Dialogic universalism and human rights education: A case study from Kuwait

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ABSTRACT

Human rights are often described as the underpinning framework for citizenship education. However, literature on the subject focuses on justifications for this perception more than on the substantive content or actual enactments of human rights education (HRE). This study explores the human rights approach espoused by Kuwait's Constitution and Human Rights (CHR) module, introduced to the secondary school curriculum as a three-year programme in 2006 but then reduced to one year by 2010. In order to analyse its substantive content and contextualised enactment as well as its rollback, a case study was conducted, involving data collection in the form of documents, observations, interviews and student research workshops over three phases (2009-2011). 'Fatima School' was selected as a critical case for its potential to provide viable alternatives. While the analysis reveals gaps in Kuwait's approach to human rights education (HRE), it also identifies expansions to this approach in Fatima School's enactment of CHR as well as in its ties to UNESCO. In conference with the theoretical field and the empirical data, particularly the perspectives of the student participants, a more maximal interpretation of HRE is offered in a *Continuum of Human Rights Education*. Three dimensions are identified for the substantive content of HRE: a curriculum that promotes criticality through purposive engagement with tensions between competing rights frameworks; participation that promotes the right to take what is termed 'unsanctioned action'; and recognition of individuals' humanity, which fosters solidarity and helps trigger transformative changes. This, it is argued, is best realized within an educational context characterised by free rather than enclosed and controlled spaces; diverse rather than homogenous school populations; and humanistic rather than authoritarian ethos. Within this continuum, HRE is conceptualised as a potential space for 'reclaiming dialogic universalism' through the types of mediations between the ideal and the real advocated by Benhabib (2008, p. 20).

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.
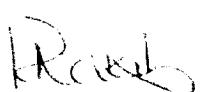
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[T]here is no such thing as teaching without research and research without teaching. One inhabits the body of the other. As I teach, I continue to search and re-search. I teach because I search, because I question, and because I submit myself to questioning. I research because I notice things, take cognizance of them. And in so doing, I intervene. And intervening, I educate and educate myself. I do research so as to know what I do not yet know and to communicate and proclaim what I discover. (Freire, 1998, p.35)

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ACRONYMS

ASPnet	Associated Schools Project Network (UNESCO)
CHR	The Constitution and Human Rights (Kuwait secondary school module)
HRE	Human Rights Education
HRW	Human Rights Watch
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoE	Ministry of Education
MP	Member of Parliament
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Commission
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED ARABIC TERMS[1]

bidūn	literally, without; refers to those without citizenship; stateless
ḥadīth	those acts, sayings, etc. attributed to the prophet Muhammad
ḥadthar	sedentary town dwellers
ḥijāb	headscarf
ijtihād	derivation of Islamic law (*shari'a*) through independent interpretation of the *Qur'ān* and *ḥadīth*
jawda	quality (quality education initiative adopted by Kuwait in 2009)
jinsiyya	nationality; (legal) citizenship
muwāṭana	citizenship
muwāṭin	a national (plural *muwāṭinīn*)
Qur'ān	Islam's holy scriptures revealed to the prophet Muhammad by Allah
shari'a	Islamic law
waṭan	nation
waṭaniyya	nationalism; patriotism

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[1] The Arabic transliteration used in this thesis follows the guidelines set by the International Journal of Middle East Studies; Arabic names, however, are spelled out in English.

1 'A BEGINNING'

> A beginning is what I think scholarship should see itself as, for in that
> light scholarship or criticism revitalizes itself. (Said, 1975, p. 380)

1.1 MY PERSONAL BACKGROUND: I AM NOT A CHICKEN NUGGET

My parents, both Kuwaitis, were not raised in Kuwait. My mother was born in Kuwait and my father in Iraq. Their fathers were both Kuwaitis, as was my maternal grandmother. My father's mother was Lebanese, and both his grandmothers were Turkish. When my mother was a baby, her family moved to Pune, India for her father's business. My mother attended a Catholic boarding school there until the age of nine, becoming fluent in Hindi and English before she had learned Arabic. My father, on the other hand, grew up in Basra, moving to Kuwait to attend secondary school. His family had decided from his birth that he would be the doctor in the family, so at 16, my dad left Kuwait to attend medical school in Vienna. Speaking only Arabic, he spent the first six months becoming fluent in German, after which, as part of his medical education, he had to learn Latin from German.

My parents met, married and had their first child – my older sister – in Kuwait, before moving to Scotland and then the United States for my father's medical internship and residency. I was born in St. Louis, Missouri the week after my mother had completed her university studies there. We moved back to Kuwait before I turned one, and three years later my mother gave birth to my younger sister. My sisters and I grew up speaking English primarily, but also Hindi and Arabic. My mother decided to enrol us all at the American School of Kuwait – a bold move at the time, when there was only a handful of Kuwaiti girls in private Western schools. This was a decision met with severe criticism by our parents' families, who felt that we would lose our 'Kuwaitiness' – which they described as 'our language', 'our culture' and 'our religion'. They got over this concern with time, though our perceived differences made us the 'American' cousins. Nowadays, young people who are viewed as 'Westernised' due to their education in Western private schools and who speak English more than Arabic have been dubbed 'chicken nuggets' by those who

attend Kuwaiti public schools; chicken nuggets as in, 'brown on the outside, white on the inside'.

I never felt like a chicken nugget growing up. To me, living in an Arab country in a Western school, speaking three languages in the house and being exposed to people from varied backgrounds was the norm. The year of my graduation, I received the 'Hugh Scott Democracy Award' for always having friends from a wide variety of nationalities, religions and backgrounds. While flattered at being recognised for something, I found it bizarre that this was something to be recognised for. In fact, making international friends resulted in a great deal of sadness during my primary school years as I had to say goodbye after goodbye to best friends since their parents could only remain in Kuwait on sponsorship from their Kuwaiti employers.

