

Research articles

International organisations and human rights education curriculum reform

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Abstract

The United Nations (UN) and Council of Europe (CoE) have engaged in the development of a human rights education (HRE) curriculum in Turkey. The study programme for an elective high school course, *Democracy and Human Rights*, was first developed as part of the UN Decade for HRE initiative in 1999. The programme was later renewed as part of CoE's Education for Democratic Citizenship and HRE initiative in 2013. This study scrutinises the course's two programmes with a view to providing insights into the role of international agencies in HRE curriculum reforms. The introduction and development of the course—which is possibly the world's longest-lived example of HRE taught as a school subject—was a product of the efforts of the international organisations. After discussing the political-ideological influences of the factions that held power when both programmes were developed, the paper ends with suggestions to improve the effectiveness of international organisations in HRE curriculum reform.

Keywords

Human rights education, curriculum development, education reform, Council of Europe, United Nations, Turkey

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) and Council of Europe (CoE) consider education a vital mechanism to internationally promote human rights and democratic citizenship. Their role in this area became more prominent after the end of the Cold War (Osler & Starkey, 1996). With a view to strengthening universal values in their member states, these international organisations have launched educational programmes: the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (HRE) initiative (1995-2004); and the CoE's Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) (1997-2010). While the former initiative called for member states to develop action plans and set up national committees for the promotion of HRE, the latter strengthened collaboration between the CoE's educational units and member states' authorities in an attempt to promote EDC/HRE (Barrett, 2020; CoE, 2010). Having been completed in three phases, the EDC/HRE initiative developed a conceptual basis, policy instruments, and manuals for policymakers and practitioners that aim to facilitate the implementation of EDC/HRE policies (Keating, 2014). This culminated in the announcement of the Charter on EDC/HRE in 2010.

While the CoE consistently promoted the core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, it came to place a greater emphasis on the promotion of intercultural dialogue (CoE, 2008). Released in 2008, the CoE's *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* criticised old approaches to cultural diversity, such as assimilationism and multiculturalism. While assimilationism is starkly contrary to human rights principles, a multiculturalism that relies on a 'schematic conception of society' runs the risk of 'endorsing separation of the minority from the majority', namely fragmentation of a society's value basis (CoE, 2008, p. 18). In fact, essentialised, monolithic and rigid conceptualisations of cultural differences ignore the fact that 'all people draw on a range of identities' (Osler & Starkey, 2010, p. 86). Moreover, the conceptualisation of cultural differences in essentialised terms is not consistent with the reality that 'systems of symbols, concepts, beliefs, traditions, rules and ways of organising and communicating can be borrowed, adapted, shared and transposed' (Osler & Starkey, 2010, p. 88). In line with these perspectives, the White Paper suggests replacing the old approaches with an 'intercultural dialogue' which is 'an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect' (CoE, 2008, p. 10). This new approach requires educators to promote the interaction of diverse identities partly because such cultural exchange fosters the culture of human rights. This new approach is distinctly echoed in the CoE's programmes that have been initiated after 2008.

The UN and CoE still continue their efforts for the institutionalisation of HRE, but ongoing global developments, such as the rise of populist nationalism or new despotism, in Keane's (2020) words, and the increasingly aggressive policies of authoritarian states accentuate the

importance of their efforts in the field of EDC/HRE. Therefore, we need to look afresh into their past efforts with a view to drawing lessons and generating insights into how they can become more influential in promoting HRE in formal education. The case of Turkey provides us with useful data in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of UN's and CoE's efforts in the field of HRE. Firstly, as a member of both organisations, Turkey joined both initiatives, and EDC/HRE found a place in Turkey's national curriculum as an outcome of these organisations' educational initiatives. The contextual particularities of Turkey make it an interesting case for evaluating the impact of the international organisations. This is because, on the one hand, Turkey is signatory to several human rights instruments, most notably the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). On the other hand, Turkey's security-centric state tradition is characterised by a routine condemnation of almost all rights struggles as a threat to the unity of the state (Babül, 2012). Exploring the implications of the tension between a security-centric state's priorities and its willingness to participate in human rights regimes may yield useful insights for improving the impact of international organisations in HRE reforms. In other words, Turkey's contextual particularities make it a unique research object for a scholarly effort that explores the role of international organisations in HRE curriculum reform. At the same time, the contextual specificities of Turkey limit the generalisability of insights yielded by this study.

