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To cite this article: Harriet R Tenenbaum, Sonia Ingoglia, Nora Wiium, Nicolò M. Iannello, Cristiano Inguglia, Francesca Liga, Alida Lo Coco, Maria Lo Cricchio, Nana-Fatima Taini Ozeto & Martyn D. Barrett (2022): Can we increase children's rights endorsement and knowledge?: A pilot study based on the reference framework of competences for democratic culture, *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, DOI: [10.1080/17405629.2022.2095367](https://doi.org/10.1080/17405629.2022.2095367)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405629.2022.2095367>



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Published online: 30 Jun 2022.



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Can we increase children's rights endorsement and knowledge?: A pilot study based on the reference framework of competences for democratic culture

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ABSTRACT

This pilot study is the first to examine whether a novel curriculum based on the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) could increase children's endorsement and knowledge of children's rights. We conducted a pre-test-post-test design with an intervention and a comparison school. Pupils ($n = 172$) from Bulgaria, Italy, Norway, Romania, and Spain attended schools in which the curriculum was taught, whereas pupils in the comparison group ($n = 120$) attended schools in the same city where the curriculum was not taught. Both groups were tested on their endorsement and knowledge of rights before and at the end of the intervention. Children in the intervention group increased in endorsing children's rights at post-test more than did children in the intervention group. Most children believed that children had rights. Children in the intervention group showed modest increases in their knowledge of rights. Future ways of implementing the RFCDC are suggested.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 23 December 2021; Accepted 20 June 2022

KEYWORDS Children's rights; reference framework of competences for democratic culture; school-based interventions

Since the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC; UN Assembly, 1989) was ratified by almost all member states (except that United States), increasing attention has focused on children's endorsement and knowledge of their rights. This document extends civic,

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educational, social, cultural, and political rights to all children everywhere regardless of social group (Melton, 2008; Ruck et al., 2016). The UNCRC also emphasizes that rights belong to children as autonomous individuals rather than paternalistic rights. As a result of the positioning of children's rights in the UNCRC, children's voices must be centre-stage in any conversation about their rights (Ruck et al., 2016).

Central to children's rights are education rights. Covell et al. (2010) argue that education factors into the UNCRC in three related ways. First, children have a right to education. Second, schools must provide rights in educational settings, such as allowing children to participate and to express their ideas freely. Third, schools must teach children about their rights. This final point is necessary if children are to understand the rights they are extended. Children cannot protect their rights if they cannot engage in meaningful discussions about their rights as partners. This study investigated whether a novel curriculum based on the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) (Barrett, 2020a; Barrett et al., 2018) could increase children's endorsement and knowledge of children's rights.

Morality and human rights endorsement

Moral development is central to the understanding and endorsement of human rights. Morality and promotion of human rights overlap in their shared support of freedom as well as their focus on justice and equity (see, Print et al., 2008). From the social domain perspective (Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 2006), people apply three types of knowledge across many social situations. These types include moral reasoning, which focuses on rights and justice; social conventional knowledge, which focuses on norms and authority; and psychological reasoning, which focuses on personal choice. When young people endorse children's rights, they tend to invoke morality. In contrast, not endorsing children's rights is associated with social conventional reasoning (Ruck et al., 2011). Thus, when young people prioritize human rights, moral knowledge is more salient than other types of social reasoning.

Much research on children's endorsements has examined children's endorsement of rights in places including Malaysia, Switzerland, and the USA (Cherney & Shing, 2008). Even in China, both types of children's rights are endorsed (Lahat et al., 2009). Developmental differences in children's endorsement of rights have not been in South African children between 9

and 13 years (Ruck et al., 2011). In the present study, we examined whether we could increase children's endorsement of both types of children's rights in hypothetical vignettes when children's rights conflicted with the wishes of authority figures.

