

67

Adult Education and Social Change

Jordan - Palestine - Lebanon - Syria - Egypt

Katrin Denys (ed.)



**International Perspectives
in Adult Education**

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The reports, studies and materials published in this series aim to further the development of theory and practice in the work of the Volkshochschulen (VHS) as it relates to international aspects of Adult Education – and vice versa. We hope that by providing access to information and a channel for communication, the series will serve to increase knowledge, deepen insights and improve cooperation in Adult Education at an international level.

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dvv international

Obere Wilhelmstraße 32 · 53225 Bonn

Federal Republic of Germany

Tel.: +49/228-97569-0 · Fax: +49/228-97569-55

info@dvv-international.de · www.dvv-international.de

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Introduction

“Why do you work only with old people?” It is a question we often hear when we introduce *dvv international* and Adult Education, its field of work. As we learnt at one of our conferences in Amman, where an interpreter translated the Arabic term usually used for Adult Education *“t’alim al kbar”* as *“education for the elderly”*, it is partly a language issue. But it is more, different cultures have different concepts of adulthood. In the Arab culture families play a bigger role in society and in the lives of young adults. The concept of adulthood, including getting full civil and political rights but also independence from family and parents, is less widespread in the Middle East, to the extent that there is no Arabic word for *“adult”* as Europeans understand it. One of the key challenges, then, that we face in our work in the Middle East is developing a joint understanding of terms and concepts that refer to the specific form of education that we call *“Adult Education”*.

While the question *“What is an adult?”* receives different answers in different cultures and societies with starting ages ranging from 16 or 18 to more variable ranges or even old age, there is a point in defining Adult Education as a separate category, linked to a specific concept of adulthood. The main reason for this is that adults, be they 16, 18 or 100 years old, learn in a different way than children do. Adult Education thus requires specific methods and approaches to facilitate learning.

First of all, adults are not legally bound to go to school any more, thus their learning is voluntary and more self-directed and self-motivated than learning of children. Adults can choose what, when and where they learn. They have a certain idea about the outcome of their learning; they have specific expectations and experience to build on.

Research has shown that adult learning is most successful when the trainer or facilitator takes the expectations, interests and previous experience of the learners into account when developing a curriculum, training plan and selecting learning methods. Another golden rule for Adult Education is that learning is mostly happening then, when participants are encouraged to connect what they learnt to their previous knowledge, experience and opinions and when they actively participate in selecting topics of interests as well as learning methods. Participatory learning methods which actually allow participants to shape the content and

sequence of a training session are rare in the Middle East – and elsewhere in the world – but more and more educators are experimenting with new methods and are surprised by the positive results. In this publication, two such approaches are described. Jawad Al Gousous shares his experience with adopting the REFLECT methodology developed by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire in education for school dropouts in Jordan. Christian Lund Jensen reveals surprising insights in the role of a trainer or facilitator.

The content of Adult Education is also often subject to misunderstandings. In the Arab world it is often assumed that Adult Education or “*t’alim al kbar*” is identical with literacy education. This reflects a common feature of education policies in the region. Next to elementary school education, vocational education and academic education, most governments organise literacy classes for adults. They can be focussed on reading, writing and calculating, but are more often following the common elementary education from grade one to grade 10, thus including subjects such as Arabic and English language, history, geography, religious studies and civic education. This is not how *dvv international* sees it, but if this does not capture the scope of Adult Education, then **what is Adult Education?**

The United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO) usually refers to one of the first internationally agreed definitions of Adult Education adopted in 1976:

“Adult Education denotes the entire body of organised educational processes (...) whether formal or otherwise (...), whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development...”¹

UNESCO’s definition encompasses all education, formal and non-formal. The European glossary for adult learning, on the other hand, stresses the non-formal aspect and thus sees Adult Education next to regular elementary, vocational and academic education:

“General or vocational education provided for adults after initial education and training for professional and/or personal purposes which aims to a) provide

¹ UNESCO: Recommendations on the development of Adult Education, adopted in Nairobi 1976, p.2, http://uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/keydocuments/AdultEducation/Confintea/en/Nairobi%20Recommendation_Eng.pdf.

general education for adults in topics of particular interests to them (e.g. in open universities); b) provide compensatory learning in basic skills which individuals may not have acquired in their initial education or training (such as literacy, numeracy) and thus to; c) give access to qualification not gained, for various reasons, in the initial education and training system; d) acquire, improve and update knowledge, skills or competencies in a specific field: this is continuing education and training.”²

“Adult Education” is often used interchangeably with “Lifelong Learning”, but it is worth distinguishing for more clarity. Again we go with UNESCO’s definition: “...Adult Education (...) is a sub-division, and an integral part of, a global scheme for life-long education and learning.”³

Lifelong Learning describes all learning that takes place throughout a person’s life and is often illustrated with the expression “*learning from cradle to grave*”. So it includes early childhood education, school education, vocational training, etc., while adult learning is restricted to learning in adult life, often in non-formal learning settings and thus forms a key component of Lifelong Learning.

While “learning” describes the active process of acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes, “education” refers to the intentional provision of learning opportunities. In sum, terms and definitions vary depending on their context and purpose. But as a basic definition, we see Adult Education as targeting people aged 16 and older, comprising a large variety of subjects, being complementary to formal education and thus being a key pillar of Lifelong Learning.

In the Middle East, Adult Education has not yet developed to the extent that it can be considered a pillar of Lifelong Learning, but there are more and more voices who see in Adult Education the potential for contributing to solutions for burning issues such as poverty and unemployment. Within the wide field of Adult Education, which covers professional development of highly educated people such as doctors and judges as well as literacy or health education for school dropouts, *dvv international’s* work focusses on access to education for disadvantaged target groups through helping build the capacity of education centres, trainers and facilitators as well as decision makers and governmental bodies.

Through our work we have the pleasure to meet and cooperate with the select

2 National Research and Development Center for adult literacy and numeracy/Institute of Education of the University of London: European Adult Learning Glossary, Level 1, http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/2010/adultglossary1_en.pdf.

3 UNESCO, see above.

visionaries in the Arab world, who are advocating for the importance of comprehensive Adult Education as a fourth pillar of the education system, who work towards linking non-formal to formal education and recognising non-formal learning outcomes, who fight for recognising adult educators as a distinct professional qualification and who develop professional standards, licensing schemes for education providers, courses and trainers. It would need all these elements in order to create a viable and professional Adult Education system.

Some of these visionaries were so kind to help us identify the scope and subject of this publication. Our sincerest thanks go out to Seham Negm from the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education (ANLAE), Eleonora Insalaco from the Anna Lindh Foundation and Jawad Al Gousous who joined our team at *dvv international* during the publication period. Together, we were able to find further experts and explorers who were ready to share their experience with Adult Education and to show the colourful variety of Adult Education.

The above described challenge of translating terms and concepts not only from one language to the other, but from one cultural context to the other, has occupied us while producing this publication. We hope we could strike the right balance between the Arab readers' expectation to find beautifully crafted language, while at the same time responding to the desire of readers in English to see brief and pointed analysis.

We found during the production process many practitioners in the Middle East, but hardly any analysts or researchers who study Adult Education in the region. However, we hope this observation will be proven wrong by our readers. In the spirit of Lifelong Learning, we hope that this publication will stir discussion that will enhance the understanding of Adult Education and its potential for development; a discussion that will help sharing experience, learn from good practice and build on existing resources; a discussion that will help pave the way for joint action in creating viable Adult Education systems in the Middle East and beyond.

Katrin Denys

dvv international

Regional Director Middle East

Seham Negm

Honorary President of the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education (Egypt)

Adult Learning

A precondition for realising human rights

Knowledge – acquired and shared mainly through reading and writing – shapes individuals and weaves the social and cultural network between people and the world around them. Instead of looking at reading and writing as tools for linking the mind with text, one can look at them as means of connecting the mind with life or as ability to decipher life.

The power of adult learning lies in the assumption that adults have great impetus for learning and developing their life skills because they feel the need for knowledge and understand its benefits. Adults have a deeply rooted need for being able to determine their needs and interests. This should be reflected in the goals, programmes, and methods of institutional work, where principles revolve around ideas, that are not only academic or professional in nature, but which start with the life of the learner and his/her own experiences and most valuable resources. The accumulation of knowledge, experience and skill development for adults enrich the learning experience.

New insights on adult learning have crystallized among civil society organisations in the Arab region working in the field of human rights and development. The focus lies on developing capacities of individuals to take decisions and to take control over their daily life. Adult Education has developed in three types of civil society institutions: The first being service and care institutions; the second being development organisations; the third being human rights institutions.

The human rights participatory development model is considered to be one of the best forms of empowerment. Civil society organisations are often aiming at community mobilisation for change and desired transformation by demonstrating the benefits of constructive change, societal progress and improvement of living standards. Through adult learning programmes, civil society organisations provide effective tools for sustainable development, positive experiences and empowerment of adults in making decisions that benefit their local communities using

participatory methodologies in needs assessment, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and development.

Literacy is still a priority on the adult learning agenda, since illiteracy leads to marginalization and exclusion of vital manpower groaning under the weight of complex and difficult challenges in all spheres: education, culture, politics, economy, health and environment. Additionally, illiteracy represents a human rights challenge and a development challenge for both individuals and communities: not being able to develop their abilities and acquire general educational, cognitive and cultural tools keep individuals from acquiring their basic rights. Illiterate communities are thus excluded from benefiting from national development, which would support sustainable development and help societies rise and progress in economy and politics.

International and regional reports indicate that in the Arab World, around 60 to 100 million people are illiterate. Despite the weak and conflicting data, all reports indicate that women represent two thirds of the illiterate population in the Arab world. Illiteracy is concentrated in five Arab countries representing 78% of the overall illiteracy in the Arab region (Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco and Yemen). Iraq has been added during the past decade to the list of countries with the highest illiteracy rates in the Arab region.

Missing education opportunities and the lack of a suitable educational environment marginalise children. According to official figures, eight to ten million children of elementary school age are not enrolled in formal education.

Despite the growing number of educated people in the Arab world and the increase of community-based programmes in number, subjects and quality, particularly in adult learning, illiteracy remains one of the principal issues that limit the development and social transformation in the region.

We find that the pressing and critical mass in any given society is that of marginalized and excluded persons who are deprived of basic rights of freedom and human dignity. In order to find the right approach to adult learning for social change, it would be necessary to scrutinize existing and known forms of change. The first form is gradual and calm change, which does not require conscious efforts on the part of social institutions including schools, and is usually slow and irregular. The second form consists of regular change that cannot be achieved without a well-set plan, where the various institutions need to work together for its implementation. Social change in this case may be slow, particularly in geographically, socially and culturally isolated communities. The third form is fierce revolutionary change,

which is often accompanied by a revolt aimed at creating radical changes in ownership, customs, traditions, values and education. Social change means structural transformation that affects demography, systems, institutions and relations among the community members followed by changes in social values, trends and different patterns of behaviour.

A number of multiple and intertwined relationships exist between the adult learner and his/her society. Adult learning serves both the individual and the society he/she lives in. Personal growth cannot be effectively achieved except through an empowering social environment and empowering individual experiences. Adults develop their actions and initiatives in response to social issues. Social movements represent a collective pressing force that strives to achieve and defend the demands of marginalized people and raise the voice of the voiceless to the public opinion, hence the formation of associations, networks and trade unions.

Curricula can help learners develop the abilities and skills to trigger change. The individual lives today in an open and diverse world contrary to what he/she had lived in the past. Therefore, it becomes necessary for all educational and cultural institutions including schools, learning centres, the workplace and homes to adjust to the changes and developments in society.

In the Arab world, and in light of the huge social changes it is going through, opportunities for adult learning can empower individuals and provide them with the necessary confidence to practice their rights and responsibilities in society and to contribute to the development and social transformation process, gaining insight from human values and principles that foster freedom, democracy and socio-economic development.

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Christian Lund Jensen
Training Expert (Denmark)

The Trainer as a Student?

Experiences from learner-oriented education

In Adult Education, it is often the case that the adult educator is younger and less experienced than the adult learners. In particular, the educator will most likely not have the specialized knowledge that each adult learner has accumulated about his or her line of work. As a result, adult educators are frequently challenged by the participants with regards to the knowledge, competencies and legitimacy of the trainer. For instance, during one of ActionAid Denmark's leadership courses in Palestine, held in 2011, a participant literally greeted us with the sentence: *"I can do a better job than you!"* Now where do you go from here as an adult educator? Using the training course in question as an example, this article argues that by abandoning traditional teacher roles and embracing non-formal approaches of peer-to-peer learning, it is possible to embrace the experience and expertise of adult learners and at the same time create learning situations where adults change their behaviour and attitudes.

In traditional and formal education the teacher plays the role of the expert. His or her primary role is to pass on knowledge to the students who are passive recipients of the information conveyed. Paulo Freire termed this concept the *"banking approach to education"* in his now canonised book on education *"The Pedagogy of the Oppressed"*.¹ In such learning environments a power relationship exists between the teacher, who supposedly possesses the *"correct"* and *"true"* knowledge, and the student, who is seen as *"ignorant"* until educated.

Based on previous experiences with adult learning, the ActionAid course participant probably felt justified in challenging the authority of the trainers even before the course had begun. Were we to ignore this experience, we would not only lose out on valuable knowledge, but also risk playing the role of the *"oppressor"* in a *"Freirean"* sense.

1 Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 1970.

Our young participant was not the only one in that particular course that proved resistant in the beginning. In fact, the first day of that course was difficult for the whole team. However, by the second day, the general mood of the team of trainers had shifted. In our evaluation, we always ask if our training differs from training activities that the participants have attended before. Here are few answers from the same training:

“Yes, the previous trainings used more traditional teaching methods and didn’t give information in this fun and relaxed way.”

“Honestly, it is totally different. It is the first time I come to a training course like this. In other trainings the methods and ways resemble lectures more but this training was totally the opposite.”

“Yes in the way it builds human capacity and teaches management skills through practice in such a short time, it is difficult to imagine. This training was the peak of excellence in the way the participants were given space, how everyone was brought together and were not shushed and this pushed the participants to improve.”



The use of simple imagery in conveying complex ideas in graphical facilitation training - Memory Map exercise, Jordan

Source: Christian Lund Jensen

The answers from the participants and the experiences of the trainer team at the course indicate that the non-formal education sector in Palestine is still largely operating with a traditional teacher-student relationship and formal approaches to education. This observation was underlined by the tendency for participants to refer to the coming training sessions as “lectures” even though their evaluations clearly show that they did not perceive the sessions as lectures. How then can we

create learning environments that draw out the experiences and expertise already present amongst the participants while at the same time introducing a more participatory approach to leadership?

The answer to this question, in Paulo Freire's terms, is to abandon the "banking approach" and traditional teacher-student relationship. Instead we should focus on creating a learning environment that allows the teacher to become student and the student to become teacher. We must create a frame where the adult learner is an expert alongside the educator and draws on his or her previous experiences to support the learning process of other learners.

In practice, these learning principles have resulted in a focus on peer-to-peer learning and learning through experience, and we now have a clearer approach when designing and planning new courses. This approach has been tested for the past one and half year with different courses in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, and the reception to our courses has been largely the same as the evaluations quoted above. By describing how the leadership course in question was carried out, I hope to inspire other adult educators in the region to try out a similar approach and see how it works out for them.

Our courses usually consist of two types of sessions: the "regular training sessions" and the "live-sessions".

Regular training sessions

In the "regular training sessions" the trainer has chosen a number of models, techniques and tools that are relevant to the topic of the course, and these are then trained, i.e. practiced, during these training sessions. In the case of the leadership course the "regular training sessions" focussed on methods for improving communication, motivation, idea-generation, decision-making, group dynamics and conflict resolution. To maximise the learning in these sessions, we follow certain principles for learning:



Icebreaker at training session, Jordan

Source: div international, Jordan Office



Interactive learning methods, Palestine

Source: dvw international, Palestine Office

Full participation

We believe that people learn best when they have the opportunity to participate fully and to actively engage with the inputs that they receive. For this reason, we have aimed for having groups of no more than 6-10 participants with 8 being the optimal number. This gives everyone enough time to speak while at the same time ensuring that groups are dynamic and diverse. Indeed, the division into smaller groups was mentioned by several participants as amongst the most positive experiences of the course.

