Executive Summaries of the Commissioned Background Papers for the Education for Citizenship Project
Contents

Promoting Democracy and Social Cohesion Under Authoritarianism:
The Case of Algerian Schools
Ahmed Al-Hedhiri

Teaching Citizenship in a Religiously Divided Monarchy:
The Case of Bahrain
Saif Al-Maamari

Raising Submissive and Dependent Citizens:
The Case of Egyptian Schools
Elham Abdulhameed

Iraqi Public Schools:
Teaching Civics With an Emphasis on Religion in a Polarized Society
Khawla Khaneka

Citizenship Education in Jordan:
Harmony Between Curriculum and Educational Practices?
Muhyieddeen Shaban Touq

Citizenship Education in Lebanon:
Between the Aspirations of Education Reform and the Reality in Schools
Nemer Frayha

Citizenship Education in Morocco:
Ambitious Goals and Inadequate Means
Ahmed Al-Hadhiri
Citizenship Education in Oman:
The Need to Follow Up on Reforms
Saif Al-Maamari

Citizenship Education in Palestine:
A Dynamic Route to the Establishment of National Identity
Muhyieddeen Shaban Touq

Citizenship Education in Tunisia:
Current Reality and Future Challenges
Naila Silini

Promoting National Identity in a Multicultural Society:
The Case of UAE Citizenship Education
Saif Al-Maamari

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Promoting Democracy and Social Cohesion Under Authoritarianism: The Case of Algerian Schools

Ahmed Al-Hedhiri

Algeria teaches civic education in public schools from first grade to ninth grade for one hour per week. The curriculum encompasses four main themes: civic society and systems, civic principles, national identity, and civic participation. To teach students about civic society and systems, textbooks emphasize the constitutional rights and duties of the citizen to the community and the state, including religious and patriotic observances. Students also learn about government institutions, and a high value is placed on the role of the national security agencies.

The civic principles taught to students include equality of citizens before the law, tolerance, social cohesion, teamwork, and respect for and solidarity with others. Algerian curricula underscore national identity as a principally civic identity and promote the values of Islam, Arab nationalism, and Berber culture. Civic education textbooks teach civic participation by encouraging participation in voting, voluntary community service, and caring for the environment.

In addition to featuring a separate course on civic education, Algerian public schools integrate civic concepts and principles into the subjects of Arabic language, Amazighi language, Islamic education, history, and geography. The contents of these courses were revised according to the state’s 2008 directive law, which aimed to develop a common national culture based on the three founding principles of the Algerian nation: Islam, Arab nationalism, and Amazighi culture.

Schools are entrusted with nurturing democratic principles while promoting social cohesion primarily between Arabs and Berbers. Students’ knowledge of civics and citizenship is tested through assessments of basic citizenship competencies. In primary school, these competencies relate to values such as social cohesion, respect for others, and appreciation of the role of national security agencies and institutions that safeguard cultural heritage. In middle school, the concepts of tolerance and social solidarity are central. The social upbringing in schools emphasizes love of the Algerian nation and the citizen’s duties toward that nation—including sacrificing one’s life.

Lack of Supportive Climate for Citizenship Education

Achieving these civic education goals requires a democratic, participatory school climate and a student-centered learning environment. Teaching democratic principles to students living with authoritarian structures and cultures at school is not effective. Indeed, it is counterproductive. Students see the glaring contrast between what they read in the textbooks and what they experience in class and outside school.

Along with the absence of a democratic climate, Algerian public schools contend with a lack of public accountability and transparency and a shortage of qualified teachers. Many Algerian teachers lack the minimum qualifications to promote democratic principles in class. According the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, the overwhelming majority of eighth-grade mathematics teachers in Algeria do not hold a university degree, and over 90 percent of mathematics
and science teachers of grades four to eight had not had professional training to improve their teaching skills during the two years preceding the study.

Teachers in Algeria’s public schools have low salaries, low social status, and poor working conditions. They often find themselves teaching large classes with over 40 students crammed into rooms built to accommodate half this number. These classrooms are frequently unsanitary, and teachers’ office spaces are often too small and noisy to allow them to work outside class hours.

When it comes to teaching methods, the teacher-directed didactic approach prevails. Students are trained to memorize facts and information, with little opportunity for open discourse and critical thinking in various subjects, including civics and social sciences. Students are overwhelmed with school work and go home with a heavy burden of homework. Most study with private tutors after school hours and sometimes early in the morning. Despite the limited financial means of many parents, they feel obliged to provide private tutoring to their children in order to make up for the poor quality of school education. As a result, students do not have time to engage in extracurricular activities outside of school, such as sports or cultural and civic activities.

The practical side of civic education is largely absent, both in school and in the local community. Students do not participate in decisionmaking in the classroom or in civic or political activities outside school. Textbooks encourage civic participation, but this is not translated into action. Students are not required to do community service or participate in civic life through other forms of extracurricular activities, and their busy schoolwork and tutoring schedules mean that they would not have the time to engage in such activities even if they wanted to do so. Thus, students do not develop the citizenship skills that the government’s education policy aims to impart.

**Students’ Perceptions of Their Identities**

According to a 2008–2009 study published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, “Education, Diversité et Cohésion Sociale en Méditerranée Occidentale,” middle- and secondary-school students in Algeria have strong feelings of national identity. Students believe it is important to be an Algerian citizen who is ready to defend the nation.

However, the study showed that the average Algerian student self-identifies first as a Muslim, then as an Algerian, then as a member of the Arab or Amazigh (Berber) ethnicity, and lastly as part of the Islamic umma (nation). This suggests that the civic education program has not developed among students the primacy of social cohesion or citizen equality before the law. To the contrary, there is evidence of rising Islamic fundamentalism in Algerian schools, which shows little respect for the different religions and opinions of others.
Sweeping political reforms that transformed Bahrain into a constitutional monarchy in 2001 were coupled with education reform. This reform focused on civics or “national education” in particular. The country organized several conferences and workshops to discuss the characteristics of citizenship education and its application in primary and secondary schools.

In 2003, a special curriculum on citizenship was implemented in both public and private schools and was revised in 2009 in order to become better aligned with the principles of human rights. This curriculum aims to promote awareness of citizenship values among students, teachers, and school administrators and to deepen the understanding of universal human rights. It was accompanied by appropriate teaching and training materials, which notably included a book on life skills for the sixth grade and a “student passport” that includes important information on laws and life skills.

National Pride, Morals, and Patriotism

An “education for citizenship” course is offered to select grade levels for one fifty-minute period per week. According to the seventh- and eighth-grade textbooks, the objectives of the course are to enhance the students’ understanding of citizenship; “plant the spirit of loyalty and belonging” among them; identify their “duties toward the homeland and the leadership for the multitude of services they provide to citizens”; and instill pride in the king’s achievements. The textbook includes chapters about private property, school facilities, public facilities, Bahraini history and geography, national heritage, services offered by the government, leadership selection, children’s rights, universal human rights, human rights in Islam, citizens’ duties, women’s role in Bahraini society, state structure and institutions, and several chapters about the king and his achievements.

Civics topics and concepts are also included in a social studies course, which is taught from first to ninth grade. Textbooks for this course cover topics such as Bahrain’s geography, ruling family, traffic rules, cooperation, and national events.