Knowledge

In addition to endorsement, we also examined knowledge. Children with greater knowledge about rights are better able to advocate for their rights than children with less knowledge (Peterson-Badali & Ruck, 2008). Moreover, children's self-reported rights knowledge is related to their social well-being (Kosher & Ben-Arieh, 2017). Early work on US children's understanding of rights suggested that children had an egocentric understanding of rights (Melton, 1980). At year 3 (for children on high socio-economic status), children began to understand that rights were systems of laws. However, it was not until children entered adolescence that children began to develop an abstract understanding of rights. Using open-ended interviews with Canadian young people aged 8 to 16 years, Ruck et al. (1998a) found little evidence of age-related progression in understanding rights more abstractly with age. One of the few age-related changes in definitions of rights was that 8-year-olds were more likely not to be able to define a right than older age groups and less likely to conceive as rights as something one can do. Instead, Canadian children's understanding seemed to be grounded in their understanding of rights in their own lives and how rights applied to themselves (Ruck et al., 1998b). Interviews with South African children from a mixed-ethnic background in Cape Town confirmed that children develop knowledge about their rights in the context of their socio-cultural communities (Willenberg et al., 2014).

Teaching rights

There have been different programmes that have focused on teaching rights to children. One successful example is the Rights, Respect, Responsibility programme, which is a whole-school approach in which not only are rights taught, but the entire curriculum incorporates rights (Covell et al., 2010). Another is UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting Schools Award (Sebba & Robinson, 2010). (Sebba & Robinson, 2010). Both programmes implement the UNCRC into all school practices and give

students a voice on policies in their schools. A third approach, which similarly seeks to empower student voice, has been developed by the Council of Europe and is based on the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC; Barrett et al., 2018). This approach focuses on fostering knowledge and valuing of human rights as well the valuing of human dignity, cultural diversity, democratic processes, justice, fairness, and equality. Due to its comprehensive scope, the RFCDC has been endorsed by the education ministers of 50 European countries and it is already being implemented in the national education systems of 22 European countries (Barrett, 2022). No study has yet investigated the effectiveness of a curriculum based on the RFCDC (Barrett et al., 2018) on children's endorsement and knowledge of children's rights. For this reason, the present study was based on the RFCDC.

The current study

One criticism of some past interventions in schools is that they do not involve educational practitioners in the design of the intervention. Similarly, many practical school-based interventions developed in the school environment have been created by educational practitioners but sometimes lack rigorous evaluation. The current study was designed to examine the impact of a school-based intervention, created through collaboration between researchers and educational practitioners. In this pilot study, we examined whether a curriculum based on the RFCDC could increase children's endorsement and knowledge of human rights and more specifically, children's rights. A group of children from five schools in five countries participated in the intervention (intervention group). Another group of children in five matched schools in the same municipality as the intervention schools (comparison group) did not. To examine the effectiveness of the intervention, children in the intervention group and children the comparison group completed questionnaire measures before (pre-test) and after the intervention (post-test). The length and dosage of the intervention was decided based on the need to integrate the lessons into the everyday flow of the existing curriculum without undue disruption, the need for the intervention to address the learners as whole persons by engaging them cognitively, emotionally and experientially, the need to build the learners' competences gradually over a substantial period time in order to facilitate the consolidation of their competences and to enable the benefits to endure beyond the end of the programme. Steps were taken to ensure that the intervention

included opportunities for learning through experience, exposure to cultural differences, explanations for practices, thoughts, values and beliefs, the development of critical awareness and understanding, and engagement with others in taking action. The professional judgment of the educational practitioners and the researchers was that two modules split across two successive school years would be optimal for these purposes. The current pilot study determined the impact of the intervention on children's endorsement and knowledge about their rights.

Hypotheses

We expected children to increase in their endorsement of children's rights when they were in the intervention group, whereas we did not expect changes in the comparison group. For this analysis, we explored country-level differences so that we could assess the feasibility of introducing the curriculum in the different countries included in our sample. We also expected increases in knowledge when children were in the intervention group, whereas we did not expect increases in the knowledge about how to define a right in the comparison group. Because of the sample size, we did not look at country-level differences in this latter analysis.