Of course, small groups are very trainer-intensive. For this reason, we make wide use of volunteer trainers, who are usually recruited amongst previous participants from our courses. Some of these trainers may have extensive trainer experiences while others are taking up this role for the first time. To accommodate all trainers, every session has a script with a step-by-step outline of how the session should be run.

Tickling the System

The facilitator and educator Peter Lang, who has worked with systemic approaches to learning, has been credited for coming up with this metaphor for change: “*You cannot force change – you can only tickle the system and see how it jumps.*” This is especially true for adult learning. People have different learning preferences and will react differently to the learning inputs that they receive – and some may not even react at all. Thus, we cannot presume to teach our participants anything. What we can do is to “*tickle*” them in as many different ways as possible by varying our methods and exercises, in the hope that the participants will experience something that causes them to learn.

The “*regular training sessions*” can be very fruitful in terms of learning, and many of the participants in the leadership course in Palestine did refer to some of the “*regular training sessions*” when asked to mention the most positive experiences during the course. However, they remain traditional in the sense that the trainer comes with an input that participants are asked to relate to in different ways. As a result, more often than not the quality of the learning experience is dependent on the capabilities of the trainer instead of benefiting from the expertise of the adult learners. Furthermore, although the participants will be inspired, will get to try out new approaches to different group challenges and perhaps feel that they have learnt something new, there is a risk that they will not be able to use the new learning in practice – that it will remain passive knowledge, inaccessible in real-life situations.

Live-sessions

To overcome these learning challenges, we make use of “*live-sessions*”. In each of these sessions, two participants are chosen to facilitate the entire session. Usually the “*live-session*” links directly to the inputs that have been covered during the “*regular training sessions*” of that particular day. In the case of a leadership course the participants act as leaders of another group of participants working on a campaign. Prior to each session, the two leaders are handed the aims of the session as well as a rough outline of the session. The leaders then have thirty minutes to prepare the session before meeting their group of participants and leading them through the session. The rest of the group members along with the trainer act as observers, taking notes in order to give feedback to the leaders afterwards. While the session goes on, neither the trainer nor the other participants are allowed to interfere except in extreme cases.

Although the whole process is simulated, it is our experience that participants are quickly immersed in the process, feel that they have something at stake, and that the sessions produce shared experiences that allow for a deep discussion of e.g. leadership. The sessions also allow the participants to feel ownership of the process and to take control of a major part of their learning process. They get to use their skills and expertise and to try out everything they have learnt in the training session in a close-to-real situation. This is usually a very rewarding experience:

“The best part was the leader sessions and how all participants got a chance to lead and apply the skills directly in leading other youths and their campaigns.”

“The live-sessions were a very positive experience and very unconventional, since they give the chance to apply the models in a way that suited the place, the topic, and the number of people, by giving us the chance to interact with a group as leader of a community in relation to geographical diversity, different personalities and needs.”

“I knew a lot of principles before but this is the first time I used them during a brainstorm.”

Post-session analysis

While it is essential that the participants are given free hands during the “live-sessions”, it is equally essential that the trainer is firmly in control of the process that follows immediately after each “live-session”. Quite often, things do not proceed as planned during the “live-sessions” and the two leaders may have quite strong feelings about what happens. Furthermore, they would be so absorbed in the process that it can be challenging for them to extract learning and see the experience from an outside perspective. For this reason, we use two tools for analysing the experience and extracting learning: “*debriefing* and *feedback*”.

Debriefing

A “*debriefing*” is a structured way of reflecting on an experience and finding out what can be learnt from it. Usually we follow a rigorous process when debriefing a “live-session”. First, we pick one of the leaders and ask him or her to describe what happened during the session. Afterwards, the leader is asked to explain how he or she felt during the process. These two steps are extremely important because it tells us how the leader saw the experience from his or her own perspective, and how he or she felt during the process. This helps the rest of the group get a sense

of what the leader did and did not notice, and it pinpoints situations that might have looked completely different from an outside perspective.

The trainer usually follows up with other questions regarding what the person thought went really well and what he or she would change for next time. Finally, the trainer asks if there is something in particular that the leader would like to get feedback on. The whole process is then repeated with the other leader, which often results in a slightly different account of what happened. When the debriefing of the two leaders is complete the rest of the group, along with the trainer, gives feedback to the participants. This is the most crucial part of the process and needs to be handled extremely well by the trainer. Often when people are asked to give feedback they will focus mostly on the flaws and faults of the other person. This closely resembles the way students are evaluated in formal education systems, which was what we wanted to avoid in the first place. For this reason, the trainer should control the process and support the participants in giving feedback that is useful, constructive and applicable to the two leaders. The trainer will want to control the process of giving feedback, but not the content of what is being said. The aim of doing so is to enable the participants to function as peer educators while at the same time making sure that the leaders do not feel that they are being examined.

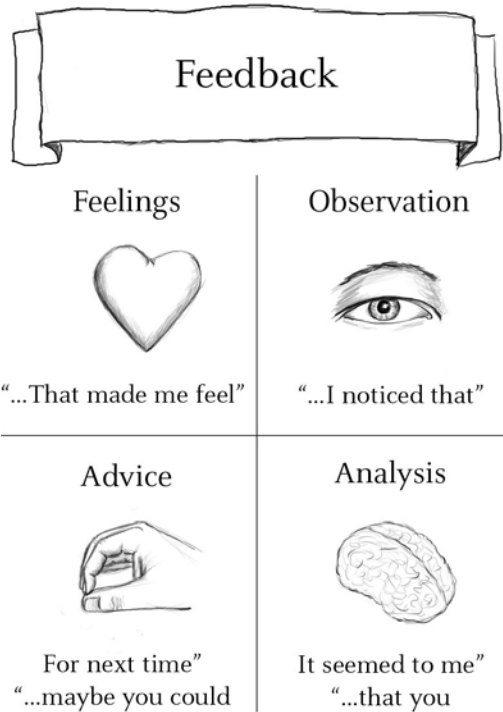
Feedback

Many different feedback models exist, but the one we find most rewarding is a four-step model that we have been using at all our courses. The four steps are called “*Observation, Feelings, Analysis and Advice*”. The first two steps, “*Observation*” and “*Feelings*” are heavily intertwined, in that the participants describe a situation that took place during the session; “*I noticed that...*” and how they felt about it; “*That made me feel...*” The participants can then go on by adding their analysis or interpretation of what took place; “*It seemed to me that you...*”, and they can give the leaders a gift in the form of an advice; “*For next time maybe you could...*”

In explaining and using the model, it is important to distinguish between the first two steps and the last two. In the first two steps the participant giving feedback is basically describing his or her own experience of the situation, and as a result whatever the participant says will be non-negotiable. Other people might have experienced the situation differently, but either way the experience of that participant cannot be negotiated. The last two steps are expressions of personal opinions regarding the experience and as such they are negotiable. These are formed on the basis of what we observed and how we felt about it.

What is important to realise is that we are used to form opinions without being fully conscious of the observations and feelings that were the basis of that opinion. To give an example, when the young participant came up to us and said: *“I can do a better job than you!”* he was giving us feedback on our performance up until now. He was giving us his analysis of the situation; *“You are not really doing a good job”* and an advice on how to improve *“Let me do it for you”*. Yet by not providing us with information on what exactly should be done better, he missed an opportunity to help us improve, and instead he succeeded in making a rather bad first impression. Obviously, there is always room for improvement during the first day, and we concluded the same in our post-course evaluation, but in that situation our immediate reaction was defensive.

It is the same situation faced during the feedback sessions when participants do not follow the model. An example: since the two leaders are leading a session together for the first time, often the co-operation and communication between them can be improved. What usually happens the first time we give feedback is that someone says: *“I noticed that the cooperation and communication between you (the leaders) was bad...”* If left like this neither the leaders nor the group would benefit much from that statement. In that situation, the trainer should ask the participant to be specific by giving examples: *“What exactly did the leaders do to make the participant arrive at that conclusion?”* Most of the times the participant is able to come with examples *“When A was speaking, B interrupted”*, *“When B was*



The Four-Step Feedback Model

Source: Christian Lund Jensen

facilitating, A sat in the corner doing nothing”, and otherwise the rest of the group can help out with examples. Giving examples has two effects: first, it links the analysis of the situation to concrete examples, which is necessary for everyone to understand why the participant arrived at this interpretation of the experience. Second, it shifts the focus from the leaders’ persons “*You were not cooperating and communicating well*” to their actions “*I noticed you did this and this, and that made me feel...*”. This is extremely important because it shows the group that it is not people who are the problem, it is their actions that can be problematic – and actions can be changed. This is of course also true for positive feedback. In order to learn from what others do well, we need to have specific examples so that the positive action can be repeated by other members of the group.

By focussing on how to give proper feedback, we often witness that participants develop drastically:

“I learned that I can reach the goals in my life. This training was like a mirror and made me see my desires and my ability to develop mentally, and by taking a leader training course it will be possible to reach these goals.”

“I feel that I can do many things I could not do before and that I have really developed personally. I learned how to love, respect, appreciate, organize, work under the pressure of responsibility, the importance of time and that there are many things I still need to learn.”

“I noticed that I am able to be comfortable with others without wearing a mask.”

In the end, our young adult learner developed a lot during the course, partly due to the skilful trainers’ actions, but more so because of the way the course was structured. I hope that other educators will be inspired to apply a similar approach and witness the magic of learner-driven learning processes.

Refaat Sabbah

President of the Arab Campaign for Education for All (Palestine)

Shifting Agendas

Education for nation-building, development and human rights

Education in the Arab World entered into a crisis with the defeats against Israel in 1948 and 1967. The six-day-war between Israel and several Arab States in June 1967 led to a power shift and forced several governments to step down. It was accompanied by a strong call for reform and by criticism of the education system. Intellectuals like Mohammed Abed Al Jaber, Constantine Zuraiq, Sate'e Al Husari, Kareem Marwa and Samir Amin, to name just a few, called for change and explained the defeat of the Arab World in the war as being a result of bureaucratic systems, lack of participation, justice and respect to human rights. Others interpreted the defeat as a result of misguided religious thought which became the dominant discourse in the Arab World. Sadeq Jalal Al Athem, a professor of Modern European Philosophy at the University of Damascus in Syria, who did not share this view and published the famous book "*Critique of Religious Thought*", was expelled from the university. Dr. Abdel Kareem Barghouti, a lecturer at Birzeit University in Palestine, called this time a period of "*reproach*" of the Arab History, which led to the collapse of a lot of concepts and pillars that were taken for granted, one of which was education. This was a time when frustration and lack of self-confidence affected the relationship between the citizen and the state on the one hand, and between the citizen and education on the other hand.

After 1967, Arab educators and politicians asked how to change the Arab world for the better. Political regression, lack of confidence and depression in the Arab World encouraged intellectuals to investigate how to improve the education system in their countries. Reform of education systems and curricula were one of the most important concerns of leading thinkers. During this time, debates began, discussing education and the major role that it could play.

In the following years, the education system became a function of politics. It reflected the methods that were used in the struggle against colonialism, foreign political interests and the Israeli occupation in Palestine. It is known that political frustration often goes hand in hand with confusion and lack of confidence in political parties. A certain isolation could be observed as well as many attempts to question history and national identity.

The political system was devoted to the traditional role of education, where transferring knowledge, traditions and customs from one generation to the next was used to maintain national identity, culture and religious morality in addition to self-protection from external threat. People were subject to the trends of the ruling family or political system. Schools became places for partisan breeding and conveyed narrow national interests. This control of the educational system triggered adaptation of individuals to the partisan philosophy of the regime.

In this approach, the learner was considered solely as a recipient of information. Paulo Freire referred to this approach to education as the “*banking concept*”. Learners were treated like vessels to be filled and any attempt of teachers and students to depart from this approach was met with repression and accusations of trying to undermine the foundations of the state. Critiques, such as Najib Mahfouz, Sadeq Jalal Al Azem and Salameh Mousa, were dismissed as being “*Orientalist*” and subordinate to the West. In general, education was not associated with people’s needs. As the banking model of education and traditional education methods continued, little consideration was given to the capabilities and expertise of the learner. Despite pressing issues such as limited political freedom, high unemployment and growing emigration, education focussed on reading, writing and arithmetic. This type of education disempowered the marginalised and did not encourage participation in decision-making in their own affairs and interests. This blocked democratic tendencies and hindered the development of intellectual, cognitive, cultural, industrial and creative production. It increased the state of dependency and inertia because it led to rigid attachment to a given text without any type of endeavour to get out of the circle drawn by the political system. This way of education did not help to meet the needs of poor and marginalised people; instead it increased mechanisms of repression and perpetuated inequality, particularly for women. The alienation of citizens led to an increase in violence rather than dialogue to solve conflicts.

In the late 1970s, voices rose up calling for changing the education system from the stage of creating knowledge and awareness to a stage of questioning knowl-

edge and awareness. The most notable voices in this movement were those of Jalal Sadeq Al Azem, Hisham Sharabi and Kareem Marwa, who criticised the prevailing social, religious, and educational structures within the Arab world. Their call was further advanced by the emergence of revolutionary theories from around the world that strived to involve the learner within his or her education, while also politicising the relationship between education and the status quo. Significant contributions came from Ernst von Glasersfeld's "*radical constructivism*" theory and Paulo Freire's pinnacle work entitled "*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*" which had a significant impact on perspectives on education worldwide. "*Radical constructivism*" helped raise important questions about knowledge, reality and their relationship to the learner, while Freire's banking concept analysed the power relations between students, teachers and the larger socio-political context.

As the call for more student participation in the learning process rose, educators started testing mechanisms of linking literacy courses to people's economic and social needs. Starting in the 1980s, Arab education movements and intellectuals like Sadeq Al Hayoum and Fadel Thamer from Iraq, Salame Mousa from Egypt and Mohammed Al Jaberi from Morocco, were concerned with shifting the focus from traditional learning of writing and reading to functional learning in which individuals develop skills needed for daily life. An example for new education methods was, for instance, a radio show entitled "*With the Farmer*" which was broadcast by the "*Jordanian Radio*" by Mr. Mazen Qubbaj. His focus was on teaching farmers agriculture, for instance which types of diseases infect plants and which various remedies can be used. He used to carry out on-site interviews that made his show one of the most popular ones at the time. He was superb in mastering the common dialect and utilising simple terms and concepts so that comprehension was optimal. Mr. Qubbaj's methods helped raise significant questions regarding teaching methodologies of adult learning in the Arab World.

On a parallel level, thinking about development reinforced change in education. Literacy was not necessarily seen by all as a human right, but certainly as a means for development. It became an urgent need to teach farmers about different types of diseases and medicines that would help them produce crops and improve farming techniques. The importance of women's education and social, economic and political participation of women became a vital social and public issue. It also became necessary for women to learn about health in order to protect and care for their children. The link between education, development and awareness also helped workers to learn about safety in order to avoid industrial accidents.

However, the prevailing totalitarian mentality at that time left its impact on the educational system and stayed an obstacle for education reform and pedagogical progress – and thus also for social development.

By the late 1980s other changes occurred. Human rights were incorporated into education and the concept of Lifelong Learning became more and more viable. Adult Education was no longer considered an act of charity but a right and a means to improve living conditions. In addition to that, the considerable technological development and rise of new means of communication had a major influence on curricula, teaching methods and on the overall role of education in improving the livelihoods and encouraging citizenship in the Arab World.

