

Citizenship Education in Egyptian Public Schools: What Values to Teach and in which Administrative and Political Contexts?

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The ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) in Egypt has recently recognized the negative consequences of low political involvement of youth in public life. These have caused violence and instability. For this, the NDP has placed citizenship programs in the forefront of its political agenda. The latter acknowledges the roles of several societal institutions such as media, civil society, religion, and family. Nevertheless, it has neglected the role of educational institutions. This article claims that schools remain a main vehicle for the transmission of democratic values and focuses on the role of social studies curriculum to promote these values. It highlights the various issues that face Egyptian policy makers and educators in the preparation and implementation of a curriculum geared to promote democratic citizenship concepts.

Keywords: *Citizenship programs, civic education, democratic values, educational policies, curricula reform, Egypt.*

INTRODUCTION

Egypt is currently undertaking major steps in political reform. In this paper, it is argued that schools can play a significant role in the process of socio-political development. Many scholars agree on this role. For example, Westheimer's (2003)¹ support for school-based civic education programming is situated in the notion that schools play a large role in educating students for democracy and citizens for active, reflective practice. He asserts, "young people need to be taught to make democracy work, to engage civically, socially, and politically". I particularly emphasize that schools' role in the democratic process must be acknowledged by policy makers and educational planners in Egypt.

The Problem

This study acknowledges the gap in students' social and political awareness in Egypt. It claims that this gap is mainly due to the reluctance of societal institutions in assuming their roles in raising the awareness of youth on citizenship values. I argue that this gap can be fulfilled if schools would be considered by policy makers and educational planners as significant actors in the process of socio-political change. One way of boosting schools' role in this process is through curricula reform, especially that of social studies. This reform should be based on a clear definition of what constitutes

Endnotes:

¹ Westheimer, Joel (2003). The civic mission of schools .Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement and Carnegie Corporation of New York. Retrieved May 5,2006 , from: <http://www.civicyouth.org/research/areas/civicmissionofschools.htm>

civic values. In addition, it should take into consideration the challenges of implementing civic education (CE) programs within the current administrative and political structures of the country.

Why is it important to rethink of Civic Education?

A review and rethinking of CE is taking place not only in developing countries but also in well-developed and long-standing democracies². Moreover, there is voluminous research on the causal relationship between citizenship education and positive students' political behavior in the developed countries. Yet, parallel research in this area is not noted in most developing countries. In addition, adequate research that addresses the complexities of implementing this type of education within the political and administrative contexts of the developing world is especially lacking. This study is imperative for two reasons: first, it comes timely with recent government efforts to introduce major institutional reforms for the democratization of Egypt. Second, it is concurrent with recent cabinet policies to improve the quality of public education.

Research Hypothesis

This research is based on the assumption that education and politics are interrelated. Throughout the modern history of Egypt, schools have been key actors in socio-political development. Textbooks of social studies as such have been shaping youth social and political values. School curricula in turn have been influenced by political ideals of the elite as such under British colonialism of Egypt, later under the Egyptian revolution, then during the liberal period under Anwar El Sadat, and currently under Mubarak's regime. The second assumption is that a clear conception of what constitutes civic education leads to the effective planning and implementation of CE programs. The third assumption claims that effective implementation of CE programs require, in the case of Egypt, assessing three dimensions; first, the overly bureaucratic structure of the Ministry of Education (MOE); second, the central administration of school textbooks national curricula; the third the financial resources required to carry out and maintain CE programs.

The above assumptions generate several issues that are worth of study. Amongst these, how politics influence the curriculum of social studies, how CE is defined in the literature, how CE is perceived among educators and policy makers ,what civic values are included in the current curriculum, and last but not least what is needed to effectively plan and implement CE programs in Egyptian public schools?

Methodology

Two integrated approaches were used in this paper to investigate the issue of CE in Egypt. The first approach consisted of a content analysis and a review of social studies curricula taught in public schools under three distinctive political eras. A brief review is made of social studies curricula under late president Gamal Abdel Nasser who led with six other army officers the Egyptian revolution in 1952, then under the late president Anwar Al-Sadat between 1971 and 1981, and last the curricula analysis is made under the present regime of Hosni Mubarak. Middle level schools (10 to 15 years old) were selected for the study because these stages constitute transitory ages during which kids

² In America, for example, CE has been the focus of public attention since the eighties. In 1983, a much publicized report declared the United state was s" a nation at risk" if dramatic improvements were not made in the educational system. In the 1990s, Congressional leaders and Presidents Bush and "Clinton have called for high quality national standards".In 1998, the National Commission on CE Renewal called for greater attention specifically to CE. In early 2002, Republicans passed the No Child Left Behind Act, the most expansive federal education law in American history to act against significant percentages of students failing in reading and math.

construct their basic values. The second approach used a focus group that included fifteen educational leaders and key decision makers in charge of planning school curricula at the Ministry of Education (MOE). This group comprised editors of social studies textbooks currently used in public schools as well.