Method

Participants

Participants were 292 ($n = 145$ boys) children from Bulgaria ($M = 9$ years; 4 months, $SD = 5.41$ months), Italy ($M = 9$ years, $SD = 3.19$ months), Norway ($M = 10$ years; 3 months, $SD = 3.30$ months), Romania ($M = 8$ years; 5 months, $SD = 4.74$ months), and Spain ($M = 10$ years; 4 months, $SD = 4.42$ months) with a mean of 9 years; 6 months ($SD = 10.55$ months) at time 1. In all countries, children were in their third year of formal schooling. All children in their third year of formal schooling in the participating schools took part. Only children who completed the pre-test and post-test assessment are included in this study. Intervention group children ($n = 172$) attended a school whose administration had agreed to take part in the project. In the intervention schools, 82.69% of the children agreed to be interviewed. The participants in the comparison group ($n = 120$) were recruited from different primary schools

located in adjacent neighbourhoods to the intervention schools with the promise of a financial donation (£300) and access to all materials at the conclusion of the study.

Implementation

The intervention was delivered to the children between September 2019 to May 2021. The intervention activities were designed based on the RFDC (Barrett, 2020a; Barrett et al., 2018). A group of researchers and curriculum specialists met together to develop the activities. A minimum of three teachers from each intervention school attended two separate one week training events to learn about the curriculum. There was a contact teacher and two teachers who implemented the curriculum from each school. In addition, there were monthly meetings across the schools.

The *CVS Curriculum for Children* comprises a series of activities that encourage Year 3 pupils to actively exercise their democratic competences at school and in their local communities through urban regeneration activities, making their voices heard about their needs, views and dreams regarding their closest urban spaces. The Curriculum is made up of two year-long modules. The experiences that pupils accumulate through the activities are designed to promote and strengthen these competences. Teachers delivered the first year of the curriculum as planned. However, after the Covid pandemic and home schooling had begun, additional learning activities that could be delivered online were instead developed by a group of teachers and Council of Europe experts for the second year rather than the originally designed curriculum for the second year. The new curriculum was designed to teach the same competences, but was focused on the Covid pandemic (e.g., reasons for social distancing and mask wearing) to help children understand democratic competences. More information about the two modules of the curriculum may be found in the Supplementary Materials. The full curriculum is on the OSF (<https://osf.io/v9zyw/>) and project (<https://www.cvs-project.eu/>) websites. To give an example of a lesson from the original curriculum that was delivered to all children, children were introduced to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and discussed what children needed to survive. Children in comparison schools were a business-as-usual comparison who followed their typical curriculum.

Lessons and materials were the same for each country. The teachers co-created the materials together with the teacher trainers and the developer of the RFCDC. In addition, all teachers were trained together and met monthly to make sure that the implementation was similar across countries. The supplementary tables provide two lesson plans in full. The intervention was not delivered as a whole-school approach, and targeted children in the third year of schooling.

Teachers reported on the number of units that they delivered throughout the project. Bulgarian teachers delivered between 34 and 35 units to each class, Italian teachers delivered 31 units to classes, Norwegian and Romanian teacher delivered all 35 units, and Spanish teachers delivered 17 units.

Measures

All measures were translated by a native speaker and checked by two other native speakers for clarity. Children completed a full questionnaire that asked about 10 of the 20 competences which the RFCDC proposes need to be promoted through the educational process. However, only the questions on endorsement and knowledge of rights are the focus of this study and will be discussed further. Children's endorsement of rights was assessed with eight hypothetical vignettes adapted from previous research ($\alpha = 0.52$ in the present study; Ruck et al., 2011). The vignettes depicted situations where a child story character wished to exercise a right in conflict with the wishes of or practices of parental or school authority. We used endorsement of children's rights as a mean to operationally define valuing children's rights in the RFCDC. Table 1 presents the vignettes. After the presentation of each vignette, children were asked whether the protagonist should be allowed to exercise the right in question on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).

