EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP IN THE ARAB WORLD
Key to the Future

Muhammad Faour and Marwan Muasher

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Summary

Any romantic notions in the West that the 2011 Arab uprisings could create instantaneous democracy in countries that have succeeded at toppling their leaders are already shattering. In the absence of strong political parties and viable civil society structures in most of the Arab world, these uprisings are proving to be only the first step in a process that will not follow a clear path and will take years to unfold. Much trial and error will take place and the region will experience multiple ups and downs before stable political and economic systems take hold.

The challenge of replacing both leaders and regimes with ones that follow democratic norms is huge and certainly not automatic. As the Arab world starts this long transformation, a self-evident but often ignored fact is that democracy will thrive only in a culture that accepts diversity, respects different points of view, regards truths as relative rather than absolute, and tolerates—even encourages—dissent. Without this kind of culture, no sustainable system of checks and balances can evolve over time to redistribute power away from the executive. Nor can a mechanism be developed to check abuses by any state institution. As the first phase of the uprisings gives way to nation building after decades of authoritarian rule, people in the Arab world will discover that their societies are not equipped with the skills and values needed to accept different, pluralistic norms of behavior.

Looking beyond the euphoria of the moment thus requires changes not only to the political structure and individuals—electoral law, constitutions, leaders—but also serious and sustained changes to the countries' educational systems. The current education reform efforts in the region heavily focus on such "technical" aspects as building more schools, introducing computers to schools, improving test scores in mathematics and sciences, and bridging the gender gap in education. While necessary and important, the reform's current emphasis misses a basic human component: Students need to learn at a very early age what it means to be citizens who learn how to think, seek and produce knowledge, question, and innovate rather than be subjects of the state who are taught what to think and how to behave. These attributes are essential if the region is to move away from its traditional reliance on "rents" in the form of oil and outside assistance, and toward the kind of system that empowers its citizens with the requisite skills to build self-generating, prosperous economies and achieve a quality of life that can come through respect for diversity, critical thinking, creativity, and exercising one's duties and rights as an active citizen.

Introduction

Numerous citizenship education programs in countries in Europe and North America have imparted skills to students that are critical to the democratic process, thereby impacting students' intentions and predispositions toward civic and political participation.[1] These programs encouraged such behaviors as social and moral responsibility and personal efficacy. In acquiring such knowledge and skills, students become more likely to serve and improve the communities around them.[2] A recent international study found a direct correlation between students' knowledge of their civic community and their actual level of engagement in it.[3] Moreover, even the simple practice of democracy in school, such as through student elections, can raise the levels of student efficacy.

In examining current education reform in many Arab countries, a set of key questions regarding citizenship education is warranted. Are students taught what it means to be a citizen? Do they know at an early age—not just through formal learning but, more importantly, through practice—that there is usually more than one side to any particular issue, and that they should seek information about, and debate the many sides of, the issue? Are they taught to question, inquire, participate, work in teams, and communicate? Are they taught to uphold values such as freedom, equality, and respect for human rights? Or is "knowledge" spoon-fed to them in a manner that discourages questioning?

Whole generations in the Arab world were ingrained with the notion that allegiance to one's country means allegiance to the ruling political party, system, or leader, and that diversity, critical thinking, and individual differences are treacherous. This kind of citizenship education is grievously outdated, but it is doubtful that current education reform in the Arab world will remedy that. Further, there exists today an unwritten alliance between governments on the one hand, and authoritarian political parties and religious institutions, on the other hand—the two major political forces in the Arab world, against any radical education reform. Both sides want their version, their interpretation, to be the only one imparted to the next generation in order to keep a monopoly on what students are taught about history, religion, and values. Students are not supposed to question, think about, analyze, or consider any other interpretations.

There has been no real interest in comprehensive education reform. Rather, the reform has focused on the "engineering" aspects. But improvements to

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the physical infrastructure of schools and even curriculum revisions are of limited value, unless they are coupled with a much greater investment in the human infrastructure of a free, democratic citizenry. As Arab societies attempt to compensate for lost time because of decades of political stagnation, they cannot afford to ignore the importance of educational systems that emphasize citizenship in all its aspects.

Education Reform in Arab Countries: The Failure So Far

Most Arab governments have attempted to improve their educational systems by addressing mainly the "technical" or "engineering" aspects. A study by the World Bank reported that the Middle East and North Africa region, which includes eighteen Arab countries, has invested heavily in education: about 5 percent of gross domestic product over the past forty years. The study identified 34 education reform programs in fourteen countries, with more than 900 reform measures, or an average of 65 per country.[4] Reform measures covered aspects such as pedagogy, teaching capacity, and management.[5]

Education statistics show that almost all Arab states have achieved impressive gains in access to free primary education and, to a lesser extent, to secondary education. The average net enrollment rate in primary schools in Arab states jumped from 75 percent in 1999 to 84 percent in 2008. In secondary schools, the net enrollment rate in several states exceeded 70 percent in 2007.[6] The average number of years of schooling of the total population aged fifteen and above has risen appreciably in each country since 1960.[7]

Despite this progress, several Arab countries are unlikely to reach the target levels specified by UNESCO in its drive for "Education for All" by 2015. Those states' net enrollment rates in primary schools are well below 70 percent, and they have not yet realized gender equity. The overall adult illiteracy rate in the Arab region remains high (28 percent in 2006).[8] Dropout rates are high, as are grade repetition levels in primary schools, which top 10 percent in some countries.[9] The status of early childhood and care education in the Arab region remains unsatisfactory; the gross enrollment rate (proportion of children enrolled in preschool) is less than 20 percent, far below the world average of 41 percent.[10]

The World Bank assessment suggests that reform measures by Arab governments are not invested in quality building. The overwhelming share of reform measures (76 percent to 93 percent) in the pre-K, basic, and secondary grades focused on the "technical" dimension of reform, such as the construction of

schools and provision of teaching materials, mainly textbooks. This superseded the human capital objectives of improved equity, efficiency, and quality.[11]

When it comes to student learning outcomes, most Arab educational systems have failed. They are not producing graduates with the skills and knowledge required to compete successfully in today's global economy.[12] Reform programs implemented in several states fell short of addressing important components of the educational system that reflect the quality of education, such as performance indicators, citizenship skills, methods of teaching and assessment, status and qualifications of teachers, governance, and accountability.[13]

Education reform initiatives have produced no tangible change in teaching methods. Teaching in most Arab states continues to be didactic, teacher-directed, and not conducive to fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving capacity.[14] Teachers communicate in classrooms using textbooks that contain ostensibly indisputable knowledge.[15] Assessment of student learning relies on memorization of definitions, facts, and concepts rather than the ability to think critically, as noted in national and international tests.[16]

