Syria's Civic Education Requiements: School and University Students in Light of the Challenges and Changes

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Abstract

In Syria, civic education is recognized as an "important" part of the curriculum. This content covers civic participation, civic rights and obligations, peaceful community living, tolerance for cultural diversity, and knowledge of Syria's political and judicial systems. An interactive method, group discussions, and practical exercises are utilized to teach civic education. Students are urged to use critical thinking, accept competing points of view, examine contemporary social and political issues, and base their analyses on a complete understanding of the problems that society is facing. Syria is presently engaged in the bloodiest crises in its modern history, which has transformed it from the world's safest and most stable nation into one of the most dangerous. As a result, civic education there has been negatively impacted, and significant damage has been done too many service sectors, most notably the education and performing arts sectors. University education and Pre-university education in particular, as this stage is seen as the fundamental framework for promoting and consolidating the values of citizenship and morals, is a field that requires attention due to its significance in determining the future of both individuals and societies.

Keywords: Civic Education, Citizenship, Crises, Civic Participation, Educational Programs.

Introduction

Syria is distinguished by its historical cultural diversity and wealth. However, the era in which we live is going through a number of changes, the results of which can be seen in many aspects of life. These changes have also begun to affect education in general, and university and pre-university education in particular. These changes had a direct and indirect impact on youth behavior, both negatively and positively.

This study sheds light on the reality of education in Syria from 2011 to 2021 by analyzing the effects of these crises on students' rights to access quality education and the types of education that are affected. This study stems from the importance of university and pre-university education, which includes millions of Syrian students, in addition to knowing the causes and reasons for the deterioration of the educational level (Ali, 2022).

Therefore, developing students' education concepts represents a basic requirement for the twenty-first century, and students' acquisition of citizenship values constitutes a basic social, economic, and political pillar. As a result, modern societies' interest in the concept of civic education increased, and it began to attract the attention of thinkers and researchers in the educational field (Mahmoud, 2020).

One of the most important concepts in social philosophy promoted by the philosopher John Dewey is the development of civic education through educational institutions, and pre-university education in particular. It not only taught students about their daily lives, but also outlined the goals of free education. The principles of education must be included in university education, in accordance with this concept. It is important to him that students understand this (London, 2002).

As a result, university education emerged as one of the necessities of the era. It aims to form a generation that uses its rights, fulfills its obligations, and bears social responsibility in order to achieve societal harmony (Mahmoud, 2020).

Recognizing the importance of university education and its role in developing the culture of civic education among university students.

Of the need for education continues despite over a decade of conflict in Syria, which has left the country in extremely difficult humanitarian situations. These include bombings of schools and the housing of displaced people in them, as well as the forced recruitment of some students by armed groups, which has led to the closure of schools. The COVID-19 pandemic and the hardship experienced by students compelled to complete coursework online.

The importance of preparing a decent citizen prior to receiving academic or occupational training is what motivated us to perform this research in order to strengthen national culture, especially in light of the serious issues that seek to directly or indirectly destroy cultural and national identity.

Literature Review

The Idea of Civic Education

The idea of civic education has grown, increased, and varied with the number of groups and ideas. There are many different approaches to civic education, especially among modern philosophers. The formation of civic knowledge, citizenship-related behaviour, and values is the focus of civic education, a live and integrated approach. Despite this, others define civic education as the type of education that strives to create

social and moral responsibility, a propensity for voluntary work, and awareness of political and democratic systems. It also attempts to produce a person who is aware of his rights and committed to his tasks (Ben Hadiya, 2017).

Others define it as the educational process that focuses on giving students a wealth of concepts, principles, and values, as well as the skills necessary to understand and appreciate various civic education subjects like citizenship, human rights, and community involvement, and to explain their significance and advantages for both the individual and society. This process helps to create the desired civil society in which justice and altruism rule. Rights, obligations, and ideals (Mahmoud, 2020).

"Hudhayfah Saeed" defines it as citizenship education, with its cognitive, skills, and value dimensions, based on a framework of rights and obligations and a system of values expressed in international charters and national laws, with the goal of creating an actively participating citizen on the scale of existing political power, society with its various groups, and the entire world (Jalamneh, 2016).