The “education for citizenship” textbook for grade four says that citizens should have “national feelings,” which it defines as the love of homeland that drives a person to belong to the people who inhabit that land, practice their habits and traditions, take pride in their history and heritage, and serve and defend the homeland. A good Bahraini citizen, according to the book, possesses commendable social values and attributes, such as “sincerity, honesty, sacrifice, loyalty, cooperation, faithfulness, and respect of law and order.”

The education for citizenship curriculum stresses the issue of national identity. It seeks to enhance the feeling of belonging to the Bahraini nation despite the inclusion of universal concepts such as human rights, rights of the child, and law and order. This is reflected in school activities focused on the theme of national identity, including the celebration of national events, lectures and public discussions covering topics such as “My Homeland and Duties Towards It,” and the school’s radio
service, which aims to promote national identity and loyalty to the regime. Co-curricular activities encourage students to prepare research reports about the vision of the king and his “democratic journey.” There are class projects for lower primary grades on topics such as the protection of private property, caring for school property, and pride in Bahrain’s history and heritage.

The Practice of Citizenship

In addition to the knowledge component of the citizenship curriculum, Bahraini schools have an applied component. Through art activities, oral expression, instructional games, and theater, students can develop citizenship skills that promote the knowledge of their rights and duties and consolidate their love of homeland and their sense of belonging to it.

The practice of citizenship also involves citizens from the community. Schools have loyalty and citizenship committees comprised of students and other societal groups. These committees are designed to discuss social problems and nurture love of nation and respect for leadership.

A new community service program for secondary schools (grades ten through twelve) was launched in 2008–2009. Through it, 6,645 students have spent their summer vacations as volunteer workers in 135 public institutions. This program engages the student in active interaction with the community, thereby promoting social skills in areas such as problem solving, dialogue, negotiation, and discipline. More generally, it fosters a realistic approach to societal issues.

Missing Elements in Citizenship Education

Bahrain’s theoretical and applied citizenship education program is more comprehensive than similar programs in all other Arab countries. However, it lacks key elements of citizenship education that commendable international programs have stressed. The program does not foster political discourse in classrooms or political participation outside of school. It focuses more on the value of patriotism than freedom, which impacts the development of students’ critical thinking and analytical and problem-solving skills. These missing elements have serious implications for a society that is composed of two Islamic sects—the Sunni and the Shia.

Since 2011, the country has been experiencing political turmoil led by Shia citizens. Some writers have attributed recent social unrest to a failure of the educational system. They blame schools for failing to raise responsible citizens who truly feel like they are part of Bahraini society. They allege that those joining the uprising lack the critical thinking skills necessary to act independently and are therefore “being led blindly” by calls to divide society and halt socioeconomic development.

But blaming the current popular unrest on the educational system alone is not realistic. The socialization of youth does not take place only in schools. Students are also exposed to the influence of their families, tribes, local communities, mosques, and other places of religious and political teaching. These young people are intelligent enough to discover the gap between the civic concepts they learn in school and the political realities outside school. Changing the educational system without a parallel change in the political system raises the students’ skepticism about both.
And teaching citizenship in a religiously divided society requires a particularly interactive, participatory school climate that encourages open discourse, freedom of thought and expression, and respect for different opinions. Students should feel safe and secure when they express their free opinions or take actions to oppose authority, be it the teacher or the political leader. Generally speaking, the student-learning outcomes of Bahrain’s citizenship education program are a function not only of the program’s particular characteristics but also of the extent to which it is aligned—or misaligned—with political and social realities in Bahraini society.
Raising Submissive and Dependent Citizens: The Case of Egyptian Schools

Elham Abdulhameed

In Egyptian public schools, civic education is taught as a separate subject to students in grades ten through twelve. In grades four to nine, there is no separate course and civic concepts, and values are integrated into courses on social studies, Arabic language, and religious education. A new course on citizenship and human rights was added to the course requirements for grade eleven for the 2012–2013 school year.

Whether offered as a separate course or integrated into other subjects, Egypt’s civic and citizenship education curriculum focuses on acquiring knowledge through rote learning. Its aim is to mobilize students in support of the political regime. Topics include information about state institutions; types of political regimes; rights of women and children; and attributes of the “good citizen,” notably respect for the law and for others’ freedoms, acting responsibly, and caring for public properties and natural resources. Duties of the citizen toward state and religion are emphasized, but human and civic rights are not. There is no mention of major social and political problems.

Generally speaking, the content of the textbooks is short on concepts and values pertinent to citizenship in a democratic society. There are few co-curricular and extracurricular activities despite their crucial importance for the development of citizenship skills and values. Students are not required to participate in civic activities or engage in community service projects outside school. At school, they are not allowed to participate in decisionmaking activities or projects that foster democratic practices. Teaching and learning methods are not conducive to pluralistic values, and school culture promotes stereotyping as well as dependence on and submissiveness to authority.

Islamization of Civic Concepts

The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the wake of Egypt’s 2011 revolution has encouraged schools to approach teaching key civic concepts, such as freedom, democracy, and human rights, from an Islamic perspective. The twelfth-grade textbook now includes large sections that promote Islamic viewpoints, particularly those of the Muslim Brotherhood. In the chapter on democracy, a section entitled “Democracy in Islamic Thought—Shura” details the concept of shura (consultation), supported by several verses from the Quran and statements by the Prophet Muhammad. It is presented as a sacred, God-given concept representing both a form of government and a value system that encompasses features of a pluralistic society. This approach is likely to develop in the minds of Muslim students the conviction that shura is the best form of democracy for Egypt and all other Muslim-majority countries.

A section on human rights in Islam appears in the twelfth-grade national education textbook. After presenting the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the text argues that the declaration is not legally binding and that other international, regional, and national covenants on human rights have stronger legal weight. It defends the practice of states citing their cultural and political specificity to justify a decision not to strictly implement all the articles of the Universal Declaration. The Arab
Charter on Human Rights of 2005 is highlighted as a document that satisfies the principles of Islam and of the other major religions and that affirms the belief in the unity of the Arab homeland.

This selective endorsement of universal human rights excuses Egypt’s new political regime from the necessity of approving full gender equality and the right of individuals to change their religions. One recent illustration of the sensitivity of this issue is the Islamists’ outrage over a statement in the national education textbook asking students to respect those who change their religions. Al-Azhar, the country’s premier religious institution, recommended deleting the statement, which the Ministry of Education did.

The textbook for the new citizenship and human rights course provides useful information on concepts relating to citizenship and human rights but gives special attention to the Islamic perspective on political awareness in Islam, the concept of citizenship, and women’s rights in Islam. It affords no attention to the perspectives of other religious groups, despite the fact that Christians constitute 10 percent of Egypt’s population.

According to the textbook, political awareness in Islam is “based on the Islamic faith . . . within the framework of the individual’s commitment to Islam in thought, lifestyle, and behavior . . . and aims at safeguarding the existence of the nation [Islamic nation], . . . which is divided into small states and peoples who now care less about this nation than about the homeland and the small country.” This makes it clear that Egyptian students are expected to show allegiance first to the Islamic nation (umma).