Fourth- and eighth-grade students from the Arab states who participated in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) tests in 2003 and 2007 scored significantly below average.[17] Likewise, the scores of fourth graders who participated in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test on reading, mathematics, and science in 2003 and 2009 were significantly below average.[18] Fifteen-year-old students from the Arab states who took the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) test in 2006 had the same outcome.[19] Despite variations in the performance on these tests from one state to another, the results irrefutably demonstrate that the levels of learning achievement in Arab educational systems are generally low.[20]

In Tunisia, despite changes introduced to the educational system under Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in 2000, 2002, and 2004, students' academic performance did not improve. Fourth and eighth graders who participated in the TIMSS and PISA tests from 1995 to 2007 consistently performed poorly. In the TIMSS mathematics test, Tunisian fourth graders scored worse in 2007 than in 2003; their average score dropped significantly below the international average (figure 1). The most proficient Tunisian fourth graders failed to approach even the average proficiency level of students from the top five performing countries. The same scenario applies to the performance of fourth graders in science, although their average score did improve slightly from 2003 to 2007 (figure 2). Tunisian eighth graders also scored significantly below the TIMSS scale average in mathematics and science, though their average scores in both areas improved from 2003 to 2007. In the PISA test in mathematics, science, and problem solving, Tunisian students scored significantly below average in both years.[21]

Figure 1. Achievement in Mathematics: Grades 4 and 8
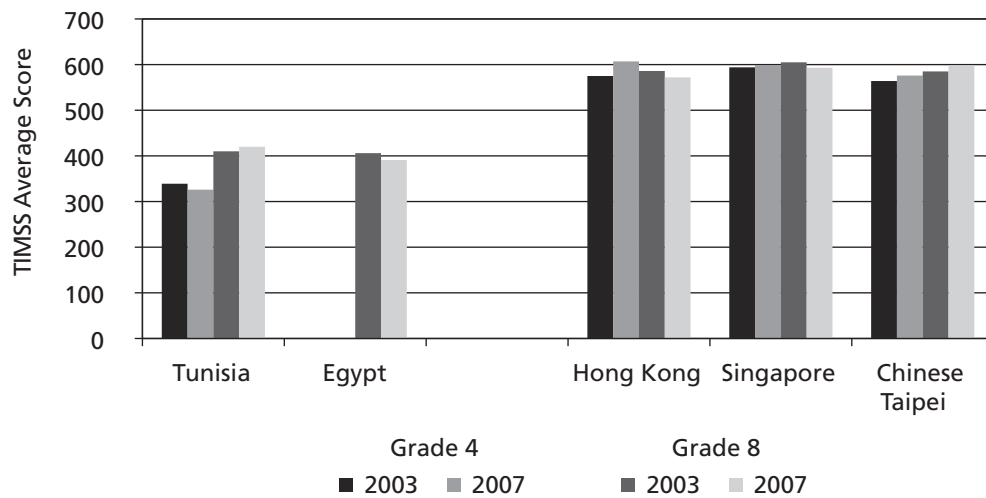
Source: http://timss.bc.edu/TIMSS2007/PDF/T07_M_IR_Chapter1.pdf.

Figure 2. Achievement in Science: Grades 4 and 8
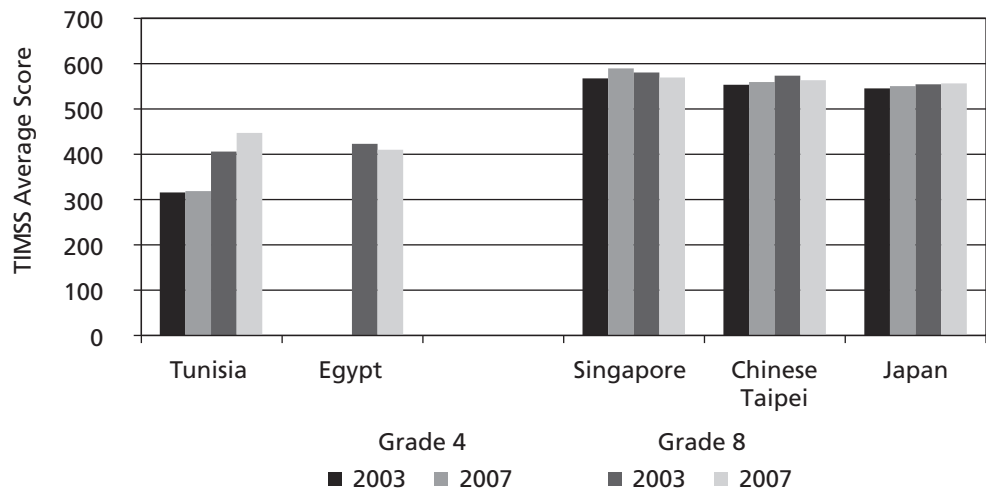
Source: http://timss.bc.edu/TIMSS2007/PDF/T07_S_IR_Chapter1.pdf.

A poor record in education quality also prevailed in Egypt during the regime of ousted president Hosni Mubarak. Improvement in learning outcomes resulting from national reform plans that started in 1997 and the implementation of a "National Standards of Education in Egypt" in 2003 was nil. Eighth graders who participated in the TIMSS tests in mathematics and science scored poorly in both 2003 and 2007, falling significantly below the TIMSS scale average (figures 1 and 2). Rather than improve, their average score in mathematics dropped from 2003 to 2007. In science, the average scores of Egyptian eighth graders also fell from 2003 to 2007. As is the case in Tunisia, the most proficient Egyptian

students in the TIMSS tests failed to reach the average scores of students in the top five performing countries in both mathematics and science. Even among the brightest, most capable, Egyptian students, performance is unsatisfactory.[22]

These examples from Egypt and Tunisia show that education reform in Arab countries has failed to improve student learning, but that should come as no surprise: The focus of the reform was neither citizenship education nor twenty-first-century skills.[23] Redirecting the emphasis of reform toward developing such skills will certainly be challenging, given that they promote values and behavior that are likely to destabilize entrenched regimes. Meanwhile, in Egypt and Tunisia, where authoritarian regimes are being deconstructed and democracies are "under construction," this shift in education reform toward citizenship should be welcomed by the new regimes in order to support their political and social transformations.

