

Teacher reflections on the challenges of teaching citizenship education in Lebanon: A qualitative pilot study

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ABSTRACT

Education for social cohesion and a unified identity in post-conflict Lebanon faces numerous challenges. While previous research has concentrated on curriculum design and educational reform, this particular study focuses on teaching and learning within the classroom. To start exploring the challenges of teaching citizenship education in Lebanon, a sample of four teachers were interviewed providing reflections on fundamental values and principles and difficult moments throughout their teaching experiences. Qualitative data collected from these semi-structured interviews showed various fundamental values and principles across the cases with limited relationship to humanistic and democratic ones. Moreover, teachers experienced difficulties with the inconsistencies between home, school and society. In addition, the evidence suggests that curriculum design and texts require attention if they are to support more effective pedagogy such as democratic and reflective dialogue.

INTRODUCTION

Citizenship education has recurrently been utilized around the world as a tool for achieving social cohesion and a unified national identity. Following the 1975-1989 Civil War in Lebanon, the 1989 Peace Accords in Ta'if emphasized the role of education for peace and social unity. Attention was given to the unification of the history and civics textbooks which, according to Frayha (2004, p. 170), "are most explicitly related to identity formation". Several years later, the Plan for Educational Revival in 1994 and the New Framework for Education in 1995 jointly re-established aims for strengthening national pride, unifying the Lebanese and Arab identity and raising the awareness of "the importance of mutual respect of other citizens and the social fabric of the nation" (BouJaoude & Ghaith, In Press)¹. Moreover, values and principles of democracy, tolerance, respect and freedom were re-emphasized as capable of embracing the diverse religious cultures and respecting humanistic values (BouJaoude & Ghaith, In Press; Frayha, 2004). Underpinned by such fundamental principles, it follows that citizenship education for social cohesion and a unified national identity has been accorded a key role in Lebanon's agendas of national development and educational reform.

The educational aims listed under the heading "National Education and Civic Development" in the national curriculum for Lebanon acknowledge the intellectual and social developments within the child which include questioning identity and the need for engaging in critical discussions (Official Journal, 1999, p. 26). The educational aims

¹ Quoted from page 8 of the submitted chapter.

pertinent to citizenship education which are listed in this document are the following (1999, pp. 26-28):

- Knowing about one's rights (personal, educational, political, social and economic), duties and responsibilities as a citizen;
- Strengthening national unity, social cohesion, justice and the principles of equality;
- Encouraging effective participation in the 'national' life;
- Respecting the rights of others;
- Engaging in the practice and development of laws through democratic practices;
- Exercising values in daily life and social relationships by joining humanistic and moral values such as truth, security, politeness, listening skills, democratic behaviour, respect and dialogue for conflict resolution.

These nationally mandated educational aims explicitly state numerous humanistic and democratic values and principles such as justice, equality, respect, truth, active participation and dialogue. Additional aims emphasizing identity and belonging in the more specific civics curricula are listed and reviewed in Frayha (2004) and critically analyzed in Shuayb (2005). In Lebanon, citizenship education in schools is taught through Civics, or *madaniyaat*, with an accompanying theme for morals, or *akhlaq*; hence, the typical textbooks designed for teaching are titled "Morals and Civics Education" (Frayha, 1994).

Research on citizenship education in Lebanon is of particular interest to a wider community exploring the paradoxes of educating for democratic and humanistic principles in a fragmented society. Previous research has mostly focused on curriculum design and development. For example, El-Amine's (2003) study, from the Lebanese Association for Educational Studies (LAES), focuses on the extent to which the educational aims and objectives of citizenship education and national development for political socialization (including cohesion and unified identity) stated at the Ta'if Agreement were implemented in the educational reform plans following the civil war. Also focusing on curricular developments and challenges, Frayha (2004) illustrates the development of educational aims throughout periods of national and educational reform for social cohesion. As a former member of the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD)² and current research specialist in citizenship education in Lebanon, Frayha focuses on the development of history and civics education and the political challenges involved in developing their curricula and learning resource materials.