To assess knowledge of rights, children were asked to define a right (Willenberg et al., 2014). These data were qualitative, but then we coded each child's answer. Children could provide more than one codable answer. All transcripts were coded using an *a priori*, non-mutually exclusive, coding scheme based on Ruck et al. (1998a). The codes included don't know, misconception, law, to do, given, privilege/entitlements, listing of rights, and other. Based on Ruck et al. (1998a), the codes 'to do', 'given', 'privilege' and 'list' were considered

Table 1. Nurturance and self-determination vignettes.

Nurturance and Self-determination Vignettes
<i>Nurturance vignettes</i>
1. Freedom from excessive chores: Carrie's parent want her to look after her brother after school, but Carrie wants to play. Should Carrie have to look after her brother?*
2. Emotional availability: Kelly had an argument with her best friend and was very upset. She wanted to talk to her parents about it but they were too busy. Should Kelly's parents have to listen?
3. Protection: Terry's parents are never there when he gets home from school. Terry doesn't like being left home alone. Should Terry's parents have to be there when he gets home from school?
4. Educational support: James was having trouble with his maths homework. He needed his parents to help him with it. But his parents said that he had to do it himself. Should James' parents have to help him?
<i>Self-determination vignettes</i>
1. Privacy: Tom kept a diary, and he said that nobody else could read it, not even his parents. Should Tom's parents be allowed to read it?*
2. Freedom of expression: Mark wrote a story for the school newspaper. In his story, he said that he didn't like the school rules. The principal told him that he couldn't print his story. Should Mark be allowed to print his story?
3. Freedom of religion: Becky doesn't want to practice her parents' religion. She wants to try some other religions or maybe have no religion at all. Should Becky be allowed to choose her religion?
4. Freedom of affiliation: Debbie wanted to go and visit her friends, but her parents would not let her because they didn't like her friends. Should Debbie be allowed to visit her friends?

*denotes reverse coding

higher knowledge, whereas the codes 'don't know', 'misconception' and 'law' were considered lower knowledge. Children received a 1 if they invoked a category and a 0 if they did not. Table 3 presents definitions and examples. The coders were blind to condition. The first author and another coder met to discuss answers. They then coded 40 transcripts (20.8%) of the dataset at each time point and obtained excellent inter-rater reliability (Bakeman & Quera, 2011; $\kappa = 0.80$ for definition).

Not all children responded to the questions about the definition of a right or listing of a right (see, Table 3). Some children gave more than one codable answer.

In the comparison schools, at pre-test, 8 children (6.7%) did not provide an answer, 109 (90.8%) provided an answer, and 3 (2.5%) provided two answers. At post-test, 109 (90.8%) provided an answer and 11 (9.2%) provided two codable answers.

In the intervention schools, at pre-test, 6 children (3.5%) did not provide an answer, 160 (93%) provided one answer, and six (3.5%) provided two codable answers. At post-test, 3 (1.8%) did not provide an answer, 155 (90.1%) provided one answer, and 14 (8.1%) provided two codable answers.

Procedure

Ethical approval was received from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee in 2019 (43 FHMS). This study was pre-registered on the OSF (<https://osf.io/v9zyw/>) where data have been uploaded along with all measures and the curriculum. Parents provided written informed consent for their child's participation and children provided verbal assent. All participants were assigned an anonymous code.

To measure the effectiveness of the intervention, participants in both the intervention and comparison groups were interviewed in June 2019 in groups of 3 to 4 children. Each child had a separate sheet to record their answers whilst a researcher read the questions aloud. Children were asked not to discuss their answers during the testing session. In May 2021, children in both types of schools were interviewed individually by a researcher over Teams. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, researchers could not enter schools to interview children. However, children in both types of schools were interviewed in the same manner at each test phase so there was no difference based on whether children were in the intervention or comparison schools. All researchers were fluent speakers of the language of schooling spoken by the children.

Participants were told that they were going to answer questions. Participants were reminded that there were no right or wrong answers and that their answers were private.

