



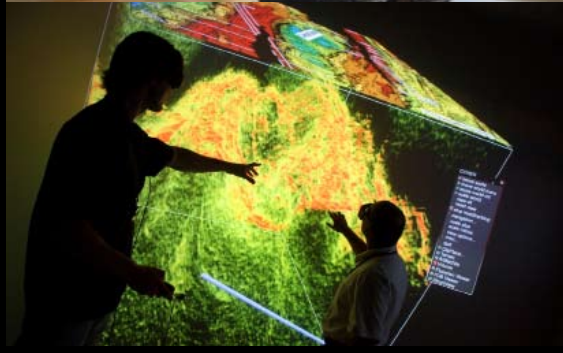
Viewpoints Special Edition



Higher Education and the Middle East: Empowering Under-served and Vulnerable Populations

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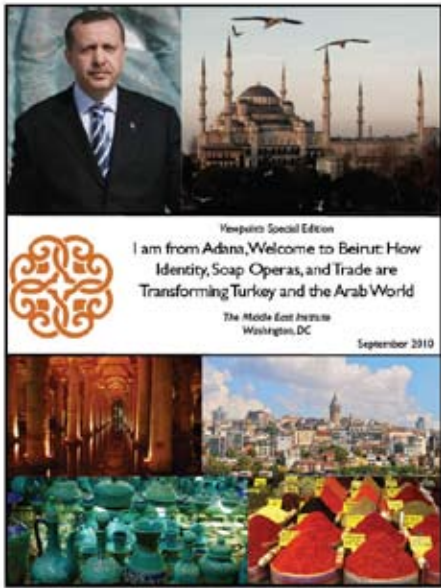
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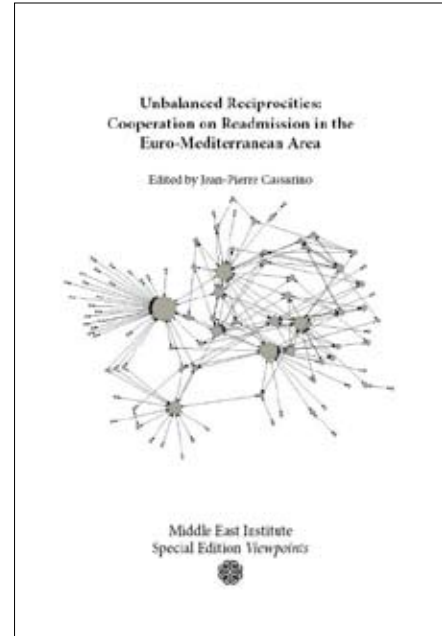
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Higher Education and the Middle East: Empowering Under-served and Vulnerable Populations

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Introduction

This second edition of the MEI *Viewpoints* series on Higher Education and the Middle East focuses on Empowering Under-served and Vulnerable Populations.

The nine essays collected in this volume explore a wide range of issues, including whether higher rates of participation in tertiary educational institutions by traditionally under-represented groups alone constitute progress; what the reasons and costs are of denying access to higher education to expatriate workers and their children; why “women of achievement” receive less recognition than they deserve; how creative social entrepreneurship can make higher education affordable; and what the benefits are to the implementation of teacher-centered versus learner-centered practices and the barriers to implementing them.

The Dearth of Qatari Men in Higher Education: Reasons and Implications

Sheikha Abdulla Al-Misnad

That education is a major force for socialization is indisputable. Education has the power to shape views of the world, to challenge long-held beliefs, and, therefore, to impact the social order. Its influences on the course of a society's development are far-reaching, from the public realm of employment patterns and economic development to the private sphere of marriage and childbearing.

Despite some broad trends worldwide, it can be argued that patterns of educational attainment as well as the impact of education on development have not been uniform across (or even within) societies. Systems of education do not exist in a vacuum. They interact in complex ways with the cultural, economic, ideological, and political forces in any given society yielding outcomes that are context-specific.

In the Arabian Gulf, the creation of modern public education systems was strongly tied to the discovery of oil and to the subsequent rise in oil revenues,¹ which brought tremendous wealth to countries with small national populations. Public education systems in the Gulf states expanded to catch up with the economic growth brought about by the new-found oil wealth. Today, several major American and European universities have either opened branch campuses or forged other forms of partnerships and associations with universities in the Gulf. The effectiveness of education systems in the Middle East, including the Gulf states, in preparing their citizens for a knowledge-based economy, has been debated in the first volume of this series,² with some optimistic outlooks and others that are less so. Undoubtedly there have been very significant developments in higher education in the Gulf, but there are still many more challenges to be addressed in terms of the quality of education delivered and its suitability for the unique needs of Gulf societies and for the needs of the global labor market in more general terms.

This brief essay sheds light on a phenomenon common to many Gulf states, namely the gender gap in education, especially in higher education. Mention of a gender gap in most, if not all, Arab and Islamic societies usually evokes the notion of female disadvantage and of male domination. This essay identifies one vital area where this is not the case. Simply stated, men are almost absent from post-secondary education. This trend, though not new, has serious implications for the labor markets in the Gulf states



Professor Sheikha Abdulla Al-Misnad assumed the presidency of the University of Qatar in 2003, and was appointed Minister in 2010. She is a Member of the Board of Directors of Qatar Foundation and a member of the Supreme Educational Council. At the international level, Professor Al-Misnad was selected as a member of the United Nations University Council in June 2004. President Al-Misnad received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Education from the University of Qatar, as well as a Diploma in Education. She was later granted the Doctor of Philosophy in Education from the University of Durham in the United Kingdom. She was conferred the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Civil Law from Durham University in January 2008.

1. G. Bahjat, "Education in the Gulf Monarchies: Retrospect and Prospect," *International Review of Education*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (1999), pp. 127-136.

2. The Middle East Institute, "Higher Education and the Middle East: Serving the Knowledge-based Economy" (July 2010), <http://www.mei.edu/Portals/0/Publications/Education%20VP.pdf>.

and requires a careful strategy to address it. Although the trends are similar in many Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, this discussion is limited to Qatar.

DEMOGRAPHIC REALITIES AND DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Human capital is an essential ingredient in the social and economic development formula. With a globalized economy and an increasingly internationalized labor market, the need for an educated and skilled workforce is arguably greater than ever before.

Yet demographic realities and development requirements are not always aligned. Nowhere is the gap more apparent than in the Gulf states which, though blessed with energy resources, suffer from a severe imbalance in their demographic make-up. In some Gulf states, nationals comprise no more than a fifth to a quarter of the total population, making substantial reliance on a non-national workforce unavoidable.

In Qatar, the small size of the national population makes it highly unlikely that the thousands of jobs created as a result of the oil and gas-driven economic and infrastructural boom can be sufficiently filled without extensive reliance on an expatriate population. In 2009, the population growth rate for nationals was 3% compared to 15% among non-Qataris.³ Challenging as this demographic fact may be, it puts into sharp focus the need to maximize the contribution of the national population. Stated differently, Qatar cannot afford anything less than the full contribution of its men and women to fulfill the ambitious development plan, known as Qatar National Vision 2030, outlined by His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Emir.

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EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

The government's commitment to education and to the creation of a knowledge-based economy has been backed by significant financial investments (19.6% of government spending goes to education).⁴ As a result of this commitment, literacy rates have risen steadily and are today well above the regional average for both males and females in the adult and youth populations.⁵ Similarly, enrollment in primary education is almost universal and is again well above the regional average.

As with other Gulf states, the discovery of oil and the revenues that followed were closely tied to the development of the modern education system in the mid 1950s. Until then, the predominant form of education was the *Kuttab* [religious

3. Qatar Statistics Authority Website: Qatar Information Exchange, http://www.qix.gov.qa/portal/page/portal/qix/subject_area/Statistics?subject_area=176.

4. UNESCO Institute for Statistics–UIS 2010. UIS Statistics in Brief: Education in Qatar 2008.

5. UNESCO Institute for Statistics–UIS 2010. UIS Statistics in Brief: Education in Qatar 2008.

teaching based on the *Qur'an*].⁶ What was remarkable was that the opening of a primary school for boys would be followed only a few years later by a similar school for girls. The expected resistance from clergy and from a conservative society was not massive enough to deter female education. Furthermore, the government provided financial incentives for families to enroll both their sons and daughters in schools.

Higher education followed shortly thereafter with the establishment of the national university in 1973, which started out as a College of Education enrolling both men and women. Since then, there has been nothing short of a revolution in the quality and quantity of higher education offerings in Qatar. With over 8,000 students, Qatar University presently comprises seven colleges and a number of research centers.⁷ The alumni of Qatar University are some of the most influential figures in Qatari society. In 2003, the University embarked on a comprehensive reform initiative which transformed its academic, administrative, and infrastructural sectors and introduced measures to enhance the quality of its graduates in response to labor market needs.

In addition to the national university, Education City was established in 1995 by HH the Emir to expand the post-secondary offerings available in Qatar and indeed for the region as a whole. Education City⁸ is a consortium of seven world-class US universities, where the fields of study available range from journalism, computer science, business administration, information systems, design, and international relations to medicine and engineering. The initiative has been heavily supported by the government in order to ensure the quality of education that is delivered.

In all, education reforms in Qatar, whether at the primary and secondary levels (which are beyond the scope of this essay) or at the post-secondary levels, can be considered the most comprehensive in the region.⁹

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THE GENDER GAP

Despite advances in educational attainment, and the more recent quantitative and qualitative improvements to the entire educational system, the Qatari education system has been suffering from a phenomenon that can be called “the missing boys.” Both in terms of enrollment and attainment, the education gap between men and women is a serious concern with ramifications not only for the labor market, but for broader sectors of society as well.

6. C. Stasz, E.R. Eide, and F. Martorell, *Post-Secondary Education in Qatar: Employer Demand, Student Choice, and Options for Policy*. RAND–Qatar Policy Institute (2007), <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG644/>.

7. Qatar University Office of Institutional Planning and Development, *Fast Facts 2009–10 Annual* (2010), http://www.qu.edu.qa/offices/oipd/documents/Home_Docs/Brochure_2009-10.pdf.

8. For detailed information on the universities and research centers comprising Education City, see <http://www.qf.org.qa/output/Page17.asp>.

9. G. Gonzalez, L.A. Karoly, L. Constant, H. Salem, and C.A. Goldman, *Facing Human Capital Challenges of the 21st Century: Education and Labor Market Initiatives in Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates*. RAND–Qatar Policy Institute (2008), http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG786.pdf.

The education deficit among Qatari males becomes apparent at the secondary school level.¹⁰ In 2008, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) at the level of secondary education was 1.12, up from 1.01 and 1.03 at the primary and preparatory levels, respectively.¹¹

At the level of post-secondary education, the gender gap becomes even more significant. Data from the 2004 Census showed that by the age of 25, there were only 46 Qatari men with university education for every 100 Qatari women with equal qualifications.¹² In fact, the gender ratio is so skewed that at Qatar University the 2008/2009 student body was 76% female.¹³ Incidentally, this trend of female domination at the university level has been going on since the inception of the University, although the ratio was slightly less skewed at 38% men and 62% women in 1973/1974.¹⁴ Even in terms of higher education scholarships, which include support for study at the Education City universities or abroad, the trend shows an increase in women who receive scholarships compared to men. In 2008/2009, 290 women enrolled compared to 170 men.¹⁵

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WHERE ARE THE MEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

There are two issues to consider when looking for men in higher education. First, the roots of the absence of men in higher education lie at the lower levels of the education system, where boys underperform compared to girls. Statistics from 2001/2002 showed that, by the end of the preparatory education level (age 16), Qatari boys were three times as likely as girls to drop out.¹⁶ The phenomenon of boys falling behind girls in school performance has been reported in other countries as well, including the United States, Britain, and Scandinavian countries.¹⁷ It has been suggested that problems with verbal skills and reading were the main deterrents for boys rather than girls. This may or may not be the specific case in Qatar, but it does draw attention to one area of research, which is to look carefully at how boys learn differently in order to devise context-specific strategies to keep them from under-performing and therefore leaving school.