Citizenship Education: Concepts and Definitions

Citizenship education is not a recent global phenomenon in K–12 schools. Its beginnings date to the writings of Plato and Aristotle. Plato was an advocate of "true education," which "inspires the recipient with passionate and ardent desire to become a perfect citizen."[24] Aristotle viewed the citizen as a free resident of a city-state who is directly involved in governing.[25] For centuries, a main objective of Western educational systems has been to prepare students for citizenship roles. These roles have been constantly evolving and taking on new meanings in response to legal, cultural, social, and political changes, notably the French revolution in the eighteenth century, student movements in Europe in the 1960s, and the civil rights movement in the United States in the late 1950s and 1960s.[26] Prominent social scientists such as Montesquieu and Rousseau were instrumental not only in developing the meaning of citizenship but also in nurturing the idea of challenging the status quo and creating a new political order.

More recently, elements of citizenship education were introduced in the General Conference of UNESCO as early as 1974, which issued the "Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms." This position was based on the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and was followed by a framework of action in 1995 that also included education for democracy. Equally important are the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1959 and the more recent Convention on the Rights of the Child, a binding document for all UN members since 1989.[27]

Although the term "citizen" was coined in the West and developed as a concept by Western thinkers, it is not Western-specific without any global relevance. Rather, it is a universal notion that can be applied to all parts of the

world. In the Arab region, the word "citizen" (*muwatin*) is a noun linked to the root word *watan*, which has been used by Arabs since the days of pre-Islam. It refers to one's permanent place of residence, or homeland.[28] There is reference to it in statements by the Prophet Muhammad.[29] In a widely known part of the *Nahj Al-Balagha,* Imam Ali bin Abi Talib said, "Poverty in the homeland makes it a foreign place of residence, and wealth in a foreign place of residence makes it a homeland."[30] While the term *muwatin* (citizen) does not exist in Islamic jurisprudence, it is present as a notion in more than one text and event in Islamic history.[31] More important, Western connotations of citizenship, such as the existence of a social contract between the individual and the ruler based on free will, and the concepts of equality, tolerance, and social justice, *are* compatible with Islam.[32] Thus, teaching these concepts in an Islamic society will not necessarily be deemed anti-Islamic.

Today, the notion of citizenship education is related to, though distinct from, that of civic education. The term "civic" refers to the "principles, mechanisms and processes of decision making, participation, governance, and legislative control" that exist in societies.[33] Civic education deals with the knowledge and understanding of political institutions, concepts, and processes of civic life. It also encompasses education for human rights, peace, and democracy. Civic education incorporates concepts related to the rights of the individual into instruction of the democratic processes of government.

Citizenship education is a broader concept. In addition to knowledge and understanding, citizenship education encourages "opportunities for participation in both civic and civil society," as well as ways of interacting with and shaping one's own community and society.[34] Responsible citizenship is taught first by parents along with other civic values and attitudes; schools take on this role later, beginning with preschool or the primary grades.

> **"Education for citizenship," encompasses two other notions: "education about citizenship" and "education through citizenship."**

It is conceptually useful to place the range of approaches to citizenship education across countries on a continuum (figure 3). At one end is the minimal interpretation, civics education. It is based on formal education and didactic teaching, with little opportunity for student interaction and initiative. At the other end, the maximal interpretation is citizenship education. It is based on a mixture of formal and informal approaches; it is participative and inclusive, and encourages investigation, debate, and critical thinking.[35]

Because of the lack of a unified concept of citizenship in Arab countries, this paper relies on the definition provided by the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) conducted in 2008 and 2009. According to ICCS, citizenship education encompasses three main aspects: (1) knowledge of civic concepts, systems, and processes of civic life; (2) skills of civic participation,

Figure 3. Citizenship Education Continuum

Minimal Interpretation ➡	Maximal Interpretation
Civic Education	Citizenship Education
Exclusive	Inclusive
Elitist	Activist
Formal	Participative
Content-led	Process-led
Knowledge-based	Values-based
Didactic Transmission	Interactive Interpretation

Source: Adapted from David Kerr, *Citizenship Education: An International Comparison*, April 1999, 11.

problem solving, and negotiation; and (3) disposition, a sense of belonging, values, and ethics.[36] The purpose of citizenship education is to develop well-rounded, responsible citizens who know their legal rights and duties, and apply this knowledge to evaluate government policies and practices. Moreover, nurturing students to become citizens who work for the common good has a positive impact on their communities and societies. Developing the skills and competencies of citizenship has the added benefit of enabling students to compete in the rapidly changing global job market as they approach adulthood.

This approach, which can be termed "education for citizenship," encompasses two other notions: "education about citizenship" and "education through citizenship." Education *about* citizenship is simply minimal civics education that provides knowledge and understanding of history and politics. Education *through* citizenship teaches students through involvement in civic activities inside the school, such as voting for the school council, and outside the school, such as joining an environmental group in the community. Education *for* citizenship covers the aims of both of these approaches; in addition, it targets values and dispositions and is linked to the entire experience of students in schools.[37] These values of citizenship are central to the human development approach[38] and underpin the most common national goals of citizenship education in many countries: to develop the capacities of the individual and promote equal opportunity and the value of citizenship.[39]

Citizenship Education: A Key Element of Education Reform

Education for citizenship plays a key role in education reform by promoting most of the twenty-first-century skills and the European Union's "key competences for lifelong learning," namely: communication in the mother tongue;

communication in foreign languages; mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; social and civic competences; sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and cultural awareness and expression.[40] Education for citizenship also contributes to reforming the classroom environment and nurturing a democratic culture in the entire school among students, teachers, and administrators. To apply this approach to citizenship education, administrators and teachers of all subjects should develop their own competence in citizenship skills through in-service and professional development programs.

In many parts of the United States, for example, citizenship education programs go beyond teaching about American history, institutions, and the constitution; students are also provided with opportunities to practice such civic skills as problem solving, persuasive writing, collaboration, and consensus-building, as well as communicating with public officials about issues of concern.[41] Developing and nurturing these skills requires a teaching and learning approach that emphasizes open discussion and active learning that has been shown to be far more effective than the didactic, lecture-based approach.[42] This effectiveness was confirmed in the two largest-scale international studies,[43] which found that the classroom climate most conducive to high levels of civic knowledge is characterized by openness to discussion of political and social issues.[44]

Furthermore, in a classroom environment that fosters collaboration, creativity, and cultural sensitivity, young people learn to be able to live not only within the confines of their own local community or nation-state, but also in other parts of the world. As more and more individuals migrate to other states to compete, connect, and work in teams, their competence in these skills, particularly in local and global citizenship, is becoming even more important. These skills empower the youth to address the challenges of a globalized world, such as population movements within and between states, minority rights, popular uprisings, and rapid improvements in information and communication technologies.[45] In the United Kingdom, for example, the issue of how young people can be sufficiently prepared for these challenges is an "urgent consideration" for education policymakers and practitioners.[46]

Researchers and activists assert that citizenship education plays an important role in education reform. It "motivates and inspires young people, because it is relevant to their everyday lives and concerns."[47] By giving students a sense of empowerment to change their society, the impact of citizenship education on learning performance is expected to be significant. Without citizenship education, attempts at education reform will be missing a key twenty-first-century competence, namely civic competence, which also contributes to the development of most competences required for lifelong learning.

