

An Education on the Rights of the Child and Recommendations to Improve them

McLaughlin (2002) wrote that the famous philosopher Mikhail Bakunin believed that children do not constitute anyone's property: they are neither the property of their parents nor even of society. They belong only to their own future freedom. It could be interrupted that what Bakunin meant by this would be that a child experienced a childhood where the opportunities they had were only in their best interests, they had the freedom to express themselves in a way that is best suited for them and through security they were given the best chance to develop to their own potential including growing up with the freedom of being whatever they wanted to be to be however for some children this is not always the case (Sheehan, Rhoades, Stanley, 2012, p.24). In the following essay it will discuss more about the children who were unable to grow through their childhood and reach their full potential from their rights and needs not being met, the essay will include a background on what can cause their needs not being met with a description of what adverse childhood experiences also play on this. Later in the essay there will be a brief history of the legislations that have been put into the place overtime to try to ensure a child's rights are met with the end section suggesting recommendations on how furthering someone's education on a child's right could make the difference in them being met.

For a child to have their needs met is one of the most basic things that they could be given, meeting a Child's needs could be difference in them growing up to an adult who thrives or an adult who struggles through. Despite the legislations that are in place to ensure their needs are met this is not always the case, when their needs are not met this could mean many things such as from a physical aspect the child may not get fed, clothed or have shelter above their head. Emotionally the child does not receive the stimulation to understand different emotions, express their own emotions and suffer through being ignored or humiliated instead. Medically the child does not get taken to the doctor when they are ill or the dentist for a basic check-up and intellectually, they do not receive the free education they are entitled to (NSPCC, 2022).

Another measurement of looking at if a child's rights have been met is through looking at if that child has suffered with adverse childhood experiences. A childhood is from birth to the age of 17, however throughout those years there is a chance that adverse childhood experiences (ACES) took place meaning instead of a childhood filled with happiness, laughter or safety a single or multiple experiences took place which could have been traumatic, dangerous, harmful or inappropriate (Boullier, Blair, 2018, p.132). The experiences could have come in many forms from sexual, physical or emotional abuse, living with a parent who may drink or take drugs or even suffering from the death of a parent or guardian however these experiences are the cause of suffering a childhood with adverse experiences with the ability of affecting future development (NHS, 2022).

The idea of how ACES can affect future development is that when these experiences were suffered the affected individual dealt with toxic stress which had a knock-on effect when the development of their mental, intellectual, physical and emotional growth meaning that they did not develop the best they could have. The individual when growing up and moving into adulthood may suffer with creating emotional and professional relationships, may suffer from anxiety, depression or become the victim again of abuse from being unable to identify certain risk factors an abusive individual holds. The victim of ACES may also be more likely to suffer from health problems such as heart disease or cancer from being unable to correctly care for themselves, these adults who have suffered a traumatic childhood may even follow in the footsteps of their childhood and take up addictions like drink and drugs also (Asmundson, Afifi, 2019, p.17).

The explanation of why a childhood is filled with adverse experiences or the unfulfillment of needs is simple and may argue they don't come from a good home however within that there are many factors that play out and cause an unhappy home for the child. Described by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2021) there are many factors including family factors where someone within the household is unable to cope with the stress of rising a child, single parents, low income within the household and families who struggling with communication which later turns in conflict between members. Other factors can include living in areas with high crime rates, high rates of poverty and limited education opportunities. It could also mean that the idea of the family model is not met, where through a structured and functioning family certain behaviours are taught, experiences are learnt, advice is given and certain endearment is not felt and fulfils the needs of a child to navigate through the different stages of childhood (Kaslow, Wood, Loundy, 1998, p. 174)

Throughout history the development of the rights of the child has always been seen as a social phenomenon in the sense that less than 100 years children didn't have any rights, or it wasn't seen as a priority to meet their needs until in 1924 the draft of the rights of the child were made highlighting the importance of a child's development, right to be safe and away from exploitation and the child's upbringing is a duty to the parents. When the draft was created this was a huge development child neglected has dated back to 1880 and further, the draft was a huge start in getting parents, care givers and others in taking children's rights and needs seriously (Alanen, 2009, p.8). Within the last one hundred years there has been over 54 items which include laws, policies and regulations have been set when it comes to the rights of the child to try and protect a child in all areas including at home, in school, when being watched by guardian's and having their needs met to show how they are individuals and not just property of their parents. When the first draft of the rights of the child drafted in 1924 that was the start the world needed to see when it came to protecting children especially within the United Kingdom (UNICEF, 2022).