Organization of the Research

The research is divided into three sections. The first section includes a review of literature that covers concepts and issues related to citizenship and civic education. The second section includes major findings from interviews conducted with the focus group to explore their views about CE. The third section reviews the current process of administering and planning school curricula as well as public expenditure on basic education in Egypt. Finally, the study concludes with recommendations for policy makers and educators for the effective planning and implementation of CE programs in public schools.

Literature Review

The literature on CE contains countless examples that support the positive relationship between education and democracy. In the mean time, the literature emphasizes the role of school curricula in promoting democratic values and capacities. For example, Westheimer describes ten educational programs that have successfully promoted civic concepts. Despite of its relationship with democratic values, two main challenges emerge when addressing CE. The first is theoretical and stems from the difficulty of defining CE and of determining its components. The second is practical and pertains to its implementation in public schools and classroom settings. We will attempt first in the next section of this study at defining CE.

Defining Civic Education

Civic Education has been described in scholarly research, in addition, in classical Arabic literature, in the local reports issued by the Egyptian Ministry of Education (MOE), as well as in executive reports issued by international agencies for development. To begin with the Ministry of Education's definition, in one of its major publications issued in 2006³, the ministry explains CE as the "education that forms skills and abilities of students, enabling them to take a vital part in social and political life, creating civilians believing in the values of society, democracy and freedom." Civic Education however has been defined more comprehensively in international reports. For example, in a recent report issued by the United Nations in 2004 it has been described as educating youth on four components: 1) Human rights, which include empowering citizens to be able to engage in social development; 2) law, social justice and democracy, meaning political and civic participation; 3) development meaning human development as the basis of human rights; 4) peace, meaning peaceful resolution of conflict through negotiation and dialogue. The UNDP definition is acknowledged in the literature as being the most inclusive explanation of what constitutes CE programs. Hence it will be used in a later section of this study as the basis for a comparative analysis contrasting it with the definition given by the MOE on CE.

Before the UNDP definition of CE, classical Arabic literature described the basis for democratic education. Most scholars from the Middle East based their writings in this regard on the preaching and writings of the Prophet Muhammad. Scholars based their writings on CE on the Prophet's saying, "it is the duty of every Muslim man and woman to seek education". They further asserted

³ Mubarak and education (in Arabic).(2006). Cairo: Egypt. The Ministry of Education. Department of Textbooks.

that Arabs were encouraged to pursue knowledge for its own sake. The application of the concept of freedom of opinion was mentioned in Quran's verses descended in Mecca and Madina. The total freedom of opinion is a principle that was assured by Islam since it emerged, and applied by the Prophet Muhammad and his successors (caliphs) especially in the time of Caliph Omar Ibn al Khattab. According to verses of the Quran, the principles of dialogue and freedom of thought and expression are emphasized. These principles promote rational and critical thinking about the creation of the world upon which people are free and not forced to believe in God⁴. Among the early elementary educational institutions were the mosque schools which were founded by the Prophet himself. In fact, the formal pursuit of knowledge had existed in one form or another since the time of the Greeks. The Arabs translated and preserved not only the teachings of the Greeks but those of the Indians and the Persians as well. More importantly, they used these basic teachings as a starting point from which to launch a mass revolution in education that progressed in the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258 A.D.). During the Abbasid period, thousands of mosque schools were established throughout the Arab empire and the subjects of study were increased to include *hadith* (the science of tradition), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), philology, poetry, rhetoric and others. In the tenth century, in Baghdad alone there were an estimated 3,000 mosques. In the 14 century, Alexandria had some 12,000 mosques, all of which played an important role in education.

Other sources for defining CE were found in recent Egyptian writings. For example, Rayan (1993)⁵ defined CE as "the set of values that build the individual's loyalty in serving its country to the extent to the self-sacrifice when needed". Mahmoud (1997)⁶ defined it as a process that imparts a "set of values, principles, and trends that influence a student's personality in a way to encourage him/her [in] reacting positively, understanding his/her rights, [and] obligations toward his/her society. And that builds his/her capacity in thinking appropriately in different situations." Hamed (2001)⁷ explained that CE is "a set of characteristics and attributes that...create in students the capacity to bear responsibility, participation, mutual collaboration between two parties, acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to solve problems [in] their society [with] objective and scientific approaches, and [practice of] critical thinking...on contemporary and controversial issues that face their society".

