Good citizenship concept in the Palestinian curricula: content analysis for civic education textbooks

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the content of civic education textbooks for the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades at the primary stage in Palestine to establish whether the concept of good citizenship is actually contained in these textbooks. The analysis of the content of the textbooks was conducted on the basis 38-item list. The findings revealed that Palestinian curricula included many concepts of good citizenship which were repeatedly used in the curriculum and objectives of civic education textbooks for the above-mentioned grades at the primary stage. Furthermore, the degree of recurrence of these concepts was not the same in these grades. The results also revealed that civic education textbooks focused on the available theoretical knowledge as a source of information, and there was a noticeable lack of certain concepts of good citizenship from the content. These concepts are not inclusively taught, nor equally distributed in all the textbooks of the three grades. Implications of the findings and directions for future empirical research are briefly discussed.

Keywords: Citizenship, civic education, curricula, primary stage, Palestine.

Introduction

The concept of citizenship is as old as the human population, characterized by the collaboration of members of the same group to meet the challenges imposed on them by their surrounding environment. The members or citizens have developed a sense of need for each other and a dire necessity to live within a community of their own.

The concept of citizenship in human societies has evolved through successive historical stages. The governance patterns that prevailed during these stages had undergone many changes, beginning with the traditional patterns of governance, in which citizenship was limited to certain categories and culminating in democratic governance systems in which citizenship consisted of rights, duties and justice among members of the same society (Saggar, 2003).

The Dictionary of Sociology defines citizenship as "a social status or relationship between an ordinary person and a political community, or what is known as the State. The first party has to pledge allegiance while the second party has to provide protection." Citizenship is a characteristic of the individual who enjoys the rights and is committed to the duties entailed by being affiliated to a particular community in a specific place such as the duty of the military service and the duty of financial participation in the State budget (Saegh, 2003). According to Subaih (2005), citizenship has rights and obligations achieved through a degree of awareness and knowledge and through the individual's quest to achieve the rights of citizenship and fulfill their obligations by using legitimate means determined by the social system and learnt by the individual.

Furthermore, Nasser (1994) posits that citizenship involves belonging to the soil of the homeland, which is marked by geographic boundaries. Anyone who belongs to that soil becomes a citizen who has several rights and duties. Kuwari *et al*. (2001), argues that citizenship should be connected to patriotism, which constitutes an integral part of the joint work between all members of the society to achieve the cultural renaissance of society, national integration and development of the State as an independent institution in which all citizens are equal in rights and duties.

Citizenship can also be defined as the information, feelings and behavior, which are classified into two levels: the first level relates to the mental concept and psychological feeling, which is associated with information about the country, awareness of rights and duties, satisfaction with the fulfillment of the rights and duties, and patriotism. The second level relates to exercising citizenship by honoring and adhering to laws and regulations on the one hand and exercising political and civil work on the other hand (Subaih, 2005).

Moreover, Amer (2005) asserted that the human experiences that ravaged the principle of citizenship produced various meanings of citizenship in theory and in practice. Citizenship has been influenced by the contemporary concepts of political, social, and intellectual currents, which resulted as the result of fusing multiple intellectual trends. The concept of citizenship later evolved to take a universal quality characterized by the following: recognizing the existence of different cultures, respecting the rights and freedom of others, recognizing the existence of different religions, understanding and activation of different political ideologies, understanding the world's economies, having interest in international

affairs, participation in the promotion of international peace, participation in the management of conflicts in a nonviolent way.

Students' acquisition of the concepts of good citizenship can be enhanced through real partnerships between the school, home and community. Such partnership will both help to increase the academic achievement of the students and equip them with the concepts of good citizenship. The changes included in the educational environment require the cooperation of all parties concerned with the educational process.

Each nation has its own ethical, economic and social approaches which make it different from all other nations. The behavior of Member or individual behaviour of a nation is determined according to these approaches. A nation seeks to develop its own curricula according to the needs of its individuals and the requirements for its survival and continuation. It also seeks to educate its members in light of these approaches, which in their entirety make up the nation's identity and distinguishes it from the other nations. A nation seeks to achieve its objectives and goals for the sake of its own interests as well as its individuals' interests (Shuweihat, 2003). School education seeks to maintain the nation's systems, concepts, principles, laws, and intellectual offspring (Nasser, 1994). The institutions of the civil society are responsible for maintaining the concepts, customs and traditions of the community and its members (Hamid, 2005).

