



SOCIAL UPBRINGING AND PREPARATION FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

Upbringing is a consistent process carried out by society through specific mechanisms and methods to give its members all the cultural elements that shape their identity and maintain their knowledge, attitudes, values, standards, and perceptive models, affecting their behaviour in all walks of life (Mohsin, Mustafa, in Arabic, 1997). Moreover, upbringing involves developing a person's self-image, providing the individual with the elements of a social identity, raising awareness, integrating into the cultural and social environment, and preparing for the social and professional roles as an effective and full member of society.

Upbringing is a fundamental pillar in the process of analysing the requirements of the enabling environment and fostering that environment to prepare future Arab generations to access the knowledge society, in view of the fact that social, political and economic contexts play a significant role in shaping values. These contexts may uphold the values of the renaissance and progress which support science, knowledge, freedom and development, and keep them in the public awareness, but they may also create negative situations, which act as inhibitors for values and enlightened trends in society (Mohsin, Mustafa, background paper for the report). Such contexts represent the various institutions of upbringing, and are considered the main agencies concerned with this mission, including the school, family, and media, as well as the general cultural context in the society at large, in terms of religion, language and dominant values. Also, areas of upbringing vary and integrate at the

same time; from the institutional, such as school and family in particular, to the non-institutional, encompassing various areas and components of society's institutions, such as media, clubs, parties, unions, mosques and streets (Mohsin, Mustafa, in Arabic, 1997).

However, we stress that upbringing is a dynamic interactive process which interchanges between the individual and the influences surrounding him or her. "The young individual does not only passively receive external influences but also interacts with and absorbs such influences in his/her own way, then extracts from them to become part of the components of the perceptions guiding his/her behaviour towards others and the outside world in general" (Sassi, Nour Al-Din, Member of the Readers Committee).

Due to comprehensiveness of the concept of 'social upbringing' which extends to the different cognitive and social fields continuously growing in modern society, it has become possible to distinguish between several interactive types of upbringing; political upbringing, moral upbringing, religious upbringing, sexual upbringing and professional upbringing. Relevant reports show that upbringing in most Arab countries is not strong enough due to historical, economic, social, political and cultural reasons (Al-Maliki, Mohammed, background paper for the report). In fact, the political and social environment plays a negative role in forming upbringing mechanisms and methods, distorting the system of active values and perceptual models constituting individuals' awareness and behaviour in

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Arab societies.

However, we cannot pretend that there is only one value system in the Arab region. There are distinctions among the countries in the region that must be appreciated and respected. Furthermore, we observe that there are distinctions and differences as evidenced in the gaps between the upbringing received by young people in different institutions in the same society; rather, differences exist between upbringing institutions and political orientations among the cultural communities, elites and parties, and also between all these institutions and the state's view of social and political upbringing (Mahamoud Al Kurdi, in Arabic, 2010).

Despite the distinctions or differences among countries, or within each individual country in the trends and methods of upbringing, there is a greater common denominator between the value systems in the Arab world. First, these countries suffer from fragility and weakness, or what Emile Durkheim called 'anomie', a situation in which a society lacks the values and standards that guide behaviours and interactions of people in various areas of social reality. Second, they suffer from the absence or weakness of upbringing institutions, including family and education at all levels, as well as the media. Third, they experience a weakness of civil society; namely, the growing role of power in the public sphere has led to the decline and reversal of the role of civil activity represented in political parties, trade unions, professional associations and NGOs. As a result, neither the parties nor unions have played any role in the rehabilitation of children and youth (Fahmi Howaidi, background paper for the report).

In this regard, there is an important factor that cannot be ignored with respect to its impact on shaping the pattern of upbringing in the Arab region; namely the growing dominance of globalism, particularly through its long reach, which relies on the achievements of

the information and communications revolution, allowing it to grow and affect everything. As Anthony Giddens says, "Globalisation leads to transformations in every part of society, politics and economy" (John Ralston Saul, in English, 2009). Globalisation aids, or imposes, integration or even dominance over the markets and the technologies and cultures of nation-states to a degree never seen before. This integration or dominance leads to the disintegration of the system of social and cultural values in the most vulnerable countries, such as developing countries, and including Arab countries. In this respect, one researcher confirms that such dominance has weakened the governments of nation-states, making them unable, according to international standards, to finance the needs of the 'public interest', and even making them view the public interest as a branch emerging from economic development (previous reference). In fact, upbringing, in any nation-state, is at the heart of the public good; thus, poor policies of developing the public good can cause gaps in and the disintegration of upbringing, weakening the protection of sovereignty and support of national identities. This is the situation being experienced by Arab countries, and it has become, in addition to the above, one of the common features in Arab upbringing.