As I grew older, I experienced 'otherness' more profoundly, primarily because of my gender. This I felt most acutely when I chose to marry a 'non-Kuwaiti'. I could not pass my citizenship to my husband, nor would my children be citizens, even if born in Kuwait. I also had to relinquish my entitlement to public housing as well as free healthcare and education for my children, all of which are given through Kuwaiti males, who are free to marry whoever they choose and who can pass their nationality and all the attached entitlements to their spouses and children.

In 2007, my husband's father, whose extended family are all Kuwaitis but whose father never applied for citizenship, finally 'became' Kuwaiti. Despite the fact that his entire extended family are Kuwaiti 'citizens by origin', the DNA test they made him and one of his distant cousins take to prove a relationship came back negative. This meant that he was classified as a 'naturalised citizen', barring him from voting or running for office for 20 years. It also meant his adult children would not become automatic citizens but would have to go through the same process he had. My husband applied in 2007 and received his citizenship in 2011. He, too, was classed a 'naturalised citizen'. He cannot vote or run for office; I can. I cannot pass my citizenship to our children; he can. We are now eligible for housing, healthcare and

education. Between the two of us, we almost count for one citizen whose full range of rights and protections is realised.

1.2   15 MINUTES OF FREEDOM: A TEACHING EPIPHANY

After I obtained an M.Ed. in education and began teaching, I became more and more convinced of the power of education to transform experiences and enactments of citizenship in Kuwait. This was highlighted by an unforgettable experience I had while teaching grade one at an American school in Kuwait during the 2006-2007 academic year. That year, the superintendent was set on implementing the 'Understanding By Design' model of thematic lesson planning. The grade one team were chosen to pilot this programme. During our team meeting, the grade one teachers studied the Arizona curriculum that the school had adopted and adapted, and we decided that a unit on citizenship and government would lend itself well to this project. As we talked about integrated lessons and grade-wide projects and activities, we became excited about the possibilities.

Perhaps revealing our own limited views, we decided that it would be interesting if each of the five grade one classes created their own country, complete with flags, national anthems and elected leaders. Importantly, however, we shared the conviction that a pursuit of freedom and justice should be the foundation on which these nations be built, and the idea of '15 minutes of freedom' was born. Much to the horror of other primary school teachers with whom we shared this idea, we decided to start the unit with literally 15 minutes of freedom, during which the students would be able to do anything they wanted regardless of any school or classroom rules. The only two things we had to stipulate, of course, were that students were not to leave campus, nor were they to physically hurt anyone. We were met with a barrage of questions from teachers. 'What if they leave the room?' 'What if someone gets hurt?' 'How will you cope with the noise?' 'What if you disturb other classes?' Fortunately the principal did not share the teachers' qualms and gave us the go-ahead for our plan.

When we told our first graders what we were going to do on the first day of our new unit, they looked at us suspiciously and started shouting out questions to test our resolve. 'Can we read the pop-up books?' 'Can we paint?' 'Can we yell?' 'Will we get in trouble if we break the class rules?' We assured them that we meant what we said and that for 15 minutes they would be able to do anything they wanted. With teaching support staff on hand to help ensure everyone's safety, we set the clocks and began. The first five minutes were relatively calm, as students let their newfound freedom sink in. Some students went straight for the delicate pop-up books that were usually restricted to adult-led read-aloud times. Others circled the big box of musical instruments, which I quite selfishly never let them use during indoor break times because of the noise levels that often ensued. As students reached in and took up the accordion, triangle, recorder and tambourine, the volume in the room increased. So, too, did the students' realisation that I was not stepping in to set guidelines or remind them of the rules. Some students started running around the room singing and yelling. One student grabbed a pack of permanent markers and started scribbling all over one of the bulletin boards. Other students sat quietly on the reading rug, spending their 15 minutes absorbed in books and puzzles. By the last two minutes, things became calm again as students settled into finding things they truly enjoyed doing rather than indulging in things simply because they had previously been off-limits.

After the 15 minutes were over, we gathered on the rug to discuss what had happened and how we felt about everything. Some students talked about how much fun it had been to play the instruments. Others complained that the noise levels made it hard to concentrate on reading. One girl said she was sad that our bulletin board was scribbled on. Throughout this conversation, students engaged directly with each other, addressing the pros and cons of their individual and collective experiences. The first graders used words like 'respect', 'unfair', 'share', 'left out' and 'consequences'. At the end of it, they decided that freedom was wonderful and that they had to find ways to make sure that everyone got to enjoy it. They decided that some rules, or laws as we later started to call them, might be important to have – ones that expanded their own rights as well as securing everyone else's. As I

watched and listened to the students, I realised that as a teacher, I had been setting some boundaries based on my own preconceived ideas of what the students were capable of. This discussion and other experiences throughout the unit helped me to change my own outlook.

In the weeks that followed, students expanded their identities to include membership into their new nation of Joyka, a name selected and voted on by my students. On the playground, Kuwaiti, Indian, American, Lebanese and Thai students were now Joykans. It was so easy for them to reimagine and build on their views of themselves – to see similarities and shared experiences where, as adults, we assumed difference. Students in my class were curious about the other grade one countries, so they asked and compared experiences as they learned and played.

Our unit took on a life of its own as we abandoned some unit ideas and added others, often allowing ourselves to be guided by the students. Campaigns and elections were carried out, laws were set and international conflicts were resolved. Students were encouraged to keep journals about the unit, assessments included conversations about their experiences and a myriad of resources and technologies were used. All members of the school community were excited about what was happening and became involved. One day, the principal joined us with his guitar to help create a national anthem. The students selected the themes that mattered most to them, and together we created rhymes and put them to music.

> We are from Joyka,
> A country proud and free.
> We believe in education,
> To be the best that we can be.
> We believe in safety,
> It's our strongest priority.
>
> Won't you come and visit us?
> Won't you come and stay?
> We just want to tell you:
> Have a really nice day!
>
> We are from Joyka,
> A country proud and free.

We believe in staying healthy,
Life is precious, don't you see?
We respect the world we're in,
Every single person, every tree.