HRE in high schools in Turkey

The elective high school course *Democracy and Human Rights* was introduced in 1995 at the start of the UN Decade for HRE initiative, and its first programme was announced in 1999, after a new coalition government was formed in the wake of April 1998 general election (MoNE, 1999). The course's second programme, announced in 2013, was developed as part of a project funded by the European Union (EU), for which the CoE provided EDC/HRE expertise (CoE, 2012). The introduction and development of the first curriculum of an HRE high school course was a product of the UN Decade for HRE initiative, and the development of its latest curriculum, and possibly its survival, was a consequence of the efforts undertaken as part of CoE's EDC/HRE initiative in Turkey. The course in question has survived for almost 30 years, despite the massive ideological-political transformation of the country. It is probably now the world's longest-lived example of a taught HRE subject. Since this article aims to explore the role of international organisations in HRE curriculum reforms, it will not delve into the history of citizenship and HRE in Turkey; several previous studies have provided rich scholarship on this topic (Çayır & Gürkaynak, 2008; İnce, 2012; Sen & Starkey, 2019). Rather, I will briefly outline the parameters of the political context, and the significant milestones of the UN and CoE's involvement in HRE reform in Turkey.

Turkey's participation in the UN Decade for HRE initiative was realised in a period when the

forces of militant-secular nationalism were focused on tackling the rise of Islamic nationalism. While the political turmoil in the country initially interrupted the national efforts to comply with the initiative, the period after the overthrow of the Islamic nationalist government in 1997 saw several developments towards the implementation of the UN Decade for HRE initiative (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu & Çınar, 2003). When the country's politics were being re-designed under the tutelage of the secularist military, the High Coordination Board of Human Rights was established in 1998 to oversee human rights reforms undertaken in various policy areas, and a National Committee on the UN Decade for HRE (National Committee hereafter) was set up in 1998 (National Committee, 1999, 2001). To promote HRE, the National Committee prepared an action plan that envisaged offering HRE to almost all public officials in judiciary, security and formal education sectors, including universities. It designated the years from 1998 to 2007 as Turkey's Decade for HRE and asked the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) to develop curricula for HRE courses. While the first programme was developed when the rise of Islamic nationalism was challenging the hegemony of militant-secular nationalism, the later programme was developed when the forces of Islamic nationalism were establishing their hegemony under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (hereafter JDP) governments. These programmes provide significant documentary evidence of to the role of dominant ideologies and international agencies in HRE curriculum reform.

Influential ideologies during HRE curriculum development

Before moving into the next part of the article, a few words must be said about the dominant ideologies which prevailed when the curriculum was being developed. The first of these, militant-secular nationalism, was the official state ideology that exalted Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (hereafter Atatürk), the founder of modern-secular Turkey, and his modernisation efforts (Bora, 2003). It was sustained with the backing of the military through the suppression of all rival ethno-religious and ideological movements. The representatives of militant-secular nationalism staunchly advocated republican principles, such as laicism, and vehemently suppressed the rights struggle movements of Islamic nationalists and ethnic minorities, such as the Kurds, in the 1990s. The military-imposed measures in 1997 banned wearing headscarves in public institutions and shut down Islamic middle schools, irreparably damaging those who suffered from these draconian measures.

Islamic nationalism emerged first as a counter movement to the hard-line militant-secularist state establishment. While its political parties have been banned on several occasions, the EU integration reforms after 2001 paved the way for their coming to power (Özkırmılı, 2011). Since 2002, Erdoğan's successive JDP governments have gradually established Islamic nationalism as the new official ideology. Islamic nationalists imagine the Turkish people as a religious nation with a particular emphasis on the Ottoman past and seek ways to expand the boundaries of public policies grounded in Sunni Islamic beliefs. While the JDP was committed

to an EU membership agenda in its early years, its policies turned to authoritarianism after it consolidated power over the secular nationalist establishment. The brutal suppression of the Gezi Park protests in 2013 signifies one of the key events in the JDP's installation of authoritarian Islamic nationalism. Even though young people who participated in these protests were exercising their most fundamental human rights, their dissent was perceived by the government as a sort of civil coup and it was violently suppressed. Afterwards, several significant political events succeeded the Gezi Park protests, resulting in the establishment of a national security state (Sertdemir Özdemir & Özyürek, 2019). The number of institutions providing Sunni Islamic education has reached an all-time high, now that Erdoğan has asserted almost full control over the country (Lord, 2018).