The second issue is that incentives for higher education for men are weak. The public sector, which does not necessarily require a post-secondary degree, remains the single largest employer of Qatari nationals. It is the preferred choice for men (and women), as it is considered less competitive, more secure, financially comfortable, and prestigious.¹⁸ A survey

10. Labor Market Strategy Project, *Labor Market Strategy for the State of Qatar: Main Report*, December 29, 2005, p. 75.

11. Qatar Statistics Authority Website: Qatar Information Exchange, http://www.qix.gov.qa/portal/page/portal/qix/subject_area/Statistics?subject_area=199.

12. Labor Market Strategy Project, *Labor Market Strategy for the State of Qatar: Main Report*, December 29, 2005, p. 75.

13. Qatar University Office of Institutional Planning and Development, *Fast Facts 2009–10 Annual* (2010), http://www.qu.edu.qa/offices/oipd/documents/Home_Docs/Brochure_2009-10.pdf.

14. Labor Market Strategy Project, *Labor Market Strategy for the State of Qatar: Main Report*, December 29, 2005, p. 74.

15. Statistics from the Higher Education Institute, February 4, 2009.

16. Labor Market Strategy Project, *Labor Market Strategy for the State of Qatar: Main Report*, December 29, 2005, p. 72.

17. N. Kristof, "The Boys Have Fallen Behind," *The New York Times*, March 27, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/28/opinion/28kristof.html?scp=1&sq=kristof%20the%20boys%20are%20falling%20behind&st=cse>.

18. G. Gonzalez, L.A. Karoly, L. Constant, H. Salem, and C.A. Goldman, *Facing Human Capital Challenges of the 21st Century: Education*

of recent secondary school graduates found that males would much rather enroll in the police force or the military, which tend to be financially lucrative and secure careers.¹⁹ This preference persists despite the need for Qatari nationals in all occupations, whether in the public or private sector, as non-nationals presently dominate all occupation categories. The percentage of Qataris in the private sector does not exceed 5% despite policies designed to increase that number.

IMPLICATIONS OF GENDER GAPS IN EDUCATION ON EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS

The education differentials between men and women have implications on employment patterns in the labor force, where, on average, Qatari women have 3.4 more years of education than Qatari men.²⁰ Although women have historically had much lower labor force participation rates than men, the trend has been for the participation to increase over time. Between 1986 and 2004, Qatari female labor force participation rates almost doubled, from 14% to 30%. Furthermore, more young women are entering the private sector compared to young men because of their higher educational attainment, which makes them better suited for the needs of that sector.

The paradox and the real challenge for development in Qatar is that despite the need for Qatari nationals in all occupations in all sectors, young men tend to be particularly vulnerable to unemployment due to their lower educational attainment and their inadequate job market skills. Vocational training is one of the avenues that are being pursued for qualifying young Qatari men for specific technical jobs. In general however, vocational training tends to be perceived negatively in Arab societies.

Finally, educational differentials have effects that reverberate beyond the labor market and extend into the sphere of gender relations, including selection of marital partners and stability of marriages. The effect of educational differences between spouses has been shown to influence the initiation and stability of marriages in other settings, and this can be a particularly sensitive issue, given the existing demographic realities. Further empirical studies are needed in this area.

Between 1986 and 2004, Qatari female labor force participation rates almost doubled, from 14% to 30%.

POLICIES

Realizing the human capital challenges of Qatar, the state has initiated reforms in both the education sector, to better prepare graduates for employment, and in labor policies.²¹ However, their effectiveness has not yet been fully evaluated.

and Labor Market Initiatives in Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, RAND–Qatar Policy Institute (2008), http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG786.pdf).

19. F. Martorell, V. Nadareishvili, and H. Salem, *A Survey of Recent Qatari Secondary School Graduates: Methods and Results*, RAND–Qatar Policy Institute (2008).

20. Labor Market Strategy Project, *Labor Market Strategy for the State of Qatar: Main Report*, December 29, 2005, p. 45.

21. G. Gonzalez, L.A. Karoly, L. Constant, H. Salem, and C.A. Goldman, *Facing Human Capital Challenges of the 21st Century: Education and Labor Market Initiatives in Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates*, RAND–Qatar Policy Institute (2008), http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG786.pdf).

It remains to be seen whether they will be effective in harnessing the enormous potential that we are currently losing with men opting out of post-secondary education.

In the meantime, there is a need to understand better the real reasons why boys do not continue their enrollment in education and eschew post-secondary education. Part of the answer will definitely be found in the early stages of education. Research is needed on how boys learn in this specific context, their difficulties, and the most effective methods to help them improve their achievement and therefore not leave or fail out of school.

At another level, there is the issue of motivation which is very difficult to address. Jobs in the public sector should be made more competitive in terms of the qualifications and skills required, in order to motivate boys to gain higher levels of education. Attitudes towards vocational training need to be changed, as there is a need for a comprehensive and co-ordinated national plan for training human resources.

CONCLUSION

The gender gap in education in Qatar, beginning from the secondary school level and continuing to higher education is a serious phenomenon requiring intervention. The future development of Qatari society is at stake, and the resources are there to address this issue. The trends discussed here are not unique to Qatar and are shared by other GCC countries as well. Cooperation is needed in exchanging reforms and policies which appear promising in this regard.

Access to the University and Women's Participation in Higher Education in Egypt

Nagwa Megahed

The Arab Republic of Egypt is the largest country in North Africa in terms of population. In July 2007, its population was estimated to be more than 80.3 million, with a projected population of more than 84 million by 2010.¹ From 1996 to 2006, the proportion of males increased to 51%. Meanwhile, the average family size has declined to 4.18.² The total fertility rate (births per woman) has decreased from 3.9% in 1990–1995 to 2.9% in 2005–2010. The adult literacy rate during the period 1997–2007 is much higher for males (74.6%) than for females (57.8%).³ In addition, though the illiteracy rate for women over 15 years of age during the period 2003–2005 decreased, it was still far higher (43.8%) than for men (18.3%).



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Table 1: Illiteracy Rates (+15) during the Period 2003–2005 in Egypt

Year (as at January 1 st each year)	Males	Females
2003	22.0	47.0
2004	20.4	45.8
2005	18.3	43.8

Source: Chart from Egypt State Information Service, *Women in Education* (2009), <http://www.sis.gov.eg/En/Story.aspx?sid=2264>; Data from Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics.

This essay provides an overview of the higher education system in Egypt with a focus on students' access to universities and women's participation in higher education. The universities and higher education institutions in Egypt, as in other countries, accept students graduated from secondary schools. Therefore, understanding male and female access to university and higher education requires a thorough examination of the structure of the education system in Egypt.

1. UNDP Human Development Report, 2009, http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_EGY.html; and Egypt State Information Service, *Population* (2009), <http://www.sis.gov.eg/En/Story.aspx?sid=9>.

2. Egypt State Information Service, *Population* (2009), <http://www.sis.gov.eg/En/Story.aspx?sid=9>.

3. UNDP Human Development Report (2009), http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_EGY.html.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN EGYPT

The education system in Egypt is structured to begin at the primary level (six years), followed by three years of preparatory schooling; this constitutes basic/compulsory education for all Egyptian children.⁴ After completing grade nine and based on students' final scores in the Basic Education Certificate, students with higher scores join general secondary schools (a three-year program) while students with lower scores attend technical secondary schools (i.e., three-to-

Table 2: Structure of the Education System in Egypt

Age	Grade	Level	
22+	17+	University Education (4-, 5-, and 6-year programs)	Non-University Middle and Higher Technical Institutes (2-, 4-, and 5-year programs)
21	16		
20	15		
19	14		
18	13	General Secondary	Technical Secondary School (3-year)
17	12		
16	11		
15	10	(Basic) Preparatory Education	Technical Secondary School (5-year)
14	9		
13	8		
12	7		
11	6		
10	5		
9	4		
8	3	(Basic) Primary Education	
7	2		
6	1		
3,4,5			
		Pre-school	

Source: Nagwa Megahed, "Secondary Education Reforms in Egypt: Rectifying Inequality of Educational and Employment Opportunities," in C. Acedo, ed., *Secondary Education Reform Case Studies (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research [USAID-funded Improving Educational Quality Project], 2002), p. 54 (modified).*

five-year industrial, agriculture, or commercial programs).⁵ Graduates of secondary schools compete for admission to universities and other higher education institutes. There are 17 public universities, of which 11 are located in the Cairo, Alexandria, and Delta regions (in the north of Egypt), while only six universities are in the Upper Egypt regions (in the south). In addition, there are specialized institutes as well as a private higher education sector comprised of 15 universities. "The duration of study ranges from two years in middle technical institutes to four, five, or six years in

4. In 1984, attendance at preparatory (junior secondary) schools was made compulsory. As a result, increasing the number of teachers for basic education became a necessity. In 1988, the Primary Teacher Training Schools were transferred to the Basic Education Teacher Program in the education colleges at the university level. In upgrading primary teacher training schools from the secondary level to programs at the university level, the attempt was made to improve the quality and performance of primary school teachers and encourage the enrollment growth of such program.

5. Megahed, "Secondary Education Reforms in Egypt: Rectifying Inequality of Educational and Employment Opportunities," pp. 44–71.

university colleges and higher institutes. Master's and PhD degrees need at least two years and three years respectively to be rewarded.⁶ In parallel with the public education system, there is Al-Azhar (religious) education, which provides primary, preparatory, secondary, and university education. Al-Azhar institutes are spread out in different cities and regions of the country, serving diverse groups of the population.

UNEQUAL ACCESS TO THE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Secondary education is of crucial importance in the Egyptian education structure because its graduates compete for university admission or for work. According to the structure of the education system in Egypt, graduates of general secondary schools may attend university, while graduates of technical secondary schools may only attend non-university higher and middle institutes or proceed to the job market (in many cases remaining unemployed).⁷ This means that access to the university depends on enrollment in the general secondary schools with one exception: students graduating from three or five-year technical secondary school may apply to the university faculty appropriate to their curriculum.⁸ Technical secondary graduates must have obtained a high grade on their final examination and a supplementary examination may be required for admission into some faculties.⁹

As of the 2005–2006 school year, 56% of students were enrolled in technical secondary schools while 32.9% attended general secondary schools (see Table 3). Only 8.9% of the technical school graduates, however, were admitted to universities and higher education technical institutes, and just 1.9% to public universities.¹⁰ In contrast, over 80% of the general secondary school graduates entered the universities and higher education institutes, including 58.5% in public universities.¹¹ Clearly, there is unequal access to the university due not only to the dual/tracking system of secondary education but also to limited places available to its graduates at public universities in Egypt (see Table 4).

Table 3: Student Enrollment in Different Programs of Secondary Education

Program	General	Technical	Al-Azhar	Private	Total
Enrollment	1,145,174	1,961,162	279,963	94,015	3,480,314
Percentage	32.9	56.4	8	2.7	100

Source: Ministry of Education (2007), p. 280.