Arab countries have suffered, like many developing countries, from the impact of the phenomenon of disintegration and disorder in their social and political systems. The strategic systems of neoliberals have excelled at the exploitation of the 'phenomenon of value disorder,' and deepening it to produce what they call 'creative chaos'. This phenomenon causes the disintegration of the nation-state through which these strategic systems can restructure third world societies and create a new economic, political and social system in them.

Unfortunately, many Arab governments have faced this phenomenon - the

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phenomenon of disintegration - by more control, security and domination while overlooking the fact that any control or domination is no longer an effective tool in this era. This is in light of the information revolution and communication technology, allowing an open space for large segments of Arab youth to interact electronically under a limitless roof and virtual sky of freedom over which governments have no control regardless of their power or tyranny.

Hence, many Arab youths, from different social backgrounds, have joined this online community accompanying globalisation through computers and the internet, and have formed a virtual audience and exercised virtual freedom, which a researcher calls the 'electronic democracy' phenomenon (Wahba, Murad, in Arabic, 2011), and another describes it as 'Citizen-Net' (Morcos, Samir, in Arabic, 2011), which are all forms of the new global citizenship.

The solution to this contradiction and the pursuit of achieving political and social stability in the Arab world lies in the comprehensive renaissance project to access the knowledge society according to the triad of knowledge, freedom and development advocated by the Arab Knowledge Report, 2009. This would make the Arab world a positive actor on a global stage. This will not be done through 'chaos,' but through strategic, systematic and comprehensive plans and work which targets progress and would be undertaken by attentive national political forces. Moreover, this is aimed at equipping new generations with skills and values and to provide the enabling environments necessary to achieve renaissance.

Playing an effective role in the Arab states to bring about political reform which achieves democracy, freedom and justice remains the ideal and decisive solution the contradictions of globalisation and creating a comprehensive renaissance in Arab countries. Undertaking this role will always be a vital duty for Arab countries, and neglecting it may cause them to lose

hope in accessing the knowledge society, and will make it difficult for them to deal with globalism, embrace democracy and face its contradictions.

COGNITIVE UPBRINGING TRIANGLE

We move from the overview to the reality and contradictions of upbringing in the Arab world to investigate the readiness of the three sides of the upbringing triangle - family, media and general culture - as an enabling and fostering environment for young people to support their skills, values and competences required for the knowledge society.

FAMILY AND COGNITIVE UPBRINGING FOR FUTURE ARAB GENERATIONS

Reports and studies confirm that most Arab families do not provide an appropriate social environment to mobilise the creative capabilities of the young. In this regard, there are two important factors influencing change in the structure of the Arab family and restructuring of its mechanisms and methods of upbringing. The first factor relates to the growth of the middle class and its role and influence, despite what may appear in common literature as regards the erosion of the middle class in size or role. However, the reality of changes and events in the Arab world shows an increase in the awareness of this class and its role and influence in the cultural, social and even political structures. This growth can be attributed to a number of local and global variables, such as the flow of oil wealth in some Arab countries, the growth of a diverse productive economy in other countries, as well as the relative success of the Arab region in bringing about quantitative development in education enrolment rates. The growth and anticipated prosperity of the middle class would represent a strong framework in which the factors of change

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maximise and interact positively with the rapid political, economic and cognitive changes in the world. Also, the interaction of the middle class, particularly through the emergence of entrepreneurs, may be a positive link achieving economic and political integration of the Arab region into the global market according to mechanisms ensuring a balance between economic growth and changes influenced by globalism, not to mention directing further attention to the 'public good' and creating new strategies for social and cultural development (Hijazi, Mustafa, background paper for the report).

As for the second factor influencing change in the structure of the Arab family, it is represented in those social changes occurring in the awareness and structure of the Arab youth, creating a window for new ideas that have gradually changed the parental pattern prevailing in the Arab family. That awareness has been formed under the impact of advanced information and communication technology, the most important of which include Arab and international satellite channels, online media, and increased use of the internet and communication sites, as well as advanced mobile phones. "The information and technology revolution has made it possible for different and diverse cultures in the world to meet at any Arab home thanks to the possession of these devices, and the knowledge of how to use them. These cultures have begun to spread their various global influences, of course, without permission or resistance" (The First Arab Report on Cultural Development, 2008).

