

## **Towards educational, political and social change: a case study**

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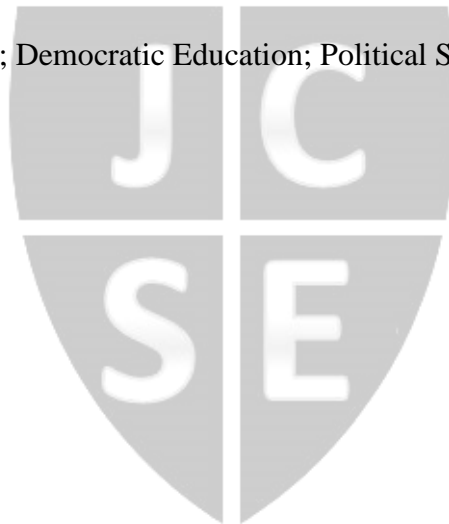
### **ABSTRACT**

Drawing on quantitative and qualitative data, this paper presents a field study that intends to examine whether young people graduating from high-school are equipped with the political knowledge and understanding necessary to participate effectively in democratic society.

In this mixed methods approach, a questionnaire was administered to 460 final year high-school Bahraini students, followed by in-depth interviews with a stratified sample of 22 students.

The findings provide valuable insights into the problems encountered by young Bahrainis as they engage in the process of political socialization. This helps the educators, curriculum designers and policy makers to build upon what Bahraini young people already know and understand, and revise the content and types of activities that should be introduced if effective learning is to take place.

Keywords: Education Policy; Democratic Education; Political Socialization; Youth; Political Knowledge.



## INTRODUCTION

Education in a modern society, from a political viewpoint, can be said to have two functions. On the one hand, it takes care of the social reproduction; on the other, it represents society's capacity for self-reflection and conscious political change (Straume, 2014).

Young people's awareness of civic and political knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions, develop slowly over time and as a result of what one learns and experiences in the home, school, community, and organizations of civil society. Citizens in a democracy are always engaging in politics in actual locations, like deliberating in public meetings, claiming rights in the courts or in the home, forming groups and networks or using public spaces to articulate demands (Brown, 1995). Those experiences should 'engender the understanding that democracy requires the responsible self-governance of each individual; one cannot exist without the other' (Branson, 2003: 7).

Politics and government are a necessity in any society and citizens cannot fulfil their potential without an effective political process and the establishment of a government which reflects the aspirations of people to live together (Leicester *et al.* 2005; Alqatam *et al.* 2002). Promoting individual security and public order, integrating diversity, achieving social equality, enhancing economic prosperity, protecting individual rights, promoting the common good, and establishing justice are some of the competing purposes of politics and government (Osler 2003; Parker 2003; Banks 2007).

In order to function successfully, modern political systems depend upon effective participation by their citizens. The important role of citizenship and politics in society would seem to suggest that citizenship education itself is necessary for all parts of society. The final report of 'The Development Education Commission' (DEC, 2000) illustrates that in the citizenship education context this usually involves 'participative democracy' implying continuous active involvement in the processes of local or national politics rather than simply using one's power as a voter to try to enable the election of the people or policies one supports.

More recently, Lister *et al.* (2003) suggests that young people's political knowledge and support for democratic values are greater in classrooms that encourage free discussion and participation than in traditional classrooms that emphasize rote memorization. This emphasizes the importance of political awareness and political interest.

While attention is rightly being paid to citizenship in the context of caring for others and knowing one's legal rights, the same level of attention has not been paid to preparing and encouraging people to understand and use their political rights (Leicester *et al.* 2005). Thus, practices and purposes must be understood, both local and national, including the work of parliaments, councils, parties, pressure groups and voluntary bodies. This is important 'to show how formal political activity relates to civil society, and to cultivate awareness and concern for world affairs and global issues' (QCA, 1998: 40). This political awareness, knowledge and understanding is necessary for the people to grasp both the inherent complexity of society and their rights and responsibilities within it. However, 'the relative presence or absence of political consciousness among the general public is a central problem of democratic theory' (Lawton *et al.*, 2000: 23).

Yet young people acquire knowledge about politics at school not only through formal classroom training. For example, a school system may have a mandated political curriculum with clearly defined goals, objectives, content, and activities for each grade level. However, they also acquire the knowledge about politics through informal experiences and indirect kinds of learning, such as class elections, extracurricular activities, and group interactions. A report about the school curriculum and the culture of Scotland (Scottish CCC, 1999), states that:

... an understanding of the political structures and processes, of rights, obligations, law, justice and democracy will not be sufficient. The curriculum should go further, by seeking to develop young people's insights into the major political issues and ... by fostering a sense of active and responsible citizenship. The imperative should not be to impart mere information, but to equip young people with the capability to engage actively in issues arising in these and other fields (Section 2).

In an attempt to bring some much needed clarity to this field, this paper examines young people's conceptions of the term "democracy", investigates whether young people view their school as democratic and explore their awareness of their political role in a democracy.

Given the importance of effective citizenship education, it is important for this study that students' political understandings and attitudes are identified and ways of measuring these and any changes that result from engaging in civics and political education be developed.

## **PART I: BACKGROUND**

This part presents a general background for the study. It illustrates the relationship between education and political socialization. It reviews the literature on the concept of democracy and highlights its relationship to citizenship. It also discusses the role of the school in developing school-community relations by involving students in their community. In addition, it looks at political socialization, and how schools promote political education by developing young people's political knowledge and understanding.

### **Education and Political Socialization**

Although a number of factors influence political socialization - family, education, media, peers and groups, and organizations - the school is the principal institution in society formally charged with teaching the younger generation about political society and citizenship (Abujado 1998; QCA 1998; Zaff *et al.* 2008). As childhood and adolescence are the formative stages for developing social and political orientations, most of the focus is on political socialization in the educational setting that occurs in the primary and secondary school system (Lister *et al.*, 2003). In particular, schools can socialize their members to become valued members, i.e. good citizens, who can function well in any specific community. Therefore, schools have the responsibility to stress to the young people the importance of local political involvement. Thus, Political socialization is defined as the process of learning political attitudes and behaviour through social interaction (Braungart and Braungart, 1998). Lawton *et al.* (2000) note that:

Politically undereducated or ill-educated and inactive members of societies are dangerous because they can misrepresent the complexity of humanity and opt for simplistic solutions based on populist politics, often encouraging authoritarian and undemocratic solutions to complex societal issues (p.23).

In addition, Lawton *et al.* (2000) believe that 'education systems with a citizenship education syllabus would enable the emergence of thinking citizens who would be less likely to seek solutions to conflicts through violence' (p.23).

Several terms are presently used interchangeably to refer to institutionalised forms of political knowledge acquisition. In this thesis, the different terms used in political socialization as mentioned above will be used interchangeably to refer to the process of political socialization in their specific contexts. These include 'political education', 'citizenship education', 'political literacy', and 'political knowledge'. In the USA and Europe, the terms citizenship education, civic education or political education are used to specify the type of political socialization process by which members are socialized into becoming participating democratic citizens who accept the democratic values and norms of their governing ideologies (Hahn, 1998). In the UK, terms like political education, used in the 1980s, may be taken to mean the same as citizenship education which is currently used (Derricot, 1998). The Great Britain Commission of Citizenship (1990) identifies the goal of citizenship education in the UK as being that:

Young people should leave school with some confidence in their ability to participate in their society, to resolve conflict and, if they oppose a course of action, to express that opposition fairly, effectively and peacefully (p.18).

Thus, 'at some stage all young people should gain some awareness of what politics is about' (Lawton *et al.*, 2000: 11). In the Bahraini context, citizenship education, in a broad sense, comprises political education, and moral education, which are regarded as being inextricably intertwined. In the past, political education, embedded in citizenship education textbooks, was education about loyalty to the nation, the state and the social institutions (Wehbe, 1992). Moral education, integrated in the school curriculum, is education about the behavioural norms governing the relationship between individuals (Ministry of Education, 2001). The citizens were, therefore, expected to incorporate the official values and norms in order to become the moral citizens of the political community.

Citizenship education has been an ongoing matter of academic and political debate (Gifford, 2004) and this debate, especially in democratic societies, on educating young people and adults for politics and citizenship is no clear-cut matter (Lister *et al.* 2003; Osler and Starkey 2003). In this sense, the debate over political socialization as a force for stability or for change permeates many of the controversies in education. Contrasting perspectives are evident in political socialization theory and research as well as in educational programs designed to teach students about society and politics. For example, some researchers and educators view the relationship between political socialization and education as largely concerned with training students to fit into the political system and display conventional citizenship behaviour (Parker, 2003). Heater (1990) analyses the nature of institutionalised political socialization process and argues that,

The style of political education will be affected by the perceived purpose of the school system as a whole. This in turn may well be determined by the political regime. This purpose itself will be related to the kind of involvement in politics expected of the individual. And this expectation will be shaped by basic assumptions concerning the way people can and should behave in society (p.211).

Political socialization considered an important source of societal and political stability (Algam *et al.* 2002; Althof and Berkowitz 2006). However, cognitive and developmental theories in psychology, along with conflict theories in sociology, view the individual as actor in his or her socialization process and emphasize the struggle over political power among competing groups in society (Abujado, 1998). Thus, although adults attempt to inculcate political values and norms, young people perceive, interpret, and respond in their own ways, with generational and group conflict a significant source of political change (Braungart and Braungart, 1998). Gifford (2004) maintains that:

If citizenship education is to have the potential to transform a political culture, as Crick suggests, then it is necessary to identify exactly how this is going to occur (p.145).

It is likely that subsequent school experiences are selectively filtered to conform to the young person's existing political beliefs. Interaction with teachers and political experiences that confirm the student's political orientations are internalized whereas those that run contrary to the student's political orientations are likely to be dismissed (Lister *et al.*, 2003).

Studies looking at young people's political participation have found that a great deal of disparity exists between men and women in terms of their interest in political and electoral affairs, and in their connection with politics (Fahmy, 2003). Interest in political affairs is also directly linked with educational level and the conditions under which social integration occurs (Lister *et al.*, 2003). Any democratic society must concern itself with the socialization of its citizens. If the goal of political socialization is ultimately to promote democracy and competent citizenship, then this should begin in childhood, and schools are critical to this process to reflect the spirit of democracy (Althof and Berkowitz, 2006).

### **Citizenship and Democracy**

Knowledge and appreciation of democracy as a political system and form of civic life requires an understanding of the basic concept of democracy (Patrick, 2003). The word democracy is derived from the Greek words δῆμος (dēmos) or 'people' and κράτος (kratos) meaning 'power' or 'rule'. Hence, 'democracy' δημοκρατία (dēmokratía) can be defined simply as 'rule of the people' (Wikipedia, 2014) or, as defined by Weale (2006), 'it is the rule of the citizen' (p.20) that is 'necessarily tied to the nation-state' (p.21). In other words, it is a system where the population of a society controls the government.

Understanding the concept of 'democracy', however, is more complex and demanding than merely defining a word. Building on the earliest origins of the word, the concept of democracy as 'popular self-government' rests on the principle that the people as a whole are considered the foundation of political life and the common citizen has a voice in politics (Bahmueller, 1992). The people are the ultimate source of authority, their interests and welfare are the principal targets of government, and their rights are the foundation of justice, the ultimate standard of the good society (Patrick, 2002). Thus, liberty is the fundamental precondition for the very concept of self-government, which embraces both individual and collective aspects of self-rule.

As noticed democracies are built on the belief that people should be free, should have choices and opportunities, and should work together to make each other's lives better. A commitment to democracy potentially affects and transforms all aspects of human life, especially those that pertain to the relationships of persons in any community. These may include the workplace, the school, the arts, the family, other personal relationships, and even the mentality of a people. Hence, the concept of citizenship is a key to the comprehension of

what democracy is and how it works. This concept links belonging and governing; the two are synonymous because in a democracy all citizens are equal members of the polity (QCA 1998; Osler 2003), which means that there are no classes of citizenship, no second class citizens. As stated earlier, citizens are the ultimate source of the authority of their government. Therefore, democracy is a form of government in which all citizens can directly participate in the decision-making process. In other words, citizens have the right to form a government and to participate in the decisions of their government for the benefit of all citizens. In this sense, the UN Development Programme (UNDP, 2002) states that:

Democratic governance in this fast changing environment is about more than people having the right to vote. It must be about strengthening democratic institutions ... and it must be about promoting democratic politics that make participation and public accountability possible (p. 61).