6. Ministry of Education, *National Strategic Plan for Pre-University Education Reform in Egypt, 2007-2008-2011-2012* (Cairo: Ministry of Education, 2007), p. 12.

7. Nagwa Megahed, "Secondary Education Reforms in Egypt: Rectifying Inequality of Educational and Employment Opportunities."

8. Graduates of five-year technical schools, if admitted to the university, are placed in the second year of the university program. Based on the five-year technical school curriculum, the first year includes theoretical and preparatory subjects that are similar to the subjects in the first year of the university level. For example, commercial graduates apply to certain faculties of commerce and industrial graduates apply to certain faculties of engineering.

9. The score of the final examination that would be accepted to enter the universities is determined annually. Each university proposes the number of new students (general and technical secondary school graduates) to be enrolled in each faculty according to its faculty and physical resources. The Supreme Council of Universities makes the final determination. See Nagwa Megahed, "Secondary Education Reforms in Egypt: Rectifying Inequality of Educational and Employment Opportunities."

10. Ministry of Education, *National Strategic Plan for Pre-University Education Reform in Egypt, 2007-2008-2011-2012*, p. 26.

11. Ministry of Education, *National Strategic Plan for Pre-University Education Reform in Egypt, 2007-2008-2011-2012*, p. 26.

Table 4: Student Enrollment in University and Higher Education based on the Type of Secondary Education Program

Higher Education	General Secondary (%)	Technical Secondary
Public Universities	58.5	1.9
Technical Colleges	6.1	3.6
Al-Azhar	0.1	–
Private Universities	0.4	0.002
Private Higher Institutes	13.8	2.7
Private Middle Institutes	1.7	0.7
Total	80.7	8.9

Source: Strategic Planning Unit, Ministry of Higher Education (2010), p. 26.

The female enrollment rate in secondary education reached 46.9% in technical schools and 51.9% in general secondary schools in the 2004–2005 school year, representing 48.8% of total enrollment in secondary education.¹² Gender disparity in education, however, is further influenced by the socioeconomic background of students. In poor and disadvantaged areas, according to the 2010 Egypt Human Development Report, “the twin problems of school dropouts and non-enrollment continue as a phenomenon that is mostly peculiar to poor girls, and reflects the persistence of gender disparities, with Upper Egypt [in the south] being the most disadvantaged region.”¹³ The following section examines women’s participation in higher education by regions and academic disciplines.

WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In her discussion of gender inequality and female opportunity to participate in post-secondary education in Africa, Assie-Lumumba explains that,

Even where enrollment ceased to be an issue decades ago, the boundaries between social groups have been moving, not disappearing, and the grounds for inequality have been mutating or shifting in terms of emphasis. For instance, the issue of unequal opportunity has moved from access to basic education to (a) post-secondary education, (b) the type of higher education institution attended, and (c) the disciplinary specialization that is characterized by the concentration of female students in humanities and social sciences and some specific sub-fields within the scientific disciplines.¹⁴

Egypt is no exception. Gender inequality in higher education is present in terms of male versus female enrollment rates

12. Ministry of Education, *National Strategic Plan for Pre-University Education Reform in Egypt, 2007-2008-2011-2012*, p. 274.

13. Egypt Human Development Report, *Youth in Egypt: Building Our Future* (2010), p. 7, <http://www.undp.org/Portals/0/EHDR%202010/NHDR%202010%20english.pdf>.

14. N’Dri Assie-Lumumba, *Women and Higher Education in Africa: Reconceptualizing Gender-Based Human Capabilities and Upgrading Human Rights to Knowledge* (Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire: PanAfrican Studies and Research Center in International Relations and Education for Development, 2007).

and women's representation by economically-advantaged versus disadvantage regions as well as fields of specialization. In recognition of gender inequality in higher education, the Strategic Planning Unit (SPU) at the Ministry of Higher Education in Egypt stated in its 2010 country report that "while there was a slight increase in women's enrollment in Higher Education between 2002/2003 and 2005/2006 (from 45% to 46%), this percentage still needs further improvement ... Percentages are lower still in governorates [provinces] such as Assiut, ... Suez Canal, and Aswan, where in 2005/2006 female enrollments were 34%, ... 41%, and 40% respectively."¹⁵

The 2010 SPU report further explains that women's enrollment in higher education is influenced mostly by the unequal distribution of higher education institutions across governorates. Thus, it is not surprising to find that the lowest female enrollment rates exist in the Upper Egypt governorates, which are not only the poorest in the country but considered socially and culturally to be more conservative and protective toward women. For example, the overall higher education enrollment rate in 2006–2007 in Upper Egypt region, including Assuit governorate, was only 16%, with the lowest female participation rate (35%) occurring in Assuit. Table 5 presents the percentages of overall enrollment in higher education by regions and gender.

Table 5: Percentages of Overall Enrollment in Higher Education by Regions and Gender in 2006-2007

Regions	Overall Enrollment (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Greater Cairo	43	57	43
Alexandria	10	50	50
Delta	21	50	50
Suez Canal	10	54	46
North of Upper Egypt	5	49	51
Assuit	5	65	35
South of Upper Egypt	6	51	49

Source: Strategic Planning Unit, Ministry of Higher Education, Higher Education in Egypt: Country Background Report (Cairo: Ministry of Higher Education, 2010), developed from data presented in pp. 64-65.

In terms of women's participation in different fields of specialization in Egypt, as commonly seen in other countries, female enrollment in the fields of education (72%), humanities (72%), and arts (73%) tend to be much higher than their male counterparts, as opposed, for example, to the engineering discipline (28%). Interestingly, however, women show higher enrollment rates than men in the fields of basic sciences (54%) and medicine (57%), as shown in Table 6.

15. Strategic Planning Unit, Ministry of Higher Education, *Higher Education in Egypt: Country Background Report*; and UN Human Development Report for Egypt, *Youth in Egypt: Building Our Future* (2010), <http://www.undp.org/Portals/0/EHDR%202010/NHDR%202010%20english.pdf>, p. 32.

Table 6. Gender Participation in Higher Education by Academic Discipline in 2006-2007

Academic Discipline	Male (%)	Female (%)
Education	28	72
Basic Sciences	46	54
Medicine	43	57
Engineering	72	28
Humanities	28	72
Arts	27	73
Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine	54	46
Social Sciences	56	44

Source: *Strategic Planning Unit, Ministry of Higher Education (2010), p. 66.*

In conclusion, examining male and female access to post-secondary education in Egypt reveals how educational inequality has been structured through a two-track system of general versus technical secondary schools. According to the World Bank, the gender gap in secondary education enrollment rates was 6.0 in 2003, which consequently reduces the opportunities for female participation in post-secondary education.¹⁶ Gender inequality in Egyptian higher education is exacerbated by the unequal distribution of higher education institutions across regions. Women's participation in higher education remains lower (46%) than that of men, especially in poorer areas (35%) – an issue that is recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education and constitutes an essential part of its reform strategies.

¹⁶ World Bank, *Gender and Development in the Middle East and North Africa: Women in the Public Sphere. MENA Development Report* (Washington, DC: World Bank Publishing, 2004).

Women's Education in the GCC — The Road Ahead

Serra Kirdar

Women's education in the Arab world has increased substantially in the last several decades, both in absolute terms and relative to men. However, when looking at the Arab world, understanding that there are vast differences culturally, politically, and socially among the countries is essential. This essay looks at the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, where women share a similar cultural and socio-economic context. It is also important when discussing education to consider both formal and informal modes. Dependency on statistics alone as indicators paints only a one dimensional image. Any examination of the role of and access to women's education will be ineffective without considering the overall context. Within the GCC, the focus of this essay is on the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

THE CONTEXT

The UAE is quickly transforming its traditional tribal society into a modern economy and society. Dubai, especially, has established itself as a financial hub, attracting expatriate workers and investors from around the world. It has become a metropolis, sporting an array of ambitious real-estate projects. Emirati citizens comprise only 20% of the five million inhabitants. The remaining 80% are foreign residents; this directly affects Emirati national identity. Abu Dhabi, home to the federal capital, drives the UAE's economic boom. It controls more than 85% percent of the country's total output capacity and over 90% of its crude oil reserves.¹ The economic metamorphosis of the UAE greatly affects its female citizens and their access to education and employment.

Various GCC governments have rapidly improved female access to higher education to the extent that in many countries, female graduates now outnumber male graduates. Government initiatives, such as extensive public sector investments in the health and education sectors, have been significant in bridging the gender gap. Current statistics show gender equality in primary and secondary education, while female students have overtaken males in tertiary education, so that the ratio is 60:40. Emirati women are also undergoing a socio-cultural transition due to foreign influences, while still adhering to cultural and religious traditions.



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1. Ibrahim Al Abed, Paula Vine, Peter Hellyer and Peter Vine, eds., *UAE Yearbook 2008* (London: Trident Press, 2008), www.uaeyearbook.com/default.asp.

Specifically, women are entering new professional fields such as engineering and information technology. The ratio of females to males in the workforce is increasing, and some women have been appointed to high-profile positions within the government and the business world. However, restrictions still apply to some professions, and support for female advancements varies among the emirates. Although the GCC female population stands at 48%, the rate of female participation in the workforce across the states stands at 19.2%. This low rate is not due to their level of education. It is more likely a combination of factors ranging from cultural and religious sensitivities to geographic isolation from major centers of employment.

Schooling in the UAE is free and compulsory for all nationals of both genders. All schools are gender-segregated, and instruction and textbooks are provided free. Two-thirds of all university students are women, the majority of whom choose to study social sciences and humanities. The proportion of female students is increasing every year, and women are more likely to graduate than men. For instance, 50% of the students admitted to the class of 2006 at the University of Sharjah were women, but the graduating class was 71% female.² Statistics from the class of 2007 at UAE University (unpublished) show that 74% of those admitted were women, and 79% of graduates were female.³ Educational attainment has been consistently high across the emirates, with literacy rates reaching 90% in 2007 and with 77% of Emirati women earning university degrees.

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Women have made tremendous headway in professions such as Engineering and Information Technology, with the support of and dedication of resources by the government. However, social mores and gender biases play a large part in subject choices, creating the “feminization” of certain fields of study.⁴ Some evidence suggests that this has resulted in employers’ devaluation of degrees in “female” subjects. Traditions play a key role in women’s professional access. A UAE law was recently criticized by Human Rights Watch for requiring permission from a woman’s husband or guardian as a prerequisite for her employment, which would violate international law by treating women as minors.⁵ This imposes further restrictions on women’s employment opportunities.⁶ In many instances, familial conflicts are cited as the cause of both resignations by and termination of employment for many women. Does what young women learn simply reinforce gender stereotypes?

2. University of Sharjah, https://www.sharjah.ac.ae/English/About_UOS/Pages/FactsFigures.aspx

3. Unpublished statistics from UAE University Facts and Figures Report, 2008.

4. John Willoughby, “Segmented Feminization and the Decline of Neopatriarchy in GCC Countries of the Persian Gulf,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* Vol. 28, No. 1 (2008).

5. *Report on UAE Draft Labor Law* (New York: Human Rights Watch), p. 11.

6. *Report on UAE Draft Labor Law*, p.11.

Women are inclined to join the public sector rather than the private because it is deemed more respectable by society, requires shorter working hours, and shows commitment to the country. Also, because of cultural stigma many Emirati women still have few opportunities for professional development and promotion and are often awarded less professional respect than foreign women.