Students in public schools thus receive inconsistent messages regarding the concept of the nation and what it means to be an Egyptian citizen. Large sections of the social studies textbooks subscribe to the principles of pluralism, national unity, acceptance of other beliefs and cultures, and the equality of Muslims and non-Muslims. However, religious education taught in the same schools develops feelings of religious distinction and inequality.

Similarly, social studies textbooks promote gender equality, but Islamic religious education textbooks do not endorse the concept, especially with regard to inheritance. When it comes to the practice of citizens’ rights in the real world, Egyptian students are exposed to Islamic texts implying that non-Muslims cannot hold senior administrative positions in the state, such as head of state or chief of the army.

**School Climate: An Obstacle to Citizenship Education**

The curriculum’s shortcomings are compounded by a school climate characterized by a rigid, centralized bureaucracy and authoritarian administrators and teachers. This hinders the development of independent, responsible, and critical-thinking citizens. The schools are dominated by a culture that does not promote dialogue, tolerance, acceptance of and respect for differences, freedom of opinion and expression, equality, cooperation, or social responsibility.

The style and quality of teaching pose further obstacles to promoting citizenship concepts and nurturing civic skills among students. Classes are dominated by lectures, which offer students limited opportunities to engage in open discussion, express their opinions freely, or participate in activities that promote democratic behavior and values. The quality of teaching is so poor that most parents employ private tutors to teach their children at home despite their limited financial means. Because
private tutors tend to be teachers at the same school that children attend, corruption has become institutionalized in the public education system.

Such a negative school climate is bound to increase students’ fear of authority figures, be they teachers, principals, or political leaders. At the same time, it makes students increasingly dependent on such figures for advice and support and fosters blind obedience to their orders.

Furthermore, public schools act in isolation from the local community and parental associations. They are not accountable to any external body except the Ministry of Education. Parental associations play a formal, ineffective role, and the local community is not consulted on policy matters pertaining to the school. This gives school administrations great power to dictate their vision and rules to all stakeholders—students, teachers, staff, and parents. Before Egypt’s revolution, public schools raised students who were dependent on the political regime and submissive to it. Though the regime has changed, this picture persists.
Iraqi Public Schools:
Teaching Civics With an Emphasis on Religion in a Polarized Society

Khawla Khaneka

Under Saddam Hussein’s regime, civic education was aimed solely at indoctrinating children to love their nation and glorify its leader. “Good citizens” had to be ready to sacrifice their lives in defense of their nation against its enemies.

After the 2003 invasion of Iraq that toppled Saddam, the Coalition Provisional Authority oversaw a partial reform of the country’s education system, aimed primarily at deleting Baathist ideology and any reference to deposed president Saddam Hussein from textbooks. Reforms also included a substantial raise in teachers’ salaries. In 2005, the Ministry of Education revised some textbooks and revamped civic education, and further revisions were made between 2010 and 2012. The name of the civics course was changed from “national education” to “national and social education,” and it is offered from grades five through nine in one forty-five-minute period per week.

The revised textbooks include some features of the democratic system and describe human rights; rights of the child; and Iraqi state institutions, syndicates, and political parties. They introduce key civic principles—such as equality, justice, freedom, and social solidarity—and promote participation in civic life and volunteerism. However, these revised textbooks still contain religious concepts and interpretations introduced during Saddam’s rule. In some instances, they further expand upon and reinforce these topics.

From Glorifying Saddam to Advocating Islam

Instead of singing songs that glorify Saddam, children at Iraqi public schools now sing Islamic religious songs, recite verses from the Quran, and observe Islamic rituals. Even preschool mathematics and science teachers use religious notions and Quranic verses during their lectures. Textbooks for the national and social education course emphasize religious perspectives and advocate religious identity on par with national identity.

Islamic viewpoints, concepts, and values dominate the curriculum. For example, the sixth-grade textbook dedicates two of its four chapters to religious approaches to civic and citizenship concepts and issues. One explains the “concept of citizenship in Islam and the other religions,” and the other details Islamic perspectives on work and productivity. Furthermore, one-fourth of the book is dedicated to the Iraqi armed forces, which is a reflection of the vital role the new regime, much like the former regime, is assigning to these forces. This chapter describes the structure and functions of the various divisions of the armed forces, such as the army and the internal security forces, highlighting their important national role.

When it comes to defining the term “citizen,” the sixth-grade textbook refers to the feeling of belonging to the land where members of society live. This bond is realized through a host of social values, customs, habits, and mutual interests as well as a shared history. And the text describes the
“good citizen” in Islam and the other divine religions (Christianity and Judaism) by referring to a Quranic verse that links civic duty to piousness.

The curricula of subjects other than civics—such as Arabic language, history, social studies, and even physical and natural sciences—also draw heavily on Islamic concepts and values. Many of the textbooks feature Quranic verses and statements of the Prophet Muhammad.

The Kurdistan Exception

While schools in Baghdad and most other regions of Iraq suffer from numerous grave shortcomings—including damaged or substandard physical structures; negative school climates; poor governance; and a shortage of qualified teachers, learning resources, and funds—the schools in Kurdistan are rapidly growing and improving.

Kurdistan’s local government has been working since 2007 to realize a set of ambitious plans for reforming the education system and establishing modern public and private schools. Funds are pouring into the region from international agencies and private, local, and foreign investors. New private schools modeled after a diversity of international curricula are opening. Some are funded and supervised by Western embassies, while others are branches of known international or regional chains. These reputable private schools have quality-assurance systems that seek to promote students’ higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving.

In public education, however, Kurdistan’s reforms—though significant and far-reaching—have not been holistic. They targeted only the development of curricula. New curricula in English language, mathematics, and sciences were drawn from those adopted by private schools in Lebanon and follow the American system of education. New teacher training programs are being implemented with external professional support.

Kurdistan’s schools teach a separate course on civic education that encompasses a variety of civic topics. For example, the sixth-grade textbook discusses the foundations of authority, its functions, and the need to have rule and order in class, school, and the community. Civics textbooks are written in Kurdish, Arabic, Turkish, and Syriac and distributed to schools according to their ethnic compositions.

Need for Comprehensive Reform

Continuous domestic conflict and insecurity in many parts of Iraq hamper efforts to implement new education programs. But at least two promising new initiatives are under way. The Child-Friendly Schools Initiative, sponsored by the European Union and the United Nations Children’s Fund in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Education, seeks to create a child-friendly school climate in by providing professional development programs to teachers. A second initiative, led by the British Council, seeks to foster interactive learning and improve school administration by training teachers and school inspectors on these principles.
But patchwork improvement is not good enough. The public education system for primary and secondary schools in Iraq needs a complete overhaul.

Outside the province of Kurdistan, the education system remains extremely centralized, rigid, and authoritarian. Most school buildings do not meet the minimum requirements for safety and sanitation, and many of them have been severely damaged by war. Most teachers have not upgraded their knowledge and skills for many years, and most teachers colleges use outdated curricula. Learning and teaching resources are in short supply. Education is teacher-directed, emphasizing rote learning and memorization instead of analysis, critical thinking, and problem solving. And the relationship between schools and parents’ associations is formal and ineffective. Since the 1990s, meetings of parents’ associations have become little more than fundraising events to support the rehabilitation of dilapidated school buildings or fix malfunctioning equipment. Even Kurdistan, despite impressive improvement, lacks a holistic approach to education reform with emphasis on democratic citizenship education.