In brief, democracies provide a wide range of means by which citizens can participate in civic and political life and attempt to influence the actions of government at local and national levels.

The structure and process of democracy affects, and is affected by people's sense and practice of citizenship. Torney-Purta *et al.* (2001) and Fahmy (2003) observe that the more young people know about democratic institutions and processes, the more likely they are to vote as adults. In addition, the more strongly they perceive that their schools teach about the importance of voting, the more likely they are to indicate that they will vote.

Citizenship can simply be viewed as a legal status in a country, however, citizenship in a democracy (*i.e.* democratic citizenship) is more than a legal status, it is a character or spirit, an ethos that guides relationships among persons and animates individual commitment to fundamental principles of democracy (Patrick, 2003). Democratic citizenship 'entails becoming informed about issues that affect individuals and participating with others in determining how society will resolve those issues' (Portelli and Solomon, 2001: 12).

Thus, schooling has a potentially powerful role to play in the development of democratic citizenship. There is a growing acceptance of this within international agencies, and it is acknowledged in the Bahraini government education policy statements.

### **Democratic Models: Schools and Classrooms Ethos**

Young people need democratic models operating in their daily lives and opportunities to exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities. In the same vein, Bhatti (1999: 103) argues that 'children's experiences at schools help to shape their attitudes towards learning and can have a lasting effect on some of their future aspirations and preferences'. In her study, Bhatti shows the crucial role schools and teachers, in particular, play in children's lives. She argues that 'teachers can change children's lives' and that 'a positive attitude among teachers and schools will certainly make a difference for all children' (p.241).

In schools, this kind of learning experience in civics and government is likely to develop the cognitive, participatory skills and dispositions among students necessary for citizenship in a democracy (Patrick, 2002). Thus, the ethos, organisation, structures and daily practices of schools including whole school activities and assemblies have a significant impact on the effectiveness of citizenship education (QCA, 1998). Schools need to consider how far their ethos, organisation and daily practices are consistent with the aims and purposes of citizenship education and affirm and extend the development of students into active citizens (QCA 1998; Lawton *et al.* 2000).

In doing so, students gain such exposure 'by being surrounded by practices, symbols, groups and individuals that reinforce the message that democracy is important' (Torney-Purta and Vermeer, 2006: 21). According to Lawton *et al.* (2000: 15), 'it is not only what children are taught and what they learn but also their actual experiences at school which contribute to their understanding of their rights and their responsibilities as future citizens'. As a result, a democratic school ethos is important and this needs to be experienced in the context of the wider community.

In a democratic school community, relationships are based on shared values rather than bureaucratic roles, resulting in individuals, who care, listen, understand, respect others and are honest, open and sensitive (Sergiovanni, 1994). A good deal of evidence now exists suggesting that a positive school community, i.e. staff members and students share a vision for the future of the school, care about, trust, and respect each other, provides a necessary foundation for school improvement. This can facilitate teachers' instructional efforts and enhance students' personal well-being (Royal and Rossi, 1997).

Through developing such practices and the associated ethos schools provide implicit and explicit messages which can have a considerable influence on students' learning and development (QCA, 1998). There is evidence that a positive relationship exists between a democratic school climate and the development of democratic civic knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour among students (Carnegie Corporation and CIRCLE, 2003).

Broadly speaking, promoting active and responsible citizenship comprises not only helping young people to acquire relevant civic knowledge and skills through studies of various topics or subjects, but also giving them the chance to experience democracy, which is likely to make them active and responsible citizens now and later in their lives.

### **Open Discussion and Democratic Values**

Researchers such as Hahn (1998) and Torney-Purta *et al.* (2001) highlight the importance of creating and maintaining a classroom climate that is conducive to a free and open exchange of opinions about public issues and other controversial topics. They believe that this kind of classroom practice is related to the development of such civic dispositions as tolerance, civility, propensity to participate, and political interest.

Torney-Purta and Schwille (1986) observe that when students participate in classroom discussions and are encouraged to express their opinions, they are more politically knowledgeable and interested, and less authoritarian. On the other hand, students who are taught through an emphasis on lectures and patriotic rituals tend to be more authoritarian and less knowledgeable about politics. Furthermore, they argue that the stress on patriotism may actually harm support for civil liberties.

Simpson and Daly (2005) conducted a study of discussion-based citizenship education for post-16 students in Northern Ireland over a period of 18 months. The study showed that an overwhelming majority of the students involved gave comprehensive and positive evaluations of a citizenship course that was reliant upon a discussion-based form of education. Democracy needs to be experienced by students in order for them to internalise democratic values and beliefs (Parker 2003). Osler and Vincent (2002) maintain:

Democracy is best learned in a democratic setting where participation is encouraged, where views can be expressed openly and discussed, where there is freedom of expression for pupils and teachers, and where there is fairness and justice (p.3).

Such engagement can be through school council and in students' daily encounters with aspects of school life (QCA, 1998). The most important overall conclusion of the IEA (1999) is that schools can prepare their students for responsible and effective engagement in a democracy by helping them to acquire knowledge about fundamental democratic processes and skills and providing them with opportunities for open and respectful discussion of opinions in the classroom. It stresses that through the school curriculum, and through providing an open classroom climate for discussion and inquiry, schools seem to be effective in promoting both civic and political knowledge and engagement (Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001). Rowe (2001) argues that:

Children will learn about democracy and their rights to be heard if class and school rules are open to constructive criticism, and if children are invited to contribute to the running of the school as significant members of it (p.41).

However, Banks (2007: 10) maintains that 'the democratic ideals taught in citizenship lessons are contradicted by practices such as racism, sexism, social-class stratification, and inequality'. For Banks, this contradiction creates a 'citizenship education dilemma'. He points out that:

In nation-states throughout the world, citizenship education programs and curricula are trying to teach students democratic ideals and values within social, economic, political, and educational contexts that contradict democratic ideals such as justice, equality, and human rights (p.10).

Osler (2003) reminds us of the Council of Europe Recommendation, R (1985) 7, regarding the need to reaffirm democratic values in the face of the re-emergence of the public expression of racist and xenophobic attitudes. The European Commission in its review of training programmes on active citizenship looked explicitly at the ways in which such programmes sought to promote equality and challenge racism. The literature indicates that democratic values do not necessarily emerge from classroom instruction but that schools can, however, cultivate them in many ways, including creating democratic schools and classrooms, involving students in service-learning programmes and linking the discussion of democratic values to current policy debates.

### **School-Community Relations**

Research shows that successful school-community relations exist in schools where communication is open, participation is widespread, teamwork is common and diversity is incorporated (QCA 1998; Royal and Rossi 1997). This can enhance students' social development and provide them with experiences necessary to prepare them for full participation in a democratic society. It provides students with a sense of competence, belonging, usefulness, and experiences that increase their resilience to stresses in life. In addition, as observed, it should be remembered that citizens who exhibit the highest levels of politicization and participation in political life are those who are the best integrated within society.

Research also indicates that schools can play an effective role in promoting positive citizenship by involving students in their communities (Patrick, 2002). Students demand a strong involvement with others. This involvement is a direct expression of the way a person



relates to the world around him or her. Zaff *et al.* (2008) maintain that promoting positive citizenship should begin with an opportunity for students to participate in activities, such as community service or political volunteering, which is linked to the formal curriculum.

Therefore, a program of civic education can teach citizenship through a combination of schooling and community service is recommended. Such efforts can be nurtured through students' involvement in a range of practical projects dealing with, for example, the school environment and through helping others in voluntary service. This can help students (young citizens) renew their commitment to the national community through service to the local community. The QCA (1998: 40) stresses the importance of learners' involvement in community affairs. Such learners not only tend to be more involved and better citizens, but also significantly improve their academic knowledge and skills, and tend to stay involved throughout their lives.

Moreover, Newton (2002) argues that the 'need to have some real curriculum time for citizenship is counter balanced by the importance of recognising that it cannot be delivered through the formal curriculum alone' (p.527). In short, Newton calls for recognition of the fact that effective citizenship education requires a whole school dimension including behaviour policy and opportunities for pupil participation in school and the wider community. This is emphasized by Kennedy (2003) who maintains that:

Authentic teaching moves beyond abstract academic concepts and gives students opportunities to engage with both the knowledge they are expected to learn...and with activities that will give them experience with the practice of democracy both in their classrooms and outside their classrooms (p.65).

The Commission on Citizenship (1990) stresses that providing opportunities for learning through community experiences are an indispensable springboard for encouraging students to make voluntary contributions in later life. 'Partnerships between schools and the community can assist collaborative working towards positive participative citizenship' (Leicester *et al.*, 2005: 96). This can be seen when young people contribute to the polity by informing themselves about public affairs and by sharing their views with other citizens and with elected representatives, participating through organizations or through established associations and social movements, participating in political parties and voting in the elections (Alqhatam, *et al.*, 2002).

Thus, the literature indicated that through youth participation in the education component of community service programs as well as through participating in activities, students have a greater knowledge of the world around them, and a better understanding of the political process. In addition, students' sense of community is greatly related to their engagement in school activities that increases their understanding of their role and responsibilities as citizens, and develops a growing sensitivity to diverse cultures. Chi (2002) finds that community-service projects promote active models of citizenship that foster the heart and soul aspects of citizenship, including caring for and taking action to benefit other individuals of the community. Accordingly, it helps students acquire the skills, values, knowledge and practice necessary to be effective citizens.

To sum up, whatever the context or focus for learning, the opportunities provided in schools make important contributions to the process of educating for active and responsible citizenship. These learning experiences provide opportunities for the development of students' capabilities and encourage their active involvement in the local community in which they live in order to participate as responsible citizens.

In conclusion, this paper has critically analysed the relevant literature on 'democracy' and 'political education', at an international level, while keeping in mind the Bahraini context. The literature review makes it clear that the process of enabling young people to adopt his/her role as a citizen, to realise their rights and fulfil their responsibilities is related to the issue of civic and political socialization. Therefore, the school has a special role to play in shaping the lives of young people. It has a major effect on the civic attitudes of children, and for teaching knowledge about citizenship responsibilities. As Rowe (2001) noted such values, perspectives, knowledge, and skill in civic matters, make responsible and effective civic participation possible.

## **PART II: METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

### **Research Design**

The study presented here was a part of a wider research project, which aimed to examine whether young people graduating from high school are equipped with political knowledge and understanding necessary to participate effectively as citizens in a Bahraini context. It provides valuable insights that are firmly grounded in the contemporary institutional context of democratic citizenship, and meet the needs of the citizenship education that Bahrain requires at this preliminary stage. These insights have helped shape the conceptual framework for the study that is organized into three domains: citizenship, community and identity; rights, responsibilities and law; democracy, politics and government. This paper focuses on the third domain that is democracy, politics and government.

### **Aim and Objectives**

The main aim of the study is to examine whether young people graduating from high school (grade 12) in Bahrain are equipped with the civic and political knowledge and understandings necessary to participate effectively as citizens.

The specific objectives of the research are as follows:

- a. To identify what young people understand by the term 'democracy'.
- b. To explore to what extent young people are aware of their political role in a democracy.
- c. To investigate whether young people view their school as democratic.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The above issues were explored with reference to young people's background characteristics, i.e. gender and place of residence based on the following hypothesis:

There is a statistically significant relationship at the  $p < 0.05$  level, between young people's background characteristics (i.e. gender and place of residence) and their

- understanding by the term 'democracy'.
- awareness of their political role in a democracy.
- view of their school as being democratic.

Each of these sets of relationships was explored further through the analysis of qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews.

## **Mixed Methods Approach**

In this study, the main source of the quantitative data came from a survey questionnaire and the qualitative data came from in-depth interviews. For the purpose of this study, a semi-structured interview schedule was formulated, and open-ended questions were focused around particular topics and was guided by some general questions. The main purpose of the interview in this study was to gain insights into students' political knowledge and understanding and to concentrate on the concrete details of the young people's present experience of politics, and their own understanding of their experience.

