

Public Relations History in Public Relations Education in Türkiye: Meeting the Past in the Present

Türkiye 'de Halkla İlişkiler Eğitiminde Halkla İlişkiler Tarihi: Geçmiş Şimdide Karşılama

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Abstract

In this study, the status of the courses of history of public relations in public relations education at undergraduate (B.A.) and graduate (M.A./M.Sc. and PhD) levels in Türkiye, the position and scope of these courses in the curricula, and the way in which these courses are structured are examined within the framework of a two-phase quantitative and qualitative research design. In the quantitative research, which constitutes the first stage, the courses of history of public relations offered in undergraduate and graduate public relations programs in Türkiye were identified, and the structures of the courses were examined through content analysis. In the qualitative research, which constitutes the second stage, based on the data obtained in the first stage, structured written interviews were held with the academics instructing the courses. In this regard, evaluations and suggestions were presented from a holistic perspective for different levels of the related courses. The study revealed that these courses are very limited in public relations education curricula. The opinions and suggestions of the academics leading the courses shed light on how to ensure interest in and support for the related courses.

Keywords: *Public Relations History, Public Relations Education, Public Relations Curriculum, Communication Education, Türkiye*

Öz

Bu çalışmada Türkiye'de lisans ve lisans üstü düzeylerde yürütülen halkla ilişkiler eğitiminde, halkla ilişkiler tarihi ile ilgili derslerin mevcut durumu, bu derslerin eğitim müfredatlarındaki yeri ve kapsamı, halkla ilişkiler tarihi derslerinin yapılandırılma biçimi nicel ve nitel olarak iki aşamalı araştırma tasarımı çerçevesinde ele alınmaktadır. İlk aşamayı oluşturan nicel araştırmada, Türkiye'de halkla ilişkiler eğitimi veren lisans ve lisansüstü programlarında yürütülen halkla ilişkiler tarihi dersleri belirlenmiş ve derslerin yapıları içerik analizi ile incelenmiştir. İkinci aşamayı oluşturan nitel araştırmada ise, ilk aşamada elde edilen verilerden hareketle, belirlenen dersleri yürüten akademisyenlerle yapılandırılmış yazılı görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çerçevede halkla ilişkiler tarihi derslerinin farklı düzeylerine yönelik bütüncül bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirmeler ve öneriler sunulmuştur. Araştırmada halkla ilişkiler eğitim müfredatlarında halkla ilişkiler tarihi derslerinin oldukça sınırlı bir şekilde yer aldığı ortaya konmuştur. Dersleri yürüten akademisyenlerin görüşleri ve önerileri, halkla ilişkiler tarihi derslerine yönelik ilgi ve desteğin sağlanabilmesine ışık tutacak niteliktedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Halkla İlişkiler Tarihi, Halkla İlişkiler Eğitimi, Halkla İlişkiler Müfredatı, İletişim Eğitimi, Türkiye*

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Introduction

For a long time, US-based public relations historiography has dominated international public relations scholarship. Structured as evolutionary and progressive, standardized historical narrative of public relations, which also provides guidance for the practice, has been based on the models of public relations. More recently, in addition to theoretical discussions and critiques of the dominant paradigm, the standard historical narrative of public relations and its basic assumptions have been challenged. As the number of studies analyzing public relations from the perspective of the social, economic, cultural and political context in which public relations practice takes place has increased, it has been argued that the roots and historical development of public relations differ from country to country, and that these different public relations practices shape the understanding and practice of public relations in different countries. Since then, academic interest in the history of public relations has grown; international conferences have been held specifically on the subject, public relations history has been included among the conference topics at leading conferences and symposia, international research networks and study groups have been established, the number of special issues on the history of public relations in international academic journals, books and international academic sources dealing with the subject from different contexts has increased.

The history of a field of activities is one of the principal conditions of its legitimacy and likewise it should similarly be evaluated as an inseparable part of its identity. The increase in research, studies, publications, and events about public relations history, especially in the last 20 years, can be understood as a revisiting of

the field of public relations. Nevertheless, this revisiting has remained in the scope of work of academics and has not reflected fully on the curriculum of public relations education in different levels.

There is a debate about whether public relations should be considered an applied field or an interdisciplinary one while there is a continued disagreement about public relations education, which leads to greater professionalism in the sector. Public relations education and curricula are being evaluated from various perspectives and many studies have proposed revisions to the related education. In addition, there are ongoing calls for public relations education to be standardized on a global scale (Watson, 2023). However, Güzelcik Ural (2012, p. 180) believes that the reality and cultural elements of each country should be taken into account when ensuring such standardization.