The education system in Iraq needs a comprehensive review and restructuring to enable it to respond to the demands of modern life. Teacher training institutes and colleges should also be reformed. Building democracy in Iraq will require the creation of a positive school climate that is conducive to fostering pluralistic values and skills among students.
Citizenship Education in Jordan: Harmony Between Curriculum and Educational Practices?

Muhyieddeen Shaban Touq

As early as 1955, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan officially highlighted the need to use education to develop citizens with open minds and sound principles who were aware of their duties toward God and country. Since then, and in spite of notable quantitative developments, political crises and demographic changes have hindered the qualitative development of the educational system.

Jordan’s modern educational development plan includes contemporary educational subjects in the curriculum, such as computer skills and English-language lessons starting from the early stages of schooling. It also features a number of quality-driven private and exploratory schools as well as the implementation of educational projects aimed at producing high-achieving students and promoting lifelong learning. However, the country has struggled to achieve educational parity among all social classes and across all regions.

Citizenship and Challenges of National Identity

The concept of civic identity in Jordan faces several key challenges. Most notably, many Jordanian citizens of Palestinian descent experience a sort of dual loyalty. Subidentities, such as clan, tribal, and regional affiliations, also interfere with a civic identity based on law and equality. Other challenges stem from growing concerns about personal and religious freedom as a result of emerging fundamentalist movements that are intolerant of religious diversity, the issue of loyalty to the ruling authority instead of the state, and the absence of a comprehensive approach to promoting the concept of citizenship among youth. These difficulties, and the reality of weak political education, contribute to an erosion of the rule of law, social justice, and political participation in Jordan. They also promote social attitudes and behaviors that work against these concepts.

Some of the most significant citizenship-related achievements of the Jordanian education system include promoting an openness to human cultures, fostering critical and objective thinking, upholding the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, recognizing the humanity of others, instilling the principles of democracy in personal behavior, promoting political education, and developing a sense of innovation and positive dialogue. These concepts have been translated into objectives for the different stages of education that focus on enhancing the learner’s affiliation to the nation and environment and developing students’ cultural and humanist capacities and unique capabilities.

These concepts are related to the values of human rights in a democratic society and a modern civic state, which include political participation, the practice of democracy, social justice, and individual and social responsibility. These practices—together with a modern educated society, participation in the knowledge economy, and coexistence and dialogue on issues of culture and peace—form the core of human rights that the Jordanian educational system aspires to achieve. They also place greater emphasis on the duties of citizens than on their rights.
The Content of Textbooks

To determine the state of citizenship education in Jordan, an analysis of sixth- and tenth-grade textbooks for Arabic language, history, national education, and civics textbooks was carried out. The analysis reveals the books’ focus on the importance of preparing learners to apply information and communications technologies in interactive activities related to the subject, which will prepare them to contribute to national development. However, they do not emphasize the broader humanist goals of the educational process, such as critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, and constructive interaction, all of which serve to reinforce national belonging, social integration, and the general development of the country.

Arabic textbooks indicate that they were designed to encourage students to interact with the subject and real-life situations by asking questions, building educational strategies, solving problems, holding discussions, and expressing opinions. However, both textbooks lack awareness of generally accepted premises of citizenship education, even though they indirectly touch on related topics, including women’s rights and social participation, friendship, justice, and freedom of dissent.

The history textbooks do not include any direct indication of civic and citizenship education concepts, despite the diversity of topics they cover. The national education and civics textbooks include specific chapters on citizenship and civics. These cover topics such as the state and citizenship, rights and duties, democracy, and human rights. Although these chapters approach these topics from different perspectives, they neglect to discuss the right to political participation and instead focus more on the concept of obedience to authority and on the religious rather than universal concepts of human rights.

These textbooks, in general, demonstrate an overwhelmingly lecture-based approach that lacks relevant examples drawn from students’ daily lives and displays an authoritative tendency to promote stereotypical masculine social roles. It also links the concept of citizenship to belief in God, holy texts, and prophets as well as a sense of belonging that underemphasize the importance of rights.

However, several required curricular and extracurricular activities for students are increasingly included in the books, but it is difficult to ascertain the extent of teacher and student adherence to them or whether they are taken into account during the evaluation of students’ grades.

Key Educational Initiatives

Several key initiatives have contributed positively to Jordan’s citizenship education program since the 1990s. One of the most notable was the development of a human rights matrix by the Ministry of Education to serve as a guide for curriculum and textbook authors. The matrix divides rights into five main categories: freedom, justice, dignity, cooperation, and solidarity and human tolerance. It also suggests mechanisms to integrate these rights into the curriculum, textbooks, and related educational activities.

Since 1993, a number of other prominent programs have been launched in cooperation with local and international organizations. They focused largely on comprehensive education, human rights and democracy, creative conflict resolution, international understanding and world peace, women’s empowerment, and human civic law. One program, which was designed to support education
development, aimed to build the capacity of thousands of educators in order to achieve a number of goals. Some of these goals are related, if indirectly, to citizenship education. They include the aims of providing students with the necessary skills to participate actively and productively in society and supplying the necessary support for schools districts to make joint decisions based on available data.

The professional development component of this program focused on creating an active learning environment based on local participation in education and on preparing committed citizens capable of changing their personal and social situations. This component consisted of three groups of programs: programs for the skill development of teachers newly enrolled with the Ministry of Education; programs for developing the skills of in-service teachers; and programs for future leadership.

In addition, the parliamentary councils for students, which were implemented since 2010 in both private and public schools, are considered pioneering experiments in developing citizenship through education.
Lebanon’s educational development plan can be considered a good initiative that aims to achieve the goals of citizenship education by implementing a common curriculum and textbooks, especially for civics and history.

The country has gone through a series of educational reforms, and the reforms have made various contributions to the field of citizenship education at the pre-university level. The most notable efforts were the 1946, 1968–1971, and 1997 curriculum reforms as well as projects undertaken by the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD), and the most recent initiative was the National Strategic Reform for 2010–2015.

The features of Lebanese citizenship education, which began to take shape in the 1946 curriculum, took a negative turn in 1968. However, in 1997, the curriculum was adjusted to re-emphasize citizenship. The “Plan for Educational Renaissance–1994” clearly stated the importance of citizenship education in “new Lebanon.” The Plan focused on encouraging the development of upright and productive Lebanese citizens in a free and democratic society in which justice and equality prevail. It also focused on the importance of being open to other cultures, both Arab and international.

This “Plan” was followed by the adjustment of the curriculum in 1997, which repeated the objectives included in the “Plan,” emphasizing the role of citizenship education in developing fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, tolerance, and the renunciation of violence on both national and international levels.

**Obstacles and Stumbling Blocks**

It is possible that these objectives, although important at the time, ignored the reality of fragmented Lebanese identities and multiple levels of affiliation and group belonging. They were also not accompanied by practical methods that would enable schools to effectively implement them.