Shuayb's (2005) study on citizenship education in Lebanon comprised a critical analysis of the new curriculum as a whole and a content analysis of the texts used for citizenship education. In Shuayb's analyses, the new curriculum appeared to pay more attention to educating duties and obligations to the state. Thus, she concluded that the design of the new civics curriculum was developed from an authoritarian approach neglecting humanitarian ideologies in citizenship education as it overemphasized the role of the citizen rather than the development of the personality. Moreover, in her review of curricular aims of

² Has also been referred to as ECRD and, in some official documents, as NCERD (National CERD).

citizenship education, the “authoritarian” and “totalitarian” approaches contradict the fundamental aims of citizenship education based on human rights, democracy and active participation. Finally, Shuayb emphasized the urgent need for a humanitarian approach towards citizenship education in Lebanon for a more unified, not only national but human identity rather than a sectarian one.³

Another approach was taken by Joseph (2005) whose ethnographic studies provided an additional perspective in understanding the challenges and paradoxes of citizenship education in Lebanon. Joseph studied the complexities of Lebanese families teaching their children their rights and responsibilities in a globalized world of predominantly “Western constructs” (2005, p. 1007). In Joseph’s article, the term *Western constructs* is used to illustrate her argument that there exists social and cultural differences between universalized notions of children’s rights constructed in an era of Western-dominated globalization versus the children’s rights and responsibilities taught and learned within certain Lebanese contexts. The findings came from two long-term studies of urban and rural contexts; one before and one after the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). Despite the constructs of individualism, autonomy and inheritance of rights threaded into the international discourse of children’s rights and responsibilities, the actual practice of the Lebanese families she studied in a patriarchal-dominated society showed and modeled to their children that their ‘citizenship’ was proactively constructed and earned “by whom they knew and how they were related” (2005, p. 1008). Despite the growing interest in citizenship education in Lebanon, however, there remains a paucity of literature and research on teacher experiences and reflections in the history and civics classroom.

A third approach for further understanding the challenges of teaching citizenship education in Lebanon focuses on reflections of learning and teaching experiences within the classrooms. These can provide valuable insight on the difficulties of teaching and learning democratic and humanistic values in the post-conflict Lebanese society. My previous research, a unique study on student and teacher attitudes to civics education in Lebanon, found a general awareness and agreement among students and teachers on the developmental aims of citizenship education as they relate to civic responsibilities and active participation within the community (Akar, 2005). On the other hand, students felt that civics classes were inadequate due to pedagogical practices such as rote learning while teachers felt the content was inappropriate. Similarly, Shuayb’s (2005) study on attitudes of democratic values within the school showed a contrast of principals’ views between public and private schools where the former found democracy in schools a threat to the traditional and hierarchical school culture. Teachers and students, on the other hand, across the schools valued democratic practice. However, data showed “limited democratic practices in the classroom” in secular public schools.

These findings suggest further research into exploring the content and practice of citizenship education within the Lebanese classroom. From the teachers’ perspectives, what specific difficulties have they encountered in teaching citizenship education? According to

³ For more reading on critical reviews of the civics curriculum, see Acra (2003) *Evaluating civics curricula. Report in Arabic submitted to the Lebanese Association for Educational Studies*; and Zoreik (2000) *Civics education: How do we deal with it. Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers.*

teachers, what values and principles do they consider to be fundamental in citizenship education and to what extent are they taught in civics classes?

This paper presents a small-scale study conducted in three schools in Lebanon. Interviews were conducted with teachers from these schools and their responses analyzed by reference to two conceptual frameworks. The first approach is the idea of humanistic and democratic principles and values being prerequisites and civic virtues as fundamentals in citizenship education. The second approach entails the essential practice of citizenship education, better conceptualized as active participation and dialogue. These two approaches differ from Shuayb's approach which focused on humanistic values primarily based on the development of the child's personality including the child's personal, emotional and psychological needs and democratic practices of student participation through student representative bodies and voices.

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

The construction of the instruments for data collection and analysis are grounded in two fundamental approaches to citizenship education. The first approach derives from a set of concepts comprising universal principles based on humanistic and democratic values (see Figure 1). Crick (2000 revisiting Crick & Porter, 1978) proposes freedom, tolerance, fairness, respect for truth and respect for reasoning as the five procedural values standing at the basis of citizenship education.⁴ Similarly, Parekh (2000) stresses procedural values such as tolerance, mutual respect and willingness for reasonable dialogue as "the basic preconditions for democratic dialogue" (p. 53). These shared humanistic and democratic values are not only prescribed throughout universal instruments of international human rights, but also, as Crick and Parekh state, as prerequisites for citizenship education. Moreover, another set of values viewed as basic universal principles in education for democratic citizenship comes from Kymlicka's (2001) four virtues of citizenship: public reasonableness, sense of justice, civility and tolerance and a shared sense of solidarity.