Many stakeholders in the field contribute to the public relations education framework with articles on the subject, book chapters, a journal such as the *Journal of Public Relations Education* that focuses directly on public relations education, issues dedicated to public relations education in the *Public Relations Review* - another major publication in the field, reports sponsored by the Public Relations Society of America, proposals from accreditation bodies, as well as sector expectations that accompany public, cultural, economic and political changes. Recently, there has been a strong consensus in favor of the inclusion of topics on the wider scope of the digital age for the future of the sector.

This study maps out the public relations history courses at different levels in Türkiye, with the premise that the identity

of the public relations field can be enhanced by increasing and disseminating the knowledge base of public relations history. In this context, the research questions of the study are as follows: How prevalent is public relations history course in public relations education? How are public relations history course contents structured by lecturers? How public relations history courses could be designed to engage students and promote better learning? What are the opinions and suggestions of academics who teach history of public relations courses to encourage the participation of the students and interest and support of the academic community to these courses?

In addressing these questions, this study aims to draw attention to the need to revise history of public relations courses in line with new debates and perspectives in the literature, to promote the identity and legitimacy of public relations education at all levels, and to generate recommendations for these courses. Accordingly, the research follows a two-phase design based on mixed methodology. In the quantitative first phase, the undergraduate and the graduate public relations education programs in Türkiye were identified and a content analysis was conducted by taking account the characteristics of these courses. In the qualitative second phase, written interviews were conducted with the academics who carried out the courses identified in the first stage. The structured written interview form (see Appendix A), which was designed to gather the experiences and suggestions of the academics about their history of public relations courses, was sent to the respondents online via Google Forms, and

the responses were then received in a written format. Ten open-ended questions were grouped under three main headings to assess the content and scope of the history of public relations courses, student interest and the department's approach to these courses.

1. General View of PR Education in Türkiye

Academic awareness of the public relations field in Türkiye has gained prominence within the context of relations between the governing and the governed in public management (Kazancı, 2016). The chapter on "*Halkla Münasebetin Tanzimi*" [*Regulation of Public Liaisons*] from Marshall Dimock's (1954) book on the *The Principles of Public Administration* translated by Nermin Abadan Unat introduced the concept of public relations into the academic literature for the first time and it was defined it as relations with the public. In 1955, Abadan Unat's (1955) first article on the subject entitled "*Amme İdaresi ve Halkla Münasebet Mefhumu*" ["Public Administration and the Concept of Public Relations"] was published in the Faculty of Political Sciences journal. A decade after this article, the first four-year university program began in 1965 at the Ankara University Faculty of Political Sciences School of Press and Broadcasting. With this approach, public relations was evaluated as an important factor in mass communication and began its journey under journalism education (Aktaş Ymanoğlu et al., 2013, p. 63). Alaeddin Asna gave the first public relations course at Ankara University, Faculty of Political Sciences, School of Press and Broadcasting in 1967, and his book titled *Public Relations*, one of the first Turkish books in

the field, was published in 1969 (Asna, 1969).

Until 1992, public relations programs were offered in five higher education institutions and experienced a significant quantitative increase with the restructuring of undergraduate education in communication faculties. Currently there are a total of 70 departments under Public Relations and Publicity departments as well as Public Relations and Advertising in state and foundation universities in Türkiye that offer 4-year (8 semesters) and minimum 240 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) public relations undergraduate education.

Graduate programs were offered under various faculties until 1982 in Türkiye. In this context, the first doctorate thesis with public relations in its title was presented by Uysal (1974) in the field of public administration at the Ankara University Faculty of Political Sciences. The first dedicated department was established at the Istanbul University Social Studies Institute as the Journalism and Public Relations Department, and Demirel (1982) was the first to complete a master thesis in 1982. After 1984, Gazi University and Anadolu University and from 1986 Ankara University and Ege University initiated graduate programs, and Ankara University starting from 1989 and Anadolu University and Ege University started PhD programs and continued with graduate education under public relations and publicity departments after 1993 (Tokgöz, 2006, p. 3). Today there are a total of 34 M.A. (/M.Sc. programs and 17 PhD programs. M.A./M.Sc. programs without thesis are defined as 3 semesters and 90 ECTS, M.A./M.Sc. programs with theses are defined as 4 semesters and 120 ECTS and

PhD programs are defined as 8 semesters and 240 ECTS.

