

## Human Rights and Citizenship Education in Elementary Education Curricula

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### INTRODUCTION

Development and changes occurred in scientific, technological, economical, social and cultural areas affect education and make reform studies in education compulsory. In parallel to these changes, the aim, content, definition and method of training citizen has been changing as well in order to obtain social unity and integrity. Within this context, educations carried out in the areas of human rights, democracy and citizenship have been taking shapes dependent upon policies carried out and development of approaches, changing definition of “responsible citizen”, changes observed within the axis of right-duty-responsibility of citizen.

Human rights education is one of the concept that becomes intensively a current issue on the agenda of all countries in the world in the years of 1990’s, it was included in basic aims of educational reforms of the countries and supported by international and regional organizations and also it was strengthen by the documents signed internationally. Human rights education was defined as “the entire inform process and educational activities aimed at injection and establishment of a universal human rights culture composed of knowledge, ability, understanding and behaviours” in Decade Action Plan of United Nations on Human Rights Education and Instructions of National Plan Preparation on Human Rights Education [1]. Human rights education covers the education including respect to human rights, protection of these rights and appropriate content, material and methods aimed at developing the consciousness of utilization in all humans when considered generally within general settings and in students when considered within the settings of formal education [2]. Human rights education is one of the rights covered by the aim and ideal of “strengthening the respect toward human rights” emphasized as one of the functions of education right provided everyone [3]. Human rights education which is compulsory condition

of democracy is permanent and reliable solution of overcoming “the problem of human rights”. Human rights education is the basic way of establishing transformation of the institutions into a “life style” in making individuals acquire the free and mature “citizen” identity in the real sense; making individuals aware of their rights and freedoms and use, protect and look after them and also making individuals effective in establishing institutionalized organizations [3]. Besides, human rights education is one of the basic and principal means and precondition of setting, protecting and strengthening democracy, assuring democracy with the citizens who achieved the consciousness and determination of sustaining democracy in every condition [3]; setting and sustaining pluralistic and participant democratic society as a life style that is assimilated and satisfied by the citizens [4].

Human as a social being should continue his/her interactions within the designated limits as a requirement of social life. Knowing and applying social behaviour rules are prerequisites for an individual to organize his/her relations established with the other people and institutions that he/she live with according to specific rules. In order for an individual to live a peaceful life depends upon learning social rules and the rights provided by these rules, duties and responsibilities. Democratic life style with its entire dimensions should be taught to individuals in democratic societies, requisite opportunities should be provided to individuals in order to consider this life style as if it were their own property and transform it as a manner of behaviour. Democracy education should be provided to individuals for an existence and continuation of a democratic society [5].

The necessity of human rights and democracy education can be based on three basic reasons from the point of views of individual, society and government [5].

First one is the *legal obligations*. Today it is seen that democracy and human rights education is an obligation from the point of government but both right

and responsibility from the point of fellow citizen considering national and international laws, agreements, notices and contracts signed (For instance, constitution; laws; Educational Studies Regulations, School-Family Union Regulations, etc.; Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Children Rights agreement etc.). The second reason that explains the necessity of human rights and democracy education is *logical necessities*. Democracy cannot be settled in a society only with laws. This can be realized with the democratic society that is respectful to human rights, development of democratic political culture, individuals who enact laws and the ones affected with these laws and who know and consider democracy as if it were their own property. The structure and characteristics of democracy, ensuring happiness and prosperity of individual and society, struggles of existence of democratic government are important reasons that make human rights and democracy education necessary. Third one is *ethical obligation*. One cannot expect from individuals to behave with democracy consciousness without being taught them the scope of the concept of democracy and necessities of democracy. Individuals should be informed on the subject in order to be sensitive on the relevant subject and perform responsible behaviours.

It is seen that the courses related to citizenship education were included under the titles of “Knowledge of Citizenship, Citizenship Knowledge, Homeland Knowledge, Civics, Citizenship Knowledge” beginning from the year of 1924 in various classes of the first eight year sometimes as one hour in a week and sometimes two or three hours in a week in the curricula considering history of Turkish education. The course of “Citizenship and Human Rights Education” was included in the elementary education curricula as a result of various studies and attempts carried out by official and volunteer organizations in Turkey after the declaration of the first 10 year period beginning from the year of 1995 as “United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education” of UN General Committee. The final programme of the course of Citizenship and Human Rights Education was accepted with the decision dated 25.06.1998 and numbered 82 of Training Committee Presidency; The course of Citizenship and Human Rights Education was organized as one hour a week for both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> classes in the years of 1997-1998 [6].