It is described by "Hamot, Gregorg" as the educational process that aids in the acquisition and learning of the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes necessary for young people to become capable and responsible citizens in all spheres of their lives (Hamot, 2003).

Previous studies

1. Study by Omoeva, Hatch and Moussa

Entitled "The Effects of Armed Conflict on Educational Attainment and Inequality". This study examines the effects of conflict on educational achievement outcomes and inequality, which worsens over a long period. This study aimed to identify the links between the occurrence of conflicts and inequality in education. This study was based on dealing with conflict as a natural experiment by examining the experiences of several countries where conflicts are widespread, in order to determine its causes and effects on educational achievement results. Regression measures were used to analyze the data. The study reached a number

of results, including that conflict reduces the average academic achievement by 7% of the school year and reduces the percentage of gender parity by 5%. Conflict reduces the average school year by 14% and widens the gap between males and females by about 8%. The study also found that ethnic conflicts are more harmful than other conflicts that lead to the spread of educational inequalities in fragile countries, while educational inequalities decrease in the post-conflict years and their levels tend to stabilize or decline slowly and may not reach Pre-conflict.

2. Study by Josh-Littenberg, et.al

The report's title is "Study of Civic Education Requirements." The study sought to define the conditions for enacting civic education in the United States of America, identify participation and citizenship laws, and gather information regarding the conditions for enacting civic education in state-run institutions of higher learning. The study came to a number of conclusions, the most significant of which is that there is a reference able standard framework. To increase student engagement and citizenship, it is important to explain the idea of civic education and create a method for incorporating the requirements for doing so into the curricula of American schools (Littenberg, et al., 2012).

3. Study by Noami and Victor Chodosky

The report's title is "Civics Education and Independent Schools: Current Reality and Future Research Issues." The goal of the study was to gauge how interested schools were in the development of civic education among their students. The most significant of the study's findings is that independent school students exhibited a level of awareness of civic education principles that was slightly different from that of public school pupils. By creating goals and strategies for achieving this, the study also validated the incorporation of the idea of civic education in public school curriculum to a little greater extent than in the curricula of independent schools and public schools (Omoeva, C., Hatch, R., & Moussa, W., 2018).

4. Study by Elizabeth L. Hollander

The article's title is "Civic Education in Research Universities: Leaders or Followers." The goal of the study was to pinpoint the unique difficulties that research institutions encounter when trying to increase their students' understanding of civic education principles. Additionally, it sought to pinpoint the unique requirements and difficulties that research institutions encounter in advancing civic education and enhancing their leadership contributions. This study demonstrated that while research institutions are leading the way in incorporating and broadening the concept of civic education, more work is needed to improve it and give a unique plan for ongoing progress. The study's findings also supported each camp's dedication to the idea of civic education. How these camps overcame two major obstacles to improve the idea of civic education (Hollander, 2011).

Comment on Previous Studies

The following can be deduced from the presentation of earlier research and studies:
a. In light of societal challenges and changes, as well as the dominance of certain values like apathy, violence, disobedience to authority, and a weakened sense of belonging, the majority of previous studies have shown the significance of the concept of civic education, as well as its dimensions and components.
b. As opposed to other research, which concentrated on the phases of pre-university education, the current study examined the effect of university education in enhancing the civic education components. This is where the current study differs from earlier studies.
c. The current study uses a descriptive and analytical technique, which is consistent with earlier studies, but it differs from earlier studies by focusing on how the war crisis in Syria and the Corona epidemic have affected education at the pre-university level. There are only a few research that throw light on this issue, and they only include.

Herein lies the significance of the study, which focuses on the interior of Syria, the nature of education in times of crisis, and the

impact of crises on students and the pre-university educational system (Chudowsky, N., & Chudowsky-Victor, 2012).

Civic Education Components

The following figure outlines the several components that civic education is built upon:
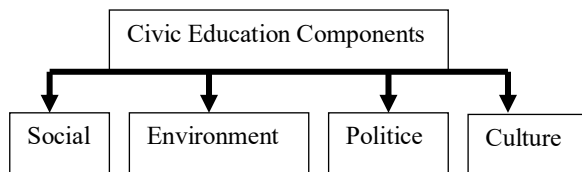

Figure 1. Civic Education Components

a Pre-University Education

This term describes the many levels of education that occur before people register in higher or university education. Primary, middle, and secondary education are all included in this definition (Zaki, 2004).