Crick	Parekh	Kymlicka
Tolerance	Tolerance	Tolerance
Respect for reasoning	Reasonable dialogue	Public reasonableness
	Mutual respect	Civility
Fairness		Sense of justice
Respect for truth		
		Sense of Solidarity

Figure 1: Figure 1. Illustrations of universal principles based on humanistic and democratic values.

⁴ Crick also calls them "presuppositions" in (Crick, 2000).

From this, it emerges that the values for tolerance and reason and reasonability are shared among the three; however, only Crick has emphasized freedom and truth as procedural values and only Kymlicka has emphasized solidarity. Yet, both Kymlicka and Parekh similarly value mutual respect and a sense of civility and both Kymlicka and Crick value fairness and justice. This brief synthesis further illustrates the research backgrounds of these writers as Crick and Parekh have responded to today's multiculturalism in England while Kymlicka has focused on a more universal or cosmopolitan trend in citizenship. By and large, this first approach provides a framework for exploring the extent to which humanistic and democratic principles central to citizenship education such as respect, tolerance, freedom, justice and solidarity are present within the Lebanese civics classroom.

The second approach is based on a concern for active participation. Dewey (1916) conceptualized the nature of the student as a social individual where the school environment shapes beliefs and attitudes by responding to the child. In Dewey's *Pedagogic Creed* (1929), the school must facilitate a smaller-scale democratic community, similar to society or the state, in which the child is allowed to actively take part. The democratic environment provided throughout the educational experience, as he wrote earlier, fundamentally "produces...a certain system of behavior, a certain disposition of action" for the participation in the democratic society outside the school (1916, p. 11). Dewey's ideas of democratic education have greatly influenced a pedagogical tradition of active learning.

Osler and Starkey's (1996, 2005) model of education for citizenship comprises complementary structural and cultural dimensions which propose a continuum starting from basic reflection and understanding to active participation and political debates for an effective learning experience for citizenship⁵. Another similar element of active participation is the need for democratic dialogue continuously emphasized by Habermas in the debate of genetic engineering (2003) and the challenges of religion in politics (2005). Moreover, Freire (1970) has argued dialogue as the fundamental and ultimate means for political freedom of the masses from political oppression and domination where dialogue, an "existential necessity" (p. 69), unifies reflection and action in the "conquest...for the liberation of humankind" (p. 70). Dewey, Freire and Habermas are among the numerous thinkers who highlight active participation through democratic dialogue as an essential medium for the communication and practice of one's rights and responsibilities in the community. Furthermore, this approach has been taken up in guidance issued by the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 1985, 2002). Some pedagogical approaches of effective learning for developing skills within the classroom for the active engagement of dialogue are illustrated in Osler and Starkey (2005).

Certain pedagogies within the classroom should facilitate debates on nation-state, ethnicity, culture and religion as a "key educational task" allowing students and peers to critically analyze different positions and reflect on their own identities (Jackson, 2003, p. 4). Blaylock (2003) explores pedagogy as a tool for effective teaching and learning in citizenship and religious education, focusing on various pedagogical aims such as pedagogy for liberation, action and diversity. Dialogue and reflection are crucial in the "pedagogy of

⁵ Osler and Starkey (2005, p.86) cite McLaughlin (1992) and Richardson (1996) for the development of viewing citizenship education in terms of maximal and minimal degrees.

action" which "relates to democratic values...a legitimate and positive intention that citizenship education should widen and deepen participation in democracy" (p. 219). Moreover, classrooms act as social settings for the students where they have little consent on social selection and thus a pluralistic environment is created making the classroom an ideal setting for verbal dialogue (Leganger-Krogstad, 2003). Pedagogies that promote democratic dialogue through debates and discussions are not only an approach to effective teaching and learning but also help develop fundamental skills for the actual practice of humanistic and democratic values.