UNESCO began to develop public relations programs within the framework of press and broadcasting or mass communication education and has been at the forefront of activities to develop this field in Türkiye. James Orrick from UNESCO was given the task of developing the Public Relations Department curriculum of the Faculty of Political Sciences School of Press and Broadcasting for the 1966-1967 academic year (Abadan Unat, 1972, p. 76). In line with UNESCO's general tendency, the proposed program included courses that effectively provided social sciences formation defined as general knowledge. The proposal was structured in two phases as general and vocational courses but unfortunately the program that was implemented did not take these into account in the first two years, with compulsory and certificate courses in the program diminishing the vocational aspects (Aktaş Ymanoğlu et al., 2013, p. 73). Public relations education was combined with journalism education and was shaped by the academic staff from the University's Faculty of Political Sciences and the tendencies of this input were reflected in the curriculum. Since, especially in the early years, the lecturers' areas of specialization were political science and public administration, this defined the framework of press and broadcasting education and teaching in general and public relations education in particular. This tendency continued to dominate public relations education in Türkiye for many years. According to Deren van het Hof and Tuncer (2011, p. 138), the fact that public relations education in the West and in Türkiye has developed under

the dominance of journalism education in press and broadcasting schools has led to the neglect of art and creativity in public relations education.

Deren van het Hof and Tuncer (2011, p. 142) state that public relations education in Türkiye should focus on management sciences as in the USA and Europe, reflect the communication between the academy and the sector, and define creativity as a part of public relations education. Today, as in the rest of the world, it is highly recommended that artificial intelligence, big data, and contemporary media within the framework of the digital age are incorporated into public relations programs in Türkiye. However, as Auger and Cho (2016, p. 65) highlighted, this suggestion “may be temporary and illusionary” since technology is transforming academia more rapidly and the gaps in between show us that some demands are transitional. There are varying approaches to the placement of public relations history in the curriculum, as a non-transitory requirement for the identity of the field. In the May 2015 *Industry Educator Summit on Public Relations Education Summary Report of the Commission on Public Relations Education Industry* (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2015, p. 8) the participants presented varying approaches about public relations history, underlining that the entry knowledge required for creating a career plan for students included network and chaos theory while public relations theory was reported as a basis for influencing persuasion and behavior. Some of the participants stated that public relations history was not worth teaching, while others took the approach that public relations history was “valuable” in providing a tangible understanding and connection for the evolving of public relations. On the other hand, the *2016 Omnibus Survey* highlighted the

importance of public relations history knowledge (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018, p. 53). Moreover, one of the findings of the research, conducted by Bahçeşehir University and Communication Consultancies Association of Turkey (2018, p. 56) on public relations education in Türkiye, is that the participants state that public relations history is one of the required subjects for public relations education.

In view of these proposals, the *Communication Research Association*, which accredits programs related to communication education in Türkiye, did not make any suggestions regarding the history of public relations for the programs gains in public relations and publicity and public relations and advertising programs. Overall, one of the most substantial studies in related literature that considers and questions public relations history in the curriculum was presented by Fitch and L’Etang (2020). Unfortunately, besides the above-mentioned study public relations history has not been the direct focus or concern of academic studies regarding education.

Fitch and L’Etang (2020, p. 703) tracing the presentation of the history of public relations in public relations textbooks, state that the functional approach, which claims that public relations advances over time, takes a superficial view of history and uses it as a way to legitimize public relations practice. In their study, Fitch and L’Etang (2020, pp. 708–711) suggest that although there is greater academic interest in public relations history, this subject is squeezed into the introduction of public relations books often as descriptive summaries of leading names and institutions, and that public relations

curriculum is planned according to the needs of the industry. According to Fitch and L'Etang (2020, p. 172) public relations needs a less corporate focus, a more variety of historical examples and a greater prominence of public relations history in textbooks so that students can better understand the ethical aspects of strategic communication. This approach has the potential to give students a better idea of the epistemology and ethics of public relations on the one hand, while helping them to develop research, interpretation, and critical thinking skills on the other hand (Fitch & L'Etang, 2020, pp. 711–712). For this reason, Fitch and L'Etang (2020) argue that the inclusion of related history should be considered an important "intervention" for public relations curricula. Within this framework, Fitch and L'Etang (2020, p. 703) suggest that public relations education should be reshaped according to the insights provided by historical approaches and methodologies and call for a "milestone revision" of public relations education that currently presents related history as background information limited to introductory courses.

There have been some responses to this milestone revision in various ways in academic research and platforms. The increase in academic interest in public relations history has become more noticeable with the organization of international conferences focused directly on the subject, the consideration given to public relations history as a separate subject category in leading international sector conferences and symposiums, the prevalence of international research networks and work groups, the special issues dedicated to the subject and the increase in the number of international

sources with different approaches. The *International History of Public Relations Conference (IHPRC)* is organized annually by Bournemouth University. *European Public Relations History Research Network* has been set up under the *European Public Relations Education and Research Association* by Tom Watson. *Journal of Communication Management* 12/4 (2008), 15/3 (2011; *Public Relations Review* 38/3 (2012), 39/2 (2013), 40/4 (2014), 42/5 (2016), (2018); *Journal of Public Relations Research* 27/3 (2015), 29/1 (2017); *International Journal Corporate Communications* 25/4 (2020) which have all published special issues on public relations history are among the most prominent on the subject. Besides, several books have been published on this subject. Especially, the studies published in the seven volume book series titled *National Perspectives on the Development of Public Relations* edited between 2014 and 2017 by Tom Watson (2014b, 2014a, 2015b, 2015a; 2017) emphasize the importance of public relations history by examining it in its unique context from a socio-cultural and economic perspective. In this framework, it seems necessary for public relations curricula to be reviewed in such a way that they correspond to new theoretical approaches in public relations history.

