

# **Integrating Child Rights into Pre-service Teacher Education Programme – A case of a Social-Emotional Learning Course**

**Mariana Khundzakishvili**

**Caucasus University, Georgia, [mkhundzakishvili@cu.edu.ge](mailto:mkhundzakishvili@cu.edu.ge)**

Presentation language: English

Promoting child rights through university academic programmes is both important and entirely feasible. Child rights can be integrated into almost every discipline in various formats, whether it is a cross-curricular theme, a specific course, a scientific research activity, or a university-organized public event (Council of Europe, OSCE/ODIHR, UNESCO, & OHCHR, 2009).

The below abstract represents a Child Rights incorporation example into the curriculum of Caucasus Education School at Caucasus University, Tbilisi, Georgia. Within the Fall semester of the 2024-2025 academic year, in collaboration with the Black Sea-Baltic Alliance - Georgia, the university added a new, one-semester elective course “Social-Emotional Learning” to the BA-level pre-service teacher preparation programme.

In order for children to protect the rights of their own and of others’, it is important that they have developed social-emotional skills (UNICEF, 2019; the Advocates for Human Rights, 2013) and have access to a socio-emotionally enabling and empowering environment (Affolter, 2005). Teachers play a significant role in creating such an environment in schools (Lundy & Brown, 2020).

Lecturers’ reflection on the above-mentioned course and students’ Focus Group Discussion (FGD) results demonstrate raised mental health literacy, improved social-emotional skills, in-depth understanding of and readiness to advocate for human/child rights among students.

Building on this experience, we are now expanding the course into a two-semester compulsory course starting from 2025-2026 academic year. The first semester will again target the development of the same competences in students as in the pilot course, while the second semester will prepare them to apply these competencies in their practice, equipping them with tools and strategies to support children’s social-emotional development in accordance with rights-based approach to education.

Key components of the revised course, assessment approaches and students’ FGD results will be highlighted at the conference, emphasizing how to promote a rights-based approach to education among future teachers.

## **References:**

Affolter, F. W. (2005). Socio-emotional enablement and the Convention of the Rights of the Child. *The International Journal of Children’s Rights*, 13(3), 379–397.

Council of Europe, OSCE/ODIHR, UNESCO, & OHCHR. (2009). *Human rights education in the school systems of Europe, Central Asia and North America: A compendium of good practice* (HR/PUB/09/3). OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/1/39006.pdf>

Lundy, L., & Brown, A. (2020). Revisiting the three Rs in order to realize children's educational rights: Relationships, resources, and redress. In J. Todres & S. M. King (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of children's rights* (pp. 386–404). Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190097608.013.20>

The Advocates for Human Rights. (2013). Social emotional learning. In *Rights Sites News: Promoting human rights education in the classroom*.  
[https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Res/sel\\_newsletter.pdf](https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Res/sel_newsletter.pdf)

UNICEF. (2019, July). *Comprehensive life skills framework: Rights-based and life-cycle approach to building skills*. United Nations Children's Fund. <https://www.unicef.org/india/media/2571/file/Comprehensive-lifeskills-framework.pdf>

## Short CV

**Mariana Khundzakishvili** is a psychologist, lecturer, and consultant in the fields of psychology and education.

Committed to supporting the socio-emotional development, psychological well-being, and educational outcomes of the most vulnerable children, she has contributed to reforms aimed at advancing psychosocial support systems in educational settings.

She is dedicated to promoting inclusive education, child rights, and teacher professional development through her work with international organizations, universities, and educational institutions in Georgia.