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## “Write for Rights”

Assessing Empowerment of Finnish Pupils Participating in  
Amnesty International Letter Writing Marathon

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| <p>This thesis explores the way Amnesty International’s human rights letter writing marathon contributes to the empowerment of Finnish pupils participating in it. “Write for Rights” is a campaign using participatory learning methods. Students learn about human rights through taking action in cases of human rights violations. They can choose to write letters to officials or solidarity messages to victims of these violations.</p> <p>The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on the socio-pedagogical concept of empowerment. A comparative study of human rights education and social pedagogy presents the connection between the two with empowerment being a core concept for both. The theoretical part also investigates the ways of measuring and assessing of empowerment and defines its indicators and outcomes.</p> <p>The analysing data of the empirical part is provided by two feedback surveys conducted by the Finnish section of Amnesty International. One survey was targeted to the pupils, while the other was a post-campaign electronic questionnaire to the teachers. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in analysing the data. The findings revealed a process of empowerment taking place for the pupils: learning about human rights and feeling of empathy towards people suffering human rights violations trigger a wish to take action. Teaching human rights with participatory methods proves to be a tool for activating empowerment of young people. Bachelors of Social Services can benefit from this study when they need to assess the empowerment of similar client groups.</p> |  |
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| <p>Tässä opinnäytetyössä tarkastellaan, miten Amnesty International -järjestön ihmisoikeuksia koskeva kirjemaraton edistää siihen osallistuvien suomalaisten oppilaiden voimaantumista. “Kirjeitä Vapaudelle” on kampanja, jossa käytetään osallistavia oppimismenetelmiä. Oppilaat saavat tietoa ihmisoikeuksista toimimalla ihmisoikeusloukkauksia kokevien puolesta. He voivat valita, kirjoittavatko kirjeitä viranomaisille vai solidaarisuusviestejä ihmisoikeusloukkausten uhreille.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen viitekehys perustuu sosiaalipedagogiseen voimaantumisen käsitteeseen. Ihmisoikeuskasvatuksen ja sosiaalipedagogiikan vertailevan tutkimuksen avulla esitetään näiden alojen välinen yhteys, ja ydinkäsitteenä molemmissa on voimaantuminen. Teoreettisessa osassa tarkastellaan myös voimaantumisen mittaus- ja arviointitapoja sekä määrittellään sen indikaattoreita ja tuloksia.</p> <p>Empiirisessä osassa analysoitava aineisto on saatu kahdesta Amnesty Internationalin Suomen osaston tekemästä palautetutkimuksesta. Toinen tutkimus oli suunnattu oppilaille, ja toinen oli opettajille kampanjan jälkeen lähetetty sähköinen kysely. Aineiston analysoinnissa käytettiin sekä kvantitatiivisia että kvalitatiivisia menetelmiä. Tuloksista kävi ilmi oppilaiden voimaantumisprosessi: ihmisoikeuksiin tutustuminen ja empatian tunteet ihmisoikeusloukkauksia kokevia kohtaan laukaisevat toiveen toimia. Ihmisoikeuksien opettaminen osallistavilla menetelmillä osoittautui työkaluksi, jolla voidaan aktivoida nuorten voimaantumista. Sosionomit voivat hyötyä tästä tutkimuksesta, kun on tarpeen arvioida samankaltaisten asiakasryhmien voimaantumista.</p> |   |
| Avainsanat  | ihmisoikeuskasvatus, osallistavat menetelmät, voimaantuminen, voimaantumisen indikaattorit                                    |

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## List of Acronyms

|      |                                       |
|------|---------------------------------------|
| AI   | Amnesty International                 |
| HR   | Human rights                          |
| HRE  | Human rights education                |
| NGO  | Non-governmental organisation         |
| UDHR | Universal Declaration of Human Rights |

*"Through human rights education you can empower yourself and others to develop the skills and attitude that promote equality, dignity and respect in your community, society and worldwide."*

*Amnesty International*



## 1 Introduction

Human rights have always been a passion of mine. Since the time I grew up in a communist country with no respect of basic freedoms, I learned first-hand how ‘ununiversal’ the universal human rights could be. Later in life, I became a trainer of Human Rights for Young People, a certificate I obtained from Council of Europe in 2004, and had a chance to organise many training sessions. Facilitating children and young people to learn about human rights principles have been the most satisfying job I have ever had. It felt more like a mission of disseminating an important knowledge to the next generation – the precious rights that everyone in the world should enjoy as a birthright. And now, in dramatically changing Europe of 2016, learning of human rights and their protection seems as relevant as in the times of the Cold War.

Another reason why I decided to write about human rights in my final project was, that during my studies in Social Services I noticed the similarities between human rights education (HRE) and social pedagogy, but the lack of any connection between them in the course of studies seemed quite astonishing. After all, “social work is a human rights profession”, an excellent statement by Jim Ife (2008, p.1) from his book “Human Rights and Social Work: Towards Rights-based Practice”. This approach I will definitely try to follow in my future work as a social pedagogue. Finally, I’m very grateful to the Finnish Section of Amnesty International for allowing me to conduct this study and presenting me the chance to write about a very dear topic.

This thesis will explore the way a human rights campaign organised by Amnesty International in Finnish schools contributes to the empowerment of pupils participating in it. Also, I will put on my socio-pedagogical spectacles while assessing a human rights educational campaign, as I would like to transfer the findings of this study to socio-pedagogical practice. Thus, the thesis consists of several parallel topics of discussion, interconnecting and referring to each other in different chapters. The structure of the thesis is presented graphically in Fig. 1, so the reader can get a preliminary overview of the topics and their connections.

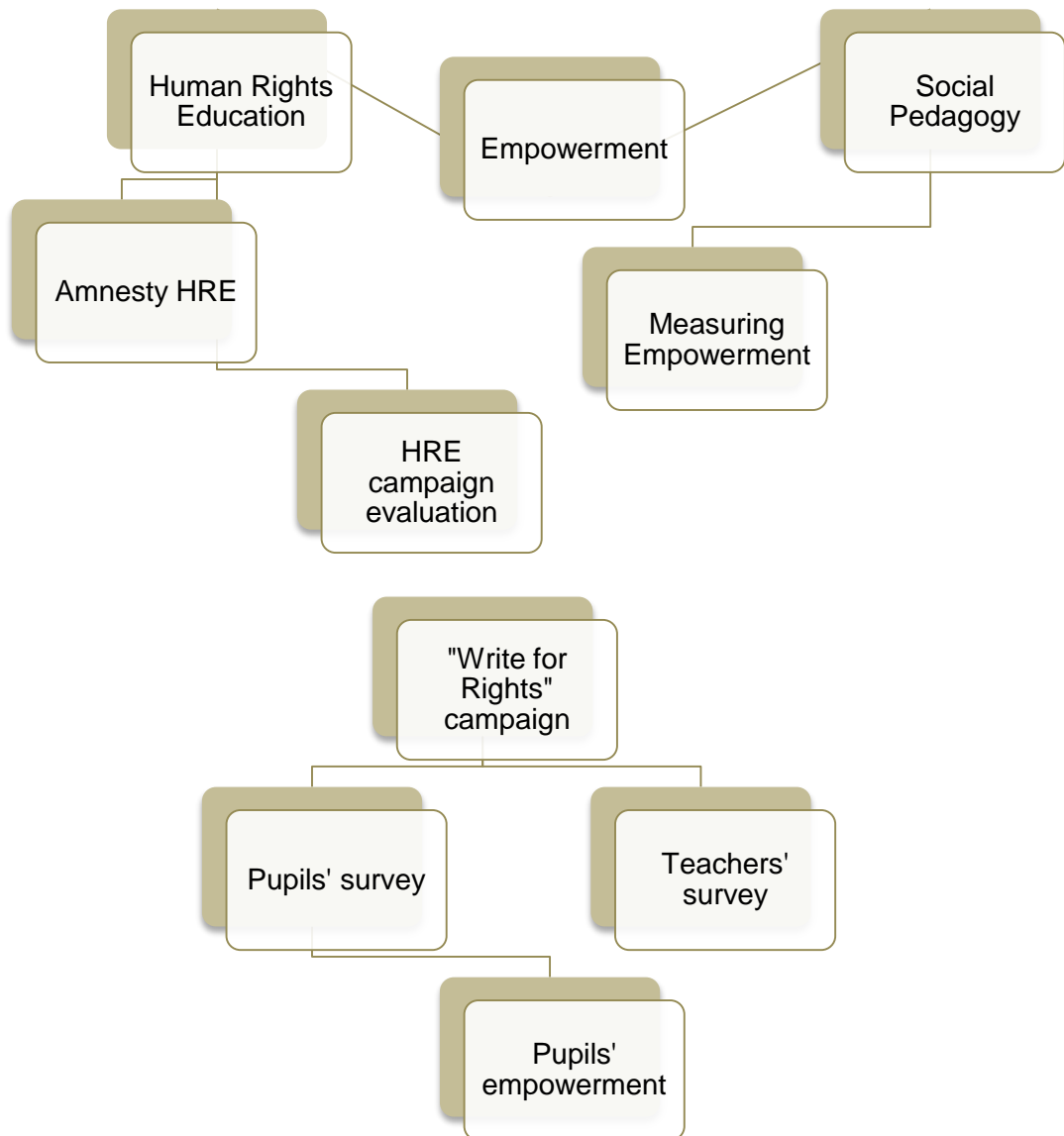


Figure 1. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis begins with a short overview of human rights education and its principles and objectives, followed by information about Amnesty International human rights education and evaluation of HRE campaigns. In the theoretical part a short overview of social pedagogy and empowerment is concluded. Empowerment is the connecting bridge between the two topics. Is it possible to measure empowerment? This will be the task of the empirical part where data from two surveys is analysed in order to search for evidence of empowerment of pupils who took part in Amnesty International "Write for Rights" campaign.