Contrary to the classic view that raising the young on values is a parent-to-child process; it proved that it can reverse the process, taking an ascending order from children to parents. To illustrate, it happens many times that parents find themselves obliged to change their values and embrace those of their children in order to adapt to the various aspects of family life and respond to the conflicts that may affect it, or as a means of coexistence with events

(Al-Siba'i, Kholoud, background paper for the report). Perhaps what is happening now with respect to the influences and protest movements led by young people in more than one Arab country is evidence of that; the young have formed their own value system acquired through information and communications technology, and transmitted it to their parents, and even society as a whole.

The mentioned factors are reflected in the multiplicity and diversity of methods of family upbringing and knowledge building in the Arab family. Studies show that there is no uniform method of upbringing with regard to knowledge and its building in Arab families, given the diversity of their segments, conditions and development, as well as their approaches towards cognitive enabling of children. In general, Arab families, the same as Arab society, undergo rapid transformations from traditional nomadism to urbanisation and openness locally and globally. Also, the economic conditions of families vary, which is directly reflected in their projects and trends in building generations. The economic level represents a factor governing this process, based on a study (Hijazi, Mustafa, background paper for the report). We can discuss four styles of upbringing in relation to the building of knowledge enabling in children. These styles are common in four family types: the elite, the financially privileged, the sub-middle class seeking social ascension through the knowledge structure, and the marginalised who remain outside the framework of knowledge and life enabling opportunities. This is explained in detail in the following.

THE ELITE SEGMENT

It is a segment of families consisting of self-employed parents who have had higher education opportunities and occupy leading positions in the professional business sector. They

represent the technocrats in Arab society. They may come from families with a long history of social/economic status or from middle-class families who have succeeded in gaining cognitive mastery and social development through their own efforts, available opportunities and favourable environment. Generally, these families enjoy solidarity and stability. They give priority to the upbringing of their children, and sponsor a project which provides them with the best opportunities to access education and cognitive enabling. Their children learn at elite schools which enjoy leading educational ranking, and they grow up having a high level of cognitive ambition and motivation to build an elite social and career status. From the outset, children live in an atmosphere of acceptance and enjoy self-esteem in an environment of democratic relations and intensive communication and dialogue. Moreover, children in this segment receive much of their parents' attention with respect to their mental, cognitive and educational development, and they are also provided with cultural materials. Further, the language practiced in dialogue with children is mentally-developed and dominated by logical dialogue, expression of reasons linked with results, mental distinction between different situations, and logical coherence in the language and its level.

With the information technology revolution, this segment provides its children, from an early age, with the tools and programmes of this technology, making them a natural part of their world and activities, to become the children and champions of this technology, and excel over their own parents, turning into references for them whenever they encounter some difficulties in operation. Boys and girls are alike in this regard, and they, in turn, make up the 'meritocracy' when entering professional life. They are the elite of the knowledge society in its methodologies, techniques, practices and innovations. They usually join the higher

segments of society where they occupy leadership positions.

THE PRIVILEGED SEGMENT

This segment has grown in the Arab region during recent decades as one of the outcomes of social and economic transformations and the massive financial flow into the region, both into the Arab oil states and others. These families are characterised by reluctant parental responsibility for the upbringing of their children. Instead of emotional and educational parental care and guidance, parents resort to showering their children with money as a kind of a financial bribe. Hence, children live in an atmosphere of conative and educational leisure as well as over-pampering. This segment is characterised by disordered language, low levels of academic ambition, motivation, formal studies and certificates. Children, the same as parents, engage in the fever of consumption and search for immediate pleasures of all kind, which makes the entertainment media market very popular among them. This parasitic and consumptive lifestyle is, in fact, unlikely to provide the motivation and willingness to exert the effort required to build cognitive enabling because knowledge is obtained through effort and perseverance. Moreover, the use of communication technologies and the internet by young people is mainly for entertainment, which obstructs the building of cognitive mastery and engagement in the knowledge society.

SUB-MIDDLE SEGMENT AND THE PURSUIT OF SOCIAL ASCENSION

This is the largest segment in the Arab world. Families in this segment are of a modest economic and social level and have the desire to provide their children with opportunities for a better life. The majority of young people in this segment receive a formal public education, whether at the university or pre-university stage,

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and they have a modest chance of building cognitive enabling due to the low levels of formal education at different stages. However, children in this segment exert great efforts and have the motivation for achievement. Yet, the cognitive formation they lack does not qualify them, except for the distinguished among them, to access the labour market. In this case, the reason lies in the system of education and upbringing. That is, the children want to move on but the parents exercise a traditional frustrating authority over them. Consequently, the children resort to the internet where they find an outlet in its virtual world. Here, internet usage compensates for the frustrations of material life. However, the use remains below the level of professionalism and technological mastery (Nasr El-Din Al Ayadi, in Arabic, 2005). The large number of young people, despite the exceptions that emerge from among their ranks, underneath the weak Arab development indicators, represent a burden to officials who do not have a clear development vision to accommodate this population to build the cognitive enabling required in the knowledge society. Thus, Arab society, for the most part, remains in a state of knowledge dependence and marginalisation that needs a revolutionary project to escape.