With themes like freedom, inclusivity, education, health, safety, the environment and respect, Joyka and its population of six-year-olds were already imagining a world better than the one they inhabited. As a teacher, I was in awe of the transformative effects this unit was having on the students and the rest of the school community. It certainly transformed me. The same year we created this unit at a private American school, Kuwait's Ministry of Education added human rights education to the national curriculum in public schools. I knew that this was a crucial time and topic for research, and my passion for it drove me to start my PhD one academic year later. As Greene (1988) states, '[W]hen freedom is the question, it is always a time to begin' (p. 135).

1.3 HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN KUWAIT

In 2006, Kuwait became the first country in the Gulf region to add an explicit human rights component to the national curriculum. This curricular module, entitled 'The Constitution and Human Rights' (*al-dustūr wa ḥuqūq al-insān*), was introduced across the three levels of secondary school – grades 10, 11 and 12. The module was conceived on the founding principles of the universality of human rights and the importance of the Constitution (MoE, 2010a). The grade 10 textbook presented introductions to the principles of democracy, the Constitution and human rights. The grade 11 content was exclusively about human rights from three perspectives: Islam, international agreements and the Kuwaiti Constitution. In grade 12, students learned about the democratic system of government, the Constitution and the distribution of power among the public authorities.

The addition of this module marked a radical shift in the approach to citizenship education in Kuwait, which had been previously centred on the notions of *muwāṭana*, or '(national) citizenship', and *waṭaniyya*, 'nationalism'. Both these terms

firmly linked citizenship to the national because of their linguistic association with their root word, *waṭan*, or 'nation'. By shifting away from *muwāṭana* to human rights and democracy, the Constitution and Human Rights (CHR) module untangled citizenship education from the exclusive notion of nationality and the promotion of a static national identity as well as from the nationalistic expressions of love of and loyalty to the nation. This opened up space for more inclusive notions of citizenship, putting the module in tension with the dominant patriarchal, Islamic discourses and consequently providing opportunities for critical engagements with these tensions (as will be uncovered). The CHR module also aspired to promote democratic participation as well as to foster humanistic and democratic ideals. These goals described a module that aimed to teach *about* democratic citizenship but that also aspired to teach *through* and *for* democratic citizenship. As mentioned, it based this approach on universal human rights.

In 2008, the CHR module was cancelled from grade 10. In 2009, it was cancelled from grade 11. At the start of the 2010-2011 academic year, the three-year programme was replaced with a one-year programme offered solely to grade 12 students. The only official reason on record appeared in a pamphlet presented to the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for Kuwait's Universal Periodic Review in 2010. It states:

> The Ministry has decided that it is much better to teach this subject in the final stage of secondary school (twelfth grade). The learner in this grade is intellectually and psychologically ready for such specialised information about democracy, the Constitution and human rights. (MoE, 2010a, p. 12)

This rationale contradicts the content of the Islamic Studies curricula, in which 'specialised information about human rights' continues to be taught in tenth grade. Moreover, it contradicts research that stresses the developmental significance of the years *before* adolescence for human rights education (Torney, 1980). The decision and its justification were also not supported by any Ministry-conducted research, nor were any independent studies carried out (as confirmed to be by a Ministry official in our 2011 interview).

In 2010, the Ministry also released its first comprehensive citizenship education strategy report, entitled 'Strategy for reinforcing the concepts of citizenship, loyalty and belonging among young people through educational curricula in Kuwait'. The goals within this report seem to build on those laid out by the CHR module, with knowledge, skills and values including 'complete knowledge of one's rights and responsibilities', 'positive critical thinking', 'practicing correct democracy' and 'faith in social pluralism'. If one ignores the normative wording ('positive' and 'correct', which are not defined anywhere in the report), the goals seem inconsistent with the decision to roll back the CHR programme to one year, particularly since nothing has been proposed to replace it. However, examining the rest of the report reveals a strong nationalistic tone. National identity and national unity are stressed, while particular affiliations and demands for rights are problematised (as Chapter 5 will analyse in detail). Seen in this light, the decision to scale back the content of the CHR module, which did not stress the national and whose focus was anchored in universal human rights and belonging, becomes less puzzling. In primary school, two citizenship modules added in 2005 – National and Civic Education (*al-terbia al-waṭaniyya wa-l-tenshi'a al-medenīa*) and My County Kuwait (*bilādi al-Kuwait*) – seem in greater harmony with the nationalistic focus of the report.

This contextualisation and the tensions it uncovers reveals that the CHR module was a radical addition to the curriculum. In leaving the national behind in favour of human rights and democracy and in striving to promote related skills and values, the three-year CHR programme was the beginning of a potentially more maximal conception of citizenship education in Kuwait.

1.4   MAXIMAL INTERPRETATIONS OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Citizenship education, like the notion of citizenship itself, has been interpreted in different ways, and the resultant tensions often lead to thin applications (McLaughlin, 1992). In addressing what he perceives as a need to debate these issues at a national level, McLaughlin (1992) maps specific tensions on a continuum from minimal to maximal interpretations of the notion of citizenship and applies this

analysis to education. The first minimal view he identifies is that of citizenship identity being conceptualised solely in national, legal terms – citizenship as status, or nationality. This view often conflates citizenship with nationalism, promoting a static national identity and expressions of love and loyalty to the state at the expense of deeper political understandings (Alharbi, 2010). This legal conception as it applies to education has been criticised as superficial (Banks, 2008) as well as marginalising and homogenising (Osler & Starkey, 2003). It guarantees status without necessarily providing opportunities for participation and promotes an imagined national narrative that often excludes various groups.