These two dominant ideologies are the major forces that mediated, resisted, altered and metamorphosed the influence of the international organisations in the HRE course programmes. This article will comparatively analyse the two course programmes with the aim of shedding light on the role of international organizations in HRE curriculum reform and the influence of dominant ideologies in curriculum development. It will highlight the political complexities of curriculum development in Turkey by focusing on how the development of the course's programmes was linked to the shifting political landscape in the country and how it was connected to a complicated balancing act between the dominant state ideologies and external political pressures. Overall, the article will contribute to the field of curriculum studies by throwing a critical light on the relationship between state ideologies, curricula and formal education (Apple, 2014; Cardenas, 2005). Lessons from Turkey's HRE curriculum development experience may increase the effectiveness of international agencies in HRE curriculum reform around the world.

Exploring the meaning of an effective HRE curriculum

The UN and CoE endorse a broad definition of HRE as an area of education that includes all forms of activities that aim at fostering a universal culture of democracy and human rights (CoE, 2010; UN, 2011). For example, the *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training* offers a tripartite conceptualisation of HRE as education about, through and for human rights (UN, 2011). Education *about* human rights corresponds to the acquisition of basic core knowledge, education *through* human rights refers to the practice of human rights in schools, and education *for* human rights aims to engage learners in human rights advocacy campaigns and strengthen their commitment to the expansion and institutionalisation of human rights in the wider society. However, this declaration does not prescribe a HRE curriculum model, possibly because a top-down technical approach to curriculum development runs the risk of channelling the values of powerful and wealthy groups into formal education (Apple, 2014). The UN and CoE's endorsement of this broad HRE

conceptualisation may be justified on the grounds that these organisations aim to harness the potential of the whole educational process in disseminating universal values of democratic citizenship and human rights. It can also be argued that confining HRE to a curricular subject is problematic since both in-class and outside-class experiences in schools are important for effective HRE.

A UNESCO publication is critical of the provision of HRE through separate courses that are added on to already-overloaded curricula (UN, 2003). And it may be true that the banking style delivery of HRE courses without any outside-class reinforcement can be counter-productive. However, in-class activities provide the gist of learning experience in formal education. A well-developed HRE curriculum delivered through discrete courses, complemented by practical experiences outside class and school, such as opportunities for students to engage in human rights advocacy campaigns, may ensure an effective provision of HRE. In fact, when HRE is not anchored in a taught subject, it may become elusive for both practitioners and researchers. Despite this, the development of HRE as a taught course and what an ideal HRE curriculum should look like in formal education have attracted little attention. By recognising this problem, Parker (2018) has made an attempt to outline the elements of an HRE curriculum theory. His theoretical endeavour has explored the possibilities for a consensual HRE curriculum model. He has used a metaphor of the sun with its orbiting planets in outlining the key components of an HRE curriculum. He suggests that key concepts like universal respect, freedom, human rights, dissent, activism, struggle, peaceful coexistence, and justice should be recurrently taught as the core content. The peripheral content around which these core concepts would be spirally taught may include the historical development of human rights, effective campaigning/protesting strategies, rights activists, major rights documents, human rights organisations/institutions, and key rights struggles. Parker's model urges teachers to use examples of rights struggle movements from contexts familiar to students, as this will raise their awareness of global human rights discourses.

What has been conceptualised as transformative HRE by Bajaj et al. (2016) highlights the role of critical engagement with human rights issues, investigations of social justice problems and actual participation in rights advocacy activities for an effective HRE. Russell (2018) has investigated the effectiveness of an HRE course taught at 10 and 11 grades in three public high schools in New York. The course aimed to engage students with global and local rights issues, enable them to use the conceptual knowledge in making sense of rights issues in their own context, and work in rights advocacy projects. It included the basic core knowledge of human rights and principles, and examples of rights struggle and activists. Students were encouraged to draw links between the conceptual knowledge they learned in the classes and human rights issues affecting their lives. Russell (2018) found that students were successful in drawing on human rights discourses in making sense of rights violations—such as police brutality and

racial discrimination—in their own environment. Alluding to the linking of the global with the local through the concept of vernacularisation, Russell (2018) concluded that students' sense of agency and their engagement with human rights were improved after taking the course. She underlines that HRE courses can more effective when students are enabled to use global human rights discourses in critically evaluating rights issues affecting their own lives and engage in rights advocacy campaigns.