THE MARGINALISED OR SHADOW YOUTH

These are the children of material deprivation, social oppression, illiteracy in all forms, and thus unprofessionalism. Family circumstances, at or under the poverty line, do not provide the cultural opportunities required for the preparation for a world of study and the mastery of knowledge. It is the segment of young people who leave school in the second half of the primary stage, and thus are semi-illiterate as they spend the first half of study in a state of formal follow-up of irregular study. They represent the segment of 'the strangers in the world of studying.'

Consequently they become professionally marginalised, moving between low-income and short-term jobs, and experience increasing social marginalisation. Instead of acquiring mental and cognitive skills a type of 'intelligent management of affairs' is learned. They are the shadow youth who fuel social violence when it breaks out, and they represent the forgotten masses (Mustafa Hijazi, in Arabic, 2000, 2005, and 2008). Efforts must be redoubled to prepare or rather re-prepare them to access the knowledge society.

Under these classifications of the Arab family and its surrounding societal and global framework, it becomes evident that family is no longer the main source of the transmission of values, and parents alone are no longer able to be role models for their children. It also becomes difficult to talk about family as a single area of enabling for a connection to the knowledge society in the absence of other enabling bodies. However this does not eliminate the responsibility of the family as a primary institution in upbringing or playing a key role in the preparation of generations. That is, the Arab family still maintains its most important function that cannot be replaced with any other institution; namely, primary upbringing and its accompanying cognitive functions. Hence, a need emerges for the presence of enabling environments that integrate with and support the family, through planning for a unified and integrated strategy based on comprehensive renaissance to prepare future generations for the requirements of the knowledge society.

THE MEDIA AND COGNITIVE UPBRINGING IN THE ARAB REGION

The media represents a powerful force in the upbringing process of young people in all societies, and it is one of the most important enabling environments supporting the competences of individuals, providing them with life skills and values,

and forming their awareness and culture. It is also a critical factor in the creation of cultural developments that empower and equip societies with the necessary skills to access the knowledge society. The media involves multiple means, the most important of which are satellite channels, the press and electronic media.

There are important variables surrounding the media in modern societies, such as the phenomenon of intensively influencing the formation of people's character and awareness, and providing them with knowledge as one of the most important mechanisms of upbringing. The first category of these variables are those associated with the features of globalism, tangible and substantial developments in the communications world, information technology, and the diversity of media and information technologies. The second category of variables involves those represented in the growing human rights movement, and most importantly the rights to knowledge, accessing information, communication, and expression. The third involves those variables associated with the unprecedented abundance of information available, and consolidation of the 'picture culture' in a way that goes beyond the language and culture barrier between peoples and cultures (Al-Hadidi, Mona, background paper for the report).

The media have moved from their traditional functions (e.g. entertainment, leisure time, and news) to being a major factor influencing the upbringing of generations through informal learning via the various outputs, in both form and content, and the information and knowledge they provide. Their impact shapes young people's attitudes - negatively and positively - to many, topics, ideas and concepts, guiding their behaviour patterns, determining their choices of role models and ideals, and crystallising their aspirations and values.

In a report based on reviewing and analysing the scientific production available from published MA and Ph.D. theses and research, it has become clear

that the Arab media, in general, is weak and fragile as an enabling environment active in socialising and preparing young people for the knowledge society, and that there is a decline in more traditional means of media, such as radio and newspapers, against the growing role of modern means through the computer and internet (Al-Hadidi, Mona, et al., background paper for the report). In this direction, statistics show a decline in the role of the press versus satellite channels, as the rate of daily distribution of Arabic newspapers does not exceed 50.2 copies per thousand people. In contrast, there has been an increasing growth in Arab satellite channels where the number of TV channels has reached 482 channels compared to only 267 newspapers (Statistics of the First Arab Report on Cultural Development, 2008). The most important findings reached by the studies include:

- Inadequacy in much of the introduced content specifically targeting new generations with respect to the requirements of the knowledge age, and also the requirements of children and adolescents. The content promoting fiction, fantasy and fairy tales dominates the scene. 69.4% of this content includes unnecessary, wild fiction which may harm the mental growth of viewers.
- The scientific content falls at the bottom of the list of topics presented by children's programmes on Arab channels. They occupy a much smaller space compared to entertainment and social topics. Moreover, they suffer from a low level of execution and direction, with different rates on a number of Arab channels.
- Most of the current children's programmes lack the theoretical principles for the development of children's mental competences and enhancement of their artistic taste. They also lack an interactive nature. Noticeably, there are no programmes directed at young people in particular. Further, teenagers do not receive proper information

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and media attention, and there are no special programmes, materials or means intended for them.