A more maximal interpretation and one that promotes agency, on the other hand, acknowledges that identity is complex and multi-layered as well as dynamic. This involves active reflection on the multiple communities that an individual identifies with on various levels – local, national, regional and global (Osler & Starkey, 2005; Banks, 2009) – and the consequent development of a consciousness of being part of shared human and democratic cultures or communities (McLaughlin, 1992; Osler & Starkey, 2005). In such a view, people continually redefine their identities (McLaughlin, 1992), but they do not do so 'de novo' (Gutmann, 2004, p. 76). In multicultural societies, individuals born within certain contexts and cultures choose themselves amidst diversity (Greene, 1993a) dialogically (Taylor, 1994). Culture is not determined, but rather undergoes constant reinterpretation through meaningful engagement with people of diverse histories, cultures and backgrounds. Respect for individuals therefore includes respect for the diverse cultures 'in and through which [they] actualise their humanity' (Rockefeller, 1994, p. 87). Recognition within such an interpretation involves acknowledging the existence of diverse cultures and backgrounds as well as their potential contributions, their struggles for recognition and any wrongs committed against them (Wolf, 1994; Taylor, 1994; Gutmann, 2004). This has implications for educational curricula, which should include the histories, experiences, struggles and contributions of previously and presently excluded groups (Banks, 2001; Gutmann, 2004; Osler & Starkey, 2010).

Rockefeller (1994) insists, however, that it is the universal identity that is an individual's primary identity, stressing that elevating the significance of ethnic identity over the universal invites intolerance. It has been similarly argued that recognition entails respect for differences without having to recognise all as equally valuable (Gutmann 2004; Davies, 2008). Gutmann (2004) argues that notions of tolerance and recognition should not be applied to all difference without criticality, but rather that civic equity should guide such decisions. She illustrates this with the example of genital mutilation as neither tolerable nor as deserving recognition. Davies (2008) points out that equal value, particularly in the context of religion, is a myth – being a member of one religion necessarily entails thinking all other religions are not of equal value. She, too, stresses the need for criticality. The issue of criticality as it relates to citizenship education is an important one. In most national conceptions of citizenship education, the opportunities to be critical of government are suppressed (Osler & Starkey, 2010). This is certainly true in several authoritarian countries, where citizenship education is used to promote loyalty to the state (Faour, 2011) rather than criticality that may invoke change. The same may be true for democracies (Harber, 1995).

Returning to the discussion of a maximal conception of citizenship, McLaughlin (1992), too, stresses that citizens are responsible for actively questioning and extending their immediate realities. This, he argues, is done by engaging with universal considerations, such as justice, and working towards the empowerment of all. The particular is not sacrificed to the universal, but rather the universal provides a means through which to challenge and perhaps change the particular and vice versa. This entails, in a maximal sense, 'a more fully participatory approach to democracy' (p. 237). In such an approach, transformative (rather than simply legal) citizens act to promote ideals such as justice and equality, even if this means violating existing laws; the aim of education is to help students become such transformative citizens (Banks, 2008). Greene (1993b) articulates this as follows:

> [S]ituations have to be deliberately created in order for students to break free in this way. Coming together in their pluralities and their differences, they may finally articulate how they are choosing themselves and what the projects are by means of which they can

identify themselves. We need to recognize each other in our striving, our becoming, our inventing of the possible, as, yes, it is a question of acting in the light of a vision of what might be – a vision that enables people to perceive the voids, take heed of the violations, and move (if they can) to repair. (p. 219-220)

Implicit in this vision of what might be is hope. While criticality is necessary to uncover inequality and injustice, hope and idealism are also needed to foster what Greene (1990) calls, 'a passion of the possible'. Without this passion, without this drive to change the status quo for a better tomorrow, criticality may wither into apathy. Such critical hope (Duncan-Andrade, 2010) or critical idealism (Davies, 2008) brings together criticality and a passion for what may be; one without the other cannot transform the world (Freire, 1998).

McLaughlin (1992) sums up his maximal view of citizenship as follows:

> Maximal conceptions require a considerable degree of explicit understanding of democratic principles, values and procedures on the part of the citizen, together with the dispositions and capacities required for participation in democratic citizenship generously conceived. (p. 237)

Citizenship education therefore extends beyond education *about* citizenship – though this is a crucial element – to include education *through* and *for* citizenship.

1.5 TOWARDS A MAXIMAL INTERPRETATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Osler and Starkey (2005) usefully conceptualise cosmopolitan citizenship within education, providing a more maximal view of citizenship than national conceptions by encompassing the issues raised in the previous section – specifically, the multiple layers and levels of identities and the universal considerations of justice and equality. As Banks et al (2005) point out, such an approach to education need not be in tension with 'critical patriotism' (p. 24), but it expands students' outlooks so that they can 'recognise humanity wherever they encounter it' (Nussbaum, 2002, p. 9). Education for cosmopolitan citizenship also has the potential to challenge the assumption that human rights are 'by the West for the Rest' and instead attempts to involve multiple communities in designing 'a common human rights agenda and practice' (Archibugi, 2012, p. 18).

Osler and Starkey (2005) adopt McLaughlin's (1992) minimal-maximal approach to represent the specificities of a cosmopolitan approach within two dimensions of citizenship education: structural/political and cultural/personal. On the minimal side of the continuum within the structural/political dimension, they place human rights education (HRE), involving the understanding and experience of human rights, democracy, diversity, inclusion and civil society. Within the cultural/personal dimension, citizens engage with and explore their identities. The more ambitious, maximal goals of education for cosmopolitan citizenship are building a more inclusive democracy and developing the competencies to effect change. To sum up, such an education 'is best achieved if it is based on acquiring knowledge, reflecting on identity, living in a community and developing skills for participation' (Osler & Starkey, 2005, p. 87). The first element – HRE – is the basis on which the more maximal goals may be realised.

Human rights are often described as the basis of or the underpinning for citizenship education (Alderson, 2000; Banks et al, 2005; Osler, 2005; Osler & Starkey, 2010). While the justification for this has been widely discussed using several of the points already raised, the actual content of and context for HRE remains underdeveloped, with human rights often reduced to one of many in a long list of citizenship topics (Osler and Starkey, 2010) or, worse, conflated with citizenship (Kiwan, 2005; Hung 2012). Theoretical research has focused on the justifications, limitations and potential surrounding HRE (e.g. Zembylas, 2011; McCowan, 2012; Starkey, 2012). However, empirical research on what constitutes HRE has been slower to emerge (Hahn, 2005). Recent studies have largely focused on initiatives by non-governmental organisations (e.g. Bajaj 2011; 2012; Gervais, 2011).