## **Selecting the Sample**

### *Survey Sample*

For the purpose of this study, a stratified random sampling approach was adopted. The nature of this study required that the sample be 12th grade students at secondary level for three reasons: First, the study was to examine the background political knowledge of students graduating from government schools of Bahrain to investigate the extent to which they had gained the knowledge, skills and values the national curriculum provides for Bahraini students. Second, to meet the aims of the research, it was necessary that the subjects had considerable experience of the Bahraini education system, and be able to complete a survey questionnaire, which contained high-level cognitive questions related to some aspects of citizenship. Third, the students were young people aged 18 years who had started to get their civic rights as adults and had begun to shape their attitudes and values as well. Therefore, these secondary school students in grade-12 were deemed to be more appropriate for the study than those who were in the lower levels of schooling. In summary, this cohort of students was selected because they represented the outcome of the educational system in Bahrain, particularly in regard to citizenship education.

The author focused on obtaining as representative a range of responses as possible to enable me to fulfil the objectives of my study and to provide answers to key questions. The target population consisted of 9191 students, aged 17-18 years, who were registered in grade-12. This included 4888 female students (53.2%) and 4303 male students (46.8%). Based on this number, I decided to choose five per cent from the total students' population for the study (5% of 9191 = 459.55). This was a manageable sample which still enabled me to generalise from the findings. Hence, 460 students from grade-12 were selected within one month. They were chosen randomly (by using a table of random numbers) from all secondary schools (12 Boys' and 14 Girls'). I then determined the number from each stratum to be sampled: Girls' (5% of 4888 = 244.40); Boys' (5% of 4303 = 215.15). Following this, permission to carry out the survey was obtained and the Girls' and Boys' schools were approached to administer the survey.

Thus, the sample of the study was a stratified sample of 460 (215 male and 245 female) Bahraini students in grade-12 in secondary third level, who had experienced the formal national curriculum implemented by the Bahraini Ministry of Education. The average age of the students was 18 years. All students were at the same level during the entire study year. The students came from socioeconomic backgrounds reflective of the social structure of the country. A sample of 54.5 per cent of students was from rural areas, and 45.4 per cent of students were from urban areas.

***Sample needed for the survey drawn from each School***

245	<u>Female students</u>	= 16 girls from each school 15 schools
215	<u>Male students</u>	= 16 boys from each school 13 schools

There are five governorates in Bahrain. These are Middle, Capital, Muharraq, Northern, and Southern. In the sample, 38.5 per cent (20.9% male and 17.6% female) were from the Middle governorate; 22.4 per cent (14.6% male and 7.8% female) were from the Capital, Manama. 17.0 per cent (5.2% male and 11.7% female) were from Muharraq and 17 per cent (5.9% male and 11.1% female) were from the Northern governorate while only 5.2 per cent of female students were from the Southern governorate. Each school enrolls students from a given catchment area, which contains families who originate from different areas of Bahrain. This diversity provided a range of students for the study in terms of their views and background knowledge of citizenship and politics.

The students came from families with varied backgrounds. Their parents had received education at different levels (i.e. 9.1 per cent of mothers were postgraduates, 29.1 per cent were graduates, 33.9 per cent had finished secondary education, and 23 per cent had finished elementary education while 4.8 per cent of mothers had no formal qualifications at all). The highest percentage of mothers was those who had received secondary education and who were undergraduates. Considering fathers, 4.6 per cent of fathers were postgraduates, 24.3 per cent were graduates, 33.7 per cent had completed secondary education, and 28 per cent had finished elementary education, while only 9.3 per cent of fathers had no formal qualifications. It can be observed that while students' parents were relatively well qualified overall, a higher percentage of mothers was qualified compared to the fathers.

According to the Bahraini literature and my personal observations, gender and place of residence can have a profound influence on Bahraini young people's perceptions of citizenship. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, two crucial variables, i.e. 'Gender' and 'Place of Residence' were focussed on. There were two reasons for investigating students' background characteristics in such a way; first, to limit the research so that it focussed on how the students' background characteristics affected specific civic and political knowledge and understanding; second, to identify possible reasons for the current problems in the citizenship education curriculum and to find possible solutions for these problems.

***Sample for In-depth Study***

As noted above, the study sample was a stratified sample of 460 (215 male and 245 female) Bahraini students in grade-12 in secondary level and represented five per cent of the whole study population (9191). To be consistent with the survey study sample, the interview sample comprised 22 students, which was five per cent of the survey sample, twelve girls and ten boys. Moreover, half of these selected were from rural areas and the other half of them were from urban areas to examine a range of different experiences. Four Secondary Schools in Bahrain from the Middle governorate were used to conduct the interviews. Two schools (one boys' and one girls') were in rural areas and two schools (one boys' and one girls') were in urban areas.

## **Data Analysis**

### ***Analysis of Survey Data***

Data analysis is conducted according to a predetermined set of criteria and hypotheses. The quantitative data, both nominal and ordinal, were obtained from the questionnaire and analysed by using descriptive statistics with the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The Chi-square test was used to allow for comparison of observed frequencies between the groups and indicates whether any found differences are statistically significant. In this case the null hypothesis is that the two factors are independent. If the calculated P-value is low ( $P < 0.05$ ), then the null hypothesis is rejected and the researcher accepts the alternative hypothesis that there is a relation between the two factors.

In addition to Chi-square, I used the Mann-Whitney U test to analyse the ordinal data that was generated through the questionnaires. The Mann-Whitney Test is one of the most powerful non-parametric tests for comparing two populations with ordinal-level variables. This test is used when members of two categories can be ranked in terms of their scores on the same variable.

### ***Analysis of Interview Data***

In the in-depth study, I was interested in exploring participants' perceptions of the concepts and themes, which were found to be important when studying their responses to the questions in the questionnaire. The semi-structured interview schedule enabled me to gather rich data.

Such qualitative data need to be sorted and managed into what is useful for the purpose of the study being undertaken. In this research, the data that was generated through semi-structured interviews was analysed manually. Since my qualitative research sample was small, and I had already decided on the themes which emerged from the survey questionnaire, I chose not to use a software package to code the qualitative data.

The tape recorded interviews were transcribed. Notes were taken during or after the interviews to record emotions and other reactions expressed by the interviewees during the interview. The transcripts were studied to explore responses about the key themes presented in the conceptual framework of the study. Further, the responses were examined to bring out the commonalities and the divergences in the young people's understanding of aspects related to citizenship. While performing this analysis, the responses of the interviewees were studied in relation to the research hypotheses and the conceptual and theoretical background of the study.

### ***Triangulation of Survey and Interview Data***

After they were analysed, the interview data was triangulated with the survey data. This was done by comparing interview transcripts with written documentation of the quantitative data from the questionnaire. This process helped to establish connections between data sub-sets. These two sources of data were integrated, discussed and interpreted. The data gathered by questionnaires and interviews was analysed.

## **PART III: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

This part analyses young people's conceptions of the term 'democracy', their awareness of their political role in a democracy, and investigates if young people view their

school as a democratic institution. Besides the statistical analysis derived from the survey data, a range of quotations are presented in the analysis below in order to provide an indication of the various ways in which young people conceptualise the term 'democracy' and some other themes related to the democratic process. This is done by analysing the quantitative data gathered through questionnaires and the qualitative data collected through interviews and questionnaire. It should, however, be borne in mind that the quotations are not representative of all responses to the questions, and thus are used solely for illustrative purposes.

### Young People's Conceptions of Democracy

In the survey questionnaire, young people were asked about the meaning of the term 'democracy' in an open-ended question to provide them with the opportunity to describe, in their own words, any understandings they currently held of the term. Given that the political reform movement and the transition towards democracy in Bahrain occurred in 2002, people (adult citizens) had been able to practise their political rights for four years only at the time of this survey. It was probably unsurprising that some young people (14.1%) stated that they did not know what the term 'democracy' meant. However, the vast majority (85.9%) of young people provided a definition of this concept. Table 1 below presents young people's conceptions of the term 'democracy'.

**Table 1: Young people's conceptions of 'Democracy'**

Democracy means:	Male	Female	Sig. (Gen. )
	%	%	
Do not Know/ no answer	6.1	8.0	
Freedom	24.1	30.2	
Rights and responsibilities	5.4	4.6	
Participate in decision-making	4.6	4.1	*
Equality	3.9	4.3	
Rule of people	2.6	2.0	
Total (100 %)	46.7	53.3	

\* P<0.05

Statistically, a significant gender difference ( $\chi^2=11.561$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p<0.041$ ) existed between young people and their conception of democracy. Young females were more likely to define democracy as freedom and equality. In contrast, to more young males, democracy meant rights and responsibilities, participation and the rule of people.

For the purpose of this analysis, responses from young people in the survey questionnaire and those from the interviews were grouped into five thematic categories, which represented what democracy meant for young people, they were: freedom, equality, participation, rights and responsibilities and rule of people. Details of young people's responses in each of these categories are outlined below.

### Freedom

To more than a half of the sample, the majority of whom were young females, 'democracy' meant 'freedom'. Young people noted that: 'Democracy means freedom of thinking as well as freedom of expressing opinions, and most importantly, freedom in

choosing our religion and in having our own faith' (Mariam, rural female). Moreover, democracy meant 'to be free in choosing anything in life and saying anything without fear' (Hasan, rural male), 'exchanging viewpoints with others and taking the best out of it' (Mooza, urban female) and it also means 'no dictatorship' (Jaffer, rural male).

### **Equality**

To a few young people, democracy meant equality. In interviews, some young people said that 'Democracy means to me justice and equality between people and that all citizens have a voice' (Hasan, rural male). Also: '... in a political or in an economical democracy, the people have a voice' (Zain, urban female).

### **Participation**

Analysis of this question shows that more young males recognised the importance of participation in the democratic process, and stated that democracy was 'participating in decision-making'. This was elaborated further by one student:

In a democracy, people should participate in the affairs of the country and get involved in everything related to their life in this land. They should have a say in what happens instead of going along with the government's decisions. These decisions should be discussed and evaluated (Hameed, rural male).

Other young people understood 'democracy' as sharing their views with other citizens and said: 'Democracy is about understanding, sharing different ideas with others, and accepting others' opinion even if this opinion is different from mine' (Razan, urban female).

### **Rights and Responsibilities**

The young people also recognised that their participation in the democratic process was motivated by a sense of personal responsibility for promoting and protecting the rights of all citizens. As indicated earlier, almost the same proportion of both male and young females indicated that democracy also meant 'rights and responsibilities. One student stated:

Democracy is giving and taking; it is about taking rights and giving responsibilities. Everyone in this country should have the right to express their views freely (Nadeen, urban female).

### **Rule of the People**

Very few young people, the majority of them were young males, indicated that democracy was 'the rule of the people's. An interviewee stated that democracy meant: 'The nation governs itself. That means the people in a nation rule themselves, work with each other, and deliberate their views before taking decisions' (Safa, urban female). Another student also recognised this and went on to say that 'Democracy means considering people's views more than the government's views (Mazin, urban male).

## Perceptions of Bahrain as a Democracy

In interviews, young people were asked whether they thought Bahrain was a democratic country and to give reasons for their answer. Interestingly, almost all young people from the urban areas thought that Bahrain was democratic while, contrarily, almost all young people from the rural areas thought that Bahrain was not democratic. To young urbans, Bahrain was democratic because of the freedom that the citizens had. This quotation summarizes the perception of most young people from urban areas:

Yes, Bahrain is democratic; it has a parliament; 98% Bahraini citizens voted for the national charter in 2002. There is a big difference between what Bahrain was and what it is now. There is freedom of expression. People can comment on anything and newspapers can present different topics, like political and youth debates without hesitation (Razan, urban female).

On the other hand, almost all young people from rural areas had different views and thought that Bahrain was not democratic for various reasons, such as: 'Theoretically Bahrain is a democratic country, but in reality it is not because citizens' basic rights are not granted. There is inequality as some ministries are serving only one group of citizens' (Rehab, rural female).