## 2 Context of the Study

The working life partner of this thesis is Finnish Section of Amnesty International, which graciously allowed me to conduct my study while using data collected in their “Write for Rights” campaign organised in December 2015. This chapter will introduce Amnesty International and its human rights education (HRE) activities at Finnish schools. A short comparison of HRE in formal and informal settings will be explored and more details will be given on “Write for Rights” campaign. Finally, a discussion on evaluation models of HRE trainings will be presented.

### 2.1 Amnesty International

*“Only when the last prisoner of conscience has been freed, when the last torture chamber has been closed, when the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a reality for the world’s people, will our work be done.”*

*Peter Benenson*

In 1961 two Portuguese students were jailed just for raising a toast to freedom. British lawyer Peter Benenson thought this was unacceptable and wrote an article in The Observer newspaper launching a campaign for the students’ release. This is how Amnesty International (AI) was founded - a movement for international solidarity for justice and freedom. It is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) with headquarters in London, with local sections in 70 countries and more than 7 million members and supporters worldwide. Amnesty is active in conducting research on human rights violations and lobbying governments to respect International Law and legal obligations. Activists are writing letters, petitions and organise protests demanding amnesty for prisoners of conscience (people imprisoned because of their race, sexual orientation, religion, or political views). Developing educational materials on human rights, organising trainings and advocating for inclusion of human rights in formal educational curricula are some of the Human Rights Education activities on AI agenda. (Amnesty International, n.d.)

One of the first national sections was the Finnish one, established in 1967. The office is located in Helsinki with 20 full-time employees and a large number of part-time fundraisers. Amnesty Finland is led by an Executive Board, but the highest governing body is the Section's Annual Member Meeting. Campaign work is mainly implemented by several hundred voluntary activists with writing letters and online petitions among most common ways to participate.

Finnish Section conducts human rights education work in several ways: trains activists and supporters at annual training sessions and seminars; campaigns at schools for writing letters on behalf of the people at risk; promotes digital e-learning among teachers. Amnesty Finland also carries out human rights education advocacy. The aim is to promote human rights education and training for all - teachers, educators, governmental and municipal clerks. Finnish Section has been involved in several collaborative projects and networks, such as ihmisoikeudet.net project, as well as organisations in global education network. The result of this cooperation has been an open to everyone Internet course "Introduction to Human Rights Thinking" and various teacher training seminars.

## 2.2 Human Rights Education

Human rights education is learning about own human rights and the rights of others and how to claim them. According to Bajaj (2011, p.482) most scholars and practitioners acknowledge that HRE should consist of content as well as process. In other words, in addition to teaching human rights according to the legal instruments it should be done in a way that an environment of critical thinking is created and learners can reflect on their attitudes and behaviour. First content of HRE will be discussed and later (in subchapter 2.2.3.) participatory methods will be presented as an effective learning process.

Human rights are defined in the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and this legal instrument, although not binding, is still perceived as the most important in International Law and usually is the one according to which human rights are taught. The complexity of teaching human rights is that they are covering so many aspects of life. René Cassin, one of the drafters of the *Universal Declaration*, proposes to regard human rights as four pillars - dignity, liberty, equality and solidarity (see Fig.2). The four pillars organise rights as life, freedom and personal rights in Articles 2 to 11; rights in civil society in Articles 12 to 17; public freedoms and political rights in Articles 18 to 21; economic, social and cultural rights in Articles 22 to 27 (Osler and Starke, 2010,

p.31). Cassin’s model gives a comprehensible way to divide human rights into several groups of rights, which makes teaching them easier.

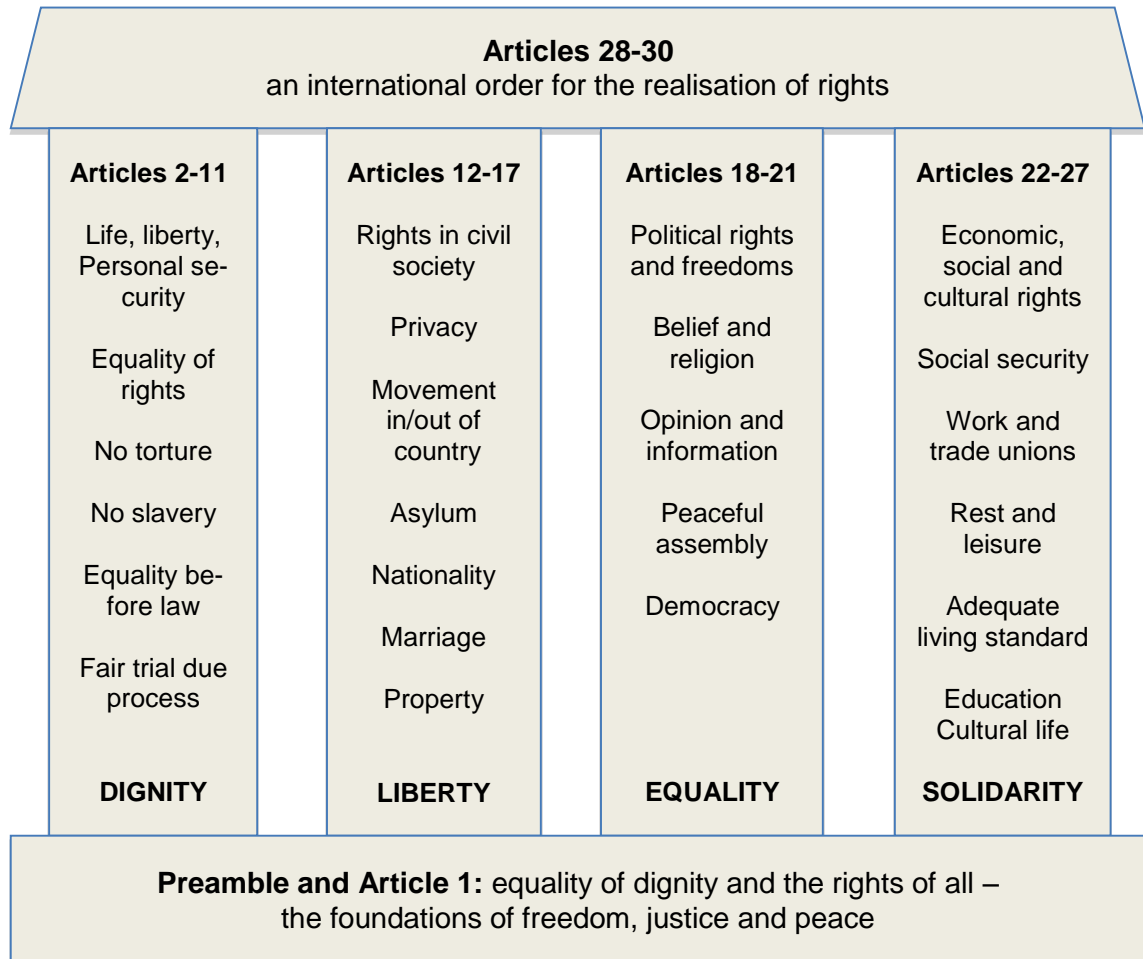


Figure 2. Cassin’s Model of the UDHR (Osler and Starke, 2010, p.32)

Everyone has the right to know about human rights. Education is itself a right (UDHR, Article 26). In 2011 the *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training* states that everyone has “the right to know, seek and receive information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms and should have access to human rights education and training” (Article 1.1). It also considers human rights education and training as comprising “all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus contributing to, *inter alia*, the prevention of human

rights violations and abuses by providing people with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviours, to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights” (Article 2.1). Council of Europe *Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education* has almost similar wording and also emphasizes on the goal “to empower learners to contribute to the building and defence of a universal culture of human rights in society”.

Private and public providers can organize teaching of human rights. Flowers (2004, cited in Waldron, 2010, p.3) identifies three main categories – governmental bodies (United Nations agencies included), non-governmental organisations and educational institutions (from schools to universities). Depending on the type of institution, human rights are thought in slightly different way. For instance, governmental agencies focus on the legal instruments and intergovernmental relations, while NGOs consider HRE as a “tool for social change” (Waldron, 2010, p.4). The objectives of informal teaching are to have transformative outcomes with focus on empowerment, individual as well as collective. Formal educational settings are more concerned with incorporating human rights to other forms of education, such as history lessons or to more recent citizenship and global education (Flowers 2000, p.45).

### 2.2.1 Human Rights Education in Finland

In research conducted in one general upper secondary school located in southern Finland, Matilainen (2011, Abstract) discovered that the “aims of HRE as specified in UN documents on education seem not to have been achieved in the Finnish context”. Only few teachers were familiar with the concept of human rights education. The pupils’ knowledge of human rights was “weak and very limited”, not knowing well either the different human rights laws or the organisations involved in human rights protection. Human rights were “both familiar and strange to the students”, often someone else’s problem far away. HRE materials were used very little in the school or not at all. However, Matilainen observed that human rights were very well implemented in the school she studied. There were no considerable problems with equality among either the teachers or the students. Teachers were *de facto* human rights educators as they try to follow human rights principles in their work and respect the human dignity of everyone.

In 2014 Human Rights Centre conducted a study on human rights education in Finland. Although HRE is implemented in Finland in various ways and in several sectors, the subject is marked by lack of a systematic approach and teaching on human rights norms and mechanisms is still relatively limited. Kouros and Vainio (2014, p.8) discovered that teachers and educators, on the one hand, and civil and public servants, on the other, lack sufficient training and education in human rights. The situation is particularly challenging in the municipal sector. Therefore, Human Rights Delegation proposes human rights to be included in all forms of education and training. Also the human rights knowledge and skills of teachers and educators, as well as public servants and other persons exercising public power, should be ensured and strengthened. And finally, the entire process of human rights education - teaching, learning and knowledge - should be monitored, evaluated and developed. (Human Rights Centre, 2014, p.24.)

