



# A call for curriculum reform to combat refugees crisis: the case of Lebanon

Ghada Awada<sup>a</sup>, Hassan Diab<sup>b</sup> and Kawthar Faour<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Education, American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon; <sup>b</sup>Regional Education Programs, American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon; <sup>c</sup>School of Medicine, American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon

## ABSTRACT

The study was set to elicit teachers' perceptions of adopting a new curriculum integrating Human Rights Education (HRE) into most school subjects and developing textbooks which could address the mainstreaming of the Syrian children into the Lebanese schools especially after the influx of more than 1.2 million Syrian refugees who migrated to Lebanon due to the outbreak of civil war in Syria in 2011. The present study employed a descriptive qualitative methodology design. Thus, the policy context and current HRE literature were assessed and reported along with the responses to a survey developed by BEMIS, a national body established in 2001 to promote and develop capacity and support inclusion and integration of ethnic minorities in Scotland. The BEMIS survey was conducted as a mapping exercise eliciting data required to help address the study questions. The study findings yielded recommendations that underscored the necessity of developing new curriculum and textbooks integrating HRE focused on accepting diversity, building peace culture, democracy and citizenship as well as utilizing the whole-school approach and the transformative model.

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## 1. Introduction

This study intends to make a valuable contribution to the research on Human Rights Education (HRE) in context of the work of the United Nations (UN) on HRE and how countries are attempting to focus on building a culture of human rights within their societies. It is particularly important that this study is situated in Lebanon at a time when the Middle East and indeed the entire world are facing the biggest refugees crisis since World War II and many of these refugees are now transiting through Lebanon seeking refuge.

The inability of the Lebanese to accept the diversity and plurality of the Lebanese society resulted in the outbreak of civil war which ended by the virtue of Taif accord which called for adopting a new curriculum integrating HRE in one school subject, namely civics in 1989. Yet, now as a proactive measure which should help the Syrian refugee children to be mainstreamed into the Lebanese society on the one hand and to enable them to

get along with the Lebanese children on the other hand, the researchers believe that a new curriculum reform integrating HRE in most school subjects and not only in civics is needed. Lebanon incorporates citizens of 18 sects adopting different religions and beliefs, which led to the outbreak of a civil war (1975–1990) rendering traumatic effects to many Lebanese irrespective of their confessions (Haugbolle, 2005). The 1997 curriculum was reformed upon the end of the civil war, and it helped unite the Lebanese again to a certain extent after incorporating HRE only in the civics textbooks and adopting the communicative approach. Thus, the 1997 reformed Lebanese curriculum was a real, practical resolution representative of the several main sects of Lebanon since it could unify the Lebanese as ‘...The 1989 Taif Agreement, which put an end to 15 years of civil wars in Lebanon, initiated a major education reform and called for the creation of a new curriculum that promotes national unity amongst the various religious and political groups in Lebanon’ (Shuayb, 2015, p. 135). As such, the Taif accord signed by the Lebanese political leaders in 1989 called for the integration of HRE in the curriculum and textbooks of one school subject, namely civics to teach tolerance and peace culture. Now in 2017, Lebanon is witnessing a tremendous influx of Syrian refugees. The outbreak of civil war in Syria resulted in having many Syrian students enrolled in Lebanese public and private schools. However, many Lebanese are facing problems with the Syrian refugees as ‘...many of Lebanon’s political factions and paramilitary groups are closely related to or directly involved in events in Syria, and Lebanese state institutions are known for their scarce capacity for the provision of essential services and security even to Lebanese nationals’ (Dionigi, 2016, p. 6).

Aiming at ensuring peace culture, tolerance, accepting diversity, and resolving conflicts, the United Nations worked in collaboration with the governments of many countries on integrating Human Rights into their curricula as ‘In 2010 the UN Human Rights Council, through its Advisory committee, produced a draft Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training and the General Assembly of United Nations adopted the declaration in December 2011. This means that access to human rights education and training is considered as a fundamental right and will apply to all levels and forms of education, from preschool to university’ (Burrige et al., 2013, p. 12). Article 3 of the UN Declaration on HRE and Training (2011) asserted the significance of giving training to teachers and others involved in education in human rights principles. Article 7 indicated that states were also recognized as having the main responsibility for endorsing HRE and training.

The United Nations (UN) also started the World Programme for Human Rights Education (UNWPHRE) in 2005. The emphasis on HRE has arisen more strongly over the past two decades at a worldwide level. The UN and the European Union (EU) have strongly supported the integration of HRE and training in all levels and forms of education, from preschool to university (Burrige et al., 2013). ‘A content analysis of 465 social studies textbooks published between the 1970s and 2008 in 69 countries showed that since 1994 there has been an increasing emphasis on human rights’ (Shuayb, 2015, p. 136). The UN outlines 10 essential human rights treaties that could ensure the protection of human rights, tolerance, equality, and accepting diversity (Robinson, 2007). ‘By seeing diversity as a learning opportunity, encouraging translanguaging, utilizing civic engagement as curriculum, and cultivating multidirectional aspirations, educators, and school leaders are addressing the many educational challenges that global mobility poses for youth immigrants’ (Bajaj & Bartlett, 2017, p. 28). In addition to integrating civic engagement and

developing tolerance for diversity, schools should adopt the whole-school approach as '... schools that promote a critical transnational curriculum give students direct experiences with civic engagement' (Bajaj & Barlett, 2017, p. 30).