The structure of patriarchal societies has not so much weakened or disappeared but merely readjusted to form a modern “neo-patriarchy.” This is prevalent throughout the GCC where access to female education is no longer the problem. What does seem to be an impediment is the dislocation between education and the employment sector and the unrelenting cultural stigmas associated with certain professions.

Education does not relieve a woman of the burdens and expectations associated with being a mother and wife. Though women are gaining more access to education at all levels there is no alleviation of societal expectations of their traditional gender roles. While women take on the extra load to pursue education, society is not evolving its expectations of men in supporting women.

With regard to the inequalities that exist not only in educational access but also in employment, it is worth noting that in the region, gender-based discrimination in hiring, compensation, and promotion persists. Women increasingly participate in business, medicine, arts, politics, and education.⁷ With the exception of a few high-profile women who hold prominent positions, women’s overall influence in the UAE remains limited.⁸ As of yet, women’s ability to influence policies at the emirate level is minimal, both formally, as members of each ruler’s advisory council, and informally.

The UAE government has introduced “Emiratization,” a nationalization program to promote employment in the private sector which requires companies in fields such as financial services and insurance to employ and train 4-5% of Emirati nationals annually. This means that as a result, private-sector companies have started to aggressively recruit young Emirati women to fill these quotas. Female participation in the UAE workforce varies across individual emirates: 10.5% in Abu Dhabi, 29.5% in Ajman, and 17% in both Dubai and Sharjah. Despite these figures, there have been positive developments in the UAE workforce, with the number of national female workers rapidly increasing. The Ministry of Labor no longer allows work permits for foreigners working in so-called traditional female roles.⁹ Nonetheless, Emirati women have complained of difficulty in advancing beyond entry-level positions. Arguably, the program has created a “sticky floor for young and ambitious UAE national women.”¹⁰ Very few women are employed in key sectors of the economy such as

What does seem to be an impediment is the dislocation between education and the employment sector and the unrelenting cultural stigmas associated with certain professions.

7. Hamida Ghafour, “Women of Influence,” *The National*, April 20, 2008, <http://www.thenational.ae/article/20080420/ONLINESPECIAL/992306773>.

8. Ola Galal, “Women Directors Few and Far between in Gulf Firms,” *Reuters*, May 19, 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/lifestyleMolt/idUSL1966031220080519>.

9. Samir Salama, New Emiritisation Drive, April 8, 2008, <http://archive.gulfnews.com/indepth/labour/Emiritisation/10049370.html>.

10. Bilkhair, *Global Perspective: Political Reforms for Access and Equity: Women’s Education in the United Arab Emirates*.

Kirdar...

oil and gas, construction, utilities, shipping, and manufacturing, and those that are tend to remain in clerical jobs.

CONCLUSION

Tremendous progress has been made in the Gulf for females in all sectors of education. Through the establishment of leadership programs, some headway has been made for women to enter into business and professional life. With 20% of the gross national budgets of GCC countries being spent on education, the focus must now be on quality rather than quantity. This means challenging socio- cultural and religious barriers that reinforce gender-stereotyping. Perhaps an investigation into the role of men in stereotyping is a prerequisite to real dynamic change. Furthermore, a synergy between the private sector and higher educational establishments is required through mentorship schemes that heighten awareness to high achieving women and encourage the ambitions of younger women. The full potential of future generations will not be realized without earnestly addressing these challenges.

A Generation in Crisis: Lebanon's Jobless University Graduates

Hana A. El-Ghali and Maureen W. McClure

Unemployment is one of the major manifestations of the global economic crisis that began to plague many countries around the globe, beginning in 2007. Developing nations with weak economies and fragile political states were among the hardest hit. In Egypt, one can find PhDs driving taxis. No country can afford, either politically or economically, such well-educated traffic guides. Higher education graduate unemployment rates in Lebanon are high and are unlikely to be reduced soon. Both the government and the higher education sector need to address the issues of the youth bulge and its impact on the preparedness of graduates to compete in both domestic and international labor markets.

Youth populations have been impacted the most by the economic downturn, especially in countries with high birth rates. According to the United Nations Population Fund, the annual growth rate is currently estimated at 1.2% for the world and 2.5% for the Arab states.¹ Lebanon is no exception. A “youth bulge” created by high birth rates, coupled with an overcrowding of the higher education graduate labor market and a clear absence of both government and university planning, has produced a well-educated youth unemployment crisis in the country.

Youth unemployment in Lebanon is estimated to be as high as the average rate for the Arab region (roughly 26%).² One third of the extremely poor university graduates are unemployed (contrasted with one out of five for better off university graduates).³ This is politically risky, as it has some potential to destabilize Lebanon. Several factors have contributed to this crisis, including: the current youth bulge; a sudden growth in the number of private institutions of higher education; and a current lack of national concern for sustaining a high quality “Lebanese brand” for higher education, both for domestic consumption and for export.

The current population of Lebanon is about 4.25 million. About one half (48.7%) of the population is under 25, while the youth population in Lebanon (15–24 years) is currently estimated at 22.9% or roughly 975,000. With a current growth rate of 1.2%, the new total will be about 1,035,000 by 2015.

1. *Making 1 Billion Count: State of the World Population 2003* (New York: United Nations Population Fund, UNDP, 2003).

2. “What We Do/The Millennium Development Goals in Lebanon,” UNDP, <http://www.undp.org.lb/WhatWeDo/MDGs.cfm>.

3. “What We Do/The Millennium Development Goals in Lebanon.”



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To meet growing youth bulge demands in the past, the Lebanese government encouraged a rapid expansion of private higher education institutions between 1999 and 2002. It was believed that these organizations were best equipped to respond to growing labor market needs. Consequently, the number of private higher education institutions more than doubled in the country. Lebanon's families responded and the country now has one of the highest higher education enrollment rates among the Arab states. 30% of the youth aged 20–24 are registered at one university or another in the country.⁴ Today, there is one national public university, along with 28 privately owned universities and over 20 technical institutes.

After the civil war ended, the rise in the number of private higher education institutions in the country generated market competition for new students. Unfortunately, at that same time, relatively few investments were made to drive up the supply of highly qualified secondary education graduates. Consequently, the additional higher education institutions have led to increased recruitment of inadequately prepared students.

In the past, the strong reputations of the public and a few private universities created a high-quality Lebanese “brand.” These institutions were able to export much of the youth bulge to the Gulf and elsewhere. When the Lebanese government opened higher education to private markets, however, it did not consider the consequences of this policy as well as continued pressure for university access on Lebanon's reputation. This oversight almost guaranteed that the national reputation would deteriorate.⁵

Both the government's *laissez faire* approaches to investments in the economic security of the next generation, and the universities' inability to self-organize for quality assurance, have contributed to the current and growing youth unemployment crisis within the country. Today, as they try to export their current youth bulge, neither the government nor the universities themselves can demonstrate consistent quality among their graduates. It has therefore become increasingly difficult for even the most elite institutions to escape the need to help employers reduce their hiring risks. The entire sector needs to promote accountability through better national and international quality assurance.

Today, most policy leaders in Lebanon still have not yet shifted their strategic thinking about higher education policy from greater access toward quality that leads to employment. University presidents across the country are expressing growing concerns for their jobless graduates. A recent study looked at university presidents' perspectives of the role of higher education institutions in addressing the youth unemployment crisis in Lebanon. Interviews with the presidents of the 28 private universities and the one public university revealed several significant issues. These included: a) the level of awareness the presidents had about the crisis; b) the perceived proper roles of higher education institutions in address-

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4. *Human Development Report 2009* (New York: United Nations Development Program, 2009).

5. *Human Development Report 2009*.

ing the crisis; and c) the perceived factors involved and their consequences.

First, preliminary findings revealed that only about 20% of the presidents were both aware of the crisis at hand and were actively taking action to address it. For example, in addition to the traditional job fairs that all universities held annually, a few institutions had created additional programs that enabled students to have practical training prior to graduation. These programs provided students with experience in real life work environments.

Only two of the 29 presidents interviewed identified the need for job creation, despite the fact that current labor market absorption rates are unable to meet youth bulge demand for jobs, either before or after graduation. Consequently, few discussed programs that fostered critical entrepreneurship skills. Some participants identified in detail external factors that interacted with each other, intensifying current conditions. At the same time, internal factors such as the management of institutional or sector quality were not addressed.

Second, preliminary findings also showed that some universities were individually taking an increasingly proactive role within the country. The presidents highlighted the needs for new programs that transcended old disciplinary boundaries, and catered to today's realistic needs of Lebanon and beyond. For example, a number of presidents from the private institutions suggested that some universities might move out of the city into rural regions, so they could assist people there by providing them with university education that addressed local needs and helped develop local communities. In turn, they hoped that it would help young people learn to be proud of their country, culture, and history.

Interestingly, a number of presidents from private universities complained that the public Lebanese University (LU) had become so proactive in recruiting students from local communities that it had become "the source of the [youth unemployment] crisis." Some believed that the government's only public institution was pressured by the government to accept considerably more students than the job markets either in Lebanon or today's Gulf region could bear. They believed that LU was under chronic local political pressure to accept many students who were poorly prepared. From the position of some of the private universities, LU was thought to be politically astute in the short term and economically clueless. This was dangerous for the whole country.

Finally, policymakers across the board were concerned about the social consequences of jobless graduates, such as youth delinquencies, family problems, and crime. They were also concerned about the economic consequences, such the loss of human capital, economic stagnation, and poverty leading to strife. Extremism was also noted as a leading potential consequence of jobless graduates. As such, a number of those interviewed discussed how easily the educated youth were being drawn to religious and political militias because, in most cases, they had no other option but to join or "starve."

Both the government's *laissez faire* approaches to investments in the economic security of the next generation, and the universities' inability to self-organize for quality assurance, have contributed to the current and growing youth unemployment crisis within the country.

In response to this crisis, we suggest the following policy recommendations:

- **A National Commission for Quality Assurance Standards in Higher Education:** Quality ambiguity was reported as a factor leading to high jobless graduation rates. This commission should, as its scope of concern, include the entire higher education sector. It should be housed directly in the office of the Directorate General of Higher Education.
- **Sector-wide Planning:** Strategic planning has been initiated by the Directorate General of Higher Education. Efforts to include the private institutions in both the planning and implementations processes are necessary. Their inclusion may help ensure a sector-wide commitment. Concerns for the quality of secondary education need to be addressed.
- **University Consortium:** We believe that the Directorate General of Higher Education should foster the development of an independent, voluntary, cooperative planning consortium comprised of all universities. It should inform and be informed by government policy. It should serve as a vehicle for initiating and coordinating cooperative institutional projects, academic activities, and policy initiatives that support the growth of national interests.

There appears to be a willingness on behalf of the private universities to play a role in addressing the crisis and take more responsibility for creating job opportunities. Now the Lebanese government needs to step up to its responsibility.

Empowering Under-served and Vulnerable Populations: Bidoon and Beyond

Tim Walters, Lynne Walters, and Jack Barwind

Since the very inception of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 1972, education has been viewed as a primary tool for building a knowledge-age economy for this young desert nation. Shaykh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahayyan, UAE's founding father, reportedly stated: "The real asset of any advanced nation is its people, especially the educated ones, and the prosperity and success of the people are measured by the standard of their education."¹ Regardless of whether he really uttered these words, Shaykh Zayed and the six other tribal leaders who built the UAE out of the sand meant them. Article 17 of the Emirati Constitution says that: "Education shall be a fundamental factor for the progress of society. It shall be compulsory in its primary stage and free of charge at all stages, within the Union. The Law shall prescribe the necessary plans for the propagation and spread of education at various levels and for the eradication of illiteracy" — that is, at least for Emirati citizens.

