

Have The European Union Guidelines been a Driving Force in the Inclusion of Children's Rights into the German "Sachunterricht" Course Curriculum?

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ABSTRACT

It is observed that efforts are made to benefit from the perspective of the Universal Convention on the Rights of the Child and to undertake the protection and promotion of children's rights more effectively in countries that are members of the European Union/membership process with the European Union Agreement (Lisbon Treaty) which came into force in 2009. In this direction, the European Union Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Children's Rights were published to guide the EU member countries and their countries in the process of membership in their work on children's rights. So, the research purposed primarily to examine the status of children's rights in the official *Sachunterricht* course curriculum used in the German education system in line with the EU Guidelines. In the research, a holistic multiple-state pattern was adopted from the qualitative research approach patterns. In the process of obtaining research data, the document review method was used. The official *Sachunterricht* course curriculum in sixteen states in the Federal Republic of Germany was examined in this scope. As a consequence of the research, it was concluded that the content included in the curriculum in most states is in line with the EU Guidelines. However, we saw just a few curricula have that there are statements of attainment and study examples regarding children's right to protection and participation. At this point, studies can be put forward to make all education curricula more compatible with EU Guiding Principles. These studies should ensure that the teaching curricula that countries will use address children's rights and related learning outcomes and teaching activities aimed at recognizing children's rights, preventing discrimination against them, building a culture of universal peace, and preparing children for responsible lives in a free society.

Key words: Children's rights Literacy, European Union Guidelines, Universal Convention on Children's Rights, *Sachunterricht* course Curricula

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is possible to state that the subject of children's rights lies at the intersection of numerous disciplines such as law, education, health sciences, and psychology. Based on this, we can state that further interdisciplinary research on children's rights will undoubtedly yield robust results and pave the way for new developments. In other words, Hareket and Kartal (2021), stated that developments in interdisciplinary studies are an effective way to protect children's rights and prevent violations of those rights. Indeed, the research and experience of those working in the field of children's rights provide us with increasingly clear ideas about the reasons and ways of protecting these rights internationally (Daniels, 2022). From a more conceptual perspective, children's rights are defined as "legislations and protections granted to children to guarantee their physical, mental, emotional, social, and moral development based on freedom and dignity (Özdemir

& Ruhi, 2016). The significance of children's rights and child protection depends on the discourse that children are the most sensitive group of people and therefore they need to have rights that safeguard them from potentially detrimental adult actions (Munongi & Pillay, 2018). All research on children's rights should be based on law, and by extension, interdisciplinary research should focus on the prevalence and promotion of those rights. Dündar and Hareket (2017) argue that administrations should develop scientific, realistic, and feasible policies to raise the public perception and awareness of children's rights and elevate those rights to a higher status. Children and young people are at the receiving end of policies that have been developed and implemented by public officials and these policies can have the potential to support children's development and their rights (Byrne & Lundy, 2019). As a matter of fact, the studies dealing with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention's intellectual consensus framework are

good examples of this (Quennerstedt et al., 2018). Many international institutions and organizations put much effort into promoting those regulations, but the Council of Europe (CoE), within the scope of the European Union is especially important as it has undertaken significant reforms to guarantee children's rights. Not only the content of these studies carried out by the Council of Europe, but also their appearance in the field of application are open to research. As a matter of fact, Quennerstedt et al. (2018), provided a strong example to child rights researchers at this point by investigating the tensions and contradictions in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The protection and promotion of children's rights is a significant objective of the EU and some legal instruments and policy initiatives have already been developed and implemented at the European level (Molter, 2021). The Council of Europe is an expert organization for protecting and promoting children's human rights. Although the duties and missions of the CoE vary across member states, it is a global organization that works on the realization of the ideal of human rights (Aladağ Görentaş, 2015). In this context, rights-based approaches play a crucial role in both the fundamental policies of the EU and the domestic policies of the member states. The protection and promotion of children's rights is a core value held and pursued by the EU within the framework of "the principle of respect for human rights." Many treaties, conventions, declarations, and resolutions, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, adopted by the CoE, draw a road map to protect and promote children's rights (Dervişoğlu, 2012). However, it should be noted that although the EU has no authority to sanction violations of fundamental rights, including children's rights, it is responsible for respecting fundamental rights in every step it takes within its jurisdiction per the Treaty on European Union (Tat, 2016).

As stated above, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, enacted by the Treaty on EU, also signed by Turkey, and the EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child (EU Guidelines) drawn up by the Council of the EU in 2017 are examples of the steps taken in the legal field for the protection, dissemination, and promotion of children's rights. Although they are not new rights, they are considered by the Agreement to be the general, written, and binding principles of the EU (Tat, 2016). In parallel, the legal regulations targeting children and young people in the member states are more about protection than punishment, in line with developments in international laws on children's rights (Tomanbay, 2011). Of the founder members of the EU, Germany has vital importance. According to Arslan (2006), the authorities of the global economy regard Germany as a miracle-maker in social and economic fields and as the cement of the EU. The German Federal Council stated in a press release in 2011 that federated states were interested in strengthening the specific rights of children (Gören, 2017). However, efforts on children's rights are unfortunately progressing at a questionable level. As a matter of fact, it is seen that the federal government of Germany was criticized by Klunt (2022) for neglecting the child welfare test and denial of children's rights such as

participation, education, and health. Similarly, Kallenbach (2021) pointed out that children's rights have been discussed by different professional organizations for many years and stated that the issue has become even more current today in Germany. Children's rights are also a fundamental issue of education law literacy and child rights literacy.