A number of other factors hindered the achievement of the curriculum’s objectives. Dividing it into secondary fields and separate subjects meant that it lacked integration. Dense textbook content in each subject area made it impossible to cover all objectives. A decision not to implement active teaching methods vital to developing student competencies and skills, which can be attributed to dereliction in the organization that is responsible for training and preparing teachers in line with the requirements of the curriculum, meant that there was a lack of suitable teachers for new subjects. Additionally, a history textbook was not issued.

The characteristics of the school environment—including the physical features of buildings and equipment, the skills of teachers and their stances on citizenship education, and the presence of environments not conducive to participation and democracy—remain an obstacle in many Lebanese
schools, preventing the achievement of the aims of the 1997 curriculum and limiting the possibility of sustainable educational development.

In addition, political tensions, which stem from personal disputes among officials, hinder the reform process. They limit possibilities for progress in the educational realm and for the development of citizenship-education skills among teachers.

**History and Civic Education**

The many religious, historical, and cultural divisions in Lebanon have resulted in a lack of unified Lebanese historical memory. For this reason, the subject of history plays a fundamental role in forging a national identity by shedding light on the suffering of common people and the achievements of citizens past and present. As a result, a unified national history and sense of belonging was developed among young people.

Within this framework, the government established a history curriculum that recognized the importance of history in “promoting a national and humanist student culture, developing the civic spirit, establishing pride in the Lebanese identity . . . developing a sense of Arab nationalism . . . building a unified national memory . . . and raising awareness about inter-Lebanese conflict.”

Three attempts have been made to publish a unified history book based on this curriculum, but political intervention and bureaucratic disputes between educational authorities have prevented this from being achieved. This exemplifies the need for a consensus on a common concept of nation and identity in order for reforms to be capable of having a long-term effect.

National education and civics textbooks from the 1997 curriculum focus on building the character of an educated citizen through knowledge, skills, and understanding of national and communal perspectives. Although the textbooks are comprehensive and cover a diverse selection of topics, they are dominated by ideological and legal concepts and fail to engage learners in class activities aimed at developing their critical skills and a positive approach to contributing to social change.

**Other Plans and Projects for Reform**

Lebanon has undertaken several additional reform projects and plans directly associated with citizenship education. One study, which CERD conducted in cooperation with the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, analyzed the stances of Lebanese youth toward people of different religions. It suggested some practical mechanisms and educational technologies to help address negative stances and promote mutual respect in the classroom. But the published results never reached teachers or students, and schools did not seriously invest in the study.

CERD successfully carried out an experimental phase of a Canadian-supported project called Education for Conflict Resolution aimed to sow seeds of positive communication among students. The aim was to build their capacity to resolve conflict, control reactions, and respect the rights and dignity of others. But the project did not progress beyond this exploratory phase, and its benefits did not reach all schools.
Most recently, the National Strategy for Education (2010–2015), also known as the Quality Development Plan for Education, reemphasized the importance of promoting “education that contributes to social integration, national belonging and civic participation . . . and in promoting concepts of national identity and civic responsibility among students.” Within this framework, an EU-funded national project was also launched recently with the aim of “reforming education for citizenship.”
As the political system in Morocco has initiated a process of transformation from absolute to constitutional monarchy, its educational system must be further reformed to become more compatible with emerging political and social realities. A decade ago, the government launched a plan for education reform that aimed to raise awareness about citizenship through developing students’ national, religious, and linguistic identities, their sense of civic responsibility in the progress of their country, and their moral and citizenship values. However, due to major shortcomings in the implementation of the educational system—notably in revamping curriculum content, upgrading teachers’ qualifications, and creating a positive school climate—these goals have not been achieved.

Goals: Realistic or Unrealistic?

The 2000 National Covenant for Education and the 2002 framework document constituted the government’s most recent efforts to reform education. These documents underscored the importance of civic education, stating goals such as raising citizenship awareness and reinforcing social cohesion. To translate these goals into practice, the government encouraged cooperation between school and society, as school plays an effective role in social development, and promoted independence and openness by helping develop students’ sense of self, religious and linguistic identities, and knowledge of national history. It also educated students on citizenship by promoting awareness of their responsibilities in the economic development and scientific progress of the country and promoted schools’ roles in imparting to students moral and citizenship values as well as the concept of human rights and the practice of democracy.

To achieve these ambitious goals, Morocco required a holistic educational reform that addressed teaching and learning issues such as teacher qualifications, working conditions, learning resources, teaching methods, and curriculum. The reform that was implemented fell short of this aim. For example, most teachers of eighth-grade mathematics do not hold a university degree and are not exposed to regular professional development to upgrade their knowledge and improve teaching skills. Teachers are not satisfied with their working conditions and complain of overcrowded classrooms, limited learning resources, and a lack of financial security and social status in their communities. Research reveals that most Moroccan teachers of mathematics and sciences have negative perceptions of their school climate. Learning resources and laboratories for mathematics and sciences are inadequate in most schools. And where libraries exist for schoolchildren, they are not optimally used. Half of fourth-grade students have never borrowed a book from the school or local library, a fact that is likely to have a negative impact on classroom learning, student achievement, and the cultivation of citizenship skills.
Civics Education: Scope and Relevance

As for the school curriculum, there is no specific citizenship or civics subject. Rather, topics about civics and citizenship are integrated into various courses at different points. In the fifth and sixth grades, these concepts are incorporated into a class on history, geography, and civics. Seventh- and eighth-graders receive civic education through a “social disciplines” course, and tenth graders learn these concepts in history and geography class. No civics topics are taught below fifth grade.

Islamic education, by contrast, is offered from first grade for three to four hours per week. Weekly sessions allocated for social studies range from one and one-half hours in the primary grades to three hours in the middle grades, with about one-third of that time allocated to civic education.

Despite the little instructional time allocated to civic education, its objectives are broad and similar to the aims of comparable curricula in Western democracies. The curriculum aims to develop students’ self-respect, independent thinking, communication, decisionmaking, respect for different opinions and beliefs, tolerance, equality, and participation as well as their knowledge about the concepts of law, rights, and duties.

The civics component of social studies covers important topics on citizenship education such as citizens’ rights and duties, government institutions, civic principles (such as cooperation, social solidarity, and dialogue between religions), civic participation (such as how to deal with a social issue using real-life examples, such as eradication of illiteracy, violence, and child labor), and civic identities (such as national and religious identities). But effective learning of these important topics requires open discussion in the classroom, respect for differences of opinion, and inquiry-based, active learning as well the opportunity to apply civic knowledge in real-life situations at school and beyond. These requirements have to be met.

Teaching in Morocco remains didactic and teacher-directed, with limited opportunities for students to engage in open discussion or express their opinions without fear of intimidation. As for learning social studies, students memorize the theoretical information presented to them in textbooks and regurgitate it in exams.

Researchers have found that teachers rarely ask or encourage students to express their opinions on civic knowledge. Students’ conception of civics is limited to citizens’ rights and duties, and they enjoy few opportunities both in or out of school to apply the concepts they learn in class. Furthermore, most students are aware that what they learn in school has no relevance to what goes on in society, such as the prevalence of violence and drug use among youth and the corruption and autocratic practices in politics. Students do not learn how to analyze and propose solutions for major social problems such as illiteracy, female discrimination, unemployment, drug abuse, and child labor. There is no meaningful link between the social studies curriculum and the sociopolitical issues that relate to society’s comprehensive development.