Apparently, Finnish government takes fundamental and human rights education and training seriously. *Government of Finland Human Rights Report* (2014, pp.87-88) recommends that quality of the current human rights education and training should be improved by better coordinating the training provided by various authorities. The Human Rights Centre has a major role in developing HRE and training but also the expertise and experience of NGOs should be efficiently used. A National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights should be drawn up. As a result a new curriculum for primary schools, based on human rights teaching, will be introduced next school year (starting in August 2016).

### 2.2.2 Amnesty International Human Rights Education

Amnesty International (2010, p.6) defines human rights education as “a deliberate, participatory practice aimed at empowering individuals, groups and communities through fostering knowledge, skills and attitudes consistent with internationally recognized human rights principles”. Obviously, Amnesty expects people not only to learn human rights in theory but also to become active in defending their own rights as well as the rights’ of others. The objective is clearly empowerment of learners who become also “agents of social change” (Bajaj, 2011, p.485).

According to Amnesty, HRE should cover human rights norms and principles, but also the values that define them. Another aspect of educating is how in practice rights can be achieved and protected. Also training should respect the rights of both educators and

learners, in other words HRE also takes place *through* human rights. In sum, the human rights education processes and actions promoted by Amnesty International (2011, p.6) acknowledge five fundamental purposes: “to address the underlying causes of human rights violations; to prevent human rights abuses; to combat discrimination; to promote equality; to enhance people’s participation in democratic decision-making processes”.

### 2.2.3 Participatory Methods

Above-mentioned objectives of HRE can be achieved through different kinds of pedagogical methodologies. However, in this study will be described only participatory methods of teaching as these are the ones primary used by Amnesty educators. Those methods emphasise not merely presenting information to learners as a matter of fact, but give space to explore, discuss, analyse and question issues relating to the cases at hand. The goal is to motivate, inspire and empower the participants into changing behaviour and taking action. This actually becomes quite natural outcome of the processes of critical reflection and analysis that learners are encouraged to practice. Thus, learners are treated as active, creative and intelligent human beings with unexploited potential to become “agents of change” (Amnesty International 2011, p.12).

Creating a safe space is a starting point in order for participants to be engaged in a participatory process. The aim is to have an environment of mutual trust and respect where everybody can express freely and respectfully their thoughts and opinions. Drawing up ground rules in the beginning of a session that participants agreed to follow should be part of each session. Also, an agreement should be reached that all opinions will be discussed without judgment. Ultimately, achieving a good group dynamics between the participants is important to enable rich discussion and a positive space in which to share and learn. (Amnesty International, 2015a, p.10.)

Another particular feature of participatory methods is the “learning by doing” approach, which in social pedagogical tradition is highly promoted by John Dewey (Eriksson and Markström, 2003, p.16). The learning that participatory methodologies encourages is also called “experiential learning” as it is based in the life experiences, hopes and aspirations of the participants. This permits learners to expand their knowledge on particular human rights issue but also to look for strategies for change as participatory methodologies seek ultimately to bring about social transformation. In relation to this goal several principles need to be achieved. First step is awareness-raising and empowerment – the



learning process should not only give information about human rights, but deepen the commitment for achieving social justice for all. Second step is accomplishment of changes in attitudes, values, behaviour and human relations. Transformation has started with oneself and learning is put into practice as participants make conscious efforts to be agents of social change and justice. And finally, participatory methodologies are concerned with actions beyond the training session, actions that can transform unfair situations in people's actual lives. (Amnesty International 2011, p. 12.)

The "learning by doing" training can be organised with the help of different methods. Flowers (2000, pp.60-75) provides a list of methods that can be used: brainstorming, case studies, creative expression, debates and negotiations, discussion, dramatisation, energizers, films and videos, field trips, games, hearings and tribunals, icebreakers and introductions, interpretation of images, interviews, jigsaw activities, journal writing, media, mock trials, storytelling. The list is long and diverse and a trainer can find a suitable method to choose from.

### 2.3 "Write for Rights" Campaign

"Write for Rights" is an example of participatory learning method *par excellence*. It is a letter-writing marathon and involves millions of people, a global public activism started in 2001 by AI activists in Poland. Main goal is empowering people who have experienced human rights violations by mobilising people around the world in writing letters of support. As a result public officials are flooded with letters and most often charges are dropped, laws are introduced and prisoners of conscience are freed. Victims of torture and people suffering other human rights violations receive thousands of solidarity letters from all over the globe. The cases are brought to public attention and victims feel supported and not forgotten. In 2014, "Write for Rights" campaign was organised in 200 countries and territories, over 3 million actions were taken and almost 80% of the letters were written by young people. (Amnesty International, 2015b, p.2.)

In 2015, the campaign was organised in Finnish schools from 4 to 17 December. The activities were targeted for an age group of 13 upwards and could be run within a school lesson. They provide, in an engaging way, an introduction to human rights for young people. Human rights are not presented as abstract concepts, but as a real life stories. Young people learn about human rights violations while virtually meeting the victims of

those violations. Finally, the students can choose to whom to write a letter or a solidarity message – in that way taking action to protect human rights.

Participation in letter/message writing is obligatory, but the young people can decide themselves if they will forward them or not. The campaign has following objectives:

- “- understanding human rights;
- awareness of violations affecting people in different countries;
- empower young people to act – not only on these cases, but in other instances as well;
- to develop empathy and solidarity;
- to develop literacy and communication skills (discussion, analysis and letter writing);
- to understand the nature and the power of activism.” (Amnesty International 2015b, p.3)

The activities are designed to develop skills and competences which can be beneficial to pupils in the whole education process. Empowerment and the ability to act are life-long important competences.

Amnesty International prepares an education pack with several cases, but each country decides which cases to introduce to their national campaign. For instance, Finnish campaign in 2015 focused on two cases – Costas and Maria. Costas and his refugee partner were badly beaten in a homophobic and racist attack in Greece. Maria is 13 years old from Burkina Faso, forced to marry a 70-year-old man who already had five wives. Pupils were encouraged to write to the Minister of Justice in Greece, expressing shock about the brutal attacks against Costas and his partner and asking for investigation of hate crime. In the case of Maria, Minister of Justice and Human Rights in Burkina Faso is asked to respect the rights of women and children as stated in international treaties and especially to ensure the prohibition of forced and early marriage. (Amnesty International 2015b, pp.11-12.)

#### 2.4 Human Rights Education Evaluation

Evaluating human rights education activities is crucial part of educational work, helping to understand human rights education process and the influence it has on learners. Needs and expectations of participants should be taken into account and the teaching activities should be sensitive to the human rights challenges participants face. Evaluation should measure the effectiveness, resources, efficiency and results of the human rights

education activities. It concentrates on both the organization and implementation of the activities (seminars, workshops, actions taken) as well as the outcomes brought about by them (the human rights learning that takes place, empowerment, capacity for action). These can occur at many levels: individual, communal, organisational and societal levels. However, measuring can be quite challenging as they are often related to changes in participants' attitudes, values and behaviour. (Amnesty International, 2011, p. 40.)

The author introduces two models for evaluation of training sessions in human rights education: Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model and Amnesty International Dimension of Change Model. Used together, they provide a comprehensive theoretical framework for developing and conducting an evaluation process in the area of human rights education. Bachelors of Social Services (or social pedagogues - the terms are used interchangeably) can use those evaluation techniques when engaged in similar educational activities.

Donald L. Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model, developed in 1959 and updated in 2006, has become the most widely used model for evaluation of training and learning, including in the area of HRE. The Kirkpatrick model, also known as the four-level model consists of four levels of evaluation of learning which measure:

- Reaction - what learners thought and felt about the training and about their learning;
- Learning - the increase in knowledge or capacity as a result of the training;
- Behaviour - the degree or extent of improvement in behaviour and application of knowledge in real life;
- Impacts - the effects on the larger community resulting from the actions of the learner.

Kirkpatrick offers a practical model for evaluating the actual training events and the learning that has occurred. It measures results at different levels starting with the individual and expanding to include a broader community. In this way, the Kirkpatrick model offers a process for evaluation that replicate the very essence of the goals of human rights education. (Kirkpatrick et al., 2006 cited in Equitas, 2011, pp. 26-28.)

Amnesty International has been using a Dimension of Change Model when evaluating results of educational programmes and projects. Four Dimensions of Change are identified in different areas where change is expected to happen as a result of the educational sessions (see Fig. 3). The main function of these Dimensions of Change is to support the analysis of the positive (or negative) impact for those affected by Amnesty International's work. The primary Dimension of Change within this framework is "changes in people's lives". Making a difference in the lives of specified target group is the main goal of Amnesty International's projects and campaigns. However, not all of activities are directed to individuals. Many of the campaigns are focusing on work with activists, changing in policies on governmental level and accountability of officials and their actions. In this way Amnesty's work focuses on those who have the power to act and change the legal or social environment, which can then affect the lives of the primary stakeholders. (Amnesty International, 2010, p.15.)