In international research, a significant study undertaken by Purta-Torney⁸ in twenty-four countries from around the world indicated a universal consensus among educators and scholars on the main themes of CE. These scholars conceived CE as a teaching approach that should be "cross disciplinary, participative, interactive, related to life, conducted in a non-authoritarian environment,

⁴ Retrieved from www.middleeastnews.com/intoarab101.html

⁵ Rayan, Fekry Hassan.(1993)."Al Tadrīs Wa Ahdafouh, Ossosouh, Assalibouh, Takween Nataegahou, Wa Tatbeekatouh". (Teaching, its objectives, principles, evaluation of its results, and applications). Cairo: World of Books.p.3.

⁶ Mahmoud,Gamal El Din Ibrahim.(1977)."Takweem Athar Manhag Al Derassat Al-Igtimaeya Lel Saf Al-Awal Al Eadady Fi Tanmiyat Al Mowatanna Lada Al Talamiz".(The Evaluation of the Impact of Social Studies Curriculum of First Preparatory Schools in Developing Citizenship Values in Students). Faculty of Girls, Cairo: Ain Shams University.p.9.

⁷ Shaaban Hamed, Nadia."Tatweer Manaheg Al Taeleem Le Tanmiyat Al-Mowatanna Fi Al-Alfiya Al Thalessa Lada Tolab Be Al Marhala Al Thanaweya".(The Development of Schools Curricula for the Promotion of Citizenship in the Third Millenium in Secondary Schools).(2005) Cairo: The National Centre for Educational Research and Development.p.150.

⁸ Torney-Purta, Judith; Schwille, John; Amadeo, Jo-Ann.(1999).Civic education across countries: Twenty-four national case studies from the IEA Civic Education Project. International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Retrieved July 27, 2007, from http://www.eriCEgov/ERICDOCS/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_o1/0000019b/80/17/9f/8f.pdf.

cognizant of the challenges of societal diversity and co-constructed with parents and the community (and non-government organizations) as well as the school.

One can conclude from the literature on CE that there is no uniform definition of CE. Two reasons are highlighted here that explain this fact. First, differences in definitions are due to the differences in the administrative and political contexts in which CE programs are implemented; second, they are due to the differences in goals and purpose for which CE programs were initially planned.

One can observe however that most definitions in Western literature have related classroom teaching to the outside world. The study of Torney-Purta (2002) on CE in twenty-four countries further supports this observation. It asserted that in the West, even in cases where civic skills were taught in theory only, or contradicted real life situations, Western students were taught how to think critically about them. Contrary to the Western literature, scholars from the Middle East focused on the pedagogical aspects of building citizens' civic capacities within the classroom and school settings. Unfortunately, they have done so in most cases with little or no reference to what was going in the outside world.

Approaches to Implementing Civic Education

Policy makers and educators found out that implementing CE programs was more challenging in practice than formulating them in theory. For example, Torney-Purta et.al (2001)⁹ research indicated that among the twenty four countries there has not been universal success in any country in formulating programs that optimized the possibility of achieving CE goals. Moreover, scholars claimed that this limitation was due to the inadequate attention given to the political and historical factors unique to each country especially in the case of developing countries.

Relationship of Civic Education to Political Contexts

The modern history indicates the interrelationship between politics and CE. For example, Davies (2000) explains that education for citizenship becomes significant as governments are struggling in a context of globalization and because they "fear the threats to the legitimacy of their nations". Countries like Australia, America and the United Kingdom have included civic courses in schools and in universities since the 1950s. In America, the federal government has provided increasing support for civic education. This policy trend is approached mainly by integrating courses in law, government, constitution, extra-curricular activities, community service activities and by developing students' civic skills in general.

In the Middle East, scholars have prompted the attention of policy makers and educational planners to the importance of building the civic values of young people for better economic and political development. For example in Egypt, civic education has become a frequent issue included in parliament's discussions as well as the focus of presidential speeches¹⁰ and mass media programs. Proponents of CE have especially drawn the attention to the importance of teaching civics in public schools. They claimed that such education is necessary to confront the growing threats and proliferation of extremist groups in Egypt (Magdi, 2006).

⁹ Torney-Purta, Judith et al (2001), What democracy means to ninth graders?. Retrieved June 6, 2006 ,from <http://www.wam.umd.edu/~iea/>

¹⁰In February 2005, President Mubarak responded to Egyptian calls for political reform by advocating the ruling NDP programs for citizenship/civic education.