Other reasons that the young people mentioned for not considering Bahrain as democratic included the fact that 'the ruling regime is hereditary and not elected' (Qassim, rural male), 'it doesn't offer a decent standard of living to its citizens' (Ali, rural male) and 'we can't express our opinions freely' (Fatma, rural female). Moreover, Jaffer a rural male said 'there is no democracy and absolute authority is given to the ruler's family'. One student was hopeful about Bahraini democracy and said: 'Enshallah [God willing], Bahrain will be more democratic because our democracy has just begun and we can't judge it yet' (Salman, urban male).

## Their Chosen Country

Furthermore, young people were asked if they had a choice to be a citizen of any country in the world, which country they would choose. Almost all of young people chose their country 'Bahrain' except five young people who chose other countries. To shed light on this finding, the responses of the young people, who chose Bahrain as the country they felt happiest belonging to and who wanted to remain as its citizens, are presented as follows: 'I will choose no other country; I am Bahraini. I like Bahrain because it is my homeland, I have lived here for 18 years and it is the place where I was born' (Ayat, rural female); 'because my family, friends and everybody that I know lives in Bahrain' (Hameed, rural male); 'it is a country that is trying to improve in all sectors' (Mariam, rural female); 'I prefer to be a Bahraini citizen, because of the feeling of love that I have for my homeland' (Zain, urban female). On the other hand, interestingly, all urban young males who were interviewed chose other countries. The countries they chose, and the reasons for choosing them, are as follows: 'I would choose to live in Canada, because I have lived there for sometime, and I have visited it so many times' (Khalid, urban male); 'I would choose to live in the United Arab Emirates, because it gives its people more rights than anywhere else' (Ahmed, urban male); 'I will choose Qatar, because their standard of living is higher' (Mustafa, urban male); 'I would choose Japan, because it is an advanced country. It is peaceful, and its people have a decent



life style' (Salman, urban male); and finally, 'I would choose Switzerland, because it's safe and one can live peacefully' (Mazin, urban male).

### **Self-Image about Being Democratic**

Most young citizens perceived themselves as democratic people, a considerable number of them saw themselves as undemocratic, and a very few saw themselves as being both. Those who saw themselves as democratic believed that they were so because; 'I listen to my friends' opinions; I understand the problems, and I discuss the problems or any issues that may arise between us with them' (Mooza, urban female); 'I participate in my school's activities, and the activities and programmes of my community. I fight for my rights and rights of others' (Ayat, rural female); 'I do not participate in the vandalism that is sometimes carried out by young people, and I serve my country' (Mustafa, urban male) and 'I don't impose my viewpoint on others and I accept others viewpoints' (Mazin urban male). Those young people, who perceived themselves as undemocratic, thought that mainly for the following reasons:

I'm not a democratic person, because I take decisions on my own without referring to, or consulting with anyone and because I have not voted at the elections yet (Ali, rural male).

The young people who could not decide if they were democratic or not, saw themselves as being both, for Example:

Sometimes I consider myself as a democratic person, because I respect my community's viewpoints and I practise democracy with my colleagues, and sometimes I'm not because sometimes I force my ideas on others, and I sometimes do wrong things; This is the reality (Zain, urban female).

### **Models of Democracy**

The young people were asked if they had met any democratic people in their life or if they found any institutions that practise democracy. Some of their comments were 'my family is democratic. We understand each other, discuss our problems and consult each other in decision making, we can express our opinion freely whether it is right or wrong' (Safa, urban female); 'my father is a democratic person; he lets us express our opinions without restrictions' (Raqia, rural female); 'my school principal is democratic with us as young people, she tries to find out our needs and finds suitable solutions. She is like a mother to all students' (Reem, urban female); 'our teachers are practicing democracy because we have freedom of expression' (Salman, urban male). Other young people mentioned particular people such as, 'the King is also democratic; he tries to find out about the needs of the Bahraini people's (Nadeen, urban female); 'Sayed Al Ghurafi, one of the religious leaders and Shaikh Ali Salman, one of the most prominent activists in Bahrain who are calling for citizen's rights and trying to solve different problems' (Jaffer, rural male). Those who referred to particular institutions and societies as democratic thought that 'there are some democratic models such as Alwifaq, a political society that is really practicing democracy, taking decisions only after consulting its members and, in addition, the board members are elected' (Ali, rural male) and 'The Islamic Awareness Society and The Islamic scholars Council both have an electoral system' (Hameed, rural male). Furthermore, a young citizen mentioned a

training programme he had participated in and found it to be democratic. Ahmed, an urban male, said:

Yes, there is the Youth Achievement Program, which I think is democratic. In this particular program, no one dictates his point of view on others, there is a democratic consultative committee, and everyone expresses his viewpoints freely.

### The Role of the Government

In order to identify what young people knew about the role of the 'government', they were asked to comment on their knowledge in an open-ended question. Of the total, 132 young people (28.7%) did not answer this question. However, 71.3 per cent of young people did attempt to identify the role of the 'government'. Their responses are presented in table below.

**Table 2: Conceptions of the role of the 'government'**

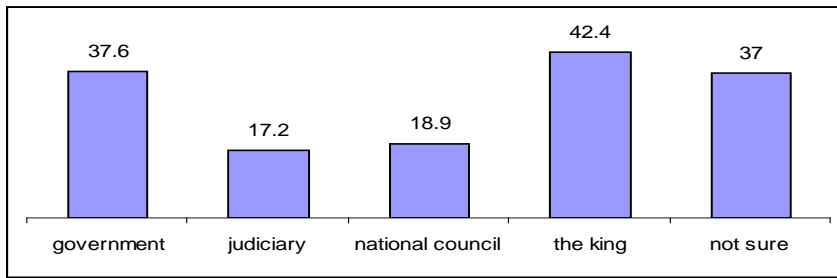
Government	Percentage	Male	Female	Sig. (Gen.)
		%	%	
Do not know / no answer	28.7	17.2	11.5	**
Devise laws	28.7	11.7	17.0	
Fulfil citizens needs	12.6	5.7	7.0	
Organize country's affairs	11.3	3.5	7.8	
Take rules in action	8.5	3.5	5.0	
Protect their rights	3.9	2.0	2.0	
Force people to follow the rules	3.3	2.0	1.3	
Punish those who break the law	3.0	1.3	1.7	
Total	100	46.7	53.3	

\*\*P<0.01

Data analysis revealed a statistically significant gender difference at ( $\chi^2=17.913$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p<0.006$ ) between young people and their conception of the role of the 'government'. A large proportion of young people indicated that the role of the government was to 'devise laws', the majority were young females. Only about one-third of young people, the majority of whom were females, mentioned that the role of government was to fulfil a citizen needs, to organize the country affairs and to implement the laws. In general, young females showed more understanding of the role of government compared to young males; the majority of whom were from rural areas. This result indicates that young people still do not have a clear picture of the role of government in their country.

### Laws and Bahraini Constitution

In order to explore the young people's understanding of Bahraini political system further, and their knowledge about Bahraini constitution, they were asked to indicate 'who devises the laws according to the Bahraini constitution'. According to the Bahraini constitution, laws are formulated by the 'national council' and approved by 'the King'. Data analysis showed no statistically significant gender or residence differences between young people and their knowledge about the Bahraini constitution. However, it seemed important to go through the results to further illuminate young people's knowledge about the Bahraini constitution. The responses to this question are illustrated in Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1: Who should devise the laws in Bahrain?**

As seen in Figure 1, more than one-third of the young people had no knowledge about who devise laws in their country. However, 'the King' was the most popular response among young people. More than one-third of young people indicated that the 'government' formulates the laws, which supports the young people response in the previous question. A considerable number indicated that the 'national council' and 'Judiciary' devise the laws. To further explore young people's knowledge about who devises laws according to Bahraini constitution, results showed that only a few young people knew the right answer and chose both the king and the national council. This suggests that young people are in need to expand their knowledge of the Bahraini constitution to understand who devise laws in their country in order to have a clear understanding of the political process in their country.

These results indicated how the young people lack knowledge about these institutions and their role in a democracy. Young people did not know the content of the Bahraini constitution and perhaps did not even read it, or did not have the chance to see it either in their school or at home.

### **The Role of the 'National Council'**

No statistically significant difference was found between young people's gender or residence and their understanding of the role of the national council. However, it is important to mention that when young people were asked about the role of the 'National Council', 40.7 per cent of young people did not answer the question and wrote that they do not know the role of the national council, while 24.1 per cent of them indicated that the national council 'discusses peoples problems', 20.9 per cent of young people indicated that this council 'makes decisions and devises the laws', 6.5 per cent of young people suggested that the national council 'defends people's rights through censorship', 5.4 per cent of young people thought that the national council 'devise the laws and the government implements them' and only 2.4 per cent of young people thought that the national council 'organizes the state's affairs'. Interestingly, the time this study was conducted, the National Council in Bahrain had been working for about four years and the young people did not have enough knowledge about its role.

### **Trust in Government and Other Civic Institutions**

Young people were additionally asked to comment on two statements related to the role of the political parties in a democratic society. Table 3 sets out the total percentages of all young people who responded to these statements.

**Table 3: Trust in government and other civic institutions.**

Sig. (Res.)	Statements		Rural %	Urban %
***	People should not criticize the government.	agree	6.3	10.4
		disagree	43.3	25.0
***	Government leaders should be trusted without question.	agree	7.6	13.9
		disagree	31.3	15.9

\*\*\*P&lt;0.000

As seen in the table above, a large proportion of young people 'disagreed' with the statements 'people should not criticize the government' and 'Government leaders should be trusted without question'. Data analysis showed a statistically significant residence difference at ( $\chi^2 = 31.252$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.000$ ) for trust in the government. Young people, the majority whom were rurals, 'disagreed' and thought that people should criticize their government, while more young urbans 'agreed' with it. In addition, some young people 'disagreed' with the statement that 'government leaders should be trusted without question' with a statistically significant residence difference at ( $\chi^2 = 28.125$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.000$ ). Data analysis revealed that the young people from rural areas were more likely to 'disagree' with this statement compared with young urbans who thought that government leaders should be trusted without question.

### Voting and Elections

Young people were asked about 'the age people are eligible to vote in Bahrain'. According to the Bahraini constitution, young people can vote at age 21. Since most young people in the sample were aged 18, they could not vote. The majority of young people (62.0%) knew the right answer which is at age of 21, while 32.6 per cent thought that people are eligible to vote at age of 18. A few young people (5.4%) thought it was at age of 23.

**Table 4: The age people are eligible to vote in Bahrain**

People are eligible to vote in Bahrain at age of 21	Rural %	Urban %	Sig. (Res.)
	33.3	28.7	**

\*\*P&lt;0.01

A statistically significant residence difference existed at ( $\chi^2 = 9.192$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) between young people and their knowledge about the right age for voting. As stated earlier, sixty-two per cent of young people knew the right age for voting. The majority of them were young people from rural areas. Furthermore, young people were asked to choose 'reasons for voting' from a list. The highest percentage of young people believed that the reasons for voting was to 'choose community representatives', and more than a half of them thought that the reason for voting was that citizens could 'exercise their political rights'. More than one-third of them thought that it was only 'to show that people live in a democratic society', while, a few of the sample believed that 'it is an obligation'.

The young people were asked if they thought women could vote in Bahrain. Results showed that a great proportion of the young people (87.6%) believed that 'women could vote'. Only 5 per cent thought that 'women could not' and 7.3 per cent of young people did not know the answer. When young people were asked to give their opinion (agree or disagree) about whether 'It is every adult's duty to vote at the elections', the majority of

young people 'agreed', while approaching one-quarter of young people 'disagreed' and a few of them were 'not sure'. Results are presented in the table below:

**Table 5: Young people and the duty of voting at the elections.**

It is every adult's duty to vote at the elections	Agree	Disagree	Not sure	Sig. (Res.)
Rural	35.4	12.4	6.7	**
Urban	27.2	10.2	8.0	
Total 100%	62.6	22.6	14.8	

\*\*P<0.01

A statistically significant residence difference existed at ( $\chi^2 = 10.151$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.006$ ) between young people and their knowledge about voting at the elections. The majority of young people who agreed were from rural areas compared to young people from urban areas. In interviews, the young people were also asked if voting at the elections was important. The majority of them felt the same way as this young person:

I believe that voting at the elections is important. Since the citizen is a part of this country, his or her voice can make a big difference. It is very important for us as citizens to vote at elections to choose our representatives, to practise our political right and to choose the best people for the national council (Reem, urban female).