- The traditional discourse, in form and content, which is addressed to children at all sub-stages of childhood, particularly the years of adolescence, and lack of content that promotes new values, or modestly presents it in a way that does not suit the anticipated role of the media in this age, or associating the presentation of such content with certain occasions, i.e., seasonal presentation. This is in addition to the limited technical capabilities of many channels or programmes (Mona Al Hadidi, background paper for the report).

Several reports have indicated that there are two factors that have had a clear impact on the Arab media in general. **The first factor** is the fading impact of political forces on people and the fragility of their structure in terms of political reality in Arab countries. This is due to the phenomenon of monopolisation of power in the Arab region, causing politics in many countries to escape newspapers, media satellite channels, and electronic media, even in countries where political parties own newspapers stronger than those of the ruling party (in Egypt and Morocco, for example). Thus, many protest movements in the Arab world gain a large part of their influence via the presence of their symbols through the means of visual and written media. (First Arab Report on Cultural Development 2008).

The second factor is the growing phenomenon of business people's access to the field of media and information

to invest and gain profit under an Arab economic trend depending on investments in service areas where the private sector controls the largest portion of the market of satellite channels in the Arab world (80% for the private sector compared to 20% for governments). The growing access of businessmen to the media has strongly influenced the rise of advertising - in newspapers and satellite channels - which is linked to the promotion of goods and services that do not depend on a real Arabic production structure. Among the most distinctive features is that the largest number of specialised satellite channels in the Arab world are religious and music channels, followed by news channels, sports channels, and lastly cultural and literary channels (First Arab Report on Cultural Development, 2008).

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SOCIETAL CULTURE AND KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

RELIGION

Many sociologists agree that religion is a moral necessity governed by an individual's need for discipline. Religion contains the values of goodness, justice and peace, which helps individuals to control themselves. Moreover, religion involves a moral aspect, and religious moralities must interact positively with

BOX 3-1

Arab media and youth - social upbringing

Authoritarianism and restriction of freedom on political forces has led politics to escape to the media and, consequently, the role of the media has grown in political and protest movements. Also, the control of businessmen over the media has led to replacing its original role with advertising and promotions in order to achieve profits. Adding to

the above and in the absence of the developmental role of the state, the development function of the media has vanished and its role has been ignored in the upbringing and preparation of young Arab generations according to clear and specific strategies to acquire the skills and values required for the knowledge society.

Field study results (Chapter 5 of the report)

the changing cultural developments and social conditions. Religion is one of the elements of social restraint and control, which helps direct and stabilise life and produces the values of work that enable people to engage in experimental and rational fields governed by scientific research which is based on objectivity and relativity in economics, sociology and politics (Ahmed, Maryam Ait, background paper for the report). Psychological studies confirm that adolescence (14-19 years old) is characterised by a continuous and permanent search for absolute truths. In this regard, idealism and strong presence of conative mind are the most important features that characterise this age range. At this age, upbringing plays an important role, as it either enables the young to form positive 'ideals', interacting with reality, and develops their competences, knowledge, and skills to change the world around them, or it fails and thus shapes the character away from the scientific and rational vision (Bin Hafeez, Abdel-Wahhab, Background Paper for the report). The failure of upbringing usually leads adolescents and young people to regard current reality and its facts as being a decree of fate, which is a state of alienation experienced by young people and reflected in their sense of helplessness, meaninglessness, and indifference. Here we find a lot of Arab youth falling prey to the confusion between true religion and the trends of religious extremism, which has intensified in recent decades.

We must distinguish between two different paths in religion. The first path is that which views religion as a source of ethics in life, enabling young people to acquire development values that support the pursuit of science and the acquisition of scientific knowledge about the universe and humanity. The second path is that of religious extremism (against oneself, or against society's individuals or systems) that resists science, denies tolerance, refuses relativity and excludes. It is a very different path. While the first path leads to the formation of ethics for science which

help it develop and advance, the second one leads to the rejection of scientific methods and the undermining of science, which limits freedom of thought, creativity, priority of dialogue, and experience as generators of knowledge. A researcher confirms that this behaviour may appear in an extremist form that antagonises and accuses society of unbelief, or in the form of behavioural withdrawal from the surrounding world, as reflected in patterns of seclusion, isolationism and dependency (Hajji, Ahmed, Member of the Readers Committee).