Although undertakings for the promotion and protection of children's rights need to be under the protection of the law, educational endeavors also play a crucial role in penetrating those rights into social life. It is mean that in practices shaped by human rights content, children learn better what it means to act in accordance with or against human rights norms (Quennerstedt, 2016). Education is the key to making sure that children enjoy their rights and turn into individuals who respect others' rights (Akyüz, 2018). As a matter of fact, schools are generally the first place that children who have rights encounter the state duty-bearer regularly (Gillett-Swan & Lundy, 2022). The world's educational systems are therefore responsible for enabling the growing generations to understand the role that human rights play in our lives and the vitality of democratic regimes (Quennerstedt, 2022). To put it more strongly, educational arguments have serious vital importance in terms of individuals being more resistant to adverse conditions in political environments in which human rights and democracy are under attack from ethno-nationalist and anti-democratic forces (Quennerstedt, 2019). Although it is an area of participation that takes place at a micro and medium level when internalized for children and young people (Cross et al., 2022), the curriculum is among the most significant of these educational arguments. Curricula should address children's rights because they set the path for subject areas, books, and all educational processes with which children are provided. Therefore, we can state that curricula set a framework for the course content regarding children's rights, make related issues visible, and manage direct and/or indirect learning outcomes and educational activities (Hareket, 2020). So, we should consider that the curriculum with the elements it contains, can be one of the sources of violations of children's rights in educational settings (Lundy & Sainz, 2018). Thus, this points to us the possible strong effects of curricula on children's rights literacy.

Overall, we should determine how often and in what way the curricula of German schools address children's rights in order to find out how deep the EU efforts on children's rights have penetrated the education systems. Bertels et al. (2021) stated that various questions and areas of research on the subject of children's rights have been addressed very little in Germany to date. Pamuk and Pamuk (2016) note that *Sachunterricht* in Germany and social studies in some countries are the courses that introduce the subjects of citizenship and democratic values to children and prepare them for a democratic society. *Sachunterricht* and social studies courses offered to students from grades 1 to 4 help them learn about life, get to know the world, and develop essential skills that will enable them to adapt to society (Tural et al., 2017). German reunification in 1990 resulted in the total number of federal states rising to sixteen. Although a central ministry of education oversees all federal states, they have the authority to decide their own educational and cultural policies (Can,

2019). Therefore, the curriculum of *Sachunterricht* may vary across the federal states. This means that the repercussions of the EU Guidelines adopted by the Council on the curriculum of *Sachunterricht* may vary even within Germany's borders. Inculcating the ideals of democracy and human rights into youth is becoming more and more critical for the EU (Uğurlu, 2011). Consequently, the Treaty of Lisbon signed by the EU member states and entered into force in 2009 stipulates that children's rights be monitored and promoted effectively by the member and candidate states in light of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The primary objective of this study was to examine the *Sachunterricht* curricula in German Education System from the perspective of the EU Guidelines.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research was designed in accordance with the qualitative research approach. The qualitative research approach is a process in which the processing steps related to the research process are designed, researchers often acquire data from their own environment, inductive data analyses are performed, and data are interpreted and interpreted by researchers; it is expressed as a method that allows the data to be handled one by one and the research results to be readable within the framework of certain codes and themes (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 1998). A holistic multiple case study, a qualitative research method, was the design of choice in this study. The holistic multiple case study involves multiple phenomena addressed first separately and then as a whole concerning the topic of interest (Yin, 2009). The study first analyzed the curricula of the 16 federal states of Germany one by one and then evaluated them all together. At this point, it is worth noting that data may consist of program documents and records (Patton, 2014).

Research Group

The sixteen official *Sachunterricht* course curricula were analyzed from the perspective of the UNCRC and the Europe Union Guidelines. The sample consisted of curricula recruited using criterion sampling, a purposive sampling method used to draw a sample that satisfies a set of predetermined criteria.

The inclusion criteria were as follows:

- Content on democracy, human rights, citizenship, gender, and children's rights
- Used by a member or candidate state where the repercussions of the EU Guidelines can be observed.
- Used by a state which signed the UNCRC

The Process of Data Collection and Analysis

The data were analyzed using document analysis. Documents are one of the most basic data collection tools and more stable and objective than other qualitative data collection tools (Patton, 2014; Merriam, 1998). The sample consisted of the authentic versions of the *Sachunterricht* curricula offered by Germany's sixteen federal states. The specific goal of the

curricula analyses is to investigate and clarify ways in which education for human rights (children's rights) is communicated within national curricula, and how children and young people's growth as holders and claimers of human rights are addressed (Phillips, 2016).