Within this process, the book titled “Citizenship Knowledge” written by Atatürk on his own is crucial and invaluable from the points of developing citizenship consciousness in people as being an individual of the

society and knowing and understanding Atatürk directly from his own opinions [7]. The first publication of the book titled “Civilized Knowledge and Handwritings of Atatürk” as “Civilized Knowledge for Citizen” in the years of 1930’s was the important turning point. The book of “Civilized Knowledge for Citizen” which was written by Afet Inan who is oriented by Atatürk and published for the schools with the order dated 7.9.1931 and numbered 2197 of Ministry of Nation Deputy Training Department is important in terms of providing citizenship education in schools [8].

Üstel [8] states that the basic reason of changes occurred in citizenship education in the period of republic are the transition from multinational emperorship to national government and the regime of Republic. In other words, necessities such as the project of “transition from community to a citizen” of II. Constitutional Monarchy; wish of presenting and explaining the good sides of the regime of Republic; wish of providing adaptation of youth to Turkish Republic with “national training”, efforts of “nationalize” and “civilize” within the frame of principle and revolutions of recent government; adaptation studies to contemporary educational movements occurred in the West; the existence of disciplined citizenship education and wish of training citizens harmonious with national society etc. change significantly the direction of the education provided in this field.

There is an order regarding right and responsibilities of citizens and government at the minds of the founders of the republic as theoretically [9]. The things that are taught to republic citizen in order for him/her to be aware of right and responsibilities considering his/her status are mostly his/her responsibilities and duties that he/she has [10].

Different understandings of citizenship, nation, mother-country come on the scene along with the changes of elementary education curriculum in 1926 [11]. The course which was taught as under the name of “Knowledge of Motherland” since 1924 was renamed as “Civics” in 1926 in order to make students acquire knowledge on the subjects of government, motherland and nationality and that Turkey is a democratic country and to form the consciousness of that it is based on family and ownership [12]. The curriculum carried out between the years of 1926-1936 is much more dynamic, liberal and it includes right and freedoms widely compared to the subsequent curriculum. Despite the fact that the word democracy was not used in the curriculum, it is a significant point that the curriculum describes Turkey as a democratic government and it projects the participation

of the students to school life. The basic objective of the course of Civics included in the curriculum came into force in 1927 can be explained by “harmony”; to provide opportunities of harmony to citizens toward the regime of Republic and to the project of nation-government [11,8]. Ünsal [13] made a comment on multi-party period as “citizenship is not an easy state in a government in which the democratic parliamentary life is interrupted frequently” in spite of the facts that it is not easy to put down the right and freedoms included in the concept of modern citizen, especially freedom of thought and being organized compared to before and there is gradually an increasing respect to human rights. The expected outcomes and transformation was not obtained in the understanding and education of citizen since the transition to multi-party life was provided by the curricula put into use in the period of single-party. But on the other hand, the inclusion of the theme of “democracy” is important [8].

The course of Civics had been included in the course of Social Sciences and the books were renewed beginning from the late 1960’s to the year of 1985 [11]. It is seen that the topics related to human rights were almost not included in the curricula when the curricula related to knowledge of citizenship after the declaration of republic to near past are taken into consideration [14]. The dimension of human rights was included in the course books beginning from the midst of the years of 1990’s. The components of citizenship and human rights displays an eclectic view in the years of 1995-1996 [11] and that the name of the course was changed as “Human Rights and Citizenship Education” in the curriculum prepared in 1995 makes changes in the subject of the course content in the manner of being human in a way [15]. When the units of the course of Citizenship and Human Rights Education which was organized as one hour in a week in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> classes beginning from the years of 1997-1998 are taken into consideration, it is seen that the topics of human rights are covered beside the topic of citizenship.

