

Promoting Human Rights in Primary and Secondary School Textbooks: A Human Rights-Based Textbook Analysis

The Economic and Social History Foundation of Turkey (History Foundation of Turkey)

DESCRIPTION

The Project for Promoting Human Rights in Primary and Secondary School Textbooks which began in May 2002, was carried out under the auspices of the Turkish Academy of Sciences, by the History Foundation in cooperation with the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey and with the financial support of the European Commission and the Open Society Institute. Its aim was to determine the human rights content context of school textbooks, formulate recommendations for their improvement, and to foster awareness of and respect for human rights norms in school textbooks and the school environment, among school teachers, textbook writers, parents, and educators in general, at both the grass roots and the official levels.

The findings of the survey of 190 textbooks from all subjects and years, conducted with the participation of close to three hundred volunteers, who consisted mainly of school teachers, but also included senior university students and parents, are reported at length in a volume titled *Human Rights Issues in Textbooks, the Turkish Case* (in English) introduced and edited by Prof. Gürol Irzik and Dr. Deniz Tarba Ceylan. In vindication of the basic premises of the survey, an overwhelming number of reports of problematic usages were related to basic educational practices, and therefore these also constitute the main issues which are emphasized in our final recommendations.

In Turkish, three different volumes, one on the survey results, another on writing more human rights sensitive textbooks, and a third, a guidebook for the teachers, for a more human rights friendly school environment, appeared in December 2004.

A survey for qualitatively and quantitatively determining the attitudes and practices towards human rights, with the aid of a questionnaire and focus groups, was conducted in six cities in Turkey with 1200 students and 300 teachers. The findings of this survey also published in books form.

Grass roots watchdog committees have been set up in six provinces in Turkey to keep up the surveillance of textbooks with respect to human rights criteria, and trainer training programs have been conducted for 165 teachers, with the aim of enabling them to critically assess their own school and teaching experiences.

An international symposium was held in April 2004 on Human Rights Education and Textbook Research to compare approaches and experiences on an international level, to develop suggestions for the sectors concerned and communicate key findings. The proceedings of the Symposium published under the title *How Are We Educated?*

The Recommendations to the Ministry of Education is final action item of the Project for Promoting Human Rights in Primary and Secondary School Textbooks.