It is not possible to separate the three spheres: education, development and human rights. The challenge now lies in keeping these three concepts in one circle enhancing each other. Education reflects social hierarchies. Bridging the gap between the learner and education helps to break all the historical, social and mental barriers among learners and teachers. If we do not move across social barriers, we will just reproduce the existing system and the inequality it sustains. Education is never neutral. Therefore, if we are to enhance development, reform and modernisation of education, we must produce new models that can operate in and reflect realities, actions and underlying convictions and ideologies. Curricula imposed on students do not work. Learners are demanding to be involved in developing their own curriculum and this claim has become the demand of educational revolutionaries. There is no specific method or curriculum that should be fostered, but we should respect and promote certain pedagogical principles that encourage intellectual and political pluralism and help people realise their human rights.



Participants involved with the Global Campaign for Education, Lebanon

Source: Refaat Sabbah

Eleonora Insalaco

Coordinator of the Anna Lindh Report - The Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures (Egypt)

Growing Together

Education for citizenship in the Mediterranean region

2011 is a year that marks a historic point in the Arab world and in Arab-West relations. Starting in January 2011 the “*Arab Spring*” movement spread all across the Arab countries from Morocco to Tunisia, to Libya, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Yemen and Bahrain engaging millions of people committed to fight for a better course of their lives and their countries. The strive for change which has been ongoing for almost one year at the time of writing this article is but at its beginning and has already seen different waves of social partaking; going from the initial euphoria for the ousting of former leaders, to rising hope for the possibility of a better future, to frustration for the slow pace of reform, to a more reflective and strategic approach to prepare the political succession to power. The wave for change has united Arab populations and especially Arab youth facing common challenges, living similar feelings, exchanging good practices and looking at the possibility of a future in which citizens are more empowered to make decisions and can act for better social, political and economic conditions departing from the need of a “*leader-father figure*” to lead the nation.

From its privileged location in Alexandria, the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures, an institution working for the promotion of intercultural dialogue among the people of the Euro-Mediterranean region, observed the rising of the movement and its development and prepared itself to support the processes of change. In fact, for the Anna Lindh Foundation, intercultural dialogue does not refer to abstract cultures but to an exchange between human beings with their complex identities, aspirations, fears and specific needs. An exchange that can take place among individuals, who are able to decide and participate in their societies and assume their role as full active citizens.

Underpinning values

In line with its mission to support the emergence of active citizenship, and taking into consideration the shared and specific needs of societies in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, the foundation identified education for democratic and intercultural citizenship as a priority for its programme of action. A programme that would support the development of educational practices and activities designed to help young people and adults to play an active part in democratic life and exercise their rights and responsibilities in society, enhance their feeling of belonging to the community, local and global, as well as sensitising them to understand and appreciate the normality of different worldviews, customs and ways of life among human beings. Education helps communities and individuals to find their voice in society and value the richness of cultural diversity as a source of social, cultural and economic development.

“*Arab Youth Voice*” is the first initiative of this kind launched by the foundation in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia during its pilot phase and to be further expanded in three other Arab countries (2001-2013). Developed in co-operation with the British Council, the project aims at establishing debate clubs in urban and rural areas to engage people to discuss, in a structured way, issues of major concern for their lives and to enhance their skills to manage and accept a variety of points of view. These exchanges targeting people from different social, political, geographic and economic backgrounds are aimed to foster critical thinking, appreciation of

pluralistic values and of the internal diversity among the citizens of these countries as foundations for the establishment of a true democratic culture. Considering the importance of spreading the message and reaching the widest possible audience, social media is used in the project as a tool to stimulate the debate online beyond the geographical borders of the targeted countries and to communicate the results and dynamics engaged at the local level.



Young Arab Voices debate, Egypt

Source: Eleonora Insalaco

Setting the context

In line with the Euro-Mediterranean scope of its action, the Anna Lindh Foundation launched a three-year education programme running from 2012 through 2014. It benefited from the experience of a pool of over fifty experts and practitioners from around thirty different countries who contributed to assess the main needs, challenges and methodologies related to the implementation of education activities for democratic and intercultural citizenship. The gathering and exchange of information about national policies and approaches developed for the promotion of democratic and intercultural citizenship education both in formal and non-formal education is considered the first step to develop any future initiative.

To cite a few examples: In the case of Spain, certain measures have been taken for the promotion of diversity education and the principles are clearly stated in the 2006 education act. However, teachers are not adequately trained to deal with diversity in the classroom and to initiate participatory and inclusive practices. In the case of Egypt, the curriculum of social studies included notions of civic education but mainly focussing on the role and responsibility of the authority and leaving little space to the citizen as an active actor in the social sphere; a similar dynamic is identified in the student-teacher relationship in the Egyptian classroom. The education reform process in Egypt has been announced and new resources should be provided. In Lebanon, the National Education Strategy adopted in 2010 sets the framework for the revision of the civic education curriculum based on three learning areas (cognitive, competences and affective) and four operational dimensions (political, social, economic and cultural) aiming to make young people aware of their identity, be civically involved, believe in human partnership and be endowed with the skills, knowledge and attitudes for living together in diverse societies. In the United Kingdom, the new citizenship curriculum was launched in 2002 as a specific subject in the school curriculum and initial assessments about its implementation show that the acquisition of citizenship concepts and practices is mainly successful when democratic practices are adopted as overall management guidelines within the school, that-is-to-say that citizenship and diversity education — besides a knowledge component — are disciplines which require experiential learning.

Needs, challenges and approaches

As a basis for the elaboration of concrete proposals for action, some of the main challenges, needs and existing education methodologies have to be taken into con-

sideration. From the analysis of the expert group some of the most challenging questions refer to the possibility of designing an intercultural and democratic citizenship programme for the whole Euro-Mediterranean region while taking into consideration the different and specific needs in the targeted countries. In this respect a proposed solution could be to identify common competences to be enhanced across the region and to develop learning schemes tailored to the local realities. Among the competences that should primarily be developed are the ability to learn how to accept change, critical thinking, dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution skills, human rights and culture of peace, skills to enable people to “navigate” between different identities, self and collective identity awareness to work towards social cohesion, empathy, diversity management and transformative leadership skills.

Another challenge refers to combating the fear of change of the established education patterns among educators, teachers and decision-makers especially in Arab countries which are undergoing dramatic transformations and that live, therefore, a period of instability in which the future is not yet clearly delineated. In this moment of transition, some people might be resistant to adopting reforms that could add to the uncertainty in their country.

Among the controversial issues, the religious factor constitutes a dividing line in terms of education contents between Arab countries and European countries, because it appears that religion is a central element in the social development and cohesion in Arab countries while it is not as present in the debate in Europe. In particular, the debate among the experts gathered by the Anna Lindh Foundation revolves around the development of resources for the comparative analysis of religions to enhance people’s knowledge of religious diversity within their countries and among societies rather than insist on the concept of secularism.

The place of governments — and whether or not they should be the primary interlocutors for an education reform process — is another issue of debate since people from countries which went through the revolutionary uprisings could be particularly sceptical of involving the government apparatus as a consequence of their accumulated lack of trust towards the establishment and willingness to propose a bottom-up approach to reform. From a first analysis of the possible options of action, the combination of a bottom-up and top-down approach could be the most effective move, as on the one hand the development of policies at country level makes it possible to impact on a wide number of people, while working in close contact with the targeted populations through the involvement of schools,

civil society organisations and community leaders allows to directly address specific needs and develop necessary skills.

After decades of autocratic regimes, people calling for democracy is just the first step which needs to be accompanied by the development of a culture of participation, dialogue, rule of law, equality, respect for diversity and that should be nurtured, starting with the younger generations so that the expected change can be brought about over a decade. For this change to take place the focus should be mainly on the learning process rather than the content because people need to experience participation, democratic decision-making and social responsibility practices over time and acquire behavioural patterns that can then be translated at the societal level.

Furthermore, for a region-wide education programme it is important to contextualise the learning contents to engage and stimulate the learners' attention around issues which relate to their lives while ensuring that these contents are up-to-date and respond to the current challenges of targeted societies.

Guidelines for action

On the basis of the identified needs and challenges, some concrete proposals for the development of a regional programme for intercultural and democratic citizenship would evolve around three main axes: advocacy towards decision-makers; development of resources and tools; training activities targeted to formal and non-formal education contexts. Going from the macro to the micro perspective, a first step entails support to governments for the adoption of transferable and sustainable citizenship education reforms, aiming at the development of educational programmes to be taught as transversal subjects and entailing a learning process from early childhood to adult life. In order to proceed in this direction it is necessary to map out the existing policy measures, good practices and needs in each of the forty-three countries of the region to then propose a “*check list*” of common and different elements to be addressed at the country level.

To support this advocacy action and further training activities, it would be useful to develop a common intercultural citizenship course with guiding principles for the reform process and action-oriented activities in the region to be further adapted to the local realities. Given the scepticism that is associated sometimes to the concept of “*citizenship*” as a “*western concept*”, such a resource could be branded as “*course for social change*”; to inspire social change, appreciation of values of pluralism, social participation, dialogue skills and social cohesion. The resource

should be developed through a multi-stakeholder and participatory approach involving teachers, students, community leaders and government representatives from the conception stages to its evaluation to enhance the commitment of all relevant stakeholders and respond to the real needs of the target groups.

Finally, to respond to the challenge of shaping a culture of social participation and dialogue among the young generation it is important to train multipliers through specific training programmes for teachers, educators and civil society representatives who can then work inside the school and within the surrounding community, making use of innovative pedagogical approaches borrowing from both the formal and non-formal sectors and making use of the arts and social media as tools for free expression and participation beyond social, cultural and geographic borders, while it is also important to support exchanges between people from Europe and the southern Mediterranean shore as a way to foster direct contact and experiential learning about the other.

In the coming years, a sound education plan for intercultural and democratic citizenship can form the basis for renewed Arab-West and Euro-Mediterranean relations, whereby Europeans manage to integrate diversity as a source for multicultural dynamism in their societies by developing policies for inclusive social cohesion and participation, while on the other hand Arab societies develop a culture of participation, national dialogue and appreciation of values of pluralism, with the two parties investing in a “*humanist*” alliance based on mutual respect and shared will for universal values.

Bart Denys
Good Governance Consultant (Jordan)
Alaa' Abu Karaki
dvv international, Regional Office (Jordan)

Stepping Out of Poverty

Holistic approaches to skills development in Jordan

The informal economy has received more attention over the past few decades contrary to the early expectations which argued that the informal economy would disappear in developing countries as they achieve sufficient levels of economic growth¹. As in much of the developing world and, depending on your definition of informality, in the developed world, the informal economy in Jordan is expanding². Of all the possible definitions of the informal economy and of informal employment, the mentioned figure refers to employed people working in informal enterprises (including employers, street vendors, apprentices, etc.), unregistered or undeclared workers in formal enterprises, and those working outside informal enterprises (including homeworkers, etc.) without contract and social security coverage.³

One important characteristic of the informal economy is that relatively little data is available on it. Moreover, the available studies, due to the nature of the informal economy, are often incomplete and do not give all the answers. We know that the size of the informal economy in Jordan is some 20 to 25% of the official GDP, that 44% of all employment in Jordan is informal and that the majority of informal employment is situated in urban areas (mainly in and around the capital, Amman). We also know that the vast majority of informal employment can be found in crafts, vehicle maintenance, transportation, storage and construction, though for women medical and social services, agriculture and education are more prominent.

Though in rural areas only 28% of employment is informal (compared to 47% in urban areas), unemployment is higher and the participation rate (especially of women) is lower. The educational level is also generally lower in rural areas,

1 Wiego

2 MoP1

3 MoP2, p. 3



Umm Hammad producing school bags

Source: dvv international, Jordan Office

poverty deeper and economic possibilities as well as related services (training, education, business support) scarce.⁴ For these reasons, *dvv international* has decided to work with Community Development Centres (CDCs) in rural areas, so it concentrates on these.

The community, the whole community and nothing but the community

In the remote, rural village of Jdetta in the governorate of Irbid in Jordan, Umm Hammad (not her real name) now produces school bags from home, she can produce them for 2 Jordanian dinar (JOD) per piece and can sell them for 4. She has also struck up a partnership with a local kindergarten which guarantees her a small but stable market for her product. Umm Hammad is a divorced mother who had scant income and hopes that her newly founded business will provide her with enough to be able to support her children, thus being able to win custody over her children who now live with their father and stepmother.

The business is an outcome of one of the activities the local Community Development Centre (CDC) has set up in partnership with *dvv international*. The CDC started training mainly women, some 35 in 2012, in Jdetta in designing and producing school bags as a way for those women to increase the family income through informal economic activities on the local market. One of the main problems related to economic activities and employment in Jdetta is the lack of transportation to market places in the governorate where products can be sold. Adding to that are factors such as cultural constraints on women working outdoors, the long distance (and of course high cost of transport) to locations where formal employment can be found and long working hours keeping women away from the family. The school bags, however, can be produced and sold locally at a lower cost than school bags found on the wider market. This way, the local producers can increase their income and the local consumers can find quality products at affordable prices. Of course, it also allows women, in a country with one of the lowest

⁴ Figures and data in this paragraph are based on: MoP2 p. 2, p. 13, pp. 24-30 and MoP1

female participation rates in the economy⁵, to become economically active, even if only on subsistence level. In this case, it can also lead to a more equitable solution to the problematic social situation as a result of a divorce through economic empowerment of the woman involved.

The CDCs, some 60, scattered over Jordan mainly in remote areas but also in some urban areas, funded by the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), are small but often highly regarded and trusted by the community. The centre in Jdetta, for instance, has only two staff and is supported by six to eight volunteers working on different projects. The centres often target the unemployed, the poor and the marginalized, but not exclusively. They also offer possibilities for others to advance themselves through training courses or tutoring for high school students. They operate mainly in remote areas where such services are scarce, as are economic activities, and where cultural constraints are often stronger than in urban centres and women, especially, participate even less in the economy. In Muhay, a village in the governorate of Karak, for instance, a young woman, trained accountant, is volunteering as a researcher in the CDC because formal work as an accountant can only be found in the bigger cities and it is culturally not accepted that she would go that far out to work. For her the centre is a source of work experience and life skills, she says, and it also allows her to follow further computer courses, in a computer lab sponsored by *dvv international*.

The CDC in Naseem-Jerash works in partnership with an active local community committee that helps with designing activities, outreach and networking. One of the problems identified there was the lack of access to work for mentally disabled members of the community. In cooperation with *dvv international*, the CDC set up a programme of on-the-



Women training in Jdetta on bag design and production
Source: *dvv international*, Jordan Office

5 ILO, 2012, p. 10

job vocational training for people with disabilities, targeting mentally disabled. 18 people were trained in vehicle maintenance, mobile phone repair, typewriting and various crafts. Through agreements between the CDC and the participating local workshops and employers, the disabled participants gained skills and confidence but employers, their employees and the wider community were also made aware of the potential of people with disabilities and learnt how to deal with them.

Next to a variety in training courses, the centres also offer micro-credits to start up small businesses and support community initiatives in other areas. The CDC in Naseem operates a low-cost kindergarten, as the cost of child care is prohibitive, especially for women, to find employment or to start their own income generating activities.

In Mansheyet Bani Hassan - Mafraq, the population is largely better off but quite isolated and the women are rarely able to venture out of the community. The CDC there provides, among other things, cooking courses for the women there. The courses not only provide the opportunity to socialize and cook. Less fortunate women can also take a food production course in which they learn how to cook for small scale, commercial purposes. These courses take place in the “*productive kitchen*” funded by *dvv international* that also allows some women to produce food to be sold in the village.

