

Gender inequality interventions in educational settings: the cases of Turkey and Italy

A proposal about an educational intervention

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“Speak up” Jean Monnet Module

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Part one: gender inequality in educational settings

1. Introduction
2. Council of Europe attempts at legal harmonization towards the Education Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) ...
3. ... but Turkish answer is the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention
4. “Is the human rights language the right one to live a life worth living”?

Part two: proposal of an educational intervention

1. Target (beneficiaries)
2. Objectives
3. Actions
4. Evaluation
5. Expected results

Part one:

1. Introduction

Gender inequality is a topic inside the human rights perspective and Turkey should be treated as a country of the Council of Europe observing the European Convention of Human Rights, the CEDU Jurisdiction and the rule of law as a part of Nato and atlantic western world. It would mean more pression by Europe but a stronger reaction by Turkish leader.

Is gender-based violence a part of such a political reaction? Sure, if it is, we're talking of a criminal reaction, which means a reaction leading towards war and more violence!

Before the two conferences of the United Nations held in Vienna and Beijing in the last decade of the 20th century *< domestic violence was regarded as a purely private matter that even liberal democracies did not consider. Hidden evocations of abuses in the family were not displayed in the public discourse as a matter of common concern. The pain of victims did not find a place where it could be heard and healed >*¹.

Council of Europe, only in May 2011, finally promulgated the *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence* (better known as **Istanbul Convention**).

The preamble of the convention explicates that:

< the realisation of de jure and de facto equality between women and men is a key element in the prevention of violence against women;

Recognising that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, which have led to domination over, and discrimination against, women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women;

Recognising the structural nature of violence against women as gender-based violence, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men; >

The treaty was opened to signatures by the Council of Europe in Istanbul. It offers a legal framework to protect women from violence and promote gender equality, through legislation, education and awareness raising. The Convention's four key principles of

¹ Marina Calloni, 37

prevention, protection, criminal prosecution and policy co-ordination aim to provide a comprehensive structure for combatting gender-based violence.

Through its ratification and implementation, the Convention has led to significant improvements in how states treat those who experience gender-based violence. These include the establishment of 24-hour helplines for survivors of domestic violence in Finland, to the introduction of consent-based definitions of rape in Iceland, Sweden, Greece, Croatia, Malta, Denmark and Slovenia since 2018.

The Istanbul Convention is a widely accepted human rights instrument to address rampant levels of violence against women in Europe. In June of 2020, Liechtenstein became the 34th country out of 47 in the Council of Europe to ratify the Convention.

But the Convention is also facing a disturbing backlash across many parts of Europe and becoming a tool by several governments to spread misinformation and demonise gender equality, women's and LGBTI rights.

It has been said already that main keywords of the Convention concern the **P**revention of the phenomenon, **P**rotection of the victims, **P**rosecution of the perpetrators, **P**olicies to be promoted by interested States (the four **P**).

2. Council of Europe attempts at legal harmonization towards the Education Sustainable Development Goal ...

Focused on OECD countries, the Education Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda is a universal call for action to promote inclusive and equitable access to quality education, and to ensure that all students can fulfil their potential. It includes a variety of indicators, notably on access to education, learning outcomes and means of implementation.

On average across OECD countries, around 95% of boys and girls are enrolled in early childhood education and care (ECEC) one year before the official primary school entry age (SDG Indicator 4.2.2). Although participation in ECEC is similar for boys and girls, ensuring equity in access to ECEC can remain a challenge when it comes to socio-economic background.

In terms of equity in learning outcomes, 15-year-old girls tend to outperform boys in reading. Reading performance also varies significantly depending on students' socio-economic background and immigrant status (SDG Indicators 4.1.1 and 4.5.1).

OECD reports show how gender disparities also persist and influence educational trajectories and opportunities in the labour market. Boys are more likely than girls to repeat a grade and underperform in reading, and less likely to complete upper secondary education. When it comes to selecting an educational trajectory, boys are usually overrepresented in vocational paths and less likely to enter and graduate from tertiary education. Women outnumber men in participation rates to formal adult learning. Yet they remain less likely to be employed and earn less than men across all levels of educational attainment and OECD countries, even among those having graduated from the same field of study.

In **Italy** data show that higher schooling is between women instead of men. The latest stats report that in 2018 have come out of Italian high schools 63,8% of females and 59,7 of males and about graduates at universities we have had 34% of women and 21,7% of men.

Nevertheless, the gender gap is still deep and so hard to eliminate in the labour market, as confirmed by the rules of the equal opportunities Italian code, focused on eliminate the labor inequalities (d. lgs. n. 198/2006).

In fact, the major skills acquired don't become corresponding employment rates or fair remunerations.

Where economic power is strong, men's resistance is stronger.

Within the frame of the educational systems, a crucial challenge consists now in the constitutions of a network of Italian universities aimed at developing teaching, research, training, advocacy in an international perspective. This project is called UN.I.RE, which means UNiversità In Rete contro la violenza di genere (Network of Universities against gender-based violence).