The first path stresses building the ethics of science, and developing and reforming religious discourse to enable new generations to successfully, usefully and cognitively manage time, and equip them with the values of research, scientific integrity, objectivity of evaluation, and hard work in the search for scientific facts. The ethics of science as a main supporter of knowledge have developed through standards such as universalism wherein knowledge production is separated from the role of persons, and knowledge becomes public property, away from private greed, and is employed to support the public good. Furthermore, this path supports 'methodical doubt' which relates to examining and evaluating knowledge in a systematic way based on creativity and critical thinking (Bin Hafeez, Abdel Wahhab - background paper for the report).

The culture of the Arab society carries a set of values, customs, traditions, conventions, standards, and behavioural patterns glorifying the values of masculinity, nomadic tribalism and sectarianism, and reproducing them through a misapplication of religious upbringing, in many cases, in the process of guiding and directing the young generation. Despite the socio-economic changes in society, the system of social relations practicing dominance over women is still active in society. Also, despite the manifestations of change in the role of women in terms of education and work, they are still governed by a system

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of traditional values shaping the methods of social, religious, and even political upbringing. What adds to the reproduction of the discourse of traditional customs, rather than being sound, enlightened, and open to religious principles, is that the rate of cultural, religious and Fiqhi illiteracy is significantly high among families, thereby preventing children from being shielded against an inherited popular cultural discourse which has exploited religion in many cases to reinforce some regressive aspect of our cultural heritage.

Addressing the trends of intellectual rigidity and religious extremism of some groups in the Arab region requires developing the religious education system at all stages, as well as developing its curricula and teaching methods. This can be done by expanding the channels of theoretical and practical scientific research to comply with the requirements of the age, to formulate an enlightened cognitive model that acknowledges the freedom of research and renewal, and accepts the other. This also requires families, satellite channels, and all means of media to adopt certain patterns of upbringing based on respect for intellectual and religious pluralism, and belief in the ethics and values of the knowledge society: freedom, coexistence, justice, safety, security, trust, and ethics of the environment, information, internet, technology, and respect for human rights and freedom (Ahmed, Maryam Ayat,

background paper for the report).

The reform of religious discourse should help the new generations in the Arab region to form a vision open to the world, allowing productive communication which helps transfer and instil knowledge, and absorbs the values, skills, concepts and experiences for the knowledge society that the region seeks to access. Religious discourse also helps empower these generations to work in three areas, referred to in the first chapter of this report; the empirical, rational and religious, while stressing the dialectical relationship between them is a positive one that dedicates the freedom of thought, innovation and creativity to the production of knowledge.

THE ARABIC LANGUAGE AND REACHING THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

The Arabic language is the tool and fortress of thought. It is not only a tool of understanding and communication, but it is also a tool of reflection and meditation. A human thinks to speak. Language and thought are in a continuous dialectical relationship. Language is, therefore, closely related to awareness and culture in any society, and it is the carrier of its culture and is inseparable from it. Moreover, language can be a tool for social integration, as it can integrate individuals into a society's culture, and provide them with the same thought pattern through

BOX 3-2

Human rights and citizenship in the system of education and formation in Morocco

Curricula were reviewed in response to the trends experienced by Moroccan society. This is because national and international changes necessitated reviewing the curricula and textbooks with an open perspective to know the values of self-building and dialogue with while relying on the following base of values:

- Defending human and civil rights;
- Believing in cultural pluralism;

- Exercising critical and systematic thinking;
- Cooperation and taking responsibilities;
- Addressing and solving problems as part of a global perspective;
- Promoting mediation and settling conflicts peacefully.

Source: Maryam Ayat, Ahmed, background paper for the report

Educational and cultural institutions and development of social upbringing

Whereas facing cultural regression requires a comprehensive integrated strategy, extending to every area, it needs new knowledge maps that allow us to address it more effectively, and which include education in all its forms and practices. Along with education, there are other cultural and enlightening tools that relate to the deepening of the meanings of citizenship, the modern state, and values of modernity; the elimination of superstitious thinking through stressing the meanings of free scientific thinking; and the eradication of all forms of religious and non-religious intolerance by spreading a culture of tolerance and dialogue.

The efficiency of education systems is not complete without the efficiency of the media which should not aim to publicise a ruler, party, religious group, or military group in order to misrepresent them to the public. The media should play its

Source: Jaber Asfour, 2008

role freely and independently. Scientific research is not to be separated from education, it should be encouraged, and its infrastructure should be completed, in order to liberate its mechanisms to become a cornerstone of the knowledge society. Moreover, whereas education and media are two sides of the one coin that can contribute to the development of upbringing and free it from its restrictions that keep it either in the past or static, the development of the economy confirms the liberalised dimensions of this upbringing, especially when the economy complements other components, which contribute to the emancipation of the mind.. This is in addition to taking care of critical faculties associated with this upbringing as well as the rational trends supported by education and media.