The documents were authentic and directly accessible, which is vital given possible issues in terms of accuracy, reliability, and potential trends if documents had been obtained outside of research (Robson, 2015). The curricula were accessed from the official sites of the federal states. These official websites where the curricula are obtained are also presented in the appendices section. Afterward, an independent researcher who completed primary, secondary, and high school education in Germany and had C2-level German translated the sixteen curricula into English. The data were categorized according to the groups of rights granted to children by the UNCRC and then analyzed based on the repercussions of the EU Guidelines.

Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

We took some steps to maximize validity and reliability. Firstly, we accessed the authentic versions of the curricula and had two experts confirm their authenticity by checking them in their original language. In terms of the validity and reliability of the data collection process, the curricula examined were obtained from the official website resources and these sources are shown in the appendices section of the text in the ethical framework. The reliability of this qualitative study was about yielding consistent results when it is repeated over time (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, we can argue that the authenticity of the curricula served for the reliability of this study. Another step taken to improve reliability was making sure that an independent researcher with a Ph.D. and studies on children's rights analyzed the findings and the full text at two different times to determine the repercussions of the EU Guidelines on the curricula. There is no doubt that having independent researchers examine data from different perspectives increases research validity (Creswell, 2014).

FINDINGS

This section addressed the analysis of the *Sachunterricht* curricula from the perspectives of the UNCRC and the EU Guidelines. We presented the results under separate tables for each group of children's rights, including the outcomes and examples in each state's curricula. Under "Learning Outcomes and Activities," the symbol "*" refers to the statements in the curricula for first and second grades, while the symbol "***" refers to the statements in the curricula for third and fourth grades.

A) The ten curricula contained learning outcomes and activities concerning children's right to growth, development, nutrition, accommodation, rest, cleaning, healthcare services, and privacy. However, the remaining curricula had no such content. Besides, the nine curricula made mention of fundamental rights to life more than other rights. The learning outcomes and activities regarding the fundamental rights to life in the *Sachunterricht* curricula Baden Württemberg

(1), Bayern (2), Bremen (3), Hamburg (4), Rheinland-Pfalz (5), Sachsen (6), Berlin & Brandenburg (7 & 8), Thüringen (9), Nordrhein-Westfalen (10) are as follows:

*Talking about children's rights and needs for a healthy life and encouraging them to put them to use inside and outside of school**, *Addressing healthy diets**, *Making students aware of their right to live in a clean environment and encouraging them to put it into practice at school and home**, *Teaching students that students are the first to be helped in dangerous situations and teaching them what to do in such situations***, *Addressing children's right to live in a clean environment, teaching them*** (1)

*Addressing children's right to live in a clean environment and encouraging them to act accordingly***, *Addressing children's right to be the first to be helped***, *Addressing children's right to adequate and balanced nutrition and encouraging them to act accordingly**, *Encouraging children to adopt positive attitudes towards being healthy**, *Addressing children's right to privacy and respect for the privacy of others*** (2)

*Talking about diseases and getting students to understand their right to healthcare**, *Addressing children's right to live in a clean environment**, *Teaching children to respect the rights of other children and comparing their living conditions to theirs***, *Addressing children's right to be healthy and encouraging them to participate in activities accordingly**, *Teaching children to respect other children's right to life and recognizing their living conditions**, *Addressing children's right to be healthy and teaching them all they need to know about leading a healthy life*** (3)

*Recognizing children's right to life and comparing standards of living** (4)

*Recognizing that all living things have the right to life** (5)

*Teaching children about the right to healthcare and life and encouraging them to put it into practice*** (6)

Recognizing the right to grow, feel at peace, move, eat and drink, care, rest, and be protected/*** (7 & 8)

Containing information on growth and development/*** (9)

*Explaining the principles of self-care and healthy eating and living***, *Recognizing that people have the right to develop from infancy to adulthood*** (10)

B) The five curricula highlighted outputs and activities related to children's freedom of thought and expression, whereas the remaining eleven had no such content. Besides, the five curricula made mention of children's freedom of thought and expression less than other rights. The learning outcomes and activities regarding the right to children's freedom of thought and expression in the *Sachunterricht* curricula Baden Württemberg (1), Bayern (2), Bremen (3), Saarland (4) and Nordrhein Westfalen (5) are as follows:

*Making free choices and decisions to meet their needs as conscious consumers**, *Freely expressing their wants and thoughts and explaining their necessity**, *Respecting different opinions in conflicts, expressing*

*thoughts freely, displaying a solution-oriented, democratic, and tolerant attitude towards problems*** (1)

*Being aware of their interests and needs and making independent decisions about them**, *Expressing their own feelings and needs freely and empathizing with others about it** (2)

*Expressing their thoughts freely in relationships and respecting others' opinions**, *Expressing their own feelings and needs freely and letting others do it*** (3)