Developing the educational programs and curricula that promote the desired concepts of the educational process, along with the role played by the family, the school and other institutions of the civil society can tincture members of the community with their cultural, social and religious identity. These programs and curricula provide them with the society's prevailing political and cultural concepts, perceptions, beliefs, and the like (Abu Zahira, 2004). Citizenship is based on clear and important foundations in the community: loyalty, which reveals the connections and emotions that link the individual with the group; belonging to the homeland and religion; equality and justice among members of society; and freedom of belief, opinion and action (Nasser, 1994).

At present, citizenship in the community is affected by external cultures as a result of cultural openness, creating a degree of overlap between the concepts of citizenship such as loyalty, freedom, justice and equality (Amer, 2005). Arab and Islamic societies have an exclusive tincture, namely, Islam, which distinguishes these societies from other communities. The

concepts of education, citizenship and community, and national and social security revolve now in its orbit, and it [Islam] has contributed to the upbringing of the individuals and refining their characters. Islamic education, at the levels of the family, school or institutions of civil society, seeks to create and boost the individual's body, mind, spirit and soul (Khamshee, 2004).

Many previous studies have addressed the concept and issues of good citizenship from different perspectives. In a recent study, Alnaim (2008) concluded that the civics textbooks for the primary stage maintain emphasis on ready–made knowledge as a source of information and a basis for pupil education. The contents of the textbooks remarkably displays a lack of certain values and concepts of contemporary citizenship. Furthermore, the values are not taught in all the course units of each individual grade. There is an apparent discrepancy in the distribution of the values within a single textbook, and in the distribution of a single value among the textbooks. Hughes *et al*. (2007), assert that civic education is a requirement in Polish and Ontario schools which implies that governments in both Poland and Canada are attempting to foster democratic ideals and values in their citizens. However, the integration of technology in teaching and learning is a challenge confronting educators in Canada and Poland.

The study by Homana *et al*. (2006) emphasized that a positive school climate is crucial for the development of competent, responsible and capable citizens. The formation of a positive school climate for civic involvement requires the shared recognition and commitment of the school community members - the student learner as a prime focus; the need for intellectual and institutional leadership; and the need for a competent and caring teaching staff who share common goals with students, parents, and the community, and a positive school climate includes an identifiable, open and nurturing school ethos that attempts to foster a sense of responsibility and efficacy among students and staff. There is mutual respect and collaboration among administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the community.

Moreover, a study conducted by Subaih (2005) revealed that (80%) of students are aware of the rights of citizenship and their duties; (89.9%) of the students showed satisfaction with the performance of these duties, while (55.3%) of the students showed satisfaction for the achievement of their rights. The study by Amer (2005) revealed that there was a significant increase in the awareness of young people and their sense of the dimensions of citizenship (identity, belonging, pluralism and openness, freedom and political participation, and

citizenship as a whole). However, the results of this study revealed that no statistical significant differences in the dimensions of citizenship due to gender, academic education, and place of residence.

In another study, Torney-Purtra (2002) concluded that schools achieve the best results in fostering civic engagement when they rigorously teach civic content and skills, ensure an open classroom climate for discussing issues, emphasize the importance of the electoral process, encourage a participative school culture, and schools whose students do not plan to attend college and have few educational resources at home face a special challenge. The study by Roberta (1997) revealed that student membership depends on affiliation with a subgroup of peers within the class; general class participation and interactions influenced an individual's status within the group, but were inadequate to create member status.

Aims and Scope

The statement lies in determining the extent to which the concept of good citizenship is realized in the curricula of civic education textbook for the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades. The Palestinian territories have been through an extremely harsh political, economic, social, educational, and psychological events, changes and circumstances that the present study aims to establish whether the civic education curricula for the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades consolidate the concepts of good citizenship that is truly needed by the Palestinian people as well as whether the of civic education curricula contains adequate knowledge, skills and opinions to improve good citizenship in the future.

The significance of the study can be attributed to its results, particularly to identifying the extent to which the Palestinian curriculum of civic education is successful in developing the concepts of citizenship among students. The results of the study are also expected to encourage researchers to study the concept of citizenship in other school textbooks. The study is also significant in terms of its topic and scheduling.