As a summary, the transitional process of transition from community to a citizen which was accepted as an inevitable result of the establishment of the regime of Republic makes citizenship education obligatory. It becomes an inevitable obligation to make people or nation qualified at utilizing sovereignty since sovereignty will not be utilized by the members of dynasty but will be utilized directly by the people or nation after this period. Under these circumstances the government is obliged to teach the ways of utilizing this sovereignty to the next citizens to whom the government lay compulsory education down as a condition in its

educational institutions [10]. The content of the courses mediated this education is not the universal concept of “human” that is independent from time; on the other hand it is the concept of “citizen” or “fellow citizen” that is limited with time and space till 1995 [15].

The issues of the social, economical, political and legal problems Turkey; the membership process to European Union; international relations; increasing communication and interaction; the governmental unities; globalization and neo-citizenship ideas as a result of globalization [16] cause people to perceive the necessities of citizenship, human rights and democracy education and reorganization of the approaches followed within the settings of this education in the country day by day.

It is seen that the citizenship education is restructured with different approaches dependent upon the structure of the curriculum and the level of education all over the world. The structures of these approaches are as follows [17];

- It can be separate, independent (on its own); a type of must or an elective course. In this approach, citizenship education has its own special field; it can be applied with the options of must, elective or core curriculum.
- It can be integrated with one course such as history or geography or more than one course. In this approach, citizenship education is realized as a part of one or more than one course through themes.
- The more probable option is the theme approach of distributing all over the curriculum (cross-curricular educational theme). In this approach, citizenship education is provided by considering all the courses included in the curriculum.

Today, the citizenship and human rights education in Turkey is *not included as a course* with the elementary curricula carried out all over the country in 2005 which was prepared in 2004 at the elementary education level but it is included as *an inter-discipline* of “citizenship and human rights education” which was scattered into the curricula of all courses. Since the curriculum was carried out gradually in various phases, the application of “inter-discipline” has been begun in 2006-2007 academic year in 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes, 2007-2008 academic year in 7<sup>th</sup> classes; and it will begin in 2008-2009 academic year in 8<sup>th</sup> classes.

“Human rights and citizenship inter-discipline” with “an idea of integrating inter-disciplines” which was recently considered in interdisciplinary organization of 2004 curriculum was distributed among 12 courses

(Physical Education, Religion Culture and Moral Practises Education, Science and Technology, Visual Arts, Life Sciences, Mathematics, Turkish, Art Activities, Chess, Social Sciences, Sport Activities, TR History of Revolution and Atatürk's Political Doctrine). Explanatory definitions are not included in the curricula of inter-disciplines (Protection from Disasters and Safe Life, Being Entrepreneurs, Human Rights and Citizenship, Development of Career Understanding, Special Education, Guidance and Psychological Counselling, Health Culture, Sports Culture and Olympic Education) which were one of the significant changes that attract attention in the curricula of 2004.

Human rights and citizenship education cannot be compressed into a course or a course hour included only in the curriculum. It is clear that a "good citizen" which is the fundamental aim in education cannot be trained only with one course [15,18]. Human rights education should also be supported by the interactions occurred in school and all courses besides it should be included as a course in the curriculum. The environment provided to a student considering the respect towards human rights is very important. When the objectives related to human rights and citizenship inter-discipline are taken into consideration in the curriculum, the issues of being low in number and teaching students by experiences in order to make them acquire the affective domain skills at the maximum level; *not emphasizing* the importance of creating a culture based on these values in the school are major problems [18]. These problems affect human rights and citizenship education in acquiring the functionality within the context of lifelong learning approach and *total school approach*; bring together with the problem of serving to a limited aim such as making students acquire the citizenship knowledge based on transferring.

Explanations related to the following issues covering the topic of human rights and citizenship inter-discipline (as the same situation is also valid for other inter-disciplines) in the elementary education curriculum are not provided by any means; as the aim and definition of human rights and citizenship inter-discipline, the question of the reasons of limiting human rights and citizenship inter-discipline under this topic, importance and situation of human rights and citizenship inter-discipline in terms of teachers and students roles, the reason of changing the status of this course (it was included as a course in the former curriculum) into inter-discipline in the current curriculum, time allocated for the education of human rights and citizenship (the ratio of the education within courses). Other sample models and approaches are not

suggested for the education of citizenship and human rights education considering flexibility besides inter-discipline approach [19].