A third significant factor that urged policy makers to rethink CE in Egypt was due to international pressures from donor agencies. Most often financial aids coming from the World Bank, USAID or the UNDP have required quality learning that included interactive and democratic teaching styles. Moreover, policy makers have to secure funds to sustain human development projects needed in the country. It is argued that this development would not take place unless Egypt conforms to recent international indicators of development. Such indicators are essentially democratic in nature. The United Nations Development (UNDP) Report (2004,p.34) asserts that "The purpose of development is to enlarge all human choices, not just income, and one of its five essential components of the human development paradigm is empowerment". It is therefore evident that civic education has become more of an option to the government of Egypt and to the ruling National Democratic Party¹¹.

Relationships of School Curricula to Political Values

Civic Education has been strongly influenced by the political values prevailing in specific times of nations' histories. The literature on colonialism provides striking examples on how politics manipulated school curricula to promote certain values. For example, during the British colonization of Egypt in the early 20th century, curriculum and textbooks syllabi expressed the superiority of the imperial culture. Colonialism was portrayed as generously bringing the benefits of civilization to end tyranny and chaos (Hammad, 2002)¹². However, in the post-colonial period the messages changed but the influence of a dominant ideology remained. Examples from other African countries such as Tanzania indicate that syllabi have had a clear socialist tone. While in Nigeria, given the historical experience of civil war based on ethnicity, there was an overwhelming priority given to issues of unifying the nation. In South Africa, before 1994, and the then Rhodesia, school textbooks reflected the racist forms of government in power. In post-independence Zimbabwe school history textbooks took on a distinctly Marxist tone (Rakha, 2001).

School Curricula Under the Egyptian Revolution

Since the Egyptian revolution of 1952, social studies textbooks have perpetuated a different set of values. These included social justice, equity, and socialist democratic values. During the 1960s, school curricula, especially that of history and geography, continued to promote the achievements of the Egyptian revolution. In fact, many authors best described schools during the early periods of the revolution by indoctrination. The latter has in many cases deliberately falsified and ignored counter viewpoints in order to strengthen a socialist democratic ideology in the syllabi of history textbooks. Meanwhile, this process of indoctrination was supported by whole school and classroom organization that was authoritarian in nature.

Following the Egyptian revolution, schools continued to nurture an environment that discouraged students' participation, questioning and independent thought, however to a lesser extent than during colonialism (Bradley, 2000)¹³. With the expansion of public education in the eighties, CE was overlooked. Schools and universities were preoccupied with educating the largest possible number of

¹¹ Opponents to recent NDP policies for promoting citizenship/civic education claim that these programs are ambitious and unrealistic. They call for serious constitutional amendments to affect it especially with respect to the undemocratic portions of the 1971 constitution governing presidential selection and prerogatives. They argue that a citizenship/democratic curriculum cannot be taught in an environment that is anti democratic.

¹² Arif, Nasr M. Hammad. (2002). *The disenchantment of political development: Epistemes, cultures, and policies*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America.

¹³ Cook, Bradley J. (2000). *Political culture and educational control in Egyptian public policy*. *Middle East Affairs Journal*, 6 (3-4), 31-53.

the public. In fact, the expansion in school capacities was prioritized over the quality of education at this stage. Students lacked opportunities to learn more of citizenship and political values because of inflated classrooms and increased number of students. Consequently, educators gave less attention to citizenship education. The latter was mainly taught across the hidden and the written curricula of all school disciplines (Khalek, 2004)¹⁴. In most cases, it was taught across social studies, sciences, Arabic language and religion. Currently, the continuous expansion in public education raises educators' concerns over the feasibility of implementing recent government programs for civic education. Meanwhile, educators expressed their concerns over limited funds and resources. They explained that civic education requires specialized teaching techniques such as role playing, simulation, problem solving, innovative thinking and use of information technology.

School Curricular Under Anwar El Sadat

Under Anwar El Sadat, schools and universities witnessed an era of openness to the outside world. School curricula was changed especially to assert values of unity amongst Middle East countries but with an emphasis on the role of Egypt as the leader in Arab nation building. Egypt's victory in 6th of October War against Israel marked a shift in the content of school curricula. The latter stressed the values of peace and dialogue. Geography textbooks advocated such concepts as a means to claim back Egypt's lost territories in Sinai. In addition, the curricula highlighted the role of dialogue in accomplishing the Camp David Peace agreement with Israel and the return of Taba and to the Egyptian authorities. Further significant shifts took place in history curriculum. The latter reflected values of patriotism, pride and Egyptian cultural identity. All of which were the main themes that governed public school textbooks in general.

