HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION: AN ANALYSING STUDY OF THE PROGRAMS OF STUDY OF GREEK PEDAGOGICAL DEPARTMENTS

Charikleia Pitsou, Stathis Balias
University of Patras, Greece
E-mail:xpitsou@hotmail.com; balias@upatras.gr

Abstract

The United Nations (UN) declared 1995-2004 the Decade for Human Rights Education (HRE); as a follow-up, a HRE World Program (2005-2009) was initiated, aiming at the support and development of sustainable national strategies and programs in HRE. Many higher education institutions and universities seized upon the opportunity and infused their curricula with the philosophy and principles of HRE. HRE is a type of education that promotes training, dissemination, and information efforts aiming at building a universal culture of human rights (HR) by imparting knowledge and skills and shaping attitudes. This paper presents a thorough quantitative content analysis of a descriptive assessment of HRE in all Greek Pedagogical Departments' (GPD) Undergraduate Programs of Study (PS), where future Primary School Teachers (PST) and Preschool Educators (PE) are educated. A review of course titles and descriptions of the 19 PS of GPD was conducted to identify HR content. The results suggest that HR content is present in a variety of GPD courses. It is especially evident in 17 courses. The question arising and discussed is whether the attendance of such courses can lead to a robust and consistent implementation of HRE. Recommendations for further development of HRE in Pedagogical Departments (PD) are provided.
Keywords: *Greek Pedagogical Departments, Human Rights Education, Programs of Study, Training of Primary School Teachers and Preschool Educators.*

Introduction

During the last decades, there has been growing international interest in the implementation of HRE in all levels of education. Specifically, the proclamation of the years 1995-2004 and 2005-2009 as the UN Decade for HRE (United Nations General Assembly, 1994) and the World Program for HRE (United Nations General Assembly, 2005a) respectively played a catalytic role in the introduction of HRE in higher education, mainly in universities. Throughout these 15 years, the foremost aim was:

> *"...all States and institutions to include human rights, humanitarian law, democracy and rule of law as subjects in the curricula of all learning institutions in formal and non-formal settings"[1].*

Within this framework, the philosophy, perspective and concepts of HRE started being integrated in the PS of university departments. The application and implementation of the UN's aforementioned educational policies at all educational levels necessitate the introduction of HRE in the PS of PST and PE Departments, which educate PST and PE who will be called to shape the future citizens. Indeed, one of the main objectives of the World Program for HRE is the inclusion and practice of HR in primary and secondary education (United Nations General Assembly, 2005b). As HRE ought to be a part of the school curriculum, it is

---

[1] Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights at Vienna on 25 June 1993, §79.

imperative for trainee PST and PE to be educated according to the role they will assume (Pitsou, Spinthourakis, & Balias, 2009).

In Greece, future PST and PE are educated in PD (Framework Law, 1268/82). There are nine PD for PST and nine for PE. There is a Department of Special Education, for both PST and PE (Presidential Decree, 177/1993).The PD educating PST and PE have a four-year attendance and are part of the Social and Humanities Schools of each University. Each School is an umbrella covering all the departments it contains.

Here a question arises: what is HRE? HRE is the practical preparation of individuals, groups and communities in such a way that, initially, they can be informed of and understand the contents of the official texts on HR. Subsequently, this knowledge should be actively and practically internalised, so that the behaviours and skills each individual develops derive from the philosophy of HR, to allow them to take actions for their recognition, promotion and protection (Mihr & Schmitz, 2007; Tibbitts, 2005). Consequently, the educational objectives of HRE are not only knowledge-related and measurable, but aim mainly at changing the attitudes of learners and shaping a behaviour guided and inspired by the culture of HR (Mihr, 2004; Niens, Reilly & McLaughlin, 2006). The above could be recapitalised in an educational triptych which includes knowledge, skills and attitudes that contribute towards the active support of HR (Fritzsche, 2004; Tibbitts, 2002).

Research Aim

This work comes to examine whether GPD have responded, and to what extent, to the call of the UN for introducing HRE in the universities of its member states. Namely, this work aims to form a trigger for the introduction of HRE in all GPD and to fill the gap in domestic literature on the problem examined here.

Research Focus

The purpose of this study is to find out if GPD include HR in their PS. This paper analyses the data of PS of the GPD and provides recommendations for the further integration of HRE in the PD, for HRE to be implemented as best as possible.