### **1.1. Study context**

The present study was conducted in Lebanon to utilize the practices of some countries, such as Scotland and Australia, in integrating HRE into the school subjects. Scotland and Australia in collaboration with the UN have tremendously endeavored to adopt Education for Democratic Citizenship and HRE as main features of education reform and development (Kerr and Losito, 2010). Lebanon, which adopts democracy and plurality, needs to benefit from the HRE experiences of Scotland and Australia which encompass plural societies as well. Hence, the researchers, in an attempt to benefit from the HRE experience in Scotland and Australia, modified the BEMIS survey to fit into the Lebanese context. The modified, employed survey in the present study was developed by BEMIS to elicit the perspectives of teachers and educators of HRE. BEMIS held a national conference on HRE in 2011 and designed a mapping survey as a key conference outcome to determine the level of engagement with HRE within the school education sector in Scotland (BEMIS, 2016).

### **1.2. Study rationale**

The study is also based on the assumption that employing the whole-school approach and the transformative model could transform the Lebanese curriculum and the textbooks in a way that could build a culture of peace, tolerance, democracy, and citizenship. The whole-school approach focuses on integrating HRE into the curriculum and teaching materials that could help teachers incorporate HR subjects into their teaching practices; teacher training should also incorporate human rights values (Amnesty International, 2012). The HRE transformative model also intends to empower learners through raising human rights awareness and prevention of human rights violations (Tibbits & Kirchsclaeger, 2010). The study intends to elicit teachers and educators' perceptions of a new HRE-based curriculum since '...the critical transnational curriculum can offer newcomer students important preparation for life, post-secondary transitions, and the development of a critical understanding of social inequalities and civic participation' (Bajaj & Bartlett, 2017, p. 33).

The role of HRE in supporting democracy was also emphasized in changing citizenship, democracy and participation in education (Osler & Starkey, 2005). Learning for cosmopolitan citizenship makes young citizens able to identify common culture and experiences needed to function effectively in settings of cultural diversity and change. There should be a focus on the obligations of young people rather than their rights (Osler & Starkey, 2005). In partnership with important stakeholders in education in Scotland, BEMIS held a national conference on Human Rights Education in 2011. On 19 December 2011, the conference produced interest from teachers whose conference evaluations indicated that they need more information and training in HRE. The survey responses underscored the need of the Scottish teachers to training in HRE. The UN Declaration on HRE and Training was issued to call for governments to reinforce their efforts in endorsing respect for

human rights, acknowledging vital status of HRE and training in increasing the promotion, protection, and active recognition of all human rights (Burrige et al., 2013).

Unfortunately, the case of Lebanon is different from those of Scotland and Australia. Lebanon's school curriculum was last reformed in 1997. Lebanon's school education includes 1300 public schools, 300 private free schools and 1200 private schools. The Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) set plans for schooling and curriculum development, which call for the integration of HRE into the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2014). Unlike the case of Lebanon, there were opportunities for students in Australia to learn about human rights issues in secondary and middle school subjects, namely English, science, and economics and business management (Burrige et al., 2013).

### **1.3. Significance of the study**

This study is the first to investigate teachers' and educators' perceptions of developing a new curriculum integrating HRE into most school subjects; the present study is the only research that intended to shed light on the HRE good practices that have been implemented to elicit suggestions on what should be done in Lebanon to ensure having similar good HRE practices needed to address the tremendous Syrian influx into Lebanon. The present study adapted the modified BEMIS survey which was developed by Watts, Struthers, and Ousta (2013, p. 2) to '...consider the gaps in school education, present feasible recommendations to influence policy and enhance delivery of curriculum for excellence... support the Scottish government with their reporting obligations to the United Nations in relation to the United Nations World Programme for Human Rights Education'. The study is also significant for being the only research highlighting the Lebanese strategic plans launched in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 and the decrees that were issued to ensure HRE practices in Lebanon. Furthermore, there is scarcity in the literature undertaken to focus on HRE in schools in Lebanon.

### **1.4. Research questions**

Specifically, the study addressed the following questions:

- (1) To what extent are Lebanese teachers and educators aware of the United Nations World Programme for Human Rights Education (UNWPHRE)?
- (2) Do the Lebanese teachers and educators support the integration of HRE into the curriculum of most school subjects?
- (3) Based on the content analysis of survey responses and existent literature, what recommendations pertinent to the integration of HRE into most school subjects of the Lebanese curriculum can be given?

