

## Human Rights Education in the World and in Turkey

### Dünyada ve Türkiye’de İnsan Hakları Eğitimi

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#### *Abstract*

In this study, work into about human rights done in last 50 years is analyzed. The study consists of three parts. In the first part, international meetings and decisions made regarding education on the subject of human rights are analyzed. Second, the subject of human rights education itself is analyzed in terms of formal and informal education curriculums in the world and in Turkey. Last, proposals for teacher training programs are discussed with regard to teacher-training faculties.

*Key words:* Human rights education, democracy, teacher training, formal education, informal education

#### *Öz*

Bu çalışmada, insan hakları eğitimi konusunda son elli yılda yapılan çalışmalar incelenmiştir. Çalışma üç bölümden oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölümde, insan hakları eğitimi konusunda yapılmış olan uluslararası toplantılar ve buralarda alınan kararlar incelenmiştir. Çalışmanın ikinci bölümünde, dünyada ve Türkiye’deki insan hakları eğitimi, örgün ve yaygın eğitim programları açısından analiz edilmiştir. Üçüncü bölümde ise Türkiye’de öğretmen yetiştirme programları açısından neler yapılması gerektiği tartışılmış ve konu öğretmen yetiştiren fakülteler açısından incelenmiştir.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* İnsan hakları eğitimi, demokrasi, öğretmen yetiştirme, örgün eğitim, yaygın eğitim.

#### Introduction

In this study, studies undertaken into human rights and education programs in both World and Turkey are analyzed. Human rights have been discussed for more than 2500 years in many subjects. The most important development in human rights began with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Resolution adopted approximately 50 years ago by the United Nations (UN). The developments in last 50 years in human rights and human rights education have been provided by studies supported by United Nations, UNESCO, the European Council and the European Union.

#### International Studies Concerned with Human Rights

After the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Resolution was adopted by the United Nations in 1948,

the first establishment to give an international focus to human rights education was by UNESCO in 1974 and Human rights education has now come to the fore (Alfredsson, 1997, 219).

An international congress, entitled “Human rights teaching”, was held in Vienna in 1978. At this congress, it was clarified that human rights could not be dealt with separately from citizenship, political, economic and social rights. This congress suggested that the aims of human rights education should be as follows (Muntarhorn, 1998, 281):

1. Improvement of attitudes that support cooperation, respect for human rights and tolerance.
2. The foundation of national and international institutions that can provide information on human rights
3. Development of methods and tools for improving individual consciousness by taking the human rights up from both social and political aspects in national and international arena.

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Furthermore in the Vienna congress, it was suggested that human rights education should be thought as an interdisciplinary approach integrating its subjects within various lessons and disciplines.

Human rights education was analyzed in its content and documentation dimensions at the international Malta Conference in 1987, and discussed comprehensively. Decisions regarding the principles of improvement of human rights education were made at the Malta conference and it was determined that formal and informal education should be improved with regard to human rights subjects (Muntarhorn, 1998).

Human rights education was taken up comprehensively at the "International Montreal Congress on Human Rights and Democracy Education" and some important relationships between human rights and democracy were established. At this congress, it was declared that objective characteristics of people should be taken into account while determining the scope of formal and informal education programs. "It was also declared that it would be convenient that the human rights, humanitarian laws, democracy, and rules of law should form the contents of formal and informal education programs" (Alfredsson, 1997, 219). At this conference, it was reported that individuals, groups and societies in different parts of the world having different needs, may need different education programs in the area. Taking these differences into account, it was reported that information, documentation and education materials should be arranged in various ways to satisfy the various needs.

At the Montreal congress, it was suggested that human rights education should be started with the comprehensive participation of individuals, groups, families, societies, educators, and entire institutions in the the areas of education, students, youngsters, the mass media, employers and labour unions, political parties, parliamentarians, officials, independent national and international organizations, the united Nations, Human rights headquarters, and UNESCO etc.

After the Montreal congress, which was participated in by 171 countries, an action plan on human rights education was read, and the participants developed a special program for human rights education and also a number of strategies in Vienna in 1993. Furthermore it was determined that studies for formal and informal

education program encouraging tolerance and consciousness raising should be practised and educational opportunities should be provided (Nowak,1997). Suggestions and findings were collected under the title "decisions made in human rights education." This convention resulted in agreement "to develop activities in human rights education - the decision made for the declaration for *10 Years in United Nations on Human Rights Education*" (Gülmez, 1998, 171).

With the decision of United Nations general committee, the period from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1995 to 2004 was proclaimed the "10 Years in United Nations on Human Rights Education. 1995-2004". Within this framework (10 Years in United Nations on Human Rights Education), an activity plan related with human rights and democracy was prepared. Countries' responsibilities were determined with regard to how democracy and human rights education should be presented in this activity plan. Work started with the signing of a protocol on human rights education by interested institutions in Turkey to implement these principles on 14 March 1995 (Gulmez,1998). As a result of these studies, "Citizenship and Human Right" courses were included in the curriculum for the primary schools' 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in the 1998-1999 academic year.