Research Methodology

General Research Background

In recent years, we note a strong trend in Greek universities, mainly in PD, to update their PS so as to strongly orient research and knowledge production focusing on democratic values. PD cover subjects related to civic education, multiculturalism, HR and HRE. In line with international trends and influences by international organisations such as the UN, the field of HRE is a critical and essential field of research for addressing the phenomena of racism and xenophobia. Starting from the above, here it is attempted to be analysed and examined the extent to which HRE has been introduced in the PS of the PD of Greek universities, and especially to ascertain the influence of the UN intervention in the framework of the UN Decade for HRE (1995-2004) and the World Program for HRE (2005-2009).

In this thorough quantitative content analysis of a descriptive assessment of the PS of GPD, the researchers searched the PS of the 19 GPD in the academic year 2010-2011. This academic year is a landmark, as it comes one year after the 15-year course of both the UN Decade for HRE (1995-2004) and the World Program for HRE (2005-2009). A review of course titles and descriptions in the 19 PS of GPD took place, to identify HR content.

Research Sample

The research sample consisted of all 19 undergraduate study guides (SG) of GPD. Nine SG belong to the PD for trainee PST, nine to the PD for trainee PE and one to the Department of Special Education. They were collected in paper and electronic format by contacting the Secretaries of the Departments or by visiting their official websites. Some difficulties were encountered in the collection of the SG, which were overcome. Specifically, the first difficulty encountered was that the SG for the academic year under study had not been issued simultaneously by all Departments in their printed and electronic form. Furthermore, during the examination of the SG, it was found that they were not adequately updated, as they contained subjects of study that were no longer taught. Additionally, they contained subjects of study whose title or description contained HR but for which no teacher had been assigned and no explanatory information was given. These difficulties were overcome by studying the list of books given to the students of all 19 GRD in the academic year 2010-2011.[2] By this way, it was checked which subject was offered this specific academic year.

Variables

The first variable was the presence or absence of HRE in the undergraduate PS of GPD. If this variable was expressed with "yes", the researchers would examine the second variable, which was expressed as the number of courses offered that contained the words HR in the course title or description. The data for these variables were collected through a thorough quantitative content analysis of course descriptions from the printed or electronic versions of the academic SG.

Methods and Procedures

The SG were examined via quantitative content analysis (Berelson, 1971; Holsti, 1969). The recording unit used was the symbolic unit *theme,* as the most suitable for the study and analysis of educational material (Bonidis, 2004). Because the *theme* is a complex recording unit (Berelson, 1971), it seemed necessary to also determine a context unit, to serve as the basis for analysis and determination of meaning (Crano & Brewer, 2002). The *word* was set as context unit. In this research, the symbolic unit *theme* is the description of each course present in the PS of all 19 PD and the context unit-*word* is HR.

Data Analysis

This research study used three evaluators[3], including the first author. The two evaluators are practising teachers, while the third is a representative of the target audience of this analysis, i.e. a student in a PD in Greece (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998). All evaluators worked independently, used the same instructions and codified the same units of analysis. To ascertain reliability, Intercoder Reliability was applied (Holsti, 1969; Krippendorff, 1980; 2004; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002; Riffe, Lacy & Fico,1998; Weber, 1990) with the help of PRAM (Program for Reliability Assessment with Multiple Coders, Skymeg Software, 2002). Reliability ranged from .882 to .923 and is considered acceptable for all

---

[2] The list of books for each GRD is available at the following address: (http://eudoxus.gr)
[3] The evaluators act as coders, i.e. they search the research material to examine the variables to be studied.

cases (Krippendorff, 2004; Lombard, Snyder - Duch & Bracken, 2002, 2003; 2004; Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998; Weber, 1990).

To test the validity of this work, external and/or social validity was used. This implies that its documentation must meet the three conditions of social significance in accordance with Riffe, Lacy & Fico (1998). These conditions are: the size of the audience to which the content is exposed, the potential impact of the analysis content on a critical audience and the significance of its role in society. Specifically, PS are targeted to all future PST and PE and are likely to have an impact on a population of pupils aged 4-12 years, i.e. individuals who are in the process of developing their personality. At the same time, the analysis content is not isolated from the broader social, political, educational and multicultural life of modern Greek reality.