School Curricular Under Hosni Mubarak

In 1981 under President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, history and geography textbooks took the name of "Social Studies". These included new themes on citizenship and civic rights, human rights, globalization, children and women rights, political awareness, roles of non-government organizations, and meaning of democracy. To support further these themes, a recent cabinet committee was formed in 2006 upon the President's directives to set plans for citizenship education through other societal means such as media and non-governmental organizations. In fact, the cabinet committee has issued a significant report that included the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) vision on implementing citizenship programs. Many commentators observed that this report was comprehensive, yet it has neglected schools as leading institutions in this process. Most educators and think tanks agreed that this report was controversial in nature. Moreover, they raised doubts over the feasibility of implementing CE and citizenship programs in public schools. They explained that there were significant administrative and political constraints that were addressed in this report. They emphasized that these constraints represent real obstacles that would impede schools from implementing these programs. Particularly, they questioned the ability of the current political context in Egypt to accommodate these programs. An interview was conducted with a focus group comprising fifteen persons from this think tank to investigate further the controversy over CE implementing CE programs in public schools. Before highlighting the major findings of these interviews, we will attempt in the following section to throw light on the process of administering school curricula in general, and of integrating citizenship values into the national curricula specifically.

¹⁴ Youssef Saad, Abdel Khalek. (2004). Citizenship and its promotion among students in pre-university education: A comparative analysis. Cairo: The National Center for Educational Research and Development.

The Management of National Curricula

There are three main public institutions situated within the organizational chart of the Ministry of Education, which are involved in curricula planning, writing, editing, and evaluations. These are the Center for Curriculum Development and Educational Materials, the National Center for Examinations and Educational Evaluation, and the National Center for Educational Research and Development. The latter is practically the only authority that gives decisions over curricula matters amongst many other responsibilities. In addition to centralized decision making over these matters, duplication and overlapping in functions appear to be a major constraint. In fact, the Center for Curriculum Development and Educational Materials, and the National Center For Educational Research and Development perform the same functions. Ironically, three Ministers have been appointed between 2000 and 2006 as Ministers of Education but this overlapping remained unchanged under their leaderships¹⁵. The MOE is considered the largest and most complex in the Egyptian bureaucracy (Albert, 1992). It oversees the admission and evaluation of students; the recruitment, training, and placement of teachers; the development of curriculum; the preparation and distribution of textbooks and other teaching materials; the provision of buildings and equipment; the establishment of educational policies and practices; as well as daily supervision of schools and administrative offices. Because of its large work force, the MOE has the largest budget of any ministry. The MOE is into two main divisions: the Central Offices (diwan), located in the ministry buildings in Cairo; and the provincial governorates (Muhafazah), each of which has a directorate (mudirryah) responsible for educational affairs. In general, the Central Offices are responsible for the formulation of educational policies at the national level, while the mudiriyahs and their sub-divisions are responsible for the implementation of those policies at the regional and local levels. MOE officials, when discussing the relationship between the diwan and the mudiriyahs, are fond of saying, “centralized planning, but decentralized implementation”.

Several attempts were made to assess the capacity of the MOE to carry out educational reform as designed by policy makers. Probably, the most significant one was conducted in the late nineties by a team of Egyptian and American educators. The team gave a blunt assessment of the bureaucracy’s role in Egyptian education: “The Education Reform cannot be implemented without radical change in bureaucratic structure and practice”. Subsequently, educational planners will have to address the various institutional, financial aspects of implementing civic education programs. Among other issues they will have to take into consideration are the high illiteracy (around 30%), inadequate school resources, and overloaded class capacity. 16. Interviews with key MOE officials revealed other significant facts that are underlined below.

The Process of Integrating Citizenship Education into School Curricula: Major Findings from the Interviews

A focus group formed from educational planners, teachers, school principals, and researchers in curriculum development was held to elucidate aspects related to the conception of CE as well as to the challenges of its implementation in public schools. Characteristics of the focus group are shown in Table 1.

¹⁵ This overlapping was due to the establishment of the Center for Curriculum Development and Educational Materials

¹⁶ The World Bank comments on the quality of education in developing countries “Quality lags quantity, children enroll in school but don’t always learn. Advancement in primary school completion has been rapid and encouraging in many countries. Yet cross-country evaluations suggest improvement in cognitive skills has often not kept pace. Quantity and quality in education and health need to proceed in tandem. More effort is needed to monitor outcomes (especially student learning)”.