International and non-governmental organisations have been instrumental in trying to develop a more maximal interpretation of HRE. In a similar manner to the maximal conceptions of citizenship education mentioned in the previous section, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (UN, 2012) defines education about, through and for human rights in Article 2:

1. Human rights education and training comprises all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus contributing to, inter alia, the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviours, to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of rights.

2. Human rights education and training encompasses:
    (a) Education about human rights, which involves providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection;
    (b) Education through human rights, which includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners;
    (c) Education for human rights, which includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others. (p. 3)

While the declaration provides a more comprehensive definition of HRE, it does not unpack its content and implementation (Gerber, 2011).

In 2007, the year following Kuwait's introduction of HRE into its secondary national curriculum, the League of Arab States decided to begin work on a regional plan for HRE. The Director of the Curriculum Development Department of Kuwait's Ministry of Education was selected to head the project, and a report, entitled 'Arab Plan for Human Rights Education (2009-2014)', was put into force in 2010. This plan defines HRE as follows:

> Education on human rights is not solely about the provision of knowledge and skills, but it is also about promoting trends, attitudes and behaviours that allow people to participate in the lives of their local and national communities in a constructive way in which they respect themselves and others; and generations should learn about human rights through the standards and principles of human rights, which should be implemented in practice, in the classroom, at home and in all other social institutions. (p. 2)[2]

Education about, through and for human rights are defined in a similar manner to the UN declaration above. By discussing founding principles, challenges, goals and implementation strategies, and by providing suggestions on how to approach these

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[2] All excerpts from educational policies, aims and textbooks have been translated from Arabic by the author of this thesis.

matters, the report seeks to provide a comprehensive guidance on HRE. However, it does this without reducing itself to a prescriptive list of standards and outcomes.

The general principles for human rights listed in the report are modelled after those in reports such as 'A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All' (Lansdown, 2007) and 'World Programme for Human Rights Education: Plan of Action' (UN, 2006): universality, interconnectedness, indivisibility, equality, non-discrimination and participation.

The report touches upon the challenges of reconciling the universal with the particular and stresses the need for openness to other cultures and to the global community. It subsequently limits this more maximal view of universality, however, with religion. In the section that deals with textbooks, for example, the report states that they should be 'focused and effective in consolidating the values of tolerance, openness, coexistence, the right to disagree with each other and openness to other cultures, *in accordance with regulations from Islam and the other monotheistic religions*' (p. 14; emphasis added). While this particular example refers to all the monotheistic religions, others focus solely on Islam. Moreover, criticality is not mentioned anywhere in the report.

Participation is mentioned once in the report after its initial mention in the guiding principles. In the section that outlines the role of the educational environment in HRE, the following suggestion is made: 'Encouraging students to participate positively and to be involved in all aspects of the educational environment' (p. 15). What constitutes 'positive' participation is never discussed. However, in the aforementioned list of guiding principles, the following is said about participation: 'All individuals and peoples have the right to actually and actively participate in social and economic development' (p. 7). Conspicuously absent is political participation as well as participation in human rights agendas. While the UNESCO reports mentioned above link participation to empowerment, the latter is left out of the Arab Plan.

Despite its weaknesses, the plan does attempt to provide a more comprehensive, maximal interpretation of HRE than currently exists in any of the countries involved in it. It is a start to a long overdue conversation in the region – one that, as the report itself suggests, needs to include research.

1.5.1   THE RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

I believe that the three-year CHR programme was the beginning of something new in Kuwait. Arendt (1958) describes a beginning as something new that cannot be predicted based on what came before; she uses the word 'startling' to describe the inherent character of beginnings (p. 178). Abandoning the notion of *muwāṭana* in favour of universal human rights was an unexpected – perhaps 'startling' – move. This may explain the CHR programme's swift relegation to a one-year module. However, as Said (1975) states, 'Even when it is repressed, the beginning is always a first step from which (except on rare occasions) something follows' (p. xvi). This beginning, its vision and its possibilities are things I feel need to be explored in the hope that something more may follow.

In addition to this local initiative, I am interested in the potential support that may be gleaned from initiatives by international organisations. Davies (2008), speaking about UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools, highlights the empowerment offered by the approach; students' roles within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UNICEF, 1989) are not confined to school but are part of the larger context of improving the lives of children everywhere. She also stresses the approach's potential to provide a bulwark against extremism. Faour (2011), writing about the urgent need for educational reform in emerging Middle Eastern democracies in the context of the Arab Spring, also highlights the role of organisations such as UNESCO in providing technical support and advice. I believe that such approaches may offer opportunities to interrupt exclusive nationalism as well as the inherently authoritarian organisation of schools.

The overarching aim of my research is to contribute to developing a more maximal conception of education about, through and for human rights by exploring tensions within the Kuwaiti context and uncovering pockets of potential and possibility. Specifically, my interests lie in the legal conceptions of citizenship in Kuwait as well as in the tensions between national (legal) and universal rights. As an educator, my main interest is how such tensions within human rights frameworks are simultaneously perpetuated within and interrupted by education. In exploring maximal interpretations, I am concerned with official HRE policies and curricula as well as their enactment within schools. As an educator and a researcher who believes in the potential of young people to imagine the world differently than it is, I am committed to including the voices of young people in my work. For these reasons, I take a qualitative approach to address the following research questions:

- What are the implications of introducing universal human rights to the formal curriculum given Kuwait's traditional approaches to citizenship education?
    - Specifically, to what extent are nationalist discourses and religious authority subject to critical appraisal in the case study school's enactment of the CHR module?

- What opportunities to enact human rights ideals are available at the case study school?
    - In particular, what opportunities are afforded by the school's enactment of CHR and its membership of UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network?