#### Human Rights Education in Formal Education and Informal Education Curriculums

In this section, human rights education is examined in the curriculums of both formal and informal education in the world and in Turkey.

An examination of the approach in the world shows human rights education still in a formation phase. It is not an independent course and is generally included in other courses. In these courses individual responsibilities were emphasised rather than human rights. Many countries in the world give human rights education at primary school level.

Special programs were prepared in Canada and in the United States and these countries cover human rights generally in the history and politics lessons in the secondary education curriculum. On the other hand, European countries cover it in history, religion, geography, citizenship, literature, language and social

sciences courses. Human rights courses are given in citizenship courses in Middle East, Asian and Pacific countries (Muntarbhorn, 1998, 286-87).

In higher education, human rights education is either mandatory or optional in the law faculties of universities in many countries. Optional human rights education (as an elective course) tends to be more popular. As a matter of course human rights subjects are attached to many law courses. Human rights education has also been included in the courses at social sciences, teacher training faculties, as well as health and medical faculties, and the Human Rights institutes of various institutions and masters programs in university institutes (Muntarbhorn, 1998, 289-293).

Improvements in human rights in Turkey have been affected by those in the world but they are very slow in comparison. In the republican period of Turkish democracy, rights and freedoms were considered part of courses on "Civics (as a subject taught in schools)", "Natural and Social Science", "Social Science" and "Turkish".

Issues of rights and freedoms were attempted in "Civics", "Knowledge of Citizenship", "Citizenship and Human Rights Education", and "Democracy and Human Rights" courses in secondary education. However, importance was only given to rights and freedoms in these courses until 1998. Human rights were also attached to courses such as "Natural and Social Science", "Social Science", "Turkish", "Painting", "Religion and Ethics. Human rights as a subject has been included in the primary and secondary school curriculum as an independent course since 1998.

Amongst higher education programs, it can be seen that human rights subjects and education are either mandatory or optional courses at law faculties. However, human rights education at university, in post graduate programs and institutes is insufficient. In some divisions of teacher training faculties, human rights issues were covered under the title of "democracy education".

The week that includes the 10<sup>th</sup> December has been commemorated as human rights week at schools since 1983. The main purpose of this commemoration is to raise consciousness in the teachers, students, and parents, attracting their attention to this subject.

Informal education is given by government and private institutions for special purposes outside of the curriculum of the schools to satisfy educational demands of special groups. Examples of informal education are "in-service training, driving courses, education given through media, and family education.

Institutes, political parties, mass media, local administrations, clubs, unions, employers, public institutions and other independent organizations mostly arrange informal education in countries throughout the world (Muntarbhorn, 1998).

Because it is designed to meet the needs of special groups, informal education curriculums vary. For example, human rights education curriculums have been arranged for people subjected to violence, gamins, soldiers, members of the police, civil servants, high-level managers in private institutions, and workers at all levels.

This variety of human rights education is also seen in the variety of materials available. Human rights education has been provided through cartoons, plays, advertisements and commercials, newspapers and magazines, posters, special telephone lines, radio, television, and other audio visual media tools, besides seminars and courses. Because informal curriculums are in separate pieces and are not systematic, developing and improving them is very difficult. Curriculums prepared by inexperienced people and institutions cannot be helpful (Muntarbhorn, 1998).

Activities in human rights education in the area of informal education are quite limited in Turkey. These activities are courses and seminars for certain professional groups such as teachers and educationists, the Police, the Ministry of Justice etc. The Association for Human Rights and other human rights associations and institutes have started some projects, but they are very insufficient.

#### Teacher Training Programs and Human Rights in Turkey

One of the indicators that educational studies have begun to raise consciousness of human rights is that "Citizenship and Human Rights Education" courses have been included in the primary school curriculum

and "Democracy and Human Rights Education" have been included in the secondary school curriculum (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1999; Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2000). But teachers of these courses teach the subject without having any training. These teachers teach the subject from their own knowledge and the information in the course books.

In human rights education, teaching methods and teacher behaviours should be parallel to the content of the class. Students' belief in protecting human rights will fracture if the teachers who teach human rights classes do not respect students' rights both in and outside the classroom. If the teaching process of human rights issues is not planned efficiently, these courses can be boring and meaningless for the students. This can cause students to think that human rights is not a valuable subject. Furthermore, it is very important that branch teachers teach human rights subjects combined with other disciplines so that students can gain consciousness of human rights. For that reason, it is highly important to include human rights in the curriculums of the teacher training programs of universities.