Table 1. Characteristics of the focus group

Position	Experience	Qualifications	Number	Affiliation
Authors of social studies textbooks	10 years	Sociology Education Psychology	4	MOE
Curriculum development specialists	6 years	History Geography Applied sciences	2	the National Center for Educational Research and Development at the MOE
School principals	12 years	Maths History of education	3	MOE
Senior teachers	8 years	Social studies Maths Sciences	6	MOE

Members were specifically asked about meanings of CE and challenges of its implementation in public schools. The group reported that civic values are diffused in the whole school curricula and not confined to one school subject. According to the MOE, there are eight core values of citizenship education should be taught to students throughout the three stages of the middle school. The process of integrating these core values undergoes several steps until all of them are gradually incorporated into the curricula of all disciplines. The core values are explained in detail in the section that includes the review of social studies curricula. To start with, the process of incorporating these values goes as follows:

Planning: starts with identifying concepts that authors and editors of textbooks- in collaboration with MOE officials- would like to include;

Themes of CE are then arranged in sequence from simple concepts to more sophisticated ones;

Simpler concepts are selected to be taught to primary phases (for example, protection of environment, services provided by the district, traffic rules, district officials duties, and so forth);

More complex and abstract concepts (such a democracy, freedom, voting) are designed to be taught in advanced school phases such as in secondary levels;

In the following stage, curricula planners (nominated by the MOE from distinguished senior teachers and textbook authors) meet together to decide which concepts are most suitable to include in their specific subjects. These planners progress from simple values to concepts that are more abstract. In other words, curricula planners have to take into consideration the target educational stage¹⁷.

¹⁷ Contemporary Issues in the Curriculum. (2001). Center for Curriculum & Instructional Materials Development, Cairo, Egypt. P.7-9.

The process ends with what is called by the MOE officials by the general outline or ‘conceptual framework for citizenship education in public schools’.

Concepts of the Focus Group on Civic Education

Members of the focus group were asked about their own definitions of CE (Table 2). Group members held diverse views on the concept of citizenship within education. For example, the key authors of social studies curriculum perceived it as teaching citizenship and democratic values. In contrast, the majority of respondents (12 out of 15) explained that it consists of teaching students about morals and ethical behavior. Three respondents mentioned that it includes political and civic teaching. Out of the fifteen, nine teachers reported that it is about promoting patriotism through history and geography teaching.

Table 2. Respondents’ views on civic education

Respondents	Comments	%
Authors of social studies curriculum	Teaching citizenship and democratic values	4
Teachers	It consists of teaching students about morals and ethical behavior	7
School principals	Teaching students on ethical behavior	5
Curriculum specialist	Includes political and civic teaching	3
Social studies teachers	Promoting patriotism through history and geography teaching	9
Teachers’ views on the conceptual framework designed by MOE	Not really clear	10
Class discussions led by teachers	Avoided talking about political in classroom	11

When asked about what they thought of the conceptual framework designed by MOE for CE that they were supposed to implement in the class, most teachers said the framework was not clear to them and reported that they avoided talking about political issues during classroom discussions. In addition, teachers reported that students are more interested to learn other subjects, such as math, science and physics. Furthermore, they added they were themselves not clear on the meaning and purposes of civic or citizenship programs in public schools.

The outcomes of these interviews have prompted the researcher’s attention to review the content of social studies curricula. A sample of school textbooks taught on the national level was selected and analyzed. The purpose of this process was twofold: first, to examine the core civic values projected in the textbooks; and second, to compare and contrast these values with the ones identified by the UNDP as core values of teaching civics worldwide.

Review of Social Studies Curricula

As stated in a major publication¹⁸ issued in 2003 by MOE, citizenship education is based on teaching students eight core principles or values. These are: 1) Civic Education (duties and rights); 2) Life Skills (ability to negotiate, to cooperate, tolerance of others, and diversity in opinions); 3) Government System (democracy, constitution, People's Council, elections, citizens' role in elections); 4) Preserving Heritage (Arab and Egyptian heritage, Islamic and Coptic heritage, Arab and Egyptian values and traditions); 5) Egypt's Relations with Other Countries (on the Arab level, the Islamic level, the African level, and the global level); 6) Non-Government Organizations (conditions to establish NGOs, the role of NGOs); 7) Arab Organizations and Institutions (League of Arab States, Arab Common Market, Islamic Conference Organization, African Unity Organization; and 8) International Organization and Institutions (United Nations, World Health Organization, and International Labour Organization).

On one hand, the review of the textbooks indicated that, largely, the MOE definition of citizenship education conforms to the one given by UNDP, though it differs from it in two aspects. First, the MOE definition does not stress the rule of law, equality/social justice, and political rights. Second, it encompasses the UNDP definition in a way to emphasize the diversity in the Egyptian culture and identity. For example, social studies curriculum relates Egypt to the rest of the Arab, Christian, Muslim, and African worlds respectively. In addition, it relates the country to the global community.

