

Militarisation of citizenship education curriculum in Turkey

In response to the United Nation's (UN) Decade for Human Rights Education Initiative, the Turkish Ministry of National Education changed the title of citizenship education courses from 'Citizenship Studies' to 'Citizenship and Human Rights Education' in 1995. However, this curriculum reform was overshadowed by the rise to power of a political Islamist party. The secularist military toppled the first Islamist party-led government in the name of preserving the principle of laicism. Announced after the 1997 coup, the main textbook for the Citizenship and Human Rights Education course showed a profound influence of the militaristic discourses as evidenced by the negative depiction of the Kurdish people and political Islamists and the hagiographic portrayal of Atatürk and the army. By drawing on interviews with key informants, archival/public policy documentation and textbooks, this paper argues that the curriculum reform began with the participation in the UN initiative ended with the military's instrumentalisation of the subject because it was launched with no recognition of Turkey's human rights and democracy problems.

Keywords: citizenship education; human rights education; curriculum reform; Turkey; education policy.

(1) Introduction

In response to the United Nation's (UN) Decade for Human Rights Education (HRE) initiative, the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) changed the title of middle-school eighth grade (13-14 year old students) citizenship education courses from 'Citizenship Studies' to 'Citizenship and Human Rights Education' in 1995 (Ministry of National Education 1995). The curriculum reform was discontinued in the following months because the rise to power of an Islamist party in the 1995 general elections escalated the tension between political Islamism and secular nationalism. The secularist military staged a coup in 1997 to topple the first Islamist party-led government of Turkey in the name of

preserving the constitutional principle of laicism (Cizre-Sakallıođlu and ınar 2003). Announced after the coup, the Citizenship and Human Rights Education textbooks were heavily influenced by the military's ideological discourses. Even though the military had a long-standing impact on citizenship education, its influence has never been as intense as in the aftermath of the 1997 coup.

Even though there are studies investigating continuities and changes in the ideological foundations of Turkish educational system (e.g. Altınay 2004; Copeaux 2006; İ. Kaplan 1999; S. Kaplan 2002, 2005, 2006), these studies did not include a critical examination of citizenship education curriculum. Previous studies which looked into various aspects of the Citizenship and Human Rights Education course did not pay sufficient attention to the role of the ideological struggle between the dominant ideologies, particularly the role of the 1997 coup (Aschenberger Keser 2015; ayır 2007; ayır and Bađlı 2011; ayır and Gürkaynak 2008; Caymaz 2008; Gök 2004; Gülmez 2001; İnce 2012b, 2012a; Karaman Kepenekçi 2005; Üstel 2004). Üstel (2004) is the only scholar who pointed to the influence of the 1997 coup in the citizenship education curriculum with an observation that the textbooks published after the coup counted political Islamists as one of the internal threats.

The present research is distinguished from the previous studies by drawing on the perspectives of key informants and archival documentation. It explores the changing characteristics of the citizenship education curriculum in relation to political change between 1995 and 1999, which marks an emblematic timeframe in terms of observing the impact of the power struggle on the citizenship education curriculum.

As a curricular subject, citizenship education aims to contribute to the creation and improvement of a culture of peace, democracy and human rights by teaching students universal set of human values (Brown and Morgan 2008; Starkey 2012). It supports peace education in many ways since the teaching of democratic norms and human rights is essential for the maintenance of domestic and international peace, which has been recognised by the international agencies (Council of Europe 2010; UNESCO 2014). For example, teaching students to negotiate their differences through non-violent means is a goal of both citizenship and peace education. In this regard, the present research also provides insights into the state of peace education by exploring the revision of citizenship and human rights education curriculum in Turkey.

(2) Context and background

After the collapse of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Ottoman Empire in the First World War, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk emerged as the chief commander in the Turkish Independence War (1919-1922), and later became the founding leader and led Turkish modernisation by abolishing the Sultanate in 1922 and proclaiming the Republic in 1923 (Tunçay 1981). He was elected as the first president in 1923 and remained in power until he died in 1938. İsmet İnönü, one of his comrades, succeeded him as the president and continued the nation-building project until 1950. Since the Republican People's Party [*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP*], founded by Atatürk, ruled the country from 1923 to 1950, this period is often referred to as the period of single-party rule.

Taking inspiration from the French nation-building experience, Atatürk aspired to build a secular nation composed of a citizenry stripped of traditional-religious norms and values and adopted the western way of rational thinking

and decision-making in their everyday life practices (Berkes 1998). From the Atatürk era onwards, secular nationalism marked the official ideology of the Republic of Turkey.

In the Lausanne Treaty, the founding treaty of the Republic of Turkey, religious identity was recognised as the main criterion distinguishing minorities from those considered as Turkish (Oran 2007). On that basis, Greeks, Armenians and Jews were given minority status, while all Muslim people of Turkey were regarded as Turkish. Population exchange agreements took religious identity as the essential criterion to distinguish who was Turk and who was not (Çağaptay 2002, 2003). Because of this citizenship conception, the number of non-Muslim people in Turkey steadily decreased.

The classic citizenship regime of modern Turkey wais assimilationist in the sense that it intendededs to transform the inhabitants of Turkey into a secular, modern and homogeneous society by using ideological and repressive state apparatus in an Althusserian sense (Althusser 2001). This citizenship regime favourededs a segment of society which could ean be described as ethnically Turkish, religiously Sunni and ideologically secular (Kadioğlu 2007). The rest wais forced to abandon the traditional-religious norms and values incompatible with secularism, native languages other than Turkish and religious identities other than Sunni Islam.

In the post-Second World War period, the international popularity of human rights created a dilemma for Turkey: either to carry on top-down homogenisation policies at the expense of isolation from the international community or comply with human rights standard (Hale 2003; Türkmen 2007). On the one hand, the unfinished nation-building project freed-compelled the

authorities to ~~ignore~~ turn a blind eye to human rights ~~principles~~, while, on the other, the international ~~developments~~ community exerted pressure on Turkey to sign up to the ~~compelled the adoption of~~ human rights instruments in order to gain respectability. These conflicting imperatives gave rise to a tokenistic approach. Human rights came to symbolise a 'reform rhetoric' in the official discourse, with no sincere commitment to eradicating the root causes of human rights violations (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu 2001, 59). The underlying concern was to gain international recognition and respectability.