A crisis is a phase or time when tension, chaos, and emotional instability are prevalent. When an individual or group's ability to adapt is rendered worthless, it becomes necessary to modify how one adapts to the environment by coming up with fresh solutions to pressing problems. The crisis may be social, psychological, political, economic, administrative, or cultural (Abdullah, 2018). The war in Syria is defined procedurally as follows: Due to the growth of security events, this phrase was introduced (Ali, 2022). It is described by "Hamot" as the educational process that aids in the acquisition and learning of the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes necessary for young people to become capable and responsible citizens in all spheres of their lives (Hamot, 2003).

Method

The current study describes and analyses the study's variables before presenting a set of recommendations and proposals that are required to strengthen the requirements for civic education among university and pre-university students. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for the study's subject and nature. The analysis that was carried out is also based on data from the statistical group, Chapter Eleven, available from Before the Central Bureau of Statistics, which does not include the years 2011-2014, but is still available for graduate data and decisions of the Syrian Ministry of Education, and it then develops analyses and links between different research publications on the status of pre-university education.

Result and Discussion

The effects of the war in Syria on Pre-University Education

1. Effects on the Number of Students Enrolling In Pre-University Programmers

Due to its lengthy nature, which lasted more than ten years, the war in Syria is seen as having had the greatest impact on the pre-university education sector. The Covid-19 pandemic's effects were less severe and can be reversed in the future, whereas the war in Syria was the main cause of the crisis' effects. Pre-university education suffered considerable losses, particularly in terms of the number of students enrolled in the secondary stage, as a result of the enormous number of students who left secondary school as a result of the economic, social, and political situations brought on by the war. Numerous students in the pre-university education level were also affected by the violence in Syria. Most of the governorates of Idlib and Raqqa offer university education.

Table 1. Shows the number of students in the first cycle of basic education by gender and school ownership from 2015 to 2019 and their distribution by governorate

YEARS	Total مجموع Total	Total انثى F	Total ذكر M	UNRWA مجموع Total	UNRWA انثى F	UNRWA ذكر M	Private مجموع Total	Private انثى F	Private ذكر M	Puplic مجموع Total	Puplic انثى F	Puplic ذكر M
2015	2616972	1262682	1354290	19583	10056	9527	73256	35331	37925	2524133	1217295	1306838
2016	2613560	1274905	1338655	30131	15537	14594	74356	35687	38669	2509073	1223681	1285392
2017	2555283	1256639	1298644	31323	15696	15627	81852	39476	42376	2442108	1201467	1240641
2018	2540709	1236616	1304093	31741	15444	16297	91201	44046	47155	2417767	1177126	1240641
2019	2233364	1091406	1141958	35157	17249	17908	97550	47263	50287	2100657	1026894	1073763
governorate												
Damascus	201594	99267	102327	6589	3256	3333	28402	14116	14286	166603	81895	84708
Aleppo	336196	165155	171041	2600	1297	1303	19488	9656	9832	314108	154202	159906
Rural Dama	398914	195934	202980	20432	10057	10375	25709	12031	13678	352773	173846	178927
Homs	204517	99135	105382	1323	610	713	6064	2964	3100	197130	95561	101569
Hama	237424	115485	121939	721	339	382	4515	2153	2362	232188	112993	119195
Lattakia	139356	68405	70951	992	472	520	4515	2153	2362	133849	65780	68069
Idleb	196135	95845	100290	///	///	///	///	///	///	196135	95845	100290
AL-Hasake	51320	24407	26913	///	///	///	5126	2429	2697	46194	21978	24216
Deir-ez-Zor	58933	28770	30163	///	///	///	///	///	///	58933	28770	30163
Tartous	123164	59655	63509	///	///	///	2507	1191	1316	120657	58464	62193
AL-Rakka	15724	7665	8059	///	///	///	///	///	///	15724	7665	8059
Daraa	152420	74538	77882	2500	1218	1282	514	221	293	149406	73099	76307
AL-Sweida	56520	27284	29236	///	///	///	132	68	64	56388	27216	29172
AL-Quneitr	61147	29861	31286	///	///	///	578	281	297	60569	29580	30989

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics

2. How the Crisis Has Affected the Number of Graduates Enrolled in Pre-University Education

The number of pre-university graduates fell precipitously in the early years of the crisis before rising once more in the years that followed as a result of security stability in the majority of Syrian governorates.