## **2. Literature review**

In 1997, human rights values and beliefs formed the theoretical and conceptual framework to bring together the diverse sectarian, confessional, and political Lebanese groups who spent over 15 years fighting each other (Shuayab, 2015). Now in 2017, Lebanon has already witnessed an influx of more than 1.2 million Syrians since 'Lebanon is one of the most

obvious destinations for Syrians trying to escape the civil war, and around 1.2 million have registered there with the UNHCR. Yet, this small country (only slightly bigger than Cyprus) with a population of about 4 million and a history of troubled relations with Damascus, is hardly an ideal refuge' (Dionigi, 2014, p. 6). Thus, the researchers of the study believe that Lebanese school curricula should integrate HRE focused on accepting diversity, building peace, democracy and citizenship as well as utilizing the whole-school approach and the transformative model in order to develop awareness of citizenship, democracy and tolerance needed to mainstream the Syrian refugees into the Lebanese schools. The MEHE in Lebanon held a conference to launch the curriculum reform project in 2016. As such, this study was timely set to do mapping in order to elicit teachers' perceptions of the integration of HRE into the curriculum and textbooks of most school subjects in Lebanon.

## **2.1. Theoretical framework**

HRE entails goals, notions, definitions, pedagogies, theoretical models and pedagogical approaches. The implementation of HRE embraces policies, practices, curriculum initiatives, teacher training, professional development programs and environments for promoting HRE (Tibbits & Kirchsclaeger, 2010). Measuring the outcomes of any HRE program includes gauging the outcomes accomplished by students, educators, and institutions (Tibbits & Kirchsclaeger, 2010). There should be a correlation among the transformative, whole-school approach and accountability model in order to ensure effectiveness of an HRE-based curriculum that could address the Syrian influx for the following reasons: Transformative learning takes place when individuals change their perspectives by critically analyzing their claims and views and determinedly applying strategies that generate new methods of perceiving their worlds (Mezirow, 1997). A whole-school approach to HRE should be adopted in the school curriculum because it could create an environment where everybody comprehends, values and protects human rights (Amnesty International, 2012). The HRE transformative model empowers learners through raising human rights awareness and prevention of human rights violations. HRE, a transformative tool, makes learners and citizens informed, active people. Furthermore, HRE should support how governments develop policies and provide services. The educators in Scotland, in general, are supportive of HRE and such interest can only improve the delivery of the curriculum. However, national training program should be developed to empower teachers and reinforce their interest in HRE aspects of learning and teaching (Struthers, 2015). The accountability model emphasizes the significance of providing training for professionals to protect human rights; the Values and Awareness model emphasizes conveying knowledge of human rights issues; finally, the Participatory model emphasizes students taking initiatives in support of human rights and communicating technical knowledge of human rights issues and being aware of human rights violation (Ang, 2010).

As such, the analysis of the functions of the whole-school approach, Transformative, Accountability and Participatory models could form a theoretical framework of the present study.

## **2.2. A whole-school approach in school subjects**

A whole-school approach, incorporating human rights ethics and principles into all vital areas of school life, is a necessity since the whole-school approach focuses on integrating

HRE into the curriculum and teaching materials which could enrich teaching practices (Amnesty International, 2012). The UN Declaration on Human Rights (1948) and subsequent UN human rights conventions and treaties should be also the framework of the curriculum reform (Burridge et al., 2013).

### **2.3. The role of transformative model in building a culture of peace**

Transformative model builds upon critical thinking, which can be promoted through debates, questioning, and artistic activities. Transformative learning takes different modes as individuals learn best in various ways; thus, teachers should employ varied approaches to render transformation (Mezirow, 1997). According to Turay and English (2008), peace education has been indirectly associated with transforming beliefs and assumptions. Transformative model is the basis of peace education, and it is mainly connected with the welfare of the whole world; transformative model for peace education (TMPE) builds upon five elements: Diversity, Participatory learning, Globalized perspectives, Indigenous knowing and Spiritual underpinnings (Turay & English, 2008). Students transform their beliefs as '...they acquire skills for participatory democracy by engaging directly in experiential learning. ...Nonetheless, a feature of critical transnational curriculum is the connection of teaching and learning processes to real-life examples of activism and civic engagement' (Bajaj & Bartlett, 2017, p. 30).

### **2.4. Pedagogy of teaching human rights in Lebanese civics textbooks**

The pedagogy of teaching human rights was not clear in the Lebanese civics textbooks although the developers of the 1997 curriculum stated explicitly that they had adopted a didactic approach to teaching these rights as it was strongly manifested in the analysis of the directions, content, and assessments associated with human rights. The value awareness model characterized the assessment activities to a certain extent, yet students were denied opportunities to critically engage in the assessment activities that were restricted to asking students to identify some rights in the community without shedding light on the challenges and difficulties they might face. Moreover, the official exams taken by all Lebanese ninth and twelfth graders were limited to remembering information around elections and freedom of expression without providing rubrics or assessment criteria for the answers (Shuayb, 2015). The experiential and activity-centered learning involving the activation of learners' prior knowledge, giving activities that utilize the learners' experiences and knowledge, and using problem-solving and inquiry-based approaches should be utilized to promote cooperative efforts in explaining ideas, analyzing themes and performing activities (Tibbits & Kirchsclaeger, 2010).