*Expressing their opinions appropriately**, *Being aware of their own thoughts, emotions, and needs and expressing them freely** (4)

*Expressing their own thoughts, emotions, and interests freely*** (5)

C) The nine curricula discussed the learning outcomes and activities regarding children's right to physical integrity and privacy, whereas the remaining had no such content. We find it problematic that almost half of the curricula make no mention of children's right to physical integrity and privacy because we live in a time where child abuse and maltreatment are rampant. The learning outcomes and activities regarding the right to physical integrity and privacy in the *Sachunterricht* curricula Baden Württemberg (1), Bayern (2), Bremen (3), Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (4), Sachsen Anhalt (5), Schleswig-Holstein (6), Berlin & Brandenburg (7 & 8) and Nordrhein Westfalen (9) are as follows:

*Knowing about the right to cooperation and solidarity. Acting to protect physical integrity, when necessary (saying "No," asking the teacher for help, etc.)*** (1)

*Being aware of the right to physical integrity and privacy. Distinguishing bad intentions from good in terms of interventions to physical integrity**, *Being aware of the right to physical integrity and privacy. Recognizing that they have the sole autonomy in making decisions about their bodies***, *Understanding the importance of physical integrity and enjoying the right to personal care and hygiene***, *Respecting one's own and others' physical integrity*** (2)

*Recognizing that their body is private. Knowing the right to physical integrity and privacy*** (3)

*Knowing and protecting their own body** (4)

*Taking necessary measures within the framework of the right to protect their own body*** (5)

*Knowing that the body is private and taking care of it** (6)

Knowing their body and all its functions, and knowing that it is private/***, *Knowing how to say 'No' easily when privacy is compromised*/*** (7 & 8)

*Knowing the uniqueness of the body, knowing the body, and identifying male and female physical characteristics**, *Knowing the body, and identifying male and female physical characteristics, and accepting differences** (9)

D) The five curricula addressed the learning outcomes and activities regarding children's right to be protected from addictive drugs, dangerous settings, and physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological violence. The remaining

curricula made no mention of those issues. Given that we live in a time where neglect, abuse, violence, and drug addiction are prevalent, we find it problematic that only four curricula focused on children's right to be protected from such incidents. The learning outcomes and activities regarding the right to be protected from every kind of danger and harm in the *Sachunterricht* curricula Baden Württemberg (1), Niedersachsen (2), Rheinland Pfalz (3), Sachsen Anhalt (4) and Thüringen (5) are as follows:

How to implement programs to prevent violence, neglect, and abuse, Considering and recognizing the standards and ways of living in terms of safety and protection*, Protecting oneself from conflict-induced settings and proposing and implementing solutions to those settings** (1)

Knowing about physical and mental risks (injury, disease, abuse, addiction, etc.)/*** (2)

Being aware of risks and dangers/*** (3)

*Knowing that they have the right to say 'Yes' or 'No' to different situations** (4)

Knowing how to avoid danger/**, Knowing about addictive drugs and how to stay away from them*/*** (5)

E) The seven curricula specified learning outcomes and activities concerning children's right to make choices and decisions. The remaining curricula had no such content, which may be because individualism has penetrated all spheres of life in Europe. The learning outcomes and activities regarding the right to make choices and decisions in the *Sachunterricht* curricula Baden Württemberg (1), Bayern (2), Bremen (3), Hamburg (4), Rheinland Pfalz (5) and Berlin & Brandenburg (6 & 7) are as follows:

*Knowing about occupations and workplaces. Knowing that they have the right to choose their own professions**, Encouraging children to make their own decisions and develop strategies about their lives and relationships*, Teaching children to take responsibility to make their own decisions** (1)

*Ensuring that children are aware of their needs and choices and teaching them how to use their right to it**, Active participation in decision-making processes. Teaching children how to make their own decisions about things that concern them**, Helping children what consumption decisions to make to meet their needs based on their own budget*, Encouraging them to make free choices and decisions about leisure time activities and shopping*** (2)

*Teaching them about occupations and their right to choose professions freely */**, Ensuring that children are aware of their own wishes and needs and can make decisions accordingly*, Making plans about their own lives and understanding their right to rest** (3)

*Knowing about and distinguishing professions. Knowing that they have the right to choose their own professions*** (4)

Participating in today's decisions and recognizing their repercussions/*** (5)

*Children can take on roles and responsibilities, make decisions and help shape them. */*** (6 & 7)

F) The nine curricula addressed the learning outcomes and activities concerning children's right to participate in social and family life. The remaining curricula had no such content. The nine curricula focused mainly on children's right to participate in family life. The learning outcomes and activities regarding the right to participate in social and family life in the *Sachunterricht* curricula Baden Württemberg (1), Bayern (2), Bremen (3), Hessen (4), Rheinland Pfalz (5), Schleswig-Holstein (6), Berlin & Brandenburg (7 & 8) and Saarland (9) are as follows:

Recognizing and explaining different spheres of social life and actively participating in them, Participating in social life*, Accepting the rules and requirements of living together ** (1)