Table 2. Number ten by gender and stage, the number of graduates from basic and secondary education from 2000 to 2019

General Secondary مجموع T	General Secondary انثى F	General Secondary ذكر M	Basic مجموع T	Basic انثى F	Basic ذكر M	السنوات
96862	49664	47198	158336	79804	78532	2000
105654	56394	49260	171691	86072	85619	2001
114801	59985	54816	176788	90724	86064	2002
132804	71288	61516	181356	93193	88163	2003
134560	70945	63615	206363	104179	102184	2004
140249	74787	65462	209136	106874	102262	2005
145993	76346	69647	221570	114135	107435	2006
169265	87497	81768	218568	112361	106207	2007
170147	89748	80399	233124	122502	110622	2008
164156	89376	74780	225583	119035	106548	2009
154013	83894	70119	255346	133887	121459	2010
215115	111648	103467	270690	139899	130791	2011
231567	119969	111598	307028	151810	155218	2012
202024	107144	94880	201010	102390	98620	2013
189315	99748	89567	240492	122585	117907	2014
121147	66937	54210	180958	92752	88206	2015
110708	62097	48611	169380	88457	80923	2016
101512	58832	42680	164489	87950	76539	2017
110457	62761	47696	179401	95519	83882	2018
114203	68051	46152	193053	107040	86013	2019

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics

The overall image of pre-university education graduates from 2011 to 2019 during the crisis years reveals a sharp fall in the number of pupils completing their basic and secondary education. In 2011, there were over 270,690 graduates from the basic education stage, with a gender distribution of 48.4% men and 51.6% women. In 2019, there were roughly 193,053 graduates, with a gender distribution of 44.6% men and 55.6% women. These numbers showed us a drop in the number of students graduating from basic education, which was about 77 thousand students, both male and female, between 2011 and 2019, while the number of female graduates climbed by about 4% during the same time.

Government Policies in the Pre-University Education Stage during the Years of the War in Syria

A new reality brought about by the crisis in Syria necessitated action in line with advancements in education. We will review the most important actions and decisions taken by the Syrian Ministry of Education during the years of the crisis 2011-2019, which are located on its website (Syrian Ministry of Education, http://moed.gov.sy/site.

1. Choosing to enroll youngsters in school
   Since the start of the crisis, the Ministry of Education has published a circular mandating that parents should not be burdened financially by rigorous requirements for school attire. When it came to the subject of enrolling children in schools, the Syrian Ministry of Education was likewise tolerant throughout the crisis years, issuing decrees ordering both public and private institutions to enroll all pupils who wish to study. Measures have been taken, such as completing an information survey for kids in the grade levels that correspond to their age group, in order to register students who lack identification because they were forcibly removed from their families as a result of being abducted by armed organizations. The poll asks on math, science. Arabic, English, science, and mathematics are all included in the survey. The Ministry also handled the matter of pupils who had missed at least two academic years of school in grades (first,

third, fifth, and seventh) by re-registering them as Category "B" students after they returned from their absence. The proportion of youngsters who were not enrolled rose during the war. In this case, after receiving a written guarantee from the student's guardian stating that his child was unenrolled up until the date of submission and including a copy of the ID card, the Ministry permitted the registration of students in basic education schools in accordance with documents estimating the students' ages by the relevant committees. In the civil status records, the request will remain registered.

2. Culture of Citizenship and Psychological Assistance
   During the conflict, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the UN, placed a strong emphasis on children learning life skills as well as on giving psychosocial support to children to help them adapt to new emergency situations. In addition to teaching kids sustainable development skills to develop their personalities, citizenship and the culture of law have been incorporated into school curricula through social studies and extracurricular activities that work to develop the student's personality and boost his self-esteem. In addition to the Damascus educational platform, which broadcasts classes delivered, attention was also paid to the subject of integrating technology into education through the construction of the Syrian educational platform.