These studies, along with the CoE's and UN's policy documents (CoE, 2010, 2018; UN, 2011) and several other significant works (e.g. Bajaj et al., 2016; Parker, 2018; Russell, 2018), provide blueprints of what an effective HRE curriculum should look like in formal education. What these endeavours suggest is that an effective HRE programme should give due regard to the cognitive (knowing), affective (feeling) and practical (doing) components of HRE. It should allow learners to interpret human rights issues based on a universal human rights discourse with the goal of engaging them in real-life rights struggles. It must provide participatory and experiential opportunities in which students can think about the root causes of rights issues and realise what role they can play in eliminating the issues in question.

The five requirements of an effective HRE programme

What can be inferred from these resources is that an effective HRE programme must meet at least five requirements: an explicit recognition of human rights as the main frame of reference; a critical consideration of rights issues affecting learners' lives; real-life examples of rights struggles and activists; cultural contextualisation of universal human rights values; and opportunities for experience and participation. An HRE programme that meets these criteria can be called an issue-centric HRE. First of all, such HRE must take the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and CRC as the main frame of reference, primarily because these documents reflect the value consensus of the international community (Osler & Starkey, 2010). The cosmopolitan vision of human rights embedded in these documents offers an effective response to challenges posed by growing inequalities and polarization. It can enable young people of diverse backgrounds to develop a sense of community where they can live together as equal citizens without suppressing their diverse identities.

Secondly, issue-centric HRE must rely on pedagogical utilisation of rights issues affecting learners' lives because democracy is essentially 'the way of conducting our common affairs with reference to the values of equality, freedom and solidarity' (Biesta et al., 2014, p. xiii). It must provide students with platforms where they can conduct their 'common affairs', discuss and deliberate their common problems, learn the art of democratic conversation, go beyond imposed categories, and think deeply about socio-political problems. The focus on public issues can encourage students to think about and act on issues related to race, class, gender, culture, ethnicity, and religion on the basis of universal human rights values.

Thirdly, an issue-centric HRE programme includes real-life examples of rights struggles and activists in order to help students better contextualise the theoretical knowledge of rights and responsibilities and make them keen to contribute to the institutionalisation of human rights. As suggested by Westheimer (2019), 'thoughtful engagement with today's competing ideas' is a crucial step for educating democratic citizens (p. 12). The pedagogical use of contemporary public problems can improve students' skills to refine and improve available policy options, respect different opinions, and listen to those who disagree with them.

Fourthly, issue-centric HRE should enable learners to draw links between universal human rights values and their own local cultural beliefs and practices. Drawing on learners' cultural resources is surely vital for the successful acquisition of any type of school knowledge, but it is more crucial in the case of HRE partly because HRE aims to create transformations in the cultural resources of students. Therefore, the cultural, social, and political specificities of the context must be considered and used in support of the acquisition of human rights values so that students can identify rights issues in their contexts and play a role in eliminating such problems.

Lastly, issue-centric HRE is a practical enterprise, mainly because practice is key to achieving transformative learning *about, through* and *for* human rights (UN, 2011). Meaningful participatory and experiential opportunities can improve students' commitment to human rights values, their skills for effective campaigning/activism and their abilities to weigh up evidence, understand and respect differences and work with others in creating change in their multi-layered communities. This practical dimension is crucial, partly because mere information transmission can hardly yield transformative improvements.

Practitioners can synthesise these components differently. One way of organising a course in this way may require taking public issues and inequalities as the main organising principle. A teacher following this route may start a course by presenting a common problem and deepen conceptual learning through participatory opportunities, such as controversial issue discussion, seminars and deliberation (Parker, 2003). This may be followed by teaching about strategies for effective campaigning, namely what they can do individually and collectively for the elimination of the public problems in question. Inspiring examples of rights struggles and rights activists from familiar contexts can help students construct a stronger understanding. Collective analysis and decisions that they make can lead to concrete changes in their individual and collective lives. Students' commitments to human rights values are strengthened since the UDHR and the CRC are used as the main reference documents in every stage of this educational process.

An HRE programme that fails to meet these conditions may overemphasise official-nationalist

narratives without any concern to develop young people's rights advocacy skills, and it may promote a teacher-centric transmission of content knowledge. An ineffective HRE programme may require practitioners to teach about women's rights by celebrating the role of certain men in 'giving' women their rights and ignoring women's struggles in gaining their rights. Such a programme may urge practitioners to teach about women's rights by inviting students to answer questions like why men and women should be equal, how women gained their rights, and how men reacted to women who campaigned for their rights. Even though these questions may provide opportunities for participatory acquisition of knowledge, they do not critically consider women's rights violations familiar to students or encourage them to join in women's rights advocacy efforts.

