

The Jordanian Experience in Respecting, Protecting, Promoting and Fulfilling the Right to Education

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Basic Demographic Data

- Area: 89,342 square km.
- Population: 5,3 millions
- State System: Constitutional Monarchy
- Sources of Legislation: Islamic Shari'a stipulations, and French laws
- Elections: Over 18 years of age
- Official Language: Arabic, with English widely spoken
- Religion: 94% Moslems; 6% Christians
- Literacy Rates: Female- 84%, Males- 94%
- Unemployment Rates: 15, 3 % (F 21,9%; M 14%)
- Child Mortality Rates: (infants): 22 per 1000
- Maternal Mortality Rate: 41 per 100,000
- *Net School Enrollment Rates: 92% in 2000 (against expected 94%)*

Statistical Facts and Figures on Provision of Education in Jordan

- Number of students enrolled in the basic education cycle: 1256400
- Number of students enrolled in secondary education cycle: 183400
- Number of teachers in basic education cycle: 57800
- Number of teachers in secondary education cycle: 15600
- Percentage of students to teachers in basic cycle: 22
- Percentage of students to teachers in secondary cycle: 11.8

(source: Jordan in Figures, issue 7, May 2005, Department of Statistics, Jordan)

Statistical Facts and Figures on Provision of Education in Jordan

- Percentage of female students to male students in basic cycle: 96.2
- Percentage of female students to male students in secondary cycle: 100.0
- Percentage of female students to male students in middle diploma stage: 155.6
- Percentage of female students to male students in universities: 100.1
- Percentage of students enrolled in government schools: 70.3
- Percentage of students enrolled in government schools: 20.0

Internationally

Jordan is a party to 17 Human Rights Conventions most notably relevant to the Right to Education:

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- International Convention on the Eradication of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education
- Minimum Age of Marriage Convention 1973
- *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 1999*

Nationally

Constitutional Rights to Education include the following stipulations:

- Article (6)(ii): the government shall ensure work and education within the limits of its possibilities, and it shall a state of tranquility and equal opportunities to all Jordanians.
- Article(20): Elementary Education shall be compulsory for Jordanians and free of charge in Government schools.
- Article (6): Jordanians shall be equal before the law. There shall be no discrimination between them as regards their rights and duties on grounds of race, language, or religion.

Constitutional relevance to application of international law in the national jurisdiction

➤ (Article 33)(ii):

Treaties and agreements which involve financial commitments to the treasury or affect the public or private rights of Jordanians shall not be valid unless approved by the National Assembly.

➤ Recently in mid- July 2006, the JNCHR played a vital role in instigating the government towards:

(a) publishing 4 Human Rights conventions in the Official Gazette thus integrating them into national law. (ICESCR, ICCPR, ICERD, CAT) and;

(b) transferring 2 other conventions- CRC and CEDAW for consideration and adoption by Parliament in the process of being published in the Official Gazette.

Highlights on the Right to Education

In 1988 a new Education Law was enacted, restructuring the public education system as follows:

- A non-compulsory 2-year kindergarten stage for the 4-6 years age group.
- A compulsory 10-year primary education for the 6-16 years age group.
- A non-compulsory 2-year secondary education stage for the 16-18 years age group. (comprising 2 streams: comprehensive education; and vocational training).

Other Highlights:

- ❖ Concepts of knowledge-based economy and empowerment of citizens to face challenges of globalization is a priority in the provision of education in Jordan.
- ❖ Several actors provide education services in addition to Government: Private Sector, UNRWA, Armed Forces.
- ❖ Civil Society organizations play a major role in provision of education (especially early childhood education, illiteracy programmes).
- ❖ Illiteracy Eradication for Adults: Halved between 1989/1990 – 2000/20001
(from 2.6% - 0.9%)

Provision for Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination

- Gender equality in Education is guaranteed by the Jordanian Constitution and the MOE Charter.
- Jordan has one of the highest female literacy rates in the region: 82%
- The Jordanian society is predominantly a male society in which women still play a secondary role to men.
- Gender stereotyping in school curricula still prevails.
- Females are often directed into generalist streams.
- Vocational training for girls still limited in fields.
- Deprives girls from active participation in the work force.
- Higher illiteracy rates/school leaving rates for girls (relevance to early marriages).

MDG Goals:
Status of Jordan on Goal 2 of the
Millennium Development Goals
Achieve Universal Primary
Education

*(Jordan Report, 2004, MOP &
UNDP-Jordan)*

Challenges

Firstly: The high drop –out rates at all educational levels.
(increase from 0.69% in 1998 – 1.2% in 2001; also increase from lower grades to higher grades)

Secondly: Issue of quality of Education.
(re. content, globalization, IT, general equality)

Thirdly: Focus of curricula content.
(more on didactic rather than analytical skills)

Fourthly: Insufficient school facilities in Public school system. (ill equipped, rented premises, 2 shifts)

Fifthly: Absence of programmes to address students with special needs.

Strengths

- Strong Government commitment.
- High enrollment rates.
- Public awareness of importance of education.
- Societal acceptance of schools as safe space for girls.
- Presence of strong public/private partnership in education delivery.
- Ratification of international conventions related to education.
- Support of development partners.

Recommendations

- Increase educational expenditure
- Increase investment in training of school administrators and teachers.
- Encourage linkages between schools and local community.
- Strengthen role of the media, religious institutions, civil society in raising awareness to the importance of education.
- Conduct studies to assess causes of drop-out.
- Activate laws against school drop-out/ to enable poor students complete basic cycle
- Specific Recommendations: Curriculum Development; Special Needs; Teachers' Training

Human Rights Education at the Ministry of Education Level:

- In response to an NCHR Initiative, the MOE put in place a joint 3-year plan of action (2005 – 2008) revolving around 4 themes:
- Integrating HR into school curricula.
- Building the capacities of Ministry staff in HR education.
- Enhancing extra-curricular activities in the schools: HR clubs; HR competitions; HR posters; HR occasions.
- Enhancing the role of communication and media on HR issues.