Turkey has been reluctant to ratify international human rights instruments that had the potential to run counter to the nation-building project (Babül 2012). Even though Turkey joined the UN as a founding member in 1945 and the Council of Europe (CoE), as one of the first members in 1950, it selectively signed up to human rights conventions of these organisations (Türkmen 2007). For example, only a After the European Union (EU) membership application, Turkey was ~~required~~ obliged to ratify the article of the European Convention on Human Rights in 1987, having previously placed reservations when the convention was signed in 1954, allowing individual citizens to sue in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Similarly, after the EU membership application, Turkey ~~also~~ fully recognised the jurisdiction of the ECHR in 1989 (Smith 2007). In the 1990s, the ECHR was overwhelmed with the number of lawsuits brought against the Turkish government.

Despite the fact that the Republic was proclaimed in Turkey in 1923, multi-party democracy had not been established until After 1946, the multi-party regime formed a platform for the political participation of the religious majority whose voices had been silenced previously. With the advent of the

multi-party democracy, because of electoral concerns, the ruling CHP was compelled to introduce elective religious education courses and open religious conservative schools (Eskicumalı 1994; Ozgur 2012). These reforms were expanded upon after the Democrat Party [*Demokrat Parti, DP*] came to power in 1950, such as the reinstatement of Arabic as the language of prayer.

Given the fact that the majority of the population was religiously conservative, most of the governments have been formed by centre-right political parties since 1946 (Kalaycioğlu 2007). The conservative governments, especially the ones ruling without a coalition, kept attempting to extend the limits of what wais possible in respect of religion. Also, the spread of communism amongst college students warmed up the secular establishment to religion.

Intellectuals' Heart [*Aydınlar Ocağı*], a think tank organisation formed by a group of academics from İstanbul University, played a significant role in the shift from secular to religious nationalism. In an effort to help restore socio-political stability, the Heart promoted came-up-with a doctrine called Turkish-Islam Synthesis, which highlighted religion as an indispensable part of national identity (Çetinsaya 1999; S. Kaplan 2006). By developing relationships with army colonels after the 1980 coup, the Intellectual Hearts affected educational reforms in the post-1980 coup period (Kurt 2010). In this period, religious-Islamic education courses became compulsory and history themes associated-with the Turkish-Islam Synthesis were inserted into history textbooks (Copeaux 2006).

In the multi-party period, three key institutions (the military, the judiciary and the presidency) continued enforcing the assimilationist-secular nationalist

citizenship regime. Acting as the purveyor of secular nationalism, [the military](#) has staged four ~~military~~ coups within 65 years of multi-party history. The constitutions drafted under military supervision justified the oversight of the military over civilian politics. Highlighting the military's overbearing role, Celep (2014) described Turkish democracy as a 'militant democracy' (383) on the grounds that the military toppled governments which it considered as undermining the official ideology, while the constitutional court disbanded political parties ~~associated~~ [implicated in with](#) the promotion of ethnic, religious and ideological identities.

The military played a continual role in politics through its constitutional autonomy, its representatives in key institutions and its informal influence on key decision makers ~~in politics~~ (Jenkins 2001, 2007). Since the military believed that there were internal as well as external enemies, it did not confine its duty to the protection of the country from external threats, but promoted a national security doctrine that external enemies were colluding with [their](#) internal ~~enemies-operatives~~ to undermine the state authority. This doctrine originated in the Ottoman Empire as a repercussion of military defeats that led to the losses of vast territories (Karaosmanoğlu 2000). The Treaty of Sevres, which oversaw the partition of the Ottoman territories among the Western powers after the First World War, hardened this xenophobic belief. ~~According to the military, the common feature of all internal and external enemies is being against the principles of Atatürk since they all work to undermine the state authority.~~

Until the end of the Cold War, the military fought communism as the major internal enemy. In the post-Cold War period, political Islamism became popular among those who had been alienated by long-standing secularist

policies. In this period, the military identified political Islamism and Kurdish separatism represented by the Kurdistan Worker Party [*Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, PKK*] as the two internal threats (Karaosmanoğlu 2000). Even though the military was largely successful in repressing the PKK insurgency, it was powerless to stop the rise of political Islamism.

After the formation of the Islamist Welfare Party-led [*Refah Partisi, RP*] coalition government in 1996, the military intervened in politics on the grounds that the government had violated the constitutional premise of laicism (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu and Çınar 2003). The military's interventions culminated in the National Security Council (NSC) meeting on 28 February 1997 in which the military members of the NCS imposed measures on the RP-led cabinet. In spite of agreeing to the military's demands, the government was ~~compelled~~forced to resign, and the constitutional court disbanded the RP for violating laicism and banned its key politicians from involvement in politics.

This military intervention was called the 28 February or Postmodern Coup since it took place without the direct takeover of power. The period that followed the NSC meeting was referred to as the 28 February Process because the military continued to operate as the informal political power behind the scene. With reference to the 1924 Unification of Education Act, the hard-line secularist military aimed to re-establish the original education ideology. To this end, it shut down ~~Islamic conservative religious~~ middle schools, ~~ban-excluded~~ the ~~the~~ graduates of ~~Islamic conservative religious~~ high schools from secular college programmes and ~~enforced-imposed~~ the headscarf ban in ~~public~~ spaces state institutions including schools and universities (Ozgur 2012). The coup had a more profound impact on the school curricula as evidenced by the

revision of most textbooks ~~during the 28 February Process~~ in order to emphasise the military's ideological discourses.

(3) History of citizenship education courses

After the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, the first radical attempt to embed the ideals of the new regime into the educational system was the passage of the Unification of Education Act in 1924. Afterwards, a committee was formed to bring school curricula into compliance with the ideological tenets of the new regime (Üstel 2004). The committee changed the title of the citizenship course inherited from the Ottoman Empire, from Knowledge of Civility to Knowledge of the Motherland. Citizenship education courses were renamed as Knowledge of the Homeland in 1926.

The objectives of citizenship education courses emphasised collective values and advised students to put the national interest before their own interest. Citizenship education promoted a notion of national identity based on the ethno-cultural characteristics of Turkishness (İnce 2012b). The nationalist motto of the new regime, one language, one culture, and one ideal, was included, while the terms of citizen and Turk were employed interchangeably in textbooks (Caymaz 2008). In textbooks, the Turkish nation was characterised by soldierly qualities, such as an army-nation, a nation of soldiers or militant nation. Students were encouraged to sacrifice their lives with no hesitation for national independence, just as their ancestors did in the past.