Knowing the rules of living together in society and family and making sure that they use their rights and participate actively, Respecting differences** (2)

*Participating actively in family life and expressing their own opinions in conflictual situations**, Obeying rules, participating in rule-making processes, and taking responsibility for their actions**, Having the right to recognize religious and national values, celebrating holidays, and taking responsibility */*** (3)

*Obeying social rules and using democratic means to resolve conflicts**, Recognizing religious and national values, participating in activities on holy days, and establishing relationships with other people */*** (4)

Participating in family life, knowing their duties, and assuming their responsibilities/**, Finding and accepting rituals and rules for living together and putting them into practice*/*** (5)

*Participating actively in family and social life*** (6)

Complying with duties, rights, and responsibilities within a family/*** (7 & 8)

*Respecting the right to property** (9)

G) The four curricula included learning outcomes and activities concerning children's right to play and recreation, whereas the remaining had no such content. The learning outcomes and activities regarding the right to play and recreation in the *Sachunterricht* curricula Bremen (1), Hessen (2), and Berlin & Brandenburg (3 & 4) are as follows:

Knowing about children's games from other countries and recognizing that every child has the right to play, Knowing that one of the fundamental rights and needs of children is playing games** (1)

Engaging in extracurricular social activities and playing games, Designing new games and playgrounds**, Creating a game corner, knowing about new games, and giving them a try, and enjoying the right to do research on old games** (2)

Benefiting from entertainment facilities for art and cultural activities and events/*** (3 & 4)

H) The eleven curricula focused on the learning outcomes and activities regarding children's right to participate in school and classroom activities and processes, whereas five curricula had no such content. The learning outcomes and activities regarding the right to participate in school and

classroom activities and processes in the *Sachunterricht* curricula Baden Württemberg (1), Bayern (2), Bremen (3), Hamburg (4), Hessen (5), Niedersachsen (6), Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (7), Saarland (8), Sachsen Anhalt (9), Thüringen (10), and Nordrhein Westfalen (11) are as follows:

*Participating in classroom activities and decision-making processes that concern them**, *Producing in cooperation and solidarity in school and classroom**, *Being aware of school and classroom issues and actively participating in processes to resolve them***, *Recognizing democratic codes and rights. Exercising these rights in the classroom and school actively*** (1)

*Recognizing their rights and responsibilities in social life. Participating in decision-making processes in school and classroom** (2)

*Knowing about the significance of school and classroom rules., Enjoying the right to participate in processes that concern them**, *Adopting democratic attitudes towards school activities***, *Knowing that they have the right to meet their needs in school and classroom. Undertaking the responsibility of the exercise of those rights** (3)

*Helping to laying down in-class rules and obeying them**, *Participating in decision-making and democratic processes in the classroom*** (4)

*Complying with rules, participating in classroom decision-making processes, and cooperating** (5)

*Respecting, adopting, and enforcing democratic decisions made by class council*** (6)

*Participating in democratic decisions in classroom and school, identifying the causes of conflict, and pursuing conflict resolution strategies ** (7)

*Following the rules and rituals of the school community** (8)

*Identifying democratic behaviors in everyday school life and participating in decision-making processes*** (9)

*Being aware of the rights at school */***, *Participating actively in the classroom and school communities** (10)

*Participating in planning and organizational processes***, *Participating in determining the rules and conditions necessary to live and work together at school*/*** (11)

I) The six curricula involved the learning outcomes and activities regarding children's right to participate in public life whereas the remaining ten had no such content. The learning outcomes and activities regarding the right to participate in public (administrative) life in the *Sachunterricht* curricula Hamburg (1), Niedersachsen (2), Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (3), Rheinland Pfalz (4), and Berlin & Branden (5 & 6) are as follows:

*Knowing about their right to participate in political life and the components of democracy*** (1)

*Knowing about their right to participate in critical public institutions*** (2)

Researching and defining the duties and working methods of public institutions/*** (3)

Exercising their right to participate by exploring local public institutions and their areas of responsibility and using them/*** (4)

*Knowing about public institutions and organizations and participating in decision-making processes */***, *Demanding their rights and exercising them in schools, municipalities, and rural areas*/*** (5)

J) The four curricula discussed the learning outcomes and activities regarding children's right to participate in social and cultural activities, whereas the twelve curricula had no such content. The learning outcomes and activities regarding the right to participate in social and cultural activities in the *Sachunterricht* curricula Baden Württemberg (1), Bayern (2), Bremen (3), and Hessen (4) are as follows:

*Being informed about areas of leisure activity. Choosing activities to their liking and participating in them ***, *Knowing about healthy diet and sports activities for a healthy life and exercising that right*** (1)

*Knowing about activities that promote emotional and physical well-being and participating in them**, *Making decisions about how to spend their free time and executing those decisions**, *Knowing about their right to benefit from areas of leisure-time activity*** (2)

*Building new social relationships and making friends** (3)