Status of Citizenship Education in Some Arab Countries

Education reform initiatives in Arab countries for which data are available and accessible have either ignored or unsatisfactorily addressed citizenship education. School curricula typically include a civic education component—one that reflects the state ideology, laws, and policies—as well as a strong ethics section emphasizing moral and often religious values and norms. The concepts, content, and methods of teaching and assessment vary considerably from one state to another and sometimes even from one school to another within the same country, such as in Lebanon. This variation in the curriculum and related student activities is not surprising given the different political regimes and educational systems in the region.

Still, in most Arab countries, humanities and social sciences curricula in schools instill obedience and submission to a regime rather than freedom of thought and critical thinking.[48] Several researchers who analyzed the educational systems in Egypt and Tunisia concluded that the outgoing regimes consciously created systems that produce dependent and submissive students[49] who are less apt to challenge authority. Participatory activity available to students in Tunisian public schools was limited to cultural associations and sports clubs. Students were not allowed to engage in debates. Nor did they receive tolerance or respect if their opinions differed from those of their teachers.[50] Samia, a Tunisian student, elaborated: "Young teachers are more understanding, as well as women, and are more willing to respect the student, while the older say to you, 'But what do you know?' Young people have no right to stand up to their elders."[51]

In Egypt, the teachers, curriculum, activities, and administration in public schools have failed to promote or support democratic values and practices.[52] A big gap exists between the concept of citizenship education espoused by the Ministry of Education and the content of social studies textbooks. An analytical study indicated that tourist attractions rather than citizenship are emphasized in school textbooks because tourism is a main source of national income.[53] Basic concepts in citizenship education such as rule of law, social justice, and political participation are rarely mentioned. Yet citizens' dependence on the government for the provision of goods and services is exaggerated. The term "authority" prevails in the social studies textbooks over the term "citizen" (by nearly two to one), a clear indicator of state dominance of citizens.[54]

In Jordan, a number of education reform initiatives undertaken by the government have been aimed at capacity-building, reducing the illiteracy rate, expanding early childhood care and basic education, and eliminating the gender gap, but none emphasized citizenship education. For example, the project

supporting "Jordan's Education Reform for a Knowledge Economy" (ERfKE) identified schools' needs and conducted training for teachers and principals on modern teaching methods, supervision, leadership and self-assessment, and integrating technology in teaching.[55] Nowhere in the project is citizenship education addressed.

In Sudan, the U.S. Agency for International Development's program in education focuses on primary education, girls' education, teacher training, and institutional development. The program aims to build the human and institutional capacity of ministries, increase access to basic education, improve the quality of services, and promote transparency and accountability.[56] Education reform in Sudan does not address the component of citizenship.

Supported by the European Union, Syria's five-year plan (2006–2010) aimed to increase access to education, improve teacher training, enhance assessment, reduce dropout and repetition rates, develop curricula, and introduce information and communication technology to classrooms.[57] Here, too, the state's reform plan did not address citizenship education.

A number of Arab governments have attempted to design and use new curricula, textbooks, and related activities that deal with issues closely related to such civic and citizenship education as character development, human rights, rights of the child, peace studies, and dispute resolution. Such programs and projects are found in quality private schools in some Arab countries, such as Egypt, Lebanon, and Oman. These schools developed their own civic education curriculum, complete with a mandatory community service component.[58] However, no comprehensive database lists these programs and projects or quantifies their efficacy regarding learning outcomes. Of the published studies on civic and citizenship education in Arab countries, most have considerable limitations in terms of coverage, representativeness, and depth of analysis.

Among the examples that stand out is the United Nations Development Program study of education and citizenship in Lebanon in 2007, which was designed to be comparable to the 1999 study by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) that investigated outcomes among ninth graders. In comparison with the 28 other countries that participated in the 1999 study, Lebanon was classified among the lowest-performing group of countries. While its score in civic content knowledge was the *highest* among this group, its score in civic skills was the third lowest. One noteworthy finding is that Lebanese students had the lowest score on the question of accountability in democratic systems.[59] Their answers in various areas were contradictory and portrayed a mismatch among concepts, attitudes, and actions. For example, while students strongly endorsed the concept of civic participation, their involvement in voluntary associations and clubs was very limited. The study points to serious weaknesses in Lebanon's educational system and school climate and to the overriding influence of family on students' social and political values.[60]

It is evident from the above discussion that the political commitment to produce independent, creative students has been weak in Arab countries for reasons of self-preservation—doing so would produce citizens capable of challenging authority—be it political, religious, or traditional. Essentially, well-informed, independent-minded students represent a vital threat to a government's standing orders. Educational systems in these countries are therefore generally unwilling to promote the social values that flourish in democratic societies. Diverse opinions are emphatically not given voice, which has the effect of dulling attempts at informed debate and limiting citizens' capacity to reform their governments.

As nations such as Egypt and Tunisia seek to democratize, the degree of active engagement by citizens in public life will determine the strength of their burgeoning democracies. More than one-third of today's Arab population is currently in or about to enter the K–12 system (up through fourteen years of age).[61] Thus, citizenship education in schools can play a key role in preparing millions of young people in emerging Arab democracies to become well-informed participants in their localities and national governments and in the global community as well.

Challenges to Citizenship Education in Arab Countries

Education for citizenship in Arab countries will face three main challenges: shortcomings of the educational systems, international and domestic contextual factors, and funding.

Educational Systems

Shortcomings of educational systems in Arab countries pose a serious challenge to citizenship education initiatives. Of the major shortcomings, the weakness of governance and the inadequate preparation of teachers are the most pertinent.

Governance

Undoubtedly, quality citizenship education is dependent on good governance and management at both the central government level and the local school level. Given the nature of political systems in Arab states, ministries of education assume a highly centralized role and continue to be dominated by authoritarian management systems. Furthermore, most ministries lack vision, appropriate strategic planning, efficient supervisory units, and competent human resources.

Under poor governance, a new initiative in citizenship education will be up against the challenge of dealing with incompetent officers, many of whom are corrupt, resistant to change, or disinterested. Leaders of such initiatives should

find innovative ways of securing approval for their programs from government agencies and sustaining these programs under unfavorable conditions.