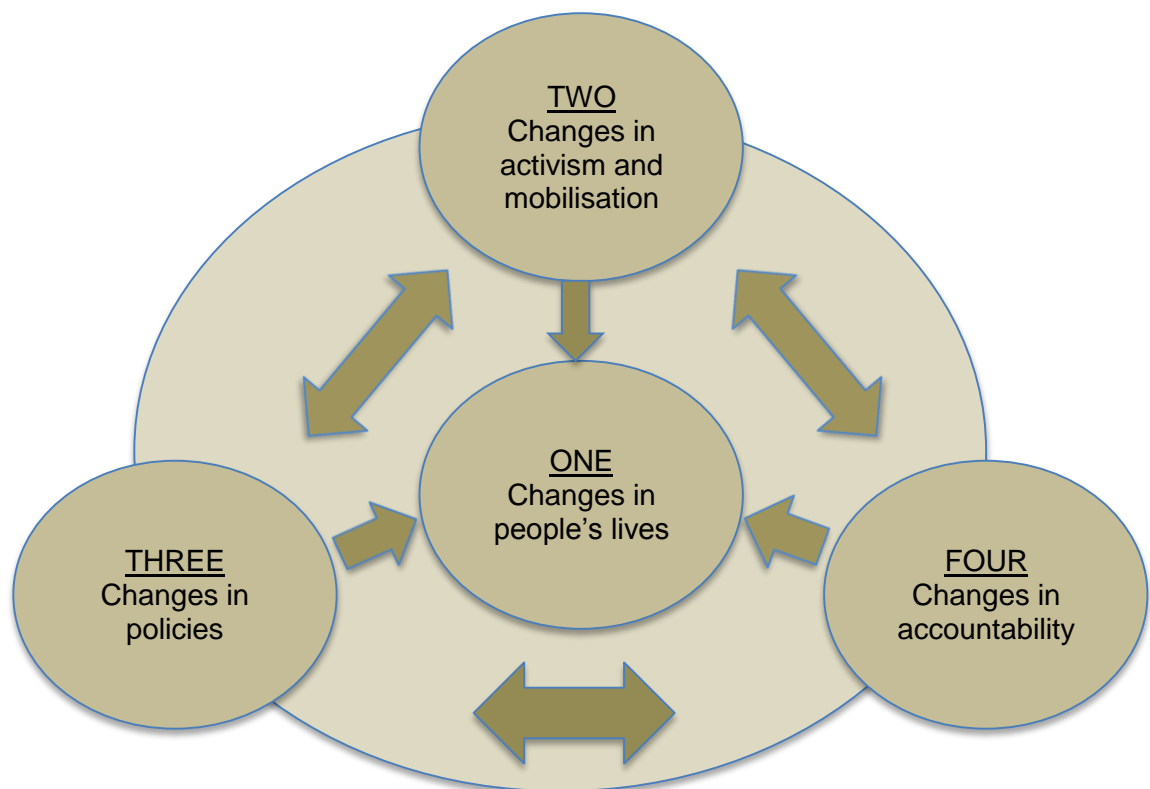


Figure 3. Amnesty International's Dimensions of Change (Amnesty International, 2010, p.16)

For the purposes of this thesis more attention will be focused on changes ONE and TWO – changes in people’s lives and changes in activism and mobilization. Of particular interest are the outcomes that can be linked to the changes in people’s lives as they are generated through the process of empowerment. Outcomes can be described into following categories (Amnesty International, 2011, p. 40):

- Empowerment demonstrated through participants’ new knowledge (learning about human rights in general; analyzing local problems with the help of human rights framework; becoming familiar with the mechanisms of respecting and protecting human rights);
- Empowerment demonstrated through changes in values and attitudes;
- Empowerment demonstrated through participants’ ability to take actions promoting human rights.

These outcomes will be evaluated later in the thesis when studying the empowerment of pupils who participated in the “Write for Rights” campaign. The empowerment as a process of change in behaviour and action will be measured and the results can be used in other circumstances when empowerment is objective of social work actions.

### **3 Theoretical Background**

Social pedagogy is the theoretical concept taught in the Degree Programme of Social Services at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. The Bachelors of Social Services graduating from this programme can work with a very diverse clientele and everywhere they are expected to apply the principles of social pedagogy. In the following part the concept is explained and the connection to present study is identified. The author argues that social pedagogy and human rights education (both formal and informal) have similar objectives and means, especially in respect to empowerment of young people.

#### **3.1 Social Pedagogy**

Most probably the best way to understand a concept is to first understand the meaning of the term, i.e. the etymology of the words. Then to learn more about the historical background of its origin, who were the people who introduced and developed the concept, what was the time they lived in and what were the contemporary philosophies. And last

but not least what is the use of the concept today. A relatively short and not inclusive overview of social pedagogy follows in the next paragraphs.

Clearly social pedagogy is a term consisting of two parts. The Latin word 'socius' means 'friend', while pedagogy has Greek origin – 'paidagogos', consisting of two parts 'pais' (boy) and 'agagos' (guide). So, in a free translation: 'guiding a boy (child) in a friendly manner'. But the concept 'social pedagogy' has German origin and the term in German language is 'Sozialpädagogik' (Hegstrup 2003, pp.72-73). As stated by Hämäläinen (2003, pp.70-71) social pedagogy is historically based on the belief that social circumstances can be influenced through education. Therefore, the social pedagogy tries to resolve (or prevent) social distress, in theory and practice, by pedagogical means.

In the middle of the nineteenth century the term 'sozial pädagogik' has started to be used in Germany. Karl Mager is believed to be the one introducing the term in 1840s in the *Pädagogische Revue* where he was an editor. However, the idea was developed and brought to a wider audience by the work of Friedrich Diesterweg. He was a Prussian educational thinker who studied primary education and is credited with inventing the 'learn to do by doing' maxim (Learning about social work in Germany, 2007). However, according to several authors (Eriksson & Markström, 2003; Hegstrup 2003, p. 73) the term can be dated even earlier to the works of Paul Natorp and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, a Swiss educator. Paul Natorp stated "...the social aspects of 'education' (Bildung) and the 'educational' (Bildungs) aspects of social life constitute this science [social pedagogy]" (Stephens, 2009).

So what exactly does social pedagogy means and how is the term defined. Smith (2009) describes 'sozial pädagogik' as an idea being used as a way of explaining alternatives to the principal models of schooling. According to Pemberton (2009): "social pedagogy is a system of theory, training and practice based on a holistic approach to other people and their social, emotional and educational development." Furthermore, the term has been used to describe a variety of work across social work and education. Usually more holistic and group-oriented, 'sozial pädagogik' is sometimes translated as 'community education' or 'education for sociality' (Learning about social work in Germany, 2007).

Nowadays, social pedagogy can be put into a wide range of practices - youth projects, kindergartens and nurseries, day-care centers, work with elderly, offenders, and people with substance abuse and mental health problems. The linkage with social problems and

crisis work situates social pedagogy alongside social work. Stephens (2013, p.30) observes that even people who have fewer adversities in life can benefit from the work of social pedagogues. For instance, children and young people in general can profit a lot from a positive social climate at school. When the atmosphere at school is pleasant and encouraging, pupils and teachers are more likely to be positive and confident. The aim of school social pedagogues is to develop caring, helping behaviours. The consequence is a secure classroom, where pupils feel safe and wanted.

The main role of social pedagogues is to facilitate people to help themselves, not to judge their lifestyles or behaviours. The point is to educate service users to trust their competences, and with the needed support, to overcome social problems. Frequently this means assisting people, with their co-operation and consent, to change their behaviours and to modify certain aspects of their lives. Generally, this process is achieved with the help of a particular type of conversation between the social pedagogue and the other person. This form of gentle communication – dialogue – brings out the best in social pedagogic practice. With the help of it a climate of goodwill is established and it becomes possible to identify challenges and implement solutions successfully. (Stephens, 2013, p.27.)

And finally reminding the work of Paulo Freire, Latin American Professor of Education, prominent representative of Education for Liberation who fought for an equal society without class differences. He is best known for his focus on the dialectical process and believed that we become conscious through dialogue. Furthermore, Freire (1996, pp.44-46) emphasizes empowerment and mobilization of people's own resources. According to this approach, social pedagogy should encourage people to change their circumstances and also develop themselves (Eriksson and Markström 2003, p.19). Similar objective is expected in human rights education, namely the development of critical thinking and stimulating people to take action (Brander et al. 2002, p. 22). Thus, empowerment is a key concept in both fields and can be regarded as the means of achieving those objectives.

### 3.2 Empowerment

Most of the literature on empowerment state that the term lacks clarity and precision and its definition can be problematic. The challenge of defining empowerment is related to the several dimensions of the term. Fitzsimons, et al. (2011, pp.5-7) point out that empowerment can be referred to as a theory, as a process and as a concept. Further complication in understanding the empowerment is the point that it has personal, interpersonal and political aspects (Lee, 2001, p.43). As empowerment is defined in so many ways, few definitions are selected and in logical order presented in attempt to understand the term in connection to the goal of this study. The definitions are quoted, as paraphrasing them seems like an attempt for redefinition and somewhat escaping the original meaning.

Lee (2001, p.33) chooses to start defining empowerment while quoting Webster's dictionary (eighth edition) on the word *empower* - "to give power or authority to; to give ability to, enable, permit" and commenting that this definition assumes that power can be given to another person but rejecting this presumption. This idea is developed further by Payne (2005, p.296) who insists that "power may not be given to people; they must be helped to take it for themselves". Also Parsons (1991 cited in Lee, 2001, p.33) sees empowerment as a "process of gaining power, developing power, taking or seizing power, or facilitating or enabling power." This definition stresses the fact that empowerment is a process of getting power by ones who are ready to seek for it and are ready to act on that aspiration. Further interpretations of the term, mainly related to social work, are presented by Adams (2008, p.17) who explains empowerment as "the capacity of individuals, groups and/or communities to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their own goals, and the process by which, individually and collectively, they are able to help themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives". But also, the "degrees of empowerment are measured by the existence of choice, the use of choice and the achievement of choice (Adams, 2008, p.18)."

It is worth mentioning that the social work literature on empowerment avoids giving any simplistic definitions of empowerment but concentrates on the processes (Coulshed and Orme, 1998, p.64). Empowerment aims to achieve the social justice objectives of social work, both in the way it is practiced and in its aims. "Empowerment seeks to help clients to gain power of decision and action over their lives by reducing the effect of social or personal blocks to exercising existing power, increasing capacity and self-confidence to



use power and transferring power from the group and individuals” (Payne, 2005, p.295). Adams (2008, p. 82) elaborates further and remarks that people do not become empowered simply by being invited to participate – they must feel empowered first. Thus, self-empowerment is the starting point of empowerment where people begin to work on themselves and take control of their lives. In this thesis, empowerment will be regarded as a process by which individuals empower themselves to achieve, to participate and to overcome their lack of power and control.