2. Methodology

This study has been carried out in the frame of two-phase mixed methodology research design to trace the significance and current status of public relations history courses in different levels of public relations education in Türkiye. In the quantitative first phase, a content analysis of history of public relations courses at undergraduate and graduate programs in Türkiye was conducted. For this end,

initially, the *Council of Higher Education Atlas* (YÖK Atlas, 2021) was reviewed for undergraduate programs; and for graduate public relations education, the programs of the institutes of universities offering the relevant degrees were scanned in May 2022. Subsequently, the curricula of the identified programs were examined through information packages on their websites or other related links to determine the history of public relations courses. Following the determination of the history of public relations courses in the programs, content analysis was conducted by including “the name of the courses”, “the grade (first/ second/third/ fourth grade), or the level (undergraduate and graduate) that the courses were taught”, “the type (compulsory/elective)”, “the inclusion of four models of public relations” as the main categories for the analysis. It was also examined whether the history of public relations courses included the four models of public relations and whether alternative public relations narratives were discussed in the courses. In addition to those categories, the reading lists proposed in the courses were also reviewed.

The second phase of the study was based on the data obtained in the first phase. In this second qualitative phase, written interviews in Turkish were conducted with academics who teach history of public relations courses at various levels. The main reason for conducting interviews with academics was to obtain in-depth, comprehensive and rich data and to evaluate their unique experiences and recommendations. The reason why web-based and written interviews were favored is that written interviews are a more "practical alternative" to traditional face-

to-face or telephone interviews (Opara, Spangsdorf & Ryan, 2023, p. 562). As Opara, Spangsdorf and Ryan (2023, p. 562) point out, this method is especially preferred to overcome financial, temporal and geographical limitations; it eliminates the necessity of audio recording and transcription and the possibility of data loss; and it can be used synchronously or asynchronously. However, when used asynchronously, as adopted in this study, it allows participants more time to reflect and develop their responses.

For the web based written interviews in the second stage of the study, the ethical approval was received from the Institutional Review Board of Başkent University, Türkiye on 25.09.2023 with the 17162298.600-225 numbered decision. At this stage, a total of nine academics teaching history of public relations courses were identified and all of them were contacted by phone or e-mail, informed about the purpose and method of the study and invited to participate in the study. All academics agreed to participate in the study in a written interview format. Then, an informative text about the research process and a structured interview form consisting of ten open-ended questions in Turkish (see Appendix A) were sent to the participants online via Google Forms and the participants were asked to answer the questions individually and in a written format. Eight out of nine academics submitted their written responses within the specified one-month period during October 2022. The written responses were analyzed within the framework of the categories on which the questions were based. Responses were translated into English for this study.

The study designed with this mixed method aims to present suggestions for public relations history courses, while reflecting the views of the related academics to produce a collective understanding.

3. Findings

According to the findings of the content analysis in the first phase of the study, there are 70 universities in Türkiye offering four-year undergraduate public relations courses (YÖK Atlas, 2021), 34 universities with 45 programs (with thesis and without thesis) offering master's level public relations courses and 17 universities offering doctoral level public relations courses based on university websites search of information packages in May 2022. Only five of the 70 universities provide public relations education at the undergraduate level, and only 7 of the 45 programs providing graduate public relations education offer history of public relations courses. In addition, 4 courses at the undergraduate level and 8 courses at the graduate level were included in the analysis as they were available in the information packages. Since only 1 program out of the 17 programs at the doctoral level had a course on public relations history, this course was not included in the content analysis, but its lecturer was included in the qualitative second phase of the research.

Communication education programs in Türkiye that also include public relations programs incorporate communications history as a core subject, while the history of media such as cinema, television, radio, and printed press is also taught in the programs. Only five out of 70 universities with undergraduate level public relations education, and only 8 out of 45 graduate programs in Türkiye offer public relations history courses. However, it is interesting to note that there are more advertising history courses than public relations

history courses in the public relations undergraduate level. There are eight undergraduate programs that include advertising history courses. Given the fact that there are fewer public relations history courses than advertising history courses at undergraduate level, it could be said that this reflects the conservative approach that the unseen power of public relations does not allow for an in-depth study of its history from a historical perspective. From this point of view, the tangible visibility of advertising allows researchers to study on the field. As far as graduate degrees are concerned, there are less advertising history courses in comparison with undergraduate degree programs. Two graduate degree programs offering public relations education include advertising history courses. This finding may be related to the fact that public relations and advertising are considered as two separate departments at graduate level in Türkiye.