In **Turkey** the situation is quite different: the social contest and the government policies are not comparable to Italian ones.

Gender inequality is one the worst aspect of an unequal and violent country into one of the states so called illiberal democracy that is going far back in the uphold of every human right and should attempt to aim more equality in every field, but it doesn't anymore. Why?

Turkey is a muslim country almost at 98% and the power of religious party is increasing more and more.

So, gender inequality interventions in educational settings must be empowered as a part of the policies by which the government could let Turkish people be closer to western lifestyle but is not sure they want it.

3. ... but Turkish answer is the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention

Everywhere in Turkey is very difficult to speak up on gender-based violence that shows in all the tough depravation of reality a problem very impressive on children, scholars, students, that are not used to discover *< dominions where force is daily perpetrated in the form of an invasive power and the will to control >*.

There is a too big gap between one world, where people live peacefully and safely, and another one, where violence explodes as *< a manifestation of coercive forms of power, domination, control both in the political domain and in the private space >*.

This cultural, social and psychological gap is based on *< enduring structural and symbolic violence embedded in the mentalities of both men and women >*.

My feeling is that ancestral instincts, totems and tabus are not enough to explain the violent reaction of people when women progress seem to awake the idea of the patriarchal order in the society and powerful institutions.

Marilisa D'Amico confirms that *< there is a very strong link between the evolution in women's role in contemporary societies [and] realization of the principle of equality between men and women [on the one hand] ... and violence [on the other] >*.

Anyway, "Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention was the first at the denouncing of it on 20 March 2021"

It was the tip of a dangerous anti-rights iceberg. But it has also galvanized activists around the world to stand up for women's and LGBTI rights," said Agnès Callamard (Amnesty International)".

"In the months since President Erdoğan issued his decree, women in Turkey and beyond have been talking about the Convention more than ever and taking to the streets to defend what it stands for. The fight to uphold the human rights of all those impacted by the scourge of gender-based violence continues.

"Turkey is the first and only country in the Council of Europe to have withdrawn from an international human rights convention. 34 out of the 47 Council of Europe countries have signed and ratified the Istanbul Convention (Poland and Hungary are still out).

The Turkish government and its supporters have said the Istanbul Convention threatens "family values" and "normalises homosexuality", claims which have been echoed by several governments, including Poland and Hungary, to justify their attempts to roll back rights. They talk of "ideological" principles, such as that of "socio-cultural" sex as opposed to "biological" sex.

4. "Is the human rights language the right one to live a life worth living"?

Since the times of the Ottoman Empire the main rules of the private law, including family ones, were imported from the roman (*Corpus iuris civilis*) and french codes during the century XIX°.

In 1839 the edict of *Tanzimat* opened the Constitutional development of the empire and in 1856 the edict of *Islahat* definitively established that the laws were the same for everyone without any distinction of religious affiliation.

Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 by the legendary leader Kemal Ataturk the secularization of both the State and the society asserted itself decisively and in 1926 the government decided to fully implement the Swiss civil code.

It meant western law for Turkish people and a secular society in Turkey after the fall of Ottoman Empire and the right choice by the Turkish leader, Ataturk, for himself and for his country.

Why today is different? Everywhere, not only in eastern Europe and Asia Minor?

Is the human rights language the right one to live a life worth living?

Better said: has the natural tension between the universality of human rights, by one hand, and the historicity of law, by the other hand, stressed too much the western model of protecting women from inequality and gender-based violence?

Maybe yes.

Beyond the criminal facts, women, all over the world, want to live a human life, in order to reach its highest potential, as the capabilities approach of the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues, including the ability to live a life that is "worth living," the ability to use one's imagination, sufficient education to enable a "truly human" understanding of the world and one's position in it, having dignity and a sense of equal worth, as well as the ability to participate in the political life of one's society.

Mary Ann Glendon, another American philosopher, starts from the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

The problem of universality loomed large from the moment the idea of an "international bill of rights" was conceived in the aftermath of World War II.

The preamble is: < *Whereas the people of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom* >

Mary Ann Glendon says that by expressly including women, by alluding to freedom from want, and by evoking the U.N. Charter's commitment to better standards of life, the Preamble signals from the outset that this document is not just a "universalization" of the traditional eighteenth century "rights of man," but part of a new "moment" in the history of human rights.

This “moment” has lasted all the cold war period that was a long peace time almost in Europe.

Now that period is over and everything has changed, from a globalized liberal order towards dangerous winds of war and a new contrast between Western democracies with their human rights traditions, on the one hand, and the great autarchies, Russia and China in the lead, by the other hand.

So, men and women of the 1948 have become in most of the world, as the Italian jurist Marta Cartabia says < *expression of a hyper-libertarian culture where freedom means absolute self-determination a culture centered on an individual isolated and abstracted from society* >.

Anything but universal can be added in conclusion!

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