

Advancing Child Rights through Higher Education: A Rights-Based Institutional Model

Varunanvelu VIJAYA SURESHVELU^a, Rangasami PERIYAN^b, Gayatri MENON^c

^aAmrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, India, varunanvelu@dl.amrita.edu

^bAmrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, India, p_rangasami@cb.amrita.edu

^cUniversity of Delhi, India, gayathrimenon08@gmail.com

Abstract

The role of academia in advancing child rights is pivotal in shaping responsive, rights-based professionals and informed citizens. This paper explores effective strategies for integrating child rights into higher education curricula, drawing on the experience of Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, which has pioneered specialized education and institutional mechanisms in child protection. Through the establishment of a dedicated Center for Child Protection, the university has fostered cross-sectoral collaborations with local, state, and central government departments, anchoring academic work in real-world impact.

The paper presents a dual model of integration: a modular approach through specialized courses on child rights and child protection, and a cross-cutting approach that embeds child rights principles across disciplines such as law, social work, public health, project management and education. Case studies from Amrita's curriculum design, student engagement, and field-based projects will illustrate how academic institutions can play a transformative role in mainstreaming child rights discourse.

Further, the paper highlights the significance of faculty capacity building through professional development programs and partnerships with child protection stakeholders. These efforts have created a robust ecosystem where research, teaching, and community engagement converge to uphold the rights of children.

This case study contributes to the growing discourse on the institutionalization of child rights education in academia and provides actionable insights for universities seeking to integrate a rights-based approach in their curricula. It advocates for academia not only as a site of knowledge production but also as an active participant in the protection and promotion of child rights.

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Short CVs

V.S.Varunanvelu - Mr. Varunanvelu V.S is Assistant Professor (Sr. Gr.) at the School of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, India. With over nine years of experience in the development sector, he has worked extensively on field initiatives related to adolescent empowerment, child-friendly policing, child marriage prevention, and child protection system strengthening. He has collaborated with UNICEF and the Government of India and various state governments, combining research with practice in child rights and protection.

Gayatri Menon – Ms. Gayatri Menon is a development professional with 10 years of experience in child protection, gender, and community development. She has worked on issues such as child labour, child marriage, child beggary, and child sexual abuse with reputed NGOs and government agencies. Her field experience includes handling cases of violence against women and children. She has also led evaluation studies on Dalit rights, elderly care, education, and child rights. She is currently pursuing her PhD on child marriage.