Research Results

Throughout this work the *19* undergraduate SG of GPD were examined. Of the 19 SG, 13 had identifiable HR courses (68%), while six had no identifiable HR courses (32%). Specifically, of the nine PD for trainee PST, seven PS offered one course with HR content, and one PS had three courses. These programs and their course titles can be found in Table 1. Of the nine PD for trainee PE, six PS offered one course with HR content, and one PS had three courses. Their data are provided in Table 2. Studying the two tables, we can see that two courses «Children's Song and Active Listening of Music» and «English II» are not directly related to HR. For this reason, it seems necessary to note that, according to the PS, in the course «Children's Song and Active Listening of Music» we can investigate global shared values such as HR through music. Similarly, the PS for the course "English II" states that the structures and grammar of the English language are delineated through texts with various topics, such as HRs.

The SG of the Department of Special Education did not include HR as a reference either in the title or in the description of its courses. Based on the results, no particular difference is observed in the distribution of courses between the PD for trainee PST and the PD for trainee PE.

Table 1. Number and Titles of Courses with HR Content Offered in Greek PD for trainee PST

University	Number of Courses	Course Titles
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens	1	➤ Science of religion and teaching of religious courses
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	0	-
University of Western Macedonia	0	-
University of Patras	3	➤ Special topics in comparative pedagogy ➤ Introduction to Philosophy I ➤ Issues on specific aspects of Pedagogical Intervention
University of Ioannina	1	➤ Human rights - pedagogy of peace
Democtitus University of Thrace	1	➤ Conflict management and pedagogy of peace
University of Crete	1	➤ Global studies
University of the Aegean	1	➤ Children's Song and Active Listening of Music

University of Thessaly	1	➢ Pedagogy of integration

Table 2. Number and Titles of Courses with HR Content Offered in Greek PD for trainee PE

University	Number of Courses	Course Titles
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens	1	➢ Pedagogy of integration
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	3	➢ Human Ecology ➢ Peace Studies ➢ Minority Issues and Minority Education in Post-war Greece
University of Western Macedonia	0	-
University of Patras	1	➢ Human rights
University of Ioannina	1	➢ English II
Democtitus University of Thrace	0	-
University of Crete	1	➢ Political socialisation and education: theory and practice
University of the Aegean	0	-
University of Thessaly	1	➢ Education on peace and human rights

Limitations of Study

The limitations of this study derive from the use of course titles and course descriptions listed in undergraduate SG as an indicator of HR content in courses. The use of this indicator causes the following problems. The absence of the term HR in the course title and/or description does not necessarily indicate a lack of HR content in a course. HR can be included in a subject of study without being included in the title or description existing in the SG of each Department. Similarly, the presence of the term HR in the course title and/or description does not reveal whether the teacher includes HR in the main body of his teaching. These limitations could be clarified via interviews with the faculty members of all GRD. However, given the large number of GPD, this would not be feasible in the context of the specific study.

Discussion

The study findings indicate a set of conclusions-thoughts. First of all, it is obviously that the teaching of HR is incorporated in a different grade into a wide range of courses in the PS of GPD, as proved in the case of the PD of PST of the University of Patras and the PD of PE of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Furthermore, although it is not obvious that some subjects contain teaching objectives relating to HR, the content of them, such as «Children's Song and Active Listening of Music» and «English II» shows that they examine issues relating to HR. This can be set as an example in order HR content to be adopted in the thematic area of courses offered in PD.

Secondly, the study findings show that there are courses exclusively dedicated to HR only in three PD out of the 19. To be more specific, these are offered in the PD of PST of the University of Ioannina «Human rights - pedagogy of peace» and the PD of PE of the University of Patras «Human rights» and Thessaly «Education on peace and human rights».

This indicates that HRE in Greek universities and especially in the field of Social and Humanities Sciences, where PD belong, is possibly limited and weak.

The above results coincide with them by Ruane, Walrdon, Maunsell, Prunty, OReilly, Kavanagh & Pike (2010) whose research project was to ascertain the level of awareness and attitudes towards HR and HRE among 152 Irish primary teachers. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had engaged with HRE at initial teacher education level. Only 14 respondents indicated that they had received HRE as part of their initial teacher education. This proves that HRE was not present in the PS of PD they attended. So, the HRE was weak in their initial studies. The presence of HRE seems also weak in the research of Steen and Mathiesen (2006). The researchers studied how many schools of social work, which are parts of universities and colleges in the United States and have an accredited MSW program, offer courses that include HR in the course title or course description. Their results suggest a dearth of HR content in social work curricula that put them behind the curve in the academy's efforts to advance HRE.

At this point, the question arises: why were the international calls of the UN for the introduction of HRE in Greek higher education institutions not taken directly into account and why are courses on HR not offered-taught at all GPD?