In all the undergraduate programs that offer public relations history courses, the courses are titled "Public Relations History". On the other hand, public relations history courses in graduate degree programs have different names. 4 courses name the course as "Public Relations History" and the other 4 courses' names are as follows "History, Theory and Practice of Public Relations", "Public Relations and Advertising History" and "The Progress History of Public Relations in Türkiye", "Single-Party Period And Public Relations Activities". The amalgamation of history with theory, application or advertising in the course titles gives the impression that public relations history cannot stand on its own but needs to be positioned as a subject that accompanies theory and application. In addition, expressions such as "development" and "progress" in the course titles reflect the

understanding that history in these courses is evolutionary.

The types of courses in the public relations history courses of undergraduate programs are offered as compulsory or electives. In this manner, 2 undergraduate courses include «PR history» course as a compulsory course in 1st and 4th grades and 2 undergraduate courses as an elective course in 3rd and 4th grades. The public relations history courses are scattered in all grades, which implies that public relations history could not find its position or place in curriculum. Out of 8 graduate courses, 2 courses are offered as a compulsory course, and the other 6 courses as elective. The fact that these courses are elective at undergraduate and graduate level suggests that the history of the discipline is not highly valued. Moreover, an elective course in public relations history seems to indicate a secondary or lesser position.

Although public relations history courses are not numerous in Türkiye, they have been included in the curricula since the mid 2000's. The public relations history lecturers have stated that their suggestions on the subject for courses were supported by their departments. Only one of the surveyed lecturers interviewed encountered some resistance, being told that it was sufficient for public relations history to be included as part of other courses, but that eventually the course was accepted with the support of other lecturers.

The lecturers of the courses state that public relations history courses are *a sine qua non* of public relations education, underlining that these history courses shape the identity of the field and support knowledge related to the practice and theory of public relations:

Along the lines of the idea that public relations history enhances the identity of the field of public relations, I was convinced that public relations history courses should be included in the graduate curriculum. My main motivation in proposing this course was not only to provide examples of public relations history in Türkiye, but also to provide examples of public relations history that are not covered by the prevailing trends in different countries of the world, and to enable students to discuss these examples of the public relations history. [...] I believe that courses in public relations history should be offered in undergraduate and graduate programs, and that they should be structured as compulsory courses. Like communication history, which is compulsory in these programs, public relations history courses should be included as compulsory courses in the curricula of students graduating from these programs. (Participant 1)

Without a doubt, I believe that public relations history courses should be included in the curricula. This is necessary to grasp the paradigm shifts in the application of public relations. (Participant 2)

The main reason for my proposal to include courses on public relations history in the curriculum is that these courses are not available at undergraduate or graduate level in many Communication Faculties. I believe that this course is essential for students to strengthen their theoretical knowledge of the field of public relations. (Participant 6)

From this perspective, public relations history is a requirement for the identity of the field while enabling students to gain a deeper knowledge of the field. Studies indicate that the identity problem of public relations field is mostly related to the USA-based history of public relations. Furthermore, Verčič et.al. (2001) state that there are more institutions offering public relations in the USA compared to the rest of the world, that *Public Relations Society of America* (PRSA) and *International*

Association of Business Communicators (IABC) have more members than *International Public Relations Association (IPRA)*, that books on the subject come from the USA - even that Americans author the chapters related to public relations in Europe-, that most of the agencies in the sector are based in the USA, and conclude that that the field of public relations and the related education has been dominated by North America in the 20th century.

This is in live with Sriramesh's (2002) view that Asian universities have looked to the US as an ideal model in developing their curricula and have often invited academics from the US on Fulbright scholarships to help develop their programs. Likewise, Kazancı (2006, p. 5) states in a critical manner that "almost all of the books written in Turkey on public relations, take the history of this profession as the history of public relations practices in USA."

In accordance with Kazancı's considerations, it could be said that the public relations education still follows USA-based narrative in Türkiye, which also shapes the public relations history courses. In that, this research finds out that 2 B.A. courses include the 4 models of public relations, while the other 2 courses do not. While 5 M.A./M.Sc. and PhD courses include the 4 models of public relations, the other 3 do not.