In addition to all above definitions, the main point in the concept is the issue of power and oppression. Empowerment has originally started with the struggles of oppressed people to gain some power from the ruling classes (or from men, in the case of women’s rights movement) in order to improve their life situation. In Table 1 are presented theories and approaches from different countries that have influenced the practice of empowerment and some of the major authors on the particular subject. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss and explain them, but the author thinks this list will help the reader to comprehend the multiplicity of the term and its history.

Table 1. Contributors to Empowerment Theories and Practice  
(Adapted from: Adams, 2008, p. 51)

| <b>Empowerment theory/practice</b> | <b>Authors</b>                              |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Black empowerment: USA             | Solomon, 1976, 1986                         |
| Conscious-raising: South America   | Freire, 1972, 1973, 1990; Illich 1975       |
| Disabled people movements          | Morris, 1993, 1997                          |
| Women’s self-help                  | Marieskind, 1984                            |
| Advocacy                           | Brandon 1988                                |
| Pupil participation and protests   | Adams, 1991                                 |
| Prisoners’ rights                  | Scraton et al., 1991; Adams, 1992           |
| Feminist women’s therapy           | Krzowski and Land, 1988                     |
| Women’s mental health              | Nairne and Smith, 1984; Women in MIND, 1986 |
| Survivors’ movement                | Survivors Speak Out, 1988                   |

Another important issue to clarify is the subject of empowerment, i.e. who gets empowered, the ultimate beneficiaries. It can be both groups and individuals (Wils, 2001, p.10). Traditionally, empowerment has been connected to power struggles of socially excluded groups or marginalised individuals (Fitzsimons, et al., 2011, p.7). But in this thesis the empowerment of Finnish pupils is studied, who by no means are oppressed. Therefore, the focus here is on personal empowerment, which includes developing confidence, boosting self-esteem and enhancing skills in order for young people to exercise power. As Thompson (2007, p.19) states: “there is a growing recognition that children should be given greater voice, in acknowledgment of their relative powerlessness”. Children and young people are in a vulnerable position because of their age and dependency to parents and other adults. At home, as well as in school, children have to be raised in empowering ways, learning about their strengths and gaining control over their circumstances.

According to Fitzsimons, et al. (2011, p.3) empowerment as a term used in youth and community work refers to the strategy for including young people into the decision-making processes of organisations and communities. This may include participation on committees, influencing decision-making or controlling of resources. But as mentioned already earlier, empowerment is also an internal process. Young people are facilitated to improve their level of confidence in order to develop and change their self-concept. However, these two processes are interrelated – young people may not be able to participate in empowering organisational processes unless they perceive themselves as being able to do so.

In conclusion, both social pedagogy and human rights education have the same aim – empowerment. While social pedagogues work mainly with people already oppressed or in a difficult life situation when they have been disempowered, human rights education focuses on teaching human rights with a goal of empowering all. Thus, the Amnesty’s transformative learning process in taking action in defending and claiming rights is an important part of the empowerment of young people (Amnesty International, 2015a, p.12).

### 3.3 Assessing and Measuring Empowerment

In order to assess and measure empowerment, it is important to have a clear definition of the concept and to specify a framework that both links empowerment to improved outcomes and identifies indicators of empowerment itself (Narayan, 2005, p.5). However, many authors take an instrumental view of empowerment, i.e. researchers are interested in measuring the impact of empowerment, not empowerment itself. It is often seen as a basic precondition for other (more general) objectives, such as the “transformation of society”, “redistribution of power in society” or “shift in power relations” and “emancipation” (Wils, 2001, p.11). In this thesis both empowerment indicators and outcomes of empowerment will be studied.

Another point to consider when measuring empowerment is that it is not a “unitary concept”. Narayan (2005, p.20) explains that empowerment is multidimensional with dimensions not necessarily moving in the same direction and with the same pace. In practice this means that two studies can examine the same phenomenon but still come up with different conclusions depending on the dimensions of empowerment they measure. And to a large extent, the availability of data has dictated how empowerment is measured.

Major problem in assessment of empowerment is that it usually involves relative changes, as opposite to absolute ones (Alsop et al., 2006, p.32). In other words, if empowerment is observed for some members of a group studied, it cannot automatically be assumed that the conclusion applies to other individuals or groups. Empowerment is relative and very personal process. Similar is the case both within countries and across countries. For instance, the economic empowerment of a poor male villager in Bangladesh is likely to be very different from the economic empowerment of an urban male. Likewise, social empowerment for women in Western Europe is very different from social empowerment for women in an African village. Alsop et al. (2006, p.33) conclude that the context in which empowerment is researched can vary across time and space with changes occurring quite rapidly which is particularly challenging for longitudinal tracking of empowerment.

Another challenge in measuring empowerment is that it is a “latent phenomenon”. Narayan (2005, p.15) explains that its presence can only be deduced through its action or its results, therefore “most observed behaviours are proxies for the underlying phenomenon”. Parsons (1999, p.391) concludes that assessment and evaluation of empowerment

is a complex task and that “contextual adaptations, cultural, ethnic and gender differences are critical to this process”. Also the need to facilitate empowerment in the evaluation and research process increase the complexity of this task.

From the literature review appears that the most commonly studied dimension of empowerment is the economic one. Perhaps this is explained with the availability of objective indicators such as income and expenditure profiles, ownership of assets, etc. Less attention has been paid to the social and political dimensions of empowerment and least studied of all is the psychological dimension. However, researchers had noticed the fact that individuals with similar abilities and resources exhibit different inclinations to act on their own behalf. This phenomenon has led to a growing interest in the psychological dimensions of empowerment. Narayan (2005, p.20) observes that “self-confidence and a sense of self-efficacy are important precursor to action”. Moreover, taking action and reaping the rewards further reinforces these feelings, which creates a virtuous cycle of reflection and action. In same line of discovery, Kirby et al. (2003 cited in Adams, 2008, p. 206) had noticed that in order to acknowledge empowerment, people who are subject of empowerment activities need time for reflecting and self-evaluating. Hence, Fetterman (1996, p. 5) proposes that programs having empowerment as a goal have to be designed in such way that there is a time for people for self-evaluation and reflection.

The next step in literature review was to find practical examples of ways to measure empowerment. The author came across a study measuring empowerment of adults with severe and persistent mental illness, all of who were clients of social services programs. Parsons (1999, p.401) developed the Empowerment Outcome Assessment (EOA), which is a 34-item client self-report instrument. Results from previous studies were used in order to identify the major categories of empowerment outcomes – personal, interpersonal and socio-political (see Table 2).

Table 2. Dimensions of Empowerment Outcomes (Parsons, 1999, p.401)

| <b>Personal</b>  | <b>Interpersonal</b>  | <b>Community/<br/>Political Participation</b>   |
|--|---|---|
| (Self-perception)  | (Knowledge/Skills)  | (Action)  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-awareness</li> <li>• Self-acceptance</li> <br/> <li>• Belief in self</li> <li>• Self-esteem</li> <li>• Feeling that you have rights</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assertiveness</li> <li>• Setting limits on</li> <li>• Giving</li> <li>• Asking for help</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Accessing re-sources</li> <li>• Critical thinking</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joining organisations</li> <li>• Giving back by helping others</li> <li>• Making a contribution</li> <li>• Voting, writing letters, speaking in public</li> <li>• Taking control in generalised areas of one's life</li> </ul> |

In this example were evident several dimensions of the empowerment process. On personal level, the empowered individual can be recognised by improved self-perception and the outcomes are higher self-esteem, belief in oneself and the feeling that one have rights. On interpersonal level the outcomes were assertiveness and setting limits, problem solving and critical thinking. And finally on community level the empowered person was joining organisations, contributing to society by helping others, being active in political life with voting, writing letters or speaking in public. The list of outcomes is long, but it does not mean that every empowered person will show all and same outcomes. As discussed earlier, empowerment is subjective and very personal experience.

Finally, it can be concluded that in order to measure empowerment, indicators of empowerment need to be observed. Indicators can be identified at all levels (inputs, outcomes, effects and impact). Preferably they are specified during the planning stage of an empowerment program or training. Wils (2001, p.6) insists indicators to be defined in accordance with the so-called SMART criteria: indicators must **S**pecify the target group; only **M**asurable indicators can be used and they should be **A**greed upon as related to the outcomes or objectives involved; and finally indicators should be **R**ealistic and be put in a **T**imeframe.

From the definitions in the previous chapter and literature review on measuring empowerment, the author prepared a table with indicators for empowerment in different contexts (see Table 3).

Table 3. Indicators of Empowerment

| <b>Empowerment: Type</b>                 | <b>Indicators</b>  | <b>Source</b>  |
|--|--|--|
| Empowerment (general)                    | Engaging in significant learning; to connect with others in mutually productive ways.  | Barry and Sidaway, 1999, p.14                        |
| Empowerment of social worker             | Five-point Likert Scale:<br>1. Knowledge and skills (professional)<br>2. Collective identity (sense of sharing goals)<br>3. Critical awareness (of one's place)<br>4. The self-concept (self-appraisal and self-esteem)<br>5. Propensity to act (initiate effective action on behalf of self/others) | Frans, 1993 cited in Itzhaky and Gerber, 1999, p.421 |
| Empowerment ('Accelerated School')       | Knowledge ("Knowledge is power"), Powerful Learning – participation in governing the school and the decision-making process  | Levin, 1996, p. 60                                   |
| Empowerment of poor                      | Improved incomes, improved governance, peace and access to justice and legal aid; functioning services; access to information  | Narayan, 2005, pp. 5-8                               |
| Empowerment as an intrinsic value        | Feeling self-confident, walking with dignity, living without fear  | Narayan, 2005, p.16                                  |
| Internal empowerment                     | Self-efficacy, self-confidence, mastery; skills and ability, competence; energy and the desire to act  | Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2005, pp.134-8             |
| Empowerment of women (Asia)              | Self-esteem or 'power within'  | Deshmukh-Ranadive, 2005, p.113                       |
| Empowerment of individuals               | Developing skills to become independent problem solvers and decision makers; organisational or community involvement   | Zimmermann, cited in Fetterman, 1996, p.4            |
| Empowerment of disabled                  | Self-determination – ability to chart one's own course in life (expressing needs, establish goals and a plan of action to achieve them)  | Fetterman, 1996, p.8                                 |
| Individual Empowerment (social services) | Service users and carers take part in activities with professionals; contribute to decisions.  | Adams, 2008, p. 207                                  |
| Self-empowerment (social services)       | Individuals feel confident, can engage in self-development; can plan and carry out participatory activities.   | Adams, 2008, p. 207                                  |

When assessing the empowerment of pupils, the author will look for indicators of empowerment at all levels (personal, interpersonal and communal) by tracking empowerment outcomes.