Some young people endorsed that at the elections people need not just to vote but also to choose the right people: 'Sure, voting at the elections is important because it is necessary to elect suitable members with whom people are satisfied' (Khalid, urban male). This was elaborated further by another student:

It is very important to vote at the elections to choose our representatives and to get the right person, who is qualified to be in this position. This elected person should discuss people's problems and not think of his or her own benefit (Ali, rural male).

### Citizens and Other Ethnic Groups

When the young people were asked if they thought that 'different ethnic groups could unite to fulfil the national goals and purposes', the majority of them (53.5%) thought that this unity was possible, while 46.1 per cent of them thought that this unity was impossible and would not happen. The young people gave different reasons for their answers. They suggested that Bahraini people could unite by sharing common things, respecting others' opinions, loving their country, developing it, practising democracy, following the Holly Quran and having a good constitution. . Some of them elaborated this further when said, for example:

Our unity can be only possible if we all work together hand in hand, avoiding fanaticism, and calling for equality and justice and trying to solve the problems all Bahrainis face (Ayat, rural female).

On the other hand, young people who thought that it was impossible for different groups to unite believed the reasons for this to be: different opinions; different religions; different sects within the same religious group; discrimination; fanaticism and intolerance. It

was clear that some young people felt that unity was impossible between different groups. This theme was followed up in the interviews and is illuminated by comments such as:

Unity is impossible and the one who thinks it is possible is dreaming. I do not think that this can happen. We are different groups with different beliefs. What we suffered and experienced in the past was different from their experiences (Jaffer, rural male).

### Young People and Politics

Young people were asked to give their opinions about two statements related to the political parties. These statements and young people responses are presented in the following table:

**Table 6: Young people's opinions about statements related to politics**

Sig. (Gen.)	Sig. (Res.)	Statements		Male		Female	
				rural %	urban %	rural %	urban %
**	**	Political parties are an important way for people with similar views to make their opinions known.	agree	63.2	44.0	69.0	62.0
			disagree	7.5	20.2	5.5	12.0
**	**	Political parties/associations do more harm than good.	agree	17.9	33.9	21.4	18.0
			disagree	46.2	31.2	32.4	26.0

\*\*P<0.01

A considerably number of young people 'disagreed' with the statement that 'political parties are an important way for people with similar views to make their opinions known' with a statistically significant gender difference at ( $\chi^2 = 10.547$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.005$ ) and a statistically significant residence difference at ( $\chi^2 = 6.948$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.031$ ). More young males who disagreed with this statement were from urban areas while more young females, the majority of whom were young rurals, agreed with this statement. On the other hand, a statistically significant gender difference ( $\chi^2 = 8.456$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.015$ ) and a statistically significant residence difference ( $\chi^2 = 10.709$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.005$ ) was found between young people and their opinion about the importance of political parties. Young males from urban areas 'agreed' with the statement 'political parties/associations do more harm than good', while only a few young people, a great proportion of whom were males from rural areas 'disagreed' with it and thought that political parties/associations could be good for the people.

It can be seen that young people from urban areas had different views from those who were from rural areas, and that young people from rural areas had better understanding of the role of political parties in a democratic society.

### Attitude towards Politics

In interviews, young people were asked whether they were interested in politics. Analysis revealed that a considerable number of young people showed interest in politics.

Those who were interested in politics, the majority were rurals, expressed sentiments similar to those quoted below:

Yes, as a citizen, I should be interested in politics. Without politics we cannot make changes in our country Bahrain, or in the world. Politics make us reach our goals for a better life and solve our different political problems (Raqia, rural female).

Similarly, other young people stated 'I would like to know more about politics and I care about our political problems' (Hameed, rural male), 'I have a great deal of interest in politics because it enables us to get our rights' (Mazin, urban male), 'as a woman, I have an interest in politics and I support it strongly because I think politics is not only related to the government or the people's situation, but is also connected to so many things in our daily life' (Khatoon, rural female). On the other hand, the young people who did not have an interest in politics, the majority were urbans, referred to the political problems in society, to some political parties and leaders, and some referred it to its complexity:

I am not involved in politics as I'm a simple person, who follows his superiors and community's symbols, but I do not follow them in everything, and there is no political party that suits me (Salman, urban male).

Another student referred to his youth, and believed that his voice would not be heard and said: 'Actually, I have some political knowledge, but I have no interest in politics because I'm still quite young for all this, and also the elders will not accept our ideologies and beliefs or even opinions' (Mazin, urban male).

Some pointed to the complexity of politics and stated: 'I am not interested in politics. I do not understand politics. Politics is something boring, tiring and very much complicated' (Reem, urban female). Others felt that politics generated conflict in society. Mariam (rural female) said: 'I don't like politics. Politics makes conflicts between people, and there are too many political problems, I prefer to stay away from it'. This lack of interest in politics could explain their low political knowledge and the lack of understanding of the role of politics in a democratic society.

### **Participation in School Activities**

The young people were asked 'about their participation in a number of extra-curricular activities in school' with the option of ticking one box on a three point scale (often, sometimes, never). At school, the young people never had the opportunity to practice some important activities related to democracy. The table below presents the ones which were found statistically significant.

**Table 7: Activities young people ‘never’ had the opportunity to practise**

At school, young people NEVER had the opportunity to:	Male		Female		Sig. (Gen.)	Sig. (Res.)
	rural	urban	rural	urban		
Form political groups/clubs	45.1	42.8	54.7	36.3	-	**
Form human rights groups/clubs	42.8	40.5	50.2	30.2	-	**
Participate in the student council	19.5	24.7	33.9	20.0	**	**
Express your opinion freely	16.7	16.3	18.8	9.0	**	**
Research and analyze information from different sources	11.2	15.8	9.0	10.2	**	-
Participate in debates or small group discussions in class	12.6	12.1	9.8	6.1	**	-

\*\*P<0.01

As we can see, in the table above, a large proportion of young people ‘never’ had the opportunity to practise the activities that were mainly related to politics. Statistically significant residence differences at ( $p < 0.013$ ;  $U = 23765.5$ ) between the young people and their endorsement of ‘forming human rights groups’ and at ( $p < 0.056$ ;  $U = 24791.5$ ) between the young people and ‘forming political groups/clubs’. It was found that the highest proportion of young people who indicated that they never had the chance to practise these activities were young people from rural areas. Furthermore, a statistically significant gender difference ( $p < 0.039$ ;  $U = 23696.5$ ) and a statistically significant residence difference existed at ( $p < 0.014$ ;  $U = 23516.5$ ) between young people and their views on participating in the student council. It was the young rural females who were more likely to indicate that they never had the chance to participate in the students’ council.

A statistically significant gender difference ( $p < 0.028$ ;  $U = 23693.5$ ) and a statistically significant residence difference ( $p < 0.019$ ;  $U = 23548.5$ ) were also found between young people and their attitudes about ‘expressing their opinions freely’ in school. Data analysis revealed that it was the young females from urban areas who were the least likely to participate in this activity compared to other young people, i.e. rural males, urban males and rural females. Furthermore, some young people indicated that they never had the chance to ‘research and analyze information from different sources’ in their schools with a statistically significant gender difference at ( $p < 0.027$ ;  $U = 23463.5$ ). Young males indicated that they never had the chance to practise this activity compared with females. Finally, a statistically significant gender difference ( $p < 0.009$ ;  $U = 22920.5$ ) showed that young males were more likely to indicate that they never had the chance to ‘participate in debates or small group discussions in classes’ than young females. These findings were endorsed by the young people in the interviews. These young people believed schools could become democratic institutions:

Schools can be democratic by forming a student council through real voting and elections, rather than choosing them without any valid criteria. This will allow the students to vote for their representatives and choose the one who is more qualified, has a strong personality, and is able to make changes (Safa, urban female).

They also stated that: ‘Schools can be democratic by listening to students’ opinions about school matters like exam timetable and the extra-curricular activities and programmes’ (Rehab, rural female).



## School Curriculum

In the survey questionnaire, young people were asked how often the school curriculum allowed them to learn about and discuss the topics presented in the table below. Table 8 presents the topics that were ‘never’ presented in the school curriculum from young people’s perspective:

**Table 8: The topics that were ‘never’ presented in school curriculum.**

Sig. (Gen.)	Sig. (Res.)	The topics that were ‘never’ presented in school curriculum	Male		Female	
			rural %	urban %	rural %	urban %
**	-	Politics and government	40.9	35.8	44.5	27.3
-	-	Voting and elections	38.6	35.3	42.4	29.4
***	-	Democracy	35.3	30.7	30.6	20.8
***	-	Laws	26.5	24.7	19.6	14.7
***	***	Human rights	32.6	21.9	18.8	11.0
***	-	Role of media	20.5	20.5	13.9	11.0

\*\*P<0.01

\*\*\*P<0.001/ P<0.000

A large proportion of young people mentioned that the school curriculum ‘never’ encouraged them to find out about and discuss ‘politics and government’. A statistically significant gender difference ( $p<0.024$ ;  $U=23775.5$ ) was found between young people and their perception about this topic, as young males were more likely to indicate that the school curriculum ‘never’ encouraged them to know or discuss topics related to ‘politics and government’. A large number of young people also indicated that the school curriculum ‘never’ encouraged them to discuss topics related to ‘democracy’. A statistically significant gender difference ( $p<0.003$ ;  $U=22586.5$ ) existed as young males were more likely to indicate that the school curriculum ‘never’ encouraged them to discuss topics related to ‘democracy’ compared to other young people. ‘Laws and responsibilities’ was a topic that was not seen to be encouraged by the school curriculum with a statistically significant gender difference at ( $p<0.000$ ;  $U=21507.5$ ). More young males believed topics related to teaching ‘laws’ were not encouraged or discussed in the school curriculum.

Another topic that young people found was not encouraged in the school curriculum was ‘human rights’ with statistically significant gender difference ( $p<0.000$ ;  $U=19367.5$ ) and a statistically significant residence difference ( $p<0.043$ ;  $U=23597$ ). Data analysis revealed that more young males indicated that the school curriculum ‘never’ encouraged discussion of topics related to ‘human rights’. Further analysis revealed that it was the young rural males who mostly indicate that the school curriculum ‘never’ encouraged them to discuss topics related to ‘human rights’. Finally, a statistically significant gender difference ( $p<0.002$ ;  $U=22337.5$ ) was found between young people and their views on whether or not they were encouraged to discuss the ‘role of media’ as a topic that the school curriculum. Analysis revealed that more young males indicated that the school curriculum ‘never’ encouraged them to discuss topics related to the ‘role of media’ than young females.

In the interviews, young people suggested some subjects that the school should teach. A large proportion of young people suggested subjects related to politics, democracy and the quotation below expresses the sentiments of the majority of young people:

I think that there are many subjects that are more important than others. Schools' subjects like Physics, Chemistry, and Geography are not important and should be substituted by subjects related to citizenship and democracy. For example; The Constitution, The National Charter, and The Parliament (Fatma, rural female).

Some young people suggested that schools should pay more attention to Bahraini history, culture, and political system, Jaffer said: 'School has to teach its students Bahrain's constitution and to conduct political and historical lectures about Bahrain' (Jaffer, rural male). Some suggested that the strategy that the school should follow when teaching these subjects:

Teaching political and citizenship is important, but teaching these subjects should be different from others, which means no examinations should be held for them and they should not be limited to support classes. Schools should help in forming groups and going for tours throughout the country (Ahmed, urban male).

A few young people suggested other areas such as 'ethics and good behaviours should be optional subjects that the students themselves could choose (Zain, urban female).

### Time Spent in Teaching about Citizenship

Young people were asked about 'the time spent in teaching about citizenship and democracy' in their school. The majority (78.5%) of young people believed that 'no time' was spent on teaching these topics while a few (10.9%) of young people thought that an 'adequate time' was spent and almost the same proportion (10.7%) of young people thought that 'too little time' was spent in teaching these topic. Table 9 below presents the results.