On a different level, the downsides of working in the informal economy are fairly self-evident, workers have no social security, no contract and no job security, work conditions are not controlled and therefore often characterised by bad health and safety conditions and long hours. Wages are often lower than in the formal economy, capital to start up or to expand or grow is hard to come by and legal protection, in the absence of registration and contracts, is weak if at all available, transaction costs are subsequently higher. Nevertheless, the informal economy allows people to create an income and customise their own work environment.⁶ This, with the current view that the informal economy is here to stay⁷, leads many to the conclusion that the way to deal with the informal economy does not solely consist of pressing for formalisation. Though many governments prefer the latter as this promises higher income for the public purse, it is also necessary to improve the informal economy as such.⁸

Technical and vocational training is a key component in creating both better

6 Mop2, p.24

7 Wiego

8 Palmer, 2008, p.1

work and better livelihoods for people in the informal sector and in allowing informal workers and enterprises to formalise. It is not the only component and without other factors such as an enabling environment for formalising informal enterprises, for business in general, access for poor to formal education and other pro-poor measures, training will not make all the difference. Nevertheless, it is a key aspect, especially for the poor and disadvantaged where we usually find a greater gap between the skills they have and the ones they need for the labour market or to lead businesses, whether formal or informal.⁹

It is clear that the centres are engaged in much more than technical training for the informal economy. The centres indeed offer training but also supporting micro-credit. They are proactive through their researchers, networks and community groups in identifying the main problems in the community, which are often related to poverty, lack of economic opportunities but also to lack of integration in the community or a lack of constructive and social activities. The centres try to address these problems with the community and with volunteers from the community. This also allows for better insight in the problems in the community and the obstacles for the different members of the community to participate more fully in society, including making a living and creating or finding gainful employment. The centres also address, through their activities, issues of marginalization or lack of integration of certain groups such as the disabled, mentioned above, so they engage in awareness-raising and advocacy. Their success depends to a large extent on their active outreach to members of different underprivileged groups and on their efforts to connect those with other groups, with employers.

The description above suggests that the activities of the centres are rather haphazard, unstructured and little uniform. To some extent this is true. The capacity to research needs and obstacles in the community, to identify opportunities, also economic ones, is rather limited, in terms of both human resources and methodological capacities. Because of this, *dvv international* is currently working with four centres to build their capacities. Recently they implemented a “*Participatory Rapid Appraisal*” (PRA) aimed at assessing how to reach larger target groups and focus more on improving economic opportunities for the community. But this diversity and flexibility is also their strength. It allows them to tackle a variety of problems, or to support the community in tackling a variety of problems, to focus on specific groups with specific problems and to work pro-actively to raise awareness of problems and of the possible solutions, even down to the individual level.

9 Ibid.

It also allows them to take on the role of facilitator in bringing together people in need of skills with employers, or people with similar complaints, or people with needs with institutions that can help them. This is one of the aims of the cooperation of the CDCs with *dw international*.

Through the funded initiatives, study visits, the creation of a community of practice and other future activities, the CDCs have the potential to become centres that can refer more to other service providers (private and public). They can provide access to training, jobs, information to the underprivileged, engage in advocacy of particular problems and solutions and empower through awareness-raising, networking and through mobilisation of the community, and of themselves. The activities of the centres and the vision of their possible future are necessary and have the potential to substantially change the situation of some underprivileged groups.

Some of the factors that cause informality – such as high costs or registering a business, high taxes, a lack of access to finance (sufficient for growth and increasing productivity), lack of reasonable benefits, heavy bureaucracy, a mismatch between the cost of formalising and the benefits it offers – have to be tackled through legal and institutional change. However, several studies on the informal economy in Jordan (as well as the experience of the CDCs) point towards a number of factors that CDCs can influence.¹⁰ Such factors are mobility problems, the mismatch of skills taught in formal technical and vocational training (or other education) and the requirements of the private sector (formal or informal). Other factors are also the need to work at or close to home and, especially the lack of awareness of the advantages of formalising employment of enterprises, the lack of awareness of funding sources and educational and training possibilities and the lack of faith in the durability of work in the private sector.

Training for the informal economy, or for transition to the formal economy, is quite specific. This is in part because the informal economy often requires very specific skills for specific, small sectors and target groups, as we have seen above and because informal markets are quite local and local circumstances and occupations vary a lot. The lack of legal protection also requires other skills such as negotiation skills, networking and organisational skills, often less important in formal employment. The fact that informal enterprises are largely micro- and small enterprises also means that business management skills are more important for more workers. All of this calls for very targeted interventions in training and interventions that offer more than the traditional technical and vocational training

¹⁰ MoP2, p.24 and al Quds, 2006, pp. 13-14

offers. The geographical, mobility and cultural constraints also require more on-the-job and very localised services. The former is often done through traditional apprenticeships in informal businesses, a form of training which is more flexible and wider than formal “*Technical and Vocational Education Training*” (TVET) but also limited in terms of acquiring modern, technologically up-to-date skills. Training for the informal sector needs to be both flexible (and transferable to other informal sector jobs) and answering the demands of the (local) labour market, skills necessary for formalisation of work require forms of certification, which could be competency-based and organised on a local scale.¹¹

Whether it is about acquiring skills to work in the informal sector, skills necessary to increase the productivity of informal activities and enterprises or skills necessary to enter the formal economy, it is clear that flexibility and targeting specific, small, target groups is a necessity. Let us then take a look at what the CDCs offer, or potentially could offer, in that regard.

CDCs and their unique position to support technical and vocational training for the informal economy

As mentioned above, the CDCs are in no position to greatly influence the establishment of an enabling environment for formalising work or businesses and many of the factors limiting the ability of people to get formal or informal jobs or earn a living otherwise. Nevertheless, the centres do and can contribute to training for the informal sector or in order to transition to the formal economy or formal work.

The centres are uniquely located in some of the villages where people encounter most constraints and least opportunities. They are also uniquely positioned to identify and address specific problems of specific groups in those communities, with the members of the community, as we have already seen above regarding disabled and disadvantaged women. The centres already address skills gaps with tailored training and on-the-job training to specific groups. This unique position also allows the centres to gather the knowledge that will allow them to tailor to local economic possibilities which can include non-traditional activities incorporating new technologies that allow for increased productivity and growth of informal or otherwise small enterprises.

The centres also provide some of the services necessary to complement training such as micro-credits and basic work experience. They are well-positioned to grow in that function and provide links to other providers of finance, of training,

¹¹ Palmer, 2008

of business counselling who can tailor their services based on the knowledge in the centres. They already organise the community around some services such as kindergartens and employers around themes such as providing work experience to the disadvantaged.

Though the centres have limited capacities for training, for control of informal enterprises and such, through their network in the community, the trust they have and their active outreach, they can be pivotal actors in linking training in the informal economy to new forms of competency-based certification or reaching out to informal employers to improve work conditions and handing them the tools or information about support available to do so.

Because of their presence in the community and their capacity to identify, in a participatory fashion, skills gaps for different groups, they are and can be more so, focal points for designing training for the broader life skills necessary for workers in the informal economy such as negotiation and organisation skills. Moreover, their focus on working in the community and networking specific groups can be invaluable to support informal workers or entrepreneurs in organising themselves on a community level, despite legal constraints on organising workers.

Finally, through advocacy and awareness-raising they can not only improve life in the community for disadvantaged but also provide information and raise awareness about potential benefits of formalising informal economic activities and the institutions that can support this, for as far, of course, as they exist.

In sum, the centres are currently working in a variety of ways on improving life in their communities but have the potential to take these activities to a higher level. With *dvv international* the centres are already working on new ways of addressing skills gaps and organised ways of overcoming obstacles to income generation. Together they have worked on upgrading the capacities of the centres in terms of project management and different concepts of Adult Education and work creation through linking different groups in the community and institutions. Further capacity building is planned as well as the creation of supporting experts and communities of practice that allow such centres to exchange best practices and new ideas. With a clearer focus on poverty reduction and work or livelihood creation within their community building mission, these centres can take the provision of this broader and more tailored version of technical and vocational training, to a new level. Their local knowledge and networks allow them to provide those working in the informal sector (or those likely to end up there) with training that is needs-based, demand-driven, targeted, going beyond technical skills, using tradi-

tional informal training mechanisms, involving public and private providers and allowing for incorporating skills for new technologies that can increase productivity in the informal sector. These have been identified as key characteristics necessary for productive technical and vocational training for the informal sector¹².

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Thuqan Qishawi

Regional Coordinator of the Quaker Palestine Youth Programme (Palestine)

Tough Reality and Inspiring Models

Experiences from community education in Palestine

When speaking about Palestine and Palestinians, the occupation and all it brings instantly jumps to mind. We also think about how the Palestinians who endured the catastrophe of 1948 and the setback of 1967 found a safe refuge in education. The formal education sector in which universities played a major role has been serving Palestinians for quite a long time. In due course, community education emerged as an important non-formal model separate from the boundaries of universities, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoHE), or even the education officer of the Israeli Civil Administration who was in charge before the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority. Political parties, some activists and educators played a vital role in community education. During the Palestinian “*Intifada*” (literally: uprising) that started on 9 November 1987, the civil society had a leading role in education especially when the universities were closed or worked irregularly. In addition, new pioneering community education institutions were born such as the “*Tamer Institute*”¹, a community based non-profit institute founded in 1989 as a natural and necessary response to the needs of the Palestinian society. From the institute’s point of view, the need for the society to acquire the means in order to help them learn and be productive is considered one of the most important needs. The vision and philosophy of the institute focusses on providing alternatives for learning in all forms and to all areas. In short, from the institute’s perspective, learning is the link between language and logical work within context and vision.

The formation of the Palestinian National Authority gave Community Education a new dimension. The Palestinian National Authority signed different agreements and memoranda of understanding that limited many of its activities. For example, the “*Oslo Accords*” are considered to be one of the limitations on the activities of the Palestinian National Authority. This is where the role of civil society organisa-

1 <http://www.tamerinst.org>

tions emerged, which can work in geographic areas that the Palestinian National Authority cannot access and that can address topics and issues that are difficult for the Palestinian National Authority to discuss, such as historic Palestine. In the official discourse, the Palestinian National Authority calls it “*Israel*” while civil society organisations call it “*historic Palestine*”. The “*Oslo Accords*” also have a direct impact on education: the Palestinian curriculum, for instance, no longer includes information regarding the Palestinian sovereignty over the city of Jerusalem. In addition, symbols, some subjects in history, geography, art and culture were also omitted from the curriculum. This deletion was particularly evident in several subjects for the curriculum of the First Grade, such as Arabic Language, Islamic Studies, history and geography, as well as the removal of the Palestinian flag and all the poems related to the “*Intifada*” and the Palestinian refugee’s “*Right of Return*”. Unlike the Palestinian National Authority, civil society organisations were not tied to the “*Oslo Accords*” and they had the freedom to cover certain topics and work in certain geographic areas.

With the occupation, Palestinians became determined to survive and withstand their hard reality. They had to be inventive in using their capabilities and resources to make their daily lives easier; always hoping for a better future. They learnt to take a role other than that of the victim, creating hope and inspiration out of suffering. They understood the “*scarcity*” issue in Adam Smith’s economic theory.² They suffered scarcity because the occupation deprived them from their land and other resources. Scarcity in this case is related to the imbalance of power. As a result, investing in human resources became a vital means of survival and endurance.

In the last ten years, the civil society; national and grassroots organisations succeeded in mobilising the Palestinian community. The civil society wanted to play an important role in social change and this was hugely supported by different international organisations and donor countries, but for different motives. Thousands of programmes and activities related to Adult Education were implemented. Now, there is a debate going on amongst Palestinians on the true effectiveness of donations on community development.

Many Palestinian organisations are working in adult community education and played an important role in societal change. They have different goals, methodologies, motives, agendas, identities, and fund-resources; but they share a general framework through which they reach different geographical areas focussing on essential concepts, such as empowerment, societal change, partnership and oth-

2 Adam Smith: On System of Political Economy (Book IV)

ers. They dealt with Adult Education differently from the way traditional formal education at universities or other official institutions do. Formal education concentrated on passing on knowledge and as a result a gap between qualifications of graduates and market or society needs was found.

Civil society organisations became aware of their role in this new type of education and chose methodologies and topics accordingly. They overcame the idea that the formal system is the only knowledge source. Society now has a say in what people should learn. In the following, adult community education in Palestine and its effect on societal change will be analysed drawing on two sample projects.

Community mobilisation against domestic violence

Many of these institutions played a pivotal role in some important and sensitive social issues not tackled before. For example, incest is one of the taboos that even adults do not discuss in the conservative Palestinian society. The traditional education system at school or university does not cover this issue as needed and fails to answer parents' questions. Social counsellors do not know how to deal with sexual harassment or incest cases within the families of students.

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, a national survey on abuse in the Palestinian community in 2011 was conducted, and the following are the most significant results: around 8% of youth (18 – 29 years old) were subject to physical abuse in the streets, most of them male (16%) and some female (1%).³ According to the same survey, 2% of youth were subject to sexual harassments in the streets (0.5% males and 3% females). Over 20% of the students were physically abused by their teachers, 14.2% by fellow students. Approximately 20% of the youth were subject to psychological abuse in the streets, 29% of the male and 10% of the female. Roughly in every fourth case, Israeli soldiers were involved. 9% of youth were subject to psychological abuse in education institutions by their teachers or peers.⁴

The project "*Aman*" (which is the Arabic word for "*safety*") was implemented by the Women's Studies Centre team. Over four years and during two phases, the project targeted teachers, counsellors, judges, policemen, parents and students to create awareness, knowledge and experience in dealing with sex abuse within Palestinian families. It also endeavoured to provide children with a safe environment and keep them away from such assaults.

³ The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics initial results of the violence in the Palestinian Community survey, 2011.

⁴ See above footnote.

The project has taken into account the sensitivity of these issues as well as the fact that they have been a taboo for many years. However, there is a definite need and increasing demand from the parents as well as the teachers to answer students' questions, putting aside feelings of embarrassment and shame. There has been acceptance from some Imams of Mosques who began discussing it within religious settings, explaining the importance of having such information, especially for parents and teachers in order to help these students protect themselves. The impact of this project was visible in the behaviour of the target groups, particularly within schools and family settings.

It helped people to answer teenagers' legitimate questions related to their bodies without feeling shame or hesitation. Students and parents learnt different ways to protect themselves and their colleagues from sexual abuse. "*Aman*" has offered a much needed intervention through specialists in sex education. It offered assistance in different areas, especially children's abuse. It helped the Ministry of Education (MoE) in dealing with such a complicated issue.

Being a distinguished example of community education activities, how can "*Aman*" be replicated in other areas in Palestine? And how can it create a true social responsibility between the formal, social, and private sectors? These questions will move us to essential issues in co-operation, coordination and co-planning between different sectors in the country.⁵

Community mobilisation for civic participation

The Palestinian society is diversified in terms of political, cultural, and religious identities. There are different ideologies (leftists, religious, or centrist), and religions (Muslims and Christians). Palestinians wisely invested in this diversification and positively used it in serving their higher interest and common goal: the elimination of occupation. Despite their big tribal or political differences, Palestinians shared this one goal in many of their social programmes: civic and community participation. Local civil society dealt with this concept in an unconventional way. They went beyond traditional civic education concepts in formal curricula and touched the real needs of the society. There has been great interest from some institutions such as the Teacher Creativity Center or the Universal Education Foundation or even from the volunteer work department at Birzeit University and Al-Quds University on the development of different models in order to promote the values of civic duties as universal values.

5 The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics initial results of the violence in the Palestinian Community survey, 2011.



Youth celebrate the final day of civic engagement training that enabled them to implement youth initiatives in their communities, Palestine

Source: The American Friends Service Committee – Quakers, Photographed by Nivin Qadadha

In order to enhance cooperation and exchange between the various interest groups, since 2003 the American Friends Service Committee “*Quaker Palestine Youth Programme*” is implementing a programme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip named “*Public Achievement*” in partnership with many local Palestinian institutions. It began in the United States as an education model at the University of Minnesota.⁶ It took an international dimension when it was implemented in Northern Ireland, known for historical conflict between Protestants and Catholics, where the goal was to initiate rapprochement between students in schools, colleges and many community organisations.⁷ In the Palestinian context, the programme served young people under occupation and supported their role in changing the society and shaping their reality.⁸ The main goal of the project was to promote the civic participation of the youth by starting community initiatives and expressing themselves in their own way to be heard.