- How do students in the case study school perceive their learning about and experiences of human rights, citizenship and democracy?

These questions will be explored within a case study of a Kuwaiti public school that is also a member of UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet). As my main concern is to contribute to a more *maximal* conception of HRE, I have selected a school that represents what Yin (2009) calls a critical case. This is a public school, so its context and curriculum are part of the centralised Kuwaiti educational system; in these aspects, the school is somewhat representative. However, what make the case study school a critical case from which to explore potential limitations and expansions of HRE are its location and its membership to UNESCO's ASPnet. The school is situated in an affluent district that is politically liberal, and its membership

to the ASPnet has already won the school recognition for work related to human rights. This school therefore has the potential to help build on the human rights approach of the CHR module. Such cases, Yin (2009) argues, can offer significant contributions to knowledge in their capacity to test, confirm, challenge and/or extend theories.

I believe this study is unique and contributes in significant ways to the discussion on HRE. Locally, my research fills a void identified in the 'Vision Kuwait 2030' report, which states:

> The Ministry of Education appears to conduct very little educational research as a tool to inform policy development. There also appears to be limited systematic educational research conducted by Kuwait University or KISR [Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research] [...] As a result, education policy development is rarely based on domestically-generated knowledge. (Tony Blair Associates, 2009, p. 221)

The CHR module was introduced in 2006 as a three-year programme, and its relegation to one year began just two years later. During this time, no research was conducted or published about the module or its rollback apart from two articles based on this thesis (Al-Nakib, 2011; 2012). Educational reforms in Kuwait are at the mercy of the frequently changing government and parliament and their respective agendas (as will be discussed in the following chapter), and the absence of educational research facilitates revoking programmes like CHR without raising any questions. Deleuze (1992) argues that such abandonment of university research coincides with reducing education to perpetual training – one part of the larger process of replacing public institutions with what he terms 'the societies of control' (p. 7). By bringing the realities of educational reforms to light, research can interrupt this unchallenged control over schooling. Regionally, in light of the aforementioned 'Arab Plan for Human Rights Education 2009-2014', I believe that the case of Kuwait, the first country to offer a designated module on human rights, has insights to offer. Rather than relying solely on surveys, as the plan itself suggests, I would argue that qualitative research that actually explores enactments of policies in context and practice is crucial. Gandin and Apple (2002), drawing on Ball (1994), point out that 'rearticulations' of policies must be studied in local contexts in order to 'map out the creation of alternatives' (p. 100).

Internationally, I believe that my study helps fill the gap in empirical research on HRE identified by Hahn (2005). It provides a unique perspective from the Arab World at a time when democracy and human rights concerns are at the forefront. Moreover, it presents a case study, which, as Tibbitts (2002) points out, is a method used successfully in other educational fields and is needed in HRE to highlight successes that may help develop the field. Significantly, this thesis engages young people in the study, a relatively novel approach in HRE research.[3] Fielding and Prieto (2002), in exploring a Chilean initiative that involves students in its research, argue the following:

> We have become too used to speaking on behalf of others or about others in research. This has been particularly recurrent in the case of research that deals with aspects or problems related to students. We underrate the right and necessity of students speaking for themselves systematically. Their voices have remained separate from the problems that they themselves suffer from. (p. 20)

They further argue that such involvement empowers young people to become agents capable of both expressing their views as well as acting on what has been researched. Osler (2010) applies such an approach in her study on students' perspectives on schooling. She uses Lundy's (2007) model for implementing Article 12 of the UNCRC (on the right of young people to express their views and to have them be given due weight), encompassing space, voice, audience and influence, to apply to researchers working with children. She also highlights the need for students' understandings to be complemented by other viewpoints, including, for example, the research literature. My research involves analyses of the theoretical field and educational policies and texts as well as an in-depth case study involving observations, interviews with administrators and teachers and research workshops with students.

Building on McLaughlin's approach in identifying maximal conceptions of citizenship, I synthesise my findings in what I call a *Continuum of Human Rights Education*, which is my contribution to a more maximal interpretation of HRE.

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[3] For an example from Turkey, see Çayır and Bağlı (2011).

1.5.2 CONTINUUM OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Wright (2007) argues that '[t]o be a radical critic of existing social structures is to identify *harms* that are generated by existing arrangements, to formulate *alternatives* which mitigate those harms, and to propose *transformative strategies* for realising those alternatives' (p. 26). His proposal of 'envisioning real utopias' takes into account the tension between taking aspirations for a more just world seriously and addressing the 'hard constraints of realism' (p.27). In doing this, he identifies the problem of viability as the most pressing one, as it becomes harder to envision what is possible beyond what already exists. One guideline Wright offers to the discussion of alternatives is to analyse them in terms of 'waystations' – partial reforms that may take place within existing structures but that nonetheless both illustrate the viability of larger-scale changes and empower people. The viable alternatives uncovered in the case study school's enactment of the three-year CHR programme and the opportunities for participation afforded by the school's ASPnet membership can be conceptualised as such 'waystations'. My research analyses these 'waystations' in order to suggest a more maximal interpretation of HRE in the form of a *Continuum of Human Rights Education* (developed in the empirical chapters 5 to 8 and then presented in its entirety in Chapter 9).

This continuum was built on my analysis of the relevant literature and educational policies and texts (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) as well as through my observations of and engagements with the research field and participants (Chapters 6, 7 and 8). It addresses both the substantive content of HRE (identifying and unpacking curriculum, participation and recognition) and the context within which it is more likely to become transformative (identifying inclusive populations, free spaces and humanistic ethos). This continuum is not intended as a completed, normative model of HRE but rather as a contribution to the ongoing and endless conversation on human rights and HRE that provides viable alternatives. It offers insights and ideas to be discussed, challenged, built on and changed as further cases of viability are uncovered.

1.6 CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

Following the discussion on maximal interpretations and the research intentions laid out in this chapter, Chapter 2 brings to light the various tensions in Kuwait's democratic evolution – specifically, between its Constitution, legal system and Islam and between the appointed government and the elected parliament. It also explores how these are mirrored within and perpetuated by the educational system.

