

Implementation of Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in Swedish Public Libraries

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Project description

With the aim to contribute to a deeper and more thorough understanding of implementation of Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in Swedish public libraries, this study examined implementation of Article 31 of the UNCRC in Swedish public libraries using the Street-level bureaucracy approach and focusing on how three specific factors; **discretion**, **accountability** and **resources** affect implementation. Research data was collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews with professionally trained librarians working in six Swedish public libraries and analyses of selected documents concerning the regulation of their activities.

The analysis showed that the libraries involved in the study made great effort to implement the rights contained in Article 31 of the UNCRC, and that two aspects of the article, namely **the right of the child to participate freely in cultural life and the arts** and **the encouragement of the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity**, were particularly apparent in the libraries' day-to-day activities.

Furthermore the analysis showed that each of the three chosen factors, discretion, accountability and resources, had specific effects on implementation of the rights contained in Article 31 of the UNCRC in the libraries involved in the study. Firstly, the analysis showed that **discretion** was a factor that enabled implementation of these rights in all of the libraries involved in the study, as the librarians' discretion, enabled them to fine-tune the libraries' activities relating to these rights to the wants and needs of the children who used the libraries and of their local communities.

Secondly, the analysis showed that **accountability**, i.e. the librarians' liability towards government-policy makers, on the one hand, and the libraries' users, on the other hand, was a factor that mainly enabled implementation of the rights contained in Article 31 of the UNCRC in the libraries involved in the study. A majority of the study's informants argued that their sense of liability inspired them to want to "do a good job" and reminded them of the imperative role libraries have in society.



(Relatively high levels of) Discretion enabled the librarians involved in the study to fine-tune the libraries' activities relating to Article 31 of the UNCRC to the wants and needs of the children who visited/used the libraries and of their local communities.



The analysis showed that the libraries involved in the study provided calm areas for rest and leisure activities, play and a wide range of cultural and artistic activities for children of all ages, such as story time sessions, sing-alongs etc. Furthermore the study showed that the libraries were working to ensure that their collections, programs and activities were available to all children.

Thirdly, the analysis showed that **resources**, operationalized as the following proxies:

- economy (i.e. monetary resources),
 - time (i.e. working hours),
 - collections, programs and activities,
 - facilities,
 - collaborations,
 - (theoretical and practical) knowledge and;
 - will (i.e. resolve to implement the rights contained in Article 31 of the UNCRC),
- affected implementation either positively or negatively depending on availability in the libraries involved in the study. Several of the study's informants argued that they had adequate resources for implementing the rights contained in Article 31 of the UNCRC, while some informants argued that they did not have sufficient resources to do so.