*Knowing that they have the right to engage in extra-curricular social activities**, *Knowing that they have the right to make foreign friends***, *Participation in the media; recognizing the components of the media, watching television, and playing video games***, *Children are encouraged to exercise their right to social activities outside of school*** (4)

K) The six curricula addressed the learning outcomes and activities regarding equality and justice and children's right to be protected from all forms of discrimination, whereas the remaining ten had no such content. The learning outcomes and activities regarding the right to be protected from all forms of discrimination in the *Sachunterricht* curricula Baden Württemberg (1), Bayern (2), Bremen (3), Hamburg (4), Niedersachsen (5) and Rheinland Pfalz (6) are as follows:

*Building peaceful relationships with people of other cultures and empathizing with them. **, *Recognizing the sexual characteristics of children. Accepting them for who they are without discrimination**, *Treating people of their own and different cultures equally and respecting each and every one of them***, *Appreciating the living conditions, cultures, and geographies of children of their own and different cultures***, *Discussing how to live together in harmony and respect** (1)

*Recognizing and respecting different lifestyles. Knowing their own and other children's responsibilities and social life and rights**, *Respecting physical differences and not discriminating based on them*** (2)

*Recognizing different family lives and not discriminating based on them**, *Recognizing their own traits and those of others and not discriminating based on them**, *Recognizing and respecting differences in physical appearance** (3)

*Recognizing different gender traits and roles and not discriminating based on them*** (4)

*Understanding that boys and girls are equal**, *Knowing and acknowledging gender-based differences** (5)
Recognizing and respecting the diversity and equality of girls and boys/*** (6)

L) The nine curricula addressed the learning outcomes and activities regarding children's right to defense and treatment with respect and to know their rights and related institutions and organizations, whereas the remaining seven had no such content. The learning outcomes and activities regarding the right to defense and to be treated with respect and to know their rights and related institutions and organizations in the *Sachunterricht* curricula Baden Württemberg (1), Bayern (2), Bremen (3), Hamburg (4), Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (5), Sachsen (6), Berlin & Brandenburg (7 & 8) and Thüringen (9) are as follows:

*Knowing children's rights and whether all children in the world can exercise their rights***, *Knowing about the reasons for immigration within the context of human and children's rights*** (1)

*Recognizing children's rights and exercising rights effectively when necessary***, *Defending themselves and exercising their rights in conflict situations*** (2)

*Knowing the rights of children**, *Defending and respecting other children's rights***, *Recognizing the UNCRC***, *Knowing children's rights and acting responsibly in cases of violation of those rights***, *Visiting institutions and organizations that work on children's rights***, *Recognizing and comparing the rights of children in different parts of the world***, *Raising awareness about child labor*** (3)

*Knowing the basic concepts related to law and rights***, *Recognizing that all children in the world have the same rights but that they have different standards of living */***, *Describing children's rights*** (4)

*Explaining children's rights and what they mean*** (5)

*Knowing their rights and obligations** (6)

Children's rights, respect for them, and pioneers and organizations that protect them/*** (7 & 8)

Naming children's rights and explaining their importance for people in a local/global context/*** (9)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As a result of research, it was concluded that the content included in the curriculum in most states is in line with the EU Guidelines. However, very few curricula show that there are statements of attainment and study examples regarding children's right to protection and participation. At this point, it is possible to say that there is much more to be covered in the development of education programs sensitive to children's rights. Similarly, Decara et al. (2021) declared that we need to translate the international standards on human rights—especially children's rights- education into both action and concrete learning outcomes in curriculums, adjusting content to age, subject, and context. Undoubtedly, the political dynamics of human rights and children's rights studies should take into account, just like in this research. In Germany,

especially in the last two years, it has been stated that the deficiencies in the implementation of children's rights by the administration, legislators and the judiciary are more evident by Nadjafi-Bösch (2022). In this context, by expanding the political perspective in a conciliatory direction, it will be possible to develop rights-based and rights-education-based course curricula and to institutionalize these subjects in curricula (Sen, 2021).

In the context of research results, the rights to life are children's most fundamental right because they have much to do with negative status rights. It is not surprising that the *Sachunterricht* curricula focus particularly on learning outcomes and activities regarding fundamental rights to life because *Sachunterricht* is about life itself. Tuncel and Senemoğlu (2017) state that Germany has a legal basis that guarantees institutions to achieve their specialized and long-term health, accommodation, education, and rehabilitation goals tailored to children's needs. As Title B the issue of freedom of thought and expression is especially relevant today because we live in an age where children have difficulty expressing themselves and coping with trauma, feeding into their predisposition for isolation. The children's right to freedom of thought and expression is part of their right to participate, turning them into active citizens ready to assume social roles. However, we see that the curricula have little to say about freedom of thought and expression and focus on a few learning outcomes and activities about it. According to Canbulut (2014), adults who love and protect children and want nothing but the best for them are unfortunately missing a point; they prevent children from talking about their own existence. Adults can "rationalize" in many ways why they accord secondary importance to children's freedom of thought and expression, given their status in both family and school. To corroborate this result, we can add that the Article "Participation and Empowerment" in the EU Guidelines stipulates that duty-bearers consult organizations working with children to guarantee and promote their rights to freedom of thought and expression.