In Chapter 3, a humanistic ontological perspective is presented through an exploration of human rights as a universal construct. This analysis takes into account various criticisms of universal approaches and explores answers to these within the feminist and utopian literature. It concludes that a substantive theory of HRE, though as challenging as a theory of rights itself, is also best placed within a universal framework that is constructed through dialogue and understanding. This theoretical perspective is matched with a constructivist epistemology in Chapter 4, which presents the methodology of the research and highlights its accord with this perspective.

An analysis of Kuwait's various educational policies, aims and texts is carried out in Chapter 5 to underscore the interruption to national citizenship education afforded by the CHR module. In Chapter 6, the context of the case study school is analysed in order to explore its coherence with a human rights approach as well as to uncover further interruptions to the authoritarian system that may offer insights. Chapter 7 then addresses the strengths and weaknesses of the substantive content of HRE espoused by the CHR module. Recognising that education *through* and *for* human rights requires more than a curricular module and drawing on teachers' contributions and students' concerns and ideas as well as observations in the field, recognition and participation are identified along with a critical pedagogy as integral to an HRE programme. Chapter 8 presents one teacher, Amani, as a viable example of prefigurative practice, displaying how she takes HRE beyond education *about* human rights by both recognising the rights of her students and by encouraging dissent while constantly fostering hope.

Chapter 9 synthesises the findings from the four empirical chapters with the literature presented in Chapters 3 and 4 and expands on the context presented in Chapter 2. The completed *Continuum of Human Rights Education* is presented, conceptualised as a utopian journey – not a journey that is as elusive as utopia, but rather a journey that, in its dialogic nature, espouses utopian ideals.

2 'OVERLAPPING YET IRRECONCILABLE EXPERIENCES' IN KUWAIT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Kuwait is a constitutional emirate with a hereditary amir, an appointed cabinet of ministers, headed by a prime minister, and an elected 50-seat parliament. Kuwait's democratic aspirations are stated in Article 6 of its Constitution (1962): 'The system of government in Kuwait shall be democratic, under which sovereignty resides in the people, the source of all powers.'[4] In the region, Kuwait is indeed hailed as the most established and mature democracy, largely due to its Constitution and the distribution of powers (Abdulla, 2012). However, tensions persist in the legal interpretation of the Constitution and in the relationship between the elected parliament and the unelected, appointed cabinet, both of which hinder Kuwait's growth as a democratic nation.

As Parolin (2006) points out, 'the broad protection statements [in the Kuwaiti Constitution] are generally followed by saving clauses enabling the law to limit their scope with no real restrictions on legislators' (p. 54). According to the United Nations Development Programme (2009), such constitutions empty rights and freedoms of any substantive content and 'allow individual rights to be violated in the name of the official ideology or faith' (p. 5). In Kuwait, this means that there is little in the Constitution to guarantee citizens' rights or to prevent a legal system more heavily reliant on particular (and more extreme) interpretations of Islamic *shari'a* than other elements. Indeed, in 2012, the Islamic Justice Bloc (an Islamist opposition group) revisited the issue of changing Article 2 of the Constitution so that rather than Islamic *shari'a* being 'a main source of legislation', it is 'the source of legislation' (emphasis added), a proposal backed by 31 (predominantly Islamist and tribal) Members of Parliament (MPs) but ultimately rejected by the Amir.[5] Islamists and tribal groups were previously viewed as loyalists and were therefore supported by

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[4] The excerpts from the Kuwaiti constitution in this chapter are the official English translations.

[5] As reported by Sylvia Westall on Reuters online on 17 May 2012 (http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/05/17/uk-kuwait-sharia-idUKBRE84G0G420120517). See also Tétreault (2000a) for previous attempts.

Kuwait's ruling family to counter opposition forces (see Al-Naqeeb, 1990; Ghabra, 1997; Power, 2012). However, in recent years, these conservative groups have become the largest opposition blocs to the government, a development predicted by Tétreault (2000a): [W]hile I agree that the regime has done many things to favor Islamists in politics, I do not see its strategy as effective for ensuring the long-term survival of the Sabah as the rulers of Kuwait' (p. 163).

In the tenure of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, who became Amir in 2006, tensions have heightened between the parliament and cabinet. Members of parliament have repeatedly brought interpellation motions against ministers, a practice locally dubbed 'grilling', and the Prime Minister and cabinet have taken to responding by submitting their resignation. Since 2006, Kuwait has had four different parliaments, eight cabinets and two prime ministers. The political scene in Kuwait in 2011 was marked by particularly 'intense drama', including protests on the street regarding corruption (implicating 13 MPs), the storming of parliament led by opposition MPs and the Amir's dissolution of parliament and the resignation of the Prime Minister in November (Okruhlik, 2012). This drama culminated in Islamist and tribal opposition candidates winning the overwhelming majority of seats (approximately 35 out of 50) in the February 2012 parliamentary elections. Women (who had won 4 seats for the first time in history in 2009) did not win a single seat, and liberals and Shiites also lost seats. In June 2012, the Amir suspended this parliament for one month because of the persistent tensions between the MPs and the cabinet. To complicate matters further, later in the month, Kuwait's independent constitutional court ruled the 2012 parliament unconstitutional (as the cabinet had already resigned when the Amir called for the February elections) and demanded the reinstatement of the 2009 parliament. While the country awaits a decision about whether and when new elections will take place, the opposition are fighting for a multi-party system and an elected government (including the position of prime minister).

This chapter explores Kuwait's legal conceptions of citizenship and the resultant inequalities against the backdrop of these constitutional and governmental tensions. The analysis reveals layers and binaries in Kuwaiti citizenship within which

inequalities are perpetuated due to fears of power loss, of cultural change and of the extension of the rent distribution of Kuwait's rich oil-based welfare system. It also provides an overview of Kuwait's education system, identifying how some of these tensions are mirrored and perpetuated within it.