After 1929, a nation was defined as a 'political and social community formed by citizens bound by a unity of language, culture and ideal' in textbooks (İnce 2012b, 119). The definition made no reference to religion, which manifested the effort of the founding leaders to imagine a secular national

identity for the nation. To this end, a set of secular values was promoted, such as 'being hard-working, well-mannered, docile, obedient, trustworthy, brave, heroic and sacrificial' (Keyman & Kanci 2011, 323). Üstel (2004) found that doing military service, obeying laws and paying taxes were the most-emphasised duties in textbooks. Casting a vote was added to these duties on some occasions. Rights and freedoms received little attention. Caymaz (2008) underlined that rights and freedom were presented with an overly formalistic and rigid language and deliberately in small fonts in some textbooks. Women were implied as second class citizens whose main responsibility was to become a good wife and mother.

Atatürk himself dictated a citizenship education textbook, titled *Civic Information for Citizens*, which was the most important civics textbook taught in the 1930s (İnce 2012a; Üstel 2004). This textbook included the Turkish History Thesis and the Sun Language Theory in order to teach students the superior virtues of Turkishness. The Turkish History Thesis put a favourable gloss on pre-Islamic history by claiming that the Turkish nation was one of the greatest and oldest nations that had created most of the civilisations in China, India, Mesopotamia and Egypt. The Sun Language Theory made futile attempts to prove that all languages were originated from Turkish.

The objectives of citizenship education began to make overt references to militarism in 1936. The first objective stressed that citizenship education should make students love the Turkish nation and the Turkish military in a way that they would become 'loyal and self-sacrificing citizens' (Üstel 2004, 141). The concept of democracy was removed from the objectives of the course, while concepts like the military and the Turkish soldier were mentioned for the

first time in the course objectives. After 1936, citizenship education took on a political role to create a social base for the single-party rule (Gülmez 2001).

Even though the existing studies deemed the courses taught before 1948 as citizenship education, their titles did not include the term of either citizen or citizenship. Rather, the central concept was motherland [*vatan*] or homeland [*yurt*] in their titles. In 1948, the title of the course was changed from Knowledge of Homeland to Knowledge of Citizenship. Thus, the course was entitled with the concept of citizenship for the first time [in its history](#). İnce (2012a) and Caymaz (2008) found that textbooks included a new unit, 'Democracy', after the first democratic transition of power to a new party in 1950. This unit included information supportive of the multi-party parliamentary system. Some textbooks contained one of Atatürk's well-known aphorisms, 'peace at home, peace in the world' and introduced the full text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in their appendices (İnce 2012a).

Reflecting the changing political atmosphere, a picture of a woman wearing a headscarf and standing by a ballot box was included in a textbook, while some other textbooks underlined the importance of foundations (İnce 2012a). The image of a veiled woman was significant in that all religious visibilities in education were wiped out in the previous era. In the aftermath of the 1960 coup, the military government obliged teachers to present the coup as a revolution and teach children the importance of the military (İnal 2004). In fact, textbooks published after the coup included a new unit, entitled 27 May Revolution, which introduced the coup as a revolution and denigrated the toppled government party as a clique that ruled the country from 1950 to 1960.

In the 1969 middle school programme, citizenship education courses were subsumed into social studies course (Üstel 2004). Thus, citizenship education became a cross-curricular subject. Regarding the period from 1970 to 1990, Oğuz (2007) concluded that citizenship education promoted 'militant citizenship' (p. 158) with an explicit aim to raise 'loyal and self-sacrificing' citizens (160). Oğuz (2007) also reported that textbooks continued to promote a gendered-notion of citizenship by portraying women in traditional roles, such as being a faithful wife or a good mother.

After the 1980 coup, a new constitution came into effect in 1982, which was drafted under the military rule and widely considered as a statist, nationalist and authoritarian constitution that overlooked fundamental rights and freedoms. The new constitution recalibrated the monolithic citizenship regime in more ethno-religious terms. In 1985, citizenship education was reinstated as a discrete subject after social studies was divided into three separate courses, National History, National Geography, and Citizenship Studies (Üstel 2004). The objectives of the new citizenship education course included the term of 'citizen' on only one occasion. The importance of state and nation was emphasised while the objectives glossed over the concept of democracy. The new textbooks defined a nation as 'a unity of language, religion, race, history and culture' (Üstel 2004, 177). The inclusion of religion in the definition is significant considering the nation had been previously defined with no reference to religion.

In 1995, the MoNE changed the title of Citizenship Studies course to Citizenship and Human Rights Education after joining the UN Decade for Human Rights Education initiative. Following this change, Gülmez (2001)

reported that some new topics associated with human rights were added to the existing citizenship education programme. A committee was set up to draft a new programme for the new course. The programme could not be completed as expected due to the volatile political context in which the Human Rights High Advisory Board was dissolved in 1996 (Üstel 2004).

The new programme of study was announced in 1998, which included many controversial characteristics. The longest unit of the new program was entitled the Elements of National Security and National Power, which made up 30 per cent of the content (Gülmez 2001). This unit implied neighbouring countries and some groups within the country as national security threats. Gülmez (2001) speculated that this unit might have been added after the committee finalised the programme of study, but did not give a clue regarding who added it. Çayır and Gürkaynak (2008) found a discrepancy between the textbooks' inclusion of universal human rights principles and promotion of a 'very particularistic, nationalistic, passive and authoritarian notion of citizenship' (56). Gök (2004) speculated that the new programme placed an emphasis on national security issues and international terror in order to 'impose and indoctrinate a militarist and nationalist ideology' (116). Üstel (2004) found that new textbooks were based on an exacerbated account of the national security doctrine in which even religious nationalists were implied as one of the internal threats.

Overall, previous studies answered 'what' question by documenting continuities and changes in the textbooks, but did not expand on reasons why and how that controversial programme had been produced and implemented for nearly seven years. This paper is an attempt to answer the 'why' and 'how'

questions by illuminating the background of the curriculum reform as well as presenting an analysis of the textbooks.