Teachers

The role of teachers in the education process cannot be understated; teachers and teaching quality are "the most important organizational factors associated with student achievement."[62] Quality in education is strongly associated with the presence of qualified teachers.[63] Recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers is therefore imperative. These teachers are expected to be creative in dealing with a wide range of situations and catering to various student needs. They must also continuously improve their knowledge, technical and social skills, and teaching methods. Regardless of their competence in their subject matter, teachers must be qualified to prepare students for active citizenship as part of twenty-first-century skills. For example, science teachers are responsible not only for teaching the course syllabus, but also for promoting a classroom culture characterized by creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and social responsibility.

Shortage, status, and qualifications of teachers represent another handicap to the reform efforts. About half the Arab states for which there are adequate data are experiencing a shortage of trained primary school teachers.[64] Substantial proportions of teachers in most Arab states at all school levels lack adequate academic qualifications, proper academic preparation, pre-service training, and readiness for the challenges of a changing society.[65] Salary and status of the position are low by international standards.[66] This problem is compounded by negative factors such as teacher absenteeism and lack of professional development at schools. Teachers are frequently overwhelmed with duties that are not related to teaching, such as supervision of students in the playground and places of detention and participation in administrative and extracurricular activities.[67]

Given this situation, recruitment and provision of pre-service and in-service training for any new program in citizenship education will be challenging. Besides mastering knowledge of the citizenship subject, teachers should be trained to direct and monitor the development of skills and practical experience of students in citizenship through a variety of activities in school and out of school. Furthermore, teachers in all subjects must be trained to promote citizenship values such as equality, open discourse, and critical thinking by integrating these values into their subjects.
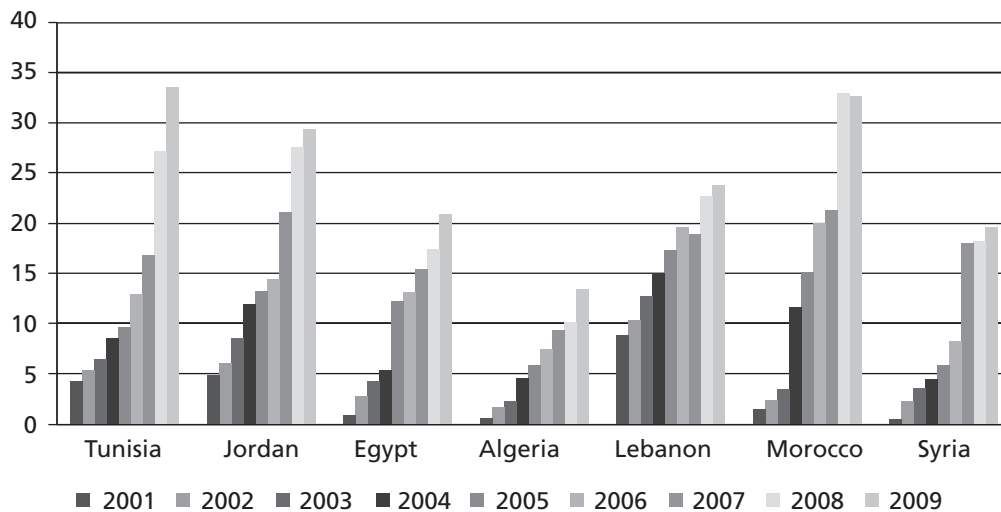
Context

Citizenship education can be better understood when placed within its international and domestic contexts. The international context refers to the impact of globalization, while the domestic context covers a host of socioeconomic, political, and cultural factors.

International Context

Globalization has been defined as the significant economic, political, and cultural changes in society that lead to a more global social policy, including citizenship education policy.[68] At the economic level, globalization has resulted in new information and communication technologies, such as computers, cell phones, and the Internet. The proliferation of global media, such as satellite television stations, the Internet, YouTube, and social media networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, has permeated the lives of young and old alike.[69] In the Arab region, as figure 4 shows, there has been a significant annual rise in the percentage of the population using the Internet since 2001. However, not all segments of Arab society view these changes favorably. Some influential conservative groups, which vehemently oppose the spread of Western values and norms, pressure governments to impose strict surveillance on the content of the new globalized media—while using some of these same media to promote their own positions and counterviews.

Figure 4. Internet Users (per 100)

Source: World Bank, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2.

Domestic Context

The nature of the political and educational systems, economic characteristics, strength of civil society, and social values are domestic contextual factors that determine the definition and approach to citizenship in a particular country. Each of these variables refers to a continuum from one extreme situation to another. For example, the political system may range between autocracy and consolidated democracy. Economies vary from the very rich to the very poor; from the socialist, centralized system to the capitalist, free market system.

Moreover, a nation's history and cultural and socio-political structures significantly affect the context in which citizenship was conceptualized and incorporated into an education curriculum. The particular traditions and values corresponding to Islamic societies, for example, are distinct from those based on Christianity or Confucianism.

While a society's religious, political, and socioeconomic background make up the primary context influencing its definition of citizenship education, the home and school environments and local community constitute a second set of factors.[70] The manner in which a school is governed, the means by which curriculum is imparted, and the experience students take away from their education are all contextual factors that will influence how citizenship education as a concept is implemented.

Serious shortcomings in socio-political and economic systems at both the local and national levels in Arab countries will influence their citizenship education programs. Loyalty to one's ethnic or religious group is fierce; authoritarian values dominate; opportunities for participation in governance processes and decisionmaking are limited; and freedom of speech and belief are constrained. The resistance of hard-line religious groups and authoritarian political parties to democratic values will be a major obstacle. Most political regimes are nondemocratic; corruption prevails and public accountability is scant; liberal freedoms are outlawed; and people live in constant fear of repression. In many Arab countries, public workers overwhelmingly depend on their states to sustain their livelihood, and illiteracy and school-dropout rates remain high.

It will therefore be very difficult to launch a citizenship education program in entrenched autocracies where the program's objectives and values are incompatible with the interests of elites and other dominant groups. By contrast, such programs are more likely to be welcomed in states that are undergoing political and social transformation.

Funding

For most Arab countries, it will be an uphill battle to initiate and maintain a new citizenship program as a key component of education reform in the face of strong conservative views that emphasize teaching the basic subjects of language, mathematics, and sciences. The challenge is augmented when administrators compete for the scarce financial resources available to the educational system. It is also difficult to secure funds when states face violent domestic or international conflicts or natural disasters that cause potential education funding to be diverted to security or emergency relief.

Nevertheless, it is feasible to implement the "education for citizenship" approach under dire funding conditions because it is not restricted to a specific subject. Its themes, topics, and delivery methods can be integrated into various subjects and extracurricular activities. The challenge lies in recruiting and training qualified teachers who are eager to take up this task.