In summary, a pedagogy based on classroom dialogue effectively develops the skills for respect, tolerance, freedom, justice and solidarity for effective citizenship. Based on these two conceptual frameworks on universal principles and democratic dialogue, this study will investigate:

1. the extent to which democratic and humanistic values are found in the Lebanese civics education classroom (in terms of teacher awareness and support);
2. the challenges teachers face in promoting dialogue as a means of *practising* these universal values.

METHODOLOGY

Rationale of methods

I conducted semi-structured interviews with four secondary civics education teachers. Each interview averaged 45 minutes. During the conversations, flexibility allowed for further clarifications on issues that were related to the following outline of questions:

- Constructs of citizenship education: why is it important? What does it mean?
- Memorable moments of teaching citizenship education in the classroom: What were some particular challenging lessons or events in the classrooms?
- Hypothetical situation of advising educational planners in a developing country of three fundamental elements of citizenship education.

These three themes were developed from the conceptual frameworks described above. The design of the questions intended to collect attitudes and reflections of the challenges in teaching citizenship, particularly promoting dialogue and practice, in the Lebanese classroom and the extent to which humanistic and democratic principles were present.

The selection of the four teachers was an opportunity sample. However, the teachers represented three schools (two were from the same school) all of which were private secondary schools attended by students aged 12-18 from a range of religious and ethnic backgrounds. Statistics show that the majority of students (61%) in Lebanon are registered in private schools (Frayha, 2004)⁶. Two of the private schools were situated in the

⁶ Frayha refers to the source from the Ministry of Education (2001) Statistical Bulletin.

mountainous outskirts of the capital city, Beirut, while the third was in the city center. The teachers were three females and one male, all with over ten years of civics teaching experience. In data analysis, false names have been given: Maha, Rola and Huda for the female teachers and Wisam for the male.

Verbal consent was granted for the digital audio recording of the interviews. The recorded data were then transcribed and analyzed. Data analysis explored patterns found across the case studies of teachers' classroom experiences. Certain themes were repeated across the transcriptions and thus grouped in categories related to the two main research questions. In investigating the pedagogical challenges of teaching citizenship, data were grouped in three categories: resources; in-class pedagogy; and school, home and society. Data for the second question, the degree to which teachers are aware and supportive of universal principles and values within the civics classroom, were grouped into fundamental values and principles inside the classroom.

Results

The results show several patterns found across the case studies. All the teachers also expressed their attitudes towards concepts and principles that underpin effective citizenship education. However, this specific study will focus on analyzing data of classroom and teaching experience that would give more insight into exploring the challenges of teaching citizenship education in Lebanon. Thus, four patterns illustrating these teaching experiences have been selected and grouped in the following categories:

1. Resources: curriculum and texts;
2. In-class pedagogy: teaching approaches and practices;
3. School, home and society: relationships;
4. Fundamental values and principles inside the classroom.

Resources: curriculum and texts

This set of data found across the case studies addresses the state of the planned curriculum and published books for citizenship education in Lebanon, otherwise titled *Civics and Moral Education*. First, the teachers described how the curriculum and texts are based on the conceptual frameworks of rights and responsibilities which are also mostly integrated into history, geography and social studies. The teachers also described how civics education is fundamentally designed to teach the laws and government structures whereas moral education teaches about civil behaviour in the community such as tolerance and respect through education on human rights. Human rights education in Lebanon, according to these teachers, emphasizes the freedom of belief and religion and other social and economic rights such as education and medical care. In addition to outlining the civics and moral dimensions of the taught curriculum, issues of concern were raised within the context of the curriculum and its texts.

The key issues that were repeatedly expressed across the cases included the inappropriateness of the content being taught, its design for rote learning and, thus, the lack

of activity for hands-on experience and practice. A civics teacher expressed concern on the inappropriateness as “there are some topics not for their age”. A social studies teacher felt that education for citizenship using a curriculum and text books that are “disconnected” from and “irrelevant” to the students’ lives leads to “passive learning”. Thus, the students learn “not to think, not to be creative, not to cooperate with others, not to be independent”. Such a structure that is monotonous and “very routine” results in “empty learning”. Maha, Rola and Hoda found the curriculum designed for “memorization”. “There’s no independent learning” in the Lebanese program. Consequently, the teaching in the classroom is neither “efficient nor influential”. Even though “to build character...you have to know...your rights...[and] the laws”, the curriculum “gives information more than [it] builds character...unless the teacher is doing this”. While Wisam felt that civic knowledge on rights and responsibilities was fundamental and sufficient in creating the good and effective citizen, Huda, Rola and Maha sought more “hands on” activities for experiential learning of participation.