Ersoy [20] emphasizes that citizenship education activities in the school should be supported by including activities related to citizenship that are applied in classroom and school in her study. According to the suggestions set forth in the study, the number of the activities carried out outside the school should be increased; arrangements should be done in the activities related to citizenship included in the curriculum of the courses of life sciences and social sciences and in the methods selected in order to apply citizenship education within classroom-school-environment as a whole [20].

It has been emphasized that the teachers who are responsible for the application of the curriculum are not adequate enough on the topics of human rights and democracy in the Turkish education system over the entire course of its history [5]. It is found out that the beliefs of teachers in having control on the topic of democratization of the education were low [21]; that the education faculties should make arrangements in this subject that are appropriate for their visions and the courses or activities covering the topics of human rights and democracy should be included in teacher training programmes were emphasized [22-25] as a result of the studies.

The role of the teacher in citizenship and human rights education becomes more important regarding inter-discipline approach carried out. Because all of the teachers of all the courses in which the inter-disciplines are distributed in elementary education are officially responsible in the application of this education today. But educational environments aimed at acquiring democratic attitudes and behaviours within the framework of pre-service and in-service educational programmes are not provided to any of these teachers except classroom teachers and social sciences teachers; and also courses or activities including related topics are not provided to them.

Mahiroğlu [1] states that teachers who are going to give this instruction are not given a special education and defends that there is not any study concerning this issue in the universities is taken into consideration, it is not possible to expect different things from this education compared to the old one [16]. After a short period of preparation, one cannot expect from teachers to have the adequate experience on the logic, philosophy and application of the inter-discipline after a presentation lasted two-week in-service training of the curriculum. In a

research [26] in which the opinions related to the curriculum of social sciences course of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> classes of teachers are asked, that the teachers are not able to establish relations related to inter-disciplines easily is found out as a result also confirms this opinion.

One of the other important points that the countries consider it important on human rights and democracy education and it affects human rights education is the method used in teaching these courses. Gözütok [15] emphasizes that methods and strategies that help to develop mutual interaction and learning between the students and responsible citizenship behaviours in students via participation should be included. Methods, techniques and strategies such as group discussions, problem solving, brainstorming, mind walk, simulation, role playing, opinion poll, speaking circle, station, six thinking hats and court play [15]; activities supporting active participation skill carried out outside the classroom [2]; learning scenarios supporting to acquire the democratic values covered in the course books [27] are very important in terms of developing democratic behaviours in students. The teachers should be sufficiently qualified on the teaching methods that serve in developing democratic behaviours as well as the inclusion of these methods in curriculum [2,25,27]. At the last decade in Turkey, the studies carried out concerning democracy and human rights education and also utilized by Ministry of National Education during the renewing stage of elementary education curricula (for instance, the Project of “In order to be a Citizenship...” of Umut Foundation, Human Rights Education Series of “I am Human” for Elementary Education developed with the cooperation of Ministry of National Education Department of Research and Development of Education and English Embassy Culture Counsellorship) [28-30] are important developments in terms of providing a solution to the problem on the knowledge of the methodology of these courses.

In order to train the future citizens to be sensitive to human rights, it is necessary to provide them environments in which respectful and egalitarian behaviours are being displayed in the places that they live [2,31]. It is too difficult to give human rights education to a child disregarded by his/her mother and father, ineffectual and ignored in making decision among the family at home after he/she has learned the relevant sentences of child rights agreement in school [15]. Human rights and citizenship education is an educational field that requires taking active responsibility of schools at all stages, informal education institutions, families,