(4) Data collection and analysis

The present study draws on a data-set collected for a research project investigating the political and ideological drivers of the evolution of citizenship education curriculum in Turkey from 1995 to 2012. The dataset ~~The corpus of this research~~ comprises ~~includes~~ policy documentation, interviews and textbooks and interviews. Policy documents are refer to ~~official texts issued by various branches of the MoNE~~ in respect of citizenship education, such as ~~. The first group of policy documentation are decisions made by~~ the Board of Education's (BoE) decisions concerning the subject's status and content and ~~. The second group is archival documents which include~~ correspondences between the branches of the MoNE, and the MoNE and external institutions. I collected a part of policy documents from public sources like the official website of the BoE and a part, from the BoE's archive.

I was given access to the BoE's archival documents in September 2014, and made photographic record of nearly 900-page documents concerning the citizenship education reform in the given period. ~~I identified the names of key informants from policy documents, reached them via email and phone call and interviewed 17 of them from September 2014 to October 2015.~~

I collected all editions of Citizenship and Human Rights Education textbooks from the library of the BoE and the National Library of Turkey in August 2014.

I identified the names of those who played a role in the curriculum reform from the textbooks and policy documents and carried out 17 semi-structured interviews from September 2014 to October 2015. The interviewees included

eight curriculum designers who worked in the committees drafting the programmes of study of the citizenship education courses, two board members, one NGO representative, two civil servants, and four key informants from external institutions like the CoE and the EU's educational units. Five interviews were carried out via phone or online calls, the rest was realised in-person. I took notes during two interviews and audio-recorded fifteen interviews. The longest interview lasted 88 minutes, and the shortest, 19 minutes.

Depending on the role of the interviewees in the curriculum reform process, I asked all or some of the following questions and expanded on responses by follow-up questions:

1. Can you please introduce yourself?
2. What role did you play in the citizenship education curriculum reform?
3. Why do you think the curriculum reform was needed?
4. How did the European Union accession agenda influence the curriculum reform?
5. How was the curriculum development committee formed?
6. Why do you think you were selected as a member of the curriculum-making committee?
7. How did you develop the curriculum? Tell me about the process:
 - a. How long did it take?
 - b. With whom did you consult, any non-governmental organisation, university or other institutions?
 - c. What were the main discussions in the committee?
 - d. In which ways do you think the new curriculum is different from the previous one?

In the analysis of data, I strove to provide a reflective, rigorous and reasonable account of the citizenship education reform rather than attempting to draw fact-like conclusions and law-like generalisations. I compared respondents' accounts on the same issue against each other and policy documents when clarifying ambiguities regarding the background of the curriculum reform. I mostly relied on policy documents in the event of a contradiction about factual events. Policy documents could not be adequately contextualised without the interviews, as both sources complemented and

~~enhanced each other and were constantly cross-checked in supporting the findings.~~

~~I only analysed the MoNE-published textbooks because they were the most-widely used ones across the country in the given period.~~

~~As for data analysis, My data analysis was influenced by~~I followed the conventions of critical discourse analysis (CDA), which is 'concerned with the production, circulation and interpretation of texts in which relations of domination and control may be said to be at stake' (O'Regan and Betzel 2016, 282). Discourse refers to particular ways of language use; 'ways of representing some aspect or area of social life' (Fairclough 2006, 31). Discourses are social practices since they build, contribute, sustain or challenge the social reality they speak about. They are ~~not unique to individuals, but~~ social and historical.

While discourses are particular ways of knowing the reality, ideologies are 'general systems of basic ideas shared by the members of a social group' (van Dijk 2011, 380). Ideologies are systemic configurations of discourses of a social group. By pursuing van Dijk's (2011) distinction between ideology and knowledge, I considered discourses that belong to a particular group and not in line with discourses of other groups as ideological and discourses that are shared beyond social groups as non-ideological.

I followed a three-stage sequential path of analysis similar to the one proposed by Fairclough (2001, 2013). At the first stage, I scrutinised the lexical and grammatical features of the text, such as foregrounding and backgrounding of agents, use of modalities, tenses and pronouns and presuppositions. At the second stage, I linked the specificities of language use to the power relations within the broader context. At the third stage, I explained how the discourses in

text contributed or challenged the existing power relations. I applied this sequential analysis to the textbook, the policy documents and the verbatim interview. Finally, to note, excerpts from the primary sources are translated from Turkish to English by the author of this article.

(5) Stages of the curriculum reform

In 1994, the UN General Assembly launched the UN Decade for HRE initiative (United Nations 2015). The minister responsible for human rights in Turkey acted on the UN's call and signed protocols with ministries to promote a compliance with the UN's initiative. It signed a protocol with the MoNE in 1995 in a ~~n-official~~ ceremonial event where the prime minister, deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs as well as the education minister and the minister responsible for human rights were present. The protocol considered the citizenship education courses as the best curricular space to offer HRE, which led to the re-structuring of the existing curriculum of a civics course. The following excerpt from an archival document shows the important parts of the protocol:

INTRODUCTION

Human Rights Age starts with the foundation of the United Nations (1945). Turkey, one of the founding members of the United Nations, is one of the first member states which signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Afterwards, it showed its positive approach to human rights by ratifying a series of universal and regional human rights conventions.

Now, the fact that our century gained recognition as human rights age is known. While entering into a new century, new developments emerging in the world shows that, as of today, the measure of the developmental level

of countries will be the importance that countries attach to human rights and the degree to which countries protect them.

(...)

DECISIONS THAT WERE TAKEN CONCERNING HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

1. 'Citizenship Studies' course, which is still taught in the second stage of primary education institutions, shall be re-structured under the name of 'Citizenship and Human Rights Education'.
2. (...)
3. In order to avoid personal and political inculcations, as a principle, international human rights documents shall be taken as the basis for human rights education.

[Signatures]

Minister Responsible for Human Rights
Education

Minister of National

(Board of Education, March 6, 1995).

The main discourse of the protocol is that human rights are a defining mark of the modern world, so their adoption is a precondition for Turkey to be seen a developed nation. This discourse does not recognise an intrinsic value in human rights, but implies that the introduction of HRE is a requirement of human rights instruments to which Turkey was signed up and a vital step to become a developed nation. Decision no.3 in the protocol reveals that the introduction of HRE is a response to external conditions, not internal, so the teaching of human rights is not expected to include human rights problems from Turkey, but a de-contextualised transmission of universal principles.