Methods and materials

The data for this research were found in the public curriculum documents which are the study programmes of the *Democracy and Human Rights* course. The first programme of study was released in 1999, and the later one in 2013 (MoNE, 1999, 2013). A programme of study reflects system-level official expectations regarding what will be studied in the scope of a course. It represents the fundamental documentary source of the intended curriculum of a course. It spells out objectives, themes/units, student performance expectations, measurement and evaluation tools, and instructional techniques to be used in the delivery of a course. The programmes of study analysed in this study outline the essential knowledge, values, skills and understanding that are to be developed in the *Democracy and Human Rights* course.

I started to analyse the study programmes with an initial reading ('superficial examination'), then deepened my comprehension of the documents by a 'thorough examination' (Bowen, 2009, p. 32). At the interpretation stage, my attempt 'to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge' from the documentary sources is informed by the theoretical frame of the study (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). In order to offer a close textual analysis, the thematically equivalent parts of the programmes, such as general goals, recommended instructional tools and student performance expectations, were placed in two adjacent columns. This descriptive comparison enabled me to discern and analyse differences and similarities. At the interpretation stage, I attempted to explain the differences and similarities by taking into consideration the role of international agencies involved and the dominant ideology in power at the time of each programme's release.

Findings

While the 1999 programme of *Democracy and Human Rights* course is composed of four units, the 2013 programme is organised around five themes (MoNE, 1999, 2013). The unit titles of the 1999 programme are the following: Human Rights, Law, State; Democracy as a Form of Government and Way of Life; Human Rights and their Protection; The Atatürk Revolution,

Human Rights and Democracy. The 2013 programme has these themes: Democratic System and Living Democracy; Human Rights and Freedoms; Living Democracy: Active Citizenship; A Pluralist Look at Diversity; Peace and Negotiation. The similarities and differences between the units/theme titles are important if we want to identify the change in conceptual focus. First of all, it seems the titles of units/themes show that human rights and democracy are the central concepts of the two programmes. The concept of democracy figures in the titles of two units in 1999, while it appears in the titles of two themes in 2013. In 1999, 'human rights' is in the title of three units, whereas it is in the title of one theme in 2013. The varying appearance of these concepts in the units/themes titles indicates a change in conceptual emphasis. It seems the 1999 programme is organised more tightly around the concepts of human rights and democracy. Besides human rights and democracy, however, the themes of the 2013 programme feature concepts like freedoms, active citizenship, diversity, peace, and negotiation. The concepts in this most recent programme testify to the fact that it was developed with the contribution of the CoE.

Changes in political-ideological perspectives

Even though the 1999 programme was a product of the UN Decade for HRE initiative, the domestic political atmosphere of Turkey seems to have left a prominent mark. This is evidenced by the promotion of official statist perspectives, such as the appearance of the concept of state, law, and the Atatürk revolution in the unit titles. This statist tone permeates almost all student performance expectations in the programme. For example, the first unit's student performance expectations frequently refer to the state:

Students show with reasons that the purpose of a state as a judicial institution is to regulate social relations based on justice and to rule the public.

Departing from the aphorism, 'justice is the foundation of a state', students associate the state with justice.

Students show with reasons that the main function of a state is to serve in a way that all in a country are ensured to benefit from human rights (MoNE, 1999).

These performance expectations in the 1999 programme show that the state interpretation of human rights is given precedence. It seems the programme has the intention of presenting the state in a positive light as the main provider of human rights. In contrast, the 2013 programme reduces the emphasis on the state; it promotes a more civilian-liberal discourse rather than highlighting the centrality of state power. In the 2013 programme, the concept of state appears only once in a human rights-related student performance expectation:

In the context of the exercise of rights and freedoms, students evaluate that, in terms of putting democracy into practice, states have duties and responsibilities to citizens,

and citizens have duties and responsibilities to state and other people (MoNE, 2013, p. 19).

In this student performance expectation, where the concept of state is employed just once in the whole programme, it might be the case that the concepts of citizen and democracy are given emphasis in order to avoid the risk of promoting a statist perspective. In fact, the other human rights-related student performance expectations in the programme clearly demonstrate that there is a concern to emphasize more liberal democratic discourses:

Students internalise the characteristics and meaning of human rights and freedoms.

Students explain the moral foundation of human rights.

Based on universal human rights principles, students interpret significant developments in our country and the world relying on documents.