The Way Forward

A number of scholars consider today's understanding of the role of the citizen to be a contemporary construct unique to the Western experience and doubt whether the concept of citizenship can apply to Arab society.[71] Many non-Western nations have nonetheless adopted democratic systems, written constitutions, and supported civil society.[72] Given the power of indigenously driven demands for democracy despite its Western origin, Arab countries forging new democracies will likely construct unique definitions of "citizen" and "citizenship."

A new Arab initiative in citizenship education must first achieve a clear definition of concepts, goals, and approach. Terms and concepts such as "citizen," "equity," "diversity," "human rights," and "identity" should be clearly defined. It is also imperative to define the relation between citizenship and identity. In the Arab region, a citizen has multiple identities that vary from one country to another, but the most common are religious, tribal, ethnic, and national identities. Any citizenship education program needs to address each of these identities that exist in its social setting. For example, religion is an important element in education reform for many reasons. Historically, education was conducted in places of worship and controlled by the clergy, who served as both teachers and administrators. Religion is also a cultural phenomenon in all societies; it is a moral resource and a component of social diversity that democracy espouses. Again, the challenge is recruiting qualified teachers who can accept issues from the point of view of people from religions other than theirs.[73]

This paper endorses the "education for citizenship" approach, which is best suited to meet the impact of global change and to consolidate or stimulate political reform. Education for citizenship has a national as well as a subnational dimension at the levels of the state, local community, family, and school. Yet all significant events, issues, and places have become interconnected, and all systems, including education, have developed global (or cosmopolitan, universal) dimensions.

Young people today need to be both national and global citizens in order to expand their capacity to compete in an interdependent world and a globalized economy. This requires education reform to have specific learning goals and innovative delivery methods and practices, with an explicit component of citizenship education. This component encompasses a set of core learning outcomes, skills, values, and dispositions that can apply to most, if not all, Arab countries. This set should qualify as universal and applicable to various social settings. Each country can add to this core what it deems relevant and useful in its particular case. For example, the notion of multiculturalism is not relevant to all Arab countries and should therefore be avoided as a core concept despite its importance at the global level. Figure 5 illustrates the relationship between core and country-specific concepts.

Although the contextual factors within each country inevitably affect the curriculum of any particular citizenship education program, by twelfth grade

Figure 5. Selected Core and Country-Specific Citizenship Concepts

Gender Equality
Secularism

Multiculturalism
Sexual Diversity

Freedom
Human Dignity
Equality
Social Justice
Tolerance
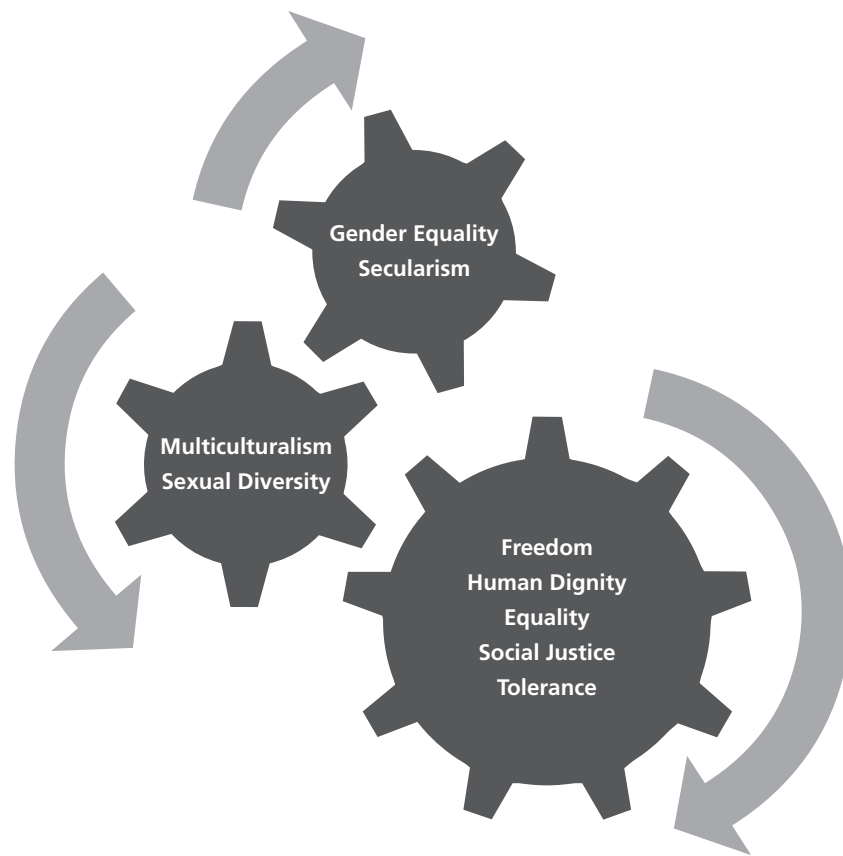
a student in any Arab country should be able to analyze and reflect on his multiple identities; the structure and functions of the national political system and other international systems; legal and moral individual rights and responsibilities; notions of power, privilege, equity, and social justice; diverse belief systems and ideologies; global themes and structures; and national, regional, and global contemporary issues and events.[74]

To compete in today's globalized world, it is crucial for young Arabs to possess a set of core skills that are nurtured, in part, through citizenship education in schools. The capacity to think independently and creatively, communicate effectively, analyze and observe change processes, and respond to challenging situations will separate the winners from the losers in the global competition.[75] Young Arabs need a school that develops and nurtures an interactive, respectful, and culturally sensitive climate in classrooms. In such a climate, ample opportunities are presented for students to get involved in decisionmaking at school and in the community and to engage in national and global issues. Furthermore, a variety of performance assessment strategies should be applied to test these and other problem-solving competencies. [76]

In addition to knowledge, skills, and school climate, citizenship education in Arab countries should aim to develop appropriate social and political values and dispositions, which are important determinants of behavior. Belief in human dignity, individual freedoms and equality, responsibility, and concern for the common good through public service are the type of universal values and dispositions imparted by citizenship education programs and the school climate that promotes such values.[77]

Conclusion

Citizenship education in the Arab world is a key element in education reform and in the development of future pluralistic societies as well as sustainable political systems and economic models. Of the key challenges facing the implementation of such education reforms, perhaps the biggest is not one of a technical nature but more of political will. The political establishments and powerful religious institutions have had a monopoly on the truth in modern times, and neither of them has called for, let alone attempted, any serious process under which students would gain the tools and freedom to learn how to challenge authority. Quite the opposite. Governments have strived to educate students in a way that would make them docile and unlikely to question political authority. At the same time, governments have failed miserably at creating jobs for an Arab world where 70 percent of the population is under thirty years of age (figure 6).