Certainly, the four model is a USA-based narrative with the models providing a specific framework for the applications of public relations, and historically representing a theme related to the USA and its history. Nevertheless, the centric progressive-evolutionary narrative of this model that has influenced public history for a long time, has been challenged with extensive analyses in studies regarding

public relations history with growing criticism of this dominant paradigm of public relations (Aktaş Ymanoğlu et al., 2013). The standard narrative of the public relations history is being challenged not only by recent publications on experiences in different countries and the revelation of PR-oriented studies prior to the 19th century, but also by the examination of different contexts and social groups that have not been addressed in previous studies of the history of public relations (Aktaş Ymanoğlu et al., 2013, p. 22). Thus, it is necessary for institutions that provide public relations education in different countries to incorporate and disseminate their individual history narratives in their public relations history courses. In this manner, when more of these individual history narratives are examined together, the holistic and historical nature of public relations history will be enhanced.

A few lecturers have stated that they do not only teach Turkish public relations history in their courses, but also include the related history of different contexts and countries and include examples of proto-PR applications from around the world in their public relations history courses from this perspective:

In my lectures, before we look at the understanding of Public Relations in the 20th century, we first examine persuasive, educational, and informative communication activities starting with proto-PR and the impact of communications technologies in this process. (Examples from the Museum of PR website have been most useful in these past weeks). In this context, we look at power relations and influence mechanisms from the perspective of the historical framework of different countries around the world. When we study the 20th century, we examine propaganda activities effective in the World Wars from a PR

perspective, we carry out a critical evaluation of Gruning & Hunt's 4 model questioning whether the history of each country can be classified from this perspective and then we look at examples of the PR history of different countries. Finally, we break down PR history in Türkiye according to different periods and discuss these in detail. (Participant 3)

Even though they are not labelled as public relations, I first address what can be considered as public relations practices in ancient times (Greek-Roman civilizations and historic Türkiye). I explain why these can be considered public relations practices. (Participant 5)

One of the lecturers interviewed evaluates this particular context as a social and economic structure as follows:

(...) I believe that for public relations students to have a better understanding of their subject, they need to have a good grasp of the political, economic, and social dynamics that gave rise to this field. I am convinced that students of the field need to know the past related to public relations, otherwise they will not be able to come up with new perspectives for the future. Thus, students have a better grasp of how public relations came to be and why we need this field. (Participant 4)

None of these courses attempt to discuss history as a discipline. Since most of the sources at undergraduate level are mostly sources from "Introduction to Public Relations" courses, public relations history are only chapters squeezed into these sources. As a result, the standard narrative is repeated in this context, signifying a lack of attention to new and original studies.

On the other hand, half of the courses in the undergraduate programs have reading lists from different areas of public relations history. These lists include Gustav Le Bon, Etienne de La Boétie and Veblen Thorstein, among others, as texts that allow different perspectives on public relations history.

With regard to the reading list at graduate level, it is notable that the studies of lecturers and academics working on the history of public relations are more prominent:

[In the courses], I evaluate cases and situations from a critical historical materialistic epistemological perspective (...) using articles and book chapters referring to other primary sources. (Participant 8)

Although not numerous, there are courses that use sources with distinctive approaches to public relations history and encourage related discussion. The diffused nature of the reading lists makes it more difficult to understand the narrative and understanding of courses in relation to public relations history and can be seen as a reflection of the lack of institutionalization of public relations history in public relations education. This situation also indicates that the courses related to public relations history in Türkiye are carried out with the efforts of academics in the field and consequently that related history courses carry less weight in terms of institutionalization within public relations education. The lecturers interviewed indicated that their main motivation for proposing and teaching the course was related to their own studies in the history of public relations:

The main motivation was the lack of academic interest and information about the history of public relations - both in terms of mainstream and critical historical literature - throughout the undergraduate public relations education in Türkiye. Considering that perspectives on public relations history also clarify the definitions of the field, the fact that research on public relations history provides important contributions to students is another motivating factor. (...) Public relations

history courses must be included in the curricula of both undergraduate and graduate levels of communications faculties. As for our department, this shortcoming must be addressed to ensure that undergraduate students have a more complete understanding of the field. (Participant 2)

The lack of a course on PR history in the department where I teach and my conviction that a historical approach of the field is necessary for students led me to propose a course on the subject. As an academic who contemplates, works, writes and follows academic publications in the field, it was my main motivation and aim was to share and discuss my knowledge with students. (...) It must be included in the curriculum as an elective course. It should be at least a 3rd year course. It should not be limited to PR departments, but should also be open to interested students in other departments such as business administration, political science, international relations, and psychology. It could also be an elective course for students in the field at doctorate level faculties. If such a course is structured around the conceptualization and ethical issues of PR, I believe that it would be most useful for doctorate level education to break out of mainstream understanding and broaden the perspectives of students. (Participant 3)

Many of the lecturers interviewed shared a similar view that students are reluctant to take courses in the history of public relations because of their generally unfavorable view of history and history lectures:

Students have a preconceived notion that history is a stale field that has nothing new to offer, and this is a major obstacle in students' approach to the course that needs to be overcome. (Participant 1)