## 4 Conducting the Study

Originally this stage of the study was planned to be a focus group interview of a class of high school students who have participated in the “Write for Rights” campaign. Interview questions were prepared with the help of which pupils would be encouraged to discuss their experiences during the lesson: what feelings they have experienced, what they have learned regarding human rights and did they notice a change in their behaviour after the campaign. I anticipated gathering more in-depth information about the implementation of the campaign, which would be beneficial to Finnish Amnesty for preparing their next year’s campaign. In addition, this type of interview would have been useful in collecting data concerning pupils’ empowerment as a result of participating in the letter writing for human rights. The working life partner was in contact with teachers from Uusimaa area who have participated in the campaign. For different reasons it was not possible to find a class for the focus group interview and the study was conducted in another way.

While planning the educational materials for the campaign, Finnish Amnesty had prepared a questionnaire to the pupils. The main objective of this survey was to gather feedback on the letters writing campaign. When I contacted Amnesty with the idea of my thesis the materials were already sent, and the campaign was about to start. So, I was not involved in the creation of this questionnaire. An electronic survey targeted to the teachers was sent after the campaign ended. I was able to contribute to it with few open-ended questions. When it became clear that I would not be able to proceed with the focus group interview, Finnish Amnesty kindly gave me permission to use the data gathered in those two surveys.

### 4.1 Study Task and Methodology

The task of my thesis is to find out what reactions did the “Write for Rights” campaign provoke in the pupils participating in it, in particular was this campaign empowering for

the young people. The results will be of direct use to Finnish Amnesty – the working life partner in this study. Also, the findings will be discussed from social pedagogues' point of view for whom empowerment is a major goal of their work.

As I will analyse data collected from questionnaires that I did not design, my analysis will be data-driven. I will locate and code sections in the data where the pupils show some kind of empowerment, i.e. I will be looking for some indicators of empowerment such as the ones presented in previous chapter. Based on the findings I will confirm or reject the proposed idea that participating in the letter writing campaign has been an empowering experience for the pupils.

#### 4.1.1 Secondary Data Analysis

The analysis is defined as secondary data analysis, or secondary analysis, when researchers analyse data already collected by others “for exploratory, explanatory, or descriptive purposes (Radey, 2010, p.165)”. In other words, a re-analysis of data with another purpose than what was originally intended. Secondary analysis is worthy of attention, because it provides easily assessable data and has a potential for resource and time savings (Kiecolt and Nathan, 1985, p.11).

One needs to be careful and critical when using data gathered by other researchers. First of all, there could be limitations to the extent the data can answer the research task as the questionnaires were not design specifically for the purpose of this study. Kiecolt and Nathan (1985, p.13) also warn for errors in the original surveys that may no longer be visible. This is especially true when one uses ready figures and do not know how they were calculated, or some of the basic numeral information is not recorded. However, in this thesis, I used raw data from both surveys, i.e. I made the calculations and prepared the frequency tables. Also, although this study is conducted while analysing data from questionnaires not designed by the author (with the exception of few questions in the teachers' survey), the purpose of gathering the data was the same. The original purpose of the surveys was to gather feedback on the implementation of the letter writing campaign. The purpose of this study is to find evidence of empowerment of pupils, which was one of the objectives of the campaign.



#### 4.1.2 Content Analysis

I also used content analysis, a process by which the “many words of texts are classified into much fewer categories” (Weber, 1990, p.15 cited in Cohen et al., 2007, pp. 475). Content analysis is a set of procedures for the analysis, examination and verification of the contents of written data. This is a way to data reduction, which is a key element of qualitative analysis and has to be implemented in a way that respects the quality of the qualitative data. Content analysis involves “coding, categorising (creating meaningful categories into which the units of analysis – words, phrases, sentences etc. – can be placed), comparing (categories and making links between them), and concluding – drawing theoretical conclusions from the text” (Cohen et al., 2007, pp. 476).

Originally content analysis has been used for longer texts, analysis of mass media and public speeches, but the use of it has spread to examination of any form of communicative material, both structured and unstructured. I used content analysis for studying the open-ended questions in both students’ and teachers’ surveys. Weber (1990, cited in Cohen et al., 2007, pp. 475) explains the purpose of content analysis in coding of open-ended questions in surveys as a way of description of patterns and trends in communicative content. This implies the use of statistical techniques in content analysis. Again Weber suggests that the “highest quality content-analytic studies use both quantitative and qualitative analysis of texts (texts defined as any form of written communication).”

I used inductive content analysis, described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005, cited in Vaismoradi et al., 2013 p.401) as a process where researcher does not have any themes in advance and coding categories is acquired directly from the text data. I followed the procedure of breaking down text into units of analysis, defining and then counting different categories, presenting them in tabular form and finally presenting a discussion on the findings and relating theory with the results.

#### 4.1.3 Triangulation

In order to strengthen data validity of the study, I used two sources of data. This process of analysis is known as triangulation. In fact, Denzin (1978, cited in Konecki, 2008, p.15) defines four types of triangulations: 1. Triangulation of data involving analysing data from various sources; 2. Triangulation of researchers – different researchers involved in the same study; 3. Theoretical triangulation – using several theoretical perspectives when

analysing the same set of data; and 4. Methodological triangulation – involving several methods to study a single problem. I applied the first type, as I analysed the data from pupils' survey as a primary source of my analysis, but also studied the teachers' survey in order to find further proof and confirmations of my findings.

## 5 Analysing Data

When analysing the results of the pupils' survey I used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The questionnaire had structured questions and several open-ended questions. For the structured ones, I used basic statistical calculations and presented results in tabular form. The answers of the open-ended questions were subject of content analysis where I looked for indicators and outcomes of empowerment. As Cohen et al. (2007, p. 461) have stated, there is no one single or correct way to analyse and present qualitative data and "how one does it should abide by the issue of *fitness for purpose*". In my analysis, I followed my intuition on classifying and categorising data. After that, interpreting and structuring it into a story line came somehow naturally out of the results and in connection with the topics discussed in the theoretical part.

### 5.1 Characteristics of Available Data

Finnish Amnesty received 209 answers of the pupils' feedback questionnaire from 9 schools all over Finland. While reading through the answers I realised that I will not have the time to analyse all the available data and decided that I will need to reduce it. I randomly picked the answers from 4 schools with 128 total number of answers ( $N=128$ ). Of those 4 schools, one was high school, while the other 3 were upper secondary schools. The age of respondents varied between 15 and 18 years. Answers were anonymous, so no possibility to analyse data by sex and to conduct more advanced statistical calculations (e.g. comparing answers of boys vs. girls).

The number of answers per school was as following: 30 answers from school 1 ( $n_1 = 30$ ); 17 answers from school 2 ( $n_2 = 17$ ); 37 answers from school 3 ( $n_3 = 37$ ); 44 answers from school 4 ( $n_4 = 44$ ). Unfortunately, there is no way to calculate the number of answers as a percentage of the total number of pupils. According to the results given by Finnish Amnesty, 40 schools took part in the campaign. But some schools had only one

class participating in the campaign, while some had several. Thus, there is no exact total number of the pupils. Although there is available total number of sent letters, cards and solidarity messages (total = 1175), there is no way to know how many of the pupils had decided not to send their letters (letter writing was obligatory, but actually sending them was voluntarily). Therefore, it is not possible to estimate the figure of the total amount of pupils. Still, I feel confident that the sample is representative and 128 answers is enough for this type of study and especially because the respondents are such a homogenous group.

Teachers' questionnaire was an electronic version and it was sent about a month after the campaign ended to all teachers involved in it. Nineteen teachers answered it, which is almost 50% response rate from the 40 schools participating in the campaign. I analysed the answers of only 3 of the open-ended questions, which were relevant to the goal of my study. The findings from them are a source of triangulation for the results from the pupils' survey.

## 5.2 Results and Findings

For generating meaning when analysing the data from the surveys, and later in the discussion, I used the tactics described by Miles and Huberman (1994, cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 470):

- counting frequencies of occurrence (of ideas, themes, words);
- noting patterns and themes;
- identifying relations between variables;
- trying to make good sense of data while using informed intuition to reach a conclusion.

This progression is a useful way of moving from specific to the general in data analysis. In the process I also used enumeration: the counting of categories and frequencies of codes, units of analysis, terms, words or ideas (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 474). This helped the recording and the statistical analysis of the frequencies of categories.

### 5.2.1 Pupils' Survey

I chose 3 questions to analyse from the structured part of the questionnaire relating to the interest of human rights, willingness to participate in the same campaign next year and finally, readiness to participate in human rights activism at school. In addition to that, I analysed all 5 open-ended questions which were asking the pupils to whom they decided to write a letter and why, what was interesting during the lesson and what was not, and finally what new they have learned. The full questionnaire is not published in this thesis because it is an intellectual property of Finnish Amnesty.

