lack of conceptual clarity and precision in the implementation of children's rights places a heavy burden on teachers, as noted by Rinaldi et al. (2020). This observation highlights the importance of providing adequate training to teachers, as emphasized by Jerome et al. (2015). Quennerstedt (2022) discusses the complexity of developing a CHRE (Children's Human Rights Education) curriculum, stressing the need for collaboration between teachers and children's rights experts.

Jerome, S., Jermann, L., Lundy, L., & O'S, S. (2015). Teaching and learning about children's rights: A study of implementation in 24 countries. *Research Report*. UNICEF and Queen's University Belfast.

### Practical Context

A collaborative 2-hour workshop was organized to develop a yearly lesson plan on the topic of children's rights. The workshop was attended by 45 preservice teachers (PST) and 24 Master students in children's rights studies (CRS), some of whom were also teachers. The participants were divided into groups of six students (four PST and two in CRS).

### Observations

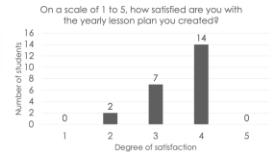
- The students encountered some challenges in understanding the yearly planning during the activity.
- Their creativity was showcased through the proposal of various ideas, such as field trips and computer-based activities.
- Most of the students were engaged and shared their knowledge about teaching or children's rights.
- While there was openness to collaboration, imbalances in participation were sometimes observed, with some students remaining silent.

When	Activity	Discipline	Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
September	Class rules discussion	French	Art. 2 No discrimination, Art. 12, Art. 13 Sharing thoughts freely
20 November	Educational trail on children's rights	School outing	Art. 42 Everyone must know children's rights
December	"We All Have Rights" song project	Music	Art. 31 Rest, play, culture, arts
February	Clothing collection & international exploration	Social sciences	Art. 27 Food, clothing, a safe home
April	Activity on food and nutrition	Nutritional education	Art. 24 Health, water, food, environment
June	Children in charge: activity selection & voting	Projects	Art. 12 Respect for children's views, Art. 13

### Role of Children's Rights Students

"We simplified the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)."  
"Drawing links between the different topics and the related rights outlined in the CRC."  
"Preservice teachers were very receptive to the arguments provided."

**Students Feedbacks**  
Online questionnaire  
23 answers: 4 CRS + 19 PST  
3 questions about collaboration



### As a preservice teacher, how do you perceive the contribution of students specializing in children's rights in the elaboration of the lesson plan?

- Most of the feedback highlights the **positive contribution** that students specializing in children's rights provide during the elaboration of the lesson plans. Collaborating with these students provides theoretical enrichment, **practical relevance**, and alignment with educational objectives. Such contributions are especially valuable for shedding light on lesser-understood rights issues and **enriching the content of teaching**.
- However, some feedback expressed a degree of **ambivalence or negative perceptions**, which were often related to difficulties in mutual understanding, a perceived lack of engagement, or practical challenges in integrating concepts of children's rights into yearly planning. These responses indicate potential areas for improvement, especially regarding communication and the **clarification of collaborative goals**.

### Collaboration with students specializing in children's rights studies can have a positive impact on the quality of lesson plans.

- Some specific examples of this impact are:
- Ability to **explain concepts** and legal terms related to children's rights.
  - Contribution of explanations about children's rights and **assistance in understanding** them.
  - **Proposals of innovative ideas** for teaching, even if not all are feasible.
  - Exchange of opinions and **discussions related to children's rights**.
  - Efforts to **make rights easier to understand** and accessible.

### Recommendations

- **Established lesson plans and materials should be critically examined** to identify improvement opportunities. This approach supports participants on optimization, rather than designing from scratch. It creates a constructive dialogue around the existing material, allowing preservice teachers to gain theoretical knowledge on children's rights. At the same time, Master students in CRS can learn about the practical aspects of incorporating rights into education.
- **Define clear roles and expected contributions:** Students specializing in children's rights can provide valuable theoretical and critical insights to understand the underlying principles of children's rights. Preservice teachers can provide specific educational tools to understand pedagogical issues better.
- **Ensure that preservice teachers leave with "ready-to-use" tools** that can be directly applied in class and **CRS students should leave with a self-assessment tool** allowing them to reflect on the quality of the expertise provided.

**HEPVS | PHVS**  
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# INTERDISCIPLINARY MASTER'S PROGRAM IN CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA

- Curriculum explores children's rights through disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses (Hanson, 2008)
  - Semester 1: foundational and interdisciplinary approaches
  - Semester 2: thematic interdisciplinary seminar (e.g. education)
  - ~40 students from diverse fields work collaboratively
  - This fosters creativity, critical thinking, and openness (Darbellay, 2022)
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# “CHILDREN’S RIGHTS, EDUCATION AND CREATIVITY”

- Focus on children’s rights education, alternative pedagogies and socio-emotional learning
- Guest professionals (e.g. Montessori directors) connect theory and practice
- Students design a “**child-friendly**” school from the perspective of different stakeholders
- Inspired by the CRC, these schools promote equity, inclusion, and child participation  
(Chabbott, 2004; Louviot, 2020)

The logo for 'DON'T SCHOOL' features the word 'DON'T' in a playful, pink, donut-like font with colorful sprinkles. Below it, the word 'SCHOOL' is written in a simple, black, sans-serif font.