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their interaction with it. It can be a tool used to reproduce the cultural regression of a society's structure or a tool to produce the structure of class distinction in society (Ahmed Ozzie, 2008 in Arabic, Bernstein, 1973 in English, and Bourdieu 1974, in English).

Accordingly, the Arabic language should play an essential role in the Arab renaissance by being an effective tool, in the context of the renaissance, to access knowledge and express reviving ideas and opinions. It should also play a significant role in the development of intellectual and creative competences to meet the requirements of the knowledge society.

Most reports and studies indicate that the Arabic language is suffering a crisis and faces real challenges related to its teaching, acquisition and its use in presenting creativity and criticism. It still faces problems related to its automated processing by modern information technologies (Mahmoud Al Naka, background paper for the report). It is noted that the level of language proficiency in classical Arabic,¹⁰ reading, writing and expression, is low among a large segment of secondary and university

students, and even among a significant number of post-graduates, which reveals massive weaknesses in teaching it, in the efficiency of its teachers, and in awareness of the issue. Hence, it is necessary not to restrict interest in Arabic to the Arabic language teacher alone, but attention should be directed to developing language capabilities among all the teachers of all grades or allowing them to play a role in developing students' language capabilities through their commitment to sound and clear Arabic language, emphasising its importance when reviewing what students write in their courses and confirming its importance. There are calls to expand in the translation of science and the latest findings into Arabic, and teaching them in Arabic, which will help the language to become a scientific one commonly used among all groups in society, and an important factor in the dissemination of scientific culture and scientific thinking (Al Mutahhar, Mohammed bin Mohammed, Member of the Readers Committee)

It is further noted the low number of sites written in Arabic on the internet in comparison to the sites written in other languages. The number of Arabic sites is

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estimated to be around 5.33 million versus 18.44 million Hebrew sites and 27.4 million French sites. Moreover, Arabic speakers represent 3.3% of the total internet users in the latest estimated statistics in May 2010, compared for example to 3.9% of Portuguese speakers,¹¹ who are fewer in number than Arabic speakers. This is in addition to the poor and mixed Arabic language used by young people on the internet in blogs and networking sites that have become a resort for many of them and where colloquial language or Arabic written in Latin letters is widely used. It was found that 67.8% of the Egyptian blogs, for example, use Arabic in blogging, and most of them confuse between colloquial and classical Arabic.¹² Also, SMS on mobile phones use the Latin alphabet and numerals to express some Arabic letters, which could threaten the culture of the language in the long term.

Some of those analysing the dynamics of educational reform in Arab countries believe that the Arabic language is one of the fundamental levers of Arab social integration towards an Arab renaissance. In the context of developing their curricula, several Arab countries have incorporated the language and religion into one subject for decades, while others have completely immersed the Arabic language in religion. Such partial incorporation has led to results that do not serve the religion or develop the language. It is true that Arabic is the language of the Qur'an, but it is also true that it is a tool for wide social communication and thought. Further, the legacy of the Arabic language is much diversified with respect to philosophy, literature and science (and it has to deal with advanced information technologies), and it should promote interaction with world cultures, as language is considered the key symbolic expression of culture. In this regard, the over use of religious perspective in the teaching of the Arabic language leads to the exclusion of other components and promotes the use of foreign languages and colloquial Arabic to

fill the space (Adnan Al Amin, in Arabic, 2005).

Another trend has occurred in the process of developing curricula in the Arab region; overloading the Arabic language with nationalism as a political perspective. However, the results are comparable to those of the first trend (i.e. the religious perspective). Thus, the Arabic language has withdrawn from the fields of science, literature and philosophy and from dealing with world cultures. Loading the language with religion or nationalistic political rhetoric has caused its role to lessen, and has increased the gap between valuing the Arabic language by word, and devaluing it in reality (previous reference.). In their communication with the world, the children of the Arabic language have resorted to foreign languages in search of knowledge in a new world, but that happens in individual cases and not through national plans and comprehensive visions for achieving the Arab renaissance. Here, we must recognise the diversity of situations wherein the Arabic language is used and respect different approaches, maintain its diversity in religion, arts, science and technology, and master the basic principles, rules and concepts of each area of knowledge.