In-class pedagogy: teaching approaches and practices

The data on challenging moments in their teaching experiences across the four case studies showed two different attitudes and, thus, approaches to teaching civics education. While Maha and Wisam's teaching experiences appeared to have valued pedagogies that did not seem to promote critical thinking, Huda and Rola seemed to value active, constructive and reflective learning. Maha expressed frustration after one boy in class “would not accept that Iran is not an Arab country.” Even after a long discussion, “he wouldn’t accept this. There was no way I could convince him”; “you tell them, you tell them, then they go home and it goes away.” Maha also encouraged in-class debates, particularly on sensitive topics such as religious history and the tolerance of Arabs towards Jews or Israelis where the class would engage in civil dialogue “until one side agreed”. From these two examples, Maha appeared to focus on arriving at a conclusion through convincing. Wisam’s classes did not experience many sensitive or controversial debates, mainly because the teacher should have “total control of the class”. He continued, “I direct the class... You direct it the way you want it; you want to give information.” In Wisam’s class, the aim of political and religious debates is for the students to “look for what’s in common”. Wisam sees the teacher’s responsibility during in-class dialogue as being “to guide them in the right direction...to guide without opinion” from which a right (teacher) answer is reached. From Maha’s avoidance of dissent or accepting differences of opinion and Wisam’s teacher-student dialogic practices (hierarchical dialogue), it appears that student-student democratic dialogue were almost non-existent within their classrooms.

On the other hand, because Huda found that the books were insufficient, poorly prepared and that “there’s nothing important” in them, much of the planning and lessons took place out of the classroom to promote active learning through “hands-on” activities. “You teach them civics things in the book; but they have to live it” and for Huda it meant actively “living” the culture in museums, literature, theatre and nature walks. Besides active learning, self-reflection was introduced through journals in Rola’s class after seeing how “there was very little tolerance or willingness to hear one another” during a controversial debate in class. The students “got very, very emotional” after this debate on religion and

created tensions even outside the classroom. When Rola started the journal activity, she saw how the class "really got into it". Rola used the journals as a follow-up activity after the in-class debates and discussions to "develop their thoughts...develop an argument...[and] to feel it's okay not to arrive to a conclusion". The journals are also followed by a discussion on "whether we think we are good listeners" promoting meta-learning. Rola's focus on the process of debate which was achieved through self-reflection was in contrast to Maha's emphasis on debating "until one side agreed".

Whether 'learning' citizenship is happening inside the classroom or outside, whether the class is memorizing laws and rights or engaging in debates on controversial topics, all four teachers recalled students' constant argument of "...is it possible that the government which made this book trying to teach us that this is wrong, is actually doing the wrong thing?" The evident inconsistencies between what is being taught and what is actually happening in society according to students' arguments is grouped in the third and the final section.

School, home and society: inconsistent relationships

All four teachers expressed, to some extent, the limits of teaching citizenship education particularly in regard to the contradictions between what is being taught and what is actually happening outside the classroom. Maha refers to these limits as "checkpoints" which illustrate the conflicts "between the school and what they're seeing outside the school". Rola's limits and inconsistencies between home and school were more of pedagogy and curriculum design rather than content. "We don't educate our kids the democratic way...our families are certainly not democratic". Rola also strongly felt that the Lebanese programmes and schools which promote memorization, "nurture obedience" rather than "maturity" which "reflects the political culture". With the absence of independent learning, according to Rola, "how do we expect the Lebanese people to be politically democratic and mature politically when our schools do not nurture maturity in us?" Huda's experiences with the students showed how "in reality it's different...there is a big, big gap between [their] learning and what they see". Huda recalled,

I had a student once telling me, "Miss, I'm gonna cheat in class". I said, "you're not gonna cheat because I'm gonna take your paper and you're gonna have a zero". He said, "but life is not like that, Miss".