Thus, the educational system has failed to provide the requisite means to reach its ambitious goals. Curricula, teachers and their pedagogical practices, and the school climate have been unable to achieve the task of promoting citizenship knowledge and skills.
Improving the System

A new approach to civic education is urgently needed. This approach, which can be called education for citizenship, requires a positive school climate where learning is student-centered and the emphasis is placed on creativity, analysis, critical thinking, equality, respect for diversity, and freedom of expression. Teachers should be adequately prepared to teach their students twenty-first-century skills, including civic competence, and schools should offer their students the opportunity to participate in decisionmaking both in the classroom and in civic life.

Funding agencies can promote education for citizenship in Morocco by supporting promising public and private initiatives at the school and community levels. Such initiatives must include, among other components, appropriate teacher pre-service and in-service training programs because teachers are vital to the success of any reform plan. In addition, concrete connections between schools and the community should be established through service learning, youth leadership programs, and volunteering in order to engage students in civic responsibility and develop their citizenship knowledge and skills.
Citizenship Education in Oman: 
The Need to Follow Up on Reforms

Saif Al-Maamari

The establishment of the Omani state in 1970 was accompanied by the development of institutions created to provide new citizenship rights to Omani citizens. Social rights, including education, health, and social security, were a particular focus. The reform process aimed to build new relationships among individual citizens and state institutions on the basis of laws that established the principle of nondiscrimination among all Omanis in terms of their right to citizenship and the benefits associated with it.

The new Omani state’s policies were among the most important factors contributing to harmony between the various segments of Omani society. These policies helped to decrease tensions between individuals and establish justice in terms of gender, religious orientation, geographic location, and race.

Omani society has long been characterized by the values of tolerance, acceptance, nondiscrimination, coexistence, and the desire to bridge the gap between the Islamic civilization and other cultures through a variety of means, such as the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center and Al-Tafahom, a journal aimed at promoting mutual understanding. Additionally, a number of measures have been taken since 1981 to promote judicial independence and political participation among citizens.

Phases of Education Reform

In 1978, the Omani Ministry of Education issued the first document outlining its educational philosophy, which was adopted as the main reference for drafting and developing curriculum. This document laid out principles that remain central today, including linking education to the development of the individual, the society, and the nation as a whole; making education a right for every Omani citizen without discrimination; developing Omani individuals who are rational, open, balanced, and flexible both in their interactions with their heritage, traditions, and values and in dealing with contemporary civilization and all of its technological achievements.

In practice, these goals have not been fully achieved. As a result, the sultanate launched a comprehensive reform process in the late 1990s that divided the education system into two stages: basic education (from first to tenth grade) and post–basic education (grades eleven and twelve). This plan focused on scientific and technological fields as well as on English language acquisition and paid some attention to citizenship education.

Citizenship Education

During the process of reforming the basic education system, officials from the Ministry of Education, together with education researchers, started expressing some interest in citizenship
education. This interest was formalized with the organization of workshops to train educators and establish an educational vision for citizenship education in the school system. Research on the topics of human rights, women’s and children’s rights, teachers’ perceptions, and the role of the school administration in mediating these issues started gaining momentum.

Several mechanisms were established that aimed to develop citizenship in the new education system. These included the integration of citizenship concepts and human rights in different academic subjects; the organization of school activities, including celebrations, seminars, contests, and the wearing of national dress; launching projects that promoted social commitment by encouraging students to contribute to solving local problems; and other activities aimed at developing openness to international cultures.

In contrast, the subjects of social studies and a course called “This Is My Homeland” still focus on the knowledge content, geographical, historical, and administrative aspects of citizenship. They seek to promote loyalty to the sultan as a symbol of the nation and an embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the Omani people; to develop a sense of belonging to the Arab homeland and the Islamic world; to promote a spirit of citizenship that is based on the correct understanding of social, economic, and political systems in the country and respect for the statutes of the state; to raise the learner to cling to the Omani identity, customs, and traditions; and to promote awareness of key historical, national, Arab, Islamic, and international events and their consequences.

Textbook content does not correspond to the modern definition of citizenship education. It does not include activities related to civic participation skills or the right of citizens to participate in decisionmaking, and it fails to offer clear knowledge about the state structure and the legislative and legal dimensions that regulate interactions between citizens and the state.

While the basic education philosophy mandates the adoption of interactive and active educational methods and continuous formative evaluation, in practice colleges of education prepare teachers to use more traditional methods. These depend on a lecture-based system that prevents the achievement of broader educational objectives. Accordingly, education remains centered on the teacher, who resorts to a lecture-based system to transmit as much information as possible. This constitutes a major obstacle in empowering youth to effectively participate in the building of their country and society.

The Need for Follow-Up Reform

Complaints regarding the shortcomings of the Omani education system in achieving education reform goals in general—and improvements in citizenship education in particular—are increasing. The curriculum does not focus sufficiently on the issue of social identity in terms of giving Islamic education a position that corresponds with its importance in the weekly course schedule. It also omits some important content and suffers from gaps in implementation, evaluation, teacher training, and student achievement.

Therefore, it is essential to transform the Omani education system to enable it to engage with the sultanate’s recent developments, including reforming the constitution, expanding the powers of the Shura Council, making the general prosecution independent, adopting an administrative division for governorates, and establishing municipal councils and a youth authority. All these measures reflect an official approval of demands to make citizenship the main focus of educational development in
the future so that it can effectively assist citizens in creating awareness of their developmental, social, and civic responsibilities in accordance with the challenges of the current period.
Citizenship Education in the Palestinian Authority: A Dynamic Route to the Establishment of National Identity

Muhyieddeen Shaban Touq

The Palestinian Authority (PA), which is responsible for education in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, has declared a goal of developing a curriculum that corresponds to the aspirations of the Palestinian people and contributes to the establishment of a common national identity, with a focus on highlighting the history of the Palestinian struggle. However, political conditions, along with the influence of the international community, have made realizing this goal very difficult.

The Palestinian Curriculum Development Center prepared the first comprehensive plan for curriculum development under the PA for the years 2001 to 2005. The plan was amended more than once, and new textbooks were provided during the academic years 2000–2001 and 2005–2006 to replace the Jordanian and Egyptian textbooks that had been used.

The Strategic Plan and National Identity

The Ministry of Education drafted a five-year strategic-development plan for 2008–2012. This plan views education as a human right as well as a means for social and economic development and for promoting national values and responsibilities. It adheres to the PA's vision of a “state built on a foundation of tolerance, humanism, knowledge and a strong economy that is also connected with global civilization and embraces human values.”

The education system’s goals are defined as “creating a Palestinian citizen who is proud of his religion, nation and Arab and Islamic culture, who contributes to the development of his society, seeks knowledge and creativity, interacts positively with scientific and technological development, is capable of competing in scientific and practical fields, is open to regional and international cultures and markets, and is capable of establishing a society that is based on gender equality and that upholds human values and religious tolerance.”