Definition of Terms

Good citizenship: a good citizen is one who fulfills his or her role properly as a citizen. Education is occasionally viewed as a prerequisite to good citizenship, in that it helps citizens

make good decisions. Education for citizenship equips young people with the knowledge, skills and understanding to play an effective role in public life (Soder, 2003).

Methodology and Design

The current study used a mixed methods approach, that is, the quantitative and qualitative designs, using content analysis, which is appropriate   for the exploratory nature of the research, and provide more meaningful in-depth data. The population of the study was limited to civic education textbooks for the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades in Palestine, during 2015/2016 academic year.

The study sample consisted of the civic education textbooks for the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades at the Palestinian primary stage. There are six textbooks: two for each grade: one is designed for the first semester and the other for the second semester. These textbooks are assumed to include the concepts of good citizenship. The textbooks are all compiled by the Palestinian Curriculum Development Center of the Palestinian Ministry of Education.

Index of a 38-item scale was utilized to measure the concept of good citizenship in the Palestinian curricula. The assessment tool was developed from a variety of research fields and disciplines related primarily to the school and classroom climate, educational practices including civic education (Hilal, 2000; Rashid, 2000; Ababneh, 2002; Fariha, 2002; Torney-Purtra, 2002; Losito, 2003; Shuweihat, 2003; Watfa, 2003; Amer, 2005; Subaih, 2005; Rashidi, 2006).

Validation of the instrument proceeded in one distinct phase involved a group of referees and expert arbitrators who provided certain comments on the tool that was taken into consideration to reach the current final version of the item scale.

 Reliability was tested using the Pearson correlation coefficient to ascertain both the reliability and consistency of the item scale. The R-values for the study scale was 0.87, which indicated a high reliability and consistency.

Data Analysis and Findings

Data was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics gauged the concept of good citizenship among the sampled population. The

following statistical techniques were measured: frequencies, percentages, and Pearson Correlation Coefficient.

Table No. (1) illustrates the differences in the number of the concepts of good citizenship included in the units of the civic education textbooks for the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades. The 2nd unit (Our Rights) of the 4th grade textbook included the highest number (57) of   good citizenship concepts. However, the 4th unit of the 5th grade textbook included the lowest number (14) of good citizenship concepts.

Moreover, Table No. (2) clarifies variations in the number of good citizenship concepts included in the civic education textbooks for the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades, especially in the civic education textbook for the 5th grade.

It is evident from Table No. (3), which analyzes the civic education textbooks, that many concepts have been utilized frequently as well as repeatedly and contrarily throughout the classroom lessons of the civic education textbook for the 4th grade, namely: respecting others (26 times), family, customs and traditions (21 times), public order and commitment to it (21 times), taking responsibility for the nation and people (16 times), accepting instructions and obedience in different institutions (9 times), cooperation and sharing with others (9 times), clarifying the duties of individuals towards their homeland and community (8 times), and teamwork (8 times). Other concepts of good citizenship revealed a lower frequency. However, (16) concepts were entirely omitted from the civic education textbook for the 4th grade.

 Table No. (4), analyzed the civic education textbooks, that many concepts have been utilized frequently as well as contrarily throughout the classroom lessons of the civic education textbook for the 5th grade, namely: accepting instructions and obedience in various institutions (21 times), respecting the system of government and institutions of the country (15 times), taking responsibility towards the nation and people (11 times), public order and commitment to it (10 times), examples relating to dialogue and discussion (8 times), the concept of volunteer work (6 times), clarifying the concepts of security and safety (6 times), respecting others (6 times), teamwork (6 times). Other concepts of good citizenship had a lower frequency, namely: clarifying the duties of individuals towards their homeland and community, time respect and management, optimal use of the nation's facilities and

rationalization of resources, belonging to the Arab nation, and honesty. However, 18 concepts were not mentioned in the civic education textbook for the 5th grade.

Table No. (5), analyzed the civic education textbooks, that there many concepts have been utilized frequently as well as contrarily throughout the classroom lessons of the civic education textbook for the 6th grade, namely: maintaining the surrounding environment and environmental awareness (16 times), taking responsibility towards the nation and people (16 times), public order and commitment to it (14 times), the concept of labor and commitment to its laws (13 times), clarifying the rights of individuals within the community (10 times), clarifying the duties of individuals towards their homeland and community (10 times), optimal use of the nation's facilities and rationalization of resources (9 times) examples relating to dialogue and discussion (9 times), accepting instructions and obedience in various institutions (9 times), the environment and methods of protecting it (9 times). Other concepts of good citizenship had lower frequency, namely: understanding others' ideas and attitudes, maintaining ties of kinship, apologizing for the error when it occurs, good healthy habits, loyalty, greeting etiquettes. However, (17) concepts were not mentioned in the civic education textbook for the 6th grade.