Requirements for the civic education elements in higher education

1. Technological and Social Prerequisites
   The following capacities and social procedures must be provided in order to strengthen the civic education components through university education:
   a. A commitment to the civic values of justice, peace, tolerance, mercy, security, stability, and the ability to participate, cooperate, foster social cohesion, and practice democracy by all parties involved in the educational process in higher education. These values serve as behavioral guidelines that influence the individual's personality and help him

positively realize his rights and obligations.

b. Handling the coordination of national affiliation, involvement, and accountability.

c. Activating civil society, encouraging community involvement, and strengthening the principles of group cooperation (Abdel Moaty et Mahfouz, 2018).

2. Political Requirements

To strengthen the educational components in higher education, a set of political capabilities and practices must be made available. These include:

a. Stressing the importance of social fairness and accountability, as well as equitable educational opportunities and the preeminence of the ideals of freedom and responsibility.

b. Building a powerful civil society that serves as a bridge between society and its many formations, since this will strengthen the university's ability to influence decisions and policies and oversee their implementation (Abdel Moaty et Mahfouz, 2018)

c. To create an environment that is conducive to democracy for the formation of student councils and unions in order to further democratic values like the Shura principle, cooperation, and social work (Abdel Moati, 2017).

3. Cultural Requirements

In order to strengthen the cultural aspects of civic education in higher education, the following capacities and procedures must be made available:

a. Increasing society's capacity and empowering younger generations to take on contemporary issues and compete in a world that is changing.

b. Strengthening the ideals of communication, cooperation, respect for other people's cultures, and faith in the year of variety. (Mahmoud, 2020).

c. A desire to foster and instruct students in the development of critical and creative thinking, which are traits of a democratic citizen.(Abdel Moati, 2017).

d. Teaching pupils how to express their beliefs, accept those of others, and reject intolerance in all of its manifestations by putting them in circumstances where they can freely express their opinions.

4. Economic Requirements

In order to strengthen the economic aspects of civic education in higher education, the following capacities and practices must be made available:

a. Combining certain economic and behavioral principles to counter the divisive consumerist messages spread by Western media and social media.

b. Improving employment prospects and resolving the unemployment issue, which is among the most critical issues a country's economy may face.

c. Creating environmental information systems that are capable of gathering and monitoring data that supports and contributes to environmental development decisions, designing and evaluating development policies, and establishing environmental protection legislation and laws (Mahmoud, 2020).

Based on the foregoing, the argument has become urgent to activate the university's role in fulfilling the civic education requirements for its students, because the student is satisfied with those requirements and is more capable of participating positively and effectively in bringing about the overall development of society. The role of university education and before it can be highlighted in activating the strengthening of students' civic education requirements (Mahmoud, 2020).

Conclusion

To conclude, civic education ended up becoming a stopping point for the Pre-university and post-university students. So, should be required to complete the following civic education courses:

a. Working to construct new schools and rehabilitation and restoration of harmed ones to end the phenomenon of overcrowding in classrooms and enhance educational quality.

b. Reevaluating the national education subject's content to support the development of a comprehensive Syrian national identity by emphasizing the rich

diversity and national diversity of the Syrian people.

c. Providing schools with electricity so that students can use educational tools other than memorization and rote learning to help them understand lessons. - Creating a local database and connecting it to all schools so that students can easily access information from dependable sources provided by the Ministry of Education.

d. Creating workable plans to encourage engagement from universities and civil society organizations in order to support students' civic education needs and their contribution to community service.

e. More research should be done in the field of civic education because there is so little of it being done in the context of educational settings and civil society.

f. Ensure that student activity events and programmers are related to the needs of the students' age stage as well as to contemporary social issues, particularly those that concern service and volunteer work as well as involvement with some civil society organizations.

g. Numerous national and cultural leaders are drawn to the university to take part in their many events (camps, workshops, seminars, and conferences) in a way that complements the educational mission.

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