Huda finds it difficult explaining to students about being righteous, honest and good citizens "while, the examples, they're not"; "because we live in a very corrupted society from top to bottom".

Wisam experienced inconsistencies through student attitudes in class. When teaching morals and behaviour, Wisam found that students would not disagree with what is right or wrong; however, students would argue "but...look at what's happening in society...[it] is different". Students feel that although the books and the government value education for success, connections and who you know supersede what you know.

The final group presents data on the fundamental values and principles perceived and practised by the teachers. Although the values and principles varied across the case studies, it is, nevertheless, interesting to note the similarities and variances and the degree to which they contain humanistic and democratic principles.

Fundamental values and principles inside the classroom

The following data have been grouped in four categories. Although they were not common across the case studies, the categories present values and principles that two or more teachers found to be fundamental in citizenship education. I also analyze the degrees to which values and principles vary across the cases.

Humanistic values and principles

Two of the teachers, Maha and Wisam, to some extent, consider respecting freedom of belief and thought (religious and political views) as essential. Maha, however, feels that a topic like respect "would need a long time" and such abstract topics cannot be taught as lessons in school, "you need to work at in school...[and] at home". Similarly, Wisam considers respect integral in citizenship education. However, he feels that respecting other views can be achieved through dialogue within the classroom where "you have opinions to give, but you also have to respect the other person". Although tolerance was mentioned by Huda, it was not discussed as a fundamental principle in citizenship education; rather, Huda felt that "public schools are the best, here in Lebanon, for teaching tolerance...because they are mixed schools, most of the time". Moreover, she felt that these public schools foster, by default, more diverse communities within them; as student demographics are more diverse, it is then easier to 'teach' tolerance.

Democratic values and principles

Concerning democratic principles, Rola found them fundamental in terms of people being "part of creating the laws" in addition to students contributing to curriculum design and development. In addition to contribution, Rola feels that liberation or freedom is one of the ultimate educational aims for society. In addition to democratic values, Maha feels that human rights need to play a stronger role in the Lebanese civics program to promote the practice of democracy; "if [the nation] is not democratic, then the citizen is not a human". Wisam strongly felt that knowing the laws and civil rights of the citizen were fundamental in achieving effective citizenship.

Active participation through learning experiences

In the classroom, Rola focused on "reflective action" which requires one to see and understand how one "interact[s] with the world" and "how you see your responsibilities in the world" for effective action. Huda focused on actively living the culture through museums, literature, art and nature rather than engaging in classroom debates. Living these moments, according to Huda, taught them respect, love and pride for the country. Similarly, Wisam did not encourage controversial debates on religious and political views; however,

he feels that dialogue, or *hiwar*, in the classroom is essential for practising one's listening and speaking skills for civil debates. Rola and Maha, on the other hand, encouraged in-class debates and discussions on sensitive topics despite the fears they felt from conflicts outside the classroom.

Solidarity and common ground

Rola and Wisam explicitly highlighted the importance of establishing common ground and aiming for solidarity. Rola, ultimately, wants the students to “feel in solidarity with people...[and] with other groups.” According to Rola, the feeling of solidarity is far more important than helping people or giving charity. Wisam, too, finds that commonality is central to citizenship; religious and political views are personal and thus, being Lebanese “is common among us all”. In turn, according to Wisam, solidarity, to a great extent, can be achieved through the practice of respecting freedom of belief where the search for common ground is essential among different views and beliefs.

The results presented in the four categories reveal essential data in understanding and investigating the challenges of teaching citizenship education in the Lebanese classroom. In the following discussion, we shall see how they provide a deeper insight into understanding the previous research questions:

- The extent to which democratic and humanistic values are found in the Lebanese civics education classroom
- The challenges teachers face in promoting dialogue as a means of *practising* these universal values

Discussion

Across the four case studies, teachers shared similar attitudes towards some universal values and principles such as respect and freedom. However, inconsistencies were present and, thus, posed concerns regarding the effectiveness of citizenship education in Lebanon. Furthermore, the challenges presented by these four teachers raised several discussions on the degree to which curriculum design and published texts, in-class pedagogies and the relationships between school and society promote effective teaching and learning of citizenship education in the classroom.