During the last three-and-a-half decades, the smallish country of about five million has worked to follow Zayed's declaration, making enormous strides for many of the Emirati citizens. At the birth of the nation, the literacy rate in the UAE was about 15%. Today, 90% of Emirati adults and 95% of its young people are considered literate. The country's women have come along just as fast, or even faster, than their brothers. By the time students reach college level, women vastly outnumber men in the national educational system.

Despite such a strong start, the promise for a better tomorrow remains only partially realized because the public educational institutions and policies apply exclusively to Emirati citizens, who constitute a mere 15% of the UAE's population. To date, the UAE has not determined how to carve out space for the overwhelming majority of the people who live within its borders to participate in the life of the country. More than 85% of the population consists of "sponsored" expatriates, resident workers who will never be citizens, which leaves even the most educated disadvantaged, legally underserved, and vulnerable. Life is far worse for those from the Asian subcontinent, who have minimal education. Yet, even among Emirati citizens, allocations of life chances, advantages, education, and empowerment differ considerably by tribe, family, and position in society. Further complicating the situation is a complex system of loyalties, responsibilities, and a centuries-long sense of place.

1. "Sheikh Zayed in Quotes," *UAE Interact*, http://www.uaeinteract.com/docs/Sheikh_Zayed_in_quotes/18411.htm.



Tim Walters worked for more than a decade in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), serving at Zayed University, the Higher Colleges of Technology, and American University of Sharjah.



Lynne Walters worked for the College of Education at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX and has written extensively on issues related to education in international contexts.



Jack Barwind has written extensively on culture, society, and education and was Associate Dean, College of Communication, at Zayed University for several years.

Engendering the necessary changes to empower underserved and vulnerable populations appears to be a journey worthy of the great pilot Ibn Battuta himself. The vast majority of expats' social, economic, and political rights are narrowly circumscribed; they lead lives separate from the rest of Emirati society and experience varying levels of alienation. At the bottom are the estimated 2.5 million unskilled Indian and Pakistani laborers who comprise about one half of the country's population. They are viewed as easily replaceable cogs in the machinery; they remain voiceless, powerless, and sometimes invisible. Forbidden to organize and deported at will, these "guests" from the Asian subcontinent often toil under a 50-degree Celsius sun. Acquiescent, obedient female domestic helpers from the Philippines and Sri Lanka (who rear the country's children) remain vulnerable to financial, physical, and sexual abuse. They are often treated more like property than people. If they complain, they are quickly "disappeared" on midnight flights. And, though often armed with golden parachutes, even the highly trained expats who man the levers of the economy can get caught up by capricious winds of change.

The Emirati Constitution, which was written in the early 1970s, has sweeping provisions guaranteeing equality, social justice, and security for all citizens, along with rights to free education, access to medical care, and the ability to own private property. Rights of non-citizens are considerably less. All foreigners must obey Emirati law, though they "enjoy the rights and freedom stipulated in international charters that are in force or in treaties and agreements to which the Union is party." The paternalistic sponsorship system binding every worker to his/her employer circumscribes those rights, permitting an employer to dismiss all employees, even those who are executives, almost at will. A sponsor sometimes keeps passports and oftentimes must write a "no objection letter" in order for a sponsored employee to have a bank account or own a car, among other things considered necessities in a modern society.

Expatriate foreigners are not the only vulnerable populations. Also included is a group known as the *Bidoon*, who are Arabic speaking, practice Islam, and have lived in the country for decades. *Bidoon*, which means without, refers to the estimated 100,000 or so souls who literally are without legal documents proving Emirati citizenship. Before the union which formed the UAE in 1972, papers did not matter. Everyone was a member of one tribe or another, and tribes easily traversed the vast open stretches of sand.²

Today, having papers does matter. However, *Bidoon* do not hold UAE or other citizenship. They are officially "stateless," which means that they have a limited legal standing. They also have limited educational opportunities and often can work only as common laborers. They cannot leave the country because they cannot obtain passports. Socially they are stigmatized, and their choice of marriage partners is restricted.

To date, the UAE has not determined how to carve out space for the overwhelming majority of the people who live within its borders to participate in the life of the country.

For Emirati society to become inclusive, much must be done to ensure the engaged participation of all members of

2. R. Ghazai, "The Frustration of Being Bidoon," July 6, 2010, <http://www.thenational.ae/article/20081106/NATIONAL/693483381/1010>.

society. Political parties will not be an option. None are permitted now; it is unlikely that they ever will be. The available pathway seems to be fostering civil networks, which benefit society by counterbalancing centralizing power tendencies. Creation of societies, organizations, or associations might enable individuals and groups to contribute to societal development and help in extending rights, reducing vulnerability, and serving the underserved. Such networks seem ever more critical in societies like the UAE which have gaping chasms between groups. But such networks depend upon an educated populace, and that is the rub. Most of the army of expats do not have an education as such and never will.³

Whether these networks eventually can bridge the chasms in the United Arab Emirates depends upon several interrelated dynamics. The first is that the government must permit them to grow. This is not a forgone conclusion. Though Article 32 of the Emirati Constitution guarantees the establishment of associations, permission is bounded by “the limits of the law.” These laws are usually very restrictive. Even when associations are permitted, the government often moves half-heartedly with glacial speed, erecting hurdles as it grinds forward.

Just as potent (and perhaps more telling) is that kinship still counts greatly, and extended families wield enormous power. These kinship groups have fostered a system that is antithetical to modern, transparent societies and economies in which meritocracy based on education and effort are valued and have created one in which tribal leaders parcel out favors. To create actual change, Emirati leaders must reform the legal and economic system. If not, the government will continue suppressing participatory developments just as soon as such developments threaten to undermine the power base of the ruling elites.

Evidence drawn from the recent real estate crunch suggests that the entrenched are neither ready for meaningful change, nor do they actually wish to be.⁴ With few exceptions, the powers “that be” protected the ruling class and its friends and family from financial fallout. Unfortunate expats were left to play the odd man out in a game of financial musical chairs — or tossed into jail via archaic bankruptcy laws. These actions, though emblematic and related to the economy, do not bode well for the future. To the contrary, they speak to maintenance of the *status quo* in which the overwhelming majority of the UAE’s population cannot meaningfully participate in the civil life of the country in which they live.

The vast majority of expats’ social, economic, and political rights are narrowly circumscribed; they lead lives separate from the rest of Emirati society and experience varying levels of alienation.

3. Avila Kilmurray, “Civil Society in a Divided Society,” September 1, 2001, *Alliance Magazine*, <http://www.alliancemangazine.org/en/content/civil-society-a-divided-society>.

4. Islah Jad, “Gender Myths and Feminist Fables: Repositioning Gender in Development Policy and Practice” (2003), http://www.siyanda.org/docs/jad_ngoization.doc.

Leadership in the Middle East: The Story of Women in Lebanon

Judith Cochran, Mona Nabhani, Rima Bahous, and Rewa Zeinati

Leila Saad and Emily Nasrallah are Lebanese women whose impact on women has been remarkable and yet not well-known. Leila has established schools on six continents while Emily is the most frequently included female author in Lebanese textbooks. In most regions, leaders in politics, business, education, and literature arise from among those who have the educational qualifications for entry positions. From there, outstanding people demonstrate the ambition, character, and knowledge to move into leadership positions. In the Middle East, leaders were previously selected based upon the strength of the tribe or community to which the male leader belonged. While these customs still exist, the past 30 years have decimated Lebanese male leadership as a result of civil wars, Syrian occupation, and conflicts with Israel. Many young women and men emigrate to countries where there are educational opportunities, jobs, and marriage partners. The women who remain in Lebanon have become the invisible leaders of the country.

This essay draws upon the results of survey and other research data. A questionnaire was e-mailed to 15 prominent Lebanese females in academia: seven Christians, six Muslims, and one Armenian. As the leadership of Lebanon is determined by religious affiliation, the selection of subjects was appropriate for Lebanon. The women surveyed were vetted by Lebanese feminists living outside the country to determine their international recognition. These feminists suggested two additional women, both Christian, to be profiled as international leaders.

HISTORY OF FEMALE ROLE MODELS OF LEBANESE WOMEN

Especially since World War I, Middle Eastern women have had female role models who were political, social, and economic leaders. Women have directed social clubs and charities that became political forces. They spoke and worked for independence from France in both Syria and Lebanon. Some female leaders demanded that females receive education equivalent to that of the male students, delivered in Arabic, and provided instruction about their country's history, culture, and religions. This would be a radical change from the separate education system that had developed for girls, which provided by French, American, and British organizations. Girls learned French history and the Catholic religion but were not required to learn the history of Lebanon/Syria or study their own Protestant, Maronite, Islamic, or Eastern Orthodox religions.



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In 1924, the Women's Union in Syria and Lebanon was formed. This was an informal educational program whose leaders encouraged women to demonstrate against injustices and to become involved in political issues. Predominant issues were rights involving inheritance, divorce, child custody, voting, and access to education. The Women's Union was multi-sectarian in religion and grounded in Arab nationalism. By the 1930s many women's groups campaigned for public government positions and legal changes. Though some males supported some of the women's goals, many other males argued that girls' schools were a French weapon against Islam. These men thought that women should not be educated. Syrian and Lebanese conservatives, whether pro-French or anti-French, disrupted campaigns for woman's suffrage and equal rights. Even nationalists who appreciated women's organizations and their work and supported their marches often resisted the idea of equal education for women.

Women had had a leading role in nationalist demonstrations, including the 1934 protest in Damascus and the 1936 mass protests in Syria and Lebanon. In 1938–1939, Damascene women organized four nationalist protests against unfair treatment. But political movements were male-dominated, and with growing violence, the message was that the streets were too dangerous for women.

Both Syria and Lebanon became independent of France in 1943. Three years later, their parliaments, under popular pressure, adopted labor codes that provided protection for working women and children, and paid maternity leave. Code enforcement, however, was weak. The codes segregated male and female workers into separate unions and then limited strikes of specific unions, mostly those that contained females. Obviously, the women's movement had no reliable allies. Communists, who were mostly males, supported female workers but did not call for reforms in women's legal status. Elite male nationalists did not support women's rights and thereby appeased religious interests.

For the past 30 years, many leaders in Syria and Lebanon have been and continue to be women. However, based upon past history, women leaders in politics, education, and literature have not been supported by the males and remain relatively unknown.

The first Arab Women's Conference was held in Cairo in December 1944 under the leadership of Egyptian Huda Sha'rawi. The Conference produced several resolutions aimed at all Arab governments, headed by the demand for women's political equality, especially the right to vote and hold government offices. The Lebanese and Syrian women leaders, however, demanded suffrage only for educated women like themselves. The women's resolutions did not include the poor, uneducated women, or children. Even nationalists who appreciated women's organizations and their work and supported their marches often compromised on equal education for women.

Today, most parents teach Lebanese history and the Arabic language to their girls each day after they come home from French language schools. In addition, school curricula — whether French, Arabic, or religious — do not often teach the accomplishments of female leaders such as Huda Sha'rawi, Mai Ghosoub, Elmaz Abinadu, Strida Gaugae, Emily Nasrallah, Leila Saad, or Gilbert Zwein. British, Scottish, and American English language schools continue to teach Syrian and

Lebanese geography in Arabic.¹ Currently, wealthy and middle class girls attend private language/religious schools while the poor attend Arabic language, government schools, or the few religious schools that provide scholarships, when and if they can enroll. The poor do not see the accomplishments or share the same language of the strong women who are the invisible, educated leaders of Lebanon.