The education system faces a number of obstacles, including a lack of funding, competing supervisory mechanisms, continuous undertraining of educators, and strict international monitoring of the curriculum and textbooks. They have hindered the PA’s ability to achieve its stated goals. The low levels of achievement on national and international examinations demonstrate the effects of these difficulties.

Regardless, the education system has undergone developments in curriculum, textbooks, and gender equality. The curriculum stresses research and critical thinking and the promotion of democratic values over incitement, hatred, and violence, all of which contribute to the development of Palestinian identity. Curriculum and textbook authors face challenges in writing about history, geography, and literature, as they must remain in line with Palestinian goals while fielding pressure from the international community to develop educational materials that accept Israel and contribute to resolving the conflict.
The latest educational plan stresses the promotion of “positive values of contemporary life, and coexistence with other communities, all of which are equal under democracy.” It also focuses on maintaining national identity; reviving and enriching cultural heritage; promoting the values of justice, equality, and good citizenship; and enabling learners to solve problems using critical thinking and scientific reasoning. These are all linked to the skills of the twenty-first century and the skills of a good citizen.

**Textbook Content**

The analysis of Palestinian sixth- and tenth-grade history, Arabic, and Islamic education textbooks do not directly address issues of citizenship and citizenship education. However, they do contain references to these issues.

Civics textbooks touch upon key institutions that form contemporary societies, including the family, state institutions, and civil society organizations. They note the essential contributions of these institutions to daily life and mention the importance of integrating their efforts. They also introduce the roles of a society and the individuals within it.

From an educational perspective, the civics textbooks are in line with the requirements of contemporary education in the twenty-first century. They avoid lecture-heavy education and focus on interactive learning; introduce knowledge in stages; promote positive behavior toward the individual, the environment, and society; and instill the values of citizenship through activities. The textbooks also present a balance between the concepts of rights and duties, avoid gender stereotypes, highlight the value of participation in building the country and providing goods and services, and emphasize the benefits of teamwork and cooperation.

Additionally, civics textbooks focus on promoting democratic practices in different areas and establishing good governance. They also emphasize the responsibility of individuals and the community in preserving a crime-free society, stress the importance of education for all in order to fight poverty and ignorance and foster development, and promote a view of the police officer as a protector of society.

The history textbooks, for example, touch upon some aspects of political and civic life in the Islamic eras, with an emphasis on the adoption of principles, such as respect for differences and solidarity. They explore the foundation of modern governance as inspired by the American and French revolutions, which were based on the authority of the people, the separation of powers, the rule of law, equality, human rights, and accountability. These textbooks provide a good example by eschewing unilateral thinking in explaining and interpreting history and instead adopting ways of thinking based on possibilities and alternatives. However, they do not relate any of the civic or political issues to governance in the PA or demonstrate their importance in contemporary life.

Arabic textbooks include diverse literary texts inspired by Palestinian society that were selected to promote good habits, such as reading, time management, environmental preservation, abstinence from smoking, and seeking education. They also promote a national identity derived from several norms, such as the triumph of right; the importance of courage; respect for soldiers defending the country; the importance of cooperation, responsibility, duty, and filial piety; and a healthy fear of prison.
Islamic education textbooks emphasize love for and defense of country; protection of land and people; and the values of solidarity, equality, and justice. They also highlight the rights and duties of children toward their parents and use Quranic verses to illustrate concepts such as individual responsibility, the importance of justice, the consequences of injustice, respect for the dignity of all human beings, the right to disagree, the rights of women in Islam, and the preference for doctrine over ties of blood and interest. These textbooks also address the importance of engaging the mind in reflection, analysis, and synthesis as well as connecting knowledge with work and reality. However, they have a tendency to focus on memorization and narration rather than analysis and interpretation. They also tend to promote theoretical concepts rather than practical activities.

In the PA, the key educational problem is not with the curriculum and official documents of the education system. It is rather with some of the textbook content and with teaching and evaluation methods, as well as with the skills of teachers and the interaction between schools and communities.
Citizenship Education in Tunisia: 
Current Reality and Future Challenges

Naila Al-Silini

The 1959 Tunisian constitution enshrined several principles related to citizenship rights, including equality; the right to establish organizations; and freedom of thought, expression, assembly, and the press. It also mandated respect for private life and emphasized that “the republican system is the most effective system for taking care of the family and securing the right of citizens to work.”

Prior to the ratification of the constitution, the Code of Personal Status was issued, which enacted civil laws with no religious dimension. This code contributed greatly to efforts to counter gender discrimination. It was later followed by laws banning workplace discrimination based on religion, politics, and gender; providing for birthright citizenship; and mandating respect for the private lives and educational, social, and cultural activities of children regardless of their place of birth.

Phases of Educational Reform

In an effort to incorporate these values into the national education system, Tunisia underwent several phases of education reform. The first phase, from 1956 to 1975, was a foundational period for the Tunisian educational system. It was characterized by the universalization of education, the institutionalization of the education system, and the establishment of regulatory frameworks governing the education system. From 1976 to 1990, the system entered its second phase and remained relatively stable, but it witnessed the emergence of tensions between the education system and the labor market.

In the third phase, from 1991 to 2002, the 1991 law was issued to provide new educational options for Tunisian society. It formed the foundation for a modern educational curriculum that sought to involve learners in the educational process with respect to their individual needs. The drafting of the 1991 Law was completed following broad national consultation that involved the participation of citizens from different segments of Tunisian society.

This effort focused on the issue of identity and tasked the Tunisian school system with “promoting Tunisian national identity” and “developing a civic sense and feelings of cultural affiliation at the national, North African, Arab and Islamic levels, and promoting openness to modernity and human civilization.” The role of the education system in citizenship-identity formation became prominent, and the plan emphasized the promotion of the values of openness to others; moderation; tolerance and nondiscrimination based on gender, religion, or race; as well as the importance of foreign language proficiency. It demonstrates a commitment to promoting engagement with modernity and global civilization.

After a 1998 evaluation of previous reforms undertaken, a reference document entitled “The Knowledge Society and the New Education Reform: The Implementation Plan for the School of the Future 2002–2007” laid the guidelines for the country’s modern education system and the fourth phase of the development of Tunisia’s national education system. This document focused on reinforcing the principle of equity between regions and schools, modernizing the education system
in line with contemporary requirements, and the importance of utilizing modern technology and focusing on the student as a key aspect of the education system. The proposed objectives of the plan encompassed knowledge as well as social, cultural, and religious dimensions that would together promote the development of a balanced personality for Tunisian individuals and further the goal of effective social integration.

The Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR) carried out a study in Tunisia 2001 that focused on evolving approaches to human rights and citizenship in the Islamic educational curriculum through successive stages of reform. The study concluded that Tunisia’s curriculum is a rational one that promotes respect for differences among people. But the curriculum was not oriented toward secularism and modernity, and it emphasized rote learning.

It found that religious, political, and international sources of information in the curriculum were numerous and inconsistent. This mixture of sources is likely to confuse students regarding their religious and political allegiances, and, to a lesser extent, their regard for universal human rights. The AIHR report demonstrated that Tunisia’s curriculum presented human rights and citizenship values as derived exclusively from religious sources, while marginalizing civic values.