Humanistic and democratic values and principles in the classroom

There are two ideas which I wish to discuss from the evidence provided. The first suggests contrasts of humanistic and democratic values and principles across the cases, which, in my view, is common as we human beings naturally hold various values. However, the discussion I wish to raise concerns the degree to which these values and principles reflect universal values and principles for human rights and democracy. Throughout teacher reflections of the four cases, it was found that a part of the Lebanese curriculum for civics and moral education is grounded in a humanistic principle of respecting freedom of belief and thought. Moreover, universal principles such as tolerance and freedom were also emphasized. However, they appeared to be rooted in personal values rather than

curriculum design and the national agenda. In addition, other essential themes such as reflection, dialogue, solidarity and contribution to creating laws were also expressed as fundamental. These universal values and principles were expressed separately across the case studies which raises the second idea for discussion – to what degree is the teaching of existing universal values inconsistent throughout Lebanese civics classrooms and can this inconsistency hinder an effective citizenship educational experience.

The second discussion raises possible inconsistencies across Lebanese civics classrooms as well as inconsistencies within the classroom from contradictions found in teacher reflections. One teacher feels that *hiwar* is an integral skill for effective citizenship; however, in-class debates rarely happen in the classroom and civics education is centered around the content knowledge of civil rights and laws. Here, we can see a possible contradiction in the positive attitude towards the democratic principle of dialogue and the actual practice of ‘learning’ the laws and structures by rote learning, to a certain degree, avoiding controversial debates. Another teacher valued “citizenship for humanity” so as to avoid the exclusion of certain groups. However, this teacher also strongly felt that certain social and political communities should have the freedom to design and construct their own curriculum. Here, we can see an almost inevitable inconsistency between the struggles of balancing a sectarian agenda versus a universal one. Moving away from humanistic and democratic values, a third teacher strongly emphasized that ‘living’ the culture is the basic or fundamental approach for effective citizenship education. Moreover, solidarity and finding common ground were also emphasized as essential aims in citizenship education individually across the cases. Here, the inconsistencies illustrate a possible incongruity of fundamental values and principles across Lebanese civics classrooms which could also demonstrate an absence of understanding of procedural values crucial for social cohesion and unified identity.

Challenges of classroom teaching

The curricular design and published textbooks for civics, according to the case studies, promote traditional learning methods such as rote learning and memorization and appear not to encourage dialogue within the classroom. Recently, in current events, political and religious leaders have emphasized the importance of dialogue, or *hiwar*, as a means of unification. This recent development in the political arena should be complemented in Lebanon’s educational reform. The primary aim of the reform in the late 1990s was to unify the history and civics books. However, *hiwar*, a crucial pedagogical approach, the alter ego of citizenship, was not emphasized and, possibly, not recognized. Not only has the traditional design of the curriculum and text books hindered the promotion of effective learning principles within the civics classroom, but has created further challenges for the dialogue that already exists within the classroom. This includes focusing on the conclusion through “convince[ing]” and directing the class “the way you want” rather than the **processes** of dialogue such as reflection. Democratic and reflective dialogue is critical in providing an effective civics learning experience. But it is not only dialogue that the teachers feel is crucial in the classroom; cultural experiences too can help develop humanistic and democratic values with the aim of national pride or patriotism. This aim can create conflicts with the balance between national and global citizenship.

On classroom teaching and learning, Maha and Wisam appear to emphasize models of transmission learning with a traditional teacher-student relationship of knowledge transference, similar to the banking system, a traditional approach that is not only in contrast to dialogue and effective learning in citizenship but also potentially promoting submission and oppression. Freire (1970) strongly opposed this banking system and argued that “dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person’s ‘depositing’ ideas in another” (p. 70). At the same time, Huda and Rola adopted effective learning principles such as active learning in creating a cultural identity in the case of the former, and self-reflection and meta-learning as ‘cooling down’ exercises from heated controversial debates.⁷ This raises an issue of teacher training. Maha and Rola, and possibly Wisam clearly intended to facilitate debates on sensitive issues. However, their accounts suggest their inexperience with this kind of pedagogy. They were aware that the process of debate risked negative consequences and it would appear that they would benefit from appropriate support and guidance.