For the past 30 years, many leaders in Syria and Lebanon have been and continue to be women. However, based upon past history, women leaders in politics, education, and literature have not been supported by the males and remain relatively unknown. Who are these women and to what do they attribute their invisibility?

LEILA SAAD

Ms. Leila Saad and Mr. Ralph Bistany continue the educational heritage begun by Irish ex-patriot Ms. Louisa Proctor and Mr. Tanios Saad. In 1886 Mr. Saad and Ms. Proctor founded an English language school for girls in the village of Choueifat, Lebanon. In 1943, Charles Saad became the Principal of the Choueifat and recruited a new team of educators. In 1975, another school opened: Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Under the direction of Leila Saad, the wife of Charles Saad, and Ralph Bistany, the school was relocated because of the Civil War in Lebanon. During this 15-year period, they opened Choueifat schools in Bath, England (1983) and Minneapolis, Minnesota (1985). In 2001, the International School of Choueifat-Damascus started as a co-educational day school. By the 2006/2007 academic year, it had grown to over 1,000 students. As she travels to Kurdistan and other new schools, Leila Saad is encouraging education that follows a scripted curriculum. These schools are evidence of her business acumen, even though Leila Saad is largely unrecognized in Lebanon and elsewhere.

EMILY NASRALLAH

Emily Nasrallah benefitted from the presence of the high school for girls at Choueifat begun by Ms. Saad's father-in-law. When she graduated from this school, she was one of the first women in Lebanon to attend college. She received her bachelor's degree in education in 1958. Born in 1931 to a Christian family in southern Lebanon, Ms. Nasrallah writes her books in Arabic rather than English. She is also a writer of children's books, short stories, and novels. She has won the LIBBY Children's Book Prize as well as the IBBY Honor list for Children's Novels.

Her most famous novel, *Tyour Ayloul (Birds of September)*, has won three Arabic literature awards since being written in 1962, including the Poet Said Aki Prize. Nasrallah's work is read by many young Lebanese women. Her stories are concerned with the experiences of women who strive for equality but are limited by the constraints and expectations of their families, religion, and communities. Her characters often live in Lebanese villages and leave their rural homes to get a higher education in the city. Often, the endings are bittersweet as the women are unhappy away from their roots.

1. Rewa Zeinati, personal conversation.

The question to be resolved today in Lebanon is why women of achievement are so little known in their own country?

Her female characters may not have managed to reach ultimate self-determination, but they never seem to give up.

Despite her recognition as a Lebanese author and intellectual, she is not included in most of the anthologies of Arab women.²

FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE FEMALE LEADERS

The question to be resolved today in Lebanon is why women of achievement are so little known in their own country? The answer, according to the women themselves, is found in the social and developmental constraints placed upon women of intelligence and ambition. Emily Nasrallah writes of women's social obstacles and yet offers no solution through women who escape and get an education. Eight women surveyed in this study who obtained doctorates and positions at the prestigious Lebanese American University are recognized among other women as leaders but have had limited celebration of their accomplishments. These are women with advanced degrees in math, physics, educational psychology, English, business, and teaching English as a second language (TESOL). They also provide leadership at Lebanese American University but are not known beyond its walls.

According to their experience, these women have the answers as to why they are not recognized. First, the laws and norms are created by males for the welfare of males. Secondly, where there is a shortage of openings, there is a preference for hiring male candidates. Regardless of the opportunities for females that occurred when males emigrated or were in military service, families continue to give priority to sons for higher education and employment opportunities. Advanced education so far has not altered the female image to include political, educational, and social leadership. And yet, as two surveyed women stated, "Education is empowerment on the personal and social levels. Educated women have more self-confidence and higher self-esteem. Also, educated women get better jobs and have a higher chance of becoming financially independent, which increases their ability to make the best decisions for their lives, such as leaving a bad marriage or seeking higher degrees." "At different levels and in different ways women have family and social empowerment, as to their role and status and more chances of financial independence and chances in the labor market." And finally, working women still face discrimination and stereotyping. Women often accept jobs in education that are part-time and untenured so that they may live close to their extended families. A shortage of adequate daycare creates more need for proximity to family.

Many educated women have come to realize that higher education and the economic independence that can come with it is their only hope for life improvement in the absence of social services and equal rights with males.

The women of Lebanon have strong, successful leaders in education, literature, science, and business. They have ob-

2. Elizabeth Fernea and Basima Bezirgan, *Middle Eastern Women Speak* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1977); Barbara J. Nelson and Najma Chowdhury, eds., *Women and Politics Worldwide* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); Nawar Golley, *Arab Women's Lives Retold* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007); and Nikki Keddie, *Women in the Middle East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

tained their positions as a result of earning higher education degrees in major universities in England, the United States, and France. Their family support has enabled them to develop their potential and actualize it in Lebanon. These female leaders we have described are invisible role models to the children and women who need them to direct their development and the country's future. They are the secret leaders of Lebanon who have yet to be recognized in their country for their expertise and accomplishments.

This is a brief overview of the status of educated Lebanese females in the past century. It raises questions about education's impact on their lives today. Research, profiles, and interviews demonstrate their efforts toward creating decent lives for themselves in a country where laws are dictated, implemented, and interpreted by males. Lebanon is a country where women are often secondary in careers and human rights. Many educated women have come to realize that higher education and the economic independence that can come with it is their only hope for life improvement in the absence of social services and equal rights with males. Lebanese women have come a long way in education and careers. Despite the absence of men in the country, women are still far from leadership in high official posts and civil rights. The second half of the 20th century is significant for females worldwide as it has highlighted social injustices that women encounter. One decade into the 21st century, females still constitute the majority of the poor and the illiterate in Lebanon and the world.

Educating the Future of Millennial Muslim Youth

Salman Ravala

In a January 1943 published letter which would ultimately lead to the creation of the historic United Negro College Fund (UNCF), Dr. Frederick Patterson of Tuskegee University wrote that the “nominal contribution of one dollar per person” could be enough to help improve the educational standards of young disenfranchised African-American children around the United States for generations to come.

It was from that simple visionary idea that we decided to launch Dollar-A-Day Scholarship Fund to help provide educational scholarships, along with a variety of financial assistance and career development programs, for young minority under-represented students to be able to achieve their academic and professional goals for the overall betterment of humanity.

As a young social entrepreneur who was born in a third-world Muslim country, I understand first-hand the compelling need to improve educational opportunities for children who may not have the adequate financial means or institutional access to pursue higher education, which will help them to eventually give back to their local communities in the long run.

From my personal experience, as the financial concept of interest-based loans (*riba* in Arabic) or usury is not allowed within basic Islamic teachings, I remember, that in addition to having to work in addition to going to school, my own father also had to take on a second full-time job in order to pay for my collegiate and law school education. Always remembering the sacrifice that he made because of his religious beliefs in order for his son to achieve his educational dreams, I decided from that day onward that I would dedicate the rest of my life trying to improve access to financial channels for young Muslim students worldwide.

I started with Dollar-A-Day Scholarship Fund, Inc., an American based not-for-profit organization. Online at www.muslimscholarship.org, it is America’s leading Muslim scholarship and professional development program. It was established on the basis of three basic principles, namely: 1) scholarship, 2) global leadership, and 3) commitment to public service. As one of the first national Muslim-American scholarship funds in the country, it aims to provide a gateway of resources for young Muslim students. Included among these resources are academic scholarships, no-interest loans, internship stipends, mentor matching, and workshops on leadership and career development. Like



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the original idea for UNCF outlined above, the cornerstone of Dollar-A-Day is the concept that individuals can collectively support its mission with as little as one dollar per day (approximately \$30 per month or \$365 per year).

With over seven million Muslims in the United States, growing at a rate much greater than the national average, one-third of this population is below the age of forty. What role this upcoming generation plays in our future is something all of us should consider thinking about. Although many young Muslim-Americans are pursuing college and graduate studies, a far larger proportion of this population is limited in doing just that due to the rapidly increasing cost of higher education and the attachment of small but significant rates of interest on education loans.

From an Islamic religious perspective, one can see at least nine major Qur'anic verses (2:275-280, 3:130, 4:161, 30:39) which relate to the general prohibition against interest/*riba*/usury in a Muslim's financial dealings. Because of this general prohibition on interest-based loans and transactions, many modern Muslim families struggle to find ways to pay for their children's education in a manner which they believe to be consistent with their religious beliefs.

Because of this general prohibition on interest-based loans and transactions, many modern Muslim families struggle to find ways to pay for their children's education in a manner which they believe to be consistent with their religious beliefs.

This is where Dollar-A-Day can help fill a very large void within the Muslim community in the United States and beyond today. By offering monetary scholarships and eventually interest-free educational loans, we will not just be able to provide a financial mechanism for young Muslim students to be able to fund their collegiate education in a manner consistent with their religious faith, but also encourage them to become agents of positive change.

President Barack Obama stated numerous times during his presidential campaign that we must help make college more affordable for Americans of all races, religions and socioeconomic status. According to a 2009 Gallup study, more than one-third of Muslim-Americans (36%) are between the ages of 18-29 and firmly within the college demographic age. While over half (50.4%) of Muslim-Americans work in the high-paying fields of engineering, medicine or information technology, only 2.5% of the Muslim-American population work in the lower-paying, yet equally important, social science careers such as academics, journalists, lawyers, actors or artists.

By lessening the financial burden for students and their parents, we are also helping to promote some of these lesser-paying social science fields which cannot compete with the higher-paying and often over-saturated professions of engineering, medicine, or information technology. This will allow students to strive for more public-interest careers which will help promote better global citizenship by defraying the opportunity costs of pursuing worthwhile internship opportunities with international, intergovernmental or non-governmental policy based organizations helping the impoverished peoples both in America and within Muslim-majority countries around the world.

Last year, the 2009-2010 Dollar-A-Day scholarship recipients included a student enrolled in a master's degree program at Harvard Divinity School and another student receiving her master's degree in Islamic studies from Columbia University in New York City.

By advancing scholarship, leadership, and public service within the younger generations of Muslim-American students, Dollar-A-Day hopes to eventually have a global impact on helping to raise literacy rates in third-world Muslim-majority nations around the world. As Dollar-A-Day continues to grow with your support, we can further help to strengthen the professional development of young millennial Muslim students around the world by providing mentoring, networking, and job placement services within our vast network of seasoned professionals in public sector jobs around the world. Dollar-A-Day's internship stipends program, for example, encourages Muslim-American students to pursue opportunities in the Middle East and other Muslim majority nations. Through this program, it aims to encourage the Muslim-American youth not only to become better global citizens, but also to serve as ambassadors and liaisons for developing alumni networks and peer groups that cater to Muslim youth from around the world. By engaging Muslim-Americans with a diverse array of students from many of the 56 Muslim nations, Dollar-A-Day can further aid in the promotion of educational exchanges and reforms in many parts of the Middle East and the greater Islamic world.

Dollar-A-Day is committed to working with like-minded institutions in any effort to replicate, provide equal access to higher education, or create other scholarship and financial aid opportunities to offset the cost of higher education for Muslim students worldwide and to engage them in leadership and public service.