Students follow current issues related to human rights and freedoms.

Students associate human rights and freedoms to social life.

Students feel responsible to practice their rights and freedoms (MoNE, 2013, p. 19).

These performance expectations illustrate that the 2013 programme aims to have students acquire a more civilian-liberal notion of human rights. In fact, the concept of human rights is often accompanied by the term ‘freedoms’, which alludes to the fact that the 2013 programme differs from the 1999 one in relying less on statist perspectives.

Despite the overreliance of the 1999 on official-statist perspectives, it recommends that students be given the chance to interpret rights problems from their daily lives from a human rights perspective. For example, a student performance expectation goes as follows:

Students evaluate an actual human rights-related development or arrangement in Turkey from a human rights perspective and present it as a report (MoNE, 1999).

Even though the student performance expectation does not specify any human rights issue, it spells out that students should be given the chance to relate global human rights discourses to socio-political issues in their own contexts. The student performance expectation may be potentially powerful in bringing human rights problems from Turkey into the classroom. However, it is left unclear what exactly could be evaluated from a human rights standpoint. Given that there were severe human rights issues at the time of the implementation of the 1999 programme, such as the headscarf ban, it remains unclear whether teachers and students would be allowed to touch on that issue from a human rights perspective. From this angle, the ambiguous and generalised expressions in the programme that suggest the

evaluation of socio-political issues based on human rights are not likely to improve students' engagement with critical rights issues affecting their own lives, partly because the suppressive political atmosphere of the period made this almost unimaginable. Noting the political atmosphere of that period, one would even argue that it would almost be impossible for teachers to bring up that issue and invite students to evaluate it from a human rights perspective.

Compared to the 2013 programme, the 1999 programme is more focused on the historical development of democracy and human rights:

Teachers schematically and item by item explain the development of the idea of democracy in antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the 20th century.

By examining relevant documents concerning democratisation movements in Turkey in the 19th and 20th centuries, students compare them with developments in other countries and make an evaluation through discussions (MoNE, 1999).

This sort of historical approach is avoided in the 2013 programme; it does not refer to the historical development of democracy, citizenship, and human rights, but is more concerned with students' acquisition of core knowledge of human rights. It presents human rights and democracy by focussing on their practical implications.

Changes in how diversity is considered

The 2013 programme can be even more forthcoming in encouraging that human rights issues are brought into the classroom. For instance, it makes references to human rights problems that have to do with gender equality, discrimination, respect for diversity and disadvantaged groups:

In order to contribute to ensuring gender equality in society, students assume responsibilities relevant to their own position.

Students stand against prejudice, social exclusion, and discrimination in order to preserve the presence of diversity in peace.

Students assume responsibilities for disadvantaged groups to ensure that the old and people with a disability effectively join in societal life (MoNE, 2013, p. 22).

Even though there is no mention of rights issues that have to do with ethno-religious minorities, the 2013 programme differs from the 1999 programme in encouraging practitioners to bring rights issues from Turkey into the classroom. On issues of diversity the 1999 programme is completely silent, but respect for diversity features prominently as a core value in the 2013 programme:

Students respect different cultures and values by recognising that cultural differences are natural at local, national, and global levels.

Recognising the reality that all people are equal, and diversity is an asset, students advocate the preservation of thought, faith, and ethnic diversity within the indivisible integrity of the country (MoNE, 2013, p. 22).

These student performance expectations are progressive in that the national curriculum traditionally considered diversity as a source of concern and fear (Çayır, 2014). The memories of the Ottoman past, the founding goal of building a homogenous nation, and the contemporary issue of Kurdish separatism all hardened the negative official attitude to diversity. However, the 2013 programme takes a step towards the recognition of the human rights value of respect for diversity. The emphasis on this value was arguably facilitated by the involvement of the CoE experts in the curriculum development process and by the fact that the armed conflict with the outlawed Kurdish Worker's Party was about to cease by the time the 2013 programme was prepared.

Changes in pedagogical approach

Both programmes recommend a student-centric pedagogy. The 2013 programme recommends instructional techniques such as service learning, project-based learning, controversial issues discussion, problem-based learning, collaborative learning, role-playing and drama, case studies, debate/discussion, and research. The 1999 programme criticises rote-learning and memorisation and recommends instructional techniques such as case studies, role-playing and drama, debate/discussion, problem-based learning, field trips, observation, and interviews. The significant difference is that the 2013 programme includes service learning, controversial issues discussion, and encourages students to practise active citizenship. This marks an important difference, since the 1999 programme asks students to discuss the importance of civil society but does not encourage them to join in NGO activities. It does not urge students to participate in rights advocacy campaigns but conveys abstract conceptual knowledge. However, the 2013 programme wants students to engage with organisations that aim to contribute to the solution of rights issues:

As free and autonomous individuals, students practise their rights and freedoms.