Therefore, it is necessary to make additional efforts to enhance the status of the Arabic language, reforming it and developing its teaching methods, and to consider it a tool contributing to the production of knowledge and not in isolation from the evolution of the knowledge society. Additionally, the teaching of foreign languages should be enhanced to be able to deal with the challenges of the information revolution, and the Arabic and foreign language skills among the Arab youth should be developed, beginning in the first stages of education, so they will be able to participate in the knowledge society. Likewise, foreign languages, especially English, are important tools to enable a wide range of young people to open up to and communicate with other societies. The experiences of the developing countries,

which have made tremendous progress in advancing towards the knowledge society, show that their interest in promoting foreign languages among children through reading, writing and understanding has been one of the key factors that contributed to the building of their renaissance based on science and technology. At the same time, interest in the native language is necessary to maintain society and achieve social communication and develop identity and citizenship. This has been substantiated by the results of field research conducted in the four Arab countries during the preparation of this report; 82.7% of teachers confirm that mastering a foreign language is among the factors influencing the preparation of future generations, while 78.8% of teachers support the importance of mastering the Arabic language (see Table 19 in the Annex).

CITIZENSHIP AND IDENTITY, AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE YOUTH'S INTEGRATION INTO THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

Citizenship is a relatively novel term; it means an individual's belonging to a country through a legal and political bond which gives him/her certain rights and duties. The ancient Greek origin of the word, 'citizenship' refers to a specific legal, political, and rights-related status in the state. The term has evolved over time due to the historical, social and political revolutions seeking democracy, freedom and equality. With historical developments, it has gained new dimensions in the context of human rights wherein it is not limited to the geographical location or spatial dimension or to the knowledge dimension only, but goes beyond them to the overall legal and political presence in the nation's structure. In light of the growing phenomenon of globalism, citizenship has taken a global dimension extending to the so-called 'global citizenship' whereby every human being is a citizen of the larger world we live in.

In the Arab countries, the adoption and

application of the concept of citizenship is an important step towards dealing with the issue of diversity and respect for minorities under the law and in everyday practice. In fact, citizenship does not only embody a vertical relationship between the citizen and state, but it also represents a horizontal relationship between citizens themselves, including all interactions in civil behaviour. Consequently, establishing citizenship becomes one of the fundamental tasks of the preparation of the young, particularly through education, media and enlightened religious upbringing which is appropriate to its era. This is to be done by focusing on the transfer of civil values of coexistence, cooperation and being a good neighbour to the young, to form a sense of belonging and desire to exercise the right of citizenship in an early stage of life, provided the rights of citizenship concerning political and social practices are guaranteed for all, including minorities. Indeed, without opportunities for productive engagement in civil life and a sense of equality and participation, some may feel exclusion, deprivation and discrimination, allowing the appearance of ethnic, religious, sectarian and linguistic loyalties that may exploit the situation and lead to fanaticism, intolerance and extremism, and eventually destructive conflicts. Such an atmosphere makes the young feel frustration, instability and insecurity, which may lead many to think about migration in search of other environments ensuring more democracy and respect for the rights to education, employment and a decent life.¹³

The knowledge society requires a citizen possessing the skills, values, concepts and knowledge of the knowledge age; an individual with full citizenship capable of joining global competition in a rapidly changing world.

In fact, open citizenship based on equality in human, economic and political rights which embraces global changes will enable new generations to deepen their sense of belonging to their homeland. At the same time, it stresses identity in its

Establishing citizenship becomes one of the fundamental tasks of the preparation of the young, particularly through education, media and enlightened religious upbringing which is appropriate to its era

growing and changing form, interacting with local and global variables. Hence, citizenship and identity are two correlated concepts and it is important to emphasise that identity does not come from the fixed characteristics of an individual or group, but it is a choice of several options that vary depending on circumstances. In the context of our vision of renaissance, citizenship is considered a standard concept that should contribute to the management of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity, and enable us to build a strong base for the establishment of democracy and freedom.

BOX 3-4

Identity and the problematic issue of history in the Arab world

There is no shame when nations relate themselves to their histories, but shame lies when history becomes a substitute for the present. The biggest shame is when identity keeps borrowing from history and is not the creation of the living themselves who are facing their problems and seeking solutions for them. Therefore, it is now the time for the Arab to replace the concept of historical identity with a functional concept, i.e., the current 'self-image', which requires turning away

from the historical approach of identity toward the problematic approach. That is, the way to build a positive self-image among the new Arabs can be framed by history, but also making its content include an awareness of contemporary Arab issues in line with the tremendous progress in science, economy and ethics achieved by humans in the last three centuries, and which has not been followed by the Arabs.

Source: Muhammad Jawad Reda, 2005