On the other hand, the review of school textbooks revealed that despite the positive aspects of MOE officials' conception about CE, school curricula was ill written and misrepresented. The eight core citizenship values identified by MOE on paper were in fact inadequately reflected in the textbooks. The analysis was based on calculating frequencies of repeated words that related to CE core values. To calculate a percentage, total number of words in selected chapters were counted then divided by the number of terms indicating civic values. The results of the analysis of the content of social studies textbooks are highlighted in Table 3.

The analysis in fact indicates that teaching about citizenship was the least value represented in the text. Meanwhile, environment, and tourist attractions were the most emphasized concepts. This could be possibly explained by the fact that the editors of the texts were much concerned about raising students' awareness of the importance of tourism as a prime source of income in Egypt¹⁹. While it is true that tourism constitutes a major source of income in Egypt, the curriculum has reflected a major political concern over the stability of such source by stressing the importance of protecting tourists. The overemphasis on this value has marginalized other significant citizenship values.

¹⁸ Mubarak and education (in Arabic).(2003). Cairo: Egypt. The Ministry of Education. Department of Textbooks.

¹⁹The curriculum of social studies reflected government concerns over tourist attacks earlier in 1998 in Luxor, Upper Egypt.

Table 3. Frequencies of terms reflecting citizenship values

Term	Freq.	%
Citizens	25	47.5
Authority	35	81.3
National symbols(the national flag + 26 flags for provinces)	51	92.5%
Environment protection	18	78.4%
Tourism importance	38	92.3%
Minority rights (women& children)	15	31%
Social responsibility (citizens' duties toward community)	9	15%
Cultural diversity	39	93.6%
Egyptian Identity	26	48.7
Egypt to the other Arabic countries	21	32.8%
To the international community	16	23%
To African countries	11	14.4%
To the Muslim world	24	34.9%
To Mediterranean countries	10	12%
Role of government in service provision	90	99.8%
Personal health and hygiene	16	20%
Rule of law	2	0.5%
Social justice	3	0.2%
How to access governors	2	3%
Political participation (system of elections & voting)	1	0.5%

Source: Selected sample of social studies textbooks, middle level public schools, 2007.

The third and final level of analysis compared MOE definition with that of the UNDP. The analysis revealed the following significant facts:

Legal awareness was proposed in the curriculum as a component of raising students' awareness about the legal system of governing their locality. However, this component was inadequately represented, and lacked other dimensions, such as the legal rights of citizens, their satisfaction about the local services, their right to complain, and channels to complain.

The rule of law made no mention of punishment against breaking the laws, or against violence, or disorder.

Citizenship did not include the duties of citizens towards their communities (thus promoting placidity and submission to the State). Meanwhile, it overemphasized the dependence of citizens on the government provision of goods and services, and neglected individuals' initiatives in general.

The flag of each governorate (province), local famous songs, and physical characteristics of local citizens, were adequately represented. Nevertheless, editors of the textbooks have neglected to give a background to examples of democratic practices that took place in the contemporary history of these localities, such as revolutionary acts under the British occupation, and workers strikes or individuals' grievances.

The concept of children and women rights was superficially addressed. It was limited to explaining their rights to access amusement parks, and health services for example.

In general, political participation was not projected as one the important values of human rights. Nowhere in the textbook, was there mention about other forms of institutions other than the government. More significantly, textbooks are alienated from current problems and issues such as Palestine/Israel conflict, conflict in Iraq or September 11th.

Cultural diversity: Egypt was identified within the Arab, African, Islamic, Mediterranean, countries respectively, which marks an awareness of the diversified culture of Egypt.

State authority: An overemphasis on the word "authority" compared to the word "citizens" in the textbooks (81,3% and 47,5% respectively) indicating state dominance over individuals .

Role of government in service provision: an overemphasis on the role of government in service provision to the neglect of the role of the private sector (100%). Moreover, achievements in various fields, such as agriculture, industry, large projects are described as government achievements.

There is a stress on the role of Egyptians in ancient history more than modern history of Egypt.

The textbooks also projected some stereotypes of women, and neglected the representation of minorities such the Nubians living in the areas around Aswan Dam in the south of Egypt.

The curricula did not tackle postcolonial experiences in contemporary Middle East or the world, such as in Libya, and Algeria against the French, or in Palestine against Israel, nor in Cuba or in Vietnam against Japanese and Americans. Moreover, in history textbooks the general image about the country was that it fell under the attack of foreigners with little reference to local struggle against such forces.