### **2.5. Peace education in 1997 Lebanese civics textbooks**

The Lebanese civics textbooks were almost the only textbooks designed to teach human rights, citizenship, and peace education (Shuayb, 2012). Peace education was mainly employed only in the eighth and tenth graders' civics textbooks; the post-civil war curriculum stressed on reconstruction, social solidarity, and citizenship education as one of its chief goals. The textbooks also disregarded violence in schools among

young people (UNDP, 2008). Dialogue was explicitly stated in one lesson in Grade 10 textbook. However, some features of dialogue, which were not defined as dialogue, were mentioned in all grades in the form of scenarios and tasks. The dialogue was mentioned in the context of community, family, and conflict resolution. Dialogue was also tremendously introduced in the family context and not the school environment in the lower grades, although dialogue should be prevalent in every aspect of students' everyday life; dialogue in school was almost entirely absent from the intermediate and secondary textbooks. Even though each lesson started with a 'dialogue' between the teacher and the student, the students were not asked to reflect on the quality of such dialogue or the obstacles that might cause an impediment (Zakharia, 2012).

## **2.6. HRE curricular opportunities in Australia and Scotland**

National Consultation on Human Rights (NHRCCC, 2009) has explicitly supported education about human rights in schools. The Framework included many education initiatives to ensure access to information on human rights to all Australians. HRE programs for primary and secondary schools, community and for Commonwealth public sector (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010, p. 7) and the national Australian Curriculum provided HRE opportunities in many main learning areas and subjects including English, history, mathematics, and science developed by ACARA and to be implemented across all states and territories. The December 2012 national Human Rights Action Plan allocated funds to NGOs to reinforce HRE support, delivery and training for the public sector and increased funds to the AHRC, schools, and ACARA to ensure the inclusion of human rights into the national curriculum (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012).

The 11–12 senior year school curriculum in Australia included explicit opportunities for teaching human rights mainly in history, geography, and legal studies subjects and less intensely in politics, society and culture, aboriginal, women's and religious studies. The 11–12 senior year school curriculum included implicit opportunities for teaching HRE created in English, science, economics and business subjects. History, Australian and global politics, Australian and international politics, and aboriginal studies stated UN human rights declarations, treaties or Australian rights legislations in few territories. The 9 and 10 secondary year school curricula in Australia included explicit opportunities for human rights teaching in history, geography, aboriginal studies subjects and civics and citizenship; the 7–10 year school curriculum included implicit opportunities for teaching HRE in English, science, and economics (Burrige et al., 2013). The national Australian curriculum supported learning about literacy, numeracy, ICT, critical and creative thinking and included an ethical understanding statement that incorporated the main human rights issues to be learned by students. Great explicit opportunities for HRE exist mainly in the 11 and 12 senior year curriculum, less essentially in 9–10-year curriculum and with fewer opportunities in the 7–8-year school curriculum. Teacher associations were assigned the tasks to fill in the major gaps identified in the schools in Scotland through training in the new educational resources and providing teacher education and professional development programs to teach the new teachers how to teach about human rights topics (Burrige et al., 2013).

The Scottish government is also devoted to creating an inclusive Scotland which would safeguard human rights for everyone living in Scotland. The Scotland Act (1998) stipulates

provisions for the protection of human rights within Scotland and safeguards compatibility between the Scottish Parliament acts and the European Convention on Human Rights. NGOs including Amnesty International and UNICEF provide professional development training and resources for teachers and Community Learning and Development (CLD) staff and mainly support the development of Global Learning and HRE across Scotland (Struthers, 2015). Research indicated that many teachers covered human rights issues in their teaching not because of training they received or in compliance with the curriculum but because of their background and experience, which indicates that teachers in Scotland support HRE. Elements of HRE characterized the classrooms of all the teachers interviewed in Edinburgh and most respondents to the BEMIS survey. Certain aspects of HRE were misunderstood due to the absence of focus within the curriculum which incorporated HRE, yet teachers were integrating HRE holistically (Struthers, 2015).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) considers HRE a right as Article 26 states. '... education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms...' Furthermore, EU experience has had significant effect made by incorporating EDC/HRE explicitly within the primary and secondary school curriculum in EU countries either as thematic units within educational policies or as incorporated into present subjects, such as civics, social studies, history, and humanities (Tibbits & Kirchsclaeger, 2010). The United Nations World Programme for HRE could potentially empower educators although over 64% of the BEMIS respondents declared their ignorance of it and the remaining 36% declared limited knowledge of it. Scotland provides HRE practices within formal and non-formal educational settings, yet HRE should be a lifelong learning process that extends beyond the school classroom (Watts et al., 2013).