First analysed structured question asks pupils if the lesson had increased their interest in human rights. This question is important to evaluate because interest in a subject could indicate a willingness and motivation to learn more which can be interpreted as a goal for self-improvement and gaining knowledge. This tendency of obtaining knowledge and learning was observed in previous studies and was one of the indicators of empowerment (Barry and Sidaway, 1999; Frans, 1993; Levin, 1996; Zimmermann, 1996). For the bigger part of participants, the lesson has increased their interest in human rights issues (see Table 4). Almost half of the total respondents have agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 4. Question: "The lesson increased my interest in human rights"

| Scale 1-5                | School 1<br>(n1=30) | School 2<br>(n2=17) | School 3<br>(n3=37) | School 4<br>(n4=44) | Total<br>(N=128) |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1 = strongly disagree    | 3%                  | 12%                 | 11%                 | 6%                  | <b>8%</b>        |
| 2 = disagree             | 3%                  | 6%                  | 11%                 | 14%                 | <b>9%</b>        |
| 3 = agree to some extent | 27%                 | 41%                 | 32%                 | 36%                 | <b>34%</b>       |
| 4 = agree                | 37%                 | 29%                 | 22%                 | 30%                 | <b>29%</b>       |
| 5 = strongly agree       | 27%                 | 12%                 | 24%                 | 14%                 | <b>20%</b>       |

Next question for analysis was related to the willingness of pupils to participate in the campaign next year. This was relevant to analyse as it shows future intent to help and act in similar human rights action. The willingness to get involved again can be interpreted as result of the empowerment process, and as showed in the theoretical analysis

acting is also an outcome of empowerment (Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2005; Fetterman, 1996; Parsons, 1999). Clearly the results showed that the majority of the pupils want to participate again in a letter-writing marathon (see Table 5).

Table 5. Question: "I would like to participate in the letter writing marathon also next year"

| Scale 1-5                | School 1<br>(n1=30) | School 2<br>(n2=17) | School 3<br>(n3=37) | School 4<br>(n4=44) | Total<br>(N=128) |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1 = strongly disagree    | 10%                 | 6%                  | 16%                 | 11%                 | <b>12%</b>       |
| 2 = disagree             | 17%                 | 29%                 | 16%                 | 9%                  | <b>16%</b>       |
| 3 = agree to some extent | 33%                 | 29%                 | 35%                 | 27%                 | <b>31%</b>       |
| 4 = agree                | 23%                 | 12%                 | 19%                 | 32%                 | <b>23%</b>       |
| 5 = strongly agree       | 17%                 | 24%                 | 14%                 | 21%                 | <b>18%</b>       |

The question asking about future interest to participate in human rights activities can be regarded as referring to the political or social change that is a goal of empowerment process. Pupils who are willing to become human rights activists in their surroundings and everyday life would be a strong proof that empowerment as process has been completed and they have become empowered young people (Adams, 2008; Amnesty International 2011 and 2015a; Parsons, 1999).

Table 6. Question: "Would you be interested being active in human rights work at your school?"

| Answer:      | School 1<br>(n1=30) | School 2<br>(n2=17) | School 3<br>(n3=37) | School 4<br>(n4=44) | Total<br>(N=128) |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| "No"         | 13%                 | 29%                 | 38%                 | 39%                 | <b>31%</b>       |
| "Yes"        | 17%                 | 18%                 | 5%                  | 9%                  | <b>11%</b>       |
| "May be"     | 33%                 | 47%                 | 49%                 | 41%                 | <b>42%</b>       |
| Not answered | 37%                 | 6%                  | 8%                  | 11%                 | <b>16%</b>       |

It seemed that most of the pupils were hesitating to be active in human rights activities at school – majority answered with “may be”. Also there were more negative responses than positive ones (see Table 6). However, there was one exception – at school 1 most of the respondents did not answer that question at all, while the ones who answered were more positive, than negative. One explanation for this discrepancy could be that this question was on the other side of the paper sheet, and it might have been overlooked (in those cases, there were no answers to any of the questions on the other side of the paper).

However, it must be taken into consideration that the questionnaire was given to the pupils for answering in the end of the lesson. It is very probable that the pupils would not have the time to reflect on their wishes for future involvement in human rights activism. Therefore, the results of this question should be considered cautiously and without making general conclusions on that topic.

Further in the analysis, clear messages relating to empowerment were found in the answers of the open-ended questions. Pupils felt that the topics are important and they had learned how they could act to protect human rights. Especially in the responses of School 4 (obviously participated in the campaign last year), for students was important that their actions had helped last year’s victims and that this year they are willing to help again.

*“The subject is really important”*

*“I myself can influence!”*

*“...that I can help”*

*“...that can help human rights in this way”*

*“...that I can make difference in such matters”*

*“I learned how I can make a difference with the help from Amnesty”*

*“...that we can actually learn to influence”*

*“...it was great to hear that last year’s letters had helped”*

*“...that these letters had also last time brought justice to those [people]”*

“Human rights”, “Amnesty”, and “writing letters” were the dominant answers of “What were the new things you learned during the lesson?”. About 18% stated that they have learned about human rights and 9% learned about Amnesty. However, approximately 8% declared they did not learn anything new, or “nothing was interesting”.

The pupils' questionnaire had 5 open-ended questions asking about the campaign, what was interesting, what was not, what new was learnt, etc. I was able to code the answers of those questions into following four categories:

1. **“Knowledge”** = all answers related to acquiring knowledge and learning new things (about human rights, Amnesty, how to write letters, new English words, etc.);
2. **“Empathy”** = all answers expressing feelings that were provoked by the campaign;
3. **“Action”** = all answers referring to willing to help and to act;
4. **“Change”** = all answers hinting that one can make a difference, can influence and affect with the help of writing letters for human rights.

I counted the categories per answer, not how many times the one and the same category was mentioned in one answer. In other words, if a pupil has mentioned “knowledge” category in several answers I counted “knowledge” only once for this respondent. But if the pupil had also “empathic” and “action” category messages, I counted all three. Therefore, the numbers are absolute raw number of occurrence (not a percentage).

Table 7. Number of Categories in Pupils' Answers

| Category  | School 1<br>(n1=30) | School 2<br>(n2=17) | School 3<br>(n3=37) | School 4<br>(n4=44) | <b>Total<br/>(N=128)</b> |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Knowledge | 12                  | 11                  | 26                  | 20                  | <b>69</b>                |
| Empathy   | 15                  | 10                  | 19                  | 30                  | <b>74</b>                |
| Action    | 0                   | 2                   | 3                   | 7                   | <b>12</b>                |
| Change    | 0                   | 4                   | 6                   | 11                  | <b>21</b>                |

Finally, I would like to mention that there were many empty answers (some of the questions were answered, some not, or not at all answering the open-ended questions). I did not count the empty answers and will not speculate what not answering means.

### 5.2.2 Teachers' Survey

While analysing the answers from the teachers' survey I focused on only three questions which were relevant to the task of finding evidence of empowerment of pupils after the letter writing campaign. First question that I analysed was: "Did the pupils get more interested in human rights issues after the letter writing marathon?". Majority of teachers answered positively and confirmed that the topics of the campaign have raised discussions. In 3 answers was noted that pupils had come to the conclusion: "*how good are things here [in Finland]*" (Answer 2). One teacher mentioned that after the campaign students had been more interested in the news and another was giving example of a discussion relating to a certain Member of Parliament who had made critical comments on human rights issues. Pupils were also interested in the results of their letters, i.e. asking if their letters will make a difference in the people's lives. Few teachers answered that they do not know or they have not noticed change. Some commented that this would make them think how to continue the teaching of human rights in the long run.

Another productive question for analysis was: "How the letter writing marathon has affected your pupils? Do you think it had touched them?". All teachers, but 1, gave positive answers – the campaign had touched the children. Pupils had shared that they had been thinking about the educational materials they discussed during the lesson and "*how unfair the world is*" (Answer 1). For some it had been quite tough to listen to Costas' story and the forced marriages in Burkina Faso. "*It was eye-opening [experience]*" (Answer 9). and "*...the letter writing campaign touched them and made them think still at home*" (Answer 10). The lesson had a long-lasting effect on the pupils, they had continued reflecting on the human rights violations. It is obvious that they had also felt empathy towards the "faces" of the campaign (Costas and Maria). Very direct reference to pupils' empowerment were following statements: "*letter writing marathon helped students realised that even their actions are important to human rights issues*" (Answer 5) and "*pupils have told they liked the idea, that they got something concrete to do to improve things*" (Answer 11).

Finally, the question asking: "Did the pupils feel they could promote individual human rights through the campaign?" was a direct reference to empowerment of pupils. Majority of the answers to this question were short but quite definite: "*So I understood*" (Answer 3), "*I think so*" (Answer 11), "I believe so" (Answers 7,9,19), "*At least they hope so*" (An-



swer 15), “*For sure*” (Answer 2), “*Yes!*” (Answers 4,5,13,14,16,17). Few teachers mentioned how important was for pupils to see that their letters and messages will be forwarded: “*They [pupils] felt great that the letters actually were sent forward*” (Answer 19); “*They [pupils] were impressed when they saw the return envelope: the letters are really being sent on their way*” (Answer 17). The feeling of being useful and that your actions are promoting justice is powerful indicator of empowerment: “*The majority seemed to feel that the campaign and the writing of letters is indeed useful*” (Answer 10). And finally, a statement about pupils’ belief that their joint effort will have an impact: “*Yes, among other reasons, due to the fact that the letters were addressed to a real Minister of Justice! The pupils were realists: they knew, that not all letters would be read, but they believe in the force of the group*” (Answer 13).

### 5.3 Discussion

While conducting the data analysis a framework of empowerment started to shape up (Fig. 4). Not surprisingly, elements found in the Kirkpatrick’s evaluation model and the Dimension of Change Model were also emerging in this proposed model of pupils’ empowerment.