The EU Guidelines consider the prevention of violence against children a top priority and stipulate that children's rights be a focal point of attention in all EU policies and activities (Tat, 2016). The curricula included detailed learning outcomes and activities about children's physical integrity and right to privacy, and protection from danger and harm. Corroborating this finding, in most EU countries, whoever witnesses child abuse, neglect, and violence is obliged to report it to authorities. The EU Guiding Principles also have content tailored to the prevention of gender inequality and violence and abuse against children. European Children's Network undertakes activities to monitor and report children's rights, improve the lives of deprived, refugee, and unaccompanied children, promote child health and participation, and prevent child labor and abuse, underpinning the content of the curricula (Kaya, 2013). When we look at Title E, the nine federal states find it unnecessary to include children's right to make choices and decisions in their curricula. Pamuk and Pamuk (2016) state that German textbooks provide students with information regarding democracy and free elections in a conceptual framework and, in this way,

teach them about political phenomena and processes, such as human rights, children's rights, constitution, and the right to vote and stand for election. In conclusion, the curricula adopt an approach similar to that of the EU Guiding Principles when it comes to children's right to make choices and decisions.

The results showed in Title F are important because social participation, which is defined as participation in family, cultural, and social life, is a parameter used to measure how well children are, where they are located in society and family, and how they are valued (Erbay, 2013; Karakaş & Çevik, 2016). Corroborating this result, the course teaches first to fourth-graders about life, helps them develop the skills they need to overcome problems, and allows them to adapt and participate in community life (Pamuk & Pamuk, 2016). One of the primary goals of the member states' policies is to strengthen social cohesion, participation, and solidarity (Uğurlu, 2012). Based on the EU Guiding Principles, the member and candidate states care about children's rights regard them as part of society and specify their position in family and society within the framework of law (Dirican, 2018).

Although games undergo a drastic change, it does not change the fact that children have the right to games and recreation, which play a crucial role in physical and mental health as well as creativity and self-confidence (Uyanık Aktulun et al., 2018). However, when we examined *Sachunterricht* curricula, determined only four of the curricula (Title G) offered learning outcomes and activities about children's right to play and recreation. This may be because children already spend a great deal of time playing games and taking part in activities, and therefore, the federal states find it unnecessary to emphasize children's right to play and recreation in the curricula.

The results in Title H show that most of the curricula address children's right to participate in school and classroom activities and processes. This comes as no surprise, given that Germany makes significant contributions to and takes important steps to promote fundamental rights and freedoms and the protection and promotion of children's rights within the context of the EU Guiding Principles. However, given the influential power of education on children, to what extent the components of education agree with children's right to participate is a different matter because children spend a considerable portion of their lives in schools, which are, therefore, the first institutions we should focus on to determine to what extent children's right to participate is exercised (Erbay, 2013). The results indicate that the curricula address children's right to participate in school and classroom activities and processes comprehensively. Uğurlu (2012) also argues that most member states' education laws and official documents are concerned with the issues of active and responsible citizenship and participatory school culture. It is a point to consider (Title I) that most curricula made no mention of children's right to participate in public life, although it is a critical component of a democratic society. Participating in local decision-making processes and expressing their opinions on issues that concern them is one of children's most fundamental rights. It is so fundamental

that the UNCRC can be considered a crucial step to making sure that contracting states fulfill their responsibilities to turn children into citizens who can participate in democratic processes (Öztürk, 2017). Corroborating this argument, it is suggested that settings, where children are present, be organized in line with certain principles to make sure that they partake in the administration of institutions, be among those setting the rules and framework of a task or project and share their experiences or opinions freely (Şahin & Polat, 2012).

Individual or group sociocultural activities, volunteering initiatives, and social responsibility projects are prevalent in Europe. Therefore, the federal states may have felt it unnecessary to emphasize children's right to participate in social and cultural activities more than they already do. Besides, when we think about Germany, the first thing that comes to mind is social rights and a welfare state system that is non-partisan and rights-based (Hekimler, 2017). The EU Guidelines also refer to Article 6 of the UNCRC. The EU Principles address children's personal, social, cultural, and economic rights from a holistic perspective (Karasu Avcı & İbret, 2018). These results suggest that the member states are sensitive to the socio-cultural development of children. It is noteworthy that less than half of the curricula (Title K) made a mention of discrimination, although Germany, like many European countries, is a receiving country with cultural and ethnic diversity. Children's right to non-discrimination and equality is one of the pillars of the UNCRC. Therefore, countries with ethnic and cultural diversity should pursue policies to protect children from all forms of discrimination and introduce an inclusive and universal agenda to ensure that they have access to education and social life in a non-discriminatory fashion. The EU Guiding Principles also promote the fight against exclusion, marginalization, and discrimination and the provision of an equal world for all children. These results (Title L) suggested that more than half of the curricula focused on teaching children their rights and their importance and raising their awareness of respecting other children's rights. According to Kutlu et al. (2018), the German education system encourages students to participate in democracy and teaches them about children's rights and responsibilities and the activities of the organizations that work on children's rights.