### **2.7. Information communication technology (ICT) to enhance HRE awareness**

ICT is considered as vital in facing the difficulties of remoteness and in supporting HRE to teach people about human rights issues and to provide teachers with interactive, experiential, and pedagogical approaches to HRE. The effectiveness of ICT was significant in connecting students of regional, remote, or international schools and supporting their learning. Many social networking applications and ICT were recognized as vital in supporting human rights learning. For instance, the Skype, email, video, desk top conferencing, audio conferencing, Facebook, Twitter, wiki spaces, and Dropbox are among the vital Internet communication applications and models used in schools to make connections between local and rural schools, help overcome their geographic drawback, and provide them with access to resources to increase learning opportunities (Burrige et al., 2013).

## **3. Methodology**

The present study employed a descriptive qualitative methodology design. In addition, the policy context and current human rights school education literature were assessed and reported. The qualitative descriptive method was employed since it could elicit and analyze data related to the teachers' and educators' perceptions of adopting an HRE-based curriculum. The educators were the school personnel and counsellors of the MEHE in Lebanon. The sampled public and private schools were chosen since they are

accommodating a great number of the Syrian refugees. The modified BEMIS survey, which was employed to elicit perceptions through identifying weaknesses and providing recommendations related to HRE, revealed that certain aspects of HRE were misunderstood due to the absence of focus within the curriculum which incorporated HRE, yet teachers were integrating HRE holistically (Struthers, 2015).

### 3.1. Instruments

The adapted BEMIS survey from Watts et al. (2013) was conducted as a mapping exercise eliciting data required to answer the questions raised in the study. Using Google Drive, being a file storage and synchronization service, the survey was sent to the teachers of private and public schools along with educators to elicit their perceptions of the integration of HRE into school subjects. The participants received the survey Google Drive link and filled out the survey at their convenience and the Google drive application provided on the spot their responses. Using Google Drive, the survey link was created and the data were analyzed. The modified survey consisted of predefined and closed- and open-ended questions and was used to collect data from 363 respondents ( $n = 363$ ). The respondents could answer the questions requiring sharing their experiences, practices, and recommendations pertinent to HRE in Lebanese school subjects. A Likert scale was employed to collect the responses for the closed-ended questions. The ethics of survey research including informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity were observed. The analysis of existent literature was another instrument used to analyze data and to address the questions of the study as well.

### 3.2. Survey respondents

The survey link was sent via email, Facebook and WhatsApp to school principals, personnel, counsellors of MEHE along with teachers of public and private schools located in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. A total of 363 ( $n = 363$ ) respondents completed the survey. The respondents who filled out the survey were 53.86% of the total population that received the survey.

### 3.4. Data analysis

*To answer study question 1:* To what extent are Lebanese teachers and educators aware of the United Nations World Programme for Human Rights Education (UNWPHRE)? The researchers had to analyze the findings of survey items 1 and 2.

*Findings on survey item 1:*

This item was answered by 344 out of 363 participants. Only 39.2% confirmed awareness of the United Nations World Programme for Human Rights Education (UNWPHRE).

*Findings on survey item 2: Have you ever attended any training or awareness raising on human rights or the UNCRC? If you have answered yes, please give details of the training you attended.*

82.7% of the responses confirmed their unawareness of any training or awareness raising on human rights or the UNCRC. Furthermore, 96.6% confirmed that it is necessary to learn about human rights. Few responses, 14 teachers, indicated that they attended

training given by Youth International Organization (IYF), Notre Dame University (NDU), UNDP, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), British Council, MUN training, Beirut Bar Association, and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Institute for Human Rights (2010–2011). Some received training titled 'Coaching the Coach by Hanks Giving Tree.' A civics teacher attended the International law and human rights course at l'Université Saint-Joseph (USJ). A teacher added, 'I have done so many activities on human rights for the two projects: ISA and Human rights in Action (USA). It has been such a great experience when I work with my students in this domain that let them know the importance of having such rights.'

Conversely, most respondents confirmed that they weren't called for any event pertinent to HRE as shown in the following response, 'Not a soul to hear.'

*To address study question 2: Do the Lebanese teachers and educators support the integration of HRE into the curriculum of most school subjects? The researchers had to analyze the responses of survey items 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7?*

*Findings on survey item 3: Have you experienced any barriers that might have prevented you from teaching or learning about human rights? If yes, what are they?*

In response to survey item 3, some participants shed light on barriers pertinent to school politics, governments, and proper training on what they teach. Social traditions may contradict some of the ideas promoting gender equality or against early marriage; for example, some participants asserted that the culture and background of learners might form a barrier impeding the discussion of issues related to gender equality and freedom of expression. Some science teachers indicated that the nature and broadness of the curriculum don't allow them to teach human rights.

Some think that the issue is that no one sees the importance in human rights. The Lebanese society tries to prevent the youth to learn about their basic rights. They also believe that culture and religion are barriers to teaching human rights. The mentality of some people in Lebanon goes against human rights. 'At times, I feel that what seems like a talk about human rights ends up being a political issue which makes me hesitant such as Armenian Genocide, Palestine etc.'

Other participants asserted that time constraints are barriers to teaching about human rights.