After the protocol was signed, the MoNE changed the title of the [existing](#) citizenship [education](#) course and added some human rights themes to the content of the [citizenship studies](#) course (Ministry of National Education 1995). The preparation of the new curriculum was disrupted by the rise to power of the RP. When the military began to intervene in politics under the pretext of upholding the constitutional principle of laicism, the interest in the curriculum reform was declined. This change in the official approach is captured in the archival letter below, [which was](#) issued by the BoE in 1997 in response to the CoE's invitation to the Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) initiative:

Existing Situation

There are many things concerning democratic citizenship that Europe will learn from Turkey. This is because the concept of 'citizen' was developed as an approach by superseding the concept of 'subject hood' in a period of 150 years, and the modern identity of 'democratic citizen' has been formed [in Turkey].

This process started with the 1839 Sultan's Decree for Reorganisation changes; the classifications of umma-congregation-religious community reached to the stage of neighbourhood-hometown; after the promulgation of the National Republic under the leadership of Atatürk, the individuals of modern Turkish society are called 'citizen'.

In this last stage, the one who acted as both leader and teacher is Atatürk. He urged prominent scientists and politicians of the time to work on the identity of democratic citizenship on the condition that he himself would extensively make contributions. The book, *Civic Information for Citizens*,

which is an outcome of these efforts, is the most important matter that should be brought onto agenda, as a comprehensive source of democratic citizenship education in our country, of the Conference of Ministers of Education of Europe and Education Committee meetings (Board of Education, January 14, 1997).

The letter explains how Turkey was a leader in democratic citizenship education thanks to the Atatürk reforms and offers to help the other states. The letter starts with a statement that upends the hierarchy between Turkey and Europe regarding democratic citizenship. Even though Turkey has been historically in a position to learn from the Europe about democratic citizenship, this relationship is reversed in the letter by the following sentence 'There are many things concerning democratic citizenship that Europe will learn from Turkey'. First of all, the sentence does not include any modality that gives a meaning of nuance and possibility, such as 'there might be something in Turkey which Europe can learn'. On the contrary, it bluntly expresses an unusual view that Turkey is in a position to teach European countries about democratic citizenship. It strengthens the hierarchically higher position of Turkey by the use of an ambiguous phrase, 'many things'. 'Many things' are not illustrated by any concrete example, but the statement that there are 'many things' that Europe will learn about democratic citizenship from Turkey is expanded on by a peculiar narration of the history of secularisation in Turkey. It seems there is a confusion between the concept of citizenship and secularism in the letter because what is being conveyed is a version of Turkey's secularisation history rather than citizenship.

Using citizenship and secularisation synonymously, the letter makes a contrast between 'subject hood [*kulluk*]' and democratic citizenship. It argues

that the people of Turkey were stripped of their characteristics that made them 'subject [*kull*]' and became 'democratic citizen' in a period of 150 years. The people of Turkey before the emergence of democratic citizenship are described with concepts that have religious connotations like 'subject hood [*kulluk*], umma [*ümmet*]-congregation [*cemaat*]-religious community [*millet*]', whereas the people of Turkey after the emergence of democratic citizenship are associated with secular concepts like 'neighbourhood [*ahali*]-hometown [*memleket*]' . The contrast reveals an underlying assumption that the concept of democratic citizenship developed in Turkey through a transition from a religious to secular society. According to this discourse, Atatürk is 'the leader and teacher' who gave the final shape to democratic citizenship.

This particularistic way of presentation of the historical development of Turkish citizenship exalts the state formation era and the role of Atatürk. The first sentence of the last paragraph exaggerates the role of Atatürk in the evolution of citizenship by placing his name as the main verb of the sentence: 'the one who acted as both leader and teacher is Atatürk.' To support this claim, the letter provides evidence that one of the books of democratic citizenship, *Civics Information for Citizens*, was written with the request and contribution of Atatürk. The letter later suggests disseminating this book to member countries after translating it into French and English. It suggests introducing the book as a comprehensive source for democratic citizenship. This book is the main civics textbook of the 1930s, which is heavily under the influence of the secular nationalist ideology of the state-formation era (Üstel, 2004). The emphasis on it reveals a lack of previous engagement with European organisations.

The portrayal of secular nationalist citizenship education of Turkey as the

epitome of democratic citizenship education and the depiction of Turkey as a country with an outstanding history of democratic citizenship were arguably intended to convey a message to the CoE that Turkey was not in need of a citizenship education reform. This was mainly because a possible citizenship education reform to be undertaken in collaboration with the CoE would necessarily require taking into account the demands of rights-claiming groups, namely the Kurdish political movement and the political Islamist parties. In order to avoid both a fall-out with the Europe-based intergovernmental organisations, the BoE presents Turkey as a country which does not need to advance a democratic citizenship education, but is a willing and experienced candidate ready to help other countries who would like to undertake such a reform. The foregrounding of secularist discourses manifests the intention to use citizenship education as an instrument to suppress political Islamism. In fact, this interest in the instrumental use of citizenship education became more visible after the 1997 coup.

In 1998, the BoE announced the citizenship and human rights education course's curriculum while the military was playing an active role in redefining the ideological premises of the educational system in the aftermath of the coup (Ministry of National Education 1998). The key informants reported that the military played a decisive role in the making of the new curriculum. For example, Interviewee 11, who was an influential decision-maker at the BoE, stated that,

In those years in Turkey, the 28 February Process was under way and the domination of the tutelage regime over the educational system was conspicuous; therefore, I do not think decision-makers, academics, curriculum experts and those who prepared the curriculum, those who

wrote the textbooks managed to exceed the boundaries set by the military people of the period and prepare a curriculum that is in line with the principles of human rights and democracy. Because it was a dark period of Turkey... (Interviewee 11, August 24, 2014).

The interviewee's reflections give some ideas about the nature of military's involvement in education. He casts doubt on who really prepared the curriculum and describes the aftermath of 1997 coup as 'a dark period of Turkey'. He claims that those who prepared the curriculum of the course were under the influence of the military, so they had to reflect the wishes of the military in the curriculum. In support of the statements of Interviewee 11, Interviewee 5, who was one of the members of the committee which prepared the programme of study of the course, made clear that the programme was modified in the Secretariat-General of the National Security Council (September 2, 2014). The interviewee surely stated that the Secretariat-General modified the curriculum to emphasise the militaristic discourses.