Students encourage people in their environment to use their rights and freedoms.

Students take part in the processes of democratic decision-making about matters that concern them.

For the solution of problems in their environment, students voluntarily and actively engage in the works of organisations relevant to their age and location (MoNE, 2013,

p. 20).

These student performance expectations suggest that the 2013 programme intends to promote the experiential learning of human rights, whereas the 1999 programme seems more focused on knowledge transmission. The inclusion of active citizenship as a central concept in the 2013 programme distinguishes it from the 1999 programme, which exalts the state as the protector of human rights. Also, the 1999 programme presents a list of concepts to be taught in each unit, whereas the 2013 programme includes a set of key values and skills besides concepts. This suggests that the overarching aim of the course's programme has shifted from knowledge transmission towards a more holistic approach that intends to ensure the cognitive, affective, and behavioural development of students. Nevertheless, while both programmes contain the conceptual knowledge of human rights, references to human rights documents, and international and national mechanisms that uphold human rights, they do not specifically mention any rights struggle or name any rights advocate/activist. Neither is there any sign that students are encouraged to become critical of the state institutions in evaluating human rights violations.

Changes relating to Atatürk

The ideological influence of those in power at the time when programmes were being developed becomes more explicit when we look at how they consider Atatürk and the modernisation reforms undertaken under his leadership. While Atatürk and the Atatürk revolution figure in the title of the last unit of the 1999 programme and some of its performance expectations (MoNE, 1999), the 2013 programme makes no reference to him at the level of theme titles and student performance expectations (MoNE, 2013). In the whole of the 2013 programme, Atatürk is referenced twice in the explanations of student performance expectations, and in none of the 30 performance expectations is any attribution made to him. One reason for this remarkable change may have to do with the fact that the 2013 programme deliberately distances itself from governmental, official and statist perspectives. Nevertheless, the disappearance of Atatürk at the level of themes titles and performance expectations in the 2013 programme cannot be simply attributed to this factor. The transition of power from militant-secular to Islamic nationalists from 2002 to 2013 is arguably the real reason behind this change, partly because Atatürk is a figure of veneration for secular Turks as compared to Islamic nationalists. This change is emblematic of the political complexities of HRE curriculum development in which the impact of international agencies is likely to be overshadowed by the ideological considerations of those in power.

Discussion and conclusions

The overall differences between the programmes suggest that the 2013 programme is better than the 1999 programme in paying attention to the knowing, feeling, and doing dimensions

of HRE. It is also more detached from governmental and statist perspectives. Saying the 2013 programme is better than the 1999 version does not mean that the CoE's initiative was more successful than the UN's. In 1999, the country's political conditions were almost completely different, as the military dominated almost all policy spheres. In addition, the UN Decade for HRE initiative was only realised by domestic stakeholders with no participation of international experts or funded projects. On the other hand, CoE's EDC/HRE initiative was supported with funds and the contributions of international experts.

Despite some improvements in the second programme, both programmes show significant weaknesses when assessed against what has been outlined in the theoretical model of what an effective HRE programme should look like. One major issue is that neither programme includes examples of human rights struggles, human rights activists, a specific list of human rights, and effective strategies of campaigning and protests. Given that the programmes include no examples of rights struggle and advocates/activists, students may find it hard to relate universal human rights discourses to their own contexts. This may result in the provision of a highly disempowering HRE. The provision of such a sanitised curriculum is not likely to create a substantive transformation in the meaning-making resources of students. This is because the programmes' disregard of rights struggles, activists and inspirational real-life examples may inhibit the transformative power of HRE.

Hess (2009) underlines that 'democratic education without controversial issues discussions would be like a forest without trees, or an ocean without fish, or a symphony without sound' (p. 162). The concept of 'democratic education' in this statement can be replaced with HRE, as controversial issue discussion is crucial to HRE. Learning about inspirational examples of human rights struggles and activists may be equally crucial. An emphasis on such examples may foster students' affective commitment to human rights and give life to an otherwise intangible knowledge of them. Opportunities for participation and experience are also vital for students to enhance their commitment. However, these components are absent in both programmes.