Others indicated that there are no barriers to teaching about human rights but in applying them. A teacher highlighted that the universities and high schools should introduce the citizenship values as a compulsory subject. 'The barriers I have experienced are the students' questions on why aren't these rights being implemented (zero hunger, peace, homeless children...)' Some teachers revealed that they don't know how to integrate HRE in their classes. 'I don't know how to integrate it in teaching. I don't have enough information.'

*Findings on question 4: Would training on Human Rights Education be helpful to you?*

In response to question 4, 71.5% confirmed that training in HRE would be helpful to them.

*Findings on question 5: If training on Human Rights Education is helpful to you, what do you think that training should focus on?*

In response to question 5, many participants asserted that gender roles, general history of human rights, key problems, and solutions incorporating human rights in teaching should be the focus of the training. A few respondents indicated that learning basic

principles of human rights, rights of prisoners, gender equality, unbiased curricula, religion, race, current issues, and dealing with diversity/different cultures should be also the focus of the training.

Some recommended that the training should focus on how to practice rights and protect them, how to convey global messages to students, how to behave in society, how to build self-confidence and let children know they have rights and how students can be active members in the society. The training must focus on the peaceful conflict resolution techniques and the development of peace. Some recommended having training on issues such as the eradication of poverty, hunger, and well-being of human kind.

*Findings on question 6: Have you experienced any barriers to teaching or learning about human rights?*

59.8% confirmed that they haven't experienced any barriers to teaching or learning about human rights.

*To address the study question 3: Based on the content analysis of survey responses and the plethora of existent literature, what recommendations pertinent to the integration of HRE into most school subjects of the Lebanese curriculum can be given? The researchers had to analyze the responses of survey question 7.*

*Findings on question 7: What recommendations pertinent to the integration of Human Rights Education in the Lebanese curriculum can teachers give?*

Some respondents suggested integrating HRE in the civics textbooks of primary, middle, and secondary grades. 'Human rights can be a chapter added in the civic education class, presented in the brevet and baccalaureate. The human rights should be taught to student while there are still in their middle or elementary school years.'

Some respondents suggested including the themes of respect and tolerance for diversity and special needs in the textbooks of all grades without specifying the subjects.

Other respondents suggested integrating the themes of helping others and empathy in all grades without specifying the subjects as well. A respondent wrote, 'Students at different levels and from different social and religious sectors should have equal opportunities and should be treated with dignity, respect, tolerance, justice and openness. It must be applied and implemented into the entire program.'

Some respondents suggested integrating HRE in the English textbooks of all grades.

A respondent asserted, 'Perhaps adding newer texts to English textbooks about women rights, conducting workshops and implementing civil service volunteer hours in secondary classes to better enhance rights/duties.' Another respondent suggested rewriting the entire curriculum and to integrate HR in the civics books without specifying the grade levels.

Some other respondents suggested adding themes to protect the needs of students with special needs without specifying either the subject or the grade level.

Some respondents recommended revising the entire curriculum to integrate human right themes that would lessen conflicts among the Lebanese. A respondent wrote, 'At first the entire curriculum must be revised, ensuring what kind of stuff should be incorporated in it to reduce the conflicts. I advocate the character education stuff or character development traits i.e. truth, honesty, trustworthiness, tolerance, integrity, cooperation, kindness, forgiveness, open-mindedness, justice and so on.'

Some respondents recommended revising the assessment tools along with revising the entire curriculum, and learning from the experiences of other countries. A respondent wrote, 'Apart from their inclusion in the content, these traits must be judged in the playground as

well. The assessment system should also include such stuff.' Other respondents recommended utilizing the EU grants to integrate the citizenship into all subjects. A respondent wrote, 'The EU granted the Lebanese Government many supportive budgets in 2012 to encourage the citizenship theme along the secondary and college studies.'

#### 4. Discussions and implications

The findings of the present study are useful in shedding light on the teachers' and educators' perceptions of proposing an HRE-based curriculum reform that could be developed in order to meet the emergent needs of the Syrian school learners in the light of the UN cooperation with Scotland and Australia in implementing HRE along with the recommendations provided by the survey respondents. As such, the findings indicated that most respondents endorse the adoption of a new curriculum integrating HRE into school subjects and they suggested receiving training covering HRE activities, content and strategies. As such, the elicited perceptions indicated that there should be a correlation among the transformative, whole-school and accountability models into any HRE curriculum reform in order to ensure the effectiveness of an HRE-based curriculum that could address the Syrian influx for the following reasons: In alignment with Mezirow (1997) and Kerr and Losito (2010), the HRE transformative model would empower learners through raising human rights awareness and prevention of human rights violations. It would enable learners to positively change their perspectives by critically analyzing claims and views and determinedly applying strategies that would generate new methods of perceiving their worlds. Also, in alignment with Shuayb (2015) and Turay and English (2008) and based on the elicited perceptions, it can be inferred that employing the Transformative model in the new curriculum could build upon peace education since the transformative model is mainly connected with the welfare of the whole society. Furthermore, in agreement with Amnesty International (2012), the whole-school approach to HRE should be adopted in the school curriculum as it could create an environment where learners could comprehend values and enjoy human rights. Along the same line of the study findings, Bajaj and Barelett (2017) called for adopting a transnational approach that demands building upon sustaining pedagogy that would allow students' realities to be reflected in the curriculum in order to ensure that '...specific newcomer schools engage in culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy tailored to students' interests and needs' (p. 33). Moreover, the curriculum should encompass HRE as 'A curriculum that fails to recognize the realities and needs of migrant students and families is a lost opportunity' (p. 33). Moreover, the elicited perceptions indicated the significance of adapting the international practices Scotland and Australia implemented in collaboration with the UN as they adopted EDC/HRE. The findings of the study which emerged from the literature review and survey responses were infused to yield the following significant recommendations to reform the 1997 Lebanese curriculum and design a new curriculum that could promote HRE and address the Syrian influx in Lebanon.