(6) Textbook analysis

The main textbook for the course is composed of four units (Çiftçi et al. 2001). The first one is entitled 'state, democracy, constitution, citizenship, citizenship rights and responsibilities', the second, 'protection of human rights, the third, 'the elements of national security and national power', and the last one, 'issues faced in the protection of human rights'. The longest is the third unit, which is 29 pages and exceeds the total page number of the two units on human rights (26 pages). I illustrate the militaristic y's ideological discourses in the textbook through three main identifiers: the representation of the Kurdish people, political Islamists and the army and Atatürk.

Representation of the Kurdish people

The textbook includes implicit accusations directed at the Kurdish people. For example, they were blamed for the spread of PKK terror:

In some places, citizens' not reporting terrorists, unconsciously hiding them as a guest, abetting them, providing their needs for food and dress led terror to thrive. Leaving the fight against terrorism to officials shows people's public unconsciousness (Çiftçi et al. 2001, 69).

The excerpt uses a neutral and formal tone as though it ~~expresses was an expression of~~ a scientific fact. Four negative acts are listed in a nominal form by leaving vague who the subject of these negative acts is. What is being stated in nominal form can be unpacked as follows:

- (7) 'Citizens' not reporting terrorists': Citizens in some places do not deliberately report terrorists.
- (8) 'Unconsciously hiding them as a guest': Citizens in some places hide terrorists as a guest.
- (9) 'Abetting them': Citizens in some places abet terrorists.
- (10) 'Providing their needs for food and dress': Citizens in some places provide food and dress for terrorists.

These accusations are expressed in nominal form because they are unsubstantiated claims. In a vague way, 'citizens in some places' can be understood as the subject of the negative acts, but there is no answer to who these citizens aiding and abetting terrorists are and why they are not penalised for committing those crimes. Given the political context at the time of the textbook's use in Turkey, ~~t~~The subject of the sentence, 'citizens in some places', points a finger at the Kurdish people. ~~The~~This implicit accusations ~~is~~ are directed at the Kurdish people because there were no terrorist organisations except the PKK terrorism in the Southeast Region. The subject of the sentence, 'citizens in some places', points a finger at the Kurdish people. This accusatory

discourse repeats the militaristic discourses on the spread of the PKK terror by portraying the state security forces as blameless victims of terror.

The following excerpt, without mentioning the name of a terrorist organisation, makes references to the PKK terrorism by specifying the region where the terror was rampant at the time.

The GAP project [a dam construction project], which will change the fate of Southeast Region made many countries jealous, so a terror atmosphere was immediately created in the region. The Turkish youth to whom Atatürk entrusted the Republic of Turkey set a goal for himself to work for the peace of the country with the love of the homeland and nation without falling into these traps (Çiftçi et al. 2001, 81).

The excerpt conveys a military discourse that countries that do not want Turkey to develop support the PKK terrorism. This discourse links the spread of terrorism to a dam construction project in the region and reduces the PKK terrorism to a matter of the manipulation by foreign countries. It insulates the PKK terror from its socio-political and ethnic dimensions and considers it as a security issue created by external enemies. The last sentence of the excerpt addresses 'the Turkish youth' by assuming all people in the region as Turkish. The expression, 'the Turkish youth to whom Atatürk entrusted the Republic of Turkey', is a formulaic statement which can be found in a casual press remarks by the General Staff. This statement conveys a message that the effective dissemination of secular nationalism in the region will stop the spread of terror.

Without making any suggestion of structural change as a solution to the PKK terrorism, the textbook presents a particular way of Turkification as the solution to the PKK terrorism. This discourse ignores the fact that the PKK has terrorised the country on the grounds that the Kurdish people had been forced

into assimilation. Presenting the root cause of the issue, assimilation, as a solution to the issue itself, is a paradoxical ideological discourse promoted by the military. This discourse does not have a potential to bring about a structural change to the unequal power relations between the Kurdish and secular Turkish identities, but is likely to reinforce the privileged status of secular Turkish identities at the expense of the suppression of the Kurdish identities.

Representation of political Islamists

Considering that the textbook was published in the aftermath of the 1997 coup, the inclusion of discourses that denigrate political Islamists is an indication that the citizenship education course had been instrumentalised to fight political Islamism. The first indication of the denunciation of political Islamists is seen in the modified definition of the concept of nation (Çiftçi et al. 2001, 35). When compared with the definition in the main textbook of the previous period, the omission of religion from the constitutive elements of a nation signifies an important shift (Dal, Çakıroğlu, and Özyazgan 1986). The previous researchers considered the inclusion of religion among the constitutive elements of a nation in the post-1980 coup textbooks as evidence of a shift towards more religious education (Copeaux 2006; İ. Kaplan 1999; S. Kaplan 2006; Üstel 2004).

Therefore, its omission is a significant modification and linked to the military's efforts to stamp out political Islamism during the second half of the 1990s. The modified definition is an attempt to re-conceptualise the nation in a way that leaves out political Islamists and universalise the attributes of secular nationalist groups as the characteristics of the whole nation, which is well illustrated in the following excerpt:

The Turkish nation is respectful to its faiths, rejects fundamentalism, and does not like bigotry. It is neither backwards-looking nor pious. It regards everyone who lives in our homeland as precious. It does not consider anyone as second class citizen. It is loyal to the ideals of Atatürk from the heart (Çiftçi et al. 2001, 73).

The excerpt makes a personification of the Turkish nation to emphasise its good qualities. Lexical choices reveal the ideological messages embedded in it. The descriptors, fundamentalism [*köktencilik*], bigotry [*taassup*], backwards-looking [*gerici*], pious [*yobaz*], are the pejoratives that secular nationalists used to denigrate political Islamists. Through these descriptors, not only are the characteristics associated with secular nationalists exalted, but the characteristics associated with political Islamists are denigrated.

As the secular nationalists were in power at the time when the textbook was written, the centralised curriculum authority weaved their ideological discourses into it. The following excerpts exemplify the different discursive manifestation of animosity between the two groups:

Modernity is the opposite concept to primitiveness and bigotry. This means things that are modern, alive in today's world, new and precious, stripped of primitive and rude measures are the understanding embraced by the overwhelming majority of society. (...) Bigot and primitive thoughts stand against modernity and every type of innovation (Çiftçi et al. 2001, 79).