It was also noted that such aversion can even lead to the abandonment of public relations courses:

The undergraduate public relations history course, which was deemed compulsory by the curriculum commission, was later allocated as an elective course and finally removed from the undergraduate curriculum with the decision to be included in the two-semester public relations course. (...) The young run away from the word "history" but the problem is solved when we call it development process" [instead of "history"]. (Participant 7)

The lecturers of these courses have stated that students' interest in the course/subject could be increased by using different materials such as documentaries, films and interactive applications. In this respect, the surveyed lecturers believe that preconceptions can be overcome. Tools and approaches to change students' attitudes towards "history" were identified as follows:

I think that in order to make the history of public relations more attractive to students, it is necessary for them to first change their perception of history and that this can only happen if students dabble in history materials. In other words, courses should not be limited to history related reading materials but contents such as museum visits and films should be added to the course to increase interest. (Participant 1)

Some of the students perceive the course as a history lesson and first approach it hesitantly. So an effort is required especially during class to make use of visuals and documentaries related to the field of public relations thereby making the course more interesting. (Participant 2)

The majority of students are interested in the course. Removing the preconception that history is a boring subject makes the lectures more fluid. Giving students sources to use in preparation for the weekly class discussions increases interactivity. It is important not to limit courses to basic lecturing, but to allow students to think and comment through discussion questions. Online quiz tools such as

Kahoots allow students to have fun while testing their knowledge. (Participant 3)

I can only say that giving examples with a story behind them increase interest. (1926 Mobile Exhibition, Singer's first marketing drives, population control etc.) (Participant 5)

Among the participants' suggestions on how to increase students' academic interest in the course, there are also suggestions on the necessity on more books, articles, symposiums, or conferences include case studies on the subject. These suggestions have the potential to make public relations history "visible" and thus increase academic interest in the subject.

Conclusion

Although there is a growing academic interest in the history of PR in Türkiye, it cannot be said that the same interest is reflected in PR education. In fact, many of the undergraduate and graduate programs in Türkiye do not include a course of public relations history. The few public relations history courses taught by lecturers who produce academic material on the subject, have begun to find a place in the education curricula in Türkiye since the mid-2000's. Public relations history courses are provided mainly as elective courses in the programs. On the one hand, this positioning as an elective course indicates a secondary role for history, and on the other, it translates into a negative interpretation of students' approach to PR history. Thus, the low student demand for PR history has provided a basis for the elective status of these courses.

The negative opinion of students towards public relations history courses and its secondary position within the discipline are among the issues that lecturers of public relations history in Türkiye agree on. In fact, course lecturers hold the common belief that public history is *a sine qua non*

of public relations education and that public relation history courses are necessary for enhancing the identity of the public relations field. However, under the circumstances it can be said that the few public relations history courses available are not sufficient to strengthen the identity of the field. On the other hand, the courses that also include different contexts and examples of public relations history in other countries often do not go beyond the mainstream USA-based version of related history and the reading lists in these courses are similar to sources of "Introduction to Public Relations" courses, signifying that public relations history courses do not show much variation.

Despite the individual efforts of course lecturers, it is noteworthy that students show a reluctance towards public relations history courses. This lack of interest can be seen as the result of the structure of the field on a "progress and development" basis. In fact, it could be said that the lack of interest towards public relations history leads to this subject being interpreted as a "primitive" application that is falling behind.

To raise awareness of public relations history in Türkiye and nurture related interest, the necessity of including alternative history perspectives as well as periods, people and examples that are omitted in the dominant narrative can be highlighted especially in public relations history textbooks. The reluctance and lack of interest of students in public relations history courses can be overcome with the application of digital tools in particular. While the digital age and related trends are shifting student focus towards digital skills and away from interest in history, these same trends can also be useful in shaping interest in public relations history education. This type of approach to public relations history can increase interest in

the field especially at undergraduate level, while promoting enthusiasm, curiosity and an appetite for new research at graduate levels.

The existence of public relations history courses is not sufficient to strengthen the identity of the field or provide a platform to further legitimize the field. "Public relations history "may be national, regional, cultural, governmental, institutional, organizational, professional, biographical and autobiographical" (L'Etang, 2008, p. 319). Public relations history should address public relations in a social, economic, political, cultural context and be evaluated with an intertextual approach that involves people, institutions, and events. As L'Etang (2008, p. 323) expresses in reference to Levi-Strauss, the historian joins alternative voices and opinions like a *bricoleur*.

The placement of public relations history courses as a prerequisite for public relations programs at different academic levels as well as the structuring of course content, should be the responsibility of primarily academics, professionals, sector institutions and accreditation councils as well as all stakeholders. In parallel, the prominence of the course in different countries needs further research and a comparative discussion. Thus, we can move on to policies related to public relations education.

