

Foreword

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The Human Rights Centre at Queen's University Belfast celebrated its 25th anniversary during 2015–2016. Throughout its history the Centre has sought to enhance the quality of debate around human rights issues, whether local, national or international. It has organised innumerable conferences, seminars and guest talks. It has facilitated various research projects and training initiatives. And it has been centrally involved in the delivery of Masters programmes – first the LLM in Human Rights Law and then the LLM in Human Rights and Criminal Justice. The Centre is proud of the role it has played in attracting top-notch staff and graduate students to the university and has plans to develop that role still further in the coming years.

As an additional vehicle for publicising the work of the Centre, an agreement was reached with the Editorial Board of the *Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly* for the production of a Special Issue of the journal focusing on a particular human right. We were privileged to be appointed as joint editors of the Special Issue and decided to choose the right to education as the focal point for discussion. We felt it would allow for a mixture of articles highlighting the importance of the right internationally as well as its salience within Northern Ireland. After a call for papers, we were pleased to select the four articles that follow, which we have supplemented with our own piece advocating a much broader approach to the protection of children's right to be educated in a manner which empowers them to think and act as global citizens – their right to education for humanity.

Foluke Ifejola Adebisi argues passionately for a reframing of the right to education within the continent of Africa. She trenchantly critiques the ways in which the colonisation of Africa has detrimentally impacted on children's education there and she points to steps that can be taken to revive the indigeneity of learning processes. Elizabeth Craig's article provides a fascinating insight into how the right to education is being protected as far as minorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) are concerned. She shows how implementation of the right has been variable but maintains that the approach being advocated by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's High Commissioner for National Minorities has the required flexibility to strike an appropriate balance between accommodationist, assimilationist and integrationist tendencies, though much more successfully in FYROM than in BiH.

The remaining two articles take a detailed look at specific issues affecting the right to education in Northern Ireland. Orla Drummond examines whether new legislation on children with special educational needs will make a real difference to the realisation of their rights. She is forced to conclude that expectations may be disappointed unless and until further improvements are made to the mechanisms in place for allowing children's views to be taken fully into account. Patricia O'Lynn's article considers the provision made in Northern Ireland for 'education other than at school'. She finds that thousands of children are being failed by the current arrangements and that fresh thinking and greater resources are required if such children are to be given better life chances.

We are very grateful to our contributors for their diligent co-operation in the production of this Special Issue. We hope the collection will help to promote reforms that will benefit future generations not just in Northern Ireland but further afield too. The Human Rights Centre at Queen's University Belfast will maintain a keen interest in the area and is open to receiving suggestions for further collaborative research.

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