This excerpt makes a contrast between 'modernity [*çağdaşlık*]' and 'primitiveness [*ilkelliğin*]' and bigotry [*bağnazlık*]. The secular nationalists tend to present themselves with secular identities as western, modern or European, while they employ the descriptors like primitive, backwards and bigot to denigrate religious identities. By employing these ideological descriptors,

political Islamists are implied as 'primitive' and 'bigot' people who are against 'modernity' and 'innovations'.

Representation of the army and Atatürk

The textbook makes a virulent and effective propaganda of secular nationalism through the hagiographic depiction of the army and Atatürk. According to the official ideology of secular nationalism, the army is 'identified with Mustafa Kemal and his mission' and 'the "true owner" and personified symbol of nationalism' (Bora 2003, 437). This discourse relies on the exaltation of military power around the cult figure of Atatürk, which permeates many parts of the textbook. For example, the textbook, which is an HRE textbook, legitimises the use of weapon:

Mankind needed weapons as much as food and drink since the first day of his existence (Çiftçi et al. 2001, 68).

The excerpt presents a weapon as a basic need equivalent to food and drink. It legitimises the need for the use of weapon by claiming that need exists since the beginning of history. It might be reasonable to say that people needed the weapon to protect themselves, but when this is expressed with the vague subject of 'mankind [*insanoğlu*]' and without specifying a rationale for it, it sends a message that individual armament is a normal thing. In addition to the presentation of the weapon as a basic need, the textbook makes a positive representation of the military power:

The Turkish people founded many states throughout history thanks to the importance they attach to military power. This situation in the Turkish states indicates that military power comes before everything else, and it reaches the level of sovereign power in the society. Our army is the source of

peace, safety and pride for our nation. Our army is also the guardian of our republic that is a democratic regime (...) If Turkey has not gone to a general war since the foundation of the Republic, it is thanks to the power and deterring influence of the armed forces. The Turkish Army is one of the most powerful armies in the world. With this power, it deters its enemies. It ensures the happiness and safety of the nation (Çiftçi et al. 2001, 62-63).

In the excerpt, hypothetical information is presented as facts. The assertion that Turkey has not gone to a general war since its foundation thanks to its military power represents a refutable opinion rather than a fact. This is because Turkey's avoidance of a general war is attributed solely to the power of its army. Similarly, the importance the Turkish people attaches to the military power might be one of the reasons, not the sole reason, why the Turkish people founded states in history.

Also, the glorification of the army as the most vital institution places all other institutions, such as the Grand National Assembly or the cabinet, in a secondary position. The army is portrayed as an institution that founds states, protects the regime of democracy and ensures the happiness of citizens. The statement, 'military power comes before everything', expresses the same discourse that the military is the most vital institution in Turkey.

The excerpt includes a phrase identified with the military circles who describe the army as 'the guardian of the Turkish democracy'. This discourse equates the continuance of Turkish democracy to the continuance of laicism. It views the army as 'the guardian of the Turkish democracy' since the army is recognised as the key force maintaining secular nationalism. In a learning context on the military's relations with democracy, one might expect to see an attribution to the military coups, but the textbook does not include any sign in this regard.

The other dominant discourse regarding the military is that states cannot run the risk of waging war against each other because rapid advancements in the weapon industry have made war almost impossible, which made terrorism the only viable alternative. With this argument, the textbook implies that foreign countries that do not wish Turkey to develop use terrorist organisations to keep it under control. This claim is strengthened with an argument that Turkey's geopolitical location makes a possible war against Turkey impossible since it is in an extremely critical location in terms of the balance of world powers. Since a war against Turkey may spark a regional or even world war, enemy countries support terrorist organisations to achieve their goals in Turkey. This discourse permeates the following excerpt:

Turkey has a very significant geopolitical location in terms of the world and regional balances. For this reason, many countries have aspirations on our country. Therefore, we are a country, which is under a constant risk. Places where terrorist organisations that aim to destroy our country were sheltered mostly are neighbouring countries outside Turkey that we think as ally. A possible attack on our country, which has a very vital location in terms of the balance of world powers, will jeopardise the world peace (Çiftçi et al. 2001, 80).

The excerpt makes a link between external and internal enemies and brings 'neighbouring countries' under suspicion for aiding and abetting terrorist organisations against Turkey. 'Neighbouring countries outside Turkey that we think as ally' are portrayed as external enemies who use internal enemies as their operatives within Turkey. When students are convinced that terrorism is inevitable and Turkey is under a constant threat, they will automatically recognise the vital importance of military power and the hegemony of the army.

Atatürk is presented as a celestial figure, and his aphorisms and pictures are included in all over the textbook. The following excerpt is illustrative of this aspect:

The recognition of women's rights [in Turkey] is not a consequence of a movement of thought and social evolution as in some European countries. The rights granted to women in our country are a consequence of Atatürk reforms that took place in the state formation era. Reforms undertaken under the leadership of Atatürk opened up new horizons for Turkish woman. (...) new laws did not go against the Turkish women's actual conditions because the great leader Atatürk knew in great detail the cultural characteristics of Turkish society (Çiftçi et al. 2001, 25–26).

The excerpt presents the entitlement of women to their rights as an individual success of Atatürk. Explaining such historical progress through Atatürk's charismatic leadership overshadows the agency of women who struggled for their rights. The excerpt overlooks women's agency to emphasise the hagiographic virtues of 'the great leader Atatürk'. Also, the excerpt assumes that reforms on paper were sufficient to end the women's subordination. It does not include a reference to the real conditions of women and discussion on whether 'new laws' made a difference in reality.

Finally, Atatürk is referred to by phrases, 'our great father' (Çiftçi et al. 2001, 76), 'the Turkish state which Atatürk founded' (78), 'Great leader Atatürk' (79), 'the Republic which Atatürk established' (80), 'the Turkish youth to whom Atatürk entrusted the Republic' (81), 'the goal of transcending the level of contemporary civilisations that Atatürk set' (81) and so on. In this way, Atatürk is portrayed as the paragon of a soldier, citizen and commander to whom all citizens should aspire, and his aphorisms are quoted as though they were verses from a holy scripture.