Declarations

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Appendix A

Written Interview Form in Turkish and Its English Translation

Sayın Hocam,

Halkla ilişkiler tarihi eğitimi üzerine bir araştırma yürütmekteyiz. Araştırmamızın ilk aşamasında Türkiye’de lisans ve lisansüstü düzeyde halkla ilişkiler tarihi üzerine yapılandırılmış az sayıda ders olduğunu belirledik. İkinci aşamada ise, bu dersleri veren öğretim üyelerinin görüşlerini almak istiyoruz. Bu kapsamda sizin halkla ilişkiler tarihi konulu dersinizle ilgili bilgilere, Türkiye’de halkla ilişkiler tarihi eğitiminin geliştirilmesi konusunda görüşlerinize ve önerilerinize ihtiyaç duymaktayız. Sorulara yazılı yanıt verebileceğiniz gibi derseniz yüz yüze veya çevrimiçi görüşme ile de değerlendirmenizi alabiliriz. Araştırmamız sonucunda hazırlayacağımız yayınlarda verdiğiniz bilgiler, görüş ve önerileriniz isim belirtilmeden anonimleştirilerek değerlendirilecektir. Zamanınızı ayırarak kıymetli görüşlerinize araştırmamıza destek vermenizden mutluluk duyacağız. Selamlar.

[Dear Sir/Madam,

We are conducting research on public relations history education. In the first phase of our research, we found out that there are few courses on public relations history at undergraduate and graduate levels in Türkiye. In the second phase, we would like to get the opinions of academics who teach these courses. In this context,

we need information about your public relations history courses, and your opinions and suggestions on the development of public relations history education in Türkiye. You can answer the questions in writing, or if you wish, we can also receive your answers through a face-to-face or online meeting. The information you provide, your opinions and suggestions will be evaluated anonymously in the publications we will prepare at the end of our research. We would be happy if you can spare your time and contribute to our research with your valuable opinions. Best wishes].

Questions in Turkish and Their Translations into English

- 1) Adınızı ve soyadınızı yazınız. [Write your name and surname.]
- 2) Halkla ilişkiler tarihi üzerine vermiş olduğunuz dersin ismi, yer aldığı program ve düzeyi nedir? [What is the name, program, and level of your public relations history course?]
- 3) Halkla ilişkiler tarihi üzerine geliştirdiğiniz ders içeriğinde hangi kaynaklardan yararlandınız? Ve ders kapsamında başka hangi kaynakları kullanıyorsunuz? [What sources did you use in the public relations history course’s content? And what other resources do you use in the course?]
- 4) Yürütmekte olduğunuz halkla ilişkiler tarihi konulu dersi yapılandırmaya nasıl karar verdiniz? Bu konudaki temel motivasyonunuz ve amacınız neydi? [How did you decide to structure your public relations history course? What was your main motivation and purpose?]
- 5) Halkla ilişkiler tarihi konulu dersinizin bölümünüzde/anabilim dalınızda açılması kararı nasıl verildi? Bu konuda herhangi bir muhalefet veya destek ile karşılaştınız mı? [How was the decision made when you

offered your public relations history course in your department? Did you encounter any opposition or support on this issue?]

6) Halkla ilişkiler tarihi dersinizin kapsamı nedir? Üzerinde görece az durulan konu, tema, kişi veya incelemelerden yararlanıyor musunuz? Yararlanıyorsanız bunlar hakkında kısa bilgi verebilir misiniz? [What is the scope of your public relations history course? Do you draw on relatively ignored topics, themes, people or studies? If you do, can you give brief information?]

7) Halkla ilişkiler tarihini konu edinen derslerin müfredatlarda yer alması gerekliliği konusundaki görüşünüz nedir? [What do you think about including public relations history courses in the curriculum?]

8) Öğrencilerinizin derse ilgisini nasıl değerlendirirsiniz? Öğrencilerin halkla ilişkiler tarihine yönelik ilgisini arttırmak için kullandığınız bir yöntem ya da yaklaşım bulunuyor mu? [How do you evaluate your students' interest in public relations history courses? Is there a method or approach you use to increase students' interest in public relations history?]

9) Halkla ilişkiler tarihi konulu derslere akademik ilgiyi arttırmaya yönelik önerilerinizi paylaşabilir misiniz? [Can you share your suggestions for increasing academic interest in public relations history courses?]

10) Dersinizin içeriği, haftalık ders akışı ve/veya okuma listesi bulunuyorsa bizimle paylaşmanızdan mutluluk duyarız. Varsa sorularınızı, önerilerinizi ve iletmek istediğiniz belgelerinizi bize iletebilirsiniz. [If you have a course content, syllabus or reading list, we would be happy if you can share it with us. You can send us your questions, suggestions and documents you want to share if any.]