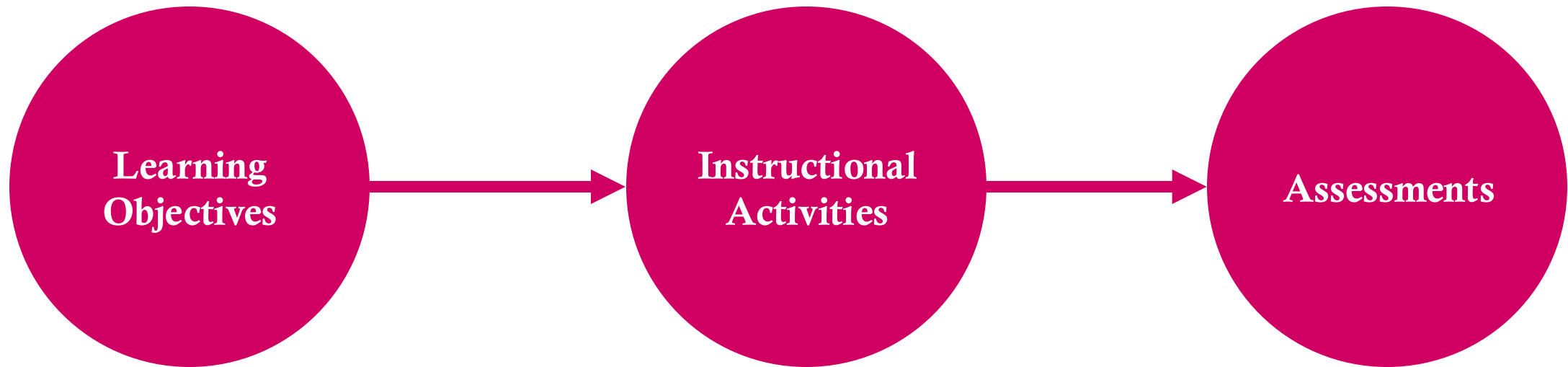
DON'T  
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# CURRICULAR ALIGNMENT

Refers to the **coherence between the three core elements** of an educational program (Anderson, 2002)



Interdisciplinary teaching fosters pedagogical coherence and helps embed children's rights in school practices (Louviot, 2017)

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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the links between children's rights and education
  - Explore alternative pedagogical approaches
  - Analyse issues of access, inclusion, and equity in education
  - Develop psychosocial and 21st-century skills (e.g. creativity, critical thinking)
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# INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Lectures on children's rights and education, alternative pedagogies and socio-emotional learning
- Guest speakers from educational practice (e.g. nature-based)
- Group projects simulating multi-actor school systems
- Interactive methods:  
World Café, Q&A sessions,  
collaborative workshops, SWOT

Lundi 19.05	Mardi 20.05	Mercredi 21.05	Jeudi 22.05
<b>Cours présentiel</b> <i>L'accès à l'éducation : Migration et enjeux de scolarisation</i> Stéfanie Tamara Kurt	<b>Cours présentiel</b> <i>Tour d'horizon des pédagogies alternatives</i> Sylvain Wagnon Université de Montpellier (9h00-10h30)  <i>Climat scolaire et pédagogies alternatives</i> Sarah Zerika (10h45-12h15)	<b>Cours présentiel</b> <i>Écoles Amies des Enfants ?</i>  <i>EducaTerre : Apprendre dans, par et avec la nature</i> Isaline Pilet, Yasmine Nidegger, Morgane Pitteloud, Carey Faulkner, Alexandre Savioz  <i>Little Seed</i> Sylvie Roten  <i>Écoles de l'Arpille</i> Matthieu Moser	<b>Travaux de groupe</b>
<b>Cours présentiel</b> <i>World Café : Implémentation de l'article 42</i> Sarah Zerika & Frédéric Darbellay	<b>Échanges et questions-réponses avec les enseignant-es</b>  Frédéric Darbellay & Sarah Zerika	<b>Travaux de groupe</b> En présence des enseignant-es	<b>Travaux de groupe</b>





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## ASSESSMENT

- Group project: design a “child-friendly school” model
  - Based on the perspective of school stakeholders (e.g. students, teachers, policymakers)
  - Output: written report with recommendations
  - Evaluation aligned with interdisciplinary goals and communicated in advance
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# STUDENTS' ANONYMOUS EVALUATIONS



“The weeks are structured in an optimal way. The content is presented in an interactive manner (not always, but overall it keeps us engaged). The guest speakers are very committed and highly interesting.”

“The seminar truly lives up to its name – it helps us broaden our horizons, think differently, and approach topics creatively. It’s a refreshing change from typical university courses!”

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutionalize children's rights  
in teacher education

Maintain and strengthen  
interdisciplinary approaches

Preserve and enhance active,  
participatory learning

Integrate assessment as learning

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