University Capacity for Children’s Education to Prevent their Abuse and Exploitation

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Abstract

The paper explores the higher education institution experience activities regarding minors’ protection against abuse and exploitation within the international framework of the challenge under study. The research stands on the comparative analysis of the Lanzarote Committee documents, explored Parties’ replies to Question 2 (Education for children) of the Thematic Questionnaire and Question 8(a) (Education, awareness raising and training), first indent, of the General Overview Questionnaire. The analysis also took into account Academia’s publications on the issue under study. The Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) faculty members’ participation in the Lanzarote Committee work also contributed to the research.

The paper highlights qualitative analysis findings that cover such issues as the education contexts for preventive information delivery, their contents, tools and forms of disseminating preventive information, terminology used, parents’ engagement, situations of risks, etc. The above aspects are considered through the lenses of university engagement in the analysis.

The paper argues that the university can contribute to capacity-building measures for minors’ education to prevent their abuse and exploitation; the university capacity to perform the relevant activities rests on its multiprofiled structure, comprehensive nature, and opportunities to collaborate with various agencies and engage specialists in pedagogy, law, medicine, psychology and psychiatry, etc. The research findings reveal that the university might play a significant role in shaping information, bridging institutional responses, coordinating the legislation, government policies and the public initiatives to promote action plans towards the nation-wide and international levels to protect minors and combat against their abuse and exploitation.

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1. Introduction

The research aims to share the Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) experience regarding the issues of children’s education on their potential abuse and exploitation in the era of globalization. Since 2015, the RUDN University has been engaged in applied research in the above area, namely, exploring the international experience and the latest developments in the field. The research team engaged in identifying best practices, devising instruments for domestic policies to protect minors against sexual abuse through preventive education, etc.

The research has been conducted under the state contract № 29.129.2016 to provide research and methodology support for the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote, 25 October 2007).

The current importance of the research area relates to increasing minors’ prostitution, pornography and trafficking that become parts of global commercialization of services and entertainment industry (Kinnear 2007). Research data confirm that child’s sexual abuse is a universal challenge that requires a worldwide response (Ewing 2014, Finkelhor 2009, Stoltenborgh et al 2011, Wittier 2009).

The paper covers issues related to raising children’s awareness of potential risks of their sexual abuse and exploitation and enhancing children’s education to prevent the respective situations. The theme goes in line with the Convention goals related to children’s education regarding the potential risks of their sexual exploitation and abuse and the relevant protection means (see Article 6 of the Lanzarote Convention).

2. Research Framework

Skyrocketing globalization affects every facet of human life. Globalization influence on adults and minors combines positive and negative consequences that require evaluation on the case-to-case basis. Nevertheless, a number of international conventions have laid solid grounds to protect children against various forms of abuse and exploitation.

The Lanzarote Convention provides legal framework for children’s protection against sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, in particular (Lanzarote Convention 2007). It is obvious that both the concept of protection and the respective goals embrace various actions and measures, starting from children’s education and ending up with criminalization of sexual offences against children.

Under the Convention, the education of children (Article 6) is vital for their safety, mental and physical health. Therefore, a wide array of governmental agencies, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations (further NGOs) pursue the goal of enhancing minors’ education to prevent their sexual exploitation and abuse.

In view of the above, the research aimed to identify: (1) bodies and agencies in member states that are engaged in minors’ protection by means of preventive education (2) relevant legislation and regulations in member states (3) contexts and forms of preventive information delivery to minors, parents’ engagement in education activities, situations of risks, ICT use.

The above goals aimed to test the research hypothesis that follows:

The university can contribute to capacity-building measures for minors’ education to prevent their abuse and exploitation; the university capacity to perform the relevant activities rests on its multiprofiled structure, comprehensive nature, and opportunities to collaborate with various agencies and engage specialists in pedagogy, law, medicine, psychology and psychiatry, etc.

3. Research Methodology

The methodology stood on the comparative analysis of the Lanzarote Committee Parties replies to Question 2 (Education for children) of the Thematic Questionnaire (further TQ, see the link to the web-page with TQ replies in the references list) and Question 8(a) (Education, awareness raising and training), 1st indent, of the General Overview Questionnaire (further GOQ, see the link to the web-page with GOQ replies in the references list).

The respondents’ body included 25 member-states of the Lanzarote Committee.

The replies of the following countries were analyzed: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,
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