Other MOE initiatives

- Prohibiting the use of beating as disciplinary punishment.
- Installing direct hot line to MOE for receiving complaints.

Major Drawbacks:

- Refusal of official authorities to permit establishment of a Teachers' Union /Syndicate.
- Restrictions on forming Students' Unions.

Role of the JNCHR in Human Rights Education

- The Mission Statement of the NCHR is to protect and promote human rights in Jordan, disseminate a human rights culture among Jordanian citizens.
- The Advocacy and Training unit is one of the 5 units of the NCHR responsible for human rights education, through general awareness raising and professional training on human rights

Main Activities in this regard

- Conducting a study and analysis of the current situation of Human Rights in the school system in Jordan, 2006.
- Conducting a study (2005) on awareness of university students regarding women's rights).
- Training workshops on 'Human Rights concepts and Techniques of integrating human rights in school curricula, in cooperation with UNDP and MOE.
- Training on 'Juvenile Justice' in cooperation with the Family Protection Dept. and UNICEF.
- Training course entitled 'Youth to Stop Violence Against Women, in cooperation with Freedom House Foundation, implemented in 6 universities in different parts of Jordan, 2005 and 2006.

Main Activities in this regard

- Partner in ‘Coalition for CEDAW’: Adoption in Parliament and Publishing in the Official Gazette, in partnership with the Human Forum for Women’s Rights, Mizan –Law Group for Human Rights, supported by Freedom House.
- Launch of ‘Training Manual on Civil and Political Rights’ for university students, in cooperation with Konrad Adenaur.
- Building NGO capacity on CRC Reporting and Follow up, in cooperation with Save the Children Fund.
- Training on “Human Rights and Refugee Issues”, in cooperation with UNHCR.
- Course for “Trainers in Human Rights Education for the Middle East Region and Gulf States”.

Government's Role in Promoting Human Rights Education

- Issuance of a Ministerial decree to establish 'a national committee for human rights education', 1999, comprising representatives of Governmental and non-governmental institutions.
- Committee set up 'a plan of action' and performed 'an analysis of school curricula' in search for human rights concepts.
- Committee held seminar on: Human Rights Education in Jordan, in presence of the Honorable Mary Robinson, February 2000.

Government's Role in Human Rights Education

- Smoothly phased out to give birth by end of 2000 to the Royal Commission on Human Rights, Headed by H.M. King Abdullah , with a specialized committee on 'Education and Training on Human Rights'.
- Establishment of Jordan's NCHR late 2002 as recommended by the Royal Commission, ending its mandate by formulating a draft law for the center.

Concluding Comments

Jordan's High Literacy Rates

➤ Generally Attributed to:

- Commitment to the Islamic teachings of the Holy Koran and the Hadith Sharif (Prophet Mohammed sayings) placing literacy among divine orders
- Political instability in the Region: Arab –Israeli wars, Occupation of Palestine in 1948, and influx of refugees into Jordan called for a guaranteed future insurance epitomized in education.

Jordan's Approach to Balancing a Commitment to Islam and Providing Education

- Issuance of the Amman Message in November 2004 (Ramadan 1425): Aimed at drawing attention to the threats and challenges in the face of misleading campaigns that seek to raise suspicions about Islam.

Amman Message is the Message of Islam

- Islam honours every human being without distinction of colour, race or religion;
- Islam affirms that Muslims when spreading the call of God are called upon to act gently on earth;
- Islamic mission is based on reason, Muslims are to shun violence and cruelty and speak with kindness and respect;
- Islam's message is to bring mercy to all people;
- Islam calls for treating others justly, safeguarding their rights and possessions;

Amman Message is the Message of Islam

- Islam dictates respect for conventions and pledges, and condemns treachery and treason;
- Islam upholds human life, there is to be no fighting against non-fighters, no assault on civilians and their properties, on children in their mother's laps, on students in the schools, on older men and women;
- Islam calls on Moslems to demonstrate tolerance and delight in human life;
- Islam respects balance, moderation and equanimity;
- Islam opposes extremism, exaggeration and intransigence.

Amman Message- on religious grounds, on moral grounds:

- Denounces extremism, and the contemporary concept of terrorism;
- Preaches Islam's guidance to build up the Muslim individual through the best of education;
- Adopts the Islamic approach which provides a balance in spiritual, economic, and social life, provides for human rights and basic liberties, ensures the individuals right to live in dignity and security, guarantees basic needs;
- Attaches great hope onto the scholars of the nation to enlighten youth and keep them from sliding down the paths of ignorance, corruption, close-mindedness, and subordination, into the abyss of extremism.

Impact on Education and Human Rights Education

- Implementing a **Matrix of Human Rights Concepts** at MOE schools (1999-2003): Environmental concepts matrix; Population education matrix, International law matrix; Health education matrix; Comprehensive education matrix; Life skills for Youth matrix.
- Most notable Matrix adopted by Council of Education on 6 Oct. 2003: '**Human Rights, Peace and Global Values Matrix**', currently being reviewed in cooperation between MOE & JNCHR.
- Adopting a pioneer educational development project: **ERFKE**- Educational Reform for Knowledge Economy (2003).
- **Curriculum Development:** to include integrating concepts of Human Rights Education: Culture of Peace & Conflict resolution - within achieving a balance between positive traditional Arab values and globalization.

Thank You