**Table 9: Time spent in teaching about citizenship and democracy**

Time spent in teaching about citizenship and democracy	male	female	Percentage	Sig. (Gen.)
	%	%		
Adequate time	3.	7.8	10.9	**
Too little time	5.0	5.7	10.7	
None	38.7	39.8	78.5	
Total	46.7	53.3	100.0	

\*\*P<0.01

The results show that there was a statistically significant gender difference ( $p < 0.01$ ;  $U = 23973$ ) between young people and their responses to this question regarding the time spent on teaching citizenship. More than three-quarters of the young people, the majority of them were females, thought that 'no time' was spent on teaching citizenship and democracy, while a very few of them thought that 'adequate time' was spent on teaching these topics. Moreover, when young people were asked about 'the importance of secondary schools teaching about citizenship and democracy', the majority did not know, a very few thought it was 'not at all important', and, about one-quarter of them thought that it was 'very important'. Table 10 presents the findings of the young people's responses to this question according to the place of residence.

**Table 10: The importance of secondary schools teaching about citizenship and democracy**

The importance of secondary schools teaching about citizenship and democracy.	Place of Residence		Total	Sig. (Res.)
	Rural	Urban		
Do not know / no answer	33.9	22.2	56.1	***
Very important	14.1	15.7	29.8	
Somewhat important	4.8	3.3	8.0	
Not at all important	1.7	4.3	6.1	
Total	54.6	45.4	100.0	

\*\*\*P<0.001/ P<0.000

A statistically significant residence difference ( $p<0.005$ ;  $U=22671$ ) was found between young people beliefs about the importance of teaching citizenship and democracy. Young rurals were more likely to acknowledge teaching citizenship and democracy compared to other young people. In the interview, the young people indicated the importance of teaching these issues in order to improve their knowledge about citizenship and democracy, the majority had opinions similar to the young people quoted below:

Schools should teach citizenship and politics in order to give us the chance to know our rights and responsibilities, our political role and our political system. It should teach us the national charter and the constitution (Ayat, rural female).

Also:

Schools should teach democratic values, such as accepting others opinions, and tolerance (khalid, urban male).

### Young People's Views about their Civic and Political Knowledge

Young people were asked to 'rate their knowledge' about some topics relating to democratic citizenship by using a scale of (1-4) 'none; very little; average; extensive'. The analysis of the findings is discussed below:

#### Rights

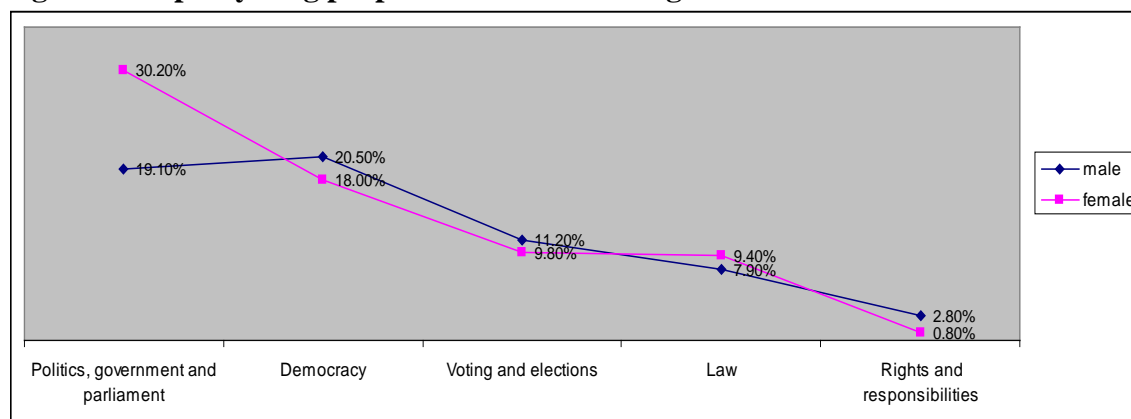
A statistically significant gender difference ( $p<0.001$ ;  $U=22100$ ) and a statistically significant residence difference ( $p<0.002$ ;  $U=2254$ ) was found between young people and their knowledge about their rights. Analysis revealed that young rural females were more likely to rate their knowledge about their rights from 'average' to 'extensive'. Urban males thought that they had 'very little' knowledge about their rights and only one per cent of young people, most of whom were rural males, thought that they 'did not have' any knowledge about their rights.

#### Politics, Government and Parliament

A large number of young people (42%) with the majority of whom were females indicated that they had 'very little' knowledge about politics and government with a statistically significant gender difference of ( $p<0.001$ ;  $U=22057.5$ ) compared to young males who rated their knowledge from 'average' to 'extensive'. With regard to young people's knowledge about 'law', 'voting' and 'democracy', analysis revealed that there were no statistically significant gender or residence difference existed.

About one-quarter of the sample, mostly young females, mentioned that they had ‘no’ knowledge about politics and government and law; while most young males mentioned that they had ‘no knowledge’ about democracy, voting and elections and rights and responsibilities. The topics that young people had NO knowledge about are presented in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: Topics young people had ‘NO knowledge’ about**



### Young People’s Sources of Information

When the young people were asked to rank ‘their primary sources of information about citizenship and democracy’, they ranked their ‘frequent sources’ as shown in Table 11 below.

**Table 11 Frequent sources of information about citizenship and democracy**

The sources of information	Male		Female		Sig. (Gen.)	Sig. (Res.)
	rural	urban	rural	urban		
Parents/ Family	25.1	25.6	38.4	29.0	***	-
The Internet	27.4	24.7	35.9	19.2	-	-
Newspaper	25.1	23.3	31.0	24.5	-	-
Television	19.1	21.4	28.6	23.7	***	-
Mosques / Religious scholars	23.3	24.7	22.0	12.2	***	-
Radio	14.0	17.2	20.4	17.1	**	**
Friends	13.0	14.4	15.1	10.6	-	-
Associations/organizations	14.9	13.0	12.7	7.3	-	-
School/Teachers	7.9	9.3	10.2	8.2	-	-
Youth Clubs	2.8	7.0	3.3	1.6	-	-

\*\*P<0.01

\*\*\*P<0.001/ P<0.000

A considerably, greater proportion of young females thought that the ‘family’ and the ‘mass media’ (the Internet, television, newspaper and radio) were ‘frequent sources’ of information for young people and saw ‘friends’ and ‘school/teachers’ as ‘occasional sources’ while, more young males thought that ‘youth clubs’ were ‘not a source’ of information to them.

Data analysis revealed some statistically significant differences between young people and sources of information. The sources of information, which were found to be statistically

significant, are found in Table 11. A statistically significant gender difference was found at ( $p < 0.000$ ;  $U = 21918.5$ ) with more young females indicating that 'parents/family' were their most frequent source of information. With regard to 'television' as a source of information, a statistically significant gender difference was found at ( $p < 0.005$ ;  $U = 22661.5$ ). Young females were more likely to consider 'television' as a frequent source of information, compared to young males. A statistically significant gender difference ( $p < 0.017$ ;  $U = 23168$ ) and a statistically significant residence difference ( $p < 0.012$ ;  $U = 22902$ ) existed between young people and their endorsement of 'radio' as a frequent source of information. Data analysis revealed that young rural males were the least likely to consider the 'radio' as a frequent source of information. Furthermore, a statistically significant gender difference existed at ( $p < 0.002$ ;  $U = 22148$ ) for the statement on 'mosques and religious scholars' as a source of information. A greater proportion of young males considered the 'mosques and religious scholars' as a frequent source of information about citizenship democracy compared with young females.

The young people mentioned other sources of information, such as: lectures, bulletin/brochures and books. It was mostly young people from rural areas who mentioned the above sources while, for both young people from rural areas and young people from urban areas, 'lectures' were one of the main sources of information. They believed that their information was gained, 'from different media such as, television, the Internet and other people (Sadiq, rural male), 'from my family, reading books, cultural programs and events' (Fatma, rural female) and, finally, 'my father is my source of information about democracy and life' (Mooza, urban female).

Other young people pointed out that besides getting information from their family and the mass media, their local community and religious leaders were other sources of information. For example, one student said: 'I have some knowledge about what is going on in my community and politics which I get from the local community, my family and from lectures by religious leaders' (Ali, rural male). In the interview, the majority of young people indicated the importance their parents had in influencing their knowledge and in forming their attitudes. Here are some examples:

My father is kind, understandable, and democratic. He is a good listener too. He always advises me and guides me. I like him and am happy to have him as a father. My mother is also kind, passionate, and understanding. Like my father, she is a good listener too. I like my mother. My personality is like hers. She always gives me advice for the future. I like my parents, they care about me and guide me, but at the same time they do not interfere in my life or in my decisions (Safa, urban female).

Some young people mentioned that their parents had a role in involving them in community activities. Mustafa a rural male said:

My father is a farmer, but he plays a big role in the community through participating in its activities. My mother is a housewife. She is wise, patient and social. She communicates with her family, neighbours and our village community. She attends almost all the activities in our community. She has the same role as my father in influencing my choices in life.

The young people were also asked how they spent their leisure time. The majority of them indicated that they spent their leisure time either watching television or surfing the Internet. They mentioned specific programmes that they like to watch on television. For instance this respondent said:

I watch television daily. I like to watch everything, comedy shows, intellectual, political, religious and social programmes, episodes and Investors programmes. 'The Investor programme' taught me the basics of dealing with others, directions, different things of life, building up a leadership personality. It does have an influence on building up my personality through gaining different kinds of information (Mazin, urban male).

On the other hand, Razan, an urban female, only selectively watched television, said: 'I don't watch television much, but I watch my favourite shows, like those directed towards youth and entertainment and educational programs. Those programs are educational, advisory and directive. However there are some programs which I find useless'.

Raqia, a young rural female used the Internet for specific purposes. She said 'I surf the net sometimes to do my school research and to log on to political websites'. Another respondent said 'I use the Internet for about four hours a day at the most; going through various websites about Bahrain and participating in Bahraini forums'. Hameed, a rural male, said 'I surf the net for a maximum for one hour daily, logging on to sport websites, going through local newspapers'. With regard to reading, a few young people had read more than seven books during the past three months before the interview. Here is an example of a respondent who managed to read more than seven books said:

I read more than seven books during the last three month. I enjoyed reading religious books, such as: 'the Family in Islam' and 'Contemporary History of Bahrain'. The first book was an educational one and I learnt a lot from reading it. In addition, I like reading about Bahrain's history to get to know Bahrain's culture. I think my reading helps me to form my personality and lets me know more about my religion. Some books make me confident; by giving me the knowledge I need and to help me to understand life (Reem, urban female).

## **Preparing Good and Democratic Citizens**

### ***Role of Family***

In the interview, young people indicated that the family had a major role in preparing children to be democratic and to participate in a democracy. Salman said: 'A good citizen is a part of a good family. If we have a good family, we can gain a good citizen and the whole society will be good for its members' (Salman, urban male).

Furthermore, young people believed that by living in a democratic environment at home, children would know the meaning of democracy, and how to be democratic and they would accept others opinions and respect others rights, as well. By doing that, they said, children could participate in developing their country to compete with other developed countries. In addition, young people believed that the family should train children to love their country, to respect their traditions and should encourage them to express their opinions freely:

The family should be trained to behave properly: to respect people's feelings and efforts, to try not to hurt others, to be understanding, to be good listeners, to avoid damaging property, and to discuss different matters in a logical way (Raqia, rural female).

One student mentioned the importance of the family's role in calling for rights. Jaffer, a rural male, said: 'Parents should teach their children to struggle for human rights and to participate in different community activities and programmes by encouraging them to participate in the relevant public events.

Other young people mentioned that the family had a role in preparing its children to practise democracy by helping them to learn about democracy through different media, such as television, the Internet, books and magazines. One student argued that 'these democratic characteristics will definitely benefit on our homeland and the community in particular' (Nadeen, urban female).

### ***Role of School***

Almost all young people believed that schools also had a role in preparing young people to participate in a democratic society. They thought that schools should guide and teach young people democratic knowledge, values and skills by providing suitable textbooks, which focus on developing the qualities for good citizens, and by practising democracy through different school activities. This might include debating different topics like their right of education and discussing their educational problems.