Discussion and Recommendations

The results revealed that the civic education textbooks for the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades included numerous concepts of good citizenship. However, these concepts differed in the degree of their recurrence throughout the curriculum of the three grades, which implied that certain concepts had been used more frequently in the 4th grade and less frequently in the two subsequent grades. These findings can be attributed to the following factors:

First, the Palestinian Ministry of Education has been accurate, successful and insightful in looking at the future of the emerging generation. Young people are considered the hope for the future. To build a good citizen and nation, a wide range of concepts of good citizenship were included in the civic education textbooks for the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades.

Second, the Palestinian Ministry of Education has been utilizing much time and effort to consolidate a philosophy of education which is exclusive to the Palestinian people who were oppressed for decades by the Israeli occupation. The philosophy is based on designing curricula to produce a good human being (student) with good values and education in all

aspects of the development process, including aspects of good citizenship. Agents of socialization, especially media outlets, have had a big role in disseminating and reinforcing different concepts among the students, which motivated the Palestinian Ministry of Education to design its own curricula, and include concepts which are thought to be the most crucial and beneficial in the development process.

Third, school curricula has observed the integrated view of the learner in all areas or disciplines, including civic education. Raising good children and instilling the concept of good citizenship in them as students is an integrated process that is influenced by various institutions of society; it commences at home; shaped in kindergarten and refined at school.

Fourth, the Palestinian Ministry of Education has given much attention to the distinctive situation of the Palestinian people, and to the role played by the official institution in disseminating the concept of good citizenship including these concepts in the curricula.

Fifth, the concept of good citizenship, an objective all the citizens of Palestine seek, emerge from a clear mission and a future vision. Therefore, the curriculum development team took into account these concepts and included them in the civic education textbooks in order to build a generation of students with multiple skills and capable of keeping pace with the progress and development in all disciplines of knowledge.

Sixth, the inclusion of the concepts of good citizenship in school curricula plays an important role in creating appropriate opportunities to help students develop spiritually, morally, intellectually, socially and physically in an integrated manner and in line with their preparations, potentials, the nature of the Palestinian society and their hopes for the future.

Seventh, have faith in the active role that the school plays in instilling important concepts and reinforcing them in the students to make a positive change towards the development of the concept of good citizenship.

Finally, good citizenship concepts are part of the customs and traditions of the community. Islam focuses on these and regards these concepts as a cornerstone of survival for society. Hence, it has become imperative for education policy-makers to include these concepts in the curricula for all grades. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. School curricula must be enriched with a number of good citizenship concepts such as: volunteer work, loving the homeland, defending its resources and having pride in it, in its achievements and its products, teamwork, greeting etiquettes, solidarity and social solidarity, and security and safety.

2. Revisiting the concepts of good citizenship which are included in the civic education textbooks to be enhanced so that they are commensurate with the maturity level of students in different grades.

3. Preparing a list of the basic concepts of good citizenship for inclusion in the civic education curricula. .

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Appendixes

Table No. (1). Number & percentage of concepts of good citizenship in each textbook and unit.

Grades	Units	No.	Percent %
Fourth	My Family	46	0.253
	Man in Service to Others	57	0.313
	Our rights	41	0.253
	The Society We Want	38	0.181
	Total	**182**	**1.000**
Fifth	Children's Rights	52	0.419
	I'm an Active Kid	36	0.290
	Public Interests and Conservation	22	0.177
	Some Problems of Our Society	14	0.113
	Total	**124**	**1.000**
Sixth	I'm a Positive Human Being	54	0.316
	Contact and Communication	42	0.246
	Violence within the School	44	0.257
	Common Global Objectives	31	0.181
	Total	**171**	**1.000**

Table No. (2). Total number & percentage of concepts of good citizenship in Palestinian textbooks for civic education.

Grade	No.	Percent %
Fourth	182	0.382
Fifth	124	0.260
Sixth	171	0.358
Total	**477**	**1.00**

Table No. (3). Concepts of good citizenship included in the units of civic education textbooks for the basic fourth grade.