Administrative and Financial Aspects

MOE faces several daunting missions. First, besides its responsibilities of managing and supervising schools it also assumes the administration of curricula matters including content planning and production of school textbooks. While doing so it runs into the risk of poorly planned and outdated

textbooks²⁰. Meanwhile, the MOE is considered amongst the most highly centralized ministries in Egypt. Policy makers, educators and high officials in fact are even more conservative over curricula matters. With the expected changes to reform school curricula to conform with civic concepts, one has to think about the magnitude of the task as well as the cost that the MOE has to incur to produce new textbooks with new curriculum fitting into the objectives of teaching civics. In fact, most school textbooks remain unchanged for these typical reasons. In many instances, school textbooks continue to bear the names of the original authors and editors who passed away so to avoid incurring the cost of printing new ones²¹.

The second, major administrative constraint that faces the preparation of well-designed curricula - think tanks claim ²² – is the inaccessibility to the process itself. The latter has been dominated by a group of authors for several years. Under the Minister of Education appointed in 2000 and who remained in his post until 2004, the process has become more transparent. Most of public schools are underfunded and government expenditure on public education is increasingly challenging efforts for reforms. Despite of the inflation in public expenditure on education, it is considered low when compared with international ratios. Table 4 shows the increase in the rate of public expenditure in Egyptian pre-university education. It indicates that most of the education cost is spent actually on teachers and staff salaries beside other operational and administrative matters.

Table 4 The Evolution in Government Expenditure on Pre-School Education

Year	Total Exp.	Exp. On Pre-univers. Edu	Current Exp.	%
2000/01	10,535	6,773	4,792	71,0
2001/02	18,243	12,221	8,971	87,4
2002/03	728	13,337	9,847	86,9
2003/04	---	15,192	1,829	87,1

Source: Youssef Saad, Abdel Khalek.(2005).Sustainable Participation in Education for Addressing Problems of Finance Egyptian Education in Light of the Experience of the United States of America. The 6th Scientific Participation and Development of Higher Education in the Knowledge Society. Cairo: The National Center for Educational Research and Development.

Table 4 indicates that most of the public expenditure appropriated for education is spent on teachers' salaries and general administration of the MOE, the remaining part is spent on the educational services, facilities, laboratories, equipment, asset transfers. Hence, the actual expenditure per student is reduced to the minimum percentage of public expenditure.

²⁰ In fact, as revealed by the study, several social studies textbooks still bear the names of faculty members – as authors. Ironically many of them have already passed away some years ago.

²¹ Social studies textbook currently taught at 4th primary school were edited by an author who passed away in 2001-2002

²² Several researchers and key staff in the National Center for Curriculum Research and Development explained the ambiguity of the process of selecting the best proposal for school curricula. Theoretically, this process should start with an advertisement in Al-Ahram official newspaper. Second, proposals submitted for each school subject should be screened. Respondents commented that this process should be made more transparent. See Al-Ahram Weekly, 21 - 27 September 2006 Issue No. 813 for more details on the subject.

Table 5 indicates the MOE expenditure on printing school textbooks.

Table 5 The Increase in the Numbers of School Textbooks printed by the Ministry of Education

Book Type	1991-1992		2003-2004	
	Number of editions	Number of printed text	Number of editions	Number of printed texts
Textbooks	1255	160548150	2304*	420441044
Tests	19	1849500	161	3814850
Total	1274	162397650	2465	424255894

Source: Mubarak and Education.(2001) .Cairo: The Ministry of Education. The Department of Textbooks Production,p.102

*This figure does not include the printed textbooks for language schools, kindergarten, Al-Azhar and schools for blind.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis indicates that the content of social studies curriculum reflects social and political values since the Egyptian revolution up to the present time under President Mubarak. The curriculum has evolved from promoting a socialist democratic ideology focused on Arab nationalism to an entrepreneurial one focused on Egyptian identity, and lately to a curriculum focused on globalization and diversity.

While the conceptual framework adopted by the MOE conforms-by and in large- with UNDP core principles of CE. It does not stress the importance of human and political rights either in instruction, in the hidden or written curricula. Moreover, the analysis points that several citizenship values – though mentioned in the MOE conceptual guideline, were poorly represented in the textbooks.

The study concludes with four main reasons for these limitations. First, many of these problems are attributable to a centralized management system of school curricula. This has resulted in excluding views from non-government sector, politicians, business sector, religious leaders, and inputs from other sectors than the government. Second, it is due to the overlapping responsibilities between the MOE Divisions concerned with curricula matters. Third, it is due to a lack among educators and practitioners on the meaning of CE. Third, and more significantly is due to a political environment that struggles for more democratization.

Therefore, a clear definition of both the concept and the practice of citizenship should supersede any curriculum reform. Unless policy makers and educators consider these two critical questions, the notion of citizenship education in Egyptian public schools will remain simply ink on paper.

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