##### 4.1. A call for teacher associations' action

A human rights culture within the curriculum must be reinforced (Burridge et al., 2013). Teacher associations play a vital role in disseminating the best practices of the integration

of HRE into school subjects. Teacher associations should provide teachers with the training and resources needed to develop the students' critical thinking skills, enable them to evaluate evidence and to make judgments about matters of rights in the community. Teachers should learn how to make their students active citizens who can draw on the evidence and judgments to make changes.

#### **4.2. A call for stakeholders' and policy-makers' action to reform curriculum**

In the same vein of the findings of Struthers (2015) and based on the study findings, it can be inferred that the Lebanese government should follow the footpath of the Scottish and Australian governments by issuing an Act to protect human rights within Lebanon. The national Australian curriculum supported learning about literacy, numeracy, ICT, critical and creative thinking and incorporated explicit opportunities for HRE in the 7-, 8-, 9-, 10-, and 11-year curriculum (Burridge et al., 2013). As such, the Lebanese curriculum should be reformed to incorporate HRE in grade 7–12 curriculum of most subjects. NGOs including Save the Children and UNICEF should be urged to provide professional HRE development training and resources for teachers in Lebanon. Further studies using the BEMIS survey should be conducted on a larger scale to elicit information from a larger population of educators teaching at different public schools in the remote areas and the outskirts of Beirut to identify the weaknesses in the curriculum and to provide more recommendations to be adopted in a new curriculum encompassing HRE in most subjects.

#### **4.3. Call to benefit from the HRE experiences of Scotland and Australia**

As there was a need for the development of training program in Scotland to empower teachers and reinforce their interest in HRE aspects of learning and teaching (Struthers, 2015), there should be similar training programs incorporating ICT to address the difficulties of remoteness and to serve the same purpose in Lebanon. Facebook, Twitter, wiki spaces, and Dropbox would support HRE and provide teachers with interactive, experiential, and pedagogical approaches to HRE (Burridge et al., 2013); other models such as Blogs and WebQuest which could increase motivation (Awada & Ghaith, 2014, 2015) should be employed in schools to make connections between Lebanese schools and other international schools and communities. As such, like Scotland, Lebanon should benefit from the experience of Scotland and provide good HRE practices within formal and non-formal educational settings.

#### **4.4. Call to enact the policies drawn in 2012, 2013 and 2014**

Stakeholders and policy-makers can utilize the HR practices and the transformative model along with the policies drawn in 2012, 2013 and 2014 to complete what was launched in 2014. The whole approach coined with determination and perseverance should be adopted to make the flag of Lebanon soar high in the sky of development sheltered by HRE. A former Minister of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon, Professor Hassan Diab, believes that the only path towards success and development is the integration of HRE practices into the schools and universities of the country. As such, Diab launched the ICT strategic plan in 2013 to bridge the disparity between the successful 1997 curricula

and the textbooks (Awada & Diab, 2016). Diab was the first to integrate ICT into the classrooms of public schools in Lebanon in 2012 and to issue decrees and a new law (approved by the parliament) that enabled all K-9 grade public school students to get their free textbooks. Diab also issued decree 150 in 2012 which introduced compulsory education starting with Kindergarten through grade nine classrooms, which resulted in receiving an evaluation issued in the World Economic Forum report on Higher education indicating that the Lebanese MEHE has ranked four out of 144 for the quality of teaching math and science in the world (Ministry of Education, 2014). The letter dated 4 February 2014 indicated that: 'After review of the joint application from the Lebanese ministries of telecommunications and education and higher education, I am delighted to inform you that the government of Lebanon has been judged the winner of the GSMA 2014 Connected Government Award' (Ministry of Education, 2014). As such, the present Lebanese MEHE should work hand in hand with the parliament to issue the needed legislations to ensure the integration of HRE in most subjects to change attitudes and values and to ensure the creation of a culture of human rights across all the Lebanese areas and territories.