Results

Endorsements

We first examined endorsement of children's rights. Table 2 displays all means by country. To examine whether children changed in their endorsement of rights, we conducted a 2 (Time) x 2 (School Type: Intervention, Comparison) x 5 (Country) mixed-design ANOVA model. Time served as a repeated factor while school type and country served as between-participants factors. There was a main effect of Time, $F(1, 282) = 25.46$, $p < 0.0001$, $p\eta^2 = 0.08$, which indicated that all children increased in their endorsement of rights from the pre-test to the post-test. The effect for Time was qualified by a statistically significant Time X School type interaction effect, $F(1, 282) = 4.92$, $p = 0.03$, $p\eta^2 = 0.02$. To tease this interaction apart, we conducted two follow-up repeated-measures ANOVAs separately by type of school

Table 2. Means endorsement of children's rights.

	Intervention						Comparison					
	<i>n</i>	Pre-Test		Post-Test		<i>F</i>	<i>n</i>	Pre-Test		Post-Test		<i>F</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Bulgaria ($\alpha = 0.43$)	23	3.05	0.75	3.14	0.67	(1,22) = 0.30, $p = 0.60$, $\rho^2 = 0.01$	17	3.16	0.53	3.26	0.49	(1,16) = 0.26, $p = 0.61$, $\rho^2 = 0.02$
Italy ($\alpha = 0.48$)	33	3.09	0.50	3.76	0.46	(1,32) = 34.55, $p = 0.0001$, $\rho^2 = 0.52$	20	3.41	0.63	3.39	0.48	(1,19) = 0.01, $p = 0.91$, $\rho^2 = 0.001$
Norway ($\alpha = 0.44$)	28	3.73	0.47	3.97	0.30	(1,27) = 9.00, $p = 0.006$, $\rho^2 = 0.25$	34	3.91	0.37	4.07	0.24	(1,33) = 5.58, $p = 0.02$, $\rho^2 = 0.15$
Romania ($\alpha = 0.27$)	48	3.09	0.53	3.32	0.51	(1,47) = 5.67, $p = 0.02$, $\rho^2 = 0.11$	18	3.27	0.59	3.35	0.54	(1,17) = 0.21, $p = 0.65$, $\rho^2 = 0.01$
Spain ($\alpha = 0.50$)	40	3.56	0.57	3.77	0.38	(1,39) = 3.82, $p = 0.06$, $\rho^2 = 0.09$	31	3.54	0.47	3.77	0.42	(1,30) = 4.81, $p = 0.04$, $\rho^2 = 0.14$

Table 3. Number of times definitions of a right were offered.

	Definition	Example	Intervention		Comparison	
			Pre-Test (n = 172 answers)	Post-Test (n = 183 answers)	Pre-Test (n = 115 answers)	Post-Test (n = 131 answers)
Don't know Misconception	Replying that they do not know the answer.	'I don't know'	2 (1.16%)	24 (13.11%)**	9 (7.82%)	10 (7.63%)
	Replying with an answer that demonstrates a misunderstanding	'A right is when you are not wrong'	16 (9.30%)	2 (1.09%)**	7 (6.09%)	2 (1.53%)
Law To do	Thinking that a right is a law or a rule	'It's a law'	29 (16.86%)	2 (1.09%)**	19 (16.52%)	0 (0%)
	Believing that a right is something one must do	'It's something you have to do'	40 (23.26%)	36 (19.67%)	19 (16.52%)	35 (26.72%)
Given	Believing that rights are bestowed for everyone	'Something you are given'	11 (6.40%)	33 (18.03%)**	9 (7.83%)	15 (11.45%)
Privilege/ Entitlements List	An advantage to which only certain people are bestowed	'Something you are entitled to'	2 (1.16%)	14 (7.65%)**	4 (3.48%)	3 (2.29%)
	Giving an example(s) of a right	'To play'	28 (16.28%)	25 (13.66%)	16 (13.91%)	37 (28.24%)*
Other	An answer that did not fall into one of the previous categories	'everyone has to decide'	53 (30.81%)	48 (40.87%)	47 (40.97%)	28 (21.37%)