Democracy can be practised by letting young people express their opinions freely and by letting them participate in school activities and educational programs: school lectures, clubs and groups, for example, and by voting and making the young people's council more active (Mustafa, urban male).

Also:

Schools, like home, should also guide young people right from the beginning; I mean in primary school, and teach them about real democracy, and good citizenship (Mariam, rural female).

The school 'should not be limited to conducting examinations for young people's (Reem, urban female). Schools should be 'educational and advisory' (Khalid, urban male) and, furthermore, 'it is the school's role to provide knowledge about democracy and of the citizens' rights and responsibilities' (Fatma, rural female). Hameed, a rural male, said 'democracy should not be learnt theoretically, but it should be practised on a daily basis'. Overall, young people seemed to believe that the school should help its young people to play a role in the democratic life by enforcing mutual respect between all school members, e.g. teachers, and young people etc. A small minority of young people argued that the 'school plays no role in preparing young people to participate in democratic life' (Qassim, rural male), and Ahmed, an urban male, said that the 'school has a minor role in preparing a good citizen'.

### ***Role of the Community***

A large number agreed that the community should play a big role in preparing citizen for democratic life to empower feelings of belonging among citizens. One student indicated that:

In a democratic society, mass media such as, television, radio, newspapers, and the Internet should play an important role in guiding its citizens and helping in the activities and programmes of the society (Zain, urban female).

In addition, young people thought that the community could help citizens 'by encouraging them to participate in the elections when they can vote' (Ali, rural male), 'to hold workshops, seminars, conferences and forums to educate people's (Ayat, rural female), and 'by providing some training programs that are related to the principles and values of democracy' (Nadeen, urban female), or 'by educating citizens about the conception of democracy through television and newspapers' (Khatoon, rural female).

A few young people indicated that they had no idea about the role of the community or they did not believe it had a role. Mazin, an urban male, said 'I have no idea of the community's role in preparing citizen for a democratic life, but a calm peaceful place can make good citizens' and for Rehab, a rural female, 'preparation for democracy comes only through the role of individuals. If individuals are democratic, the whole community will be democratic'.

A considerable number of young people indicated that political parties, the 'National Council', the parliament and its representatives should participate in preparing citizens to be democratic and knowledgeable about democracy, voting and elections, freedom of expression, their political role in a democracy and their political rights. This could be done through social and political associations and organizations' workshops and lectures, by discussing youth's problems and discussing life in Bahrain and by developing relations between Bahraini citizens, which can prepare young people for a better future.

To sum up, findings revealed that there is a statistical significant relationship at the  $p < 0.05$  level, between young citizens' background characteristics (i.e. gender and place of residence) and their conceptions of democracy and government, their awareness of their political role and their perceptions of the role of schools in a democracy.

For the majority of young people, democracy meant 'freedom' while more young males thought democracy meant rights and responsibilities, participation, equality and the rule of people. Young rurals, on the other hand, had a greater awareness of politics and, therefore, more understanding of their role as citizens in a democracy. A large number of young people had never had the opportunity to participate political activities in their schools. Some even mentioned that they had never had the opportunity to express their opinions freely or to criticize their schools, teachers or textbooks.

In conclusion, the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data indicates that there is a noticeable awareness of citizenship. Young people appear to have a good knowledge and understanding of their rights and responsibilities. They are aware of their community issues, but they are not greatly involved in community associations or activities.

Furthermore, young people seem to have some knowledge and understanding of democracy, they are aware of the need for democratic schooling. On the other hand, they show little understanding of politics and government and indicate their main sources of information on these topics were mainly the family and mass media. Young people want changes in the school curriculum and the introduction of school subjects related to democracy,



citizenship and politics. It could be noted that if the goal of political socialization is ultimately to promote democracy and competent citizenship, then the structure of the educational system, the staffing of the school, and the underlying assumptions of the curriculum, tasks, and evaluation process need to reflect the spirit of democracy.

Interestingly, more young females, mentioned that they had 'no knowledge' about politics and government and the law while more young males mentioned that they had 'no knowledge' about the democracy, voting and elections and rights and responsibilities (See Figure 2). It can also be noted that the majority of young people lack knowledge of the Bahraini constitution; the role of the government and the national council.

Almost all of young people chose 'Bahrain' as the best country and wanted to remain its citizens. Young rurals showed more understanding of their role as a Bahraini citizen in a democracy compared to young urbans. Young urbans thought that Bahrain was a democratic country because of the freedom citizens had. In contrast, young rurals thought that Bahrain was not democratic due to the inequality that is practised by the government. Finally, a considerable number of young people indicated that some government and non-government institutions should participate in preparing Bahraini young citizens to be democratic for a better future.

#### **PART IV: CONCLUSIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

This part presents the conclusions and the interpretations of the findings of this study. It reports my reflections on this research and summarizes the lessons learned about young Bahraini citizens. In order to make sense of the findings, the discussion of the research hypotheses is compared and contrasted with the findings, the views, theories, issues and research that are presented in the literature review in Part I. It then discusses the possible implications of such lessons for the development of political education in Bahrain.

The hypothesis was tested to explore young people's understanding of the term 'democracy', their awareness of their political role in a democracy, and to investigate if young people view their school as a democratic institution. The findings of the study show that there is a statistically significant relationship at the level of  $p < 0.05$  between young people's gender and place of residence and their conceptions of democracy and government, their awareness of their political role and their perceptions of their schools as a democracy.

##### **Conception of Democracy**

In a democracy, the people govern themselves and are considered the foundation of political life (Breslin and Dufour, 2006). A statistically significant relationship was found at the level of  $p < 0.05$  between young people's gender and their conception of democracy. Fourteen per cent of the young people in the study did not answer this question and perhaps did not know what democracy means. The vast majority of respondents define democracy as freedom while young female people are more likely to see democracy as freedom and equality. In contrast, more young male people understand democracy as signifying rights, responsibilities and participation in decision-making; and to a few young people democracy means the rule of the people.

Since democracies are built on the belief that people should be free (Keeter *et al.*, 2002), most of the responses that emerged from the survey equate democracy with freedom; an understanding that was repeated in the interviews. For about half of the young people, the majority being females, democracy means freedom of thinking, expression, and choice of religion. This is supported by the findings on the role of Bahraini citizens in a democracy. A similar number of young people, the majority again, rural females, also note that citizens

should enjoy freedom of expression, should practise their rights and should perform their responsibilities. For more young male people, citizens should participate in decision-making, accept others' opinions and govern themselves.

Breslin and Dufour (2006) argue that freedom is an extremely important concept in the context of citizenship. In this sense, young people believe that someone who respects people's freedom is a democratic person. They put forward various models of democracy. Some view their parents as democratic, either the mother or father or both; while a few see people such as the school principal, some teachers, the King, the religious leaders, and some popular political activists in Bahrain. They view these people to be democratic because they respect individual freedoms or call for it. Moreover, a few identify certain institutions as democratic, such as The Alwifaq Political Society, The Islamic Awareness Society, and The Islamic Council. This may be a reflection of the fact that these organisations embody democratic principles, as 'political societies operate much like political parties and hold internal elections, campaign for public support, and host political gatherings (BDHRL, 2013: Section 3a).

Interestingly, most of the young people also perceive themselves as democratic for reasons similar to those mentioned earlier, such as endorsing principles of respecting others' opinions, thoughts and ideas; participating in school and community activities; and protecting their own rights and those of others. Here the young people are clearly relating democracy to human rights, which suggests that there is an understanding and conscious commitment to the fundamental values of human rights and democracy, such as freedom, equality and fairness.

Parker (2003) and Banks (2007) argue that democracy needs to be experienced by young people in order for them to internalise democratic values and beliefs. The majority of young people in the study have embraced the concept of democracy, and some of the associated values, but very few of them understand the wider implications of the concept. Values related to the preservation of the way of life in a democracy are regarded as more important. However, democracy is perceived as an ideal rather than a real life objective about which one has to acquire relevant knowledge and to shape it through participation.

Flowers (2000) notes that participation in the democratic process involves a conscious commitment to the fundamental values of human rights and democracy such as equality and fairness, and the ability to recognize problems such as racism, sexism, and other injustices as violations of these values. This participation is engendered by a sense of personal responsibility for promoting and protecting the rights of all. The young people in the study show a developing understanding of democratic values and regard knowledge about the actual functions of democracy, struggle for rights and participation in democracy as important. Three-quarters of young people in the study consider struggling for democratic rules and principles as one of the most important qualities of a good Bahraini citizen.

In a democracy, citizens are the ultimate source of authority, their interests and welfare are the principal goals of the government, and their rights are the foundation of justice, the ultimate standard of good society (Parker 2003; Patrick 2003). Bahrainis have lacked trust in their government since the introduction of the new constitution in 2002, which many Bahrainis do not accept (Alsayed *et al.*, 2002). They effectively suspended some of the previous constitutional rights relating to an individual's rights to security and liberty. In addition, a few of the young people state that there is no role for citizens in decision-making because the absolute authority is in the hands of the ruling family. The BDHRL (2013) notes that the constitution states that the King is head of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the government. In interviews, young people, the majority of whom are from rural areas, state that they find Bahrain undemocratic due to the continuous infringement of citizens' rights, and mention inequality and discrimination. These incidents have led to loss of trust in the government. Havel (1985) suggests that 'neo-totalitarian regimes no longer strive

to control fully the bodies and souls of their subjects' (p.8). In this context, the young people's stress on the need to introduce and preserve a democratic way of life and the rights of the citizens in Bahrain is understandable.

More than one-third of the young people think that they have very little knowledge of voting and the electoral system. This finding is supported by the fact that three-quarters of them state that the school curriculum does not encourage them to find out about and discuss topics related to voting and elections. However, the findings reveal that two-thirds of the young people know that they can vote at the age of 21, according to Bahraini constitution, and that they do not have the right to vote at their age. A large proportion of young people, females in particular, believe that voting at elections is important for a number of reasons, for example, to enable citizens to choose their community representatives, and to exercise their political rights. A few of them consider themselves undemocratic for not having participated in any elections or in a process of consultation in decision-making yet. There is an awareness not just of the importance of voting at elections but also of choosing the appropriate representatives. Young people think that elected officials should care about what people think and consider people's opinions in policymaking. Some of the young people believe that the Bahraini parliament is ineffective as the elected members do nothing for the Bahraini people and solve no problems.

In short, democratic citizenship requires more than voting to elect their representatives; it requires using one's voice, and being able to act. 'It involves dialogue and debate not simply between parliamentary representatives, but also between ordinary citizens (Breslin and Dufour, 2006: 114). This study suggests that the meaning of democracy is unclear to young people and they only have a partial view of what it entails. As a result, it seems desirable and perhaps necessary for young Bahraini citizens to develop their knowledge about the meaning of democracy and their role in a democratic society.

### **Political Awareness**

A statistically significant relationship was found at the level of  $p < 0.05$  between young people's gender and place of residence and their awareness of their political role in a democracy. The findings of the study reveal that young people exhibit little political knowledge. Despite their endorsement of the importance of democratic values, the majority of young people do not take part in political activities for various reasons. One major reason for non-participation is the impression that it is too complicated. Young urban people have political views, which are different from those of young rural people. For instance, a considerable number of young urban males, in particular, show a lack of knowledge about the aims of political parties or associations as they 'disagree' with the statement that political parties/societies are an important way for people with similar views to make their opinions known.

It has been argued, in literature, that a certain degree of political knowledge is necessary for young people to be able to play an active role in a democratic society. Political knowledge is an important prerequisite for motivating political participation. The findings of this study reveal that the majority of young people lack knowledge about the role of the government. More than one-quarter of them did not respond to the question about the government's role and more than one-third showed their lack of awareness about the role of the government in Bahrain, as they stated that the government had powers to devise laws; protect citizens' rights etc., which is not the case. Only one-third of the young people stated that the role of government was to fulfil citizens' needs, to organize the country's affairs and to implement the laws, which reflect the role of the Bahraini government. The findings also

suggest that a small proportion of females have slightly more understanding of the government's role as compared to males.