Finally, inconsistencies between what was being taught and what was actually happening continuously raised challenges of teaching and learning across the four cases. Some of the teachers felt that these were their limits in teaching civics as students would continuously question the inconsistencies of civil and reasonable behaviour in Lebanese society. Two other teachers have used this paradoxical relationship to illustrate the importance and necessity of what they were studying by telling the students, “**because** it’s happening like that...we’ll teach you the right way so you can improve the situation”.⁸ Pedagogy, too, was believed to have been affected as the political culture was said to nurture obedience, which in practice meant memorization. Although there may be tensions between the values of home, school and society, student attitudes find the paradox of learning humanistic and democratic values in a corrupted society contradicts their learning experiences. From this, further challenges are developed in learner confidence and approaches to classroom teaching.

CONCLUSION

This pilot study conducted on four civics education teachers in Lebanon provides an initial step to empirically exploring the challenges of teaching citizenship education in Lebanon. It is important to stress again that the data collected from the four case studies must not be used for generalizing the case of Lebanon. Rather, the importance of the evidence provided and the previous discussions should be regarded as one of many exploratory approaches in investigating citizenship education in the Lebanese classroom. I will now conclude with two remarks from the analysis of this pilot study which lead to critical implications for further inquiry.

The first is a concern about the extent to which the fundamental values in Lebanese civics classrooms are humanistic and democratic. The evidence gathered has suggested that

⁷ For more on these approaches for effective learning, refer to Watkins, C., Carnell, E., Lodge, C., Wagner, P. and Whalley, C. (2002) *Effective Learning*. NSIN Research Matters, 17.

⁸ Boldfaced because shows emphasis during interview.

citizenship education in Lebanon appears to be more centered around nationally determined civic rights rather than human rights; more on what the laws are rather than how to critically analyze them; and, according to one of the teachers, more on obedience rather than participation. Consequently, the context provided for the values promoted in the classroom was local and national rather than global or universal. Duties and obedience were more strongly promoted than freedom, equality, fairness and empathy. What I find interesting is not merely the imbalance between the civic and universal agenda, but the disagreement as to what constitute basic, fundamental values or prerequisites for citizenship education in Lebanon. The inconsistencies of values and principles across the classrooms raise immediate concern about the agreement and, thus, existence of presuppositions or prerequisites to citizenship education in Lebanon. Naturally, teachers, due to human nature, hold values according to their beliefs and culture. However, in citizenship education, there is a potential danger in not having, at least, a common aim or universal principles for living together. So, there is danger that classrooms for citizenship across the nation (or world) lack a consensus on the presuppositions of citizenship education. Furthermore, a civic-centred curriculum may promote principles based on teachers' personal values as opposed to universal humanistic and democratic ones.

In addition to the limited values and principles and their inconsistencies across civics classrooms, teaching methods appear inappropriate for learning fundamental values and principles. This raises a second concern on the extent to which effective pedagogy, particularly dialogue in the case of citizenship education, is emphasized and valued by policy makers, school leaders and teachers and, thus, present in classrooms. As one of the teachers expressed, these abstract values cannot be taught in one or two lessons, they take time; they also need practice. Currently, what seems to be happening is that the present values and principles are simply presented in class. Furthermore, there also appears to be a lack of curricular support for the actual practice of these values and principles. Dialogue as a means for active participation appears to be absent or oppressed in the Lebanese educational culture. Rather, the principles of effective teaching and learning have primarily been focused on 'core' subjects such as mathematics, science and language arts? The results presented invite further inquiry into the extent to which the pedagogical values for active civic participation and classroom practice of dialogue are present in classrooms of citizenship education in Lebanon.

In conclusion, the paradox of teaching citizenship in a culture of sectarianism, patriarchy, connections and corruption remains. The inconsistencies between home, school and society and the need for dialogue in a content-based civics curriculum continue to challenge effective citizenship education in Lebanon for social cohesion and a unified identity. From this pilot study of four case studies, evidence has called for further inquiries into the challenges of teaching for effective citizenship. Additional data collected from class observations, text and curricula analyses, interviews with student groups and parents on the extent to which the curriculum, society and home develop and teach humanistic and democratic values and principles for effective citizenship may be a contribution to enhancing the educational experience of citizenship education.

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