

BOOK REVIEW

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN RIGHTS Educational Challenges for the Future

By Paula Gerber

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A FIRST SCHOLARLY ANALYSIS OF THE UN's WORK ON HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

An appreciation by Phillip Taylor MBE and Elizabeth Taylor
of Richmond Green Chambers

Wherever you stand on the issue of human rights, for or against or in the middle, the row in the United Kingdom over the future of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the legal effect of judgments in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) will remain a little local argument when the global role of the United Nations is taken into account.

It's very understandable that some politicians have misgivings about the ECHR itself by what author, Paula Gerber, achieves here with her excellent statement on how we might prevent future human rights abuses with an examination of the UN's

human rights education (HRE) activities. So Gerber is coming to this big political controversy from a global standpoint and we feel the book makes a tremendous contribution to the continuing debate on human rights both in Europe and across the world: the key being education.

In the UK today, with substantial reductions to the legal aid budget, much of the mainstream legal thinking on the future of access to justice is centered on what is called ‘public legal education’: in other words educating the citizen about how the legal system works. It is the view of many that human rights will also fall into this category if, as is possible at some future date, there are changes to the UK’s human rights legislation.

So where better to start than the UN’s position! Gerber identifies a number of deficiencies in the UN’s HRE mission. She offers some solutions on how the UN can effectively promote HRE and increase States’ compliance with global HRE obligations.

In essence we have here with this excellent work “Understanding Human Rights” an important contribution for international lawyers partially explaining why the issues of the UK’s concerns on human rights legislation raise such emotions: the matter is and always will be an issue of international and not merely domestic law.