6 Read more about the program at: <http://www.augsburg.edu/cdc/publicachievement/>

7 Read more about the program at: <http://www.publicachievement.com/>

8 Read more about the program at: <http://www.afsc.ps>

The programme targeted three age groups:

The **Community Pioneers** (ages 18-25) are mostly university students. They are selected in cooperation with partner organisations which they are engaged in. This group undergoes an intensive empowerment training programme of not less than 126 hours. It covers many topics that prepare them to become effective Change Agents in their community. Training merges knowledge, skills and attitudes according to participants' needs. Topics include development, young people's role in change, community service, voluntary work, work challenges in Palestine, political history of the Palestinian cause, and geopolitical, economic, and social aspects of life under occupation. It also covers facilitator skills, training of the trainer, communication, team building, planning, budgeting, resource allocation, report writing, lobbying and advocacy, dealing with different behavioural patterns, social media, and concepts of citizenship, participation, democracy, freedom, change, and activating available resources. They become well aware of the needs of the community, know when and how to intervene in community affairs, participate in activities related to accountability to the parliament or to defining the needs of the community. Some are working with civil society non-profit organisations or community-based organisations.

The **Youth** (ages 14-17) participating are divided into groups of 15 participants each. Each pioneer forms his or her group of participants and they work together for seven months. They meet every week for two and a half hours in a non-formal learning context. Pioneers facilitate the meetings and pass their experience and know-how in community work to the group. Participants like to attend because they find meetings different from traditional learning at schools. They enjoy their time, laugh and play while learning. At the fourth month each group starts to think about a public issue. They consider real concerns that they want to deal with. Democracy is present in thinking, discussing, and selecting the case. After that, each group starts to study the selected issue in depth through research, data gathering, statistics, and interviews. Then they study the powers affecting the issue and identify the supporting powers, analyse its motives, learn how to communicate with it and win it. The same is applied on opposing powers. Then the group tries to come up with an initiative that responds to the issue. They develop a work plan, divide tasks, implement the initiative and finally celebrate achievements with the community.

The **Local Community** is indirectly targeted and represents individuals and local community organisations involved in the "*Public Achievement*" programme,

especially during the work on the selected issues. This group is the supporting partner that provides young people with guidance and advice in order to activate their role in societal change. This group learns about young people, recognises their role in change, and realises the importance of listening to them. In most cases, the community has been supportive of the youth's ideas and initiatives, even those who were not convinced of the project in the beginning. However, the youth were able to prove themselves and trigger change.

The programme is an example of societal change and empowerment that creatively responds to people's needs through activating available resources or using advocacy and lobbying tools. Small initiatives opened big opportunities for this generation to address sensitive issues and paved the road leading to the community and future plans.

Almost 540 pioneers from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank engaged in the "Public Achievement" programme between 2003 and 2011. Under the slogan "Young people are citizens of the present, not only the pillar of the future", the programme helped young people address different issues such as school and domestic violence, early marriage, poverty and child labour, but also very specific local concerns such as a lack of sunshades in Beita village or the high rate of cancer in Yabid village due to the coal industry. Around 340 youth-related initiatives were implemented. Among them were also cultural, environmental, and political initiatives. Altogether, 8000 participants were involved in the projects. One of the pioneers from 2006, said:

The programme helped me discover my abilities that ultimately led me to my true role. I am now a Board Member in the Beta Club and managed to allocate funding through my connections with a group of funders. The Public Achievement programme has contributed by helping me build my capacity and become a certified trainer from more than 10 local institutions.

After his participation in the programme he was able to perform the role of a community activist through communicating with more than 5000 young people using a social media initiative he named "Yella Shabab" (in English: Come on Young People).⁹

Civic participation in the "Public Achievement" programme continued after the project ended and covered other community efforts and initiatives such as Palestinian division, national unity, and boycott of Israeli settlement goods. There are

9 <http://www.facebook.com/GoYouth.YallaShabab>

now a diversity of tools to resist the occupation, which are considered far from the traditional model of resistance. For instance, there are youth groups who participated in the project that were able to mobilise international solidarity for Palestine linked to the activities of well-known protest movements in the villages of Bil'in and Budrus. There are groups active on Facebook that led campaigns to support Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons and there are other groups who played a role in the popular movement calling for an end to the division, as well as supporting campaigns that went to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) to gain recognition of a Palestinian state.

Achievements of the community mobilisation programmes

The model of the “*Public Achievement*” programme initiated societal change on various levels:

First of all, a perception change could be observed. In traditional education, students are generally expected to learn by heart, whereas the “*Public Achievement*” programme encouraged them to think what an abstract term, such as for instance “*democracy*”, means for them in their daily life. One of the pioneers from 2006 defined democracy as the possibility to “*speak my mind even if what I say differs from other people’s opinions*”. For another pioneer democracy is: “*when my mom asks me what to cook for lunch tomorrow*”. A pioneer who works as the manager of an IT centre thinks that “*democracy is originally a western concept, we have a more effective concept ‘Shura’*”, which is an Islamic concept for community consultation in decision-making. Shaping and moulding perceptions in accordance to context is an important indicator of societal change. Concepts are dynamic and change over time.

Secondly, there was a change in behaviour and attitude: concepts are translated into behaviours and attitudes, affecting other people through certain reactions. When speaking about accepting the other and respecting different viewpoints as an important component of social work in the “*Public Achievement*” programme, we find that theory was put into practice and the concepts became a part of everyday life. The feedback from parents whose children participated in the project suggested a radical change in their children’s characters and convictions. Some parents talked about how their son broke the barrier of shame, others talked about the project’s part in strengthening leadership skills of their sons, and some mothers talked about the project’s role in strengthening their daughters’ self-confidence, which helped them speak comfortably in front of others. Behavioral changes also

affected the identity of participants and will affect also their families, colleagues and friends. For example, gender balance was initially seen as something foreign until people engaged in discussions about gender issues regularly.

Furthermore, policies on community and even on national levels changed. This is a critical stage in societal change. People seek to spread the change model to decision-making processes and policies that regulate the community. There were strong voices stemming from the “*Public Achievement*” programme that affected gender related policies at the Prime Minister’s Office. Here, gender was not a mere concept used in public slogans or public awareness. It had an influence on policies that are in turn responsible for a wide societal change and are committing for decision-makers. One group has initiated local youth councils, which started discussions with the Palestinian Ministry of Local Government. Within two years, this turned into a national initiative of local youth councils in a group of Palestinian cities and villages.

The final stage in social change is maintaining the achievement, which is an ongoing challenge all pioneers and youth groups constantly face.

In conclusion, the Palestinian reality paved the way for new types and models of non-traditional and non-formal Adult Education. These models inspire research and development and broaden the role of individuals, civil society and national institutions to play a central role in shaping the awareness and identity of the community, responding to the hopes and aspirations of Palestinians and helping them get heard locally and internationally.

Reem Kassem
Director of Agora Arts and Culture (Egypt)

Beyond the Beaten Paths

Youth empowerment through art projects in Egypt

In Egypt, there is no officially recognised definition of non-formal education. For a long time, non-formal education was seen as a means to provide people who did not finish school with education opportunities. For this reason, literacy was the major component of non-formal education. Over time, the concept of non-formal education widened and now also includes other kinds of education, such as training for employment, education on rights, health, etc. In the recent economic crisis, non-formal education came up on the agenda as a tool for improving productivity and providing a possible solution to youth unemployment.

In the past few years, due to the inefficiency of the education system, many youth initiatives emerged, generally motivated by the concept of “*learning by doing*”. The traditional formal education system is often following a one-way method of teaching where the teacher is considered as an expert and the learner as a passive receiver of knowledge. However, performing arts such as drama, music, dance or puppetry can be an interactive method of learning and can encourage the participants and the audience to engage in a constructive dialogue. Experience shows

that initiatives that promoted social work were the most dominant and interesting. The needs of the community inspired volunteerism and non-formal education.

Non-formal education can be seen as a tool for positive change. Non-formal education can help people develop skills and knowledge for coping with economic and social problems. Non-formal education can be a tool for dialogue between different cultures. Non-formal education can encourage social change.



Art education, Egypt

Source: Reem Kassem

Arts can be a means of non-formal education and a tool for social change. One could spend millions on media awareness campaigns for certain topics, but arts (performing arts in particular) could be used to communicate the message and spread information in a more exciting way, incorporating alternative methods that capture the attention of the target group and help communicate certain messages.

The Egyptian non-governmental organisation AGORA Arts and Culture developed a concept for linking art with education and social change, especially in rural areas. The concept is called “*2020 Recovery Matrix*”, alluding to the need for society to recover from a time of oppression and economic hardship.

AGORA approaches both youth and adults in urban and rural communities and encourages them to express and share their needs and fears, to engage in dialogue with their environment, and to acquire skills for generating income and developing an identity through arts and crafts. The various components of the programme and their target groups are shown in the following table:

The 2020 Recovery Matrix

	Target Groups		
Objective	Child and Adolescent (under 16 years old)	Young People (16 – 30 years old)	Adults (over 30 years old)
Poverty alleviation	NA	Life skills and handcraft education for those who might not be able to find employment opportunities/ physical skills for those who do not have strong mental skills	Handcraft education, economic empowerment through income generating projects and activities
Youth empowerment	NA	Youth clubs and volunteering activities	NA
Enhancing innovation and creativity	School programmes that develop the interpersonal skills of the children and young people/ art education as a component of the school curricula/ a variety of cultural activities that are accessible for all community members		NA
Strengthen identities	Artistic and cultural activities/ performance/ debates/ educational programmes that are accessible for all community members/ free access to culture		

Colour Code

Art for Economic Development Programme	Art for Social Change Programme
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Poverty alleviation

The first objective of “*The Development Matrix*” is to improve the economic well-being of the community through income generating activities. This objective directly targets young people and adults from rural areas and indirectly targets young people and adults from the middle-class sector in urban areas. Income generation is addressed through the “*Arts for Economic Development*” programme encouraging people to start their own businesses.



Young adults, Egypt

Source: Reem Kassem, Photographed by Amr Saleh

AGORA created a network of young artisans, usually from a middle-class background. Network members are students and fresh graduates who have not found a job opportunity but have acquired a certain artistic skill, such as copper shaping, sculpting, painting etc. The network empowers them with additional handcraft training, opportunities for exchanging new ideas and practices and for joining monthly markets to showcase their products, sell them and thus generate income.

The idea of empowering young artisans is not solely to aid them in generating income and securing a better future for themselves, but also to attract them to pass on their knowledge to young people and adults from rural areas. To this end, AGORA trains the artist to be trainers for people from rural areas.

Through the “*Arts for Economic Development*” programme, AGORA enables the development of human resources necessary to tap Egypt’s valuable cultural capital. Drawing on this resource is an essential precondition for developing a strong and sustainable cultural industry, which can play a key role in enhancing the socio-economic development in Egypt.

Youth empowerment

Alongside art workshops for youth, AGORA created a youth club in Alexandria

at the time of the uprising in Egypt when the enthusiasm for social work and youth networking peaked. The AGORA Youth Club has more than 30 active volunteers and four committees for Media and Press, Marketing and Public Relations, Community Outreach and Development as well as for Youth and Volunteerism.

The AGORA Youth Club provides a forum for young people to promote cultural and artistic activities and opens a pathway for volunteers to become powerful change agents by acquiring skills, knowledge and tools necessary to create a sustainable future. It specifically works in the following three areas:

Empowering members with new skills

The youth club is a vehicle for the volunteers to discover their potential and develop new skills. Implementing a major event helps them develop their abilities to define goals, plan a project, draft a budget and engage in fundraising. They can learn how to supervise a team of volunteers and how to train others. Painting murals or banners for an event could simply awaken art talents in a person.

Being part of a new family

A friendly and empowering environment can set free incredible creativity, productivity, and commitment. For this reason, AGORA tries to create an inspiring team spirit and to encourage volunteers to engage in all projects together by supporting them in achieving the progress they desire, reducing obstacles, providing help and acknowledging efforts. There are volunteers who have interpersonal or professional difficulties and need assistance in overcoming such obstacles on their way to empowerment. There are other volunteers who need to be empowered with professional skills, training or mentorship. Volunteering also offers a networking opportunity. They meet interesting people, get new information and learn how to do new things – which altogether can have a major impact on their lives.

Motivating and consolidating sense of achievement

Volunteers come to AGORA either because they would like to be part of a new family or because they believe in AGORA's mission. What motivates them most is the feeling to achieve something. It may be true that one organisation cannot solve all the world's problems, but what AGORA's volunteers believe is that they can make Alexandria — the relatively small city they live in — a little bit better and foster social change.



Social change, Egypt

Source: Reem Kassem, Photographed by Amr Saleh

Enhancing innovation and creativity

Culture and arts are essential components of a comprehensive education enhancing the holistic development of an individual. With art programmes being eliminated from schools due to budget cuts,

and with parents who are overworked and often short of money and thus unable to provide their children with private art lessons, we risk a future of adults with little sense of creativity and innovation.

AGORA initiated the project “*Explore the Arts*” in a school in Alexandria which might be a model for other schools in the country. Alongside the project, AGORA advocates for including arts practice in the school curricula.

Strengthening identities

If we look back in history, we can see that art has always been a means of expression – of personalities and of communities. Art transforms constantly and reflects the values and attitudes of a culture communicated through language, poetry, music, visual or performing arts. In the Egypt of today, it is critical to provide people with the knowledge and skills and, perhaps even more importantly, the values and attitudes, the ethical principles and the moral directions to become responsible citizens and guarantors of a sustainable future for a country on its recovery path. The “*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*” Article 27 states:

‘Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.’

Performing arts can create a harmonious atmosphere to start meaningful dialogues on sensitive issues. When the issue under discussion is a sensitive, unpleasant or even a taboo topic, performing arts can help attract an audience, capture their attention, and then involve them in a discussion and even build community support groups to address the issue. Information can be communicated, discussed, joked about, explained and questioned, reaching out to the audience on a personal and emotional level.

In order to enhance expression through arts, AGORA organised cultural and artistic projects in public spaces. Among them is the festival “*Start with Yourself*”,

which aims at promoting positive social change. The festival takes place twice a year, each time in a different neighbourhood. The festival engages the public in non-formal learning not only through performances and a workshop during the event, but also through preparatory activities. The performances encourage questions and enhance discussions on social, political and cultural topics.

AGORA's work shows that art has an enormous potential for learning and social change. However, to fully unfold this potential, public action and support is needed. Arts can only thrive if the right to culture is promoted and put into practice, if closed and neglected theatres and cultural centres are revitalised and artistic and cultural education becomes an essential part of education in all schools in Egypt.

Roy Moussalli

Director of the Syrian Society for Social Development (Syria)

Ruba Samain

dvv international Regional Office (Jordan)

Off the Streets

Rehabilitation for juvenile delinquents in Syria

Juvenile justice centres are meant to rehabilitate young people who have broken the law and help them reintegrate into society. Education is seen as a major steppingstone to the rehabilitation of under-age delinquents. However, only a few institutions in the Middle East provide targeted education in the field of literacy, basic education and vocational training for this target group. The benefit and impact of educational activities in prisons in the region are hardly documented, thus this article shares experience from education projects in a juvenile facility in Damascus.

The Khaled Bin Al Waleed Juvenile Justice Centre (KBW) in Damascus hosts up to 2000 girls and boys aged 16 – 18 years. Only 10% of them are serving sentences, while the large majority is awaiting arraignment. This process can last between a few days to a few months, the average having gone down from more than 90 days to 45 days. Almost 90% of the young people in the KBW were working before their arrest. Around 70% were convicted or charged with theft, the others for a variety of minor offenses and only very few for serious crimes. Almost all of them come from rural or suburban areas. Every second person faced serious difficulties in their family, 64% of them have parents who are illiterate or have only primary school education level.

Around 50% of the juveniles themselves are illiterate, even though almost all of them have gone through the first six years of schooling and thus finished primary education. Only 5% made it to secondary school and only 2% were enrolled in school when they were arrested.