> **Governments have strived to educate students in a way that would make them docile and unlikely to question political authority.**

Figure 6. Unemployment, Youth Total (Percent of Total Labor Force Ages 15–24)

Source: World Bank, http://databanksearch.worldbank.org/DataSearch/LoadReport.aspx?db=2&cntrycode=&sercode=SL.
    UEM.1524.ZS&yrcode=#.
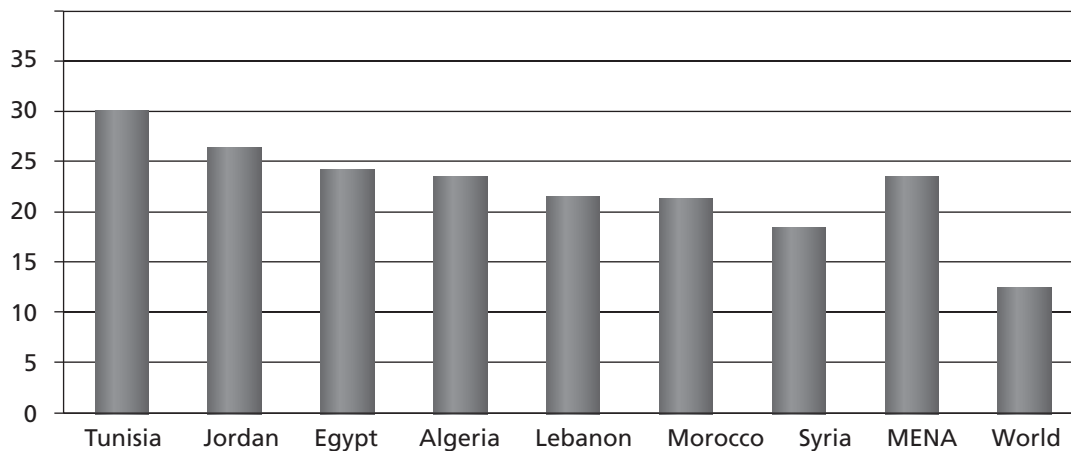
Religious establishments, meanwhile, have also worked to maintain their monopoly on interpreting religion in a narrow manner not commensurate with the practices of early Islam or of the main religious scholars of only a hundred years ago. As a result of these self-preservation practices, whole generations of students have been deprived of achieving their full potential, and they have not been equipped to compete in the domestic or global market. If the objective was to create and maintain docile societies, what has been achieved, in fact, is the very opposite. The recent uprisings have irrefutably demonstrated that Arab publics are no longer willing to be silent about the failure of their political systems in providing both freedom and bread.

> **The whole approach to education reform in the Arab world must, therefore, be revisited. Current reforms are conspicuously lacking.**

The whole approach to education reform in the Arab world must, therefore, be revisited. Current reforms are conspicuously lacking. Research into the different education reform measures under way in many Arab countries must point out the glaring gaps between what these efforts encompass and what they do not, as well as suggest ways to bridge the gaps. More than educational systems will suffer if this issue is not seriously addressed. The very cause of a prosperous, democratic, diverse, and peaceful future for the region is at stake.

Notes

1 The American National Center for Learning and Citizenship (NCLC) determined in a state-by-state nationwide study that skills and positive dispositions toward involvement in public life are the most critical elements in developing informed and competent citizens capable of strengthening a democracy. See *The Progress of Education Reform October 2010*, vol. 11, no. 5, 1, www.ecs.org/per; for more details on citizenship education in the United States, see Tiffani Lennon, "ECS Policy Brief: Citizenship Education," Education Commission of the States, July 2006, 1–10, www.ecs.org/html/educationIssues/StateNotes/2006PolicyBriefs.pdf. Civic education is even more rigorously implemented in Canada; see Alan M. Sears and Andrew S. Hughes, "Citizenship Education and Current Educational Reform," *Canadian Journal of Education*, 21, 2, (1996): 123–42, www.csse-scee.ca/CJE/Articles/FullText/CJE21-2/CJE21-2-03Sears.pdf. In the case of England, see Thomas Benton et al., "Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS): 6th Annual Report–Young People's Civic Participation in and Beyond School: Attitudes, Intentions and Influences," National Foundation for Educational Research, Research Report DCSF-RR052, 2008, iv–v.

2 Neil Rose, "Citizenship education is integral to 'big society'" *Guardian*, January 19, 2011.

3 This study is the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) of 2009, the largest study on civics and citizenship ever conducted in 38 countries (none from the Arab region). It was conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), an independent cooperative of national research agencies. See Wolfram Schulz et al., *ICCS 2009 International Report: Civic Knowledge, Attitudes, and Engagement Among Lower Secondary Students in 38 Countries*, International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (2009): 251, http://www.icfes.gov.co/iccs/index.php/documentos/category/5?download=24%3Ap-2009.

4 Ahmad Galal, *The Road Not Travelled–Education Reform in the Middle East and North Africa*, World Bank (2008): 292–95, table A.1.

5 Ibid., table A.2

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7 World Bank data as cited in Galal, tables 1.5, 16.

8 UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005, Education for All: The Quality Imperative* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2005), 16, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001373/137333e.pdf; *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009, Overcoming Inequality: Why Governance Matters*, 6, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001776/177609e.pdf.

9 UNESCO, EFA *Global Monitoring Report 2009, Regional Overview: Arab States*, 5.

10 UNESCO, *Early Childhood Care and Education Regional Report: Arab States*, August 2010.

11 Galal, 151 and table 5.2.

12 Galal, 77–111; and UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2003: Building a Knowledge Society*, 2003.

13 UNESCO, Education Policies and Strategies 14, *Global Synthesis of the Findings of UNESS Documents: Progress Report* (working document), April 2009, 12, 23, 30; G. Gonzalez et al., *Lessons from the Field: Developing and Implementing the Qatar Student Assessment System, 2002–2006*, RAND Corporation (2009): 26, www.rand. org/pubs/technical_reports/TR620.html.

14 UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2003*, 53.

15 Ibid., 54.

16 *EFA 2009*, 9.

17 Six Arab countries participated in the 2003 TIMSS as compared to fourteen countries in the 2007 TIMSS. In the 2006 PIRLS, only three Arab countries participated. TIMSS and PIRLS results by country are available at www.timss.bc.edu.

18 Only four Arab countries participated in the 2009 PISA test. PISA results by country are available at www.oecd.org/dataoecd.