The profile of educational elements in terms of children's rights is an issue that should be emphasized. As a matter of fact, Colucci-Gray (2022) put forward a question about how an education based on children's rights can support the development of children as subjects and thus tried to determine how children's human rights can be met through education. This issue is undoubtedly handled with the same care and questioning approaches in terms of EU countries. Germany, an important member of the EU, consists of sixteen federal states, all of which offer the *Sachunterricht* course to first, second, third, and fourth graders. However, the curricula differ from state to state. This study investigated all sixteen curricula and found that most of the curricula agreed with the EU Guidelines. However, few of the curricula included learning outcomes and activities on children's right to protection and participation. Therefore, we can state that the curricula should provide more learning outcomes and activities

regarding children's right to protection and participation in line with the perspective laid down by the European Union Guiding Principles. We believe that this is essential for the strong advancement of children's rights literacy in Europe areas. Naturally, we should keep in mind that rights awareness has significant educational outcomes as well as the effect of mobilizing rights (Perry-Hazan, 2021). Indeed, educational reforms continue in EU member and candidate countries consistently. Children and young people in schools are of great importance to nations; therefore, school education is highly regulated. Because children and young people in school are of great importance to nations; therefore, school education and its elements are highly regulated and consistent (Quennerstedt, 2022). At this point, studies can be put forward to make all education curricula more compatible with EU Guiding Principles because this research is limited to examining only *Sachunterricht* course curriculum in German Education System. These studies should ensure that the teaching curricula that countries will use address children's rights and related learning outcomes and learning outcomes and activities aimed at recognizing children's rights, preventing discrimination against them, building a culture of universal peace, and preparing children for responsible lives in a free society.

In fact, we are thinking that children's rights sensitivities of curricula in different EU countries where principles are valid can also be examined. This is significant in terms of seeing the widespread effect of the principles and increasing the scientific arguments that can be applied in the process of designing education curricula sensitive to children's rights. From the perspective of educational child rights research, this may be a beneficial approach. Because the boundedness of educational children's rights research to certain cultural traditions and investigative approaches poses a risk to the future and depth of children's rights research (Gillett-Swan et al., 2023).

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APPENDICES

The information about the curricula examined within the scope of the research is as follows:

Name of State Curriculum	Education Unit Official Web Address	Date of Access
Baden-Württemberg Curricula	http://www.bildungsplaene-bw.de/,Lde/LS/BP2016BW/ALLG/GS/SU	24.9.2022
Bayern Curricula	https://www.lehrplanplus.bayern.de/fachlehrplan/grundschule/1/hsu https://www.lehrplanplus.bayern.de/fachlehrplan/grundschule/3/hsu	24.9.2022
Berlin-Brandenburg	https://www.berlin.de/sen/bildung/unterricht/faecher-rahmenlehrplaene/rahmenlehrplaene/	25.9.2022
Baden-Württemberg Curricula	https://bildungsserver.berlinbrandenburg.de/fileadmin/bbb/unterricht/rahmenlehrplaene/Rahmenlehrplanprojekt/amtliche_Fassung/Teil_C_Sachunterricht_2015_11_16_web.pdf	27.9.2022
Bremen Curricula	https://www.lis.bremen.de/schulqualitaet/curriculumentwicklung/bildungsplaene/primarstufe_15222	1.10.2022
Hamburg Curricula	https://www.hamburg.de/bildungsplaene/2460202/start-grundschule/	1.10.2022
Hessen Curricula	https://grundschule.bildung.hessen.de/rahmenplan/index.html	1.10.2022
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Curricula	https://www.bildung-mv.de/schueler/schuleundunterricht/faecherundrahmenplaene/rahmenplaene-an-allgemeinbildenden-schulen/	2.10.2022
Niedersachsen Curricula	https://cuvo.nibis.de/cuvo.php	2.10.2022
Nordrhein-Westfalen Curricula	https://www.schulentwicklung.nrw.de/lehrplaene/lehrplannavigatordgrundschule/sachunterricht/index.html	3.10.2022
Rheinland-Pfalz Curricula	https://lehrplaene.bildung-rp.de/	6.10.2022
Saarland Curricula	https://www.saarland.de/7309.htm	10.10.2022
Sachsen Curricula	https://www.schule.sachsen.de/lpdb/	11.10.2022
Sachsen-Anhalt Curricula	https://lisa.sachsen-anhalt.de/unterricht/lehrplaenerahmenrichtlinien/grundschule/	14.10.2022
Schleswig-Holstein Curricula	https://lehrplan.lernnetz.de/index.php?wahl=154	16.10.2022
Thüringen Curricula	https://www.schulportal-thueringen.de/media/detail?tspi=1264	16.10.2022