Contrary to the mandate of a juvenile justice centre, serving time there can contribute to social disintegration of youth. Many juveniles are likely to reoffend and stay at the margins of society. Usually they have little capacity to be reintegrated into formal education and vocational training even at low skill levels.



Peer education in juveniles' rehabilitation centre, Syria
Source: Syrian Society for Social Development, (SSSD)

The Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD)¹ is implementing a project in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, who manages the juvenile facility. The Drosos Foundation is a main funder and partner; Questscope for Social Development in the Middle East has helped transfer experience and adapt their successful Infor-

mal Education (IFE) and mentoring programmes.

The project spans over three years starting in 2010, with an option for two additional years for transition to ensure its success and sustainability. The project has three primary goals: rehabilitation during the period of custody, care for at-risk youth after release, and reducing incarceration and finding effective alternatives. Complimentary goals are capacity building for the KBW and a holistic programme around the KBW to become a model for good practice in youth reintegration and development.

In order to help juveniles reintegrate into society, SSSD engages various parties such as case managers, mentors, educators, the family, the environment, the plaintiff and the court and applies a pro-social approach on three levels:

- ▶ Individual and community level: SSSD develops and implements its programmes by involving children and community members, incorporating their knowledge and skills to produce benefits that are desired and sustainable. This includes individual and family counselling, and interventions in the field of restorative justice, such as victim empathy programmes, victim offender mediation, and diversion from incarceration.
- ▶ Institutional level: SSSD engages the resources of governmental, non-governmental organisations, and community institutions to serve and equip children and communities. Examples are partnerships with local NGOs and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, the Governorate of Damascus, Municipality of Aleppo and the MoE.
- ▶ Policy level: SSSD seeks to involve governmental institutions and officials to

¹ SSSD is a legally registered Syrian non-governmental organisation. It works to provide an effective response to the needs and challenges of marginalised and at-risk youths, their families and their communities as a whole.

encourage needed policy changes and the implementation of best practice. An example is SSSD's participation in drafting the Juvenile Justice Law and engaging in reforming the NGO law.

The activities are complimentary to each other, therefore the success of the programme is based on all the above-mentioned approaches. Education, however, is the core of the programme and the key to reintegrating youth into society.

Education activities

The education cycle begins with an assessment of competencies that helps placing the juveniles in groups with similar educational needs and capabilities. Two specific tests are devised to determine whether students are qualified, what their basic educational level is, and what their potential to learn. One test determines the basic level of knowledge in Arabic, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and English. The other test covers the specific knowledge required to pass Grade 9 and 12.

The programme focusses on youth who, while detained at the KBW, are preparing for official exams: the Grade 9 Brevet Certificate and Grade 12 Baccalaureate Certificate. Juveniles sit for the official exams outside the KBW in assigned schools or exam centres with a special permission granted by the court. The education component of the programme is comprised of four elements: informal education, tutoring, traditional literacy education and vocational training.

Informal education is being offered to the unschooled, to those with basic reading and writing skills alongside 6th to 9th graders. Its goal is to serve as an entry point to other learning opportunities. It uses the methodology developed by Paulo Freire known as "*street education*" or "*popular education*". Building on a specific form of Paulo Freire's approach, the "*Participatory Education Methodology*" developed by Questscope allows following a curriculum but also flexibly reacting to the previous experience and interests of the students in subjects such as Arabic, arithmetic, history, geography, values, general culture, personal rights and duties and social skills. Informal education encourages critical consciousness and analytical thinking and motivates people to discover other learning opportunities. It provides a safe space for learning in a positive, supportive environment, where case managers, mentors and facilitators encourage personal growth and development of the youth. Sessions take place two or three times per week and last between two and four hours each, depending on the group. Some groups take an intensive path, meeting four hours per day, five days per week. The course lasts one month. New

students are introduced in each cycle and those that have progressed can move on to different streams.

Within the first year, 123 students acquired basic reading and writing skills and are now able to write simple words and sentences. Another 55 juveniles developed from being able to write only words to formulating simple text. Overall, 887 juveniles have benefited from informal education activities in 2012, which was the first year of the programme. Informal learning has had a positive impact on the students' way of life and thinking, i.e. some have volunteered to help in preparing the informal education sessions and facilitating learning activities for other students.

Tutoring in the formal curriculum is available to 6th graders all the way through to 12th graders. The main goal is to reacquaint and accelerate teaching for students enrolled in school and those who would like to continue education in incarceration. Tutoring is directed towards capable students, particularly those preparing for official examinations. Tutors are qualified teachers who can deliver the school curriculum. In some cases the tutoring technique is customised to meet the needs of the students. Students are taught in small groups or on a one-to-one basis depending on numbers and the subjects they are studying for. Once they have passed the state exams, they acquire certificates.

As further support to the students through the tutoring activity, mentors were trained. Around 140 mentors were selected among graduates and student volunteers and support the students in their education.



*Boy reading a book at the centre of Khalid bin Walid, Syria
Source: Syrian Society for Social Development, (SSSD)*

Traditional literacy teaching is open to children without previous education and those with basic reading and writing skills. It follows the official state curriculum developed by the Ministry of Culture and lasts four months. The curriculum covers reading and writing predominantly as part of the state curriculum. Additionally, the programme provides informal mathematics courses in the afternoons. The course duration of four months is reduced to an

intensive course of two months at the KBW juvenile centre, so that the juveniles can obtain a certificate in a short time. However, no formal certificate is provided because this intensive programme, although it follows the state curriculum, the content is customised by SSSD so that it is possible to complete it in two months.

Overall, the traditional literacy classes helped 120 youth acquire basic reading, writing and calculating skills within the first year.

Despite limitations in the facilities to carry out vocational training, a few courses such as hairdressing, sewing and computer courses could be delivered in the KBW. The training is provided by the KBW with the support of the SSSD’s staff. Vocational training is available to the unschooled, those with basic reading and writing skills alongside grades 6-9. Education activities are being carried out by KBW and SSSD staff as well as by volunteers. Certificates are not provided systematically.

The focus for grades 10-12 is solely on tutoring, grades 6-9 are given tutoring as well as informal education. Traditional literacy classes and informal education are given to the illiterate and those who have basic writing and reading skills. As for vocational training, all groups have access to this apart from grades 10-12.

The table below presents the targeted groups and the activities available to them under the educational interventions:

Target groups	Activities			
	Traditional literacy	Informal Education	Tutoring	Vocational Training
Unschooled	x	x		x
Have basic writing and reading skills	x	x		x
Grade 6 – Grade 9		x	x	x
Grade 10 – Grade 12			x	

All of the above-mentioned educational components are being carried out by the KBW and SSSD staff as well as by volunteers. Certificates are provided by SSSD, but are not officially recognised by the state. However, students have the chance to acquire a formal education certificate when they pass the official placement tests in regular schools or join the formal education system.

Conclusions

In 2011, the second project year, over 20 students returned to school after their release with the support of the tutors and mentors. 11 students joined Grade 9, and 2 students succeeded in Grade 9's official exam. Out of the 14 students who entered the Baccalaureate classes, 10 passed the exams. The youth released from the KBW have stayed in touch with the education team for support and encouragement. A student from Kameshli (Northeast Syria) even travelled the 900 km to Damascus after the Baccalaureate exams just to thank the tutors.

Indirect beneficiaries of the programme are the families of juveniles. In the first year 1,000 families benefited from family counselling while their kids were serving their time in the KBW, and 66 after their release. They benefited in knowing how to interact with their children and setting a plan of action for the future.

Returning to formal education has been a main goal and important outcome of the project. But even for those who have not gone back to school, having acquired basic reading and writing skills has given them a better outlook to the future. Simply being able to read mobile phone numbers and text messages is encouraging and integrates people better into circles of family and friends.

The education activities combined with community interventions in and around the KBW were successful in equipping young delinquents with skills that they can utilise to get back on track of formal education or employment. Participatory teaching methods were able to reignite an interest for learning in the young drop-outs. Furthermore, the capacity of the KBW to provide informal education and vocational training has improved.

However, three key challenges remain: firstly, it is important to intensify efforts on getting more juveniles to complete Grade 9, not only those with an acceptable academic level. Grade 9 is crucial for those seeking further academic education or vocational training. Secondly, the MoE recognises the need for more and better qualified teachers in juvenile justice centres and takes first steps. Thirdly, many young people come from poor families and need to work, which usually prevents them from continuing their formal education. So far, there is no mechanism that enables students to work and study simultaneously. Most of the young people who left the KBW need more training, especially vocational training, for being able to generate income. Thus SSSD is supporting the KBW to establish more professional and labour market-oriented vocational training facilities.

Ghadeer Fannoun

Head of the Adult Education Section, Ministry of Education and Higher Education (Palestine)

Responding to People's Needs

Literacy in the “*Parallel Education*” programme in Palestine

“One remains a scholar as long as he seeks knowledge. If he thinks he knows, then he is ignorant.”

Abdullah bin Mubarak from the followers

Introduction

Adult Education is not a new phenomenon and has been practiced in previous ages. It was known to humanity in old civilisations before Islam, such as Pharaonic Egypt, the Greek and Roman Empires. Islamic heritage and culture encouraged learning and thus this culture became the world's minaret of knowledge for decades in the time of the Caliphates until the end of the fifteenth century.

The interest in Adult Education in the Arab world was revived in the 20th century. In 1948, the League of Arab States conducted a literacy survey in 19 Arab countries. One of the recommendations of the study was to “*care for Adult Education, to create awareness for parents in order to teach their children and to develop the family and community*”¹. It is obvious that the recommendation was referring to literacy.

Since then, the notion of Adult Education has expanded. It is no longer possible to mark when Adult Education begins or when it ends in a person's life. Adult Education is widely seen as a means to keep pace with today's fast changes in knowledge and technology and to respond to socio-economic problems of societies and individuals. The content of Adult Education differs from one time to another and between societies. It also takes different shapes within the same community, often responding to the needs of specific groups. In countries suffering

1 Adult Education Strategy in the Arab World (ALECSO), 2000.

illiteracy, Adult Education mainly consists of literacy courses and the basics of human rights, health and religious awareness.² In developed countries, where illiteracy is not a prominent issue, the focus of Adult Education is on vocational training and continuous professional education to facilitate people's inclusion in the technologically advanced society.

Literacy is the basic precondition for further education. Thus when it comes to Adult Education, as many other Arab countries, the Palestinian government is focussing on the eradication of illiteracy. The Authorities base their efforts on a differentiated definition of literacy covering four aspects:

- ▶ **Alphabetical literacy**, which refers to the ability of individuals to read and write.
- ▶ **Functional literacy**, which is linked to the individual's ability to use written sources to manage his or her daily life.
- ▶ **Educational literacy**, which relates to the ability of accessing information.
- ▶ **Cultural literacy**, which refers to basic knowledge and practice in communication and interaction with other people, covering also political, religious, societal and health issues.

Palestine is in an extraordinary situation because of the Israeli occupation and the hardships it brought on the Palestinians. Conflict and occupation have a detrimental effect on education. For instance, the closure of roads led to the dropout of students from schools, especially the females due to their need to travel longer and take deserted roads. In certain areas that are classified as area C, which is the West Bank territory under full Israeli control, and in east Jerusalem; the Israeli authorities prohibit building Palestinian schools. This puts the existing schools under enormous pressure. Many schools and teachers are working double shifts and often cannot provide a supportive learning environment. Rates of students dropping out from school are high and increasing every year. The dropout rate in the academic year 2010 - 2011 was 2%, with slightly more male than female students between 13 and 20 years old who were leaving school before acquiring a certificate.³

The reasons for dropping out are manifold. Some students simply cannot follow the lessons, receive bad grades and lack motivation to learn. Others are not allowed by their families to go to a mixed school and/or to travel to a school far from their homes. Youth in poor families sometimes drop out of school to work and contribute to the family income.

2 Adult Education Strategy in the Arab World (ALECSO), 2000.

3 According to statistics of the Ministry of Education (MoE), Palestine

The “Parallel Learning” programme

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoHE) first started working in the field of Adult Education in 1997, inspired by the International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA) (Hamburg, Germany). Together with universities and NGOs, the MoHE initiated literacy courses for school dropouts.

Due to large interest not only from young people but also from those who did not finish their basic education due to the “*Intifada*” or for other reasons, in 2003 a new programme was launched, the “*Parallel Learning*” (in Arabic: Al-Taleem Al-Mowazy) programme, which was at that time open for people between 13 and 20 years of age who left school early. It helps them develop basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic as well as acquiring more advanced education which will allow them to enrol in vocational schools or even academic institutions. By offering more than just literacy education, the programme is a parallel or alternative learning opportunity for people who cannot go to regular schools. Graduates of the programme receive a certificate that is equivalent to a regular secondary school certificate (9th grade), which is also the precondition for getting a driving license. Following a multifaceted literacy approach, the programme also promotes nation-building, social empowerment and poverty alleviation.

The MoHE intends to organise courses wherever 10 to 15 students come together. The programme takes two years and is divided into four semesters with a total of 150 hours in each semester. Lessons usually take place in governmental schools in the evening hours.

The curriculum was prepared by the MoHE in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour (MoL), the Tamer Institute for Community Education, Birzeit University and community organisations to ensure an adequate response to the target groups’ needs. The programme concentrates on the following topics: Arabic language, Islamic Culture, Mathematics, Science, Computer and IT, English (since the academic year 2011) and some business training elements.

In 2003, the MoHE selected 50 teachers from formal schools — 30 teachers from the West Bank and 20 from Gaza Strip —



Parallel Education for dropout students at Ramallah Boys Secondary School, Palestine
Source: Ghadeer Fannoun

and trained them in delivering the curriculum, communication skills as well as evaluation of learning achievements to become facilitators. Special attention was given to understanding the situation of the course participants and dealing with people who might have had negative experience in their schools.

Each year, more facilitators were trained. What had started with 5 schools with altogether 65 participants in 2003, became an infrastructure with 18 centres in 2011, teaching 300 participants. Until 2007, the number of centres and students was declining, apparently because of a declining demand among the target group. On the other hand, people up to 40 years old, especially women, showed interest in joining the courses. Thus in 2008, the programme was opened for learners who were up to 40 years of age. Since then a constant increase of centres and participants can be observed.

Academic Year	# Centres	# Students
2003-2004	5	65
2004-2005	5	62
2005-2006	3	40
2006-2007	5	50
2007-2008	6	70
2008-2009	8	120
2009-2010	10	210
2010-2011	18	300
2011-2012	20	340

The programme gave an opportunity to many young people and adults who could not continue education. Tracer studies of graduates are conducted every year. It was observed that half of them continue their education to get a high school diploma, the so called “*Tawjihi*”. Around one third of the graduates enrol in vocational training. Especially women were empowered to work in secretarial and administrative jobs, cosmetics/beauty and sewing. Some of the participants got a driving license. Women reported that they were now able to help their children with their school work, which means that adults also become role models for kids and encourage them to stay in school and engage positively in learning. From an institutional perspective, the programme was effective in supporting develop-

ment and providing diversified educational opportunities. This stems from its principles of including everyone in education and giving people who could not continue their formal education a second chance to do so.

The “*Parallel Education*” programme meets the needs of a specific target group. Adult Education in Palestine faces larger challenges though. It has to develop mechanisms to move from the basic concept of literacy to a multifaceted education level.

The National Strategy for Adult Education in Palestine, which is currently being developed, defines Adult Education as educational processes, through which adults develop their capabilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications, or come-up with new ways to meet their own needs and the needs of their communities. It includes the processes that directly or indirectly change their behaviour and attitude in parallel to the social, economic, or cultural development. In this sense, Adult Education includes all types of non-formal and informal education available in a learning and knowledge-seeking community, where both theory and scientific application are equally recognised approaches. The strategy aims to create an education system that develops people’s knowledge, experience and skills for economic and social development.