(11) Discussion and Conclusion

When the secularist state establishment was challenged by the rise of political Islamism and Kurdish separatism in the 1990s, the military took several measures to maintain the hegemony of secular nationalism and suppress the ethnic and religious movements. As a result, a militarised curriculum was taught in Turkey under the title of citizenship and human rights education. The curriculum reform that culminated in the participation in the UN initiative ended with the production of a curriculum, which placed the military's ideological perspectives at the centre of citizenship education.

By revealing the militaristic discourses embedded in the Citizenship and Human Rights Education textbook, this research showed that curriculum reforms sponsored by international organisations might result in the promotion of the ideological discourses of powerful groups. The recognition of internal human rights issues is an indispensable precondition for the contextualization of democracy and human rights principles in the curriculum. Democracy, human rights and citizenship can be ideally taught through examples derived from the democracy and human rights struggle of target context. Citizenship education reforms that are launched with no recognition of specific human rights and democracy issues are unlikely to promote democracy. The curriculum reform in Turkey ended with the military's instrumentalisation of the subject arguably because it was launched with no recognition of any of Turkey's human rights problems, and the textbooks did not include democracy, citizenship and human rights issue from Turkey.

The existing studies did not observe an intense military influence in the citizenship education curriculum of previous years before the 1997 coup (Aschenberger Keser 2015; Çayır 2007; Çayır and Bağlı 2011; Çayır and

Gürkaynak 2008; Caymaz 2008; Gök 2004; Gülmez 2001; İnce 2012b, 2012a; Karaman Kepenekçi 2005; Üstel 2004). The military's ideological influence had been a long-standing feature of the citizenship education curriculum, but it has never been as intense as in the Citizenship and Human Rights Education textbook. This is because the hegemony of the official ideology of secular nationalism had never been challenged as severe as in the 1990s. To suppress the dissident movements and consolidate the hegemony of the official ideology, the military capitalised on the instrumental value of the citizenship education courses and infused its ideological discourse into the course's main textbook.

Few studies have explored the changes in the curriculum after the 1997 coup. Altınay (2004) provided a well-evidenced account of the changing aspects of the content of the National Security Knowledge [course](#) after the 1997 coup. However, she did not recognise the fact that the infusion of the military's political discourses into the content of the course was linked to the efforts to stamp out political Islamism. The present study added this body of literature that the military played an active role in the making of the citizenship education curriculum of 1998. It instrumentalised the citizenship education courses to spread its own conception of national identity, citizenship and human rights, suppress the dissident movements and fortify the hegemony of the official ideology.

Regarding the intensity of militarist themes in the Citizenship and Human Rights Education textbook, Gülmez (2001) speculated that they might have been added after the programme of study was finalised at the BoE. The findings of this research substantiated Gülmez's (2001) speculation that the militaristic discourses were added at the Secretariat-General of the National Security

Council after the committee had finalised the programme of study at the BoE. As a result, the dominant ideology in power remained effective under the veneer of some cosmetic changes.

The textbooks depicted some ethnic and religious groups in a negative light, promoted animosity against neighbouring countries, and made attempts to legitimise state violence and war as necessary and normal. They contained militarist and exclusionary discourses targeting both the Kurdish people and religious nationalists and presented using a weapon as natural as the need to drink water and eat food. The teaching of the ideological discourses identified was contrary to the objectives of not only citizenship, but human rights and peace education. In this regard, the course did not support either the internal peace of Turkey or regional and international peace at all.

The production and implementation of that militarised citizenship education curriculum in Turkey was not a cultural or historical necessity, but facilitated by the structure of the curriculum development system. The centralised curriculum authority, the BoE, was established in the state formation era to ensure curriculum's compliance with secular nationalism. The number of members serving on the board changed over the years (currently eleven including the head), but its highly-centralised structure has been preserved up to the present (MoNE, 2012b). The BoE still operates as the sole curriculum authority and makes decisions regarding all aspects of school knowledge.

The original name of the Board of Education in Turkish is *Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu*, whose close translation would be 'Board of Training and Discipline', not 'Board of Education'. The words in the title 'training' [*talim*] and 'discipline' [*terbiye*] sound authoritative and militaristic. In fact, this research

found that the BoE was monitored and controlled by the military [in the given period](#), namely by the Secretariat-General of the National Security Council. Thus, the evidence presented in this paper suggests that the [non-participatory and non-inclusive is-centralised-curriculum development system authority hinders stands as an obstacle to](#) the institutionalisation of democratic citizenship education in Turkey.

Even though the BoE is an appointed, not elected body, it has not been subject to a remarkable public nor scholarly scrutiny. In my fieldwork, I was told that I was the only researcher who had come to conduct research there. This lack of interest is arguably caused by an entrenched conviction that curriculum is a specialised business fulfilled by experts in the state departments. This entrenched conception of curriculum should be changed towards a notion that curriculum should be developed through participatory and inclusive processes. This change is necessary to make relevant stakeholders engaged in curriculum work. A democratic conversation on curriculum in academia and community of practitioners can facilitate this conceptual change.

The centralised curriculum authority does not still have a legislative framework that supports a participatory curriculum development process. For example, non-governmental organisations' representatives are not allowed to join curriculum development committees (MoNE, 1993). The current regulations [should-may](#) be amended to support partnerships between NGOs and BoE, so that NGOs [can-are allowed to](#) produce educational materials to enhance the citizenship education experience of students. In short, an inclusive and participatory curriculum development system is necessary to bring citizenship education in line with the international standards.

In addition to the re-structuring of the curriculum development system, the influential socio-political actors should be convinced of the significance of democratic citizenship education. For this purpose, a high-profile committee, representative of the Turkish society, can be formed to determine Turkey-specific objectives of democratic education.

This research finally showed that curriculum reforms sponsored by international organisations might result in the promotion of the ideological discourses of powerful groups. The recognition of internal human rights issues is an indispensable precondition for the contextualization of democracy and human rights principles in the curriculum. Democracy, human rights and citizenship can be ideally taught through examples derived from the democracy and human rights struggle of target context. Citizenship education reforms that are launched with no recognition of specific human rights and democracy issues are unlikely to promote democracy. The curriculum reform in Turkey ended with the military's instrumentalisation of the subject arguably because it was launched with no recognition of any of Turkey's human rights problems, and the textbooks did not include democracy, citizenship and human rights issue from Turkey.

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