The development of an issue-centric HRE curriculum is not an easy job, as proved by the fact that the more-than-two-decades long international collaboration did not produce an effective curriculum in Turkey. Even in the present day, it may be almost impossible to find examples of rights struggles and activists in Turkey's HRE curriculum. One reason for this may be found in the political conditions of the country. However, if we assume that political support is guaranteed, it is difficult for curriculum designers to agree on examples of human rights activists and struggles to include in the curriculum. The difficulty in finding uncontroversial rights advocacy campaigns and organisations may further exacerbate this problem.

In Turkey, almost all rights struggles are accused of wanting to destabilise the Turkish Republic, while almost all rights violations committed by the state are justified from a security-centric approach (Babül, 2012). Even the concept of human rights has a negative connotation in public discourse in Turkey. This enables the state authorities to easily criminalise those who advocate human rights. Thus far, the repressive state tradition has not allowed rights struggles to succeed and set a precedent. In the USA, there is a tradition of rights struggle; rights groups have not been accused of separatism or implicated in attempts to destabilise the state or collude with an external enemy. However, in Turkey it is almost impossible to find uncontroversial examples of human rights struggles, activists or organisations that stakeholders may agree to include in the curriculum.

Highlighting the weaknesses of Turkey's HRE curriculum, one can conclude that participation in the UN and CoE's initiatives did not produce an effective HRE curriculum, partly because of the political complexities of the country and the strict control of the curriculum development processes by the forces of secular-militant nationalism in the first programme and the forces of Islamic nationalism in the second. The problems identified in the programmes accentuate the need to find satisfactory answers to the following questions: How can an HRE curriculum be developed and implemented in the formal education of countries where rights struggles/activists are criminalised and suppressed by severe punishments? How can an HRE curriculum succeed in helping learners vernacularize and practise universal human rights discourses in such contexts?

These questions imply that the development and enactment of an issue-centric HRE curriculum that meets the five conditions is not easy in contexts where authoritarian leaders barely allow the promotion of democratic human rights values in education. For example, despite the CoE's closer collaboration with the MoNE since 2011, the only concrete curricular outcome has been the renewal of the elective *Democracy and Human Rights* course and the introduction of an EDC/HRE course at fourth grade in primary schools (Sen & Starkey, 2019). An ongoing EDC/HRE project entitled *Strengthening Democratic Culture in Basic Education* does not include any objectives in relation to strengthening EDC/HRE in the national curriculum of Turkey, such as the introduction of an EDC/HRE course (CoE, 2023). Ironically, the Turkish national curriculum has been unprecedentedly Islamised and moved dramatically away from the objective of promoting universal human rights values during the time these collaborations/projects were underway (Sen, 2022).

While the case of Turkey indicates that authoritarian governments find ways to water down the expected outcome of international organisations in EDC/HRE reform, in such contexts it may prove too costly for practitioners to offer an issue-centric HRE, especially if they are not shielded against possible negative consequences. Waiting for the transition of power to actors

who might open a window of opportunity for an issue-centric HRE is not ethically defensible. Despite these obstacles, however, powerful mechanisms still exist to strengthen HRE. History shows that international organizations like the UN and CoE have succeeded in consolidating cosmopolitan human rights values in education, so they can further strengthen it (Russell & Suarez, 2017). The consolidation of human rights is a global imperative that requires global responses that can be achieved by effective global coordination.

Turkey's HRE curriculum development highlights two specific things that international organizations can do to advance their efforts in this area. Firstly, international organizations must establish independent monitoring mechanisms that do not only rely on governmental sources in evaluating the quality of HRE in their member states. Secondly, given that their policy instruments in this area are legally non-binding, they must take their efforts to the next stage by developing legally binding instruments in support of HRE. It is now time to think seriously about developing a legally binding international convention that will protect advocates and mandate signatories to teach universal human rights values through separate courses and in other ways. The development of legally binding instruments will certainly require the constitution of enforcing mechanisms to replace the current naming and shaming strategies in order to ensure more thorough compliance in member states. Advocates will be encouraged if their efforts are supported by strong international law. If governmental actors are unwilling to comply with such a convention, the international agencies can work with non-governmental actors, teacher unions, voluntary experts, and practitioners in organizing teacher training and producing educational materials. The effectiveness of HRE will certainly improve when its advocates are supported with strong legal protection, quality curricular materials and training that will improve their competencies in the field of HRE.

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