By raising just one dollar a day per person at a time, at least amongst the many millions of Muslims in America, the organization invites all of us to take part in a bold grassroots campaign in an unprecedented effort that should be looked upon not only as a tool to help young Muslims attend college and graduate school, but also as a social and moral commitment to engage them in service. It is our belief that with the tools of education, they will build societies and institutions throughout America and the Muslim world to develop sustaining relationships — relationships that will create global leaders who work to challenge stereotypes, fight injustice, and grow together as one human race.

By replicating the business model of UNCF and their original community appeal for a “nominal contribution of one dollar per person,” the Dollar-A-Day Scholarship Fund has taken that mantra as its namesake as it continues to grow into becoming the primary vehicle for academic, financial, and professional development assistance for the next generation of young millennial Muslim students across the United States and beyond.

Struggling for the Center: Teacher-Centered vs. Learner-Centered Practices in Palestinian Higher Education

Louis Cristillo

Alongside the struggle for an independent Palestine, not to mention the internal power struggles between the rival Fatah and Hamas movements, another struggle — largely absent from local news headlines and talk on the streets — is unfolding in classrooms in Palestinian higher education. Faculty are pushing back against the hegemony of teacher-centered instruction and embracing, in principle if not in practice, the global movement toward learner-centered pedagogy. This is a radical departure from the legacy of teacher-centered methods inherited from late 19th and 20th century European models of education in the service of state formation, modernization, and the development of human capital.

In poststructuralist education theory, teacher-centered pedagogy is associated with top-down, hierarchal pedagogy and is derided for reinforcing passive learning, rote memorization, and hindering the development of higher level cognitive skills. Not only is teacher-centered pedagogy seen as harmful to the development of critical thinking, but also is associated with authoritarian, anti-democratic regimes that exert centralized control over schooling to produce an obedient, passive citizenry.¹ In contrast, a learner-centered approach positions students to take co-responsibility for their learning and to develop and use critical thinking and collaborative learning. The student participates in a “learning community” characterized by such practices as group work, open discussions, debates, case studies, literature searches, presentations and, in addition to quizzes and tests, the use of self- and peer-assessments, journal entries, and portfolios. The learner-centered paradigm is thus believed to foster cooperative and democratic learning strategies characteristic of progressive education.

Drawing on findings from a recently published study by the West Bank/Gaza offices of America-Mideast Educational and Training Services (Amideast), *The National Study of Undergraduate Teaching Practices in Palestine*, for which this writer served as co-principal investigator, this paper considers how Palestinian faculty and students are negotiating the struggle to displace teacher-centered practices in higher education. The significance of this



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1. S.A. Crabtree and R. Williams, “Inclusive Education and Children with Disabilities in the Gulf Cooperation Council Member States,” in A.E. Mazawi and R.G. Sultana, eds., *Education and the Arab ‘World’: Political Projects, Struggles, and Geometries of Power* (New York: Routledge, 2010); L. Herrera, and C.A. Torres, eds., *Cultures of Arab Schooling: Critical Ethnographies from Egypt* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006); G. Mehran, “Representations of Arabs in Iranian Elementary School Textbooks,” in A.E. Mazawi and R.G. Sultana, eds., *Education and the Arab ‘World’: Political Projects, Struggles, and Geometries of Power* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

struggle is typically framed in neoliberal economic discourse by international donors such as UN agencies, the European Union (EU), the World Bank, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in which learner-centered education is the basis for producing a nimble, tech-savvy labor force ready to compete in the market-driven arena of the so-called global knowledge economy. What this paper argues instead is that the real significance of education reform in Palestinian higher education is local, not global. The struggle over the center — teacher-centered versus learner-centered instruction — is about transforming discourses and practices that are shaping emergent properties of a diverse, pluralistic society of a future independent, democratic state in Palestine and for its social, economic, and political development.

Palestinians take enormous pride in the role that their institutions of higher education have played in the struggle to preserve and sustain a strong national identity, to resist occupation, and to produce the human capital vital to social and economic development. In the short span of four decades and in the face of extraordinary obstacles incurred under Israeli military occupation after 1967 — including campus incursions and closures, book and periodical banning, checkpoints, detentions, administrative arrests, deportations, and the suppression of student demonstrations² — almost four dozen postsecondary institutions have been founded in Palestine. Funded and sustained largely through private donations and tuition, some 43 educational institutions (11 universities, 13 university colleges, and 19 community colleges) offer nearly 300 educational fields of study across the arts and humanities, the social sciences, and mathematics, science, and technology. In the decade between 1994 and 2005, enrollment in postsecondary education quadrupled from about 30,000 to nearly 140,000, of which over 37% are enrolled in Al Quds Open University. In the same period, the number of faculty and teaching assistants in all universities and colleges grew from 930 to 5,724.³ And even though women account for only 16% of university teaching staff, nearly all tertiary education in Palestine is coeducational, and females make up 53% of the enrollment.

In short, Palestinian higher education has been at the forefront of national liberation and the struggle for social, economic, and political sovereignty.⁴ The idea of the modern university as a social arena giving rise to youth activism is of course nothing new. One has only to think of the role universities played in galvanizing national liberation movements among colonized elites in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, and its role in shaping political discourse and leadership in postcolonial states, not to mention the turbulent 1960s in which university campuses in the West mobilized anti-war protests and demonstrations for civil rights. Campus activists today — now globally networked — continue to agitate on issues ranging from international human rights and environmentalism, to poverty and globalization.⁵ Conceptualizing the

In the decade between 1994 and 2005, enrollment in postsecondary education quadrupled from about 30,000 to nearly 140,000

2. Cristillo, *National Study of Undergraduate Teaching Practices in Palestine* (Ramallah: Amideast, 2010), <http://www.amideast.org/offices/westbank/default.htm>.

3. C. Bruhn, "Higher Education as Empowerment: The Case of Palestinian Universities," *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 49, No. 8 (2006), pp. 1125–1142; C. Fronk, R.L. Huntington, and B.A. Chadwick, "Educational Attitudes and Trends in Palestine," *Educational Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1999); K. Hammond, "Palestinian Universities and the Israeli Occupation," *Policy Futures in Education*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2007), pp. 264–270.

4. Ministry of Education and Higher Education, *Palestinian Higher Education Statistics 2005*.

5. I. Abu-Lughod, "Palestinian Higher Education: National Identity, Liberation, and Globalization," *Boundary 2*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2000), pp. 75–95; S. Assaf, "Educational Disruption and Recovery in Palestine," in S. Tawil, ed., *Final Report and Case Studies of the Workshop on Educational Destruction and Reconstruction in Disrupted Societies* (Geneva: UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1997); C. Bruhn, "Higher Education as Empowerment: The Case of Palestinian Universities," *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 49, No. 8 (2006), pp. 1125–1142; M. Hallaj, "The Mission of Palestinian Higher Education," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1980), pp. 75–95; K. Hammond, "Palestinian Universities and the Israeli Occupation;" J.M. Tahir, "An Assessment of Palestinian Human Resources:

university campus as political space thus provides a useful framework for understanding why, in the development of higher education in post-1948 Palestine, learner-centered pedagogy is now on the ascendant. For many of the Palestinian faculty and students in the *National Study of Undergraduate Teaching Practices*, they see it as a choice between a learning environment structured by an authoritarian transmission of knowledge to passive learners, or one that creates a democratic, participatory space for critical thinking and collaborative problem solving.

Another way to understand this choice is to see Palestinian higher education operating in the context of a stateless society. In other words, university campuses in the West Bank and Gaza fill the critical role as surrogate spaces of civil society, a role that learner-centered pedagogy is particularly well-suited to promoting. This is true even though universities are highly centralized hierarchal institutions where, as described by Abu-Lughod, “the budget, academic priorities, institutional development, and the system in general” are in the hands of a few.⁶ As a case in point, each university has a student council with three major components representing student interests: academic affairs and careers, social and cultural affairs, and political affairs. The latter function is so important that student council elections are often seen by the media and political elites as a bellwether of the political mood of young Palestinians and of Palestinian society at large. In student council elections, not only do students run as class representatives, but also as representatives of political interest groups. As Abu Lughod has written, the university campus in Palestine is “an important arena for training in democratic politics. The experience one gains in student politics is transferred to society at large; some members of the Palestinian Legislative Assembly have acquired significant political experience on the Palestinian campus.”⁷ In short, not only are the practices of learner-centered classrooms — discussion, debate, collaborative problem solving, and critical thinking — valuable to Palestine’s success in local, regional, and global economies, but they are also ideally suited to the “training for democratic politics” of Palestine’s future leadership.

In short, Palestinian higher education has been at the forefront of national liberation and the struggle for social, economic, and political sovereignty.

Paradoxically however, the *National Study of Undergraduate Teaching Practices* found that learner-centered pedagogy was in fact less salient in actual practice, a finding that is consistent with international assessments of education policies and practices in the Middle East and North Africa since the mid-1990s. According to a major 2008 report published by the World Bank:

there is little evidence of a significant shift away from a traditional model of pedagogy. The main activities in the classrooms in MENA continue to be copying from the blackboard, writing, and listening to the teachers (El-Haichour 2005). Group work, creative thinking, and proactive learning are rare. Frontal teaching—with a teacher addressing the whole class—is still a dominant feature, even in countries that have introduced child-centered pedagogy.⁸

Discussions with faculty and students in focus groups and semi-structured interviews by the *National Study of Under-*

Higher Education and Manpower,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (1985), pp. 32–53.

6. P.G. Altbach, “Perspectives on Student Political Activism,” *Comparative Education*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (1989), pp. 97–110; M. Mashayekhi, “The Revival of the Student Movement in Post-Revolutionary Iran,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Winter 2001), pp. 283–313.

7. I. Abu-Lughod, “Palestinian Higher Education: National Identity, Liberation, and Globalization.”

8. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *The Road Not Traveled: Education Reform in the Middle East and North Africa* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2008), p. 88

graduate Teaching Practices in Palestine suggest a variety of reasons for the continuing prevalence of teacher-centered practices. One problem is the lack of pre-service and in-service professional development in teaching methodology for newly inducted faculty. The result is that teachers often fall back on teacher-centered practices they internalized from their own experiences in secondary school and undergraduate courses. Moreover, so entrenched is rote memorization that some teachers who have tried to introduce learner-centered methods reported occasionally facing resistance from students who, unaccustomed to engaging critically with course content, found their grades slipping. Another reason is departmental policies mandating the near exclusive use of summative assessments — midterms and final exams — which tend to reinforce rote memorization and passive learning. Finally, economic pressures are a major factor. Chronic budget deficits — a consequence of decades of halting economic growth due to the Occupation — have forced university administrations to cap the hiring of new faculty while boosting student enrollment. The result is overcrowded classes that make learner-centered methods extremely difficult for even the most motivated teacher to utilize. To make matters worse, teachers are often compelled to take on second jobs just to make ends meet. This, in combination with overloaded teaching schedules, makes it increasingly difficult for many teachers to give their students the attention they expect or to engage in professional development activities designed to introduce innovative teaching methods.

