
Sara Lembrechts

Abstract

This chapter uses the momentum of 25 years of the CRC to address two interrelated dilemmas at the heart of the current children's rights debate: (1) the inherent complexity of children's rights, which militates against a shared understanding of social problems and their solutions, and (2) the fragmentation of knowledge, which prevents better outcomes in a society where we are 'information rich and time poor'. To that end, the chapter initiates a dialogue between two research fields that have so far only seldom been connected – children's rights and knowledge management (KM). The chapter gives some insights into how our knowledge on children's rights, and the mechanisms at play around it, could become better equipped to address the mess, confusion and complexity of our present reality. It shows how different knowledge actors in the field of children's rights could benefit from know-how in the field of KM, while at the same time offer innovative approaches to KM on how to give children a meaningful role in such processes As such, the chapter hopes to launch an open-ended discussion on the challenges and opportunities of connecting both paradigms, as well as to offer a refreshing perspective on conventional ways of understanding children's rights.

1 Introduction

1.1 Setting the Scene

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provided an ideal opportunity for researchers, policy-makers and practitioners to take stock of where we stand with children's rights. What can we learn from the past quarter century that makes us push the boundaries of today towards an innovative future with more social justice and human dignity?
for children? Why have efforts to further the realisation of children's human rights often been fragmented and ineffective, despite the great progress being made in theory and practice?

The chapter uses this momentum to address two interrelated dilemmas at the heart of the children's rights debate: (1) the inherent complexity of children's rights, which militates against a shared understanding of social problems and their solutions, and (2) the fragmentation of knowledge, which prevents better outcomes in a society where we are ‘information rich and time poor’.1 To critically address these challenges, the chapter will initiate a dialogue between two research fields that have so far seldom been connected – children's rights and knowledge management (KM). Whereas KM is understood as the multidisciplinary approach to achieving social objectives by making the best use of knowledge,2 children's rights are defined as fundamental claims for the realisation of the social objectives of justice and human dignity for children.3

The chapter builds on materials and insights that were gathered from activities of the Flemish Children's Rights Knowledge Centre (in Dutch, Kenniscentrum Kinderrechten vzw, abbreviated as KeKi). Operational since 2010, KeKi aims to gather, make available, disseminate, stimulate and increase knowledge on children's rights. Usually, this knowledge is generated by national and international academic research4 and is intended for researchers from multiple academic disciplines, policy-makers and practitioners working on matters concerning youth and children's rights. As a non-profit organisation, financially supported by the Flemish Government and substantively backed up by a multidisciplinary, inter-university platform of researchers in Belgium, KeKi occupies a unique position at the intersection of these three domains of research, policy and practice. Moreover, due to its growing role as an independent knowledge actor, on the one hand, and a bridge, broker and knowledge

---

4 Increasingly, however, the use of knowledge stemming from non-academic sources is gaining ground as well (see, for example, the first edition of Research on Stage at http://www.keki.be/research-stage).