No.	Concepts of good citizenship	1	2	3	4
1.	Respecting others.	8	10	6	2
2.	Family, customs and traditions.	6	7	5	3
3.	Public order and commitment thereto.	3	5	4	5
4.	Responsibility towards the nation and people.	3	4	4	5
5.	Accepting instructions and obedience in various institutions.	2	4	3	0
6.	Cooperation and sharing with others.	2	4	3	0
7.	Clarifying the duties of individuals towards their homeland and community.	2	3	3	0
8.	Teamwork.	2	3	2	1
9.	Respecting the system of government and institutions of the country.	2	2	1	2
10.	Clarifying the concepts: the rights of	2	2	1	2

	individuals within the community.				
11.	Social solidarity and interdependence with others.	2	2	1	2
12.	Labor and commitment to its laws.	2	1	1	3
13.	Time, respect and management.	1	1	1	3
14.	Honesty.	1	1	1	3
15.	Understanding other people's ideas and attitudes and listening to them.	1	1	1	2
16.	Examples relating to dialogue and discussion.	1	1	1	1
17.	Ties of kinship.	1	1	1	1
18.	Belonging and loyalty to homeland and society.	1	1	1	0
19.	Maintaining public and private property.	1	1	1	0
20.	Fidelity.	1	1	0	1
21.	Healthy habits.	1	1	0	1
22.	Volunteer work.	1	1	0	1

Table No. (4). Concept of good citizenship included in the units of civic education text books for the basic fifth grade.

No.	Concepts of good citizenship	1	2	3	4
1.	Accepting instructions and obedience in various institutions.	8	4	3	3
2.	Respecting the system of government and institutions of the country.	7	3	2	3
3.	Responsibility towards the nation and people.	5	3	2	2
4.	Public order and commitment to it.	3	3	1	1
5.	Examples relating to dialogue and discussion.	3	2	1	1
6.	Volunteer work.	3	2	1	1
7.	Clarifying the concepts of security and safety.	3	2	1	0
8.	Respecting others.	2	2	1	1
9.	Teamwork	2	2	1	1
10.	Labor and commitment to its laws.	2	2	1	0
11.	Belonging and loyalty to homeland and society.	1	2	1	0
12.	The environment and methods of protecting it.	1	2	1	1
13.	Loving and defending the homeland.	1	2	1	
14.	Maintaining the surrounding environment and environmental awareness.	1	1	1	
15.	Cooperation and sharing with others.	2	1	1	
16.	Family, customs and traditions.	2	1	1	
17.	Clarifying the concepts of the rights of	2	1	1	

	individuals within the community.				
18.	Understanding other people's ideas and attitudes.	2	1	1	
19.	Clarifying the duties of individuals towards their homeland and community.	1	0	0	0
20.	Time, respect and management.	1	0	0	0

Table No. (5). Concept of good citizenship included in the civic education textbooks for the basic sixth grade.

No.	Concepts of good citizenship	1	2	3	4
1.	Maintaining the surrounding environment and environmental awareness	5	4	4	3
2.	Responsibility towards the nation and people.	5	4	4	3
3.	Public order and commitment to it.	4	3	4	4
4.	Labor and commitment to its laws.	4	3	3	3
5.	Clarifying the concepts of the rights of individuals within the community.	4	3	3	0
6.	Clarifying the duties of individuals towards their homeland and community.	4	3	3	0
7.	Optimal use of the nation's facilities and rationalization of resources	3	2	3	1
8.	Examples relating to dialogue and discussion.	3	2	2	2
9.	Accepting instructions and obedience in various institutions.	3	2	2	2
10.	The environment and methods of protecting it.	3	2	2	2
11.	Respecting the system of government and institutions of the country.	2	2	2	2
12.	Rejecting violence and using force to achieve the objectives.	2	2	1	3
13.	Clarifying the concepts of security and safety.	2	2	1	3
14.	Maintaining public and private property.	2	2	1	1
15.	Respecting others.	2	1	2	1
16.	Cooperation and sharing with others.	1	1	2	0
17.	Teamwork	1	1	1	1
18.	Belonging and loyalty to homeland and society.	1	1	1	1
19.	Generosity and altruism.	1	1	1	0
20.	Family, customs and traditions.	1	1	1	0
21.	Volunteer work.	1	0	1	0

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