As noted above, the literature shows that in order to prepare young people to participate fully in the political life of a democratic society, they need to have some 'factual knowledge about the institutions and processes of government and how they work locally, nationally and internationally' (Breslin and Dufour, 2006: 145). However, there is evidence that young people in Bahrain do not have sufficient knowledge about the government and the constitution as the majority of them indicate that the government devises laws according to Bahraini constitution. Only one-third of the young people know that the 'national council' and 'the king' devise laws according to Bahraini constitution. This indicates that young people's lack knowledge of Bahraini political institutions and their role in the governance of Bahrain. Unfortunately, young people leave school without having the chance to learn about the Bahraini Constitution, which makes it difficult for them to become active, aware and responsible citizens.

Young people, who do not have an interest in politics, relate the political problems in society to some political parties and leaders. The majority of urban young male people seem to think that political associations do more harm than good to people and believe that political associations do not exist for the welfare of the people or society. Rural young people appear to be more politically radical and astute. They are more likely to disagree with statements such as 'people should not criticize the government', and that 'government leaders should be trusted without question'. They show more understanding of the role of political parties and associations and have more political awareness. They were more likely to take part in activities related to political issues, such as attending political events and taking part in demonstrations. Most of them feel it is their responsibility to take an active part in the demonstrations. This greater political awareness seems to engender a belief that political activity can lead to changes in their country and in the world, and that an active involvement in politics can help citizens lead a better life and solve their different political problems.

In contrast young urban people, particularly females', relative satisfaction with the current reality of citizenship seems to be the consequence of their acceptance of a passive citizenship. Since they believe that they enjoy satisfactory rights as citizens in Bahraini society, they are not eager to take part in political matters. It could be argued that a lack of relevant knowledge about politics is one of the reasons for this passivity. This is worrying in light of Crick's (1999: 338) contention that 'where a state does not have a tradition of active citizenship deep in its culture, or cannot create in its educational system a proclivity to active citizenship, that state is running great risks'.

Although this study has found that there is a deep sense of affiliation with the nation-state of Bahrain, it has also found that young people have a negative perception of politics, a sense of uncertainty about politics, and a general belief that politics is too complicated, and this has induced passive attitudes of non-involvement. Despite being ambivalent about political involvement, the young people show a great deal of concern for the civil and political rights of Bahraini people and view it as vital for the preservation of the Bahraini democratic mode of life. The literature indicates that young people live at a time where politics appears to be far removed from their lives, and what we are seeing, instead, is the emergence of a kind of 'anti-politics', a retreat from civic involvement. In this study, a large proportion of young people who participated in the survey admit that they 'never' have the opportunity to practise activities, such as forming political groups; forming human rights groups; debating political and social issues, editing the school newspaper or magazine, or participating in the student council in their schools. In response to another question, about three-quarters of young people, mostly males, mention that the school curriculum 'never' encourages them to find out about and discuss topics related to politics and government. In

addition, a large number of young people, the majority of whom are rural females, indicate that they have 'very little' knowledge about politics and government.

It appears that Bahraini schools are not providing opportunities for young people to find out about politics or giving the students the opportunity to practise political activities despite the fact that young people know that they lack political knowledge and are aware of its importance. They also realise that their schools should play a role in improving their political knowledge. This kind of awareness-raising of politics and opportunities to practise democratic skills are important, because, as Patrick (1999) argues, the right to vote, to speak freely on public issues, and to participate in voluntary organizations, for example, have little or no significance in political and civic life unless citizens regularly and effectively use them. This implies that the right of political participation means little if most citizens fail to exercise it. For example, the right to free expression that allows citizens to comment on political laws or ideas is diminished when individuals do not have knowledge about the government and/or its operation. This view of citizenship emphasizes the idea of political, civil and social participation by citizens, which is an important aspect of democratic and institutional life.

### **School as a Democratic Institution**

A statistically significant relationship was found at the level of  $p < 0.05$  between young people's gender and place of residence and their view of their schools as a democratic institution. The literature indicates that in democratic schools everyone should be able to contribute as citizen-member of a worthwhile community (Lawton *et al.*, 2000) where relationships are based on shared values rather than bureaucratic roles (Sergiovanni, 1994). However, the majority of young people in the study view their schools as undemocratic institutions. They do not feel that they get the opportunity to discuss the topics of citizenship and democracy. Although, in the survey, young people do think that 'schools and teachers' are occasional sources of information about citizenship and democracy, more than two-thirds of young people state that 'no time' is spent in their schools on teaching topics related to citizenship or democracy. Young male people are less likely to indicate that there is an adequate time spent on teaching citizenship and democracy.

There is evidence that while some Bahraini secondary schools are bureaucratic, other schools have a students' council. However, young people criticize their schools for selecting students for the students' council rather than holding an election. The survey shows that about half of the young people 'never' have the opportunity to participate in the student council, or to evaluate textbooks, or teachers, or the curriculum. Additionally, they seem to have little chance to participate in debates or small group discussions in classes.

This is worrying in light of the fact that the literature stresses the importance of creating and maintaining a classroom climate that is conducive to free and open exchange of opinions about public issues and other controversial topics where different perspectives need to be appreciated (Breslin and Dufour, 2006). There is a belief that this kind of classroom practice leads to the development of tolerance, civility, propensity to participate, and political interest (Torney-Purta *et al.* 2001). In this study, rural females are more likely to indicate that they never have the chance to participate in the school students' council. In contrast, urban females state that they have more opportunity to participate in the students' council and express their opinions freely. While the majority of all young males, also, report that they never have the chance to participate in debates or small group discussions in classes or even express their opinions freely. This implies that there are differences in the school environment between rural and urban female schools, and between female and male schools.

It seems that not all schools operate in the same way to ensure the participation of young people in student matters.

In the literature, a positive relationship is suggested between a democratic school climate, e.g. democratic participatory experiences, and the development of democratic civic knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour of democratic citizenship (Carnegie Corporation and CIRCLE, 2003). Therefore, in order to enable young people to develop social and moral responsibility and participate in civic life, the ethos of many schools would need to be changed (Lawton *et al.*, 2000). The findings of this study show that young people support this kind of change. They believe that their schools can become more democratic by improving the students' council and giving the students the chance to vote for their representatives. They also feel that a good relationship between school members and considering students' opinions in different school matters is important. They suggest, for example, that their school should ask their opinion regarding the exam timetable, and provide help in solving their problems.

The young people also suggest that schools should teach subjects relating to politics, democracy and citizenship. For example, the majority want to learn more about the Constitution, the National Charter, the Parliament and the development of their country's political system. They want their schools to provide classes that cover ethics and historical, cultural and political issues relating to Bahrain. Furthermore, young people want schools to introduce new teaching strategies, whereby they are taught through more democratic approaches, such as workshops, lectures and seminars.

The Crick Report (QCA, 1998: 36) maintains that 'schools should make every effort to engage pupils in discussion and consultation about all aspects of school life'. The young people in this study emphasize the need to be critical of national and global issues, and suggest that democratic education would be helpful in promoting such critical attitudes and want an education that is both patriotic and democratic. They note the importance of teaching these issues to help them improve their knowledge about citizenship and democracy, to give them the chance to know their rights and responsibilities, possible political roles and their political system. By expressing these needs, Bahraini young people reveal their awareness and understanding of the importance of issues related to democratic citizenship. They relate citizenship education to democratic education, regard it as important, and link it to the nurturing of critical abilities among citizens. This is supported by Newton (2002) who argues that effective citizenship education cannot be delivered through the formal curriculum alone, as it requires a whole school approach including opportunities for students' to participate in school and the wider community. They emphasize that civic education is important as it can foster moral and responsible citizens for the community. Moreover, young people think that a structured civic education curriculum can help develop the ideal citizen who has a clear national identity, democratic values and the skills required to participate in a democracy.

The interview data supports the findings of the survey. It suggests that the integrated curriculum of citizenship education, which is based on 'Citizenship in the School Curriculum' (Ministry of Education, 2002), in Bahraini schools, is ineffective. Young people report that discussion of topics is limited and unsystematically implemented in the school curriculum, and young people find it unhelpful. Part of the problem seems to be that young people do not find it relevant. Moreover, it is likely that this unsystematic implementation of citizenship education in the school curriculum is a major reason for young people's limited knowledge of political institutions and their role in Bahraini society. The role of the curriculum in shaping young people's conceptions of citizenship and democracy seem be less effective than other socializing.

## Other Sources of Information

In the survey, family and parents are considered by young people as the most 'frequent source' of information about citizenship and democracy. It is clear that parents have a role in influencing their children's understanding and in forming their attitudes. Some even encourage their children to participate in activities related to their community. This may be due to their parents' educational level, as the parents of majority of young people were educated, and this may have influenced their children's conceptions and perceptions about citizenship and democracy. The literature suggests that children's early awareness of their parents' political views leads to a tendency for children to inherit their parents' political affiliations (Alqatam *et al.*, 2002). Thus, socialization within the family is important, since an individual's parents play an important role in the construction of his or her political identity (Abujado, 1998).

Young people rank the mass media (television, internet, newspaper and radio) as the second most frequent source of information about citizenship and democracy. On television, they like to watch intellectual, political, religious and social, entertainment and youth programmes, comedy shows, and series. On the Internet, they log onto websites related to sports, politics, local newspapers, schools research, surf Bahraini websites, and participate in internet forums, which they suggest is a good way to express their opinions. Reading is also a source of information to young people. More than two-thirds of them read one to two books in three months' time. Most of them enjoyed reading religious, historical, and political books.

The degree of influence of different sources varies according to the background, culture, and education of the family, the school that the young people attend, the social activities they are involved in, and the life experiences that he or she has encountered. The literature suggests that an independent press and the rich information provided by television, radio, journals of opinion, and books, is essential to the maintenance of a politically literate society. However, since the Bahrain government controls the Bahraini press and the Bahraini mass media (BDHRL, 2013: Sec2a), it is important that all teenagers learn to read newspapers critically for their political content. While the above affirms that the family, community, religious leaders and the media are important influences in shaping young people's conceptions of citizenship, the school curriculum, in comparison, seems to be playing a relatively less important role in promoting their understanding of citizenship. Young people are not taught to think critically about citizenship. This raises important questions for teachers, curriculum planners, schools and other educators about what the education systems needs to do to implement effective citizenship education.

Young people believe that a major role can be played by the family, the school and the community to prepare them to participate as democratic citizens in the shaping of Bahraini society. They believe that the family can encourage children to express their opinions freely, respect each other's rights, and accept each other's views by providing a democratic environment at home. Parents can encourage their children to fight for human rights and to participate in different community activities and related public events. In addition, the family can develop in children a sense of belonging to the homeland, an affiliation to their country, and respect for their traditions. With regard to the community, young people suggest cultural and societal activities that can generate feelings of affiliation to Bahrain among its citizens, such as training programs, workshops, seminars, conferences and forums to educate people about democracy and their political rights and role in a democracy. Furthermore, young people think that political associations, democratic organisations, civic institutions and the mass media can also help in this regard.

In brief, this study reveals that young Bahrainis lack essential political knowledge and democratic understanding. It has revealed the limitations of teaching selected aspects of

citizenship and democracy that are contrary to real life experiences and which lead to doubt and mistrust in government and political institutions. Therefore, this study has provided evidence that the socialization process via citizenship education in its present form, whether it is civic or political, is contributing only partially to Bahraini young people's notions of citizenship. As a result, this study calls into question the effectiveness of depending solely on institutionalised socializing processes in shaping the desirable citizenship status.

Therefore, there is a need to identify precisely which school experiences have an impact on children's citizenship learning. An active and participating citizen is not confined to lesson time; such participation goes on throughout a child's school life. Thus, education for democratic citizenship should be a long-standing goal of schools. To achieve this goal, students must learn their political rights and responsibilities in a democratic school community.

Since helping young people to acquire relevant knowledge and skills through studies of various topics or subjects is important, the most important contributions to promoting active and responsible citizenship involve giving young people democratic and political experiences that will help them to be active citizens now and later in their lives. Educators, therefore, need to share ideas and work more effectively to promote responsible citizenship.

In conclusion, any democratic society must concern itself with the socialization of its citizens. If the goal of political socialization is ultimately to promote democracy and competent citizenship, then this should begin in childhood, and schools are critical to this process to reflect the spirit of democracy.

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