Note. Because children could give more than one answer or not respond to the question, the answers do not follow the 172 in the intervention group and 120 in the comparison group. Significant changes are indicated next to the post-test scores. All McNemar's test used a corrected p value (.002) for the number of tests. * $p < 0.006$, ** $p < 0.001$

using a protected alpha of 0.025 (.05 divided by 2). Using the protected alpha of 0.025, there was no increase in the comparison school from pre-test to post-test, $F(1, 119) = 5.08$, $p = 0.03$, $p\eta^2 = 0.04$. In contrast, children in the intervention schools increased from the pre-test to the post-test, $F(1, 171) = 33.09$, $p < 0.0001$, $p\eta^2 = 0.16$. There was also a statistically significant Time \times School \times Country interaction effect, $F(4, 282) = 2.74$, $p = 0.03$, $p\eta^2 = 0.04$. To tease apart this interaction, we conducted 10 repeated measures ANOVAs separately by country and school type with a protected alpha of 0.01. The only statistically significant increases with the reduced alpha were in Italian children and Norwegian children in the intervention schools.

Knowledge about the definition of a right

We looked at whether there were increases in knowledge from pre-test to post-test in the comparison and intervention groups separately. Based on Ruck et al. (1998a), we assumed that the codes 'to do', 'given', 'privilege' and 'list' were considered higher knowledge, whereas the codes 'don't know', 'misconception' and 'law' were considered lower knowledge. 'Other' was assumed to be neutral. In the comparison group, using 0.006 as an alpha (.05 divided by 8 tests) for the McNemar tests, the only contrast that was statistically significant was that there was an increase in listing of rights, $p = 0.002$. Thus, children in the comparison group did not increase in their understanding of rights from pre-test to post-test.

The McNemar tests conducted on the intervention group indicated some growth in knowledge. For example, there were decreases in misconceptions ($p = 0.001$) and confusing rights with laws ($p < 0.001$). There were also increases in seeing rights as something given ($p < 0.001$) and privileges ($p = 0.004$), which is associated with reasoning about rights in older children and considered higher level (Ruck et al., 1998b). Combined across these two categories, 34 children in the intervention schools increased in their knowledge of rights. However, there was a statistically significant increase in 'don't know' ($p < 0.001$) with 22 additional children in the intervention schools reporting this answer, which suggests that uniform increases in knowledge did not occur. Because of small numbers, we did not conduct these analyses by country.

Discussion

This was the first pilot study to measure whether a novel curriculum developed based on the RFCDC was effective in teaching children about rights. We compared children in schools that had agreed to implement the curriculum to children in schools selected from the same municipalities at pre-test and post-test assessments. We found increases in endorsement of rights in the children in the intervention schools compared to children in the comparison schools. We also saw modest increases in children's knowledge of rights.

Children across the different types of schools increased in their endorsement of rights. No studies have longitudinally examined if young people increase in their overall endorsement of rights. Nevertheless, children in the intervention group increased more than children in the comparison group, suggesting an effect of the intervention. Given that young people tend to use moral reasons when endorsing rights (Ruck et al., 2011), the findings suggest that children may have increased in their perspective that human rights involve notions of fairness and justice, which are central to an understanding of morality (Turiel, 2006).

There was some suggestion of an increase in knowledge in the intervention schools. Although children were more likely to reply that they did not know what a right was when asked to define a right, there were fewer children in the intervention schools at post-test than pre-test assessment who replied with misconceptions or confused rights with laws. Moreover, children in the intervention schools were more likely to understand that rights were given and were privileges, characteristic of older children (Ruck et al., 2002). These increases are modest overall.

The increase in endorsement and knowledge may have been increased if we had been able to implement a whole-school approach, which has been shown to be the most effective way of teaching rights (Covell et al., 2010; Sebba & Robinson, 2010; for a discussion, see, Barrett, 2020b). Whole-school approaches are difficult to implement, but the outcomes far exceed interventions that are piecemeal. A significant barrier to implementing a whole-school approach in the present study was the Covid-19 pandemic because all the schools were forced to teach online at some point during the intervention.