The silver lining in this bleak assessment is that the *National Study of Undergraduate Teaching Practices in Palestine* found that faculty and students, as well as parents, expressed universal dissatisfaction with the *status quo*. Findings from the study's random-sample national survey indicated that the gap between the still dominant teacher-centered methods and learner-centered methods is beginning to shrink. Interviews with senior faculty provided the strongest evidence that some teachers, with support from their departments, are pushing back against what they derisively called “traditional” pedagogy. For example, the study conducted a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 11 seasoned professors from eight universities in the West Bank and Gaza. The teachers stated that, for the most part, their department administrations respected their academic freedom to teach as they pleased. Even though a few said they faced initial resistance to some of their unorthodox approaches, for example, by electing not to give exams and use portfolio assessments instead, the positive learning outcomes from these efforts won both the approval and backing of their institutions. Quantitative and qualitative findings from the study also suggest that there is a “changing of the guard” among Palestinian faculty. In the past decade, teachers who, like the 11 professors mentioned above, favor learner-centered pedagogy are those who acquired knowledge, skills, and practical experiences relating to alternative approaches to teaching and learning either prior to or in the first few years of their teaching. Perhaps not coincidentally, some of the strongest advocates of learner-centered approaches appear to be those who completed their post-baccalaureate studies in foreign universities, mainly in the United States and Western Europe, where the shift toward learner-centered pedagogies has been ongoing since the 1980s. These findings highlight the importance of both pre-service and in-service faculty training for incoming teachers.

Institutions of higher education in Palestine, as elsewhere, have not only been a driving force of economic development, but they also play a crucial role in providing a democratizing space that inspires political consciousness and activism among youth and faculty who are critical of the *status quo*. As arenas for enabling both resistance and national solidarity, and in the absence of a fully developed civil society, Palestinian universities also provide faculty and students with a platform for democratic discourse and practices. It is in this arena that many faculty are pushing back against the hegemony of teacher-centered instruction by transforming their classrooms into spaces of democratic, progressive education.

Language and Vulnerability: How Educational Policies Exacerbate Inequalities in Higher Education

Zeena Zakharia

It is well documented that conflict creates new vulnerabilities for students that negatively impact their learning. In this essay, I argue that language policy in education can exacerbate these vulnerabilities, particularly for students from underserved or minoritized populations.¹ Drawing on extensive research in Lebanon at schools with different religious, socio-economic, and linguistic profiles and varying levels of bilingualism, I consider how language policies, as enacted by schools and understood by various policy actors, including youth, create new forms of inequality in relation to higher education. Schools with strong bilingual models have the potential to mitigate these disparities and to empower underserved and vulnerable populations through responsive educational practices that address language asymmetries and that recognize language policy and bilingualism as a complex social practice with political and socioeconomic dimensions. This essay suggests that the broad strokes of how such schools conceptualize and implement bilingual policies that are productive of new possibilities.

LANGUAGE AND SOCIOPOLITICAL CONFLICT

Lebanon has a long and rich history of bilingual education that can be traced at least as far back as the early 19th century when various European and American colonial and missionary groups with competing interests in the Ottoman-controlled region established their schools alongside their Greek and Russian predecessors.² The schools taught in Arabic and the language of the mission, such as French, English, German, and Russian, thus establishing a tradition of bilingual schooling. However, the role of foreign languages in education remained hotly contested, implicating formal schooling in religious inequality and sectarian struggle.

In particular, the positioning of the Arabic language in national educational policy and in local schooling practices has been intimately connected to political and economic processes that have alternately positioned Arabic as both cherished and devalued in relation to other languages.³ School, state, regional, and global actors have served both



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1. I use the term *minoritized* here to refer to populations that are not necessarily numerical minorities, but rather, have been socially, politically, and economically marginalized historically through asymmetric processes of power.

2. K. Shaaban and G. Ghaith, "Lebanon's Language-in-Education Policies: From Bilingualism to Trilingualism," *Language Problems and Language Planning*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1999), pp. 1–16.

3. Z. Zakharia, "Positioning Arabic in Schools: Language Policy, National Identity, and Development in Contemporary Lebanon," in F. Vavrus, L. Bartlett, eds., *Critical Approaches to Comparative Educa-*

to promote the Arabic language and to undermine it, particularly during periods of instability and conflict.⁴ In contemporary schooling, this is best illustrated by the ways in which youth across schools articulated both a strong connection to the Arabic language as well as strong multilingual ideology during a period of sociopolitical conflict (2006–2007). Evidence suggests that conflict creates a push to learn foreign languages at the same time that it creates a pull toward Arabic to demonstrate patriotic ideals.⁵

Language is a complex site for ideological contestation, where asymmetrical power relations exist between groups of speakers and individuals.⁶ These asymmetries are particularly poignant for speakers of languages for which there is a rich literary tradition, and even more so during periods of conflict. In Lebanon, language-power asymmetries in education have been attributed to distinct missionary and colonial policies in which Arabic was relegated to a secondary position in schools. For example, when the American-founded Syrian Protestant College (now the American University of Beirut) changed its medium-of-instruction policy during the late 19th century, Arabic was assigned a literary function, as the language of the arts, religion, and humanities, while English was assigned a scientific and modernizing function. This policy left a lasting impression on the educational system. First, the medium-of-instruction policy of the national curriculum persists in this vein: mathematics and sciences are to be taught in the first foreign language (French or English); and humanities and social sciences are to be taught in Arabic. Second, schools promote a widely accepted discourse: that to be “modern” one must have command of a (Western) foreign language. Furthermore, English and French medium-of-instruction policies at elite universities have required schools to adjust their language emphases accordingly. Thus today, significant disparities in linguistic resources at schools contribute to limiting students’ access to elite universities and to certain university majors in Lebanon.

LANGUAGE AND UNEQUAL ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Until recently, higher education in Lebanon was defined by a handful of leading private institutions, established in the last century, and one public university, founded in 1951. However, the past two decades have seen a proliferation of exclusively private universities, amounting to over 40 institutions. These institutions have established English as the medium of instruction for higher education in a historically francophone country. In addition, the public Université Libanaise, which has traditionally operated in Arabic and French, has opened degree programs in English due to increased demand. Yet, the large majority of Lebanese children continue to be schooled in the Arabic-French medium.

Language is a complex site for ideological contestation, where asymmetrical power relations exist between groups of speakers and individuals.

This reality has created new vulnerabilities for students. Therefore, parents have played an active role in pressuring their children’s schools for an increase in English language teaching to improve their children’s chances for university placement, employment, or to leave Lebanon as a way to secure their life chances. The perception that employment in the

tion: Vertical Case Studies from Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas (New York: Macmillan Palgrave, 2009), pp. 215–231.

4. Z. Zakharia, “Positioning Arabic in Schools: Language Policy, National Identity, and Development in Contemporary Lebanon.”

5. Z. Zakharia, “Language-in-Education Policies in Contemporary Lebanon: Youth Perspectives,” in O. Abi-Mershed, ed., *Trajectories of Education in the Arab World: Legacies and Challenges* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 157–184.

6. Y. Suleiman, *A War of Words: Language and Conflict in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Arab Gulf states requires English and the observable growth of English in global communications, science, and technology, coinciding with economic hardship and political instability have together reinforced concerns about youths' future opportunities in the job market based on English language proficiency.

Youth are conscious about these disparities and associate the observable levels of bilingual variation across schools and neighborhoods to social inequality, injustice, and insecurity rendered by political instability. Schools with poor linguistic resources or low levels of bilingualism are commonly perceived as deficient. Similarly, monolingual Arabic speakers are widely perceived as inadequate. The stigma associated with being a monolingual Arabic speaker has been made more visible through recent displacements,⁷ and students articulate what they perceive to be their own bilingual deficiencies in terms of shame.⁸ Youth narratives highlight the tension between national pride and other values associated with the Arabic language and the knowledge that without proficiency in a Western foreign language, and English in particular, opportunities for higher education and socioeconomic advancement will be limited.

Students articulate this issue in terms of linguistic discrimination. In the words of one secondary student enrolled in a French program, “companies in Lebanon don’t give any importance to any person holding any kind of diploma or having any specialty if the applicant does not have knowledge of a foreign language” (original in Arabic, 2007). This statement not only implicates the economy, but also, seen together with the widespread perception that English will open doors to universities and opportunities beyond, it points to the ways in which youth seek to reduce their vulnerabilities through language learning.

Schools with strong bilingual models have the potential to mitigate educational disparities and to empower minoritized youth through responsive educational policies and practices that address language asymmetries through intentional pedagogies. Responsive bilingual pedagogy recognizes bilingualism as a complex social practice with political and socioeconomic dimensions.

EMPOWERING MINORITIZED POPULATIONS THROUGH STRONG BILINGUAL MODELS

Language policies in schools exacerbate educational inequalities and vulnerabilities engendered by forces beyond the classroom. Bilingual education practices can serve to maintain language asymmetries, and in an apparent contradiction, limit bilingualism, and in turn student possibilities. By devaluing the Arabic language through the perpetuation of a deficit discourse about the monolingual Arabic speaker, and through mundane school practices, which place a lower priority on learning Arabic, schools create tension for the development of dynamic bilingualism that is grounded in valuing of the mother tongue in concert with other languages. For students with low levels of foreign language proficiency, this tension leads them to resist foreign language learning, viewing it as irrelevant to their lives, which until this point have been circumscribed by their neighborhoods. Often this resistance is expressed in terms of Arabization as a cause. However, I contend, and when questioned, youth have concurred, that this resistance to language learning is an expression of a deficit in an educational system that deprives them of fulfilling their potential as emergent bilinguals.

7. See Z. Zakharia, “Positioning Arabic in Schools: Language Policy, National Identity, and Development in Contemporary Lebanon.”

8. See Z. Zakharia, “Language-in-Education Policies in Contemporary Lebanon: Youth Perspectives.”

Schools with strong bilingual models have the potential to mitigate educational disparities and to empower minoritized youth through responsive educational policies and practices that address language asymmetries through intentional pedagogies. Responsive bilingual pedagogy recognizes bilingualism as a complex social practice with political and socioeconomic dimensions. This requires a heteroglossic perspective that views the languages of the emergent bilingual as dynamic and interdependent. While commonplace language management in Lebanon seeks to separate languages in the classroom, creating discrete areas for usage, a heteroglossic approach would favor translanguaging.⁹ This approach recognizes the linguistic repertoire of students and allows them to draw from that repertoire as they interact with each other, with the educational materials, and with teachers and other school staff. In this way, students are allowed to draw on their strengths in both languages as they negotiate meaning. In the classroom, such practices signal to students the value of the mother tongue as a significant resource for developing the second language. Whereas commonly held notions of languages view code-switching as a deficit in student bilingual competence, translanguaging allows for an active engagement of the student's bilingual resources. Furthermore, purposeful use of code-switching by teachers can be productive, when it is part of an intentional set of practices that address language asymmetries.

Teachers are significant policy actors who negotiate the terrain of student vulnerability and the demands of external standards in education through their language pedagogy and personal practices. In one strong model of bilingual education at a Shi'ite school in Beirut, language teachers integrated real-world and community-centered concerns into language teaching to engage students in language learning while meeting, or surpassing, government educational standards during a period of violent political conflict.¹⁰ A clearly articulated school language policy, heteroglossic vision, and use of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool all contributed to their success in delivering a multilingual education to students from largely monolingual and war-affected neighborhoods. School policy included language expectations for teachers, students, and other school personnel regarding French and English, as well as measures for the development of Modern Standard Arabic. In this way, the school addressed language asymmetries, while promoting a multilingual ideology in which languages are viewed as avenues for empowerment, for reversing disparities in higher education, and as an integral component of personal and community development.

9. O. García, *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

10. Z. Zakharia, "(Re)constructing Language Policy in a Shi'i School in Lebanon," in K. Menken O. García, eds., *Negotiating Language Policies in Schools: Educators as Policymakers* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 162–181.



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