An answer that could be given is that, in Greece, since the restoration of democracy, the democratisation of Greek society has been a priority, both as a social demand and as a policy. Especially for universities, the demand for democratisation focused on expanding the network of universities and increasing the access of youth to them (Prokou, 2009). Therefore, attention focused on the quantitative dimension of the democratisation of universities. Although it existed, the debate on the education of social subjects in a democracy at all levels of education, was depreciated and this is evident in all levels of education (Pagoni, Karakatsani, Stamelos, Etienne & Spinthourakis, 2010). Last but not least, due to the economic crisis, the funding for Greek universities and research in general is well below the European average (Inter University Higher Education Policy Network, 2013), forming an obstacle to the support of the faculty in the Social and Humanities Sciences and especially in the field of HRE.

However, the above question may be a trigger for further research studies on the dynamics in Greek universities relating to research and knowledge production in the field of democracy and democratic values and the reasons why their development remains weak.

Nonetheless, the existence of courses of study associated with HRE in GPD may form a tool for change in terms of the research and theoretical orientation of the Greek educational system and its harmonisation with international standards in matters of promoting democratic-universal values. It could also serve as a starting point for introducing the teaching of courses exclusively dedicated to HR and the integration of the content of HRE in other courses.

Recommendations

The work findings reveal the existence of certain subjects of study that contain HR. It should be noted that references to HR emerge in various disciplines, thus enabling their multidisciplinary approach and their examination from multifaceted cognitive perspectives. However, it seems that their approach may remain superficial and theoretical and is limited to the knowledge thereof, with general references to their contents, or to the most important international texts on HR. It would be more effective and constructive if the attendance of any subject of study that deals even partially with HR could lead to a spontaneous desire of students to act to support these whenever they note that they are violated. How can this be achieved? Only if the subject of study associated with HR includes both theory and practice. In other words, it can be achieved when the students of the PD and all those who are taught

regarding HR in general are trained to recognize violations of HR and gain awareness in how to become actively involved in their defence. The above, in combination with the introduction of appropriate educational material, could provide a basis for the knowledge, awareness and active defence of HR (Steen & Mathiesen 2006). Moreover, it is considered important to have a link between the academic courses related to HRE and the school curricula the future PST and PE will be called to implement in the classroom (Ruane, Walrdon, Maunsell, Prunty, OReilly, Kavanagh & Pike, 2010). Such a framework will enable students to become recipients and multipliers of formal or non-formal educational practices associated with HR and to implement them with success in the school and the social reality.

Conclusions

HRE is of great importance for international peace, democracy and promoting a culture of HR. As a key tool for promoting HR in modern societies, it would be good for HRE to be adopted systematically not only in PD, but in all levels of education, as well as in all institutions, since it represents an ongoing, lifelong education that includes both formal and non-formal forms. Due to the importance of HR for more humane and more democratic societies and of the education for their promotion, the Greek educational system, and especially higher education, should more decisively introduce HRE in curricula to disseminate a culture of HR to a greater extent in Greek society.

However, as shown by this study, HRE does not hold a particularly important and significant place in the curriculum of Greek universities, and especially in PD. Even if HRE has been adopted by a number of PD, it remains essentially at a rather theoretical or superficial level, providing general knowledge about HR. In fact, it seems that there is no systematic and methodical learning and pedagogical intervention at the level of Greek universities, since the teaching of HRE as a standalone subject of study is only provided in the PS of three PD. In the context of their academic autonomy, Greek universities could more actively and to a greater extent develop the research field of HRE. Even when HR are part of their PS, greater emphasis may be placed on knowledge thereof and not on their transformational role, which is more important for changing the attitudes of learners and future PST and PE, so that HR can really be promoted in Greek society and create the conditions for a culture of HR.

Acknowledgment

References

Berleson, B. (1971). *Content Analysis in Communication Research.* (Facsimile of 1952 edition). New York: Hafner Publishing Company.

Bonidis, K. (2004). *The content of school book as a research material.* Athens: Metaixmio. [in Greek].

Crano, W.D., & Brewer, M. B. (2002). *Principles and Methods of Social Research.* Second Edition. Mahwah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Framework Law, 1268/82. For the Structure and Operation of Universities. [in Greek].

Fritzsche, K-P. (2004). What Human Rights Education is all about - 15 Theses. In Georgi,V.B. & Seberich, M. (Eds.), *International Perspectives in Human Rights Education* (pp. 162- 167). Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers.

Holsti, O., R. (1969). *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities.* Reading, M. A: Addison – Wesley Publication Company.