Increasing the levels of consciousness of democracy and human rights issues of the teachers who are responsible for planning and implementing the learning-teaching process will be very effective in raising that of primary and secondary school students. As a result of this, the community's consciousness will increase. Therefore, it is necessary for "democracy and human rights education" to be mandatory, and "children's rights" etc. to be optional in university teacher training. While covering the consciousness of human rights through such courses, the same consciousness can be raised in practising teachers through in-service training.

The content of Democracy and Human Rights Classes for education faculties can cover the content of various documents regarding human rights, raising individual consciousness on human rights with regard to universal and local practices, looking at national and international mechanisms for protecting human rights, respecting human rights and knowing the value of them etc.

As the preparation and implementation of democracy and human rights education programs continue, educating the teachers in education faculties should also

continue. After the completion of the curriculum, course materials, and education of the educators, human rights education should commence in education faculties.

### Discussion

Human rights should be seen not only from the point of view of rights, but also as a responsibility towards others. If this understanding and consciousness can be given to the community as a value, then an important phase can be completed for figuring out human rights problems. Human rights consciousness should be nurtured starting in the family and continuing in schools and throughout life. The solution of this problem through regulations and the law cannot be expected. Laws and regulations will only be meaningful after individuals have gained this consciousness.

One of the basic reasons for human rights problems in Turkey is that human rights education programs that would raise community and individual consciousness are not sufficient. The Turkish State, institutions, as well as individuals have a great responsibility for this issue and in working to solve problems in this area. Human rights education has a function in protecting rights beforehand. The more the individuals' consciousness level about their rights increases, the more they will prevent their rights being violated. The individuals who are conscious of their rights are the safeguard of both their own and others' rights.

Despite the inclusion of human rights courses in the primary and secondary curriculums, the teaching programs of these courses need to be improved. Furthermore, putting the teaching methods and quality of the teachers into agenda is of primary importance.

Human rights issues should be taken up scientifically, especially in higher education. Some institutions and centres, within universities have begun to arrange seminars and gatherings, and to research into the subject. However, these activities are insufficient. Furthermore, it is necessary to begin to consider programs for bachelor's and master's degrees.

Activities in formal education programs are not harmonious. Programs need to be integrated over the whole educational range, from primary to higher education.

It is necessary for private and state institutions to add "human rights" into their in-service training curriculums. State institutions have begun to implement human rights related curriculums in their in-service training especially for the police, members of justice, and personnel of health services who are closely involved with the subject. These undertakings need to be supported with other courses. Informal education on this subject should be regulated through the participation of institutes, political parties, mass media, local administrations, clubs, unions, employers, public institutions and other independent organisations etc. so as to reach a greater audience.

Human rights education, more advanced in formal than informal education, has to be fully adopted in Turkey in both sectors. In today's conditions, human rights education in formal education is at a certain level. However, from the point of view of informal education, there is no serious development with the exception of the law education dimension.

Informal education programs are prepared for special purposes, and therefore the link between these programs and general citizenship, political, economical and socio-cultural rights is difficult to established.

Education is an effective way of strengthening and facilitating democratic structure and the principles of human rights, establishing social consciousness, institutionalizing and raising the applicability of the principles of democracy and human rights in individuals. Social and individual changes and development are possible through educational programs. "The teacher's role must be transformed to be more democratic in nature. Instead of mostly transmitting knowledge to students..." (Print, Ornstrom and Nielsen, 2002).

There can be no expectation for individual and social behavioural change, without encouraging a culture of democracy and human rights. To achieve this, long-term educational projects should be undertaken. Taking the experience of democracy and human rights in Turkey into account, "Democracy and Human Rights Education" should be added to the curriculums of the education faculties as soon as possible to improve the consciousness of the teachers in training. This will assist

the improvement of "Democracy and Human Rights Education" curriculums for primary and secondary schools and higher education together with, related books and training tools and equipment in Turkey. A legally established commission has reviewed issues and prepared a primary and secondary school human rights curriculum (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.). There are a number of curriculum guides and materials but the problem remains of "operationalizing" these materials, because pre-service and in-service teacher training human rights education is still a problem (Conly and Barot, n.d).

The Turkish National Committee for the Decade for Human Rights Education has established a framework for human rights education and suggests a need for sub commissions to investigate human rights education at all level of formal and non-formal education. Projects are needed in citizenship, democracy and human rights education to attain the following objectives:

- Developing curriculums for pre-school, primary school, secondary school, higher education and teacher training education,
- Developing in-service teacher training courses for human rights education,
- Training curriculum developers for human rights education,
- Developing human rights materials for all school levels.

Democracy and human rights education affects the school curriculum, teacher training programs, educational materials, and the whole educational system. Preparing a good curriculum is not in itself sufficient. Suitable teachers and the system itself require development.

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