The Discrepancy Between Curriculum and Political Reality

There is no doubt that Tunisian educational policies adopted before the revolution presented Tunisian youth with an idealized image of the Tunisian state and its policies as well as of the state of citizenship and human rights in the country. However, young people witnessed daily violations of these values and rights in school, society, and political practice. This discrepancy indicates that, while education reform may have introduced knowledge of the foundations of citizenship and mechanisms to enhance civic life, this knowledge did not translate into practice. The education system did not allow Tunisian youth to apply the knowledge of their national and political responsibilities by training them in democratic political participation, social solidarity, problem solving, and the skills of constructive criticism.

The postrevolution education system should aim to promote political awareness among youth through a contemporary curriculum that focuses on active and critical learning. It should also create an educational environment that fosters citizenship education by preparing and training educators as well as creating space and opportunities for schools to promote democracy and active political participation.

The Education System and Postrevolution Challenges

Going forward, the state will need to recognize its vital responsibility in ensuring the continued right of coexistence among individuals. Creating an education system with a robust focus on civic and citizenship education can help accomplish this goal. The state should also build upon previous achievements made in the fields of human rights and citizenship in order to establish an educational vision that corresponds to the aspirations of the Tunisian people following their revolution.

The new Tunisian society will experience a number of key challenges, and the education system should address each of them thoughtfully and precisely. For example, the state will need to fulfill the
essential functions of ensuring security and stability, maintaining an independent judiciary, fighting corruption, remaining objective, and maintaining a continuous dialogue with all elements of civil society.

The state and the educational system will need to work together to promote diversity, tolerance, and the requirements of democracy. This will involve establishing a social contract that engages all political parties and civil society groups through effective mechanisms. It will also require counteracting any trends that seek to isolate Arab society and reject the principles of globalization and cultural diversity. Instead, Tunisia should enhance rational discourse that is tolerant of differences. It is crucial that the education system contributes to efforts to sensitize and train activists and civil society organizations in the concepts and practices of citizenship and political participation.
Citizenship education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is shaped by the political, demographic, economic, and cultural features of the country. Politically, the UAE is the only Arab federal state where a federal Ministry of Education has policies that may differ from those of the education ministries in each of its six emirates. Demographically, the UAE has the lowest percentage of nationals among Arab countries—8 percent. Residents comprise a widely diverse, multicultural population. Economically, many huge projects in various economic sectors have been implemented by international companies, thereby linking the country quite strongly to the global economy and forcing the local, conservative culture to adapt. The Islamic Arab tribal culture of the local society is under increasing pressure to integrate into a global, liberal culture that espouses universal human rights and Western behavior.

A primary goal of the strategic plan in public education for 2010–2020 in the UAE is to develop students’ awareness of the importance of social and voluntary work and enhance their moral standards. The curriculum on national education focuses on raising an Emirati generation that: (1) safeguards the UAE’s cultural identity as an Islamic, Arab society, (2) expresses allegiance to the state through actions such as protecting public property and defending the homeland physically and morally, (3) is made up of responsible members of society who respect law and order, and (4) has knowledge of a variety of civic principles and the nature of UAE state structure.

Focus on Morals and Patriotism

Civic and citizenship education is offered in public schools from kindergarten to twelfth grade as two separate courses. Some civic concepts and topics are also integrated into specific school subjects. In 1999–2000, a course focused on developing life skills needed at home, at work, and in social life was introduced to grades four through nine. Recently, a national education course, which had been offered to selected grades for one period per week, was replaced with a course entitled “Emirates: My Homeland.” The new course is offered to all grades for one period per week.

In addition, the courses in social studies, history, geography, Arabic language, and Islamic education include topics on civics and citizenship under titles such as “My Large Family,” “My Lovely Emirates,” “Let’s Work Together,” and “My Duties Toward Neighbors.”

The textbooks for the “Emirates: My Homeland” course cover a variety of national civic issues, including the meaning of citizenship and homeland; law and government; rights and duties of citizens; citizenship skills needed for public life; economic and natural resources of the UAE; nature and environment in the country; and foreign relations, with an emphasis on relations with other Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Highlighted in these textbooks are the civic principles of social responsibility, self-reliance, ethical behavior, and volunteering and community service in social organizations.
The definition of citizenship in the UAE emphasizes not only morals and patriotism but also knowledge of citizens’ rights to free education and medical services. National identity carries with it a number of obligations, notably allegiance to the state and love of one’s homeland. Good citizens should demonstrate loyalty to the political leadership or ruling family, maintain customs and traditions, express pride in the UAE’s history and modern achievements, contribute to national campaigns sponsored by the government, and participate in annual celebrations of the country’s unity. They should also accept the role and status they have acquired in the hierarchical structure of Emirati society and appreciate whatever benefits and rewards the rulers hand to them.

Teaching civics classes is didactic, relying on lecturing and rote learning, with little opportunity for interaction between teacher and students. Teaching methods that promote students’ critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving skills—such as inquiry, strategies of cooperative learning, and role play—are not practiced.

Furthermore, there is no discussion of political issues and social problems, be they local, national, regional, or global. This is partly due to the deficient academic and pedagogical preparation of the social studies teachers who teach civic education, because teacher colleges do not address citizenship skills. When Emirati students were asked why their knowledge of UAE history and government agencies was deficient, they cited a number of reasons. They claimed to lack interest in the subject, which they deemed less important than the core subjects of mathematics and sciences. They also pointed out that learning the subject requires only memorization, as opposed to understanding and analysis, and noted the absence of supporting activities and applications of civic concepts and theories. Indeed, there are few school activities relating to citizenship. Those that do exist focus on celebrating the national unity day, wearing the national dress, and participating in local cultural events that include folk dances, local songs, and reading local poetry.

**National Identity and Multicultural Society**

Promoting national identity and patriotism of nationals who are a minority in a multicultural society that is undergoing rapid social and economic transformation is a cause for concern. Political stability and economic prosperity are jeopardized when the overwhelming majority of residents or expatriates do not have rights equal to those of the small minority of nationals. The concept of citizenship is based on the key principles of equality, freedom, social justice, and human rights. Raising a young generation of Emiratis to become zealous, patriotic nationalists who are strongly attached to their local culture and identity without being sensitive to the other cultures that coexist with them in their society is a recipe for future conflict and instability.

This problem is compounded by the fact that about 40 percent of schools in the UAE are private, and many of them teach a diversity of international curricula with different approaches to citizenship. Thus, students in private schools, both Emiratis and expatriates, are learning different notions of citizenship and civic principles than the Emirati students in public schools.

A better approach to citizenship education in both public and private schools in the UAE would be to broaden the concept of national citizenship to that of global citizenship. This would involve emphasizing principles such as multiculturalism, peaceful coexistence of different ethnic and religious communities, and acceptance and respect for the “other.” This would require revising the curriculum and introducing supporting co-curricular and extracurricular activities as well as
preparing teachers and school administrators for new roles that promote democratic values and practices.

As aptly put by Prince Turki Al-Faysal of Saudi Arabia in his address to a Gulf Cooperation Council conference on national and regional security in 2012, “In order for us to be safe and secure in our homelands, we should reinforce our domestic front with more reform . . . and consolidate the concept of citizenship as a basis for the relationship between the citizen and the state, and to widen the circle of participation in our political systems.”