Inter University Higher Education Policy Network. (2013). *The Greek Higher Education Institutions in the world rankings Universities, Technical Institutions, Private Structures.* Study 8. Patras. Retrieved 10/01/2014, from:
http://hepnet.upatras.gr/xfiles/pubs/HEP%20translation%20final.pdf

Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content Analysis. An Introduction to its Methodology.* London: Sage Publication.

Krippendorff, K. (2004). Reliability in Content Analysis. Some Common Misconceptions and Recommendations. *Human Communication Research,* 30(3), 411-443.

Lombard, M., Snyder - Duch, J., & Bracken, C. C. (2002). Content Analysis in Mass Communication. Assessment and Reporting of Intercoder Reliability. *Human Communication Research,* 28(4), 587-604.

Lombard, M., Snyder - Duch, J., & Bracken, C. C. (2003). Correction. *Human Communication Research,* 3(29), 469-472.

Lombard, M., Snyder - Duch, J., & Bracken, C. C. (2004). A Call for Standardization in Content Analysis Reliability. *Human Communication Research,* 30 (3), 434-437.

Mihr, A. (2004). *Human Rights Education: Methods, Institutions, Culture and Evaluation.* Institute for Political Science: University of Magdeburg.

Mihr, A., & Schmitz, H. P. (2007). Human Rights Education (HRE) and Transnational Activism. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 29(4), 973-993.

Niens,U., Reilly, J., & McLaughlin, R. (2006). The Need for Human Rights Education in Northern Ireland: A Pupil Survey. *Peace and Conflict, Journal of Peace Psychology*, 12(3), 251-268.

Pagoni M., Karakatsani D., Stamelos G., Etienne R., & Spinthourakis J.A. (2010). *Curricular, Pedagogical and Didactic Questions about Participative Citizenship in Lower Secondary Schools: A comparison of two European countries*. Final Report. Retrieved 18/01/2014, from:http://www.elemedu.upatras.gr/images/jspin/CiCea_Grant_Award_FINAL_REPORT_30_04_2010.pdf.

Pitsou, C., Spinthourakis, J-A., & Balias, S. (2009). Human Rights Education and Social Change: Towards the hegemony of human rights culture. The relevance of the change of curriculum and the formation of a new type of teacher. In Ross, A. (Eds.), *Human Rights and Citizenship Education* (pp. 175-180). London: CiCe.

Presidential Decree, 177/1993. Renaming Faculties- Establishment-Organisation of Faculties and Departments in University of Thessaly. [in Greek].

Prokou, E. (2009). Adult education and life long learning in Europe and in Greece. Athens: Dionikos. [in Greek].

Riffe, D., Lacy, St., & Fico, F. G. (1998). *Analyzing Media Messages Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ruane, B., Walrdon, F., Maunsell, C., Prunty, A., OReilly, M., Kavanagh, A. M., & Pike, S. (2010). "Bringing Alive the Spirit of Human Rights": Irish Teachers' Understanding of and Disposition towards Human Rights and Human Rights Education. In Walrdon, F. & Ruane, B. (Eds.), *Human Rights Education. Reflections on Theory and Practice* (pp. 158-185). Dublin: The Liffey Press.

Steen, J., A., & Mathiesen, S. (2006). Human Rights Education: Is Social Work Behind the Curve? *Journal of Teaching in Social Work,* 25(3), 143-156.

Tibbitts, F. (2002). Understanding what we do: Emerging models for human rights education. *International Review of Education, 48* (3-4), 159-171.

Tibbitts, F. (2005). Transformative learning and human rights education: taking a closer look. *Intercultural Education,* 16(2), 107-113.

United Nations General Assembly. (1994). *United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education.* Resolution A/ 49/184 of 23 December 1994.

United Nations General Assembly. (2005a). *World Programme for Human Rights Education.* Resolution A/ 59/113 of 17 February 2005.

United Nations General Assembly. (2005b). *Revised draft plan of action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education.* A/59/525/Rev.1 of 2 March 2005.

Weber, R. P. (1990). *Basic Content Analysis.* London: Sage Publications.

Charikleia Pitsou	PhD, Head of Innovative School Activities in the Province of Ilia, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Pyrgos, 27100, Greece. Phone:+306973065665 Email: xpitsou@hotmail.com
Stathis Balias	PhD, Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Science and Early Childhood Education University of Patras, Rio 26.500, Greece. Phone:+302610969302 Email: balias@upatras.gr Website:http://www.ecedu.upatras.gr/services/site/prosopiko.php?sm=22&teacher_id=71