One of the most influential acts that was set was that of the children act set in 1946 and reformed many times including in 1975, 1989 and last in 2004. The reason for the act is for when abuse or neglect has been identified within the home of the child and local authorities or social services provide a safe place for that child to be moved to, any decision made surrounded the care of the child is within its best interests, any legal processes such as court hearings are regarding with the best intentions for the child and any outcome is only for what is best for the child (Cleaver, Unell, Aldgate, 2011. P.8)

Additional acts include the United Nations convention on the rights of the child 1990 which set the goal of every child to have the opportunity to fulfil their potential through growth, surviving and participation (NSPCC, 2021). Children and Families act 2014 which ensures plans are put into place for vulnerable children including those with additional needs including those who are adopted or in care, so their plans include for consideration when it comes to providing for their health and education (GOV. UK, 2014). Another act is the keeping children safe in education act 2019 which applies to different education settings such as schools and colleges and breaks down into different sections which all ensure the safety of a child in education is the main priority through safeguarding including physically safeguarding a child, information and data, hiring the correct individuals through DBS checks, taking any allegation seriously which includes abuse and sexual harassment (GOV.UK, 2021).

One of the most recent acts that has been set to protect a child is one closer to home and within Wales which is the protection against physical punishment or as of March 2022 will be known as the

no smacking ban which extends to parents, guardians or educators and includes the banning of smacking, hitting or any other punishment which requires a physical touch. The hope of the act is to reduce abuse and assault for children which leads to the further hope of a child getting the best start in life possible (Welsh Government, 2022).

Despite the evidence that the legislations set try their best to keep up to date when setting the laws on how to protect children there are still always recommendations that can be made on how to improve them to ensure that children and their families are protected to the highest possible standard by just furthering the education individuals have on identifying abuse or neglect.

One recommendation that could be made is for the legislations to emphasise the importance that care providers play in getting a child away if they are suffering from an abuse or being neglected just by noticing being observant, notices change, not being assumptive and reporting what they are concerned about, when a practitioner who is responsible for children carries out these four steps then the likelihood of if a child is getting abused will be picked up (Virtual College, 2019). By being observant, it could mean that assessments are being carried out such as seeing if that child reaches certain milestones or how they interact with others. To notice changes means they practitioner can identify behavioural patterns such as if a child is behaving differently. When noticing these changes before reporting it is also vital that the practitioner does not make assumptions to allow their concern to be downplayed if they think it is a norm and to remain extra vigilant to what their concerns are and lately to take the step to reporting any concerns shows the practitioners ability to do what their job asks of them and protect that child that's in their care otherwise it shows that they are unable to carry out the task of safeguarding (Christian, 2020).

Another recommendation of the improvements to keep children safe within legislations if for education to get extended to others who may not on a day-to-day basis work or come across children but should have an education on how to identify if a child is being abused neglected or not having their needs met. A lot of professionals are unaware of the value their jobs if it includes an opportunity to observe children such as a police officer who may have a relationship with a school as every few months, they go into the school to do a talk with the children on stranger danger, while a police officer is learning the legislations that they will have to follow daily the opportunity should also be there to encourage the further education of other legislations that will protect more than just a certain type of individual. By furthering the education on being able to identify abuse and the rights of a child it can make a huge difference to stopping abuse or letting it carry on undetected as if one individual may identify it, another may not (GOV.UK, 2015)

A third recommendation would be to educate children on the legislations that are out there to protect them and how they can use the legislations to best protect them, this could be by educating them in schools, clubs or through the social medias they have access to provide an education on what abuse or neglect is, identify if they are a child whose rights or basic needs aren't being met and where to go in order to report this abuse. For the best prevention to happen to allow children to report their abuse they must understand that being vulnerable is okay and by reporting it that is taking the first step in stopping it. By a child to gain an education of knowing about abuse and neglect it could also give the opportunity for them to help another child who they feel maybe neglected and not aware of it (Lloyd, 2018. P.6). According to the NSPCC (2022) there is no way of ever knowing exactly how many children that are out there who face abuse, neglect or don't have their needs met, some children are happy to report it, some are happy to report it through a third party and some will never report it but providing an education to children on what their rights are,

what they are entitled to and understand if they experience it could be the opportunity to get the numbers down if more awareness is brought forward.

To conclude the essay, to ensure the rights of the child are met, their needs are fulfilled, and they are given an equal opportunity to reach their full potential it is vital that the legislations supporting the child are met, understood and implemented in any given situation including at home or at school. Despite some factors being out of control and the cause of the contribution of why a child's rights have not been met it is vital that in any given situation the best interests of the child come first which is exactly the reasons why certain legislations have been created and that individuals learn from them.

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