Parallel Education for dropout students at Ramallah Boys Secondary School, Palestine
Source: Ghadeer Fannoun

Abdullah Saho Al Naser

Head of Non-formal Education, Ministry of Education (Jordan)

A Second Chance

Facts and figures of a programme for school dropouts in Jordan

Introduction

A nation's progress is measured by its modern education system, that invests in human resources and that benefits the individual and society, contributing positively to its socio-economic development. By investing in human resources, nations maximise quantitative and qualitative returns and ensure an effective and efficient education that is necessary to better empower individuals as the core of societal development.

Government expenditure on education measured in percentage of the gross domestic product is highest in North America and Western Europe (around 6%) followed by Africa and Latin America (5%). In the Arab countries, government expenditure for education averaged to 25.7% and the total public expenditure on education is 4.5% in 2005.¹ Despite this considerable percentage, there are many challenges in this sector, school dropouts being a major one. This phenomenon is international but varies in degree between societies, academic levels, and areas. The percentage of students who start first grade and continue to the last grade of primary education averaged 63% in Africa, 79% in South and West Asia, 94% in Arab countries, 97% in Central Asia and 98% in Central and Eastern Europe and in Northern America and Western Europe.²

Although dropping out from school is an international issue, the extent and reasons behind it differ from one country to another. In developed countries,

1 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2008 (UNESCO) Source: Annex, Statistical Table 11, pg. 142 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001547/154743e.pdf>

2 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2008 (UNESCO), Source: Annex, Statistical Table 7, Pg. 53, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001547/154743e.pdf>



Non-formal exercise, Jordan

Source: Abdullah Saho Al Nasser

the percentage of dropouts is almost non-existent (0-1%) and reasons for dropping out from school are mainly family problems. In Arab countries, dropping out has economic, educational, and political reasons.

The goals of Jordan's Ministry of Education (MoE) in Jordan are to improve the well-being of young people, to advance education and to raise the quality of the educational system and its output. These

goals are put to lead Jordan to creating a Knowledge Economy and achieving competitiveness in the global market. They require educating, qualifying and training Jordanian human resources.

The MoE translated the slogan "*Education is a National Issue*" into action when it partnered with different partners in the development and follow-up on education activities. The MoE is working closely with governmental and non-governmental organisations concerned with school dropouts to build supporting cross-sectoral policies towards eliminating dropping out.

The "Educating Dropouts" programme

The "*Educating Dropouts*" programme started in 2004 as a result of an agreement between the MoE and the British NGO Questscope. It is a pioneering non-formal education programme that serves dropouts through emphasising their right to learn, enhancing their professional knowledge and preparing them to join formal vocational training offered by the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC), which oversees all public vocational training centres in Jordan.

The programme aims at providing dropouts with a set of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that helps them enhance their professional competencies, and prepares them to join vocational training through high quality education, emphasising their right to education.

The programme serves male dropouts aged 13-18 as well as female dropouts who are between 13-20 years old. It also accepts the enrolment of people who do not have Jordanian citizenship, for instance Iraqi and Syrian refugees.

During 2004 and 2005, the MoE and its partners opened non-formal education centres covering various areas in Jordan. In fact, 45 centres were opened in areas with high rates of working children and dropouts (31 courses for male and 14 for female

students). Halfway through the year 2011, roughly 5,500 students had enrolled in these centres (around 4,600 male and 900 female students). In mid-2012 the number of centres reached 47 (33 for males and 14 for females) with 1,516 students.

The programme consists of three phases: the primary, intermediate and final session. Each session lasts eight months. Class hours are flexible and usually determined after consulting with the students. Most classes take place in the evenings to suit students' schedules and include up to three hours per day.

Content

The study material is based on school curricula which are approved by the MoE according to the decision of Education Council in December 2004. In the primary phase, students acquire basic skills of reading, writing, arithmetic, national studies (which includes the governance system, statistics, archeological sites, tourism etc.) and vocational education. This primary phase can be compared to primary schooling in Jordan (grades 1-4). In the intermediate phase (corresponding with grade 5-7), studies include general subjects in science, geography, history and soft skills such as problem solving, communication skills, presentation skills etc). In the final phase (equivalent to grade 8-10), students are exposed to soft-skills with a focus on vocational training. Religious studies, English language and computer literacy classes are taught subjects in all phases.

Once students finish the final phase, they receive a certificate which is recognised by the VTC which runs all public vocational training centres as equivalent with a 10th grade certificate thus complete basic schooling.

This certificate qualifies them either to enter regular vocational training or to continue their schooling to obtain a higher educational degree called "*Tawjihi*". For the latter option, they could subject themselves to a placement test and join formal schools.

Methodology

Studies have shown that traditional teaching methodologies, where students are simply to learn what the teacher tells them, are a main factor behind students dropping out of school because they have proven to be ineffective. Hence, the curricula gave priority to teaching methodologies and approaches that draw on the student's needs, wishes and capabilities, making the student the centre of the educational process. The programme is based on the "*Popular Education*" methodology which is a participatory teaching methodology that reinforces the student's

role in the educational process where the student with the support of the facilitator defines the objectives and methods of education. The “*Popular Education*” uses reading aids, tools and activities which are extracted from MoE’s curriculums and are selected based on the methodology’s as well as students’ requirements. Reading aids are used in the form of booklets and session outlines that help educators identify objectives, tools, and detailed description of educational activities — where students infer knowledge.

The classroom environment is simple and convenient. It is designed to be close to (an ideal) student’s home or workplace, and considers students’ privacy. It is equipped with boards, TV, video and recorder sets, comfortable chairs, tables, carpets, closets and lockers, and teaching aids such as maps and pictures.

The proximity of classrooms to students’ homes or workplaces makes the students feel more comfortable and reduces absences. The location of the classrooms within formal school buildings gave the courses more importance and validity in the eyes of the participants.

Learning takes place not only in the centre, but also in outdoor activities that the facilitator designs and prepares in consultation with students. The experience thus far showed that students enjoy activities such as picnics, outdoor painting, swimming, cooking classes and others and that these activities motivate them to stay in the centres. The costs for such activities are usually covered by local community resources and the donations of civil society institutions or volunteers.

Assessment of the student’s performance

Before starting any courses, a Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) was conducted to better understand why young people drop out from school and what are their needs and interests. It turned out that one of the reasons for dropping out from school was their fear of exams and in many cases the experience of failing in exams. Thus the programme introduced other criteria than only exams to assess students’ progress:

- ▶ Participation and interaction in the courses make up 50% of the final mark and the facilitators were trained to observe the students’ behaviour change and consider students’ abilities, and provide frequent feedback to the participants on their performance.
- ▶ Presence in the courses and activities outside the classroom were rated with 10% of the total mark.
- ▶ Tests and exams formed only 40% of the mark.

Facilitators

The role of the facilitators is rather to facilitate discussions and learning processes than teaching in the traditional sense. Facilitators are mostly teachers from public schools who received additional training in participatory and active learning methods, time management, behaviour change, psychology and social counselling following a specific curriculum designed by both Questscope and the MoE. A team of experts, including nine trainers from the MoE, delivered the curriculum.

It is worth mentioning here that all facilitators were trained, and that they were originally school teachers. All sessions were held in the evening, three times a day, 19 sessions a week, each session taking about 45 minutes.

Altogether, around 300 facilitators were trained; most of them are still working in the dropouts programme. Almost all facilitators are at the same time teachers in regular schools and receive a stipend for providing dropouts classes outside the school hours.

Supervision and follow-up

The programme is supervised by specific committees, Directors of Departments at the MoE, the programme coordinator from the MoE, field observers, liaison officers, and directors of schools. The latter two groups have been specifically trained on supervision and follow-up. A checklist for field visits has been created that representatives from the MoE and the schools use to measure whether courses live up to the set standards. Representatives from the MoE and from Questscope regularly visit each course and organise consultation workshops. In cooperation with Oxford University, the centres were assessed in 2011. The study observed that after three months in the project, participants changed their behaviour. They interacted better with their families and peers, showing less verbal or physical aggressiveness. It was also evident that they had a better idea about their opportunities and valued education much higher than before.



A classroom session in a centre to educate dropouts, Jordan

Source: Abdullah Saho Al Nasser

Experiments with REFLECT

An interview with Jawad Al Gousous about teaching methods in the programme for school dropouts in Jordan

You have been among the first in Jordan to experiment with Paulo Freire's REFLECT approach, could you explain what REFLECT is?

What makes this method so unique is that it creates a learning process where everybody is equal and where there is no domination from the side of an authoritarian teacher. The main tool of REFLECT is dialogue. Participants can share and exchange their perceptions and opinions without being judged. Through talking about themselves and their ideas, participants become aware of themselves which is an important precondition for a healthy view of self. But most importantly, they become visible as worthy individuals to themselves and to others.

REFLECT stands for "*Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques*", developed by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire in the 1960s. He had worked mainly in rural areas with illiterate agricultural workers and encouraged them to talk about their lives and developed texts and exercises building on the vocabulary and information relevant to them. His facilitation method allowed them to learn about themselves, to learn more about their environment and to understand the social and power structures around them. They became able to see their situation from a new critical perspective, recognizing the domination they were subject to. Suddenly, they had a cause for learning more, far beyond learning how to read and write. This was the precondition for action and was thus a revolutionary method for learning and action.

Together with the British NGO Questscope and the Ministry of Education (MoE) you implemented the "*Educating Dropouts*" programme that used the REFLECT approach and provided non-formal education to 8,000 school dropouts since 2004. The facts and figures of this programme are described in a different article in this publication, so let us stay with REFLECT as a method. REFLECT was developed for adults who have a certain knowledge and experience, how did it work with children?



During an English session at Questscope - MoE Non-Formal Education Centre (Ali Rida Al-Rikabi School), Jordan

Source: Abdullah Sahu Al Naser

The children Questscope worked with were between 13 and 18 years old, but since they dropped out of school and worked in the streets, they acted like adults in many ways. Assessments showed us that the reasons for dropping out from school were first of all that they did not feel respected in school. Teachers had labelled them as lazy and unintelligent, and many of them were subject to violence by teachers and fellow-students. Boys also realised that they could make money selling items in the streets or doing little jobs in the informal sector or in their families' workshops. Some boys also started using drugs. Girls, on the other hand, were not encouraged to go to school any more by their parents who did not want to let them travel alone or were afraid they would be molested on the way to school. It was very sad to see these boys and girls being marginalised and oppressed. Most of them were illiterate. But they had skills and experience different from those school children have that required a different, respectful approach. We assumed that we could use REFLECT to build on their knowledge and produce texts for learning derived from their circumstances. And it worked.

We used dialogue to identify subjects of interest for the students. One such subject was, for example, being outside in the heat during the day. We first asked them to describe how they felt in the heat, then linked their observations to health problems like dehydration, sunburns, etc., that can be caused by heat. We then moved on to learning the parts of the body, explaining the process of dehydration, what water means for the body and how it is absorbed. We would start, for example, with the word “sun”, then write other words with the letter “s” and then other words with the letters “u” and “n”. From words, we would move to simple sentences and texts. We created a text that the students could read, reproduce and work with. The text was then reformulated by the facilitators to qualify as a study text. Based on this, suitable tests could be designed to measure progress, and for the first time students experienced that a test was easy to pass, because they were familiar with the subjects.

The programme had the aim of bringing the students to the level of 10th grade students. How did it work to reconcile a method like REFLECT that leaves the content open to be decided by the participants with a strict curriculum of the MoE in Jordan?

The facilitators were able to link the texts that the students had produced together in the sessions to subjects covered by the regular curricula. The above-mentioned example for instance, allowed the facilitator to study parts of the biology textbook with the students.

Another example: A simple sentence like “*I sell toys at the King-Hussein Mosque in Amman three hours a day*” could be used as entry point for various subjects: Focussing on civic education, one could for instance discuss questions such as: What is Amman? What is the function of a capital city? What is Jordan? What is the role of a King? This allows touching upon history, geography and political systems. One could also analyse the grammar of the sentence. One could work on mathematics asking about the working hours and deriving further questions from there, introducing addition, subtraction etc. Asking questions such as: “*What is a Mosque? When do people go to a Mosque? Why do people pray?*” could lead into the subject of religion and ethics, discussing what is considered good or bad behaviour etc. Thus the whole curriculum can be covered by association and when brought up by the participants in the sessions rather than in pre-determined systematic order.

However, we did face a challenge when the MoE required curricula in order to provide certificates. Then we agreed on a compromise. We reviewed all textbooks for grades 1 to 10, rearranged the content and adjusted the methods to suit the REFLECT approach and the target group in the REFLECT classes. In this process, the textbooks for grade 1 to 4 were merged into one for the first cycle, grades 5 to 7 were merged into a book for the second cycle and grades 8 to 10 were compiled into one book for the third cycle. This allowed the facilitators more flexibility in responding to the children but also allowed evaluation according to grade levels.

Within the program, more than 300 facilitators were trained, who had been teachers in formal schools. How did teachers who are used to traditional and formal teaching absorb REFLECT?

In the beginning, the facilitators could not imagine that they could teach without textbooks. They were afraid of giving up authority. It took several months until a major shift took place and teachers turned into facilitators, able to build spontaneously on the learners' inputs by keeping an eye on the learning goals defined by the curricula. We expanded on this challenge to add a module to the training of facilitators which focussed on linking the students' ideas and wishes with text materials.

Becoming more comfortable with the methodology, the facilitators reported that to the extent they gave up authority, the students took over more responsibility for keeping the classroom clean, handling tools and equipment with care and

supporting weaker students, even outside the classroom. Several teachers also said they became so fond of the methodology that they used it with their classes in the formal school system – with great success. Some even said it helped them understand and support their own children better by giving them more space to speak and to reflect on themselves.

It was interesting to observe that the female facilitators embraced the new methodology more readily than their male colleagues and



*During an icebreaker at Questscope - MoE Non-Formal Education centre (Ghore Safi School), Jordan
Source: Questscope - MoE Non-Formal Education centre*

mobilised even the smallest resources to influence the families of their students to encourage them to study and develop.

In the beginning we had selected mainly young teachers for the programme thinking that they would be more willing and able to establish a good relationship with “*street kids*”, being more familiar with their reality and their slang. However, it turned out that age did not matter. Some students embraced older teachers as father/mother figures and accepted advice and support in many aspects. However, the goal of the programme was to strengthen the learners and to make them less dependent on compliance as a coping strategy, so parent-child dependency was not encouraged but instead each evolved as a co-learner with the other.

The facilitators were trained for over 100 hours. They were not only introduced to participatory teaching methods but also to reaching out to the families and the community to create a more supportive environment for their children.

How did the participants respond to the REFLECT methodology?

In the beginning, the students were still afraid of being punished by the facilitators, both verbally and physically, which had been a common occurrence in their regular school. When they realised that there was no punishment, they sometimes tested the facilitators by pretending they would be punished at home if the trainers did not pay them. Hearing about this, we developed another additional module for the training of facilitators to prepare them better to keep a professional relationship with the participants.

But quite soon, they developed a sense of trust, respect and responsibility. An important element in creating a supportive atmosphere in the classroom was the so-called pedagogical pact, a paper that listed the standards and commitments of both students and facilitators which was signed by all. Common standards were, for instance, no punitive actions in the classroom, removing shoes before entering the classroom, showing respect for others, making collective decisions, etc. Commitments included not interrupting someone when they were speaking, coming to class on time, keeping equipment clean and functional etc. At regular intervals, the pact was reviewed. Points that were not considered an issue any more and that had become a habit were taken out – which showed the class the progress it made – and new items were added where necessary.

Being aware of the fact that many participants were working or had obligations at home, no homework was given by the facilitators. Students eventually asked for homework and requested evaluation, something they had hated and feared

in their regular school. They were delighted when they were awarded with the highest mark, three stars. You cannot imagine their excitement until you have seen it with your own eyes.

Did the evaluation show that the methodology reached better results than other teaching methods?