#### **4.5. Call for training on the integration of HRE activities into classrooms**

Professional development and training in HRE are needed to develop HRE in schools. 82.7% of the responses confirmed the Lebanese teachers' unawareness of any HRE training. Furthermore, only 39.2% out of 363 confirmed awareness of the UNWPHRE. Many participants asserted that gender roles, key problems, and proper solutions incorporating human rights in teaching should be the focus of the HRE training. Some recommended having training in issues such as the eradication of poverty, hunger, bias, and well-being of human kind. As such, Lebanon should benefit from the Scottish and Australian curriculum reform experiences. The perceptions of the respondents endorsed those of Burrige et al. (2013) and stated that the Lebanese government should make policies and issue legislations that fill in the major gaps identified in the schools' curriculum through training in the new educational resources and providing teacher education and professional development programs to train teachers in how to teach about human rights topics.

#### **4.6. Demonstrating awareness of complexities impeding HRE integration into school subjects**

In Australia, politics and changing governments made funding HRE projects unguaranteed. Furthermore, some human rights are also contested and this might create difficulties in certain contexts (Burrige et al., 2013). The perceptions elicited in the present study also revealed that the many teachers face problems attributed to the impact of learners' social traditions, culture and background that might conflict with gender equality, early marriages and freedom of expression. Some science teachers indicated that the nature and broadness of the curriculum don't allow them to teach human rights. Some teachers believe that culture, religion and time constraints are barriers to teaching human rights. Some respondents suggested including the themes of respect, empathy, helping others and tolerance for diversity and special needs in the textbooks of all grades. A few respondents recommended revising the entire curriculum to integrate human rights themes that

would lessen conflicts among the Lebanese. Few respondents recommended utilizing the EU grants to integrate the citizenship into all school subjects.

## 5. Conclusions

The study was set to elicit teachers' perceptions of adopting a new curriculum integrating HRE and developing textbooks which could address the Syrian mainstreaming into the Lebanese society and create a peace culture among the Lebanese on the one hand and between the Lebanese and the Syrians on the other hand. The elicited perceptions along the existent literature indicated that HRE-based curriculum should be adopted in most subjects in the light of the international HRE practices in general and those of Scotland and Australia in particular. In the absence of an integration of HRE into most school subjects of the 1997 current Lebanese curriculum, student learning could not be effective in creating a culture of human rights. The study results also underscored the necessity of professional development and training for teachers in implementing the whole-school approach and the transformational model in school subjects in order to enhance student awareness of human rights and civic engagement and determining which human rights students should learn about across their school learning stages to become global citizens. The study findings revealed that key trainers with knowledge of the HR curriculum development and HRE pedagogical and conceptual frameworks and practices are required to launch initiatives to provide a range of valuable learning opportunities to schools. More significantly, the study findings necessitated a call for teacher associations, along with stakeholders and policy-makers, to take action to reform curriculum. Furthermore, the findings of the study prompted a call to benefit from the HRE experiences of Scotland and Australia and to enact the policies drawn in 2012, 2013 and 2014 to ensure the integration of HRE activities into classrooms. However, the study findings shed light on the complexities of introducing HRE. As such, curriculum roundtable discussions and more curriculum reform surveys should be organized in Lebanon to elicit further suggestions pertinent to the integration of HRE into most school subjects across all stages.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Notes on contributors

**Ghada Awada** holds a Ph.D. with the highest distinction in Applied Linguistics and Education from University Rovira i Virgili – Tarragona, Spain and a Ph.D. in Public International Law and International Relations and Diplomacy with the highest distinction from Hautes Etudes Internationales ET Politiques-Paris with concentration in conflict resolution and crisis management. She is currently a Faculty and Consultant at the American University of Beirut. She is an expert in curriculum design and textbook writing. She also consulted as an expert in curriculum development, textbook writing, teacher education and development with institutions and schools in some Arab Middle Eastern countries. Dr Awada designed professional and Teaching Certification programs focusing on the use of ICT technologies, providing inclusive environments to all learners, English language teaching and instructional strategies and techniques.

**Hassan B. Diab** received his B.Sc. (with Honors) in Communications Engineering, M.Sc. (with Distinction) in Systems Engineering, and Ph.D. in Computer Engineering. He joined the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 1985 and is a Professor of Computer Engineering at the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture. He has over 140 publications in internationally refereed journals and conferences. His research interests include cryptography on high-performance computer systems, modeling and simulation of parallel processing systems, reconfigurable computing, and higher education reform. He supervised over 80 research projects and served as Associate Editor or member of Advisory/Editorial Board on five international journals. He was Founding Dean of the College of Engineering and Founding President during 2004–2006 at Dhofar University, Oman. Effective October 2006, he was appointed as Vice President (VP) at AUB. His active encouragement and innovative use of mobile technologies as well as integration of ICT in education during his term as Minister of Education and Higher Education (2011–2014) led to the Government of Lebanon to be the winner of the GSMA 2014 Connected Government Award for the first time. Since July 2013, he returned to his position as VP at AUB.

**Kawthar Faour**, a post graduate human rights advocate and a researcher, is currently pursuing medical studies at the American University of Beirut.

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