Children were from different countries so that we could test the feasibility of the curriculum in five countries. Given that all schools were in countries who are members of the Council of Europe, our study demonstrates that the RFCDC is feasible to implement in all these

countries. In a study of children's knowledge in 27 democracies, children's knowledge was related to the human rights discourse within a country as well as length of time that a country had been democratic (Torney-Purta et al., 2008). Unfortunately, however, in this study, we did not have enough children in each country to examine between-country differences in great depth for the qualitative questions.

Another reason we could not examine differences between countries is that children were different ages in the different countries because children enter formal schooling at different ages across the countries. Children's reported knowledge (Kosher & Ben-Arieh, 2017) and support for different types of rights (Ruck et al., 1998a) varies with age. Our lack of statistical power did not enable us to tease apart age effects in the five countries. Future research needs to examine more than one school in each country and also include more than one year group in each country to be able to disentangle the effects of age and school. Doing so would also enable a stricter test of the efficacy of the RFCDC curriculum.

Another limitation for the intervention is that children in the different countries were impacted differently by the Covid-19 pandemic. The children in the different countries varied in the amount of time they were physically away from school as well as access to digital learning technologies in the five countries. As a result, there were differences in the delivery of the content and possible engagement in the content. Notably, children in Spain did not increase in their endorsement of children's rights. At the same time, Spain was the only country in which fewer than half of the lessons were delivered. It is a limitation that the programme dosage was so low in Spain. Although Bulgarian teachers implemented the curriculum fully, we did not see changes there.

Another limitation is that we did not conduct a cultural validation of the measures we used in our study. Although the endorsement type questions have been asked of children in Canada, China, Malaysia, South Africa, Switzerland, the USA (Cherney & Shing, 2008; Lahat et al., 2009; Ruck et al., 2011) and the knowledge questions have been asked of children in 27 democratic countries (Torney-Purta et al., 2008), it would have been better to have first culturally validated the questions.

This pilot study suggests that future implementations of the RFCDC are likely to have a positive impact on children's endorsements of human rights. However, future studies should also explore the additional impact that the use of an accompanying whole-school approach might be able to achieve. Future evaluations could also usefully take place in countries

outside Europe, to ascertain the extent to which the effects might only occur in countries with a strong culture of, and commitment to, human rights. In addition, the extent to which family culture in the home and parental attitudes and practices regarding human rights might moderate the effects of the educational intervention could be usefully explored. This is because there is very good evidence that both macro-contextual cultural factors and familial factors can influence the impact of educational factors on young people's attitudes and practices in this domain (for a review, see, Barrett & Pachi, 2019).

In sum, this pilot study indicates that a curriculum based on the RFDC (Barrett et al., 2018) can increase children's endorsement and knowledge of children's rights. Increasing children's knowledge and endorsement of their rights is important because this knowledge can support children in advocating for their rights (Peterson-Badali & Ruck, 2008). Furthermore, knowledge and supporting children's rights participation rights is related to children's well-being (Kosher & Ben-Arieh, 2017). The UNCRC (UN, 1989) stipulates that as part of the Convention, children must be taught about their rights. For these reasons, we need to teach children about their rights and find effective means of doing so. Only when children understand their rights can governments be assured that they have fulfilled the obligations of the UNCRC (UN, 1998) and ensure that children are fully bestowed their rights.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Erasmus+ for funding for the Project 2018-1-IT02-KA201-048371, all the teachers (Vasilka Kolovska, Borislava Ivancheva, Veneta Chobova, Maria Assunta D'Aleo, Rosanna Balistreri, Giovanna Sciortino, Anita Shepherd, Henrik Skjerlie Daae, Beathe-Kathrine Aasheim Moe, Kristine Myklebust, Cornelia Melcu, Muntean Maria Andrada, Bordas Maria Magdalena, Silvia Blasco, Miriam Barrachina Peris, Mercé Garreta Papaceit), and the pupils who participated in this study. We would also like to thank Ana Maria Marina, George Marina, and Micha Stoica.

Data availability

Anonymised data are available on the OSF (<https://osf.io/v9zyw/>) and the CVS (<https://www.cvs-project.eu/>). All materials have been uploaded.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the Erasmus+ [Project 2018-1-IT02-KA201-048371].

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