Education for Citizenship in the Arab World: Key to Social Transformation

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- Challenges to citizenship education
- The way forward
Introduction

• Youth is a principal agent of social transformation- 40% under age 18

• Schools are key change agents in developing skills & values, social & emotional development; can raise active responsible citizens, critical thinkers, knowledge seekers & producers- a must for nation building

• Education reform is a key element of social & cultural transformation
Impressive gains in enrolment, literacy levels, ‘engineering’ aspect stressed

High expenditure on education

Serious shortcomings:
- quality, efficiency, governance, climate
- Poor performance in TIMSS, PISA, PIRLS
- Lack of 21st century skills - civic competence
Citizenship Education: Concepts and Definitions

- Concept developed in the West, yet universal
- Civic education (knowledge) versus citizenship education (knowledge, skills, dispositions, values)
- Education for citizenship (about + through); holistic school reform
Rationale for Citizenship Education

- Consolidates democracy, which thrives only in cultures that accept diversity, different viewpoints, tolerates dissent, regards truths as relative
- Includes values central to human development (freedom, women’s empowerment, democratic governance)
- Promotes 21st century skills- problem solving, critical thinking, consensus building, collaboration, creativity, communication, …
Goals of the Carnegie Project

- Survey current reform efforts in K-12, public schools to establish a baseline & identify shortcomings
- Build regional capacity for research & for implementation of policies & practices
- Expand knowledge about values & practices of students & teachers; & of teacher preparation
- Assist in developing a conceptual framework as a basis for discussion
Phases of the Project

1. Documentation & dissemination of findings - papers, meetings, conference, media
2. Formation of national research committees to conduct research & develop conceptual framework
3. Dissemination of findings & studies; & development of new initiatives & programs
4. Assistance in monitoring & evaluation
Status of Citizenship Education

- Findings from studies of 11 states
- **Wide gap** between reform goals and their implementation
- **No political commitment** to raise free, democratic and creative citizens rather than obedient, docile subjects
- **Teacher-directed methods; learning assessment methods** do not focus on higher-order thinking
Status of Citizenship Education

- Lack of Teacher appreciation & support; needs higher social & financial status; ill-prepared academically & pedagogically
- Focus on knowledge aspect of civics; no requirement to participate in civic life
- Lack of Good governance (accountability & transparency)
- Negative school climate: safety, teaching & learning, interpersonal relations, & institutional environment - authoritarian, repressive; not conducive to civic competency
Overall Index of School Climate

safety; teacher development; teacher working conditions; students’ learning method; learning resources; parental involvement
Diverse Priorities in Citizenship Education

- raise religious citizens
- develop patriotic nationalists
- have citizens with two or more identities - national, ethnic, religious, Arab & global
Approaches to Citizenship Education

- Different approaches in content, allocated time, & pedagogical model
  1. A single course, part of social studies, or integrated into different subjects
  2. One weekly session, 40-60 minutes
  3. Teaching starts at different grades- 1, 5, 11; not an important course
  4. Course content & titles stress patriotism & loyalty to regime
Contents of Textbooks

- Civic society and systems including democracy
- Civic principles- equality & human rights
- Citizenship identity- national, Arab, Islamic
- Civic participation- influencing decisionmaking & societal engagement
Democracy and Citizenship

- Content of texts disconnected from social & political realities; ignores deviations such as sectarianism, corruption, bad governance

All favor democracy as a concept, yet differ on system

- Explicitly supports Western democratic system
- Adopts Islamic shura system
- Endorses both-being compatible
## Approaches to Human Rights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human rights is a principle adopted nominally by all states</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispute over Articles 16 &amp; 18 - gender equality &amp; freedom of opinion &amp; faith</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disconnect of textbooks with reality</td>
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| Endorses Universal Declaration | Supports the rights cited in their constitutions | Supports Declaration within the limits of sharia, claiming cultural specificity (Arab Charter on Human Rights, Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam) |
Generally, national identity defined as love of nation and loyalty to it & its leaders

Different dimensions of identity emphasized by countries:

1. the national dimension
2. the Arab & Islamic dimensions
3. a combination of two or more identities - national, Arab, Islamic, ethnic
Attributes of a Good Citizen

- belief in God, commitment to religious directives, & respect for others’ beliefs
- concern for security & stability
- Respect for law, responsible, moral behavior, patriotism, loyalty to regime & leaders
- case- participation in law writing & decisionmaking
- case- saving & rational spending
Civic Activities and Skills

- Social not political participation: volunteering, charity, sports

- Voting encouraged in some states

- Practice, extra-curricular activities, participation in decision-making at school, political & social engagement in community are necessary to develop skills, yet rare or lacking
Challenges to Citizenship Education

- Shortcomings of education systems
  - Governance
  - Teachers
  - School climate
- International & domestic contextual factors
  - Globalization
  - Domestic- politics, society, family
- Funding
The Way Forward

- Clear definition of concepts, goals, and approach-
citizen, equity, diversity, national identity
- National and global citizen
- A set of core learning outcomes, skills, values, and
dispositions
- Necessary for the emergence of future pluralistic societies & of sustainable development
Thank you