managers of mass media means, religious organizations, democratic mass organizations [15], politicians, government officials, society leaders [32]. But via this way, the views of “citizenship in the curriculum”, “citizenship in the school” and “citizenship via the participation of society” are developed considering the covert characteristics related to the structure, order and management of the school in human rights and citizenship education [19]. Gülmez [4] emphasizes that human rights and democracy education carried out in an environment in which the democracy, at all levels and contexts, is not seen, lived and internalised concretely in families at first, between the relations of mother-father-child; secondary, in school, between the triple relations of student-teacher-administrator will not be convincing and will not be able to achieve its goal. Because teaching human rights in the settings of education and school means facing the problem of democracy in a group of people. Democratic function of educational organizations is precondition of convincing of human rights education which was structured properly. If there is not such a democratic function, the human rights education cannot go beyond action and being formal since it is apart from the live reality of the social group that it is directed [4]. Many researches carried out recently emphasize that school and families should work together in all stages of education in order to make students acquire democratic attitude and behaviours [23]; the problems of the families should be solved in order to make them provide contributions to the formation of citizenship and human rights awareness [33]; the participation of school, society and family should be provided for active participation of students; opportunities, outdoor components, families and other resources in the society should be included in the process of human rights education in order to realize school culture and participative democracy [19,31,34,35].

The evaluation of the human rights and citizenship education is also one of the topics discussed at most recently. The difference of human rights and citizenship education from the other courses in terms of focusing skills and values beside knowledge and understanding propose such a question of “Should evaluation be done?” considering this course for the agenda. Brett [36] defends that it is too difficult to observe and evaluate some skills and values at the end of such a learning process mentioning that citizenship can only be learned by “doing-living” and also performing participation within the society. The evaluation approach applied based on classifying a student comparing with the other student in the course of human rights and citizenship education

aiming the development of critical and free thinking in active citizens reveals the view of “evaluation, itself, is contrary to the core of the subject”. But in the case of not performing the evaluation, the problems of not informing students and families on the improvement that they have displayed and interruption of the improvement studies of the curriculum occur [36]. One of the ideal way of evaluating human rights and education programmes in which the best outcomes obtained is to observe the efforts of respect to other people rights, protect his/her rights and creating a peaceful world of citizenships who has already received the necessary education determined in the curriculum.

Since citizenship and human rights education is provided by “human rights and citizenship education” inter-discipline in elementary education in Turkey, the evaluation process of these topics are realized in the courses in which citizenship and human rights inter-disciplines are included. But any item or orientation related to the measurement and evaluation of inter-discipline is not included neither in the curricula of these courses, nor in the section of class pass of Elementary Education Institutions Regulation or nor in the printed notices published on the subjects of measurement and evaluation after the preparation of new curriculum. At the end of the semesters, the evaluation of “human rights and citizenship” inter-discipline is not reflected directly to the student’s report card; consequently, the families are not informed on the evaluation of this inter-discipline [19].

### SUGGESTIONS

- The inadequacies of inter-discipline approach carried out on human rights and citizenship education should be eliminated and the teachers should be informed on the structure, aim and application of inter-discipline approach.
- Human rights and citizenship education should also be included as a separate course beside the inter-discipline approach in the curriculum.
- Optional approaches should be suggested on the application of human rights and citizenship education to schools. These approaches should be structured considering the active participation of school, society, family, NGO’s, politicians, mass media means to the process of citizenship education applications.
- The approach of establishing relations with the courses taught in elementary education curricula should be reflected to the programmes of higher education. Within this context, courses or activities

on human rights education that should be taken into consideration as a reference point in teaching of all the courses with the cooperation of Ministry of National Education and Higher Education Committee should be included in all of teacher training programmes.

- Educations related to classroom management approaches that human rights education makes them necessary in order to make teachers create a culture based on democratic values should be provided to teachers.
- Studies that put forth the amount of support provided by “total school approach” and covered curriculum observed in the process of acquiring the democratic values in schools to curricula for consideration should be carried out.
- The objectives of human rights and citizenship education should be updated considering the continuous development of human rights in the world within the context of history; universal skills such as “active citizen participation”, “social and ethical responsibility”, “society participation” and “political literacy” etc. should be included in the programme.
- Methods, techniques and strategies that provide opportunities of active participation and mutual communication of students should be included in the programmes in terms of developing democratic behaviours in students.
- Evaluation activities developed for human rights and citizenship education should cover the characteristics of measuring and evaluating the values, beliefs, attitudes and skills of the students.
- Institutions that support the participation of students in school, family and society, organize activities regarding this aim and cooperate with school-society-family should be established and determined.
- Peaceful, safe, egalitarian, just school environments should be provided.

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