19 UNESCO, *Regional Overview: Arab States, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011: The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education*, 6, www.unesco.org/new/en/education/resources.

20 UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2003*, 6.

21 For math results, see I. V. S. Mullis, M. O. Martin, and P. Foy (with J. F. Olson, C. Preuschoff, E. Erberber, A. Arora, and J. Galia), 2008, *TIMSS 2007 International Mathematics Report: Findings from IEA's Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study at the Fourth and Eighth Grades* (Chestnut Hill, MA: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Boston College), chapter 1, Exhibit 1.3; for science results, see M. O. Martin, I. V. S. Mullis, and P. Foy (with J. F.Olson, E. Erberber, C. Preuschoff, and J. Galia), 2008, TIMSS 2007 International Science Report: Findings from IEA's Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study at the Fourth and Eighth Grades, TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Boston College, chapter 1, Exhibit 1.3.

22 Ibid.

23 Twenty-first-century skills can be grouped into four categories: (1) "ways of thinking" (creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, decisionmaking, and life-long learning), (2) "ways of working" (communication, collaboration), (3) "tools for working" (information literacy, ICT literacy), and (4) "skills for living in the world" (citizenship—local and global, life and career, personal and social responsibility—including cultural awareness and competence). See www.atc21s.org/index. php/about/what-are-21st-century-skills.

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29 See Ali Al-Qari, *Merqat al-Mafateeh* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiya, 2001), 4, 753; and Sunan Abi Daoud as cited in Abul-Basal, 39.

30 Al-Sharif Al-Radi, *Nahj Al-Balagha*, part I, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dar-Al-Andalus, 1984), 575.

31 Imad Al-Rasheed, *Al-Muwatanah*, 2005, as cited in Abul-Basal, 42.

32 Several quotations from the Quran are cited by Abul-Basal, 42–46.

33 Schulz et al., 22, footnote 1.

34 "Civil society refers to the sphere of society in which connections among people are at a level larger than that of the extended family but which does not include connections to the state. Civic society refers to any community in which connections among people are at a level larger than that of the extended family (including the state)." Ibid.

35 David Kerr, *Citizenship Education: An International Comparison*, published as part of the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Project, carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in England and Wales on Behalf of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in England, April 1999, 11, www.inca.org.uk/pdf/citizenship_no_intro.pdf.

36 Schulz et al., *ICCS 2009 International Report*, 20–21.

37 Kerr, *Citizenship Education: An International Comparison*, 12, 27.

38 The human development approach is a "process of enlarging people's choices and enhancing human capabilities and freedoms …" Among the issues central to human development are those of equity, participation, freedom, empowerment of women, and democratic governance. See www.hdr.undp.org.

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40 See note 23 on twenty-first-century skills. For EU key competences, see Joint Progress Report of the Council and the Commission on the Implementation of the "Education and Training 2010 Work Programme," Notice IV*, Official Journal of the European Union C 117/01*. Available at http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:117:0001:0007:EN:PDF.

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42 A study of ninth graders throughout the United States found that students who experience interactive discussion-based civic education score the highest on twenty-first-century competencies including working with others and knowledge of economic and political processes. Those who experience neither interactive nor lecture-based civic education have the lowest scores on these competencies. Ibid., 3.

43 The first large-scale international study of citizenship skills was carried out in 1999 by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), an independent international cooperative of national research agencies. It was followed by the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) of 2009, the largest study on civics and citizenship ever conducted in 38 countries (none from the Arab region). See Schulz et al., 16.

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51 Ibid., 307.

52 Qasim, 150–51.

53 Baraka, 11.

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58 Information is based on authors' personal knowledge.

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62 UNESCO, *EFA 2005*, 108.

63 *EFA 200*5, 17; UNESCO, April 2009, 12; and Galal, 292–95.

64 For 2008, of eleven Arab countries with data on pre-K teachers, only five countries had all their teachers trained. At the primary school level, of twelve countries with data, only seven countries had all their teachers trained. At the secondary level, of six countries with data, only three countries had all their teachers trained. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Global Education Digest 2010: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World* (Arabic), tables 1, 3, and 6.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid., table 23 has data on teachers' salaries in USD PPP (purchasing power parity) for 44 countries including three Arab countries: Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia. The table shows that the starting salary for Egyptian teachers in primary school is the second lowest (2,854) after Indonesia. Jordan and Tunisia have much higher salaries, but they are far below Western salary scales. They are also lower than salaries in two other Middle Eastern states, Turkey and Israel.

67 Galal, 291–92.

68 Nicholas C. Burbules and Carlos Alberto Torres, "Globalization and Education: An Introduction," in *Globalization and Education: Critical Perspectives*, edited by Nicholas C. Burbules and Carlos Torres (New York: Routledge, 2000), 6.

69 Ibid., 6–7.

70 School environment includes governance (competence, transparency, centralization of public authority), curriculum (teacher-directed versus student-centered, whether or not it promotes critical thinking, addresses job market needs) teachers (qualifications, status, professional development), learning pedagogy (didactic or interactive, active or passive learning, use of ICT or not), student experience (participation in school life and decisions, engagement in community activity, sense of belonging to school), and classroom environment (whether or not it promotes inclusiveness, democratic debate, respect for diversity). Home environment refers to: relation to authority figures, freedom of expression, role of family network for physical protection from outside aggression and for prospective employment or business, Local community refers to structure of the community (authoritarian versus democratic, open versus closed) and to relations between student, family and community (direct relation between student and community or indirect through family, nature of influence of community on student and family).

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72 Ibid., 251–52.

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77 ECS, Table 4; Kerr, "Changing the Political Culture," figure 1.

About the Authors

MUHAMMAD FAOUR is a senior associate at the Carnegie Middle East Center, where his research focuses on education reform in Arab countries, with an emphasis on citizenship education. Prior to joining Carnegie, Faour was a research fellow at the Center for International and Security Studies at York University in Canada and from 2007 to 2010, he was president of Dhofar University in Salalah, Oman. Faour is the author of several books and monographs, including *The Silent Revolution in Lebanon: Changing Values of the Youth,* and *The Arab World after Desert Storm*, and the co-author of *University Students in Lebanon: Background and Attitudes* (with Adnan El-Amine).

MARWAN MUASHER is vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment, where he oversees the Endowment's research in Washington and Beirut on the Middle East. Muasher served as foreign minister (2002–2004) and deputy prime minister (2004–2005) of Jordan, and his career has spanned the areas of diplomacy, development, civil society, and communications. He was also a senior fellow at Yale University. He is the author of *The Arab Center: The Promise of Moderation* (Yale University Press, 2008).

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