An evaluation by Oxford University with Questscope and the MoE demonstrated that the programme had positive impacts on self awareness and social awareness of the participants. Most of the participants achieved the final level, which is comparable to a 10th grade certificate and allows them to enter vocational training or formal secondary education leading to the “*Tawjihi*”, the high school certificate. They are better able to express themselves, improve their vocabulary and are more socially adept and communicative. Many adopted a healthier lifestyle, gave up drugs and alcohol, improved personal hygiene and have a more structured daily life. For example, instead of sleeping until midday, some now get up in the early morning to go to prayer before sunrise. Many families report that their children became more a part of the family, offering help and taking over responsibilities.

Most of the “*graduates*” have not continued to secondary education, but many of them have opted for certified vocational training. In addition, those who reached the age at which they can legally work have taken up responsible jobs and/or risen in responsibility in current jobs.

The success of this project and the major impact it had on the participants calls for using the REFLECT approach more widely in non-formal but also in formal education.

Thank you Jawad for the interview!

The interview was conducted by Katrin Denys

Batir Wardam

Environmental Management and Communication Specialist (Jordan)

New Horizons

Environmental education in the Middle East

Education has been a key element in the global sustainable development and environmental management governance system that has emerged since the Earth Summit in Rio 1992. The blueprint document for sustainable development, dubbed “*Agenda 21*” has set aside a special chapter on environmental education and awareness. Almost all Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) that have resulted from the Rio process have included separate guidelines and clauses on the use of education as a tool to raise awareness and enhance positive behaviour.

Chapter 36 of Agenda 21 contains the main principles that the Rio Summit has endorsed about education for sustainable development. It states that education, including formal education, public awareness and training should be recognised as a process by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential. Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues.

Agenda 21 further reiterates that both formal and non-formal education are indispensable to changing people’s attitudes so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable development concerns. It is also critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour consistent with sustainable development and for effective public participation in decision-making.

According to chapter 36, environment and development education should deal with the dynamics of both the physical/biological and socio-economic environment and human – which may include spiritual – development, should be integrated in all disciplines, and should employ formal and non-formal methods and effective means of communication.

The underlying driver for focussing on education in enhancing environmental stewardship is to invest in the intellectual development of future generations that should be able to use natural resources sustainably and modify the traditional



Planting herbs, Jordan

Source: dvv international, Jordan Office

concept of development pursued by the current and previous generations. Countless initiatives, programmes and projects in environmental education have mushroomed all over the world, including the Middle East, since 1992.

The cumulative impact of such initiatives in the Middle East is hard to assess due to the lack of periodic

public opinion surveys that could indicate behavioural and conceptual changes. Nevertheless, some best practices and examples can be highlighted as models that have introduced creative interventions in the traditional educational system.

Middle East breakthroughs

Jordan and Egypt have witnessed various remarkable educational reforms that have led to the introduction of environmental concepts in their national education systems, as well as in extracurricular activities within the schools. These activities are carried out usually via different international programmes working with local institutes. Here are some of the major educational programmes that focussed on environmental issues:

The Arab Network for Environmental Education and Learning

Environmentalists, scientists, and educators of the Arab region initiated the Arab Network for Environmental Education and Learning (ANEEL). This network works in conjunction with the Commission on Education and Communication (CEC) and is linked to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Established in 2007, ANEEL is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to providing leadership in areas of environmental education and learning in the Arab world.

The mission of this network is to use education as a form of promoting a deeper knowledge and understanding of environmental issues and concerns, aiming to ultimately reach a sustainable means of living with the conservation of the planet. By means of sharing, exchanging and disseminating innovative educational events, programmes and curriculum development, the network intends to raise

awareness, support problem solving of current environmental issues, and build the capacity of professionals to meet conservation and sustainable development goals in the Arab world.

Jordan Valley Environmental Education Centre:

At the trans-boundary level, one of the most promising examples is the Jordan valley Eco-centre located in Al Auja village in Palestine. The project is managed by Friends of the Earth – Middle East (FoEME). The Auja’s Environmental Education Centre is a focal point for environmental awareness on the importance of the Jordan Valley by teaching visitors and students about the geology, fauna, flora, water resources and cultural heritage of Wadi Auja and the Jordan Valley as a whole. The two-storey building includes a conference room, workshop rooms, exhibit area, a cafeteria, a guesthouse and a rooftop bird watching area.



Auja Eco-Centre, Palestine
Source: Auja Eco-Centre

The guesthouse is also designed to encourage Auja residents, by concrete example, of the potential to initiate other eco-tourism type projects in the community as a means of diversifying incomes of residents who are today wholly dependent on agriculture. The Auja Spring, desert walks, cultural heritage, bird watching and in the future access to the River Jordan represent presently untapped entrepreneurial potential for Auja village residents.

Egyptian Environmental Education and Outreach Programme

One example of a multi-sector education programme comes from Egypt. Working with schools, communities, and government and private sector institutions, the “*Egyptian Environmental Education and Outreach Programme*” (E3OP) seeks to transform the way educators teach environmental education and outreach in Egypt’s primary and preparatory schools and the way it is approached by communities. The programme is assessing existing environmental education materials, developing new materials as needed, and disseminating the materials to schools and communities directly and via an environmental education and outreach resource centre. Additionally, E3OP is training teachers to direct their students in real world environmental projects and working with the government, the media and the private sector to engage wider communities

in the activities. As a result, schools and communities will become advocates of environmental awareness and action, private-public partnerships will help sustain environmental initiatives, and educators, students and community members will have access to high-quality environmental education resources.

The project prepared an Arabic language journalism training curriculum and materials to build greater awareness of environmental issues among journalists and to provide them with accurate data. The project facilitated public-private partnerships between media and educators to develop environmental education newspaper supplements as instructional and public advocacy tools, including an 8-page supplement distributed nationally through Al-Ahram newspaper. In addition, the Egyptian press published more than 100 articles regarding E3OP and environmental awareness. The project also prepared a DVD and CD for use in teacher training and classroom instruction, including approximately 40 environmental education segments of Arabic-language “*Sesame Street*”.

What impacts behaviour and knowledge: a Jordanian perspective

Available data on impact analysis indicate that, despite great investments in environmental education programmes there is still a wide gap of knowledge and attitudes regarding environmental values. The results of a survey conducted by the Public Action Programme (PAP) on water, energy and environment in Jordan in May 2010 draws disappointing conclusions and provides a justification for further investments in environmental education, albeit using different approaches.

According to the survey, most young people interviewed felt that there was a lack of clear and concise information about Jordan’s environmental challenges, although they had varied knowledge about environmental issues elsewhere in the world. For them the most useful sources of information and learning are hands-on experiences, satellite television and the internet. Young people who have actively participated in environmental activities had a better understanding of practical issues of conservation and protection, and showed more concern for holistic environmental issues.

Regarding technical knowledge, very few young people understood that Jordan is one of the poorest countries in the world concerning water rations per capita. When asked what they felt they would do to conserve water, most identified simplistic ways of conservation. Most young people showed adequate knowledge of energy sources. However, their knowledge of sources of energy for Jordan and resource scarcity was limited. Energy conservation practices were also basic, though



Up-cycling of clothes hangers and soap bottles

Source: dvv international, Jordan Office

motivations for behaviour were extrinsic stemming, from parental and financial pressures. Most young people were aware of the types of solid waste and the collection mechanisms, however most were unaware of concepts of reducing and re-using. Practices revealed that they were not necessarily concerned as they felt it was the government's role to ensure facilities are available, however anti-littering values were expressed by many.

The most negative attitudes towards environmental issues were felt from respondents belonging to the underprivileged class of society. The most considerable sources of information for this group were either their formal education experiences or satellite television. It was clear there was a marked difference in knowledge between younger youths in this population group and their older peers, who had dropped out of school. Those younger had remembered considerably more information that had been acquired through formal education, whereas their older peers remember learning some concepts at school, but found no relevance to these in their daily life and so disregarded the information. This group of youths generally felt apathetic towards environmental issues, expressing that unemployment was a bigger priority for them than environmental problems, which they felt were



Greenhouse, Jordan

Source: divv international, Jordan Office

generally trivial concerns in light of what they perceived as their unfortunate circumstances. They perceived the environment to be a priority for the upper classes, as those wealthier had the luxury to feel passionate or responsible about environmental issues, while they sensed they had bigger social problems to be concerned about.

It is interesting to note that young people from lower-middle classes were more environmentally aware than their peers from deprived classes and high-income classes. Generally, most young people in this background seemed to be considerably more aware than their peers from deprived communities, but also revealed a more developed awareness than some of their peers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. This group was also relatively more aware than all their peers in lower socioeconomic backgrounds and most of their peers in lower-middle socioeconomic backgrounds. The source of this knowledge seemed to stem mostly from experiencing particular environmental challenges in their own communities, but was also acquired from various sources such as television.

Generally, this group had a depth of knowledge about global environmental problems such as climatic change, deforestation, and desertification and air pollution. They felt that the most important environmental problem in Jordan is air pollution from factories and solid waste disposal, mainly litter. In this class, employment did not influence knowledge of environmental problems, as comparatively both employed and unemployed males and females from this background had somewhat similar knowledge of the three survey themes, while those who are employed showed more positive behaviour towards energy and water conservation. This is due to them acquiring training through work to conserve water and energy.

Future perspectives for environmental education

The need for environmental education and learning in the Middle East is still huge, but a paradigm shift is required to transform traditional education methods into more interactive and modernised tools including the need for social marketing and new media use. The huge potential of modern information technology

channels and communication outlets including mobile phones, Facebook, Twitter and other social media tools should be harnessed to enhance environmental knowledge through the information vehicles that young people prefer.

In parallel with the emphasis on formal education systems, the need to include non-formal education and learning tools is increasingly gaining momentum. The social and political changes that are sweeping through the Middle East have been ignited and magnified through social media, and this powerful tool can be a major driver for changing behaviours towards sustainable lifestyles and empowering young people with skills and knowledge required for expanding developmental opportunities including competitiveness in the job markets.

Environmental education could be considered as a main supporting factor for countries that enjoy the willingness to shift into a green economy future, where economic activities are regulated and supported with incentives for sustainable use of resources and minimising of pollution. Transition to a green economy requires a shift in the production and consumption cycle that will open up new job opportunities for environmental management disciplines. Young people in particular should be equipped with proper knowledge about environmental principles and processes to enable them to compete and seize opportunities arising in a green economy.

List of Authors

Denys, Katrin studied politics and history in Cologne and Berlin, focussing on political and social change in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain. She coordinated projects for the German Association for East European Studies and became part of the editing team of the Association's journal "Osteuropa". After having worked for the OSCE in Bosnia and Hercegovina, she joined *dvv international* in 2009 and has been working as the Regional Director for the Middle East since 2011.

Negm, Seham is an expert in the field of Sustainable Development and Education and specialised in Adult Education. She worked as the Regional Coordinator for the Education for All campaign with UNESCO and participated in the establishment of the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education (ANLAE), where she also worked as the Secretary-General. Seham has written several articles and publications related to social justice in formal education systems and focuses on developing the literacy system and adult education in the Arab region as a means to protect those excluded and marginalized from development programs. She founded and chaired the Women and Society Association in the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Lund Jensen, Christian is a Danish Training Consultant with a Master's in Business, Language (Arabic) and Culture. He has previously worked for ActionAid Denmark, designing and facilitating training courses in Arabic and English for young adults in the region.

Sabbah, Refaat completed his Master's in Women Development and Law from Birzeit University in Palestine. He participated in a number of international, regional and local conferences on civic education. He is the President of Alternatives International and of the Board of Directors of the Arab Network for Human Rights and Citizenship Education (ANHOR) and Interim Regional Coordinator for the Global Campaign for Education. He founded, and is now the Director of the Teacher Creativity Center.

Insalaco, Eleonora manages the Anna Lindh Mediterranean Foundation's strategic programmes in the fields of education, culture and media, and is coordinator of The Report on Intercultural Trends and Social Change. As a founding member of the Foundation, working from its international headquarters in Egypt since its creation 8 years ago, she has played a central role in developing the Foundation's region-wide Network of more than 4000 civil society organisations and setting the organisations main programmes. She is a graduate of the College of Europe, specialising academically in Euro-Med cooperation, Islamic studies and citizenship education.

Denys, Bart holds a Master's in Criminology, a Master's in Public Policy and Management and a post-graduate diploma in International Relations and Conflict Management. He has spent 7 years of his international career in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia (Croatia, Kosovo and Bosnian and Herzegovina) working on local political and economic development and community building for an NGO, Balkanactie, and for the OSCE. Later he spent 5 years in the Middle East (Palestine, Jordan) of which 3 years working for the European Union Office on Security Sector Reform and Crisis Response in Palestine, and 2 studying a Master's in Public Policy and Local Development and Governance in the Middle East.

Abu Karaki, Alaa' has a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and has 8 years of work with international NGOs working in the field of community and social development. She has worked with Save the Children for 5 years on the Regional Youth and Community Leadership project which was implemented in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine and Yemen. Later on Alaa' joined Handicap International (HI) as a Regional Knowledge Management Coordinator for the 5 different missions of the Middle East programme. After a year of working with HI, she joined *dvv international* and she now works as a Project Manager for the Adult Education for Development project.

Qishawi, Thuqan holds a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics and Economics from the American University in Cairo, and a Master's degree in Economics from the University of Birzeit. He is a specialist in Human Development and Institutional Capacity Building and is also a community activist. He worked for 9 years as a Regional Coordinator in the Middle East for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Thuqan is also a Trainer and a Facilitator certified by Infinite in Germany. He is also a certified Instructor in Neuro-Linguistic Programming and has given many trainings and consultations in the MENA-Region. He has participated in several international and regional conferences, and has several research papers to his name.

Kassem, Reem is the Founding Director of AGORA for Arts and Culture and Head of Performing Arts Programming at the Library of Alexandria. She is also a Fellow of the DeVos Institute of Arts Management of the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. Reem is currently doing the Clore Leadership Program in the UK.

Moussalli, Roy is a Founder and Executive Director of the "Syrian Society for Social Development" (SSSD) targeting at risk populations with psychosocial, education and legal support. Lately SSSD has extended its programs to provide support for some 30,000 internally displaced also providing shelter rehabilitation and construction. Roy has a background in engineering with a business experience.

Samain, Ruba has completed a Master's degree in Global Governance and Ethics from University College London (UCL) and worked in the media industry at Associated Press. She has also volunteered in Borneo-Malaysia working on community and environmental projects such as building a kindergarten in a remote village. Ruba currently works at *dvv international* as a Project Assistant on the Adult Education for Development project, working with local communities around the Kingdom to develop institutional capacity and in turn, the communities.

Fannoun, Ghadeer completed her Bachelor's in Mathematics from Yarmouk University in Jordan, and holds a Master's of Education from the Birzeit University in Palestine. She was a secondary school teacher and lecturer at Al-Quds Open University in Ramallah. Ghadeer is currently the Head of Non-Formal Education in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Palestine. She prepared the National Adult Education report which was submitted to UNESCO in 2009 and has participated in numerous adult education workshops on international and regional levels.

Al Naser, Abdullah holds a Master's in Educational Administration, and is currently the Head of the Non-formal Education Division of the Jordanian Ministry of Education (MoE). He has more than 20 years of experience in the field of education, ten of which were in the field of non-formal education. Abdullah has participated in many studies, conferences and workshops on local, regional and international levels in the field of adult education and non-formal education, and has some publications in this field.

Al Gousous, Jawad completed his Bachelor's in Sociology and Philosophy from Slovakia, and a Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Jordan. He started his career as a field researcher with the Ministry of Social Development in Jordan, and was responsible for monitoring the work of local and international NGO's. He then moved to Questscope for Social Development in the Middle East where he started his work in the Non-Formal Education Program. Currently he is working as the Country Director at *dvv international* in Jordan.

Wardam, Batir is a Jordanian Environmentalist with professional experience in Disciplines of Natural Resource Management, Environmental Policies and Communication. He is currently working with UNDP as a Project Manager for the third National Communication Report on Climate Change (2012-2014).

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