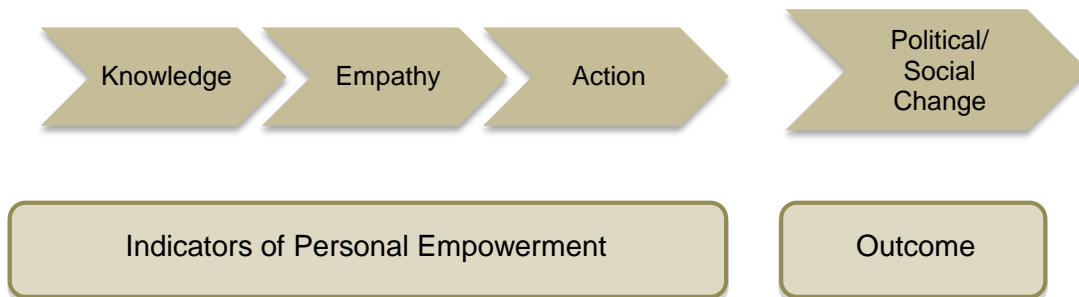


Figure 4. A Proposed Framework of Empowerment of Pupils Participating in “Write for Rights” campaign in 2015

It seems pupils were going through several steps of personal empowerment: acquiring knowledge, feeling empathy towards Costas and Maria, and as a result taking action – writing a letter or a solidarity message. The outcome of the letter writing marathon and ultimately the personal empowerment of the pupils is a more distant political and/or social

change; an outcome that is suggested to happen in the future. The framework is presented visually as a continuous line of personal empowerment with steps following one after the other, while the outcome is presented separated, a bit shifted in space from the main line to represent the distance in time of occurrence.

The results suggested that the process of personal empowerment starts with acquiring knowledge. In this case the pupils were learning about human rights and examples of their violations, about Amnesty International work and ways of protecting and promoting human rights, but also how to write an official letter and new English vocabulary. In addition to learning, pupils also showed processing the information further with regard to the human rights' situation in their home country. Critical thinking and assessing of situation are indicators of empowering behaviour.

According to previous studies on empowerment and the literature review, I had to look for evidence of personal empowerment, which includes developing confidence and boosting self-esteem in order for young people to exercise power. I could not find references to those indicators in the pupils' answers; instead there were plenty of messages referring to empathy felt towards the "faces" of the campaign – Costas and Maria. It could be suggested that this result is specific to the type of study - empowerment of young people. Probably, in cases of empowerment of oppressed people, developing confidence and boosting self-esteem would be crucial objectives of the empowerment process.

The next step follows the feeling of empathy towards victims of human rights violations and resulted into taking action. Certainly Amnesty's campaign is organised in such way (the participatory learning method) that it presents an immediate possibility to take action and write a letter or a solidarity message. Therefore, it is a bit speculative to conclude that the knowledge and the empathy were the preconditions of this action. On the other hand, as the campaign was voluntary and the pupils could chose to forward the letters and 1175 did it, suggests that they acted after acquiring the knowledge and feeling the wish to help.

The final step is the outcome of the personal empowerment and the campaign as a whole. This seems to be the most challenging part to discuss as it consists of too many speculative parts. On one hand, the outcome of the action of pupils is desirable change in political and/or social circumstances in faraway countries - Greece and Burkina Faso. This change will happen (if at all) in a distant future. There is no possibility at this point

of writing to guess would there be a positive outcome. However, there is historical evidence that these types of Amnesty's campaigns have been successful and the participants learning about the positive results had felt confident that their action brought the change. In our case there was a strong message from the pupils participated in the campaign the year before, that they are willing again to write letters of support as they had learnt that their efforts had had an impact.

#### 5.4 Limitations of the Study

Naturally, the proposed model of empowerment is a simplified, very sketchy one-dimensional framework. In the chapter on assessing and measuring empowerment was presented an example of a study where 34-items questionnaire was used and the model consisted of 3 sub-categories and 17 categories of empowerment outcomes. Therefore, my proposal of a framework is a simple one and can be regarded only as a basis for development a more comprehensive measuring instrument.

Empowerment was described as multidimensional, very personal and unique experience and any generalisations of empowerment process should be considered with reservations. This is a natural limitation of that type of assessment study. Another weakness is the problem of defining how many pupils exactly were empowered. Analysing the teacher's answers, as witnesses of the process, did indeed confirm the presumption that pupils have been empowered by participating in Amnesty's letter writing campaign. However, it is difficult to confirm that all pupils were empowered and finally very difficult to count or even estimate a number.

#### 5.5 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are important concepts defining the quality of a given study. A study is considered reliable if the results are consistent over time, are correctly representing the total population and can be reproduced by other researchers using similar methodology. Validity on the other hand is more concerned about how truthful a research is and did it truly measured what was intended to measure. Those definitions are traditional ways of explaining reliability and validity in quantitative research. As qualitative research is more heavily dependable on researchers' own interpretations of data, on her

abilities and efforts, the quality of a study is considered by slightly different terms. Credibility, transferability and trustworthiness are essential criteria for quality in qualitative paradigms. (Golafshani, 2003, pp. 598-601.)

The design of this thesis had to go through reconstructing when it became evident that a focus group interview is not possible to organise. While deciding on using the answers from the feedback surveys I carefully read the questions and concluded that there is enough data to analyse for the purposes of this thesis. Although I did not prepare pupils' questionnaire, the questions I analysed were pretty much the same as the ones I had in mind to ask in the focus group interview. Finally, I tried to strengthen data validity of the study with the help of data triangulation method as I analysed teachers' answers as well. Thus, I believe the requirements for validity are sufficient.

I presented the answers of pupils' survey per school, as well as a total number, which I hope improves the reliability of the results. Showing results per school was a good way to look for similar trends in answering the questions. However, there were some discrepancies in the results. For instance, the answers from one school did not follow the general trend of answers to the other schools. The answers of school 4 were a bit different from the answers of the other schools. The reason for that particular inconsistency was a very logical one. Those pupils had participated in Amnesty's letter writing marathon also the previous year and naturally they had a slightly different experience from the pupils who are taking part for the first time. So, any new research on the same topic and with the same target group might show slightly different results as the starting point of the studies will be different.

## 5.6 Ethical Considerations

The anonymity of the respondents has been preserved as no names of schools or cities are mentioned in the analysis of data. The schools were numbered randomly from 1 to 4. In similar manner, the answers from the teachers' survey were numbered from 1 to 19, without any possibility to identify the respondents.

This thesis was prepared in collaboration with the Finnish Section of Amnesty International, which gave consent for both surveys to be studied. The contact person in the partner organisation has approved the final version of this thesis. However, some of the information is regarded as confidential and has not been discussed in this study. Also

the questionnaires are not available for publication and therefore not included as appendices.

The author of this thesis bears responsibility of her findings and conclusions and they should not be regarded as opinions of Amnesty International (Finnish Section or Headquarters). However, Amnesty has full rights to use this work and its findings in any form or way they choose to.

## 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions of this thesis are divided to specific ones related to Amnesty's work and to some general ones addressed to Bachelors of Social Services. But first will start with recommendation of further research as the proposed model is only suggestive and needs further and more comprehensive investigation.

### 6.1 Further Research

It was not possible to have a focus group interview while conducting this study, but as interview questions were developed, Finnish Amnesty can use them in the evaluation process of their next campaigns. Interviewing is a qualitative method, which can collect in-depth understanding on a phenomenon. A good interviewer can create a special kind of atmosphere of trust during which she can ask open-ended questions and encourage interviewees to share their unique perspectives on the issues at hand, to listen attentively for special language and other clues that disclose deeper meaning to the researched questions (Hatch 2002, p. 23).

Furthermore, focus group interviewing is particularly suitable data gathering method for this type of study as it can obtain opinions on the studied subject from a bigger amount of participants who have similar characteristics and have shared experiences. Focus groups need to have a moderator, rather than an interviewer, who is able to facilitate and direct the discussion. However, Krueger (1994, cited in Hatch 2002, p. 24) observes that group discussion provides a different kind of information than can be generated from individual interviews and/or observations. The focus is on the topic, and fundamental data are transcripts of group discussion around the topic.

## 6.2 Conclusions Concerning Amnesty's Campaign

The proposed framework of assessment pupils' empowerment can be beneficial for future campaigns. In fact, the results showed that pupils who had already participated in a letter writing marathon showed clear indications of empowerment, especially after learning about the positive effect their letters had from previous year campaign. Giving feedback to the schools and updating on the situation of the people from the campaign (e.g. Costas and Maria from 2015 campaign) would motivate pupils to participate again and to spread the word among friends and family.

Also, learning that their actions had positive outcomes might encourage pupils to participate in other activities protecting human rights. Indeed the pupils' educational pack consists a list of activities for future HR activism but there could be a further research on how young people can get involved. A focus group interview or other qualitative method (e.g. writing an essay) can help gather ideas from the pupils on ways they would like to become active in protecting human rights. There are so many new ways of interactions, through social media channels and new smart phones applications that young people might come up with new initiatives to protect victims of human rights violations. Finally, writing an essay on the topic could also provoke a self-reflection, which is a requirement of the empowerment process. Teachers can be encouraged to include self-reflection methods as part of long-term teaching on human rights issues.

## 6.3 Conclusions for Social Pedagogues

In general, social pedagogues should be well acquainted with human rights as they often find themselves dealing with issues of injustice, oppression and the violation of human rights. Also, social pedagogues can benefit from this thesis in using the framework for assessment of empowerment with similar groups of service users. Worth noting is how this framework crystallised out of the theoretical background on indicators of empowerment used in previous studies (in different areas of practice) and the results analysed with the available data. This method of assessment can be used in other practices where empowerment of clients is important and one looks for evidence of it.

In conclusion, on a personal note, studying empowerment as a process has been a fascinating experience. The phenomenon of empowering is complex, multidimensional and a very personal experience. At some points, the complexity of the task of measuring

empowerment felt overwhelming. Even though, the original idea of conducting a focus group interview did not materialise, the aims of this thesis were met by analysing the already available data. Being flexible and adjusting the project according to the existing circumstances has been an enriching personal learning experience.

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