2.2 INTERPRETING KUWAITI CITIZENSHIP: LAYERS OF BINARIES

Osler and Starkey (2005) point out that citizenship status is subject to political and legal definition and is therefore a site of struggle in all democracies (p. 11). This is certainly true of Kuwait, where citizenship laws are complicated and, like most forms of national membership, exclusive. Kuwaiti membership is divided across several layers and binaries, each with its own set of civil, political and social rights, to use Marshall's (1950) categorisation. Because Kuwait is a rentier state[6] with an extensive welfare system, the latter category is particularly significant.

2.2.1 MALE/FEMALE

The male/female binary is arguably the most significant in terms of rights. Article 29 (1) of the Kuwaiti Constitution states: 'All people are equal in human dignity and in public rights and duties before the law, without distinction to race, origin, language, or religion.'[7] The fact that this article does not explicitly and unequivocally refer to gender coupled with the fact that no other articles explicitly protect women's rights makes it difficult to invoke the Constitution to fight against existing inequalities. This is particularly problematic when the caveats set up in the Constitution result in laws that discriminate against women. One example is in laws relating to marriage. Kuwaiti women who are married to foreign men cannot pass their citizenship to their spouses or children (Articles 2 & 3, 1959 Kuwaiti Nationality Law, as amended; see also Longva, 1997). These women are not eligible for government housing, and

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[6] A rentier state is one that derives a substantial portion of its revenues from the rent of its natural resources (in Kuwait's case, oil) to foreign clients.

[7] This is how the article appears in the official English translation of the constitution. In the original Arabic, the word that is translated as 'race' is 'al-jins'. This word has multiple meanings in Arabic, including citizenship and gender. For a detailed discussion of the intended meaning of the word 'al-jins' in the constitution and reasons why it is unlikely that the original Arabic intended 'gender', see Al-Nakib (2006).

their families have restricted civil and political rights and limited access to social services (see Al-Mughni, 1993). Kuwaiti women are also forbidden by law to marry non-Muslims (see Al-Mughni & Tétreault, 2000). Kuwaiti men, on the other hand, can marry whomever they choose, and their citizenship passes to their spouses and children, who are therefore entitled to social services. In addition, Kuwaiti men married to foreign women remain eligible for housing and social allowances for their children.

Another example where the law discriminates between the genders is in the appointment of judges and public prosecutors. In 2009, a female Kuwaiti law student was not permitted to apply for a position as public prosecutor due to her gender; she took the matter to court in 2010, but the case was dismissed.[8] In May 2012, five (Islamist and tribal) MPs responded by proposing an amendment to Article 19 of Law 23 of 1990, which had only limited such appointments to 'Kuwaiti citizens'. The explanatory memorandum attached to the new draft bill states the following: 'In a bid to prevent any misjudgement that calls for nominating female citizens to judicial posts, this draft law clearly seeks to add a condition according to which only a Muslim male citizen qualifies to be appointed as a judge or prosecutor.'[9] The Constitution, once again, is not explicit enough in its position on females to oppose such laws and amendments.

Kuwaiti women became enfranchised in 2005, securing their political rights. However, as the examples above demonstrate, their civil and social rights have lagged behind. Distribution of social services through male citizens suggests that women do not have an independent status – they are daughters and then wives supported by their fathers and then husbands. This inequality hinders the capacity for women to compete with men in the political and economic arenas, with Islam often used to defend such barriers (Tétreault, 2000b; Tétreault & Al-Mughni, 1995). In addition, though economic reasons are often cited in defence of policies that

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[8] As reported by James Calderwood on Middle East Online on 21 April 2010 (http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=38557).

[9] As translated and reported by Kuwait Times online on 9 May 2012 (http://news.kuwaittimes.net/2012/05/09/bill-proposed-to-prevent-female-judges/).

prevent women from benefiting from welfare rights for their families, as Tétreault and Al-Mughni (1995) point out, this conceals the real threat that full citizenship for females poses to suppressive cultural and religious practices.

Al-Mughni (1993) argues that class struggles have kept women from forging solidarities to fight such inequalities. She explains that in order to maintain class privileges, women of the elite classes must maintain their kinship organisation; for them, then, like the white, middle-class liberals described by Rothenberg (2000), the privileges of class supersede gender issues (intentionally or not). Women's organizations in Kuwait have historically supported this elite group, to the detriment of women from low-income groups, 'who suffer most from the discriminatory welfare policies of the state and from patriarchal structures, whether in the form of male violence or male religious discourse' (Al-Mughni, 1993, p. 143).

2.2.2 ORIGINAL/NATURALISED

Another significant distinction made between Kuwaiti citizens is in the actual category of citizenship, with 'original' citizenship status reserved for citizens whose family settled in Kuwait before 1920.[10] Naturalised citizens, in addition to being identified as other than a first category citizen on their civil IDs, have restricted political rights in that they cannot run or vote in parliamentary elections for 20 years (Article 6, 1959 Kuwaiti Nationality Law, as amended). Moreover, unlike 'original' citizens, whose citizenship can only be revoked for issues of national security (Article 14, 1959 Kuwaiti Nationality Law, as amended), naturalised citizens can have theirs revoked for less extreme reasons, including, for example, 'honour-related' and 'honesty-related' crimes (Article 13, 1959 Kuwaiti Nationality Law, as amended).[11] Again, the Constitution allows this in Article 27: 'Kuwaiti nationality is defined by law. No deprivation or withdrawal of nationality may be effected except within the limits prescribed by law.' Naturalised Kuwaitis are therefore nationals with social rights but not quite equal participatory citizens.

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[10] See Longva (1997) for more on the 1959 Nationality Law; for the UNHCR's unofficial English translation, see http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b4ef1c.html.

[11] As translated by the UNHCR (http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b4ef1c.html).

The 1981 amendment of the 1959 Kuwaiti Nationality Law also restricts the naturalisation of citizens to Muslims. Moreover, the law stipulates that the nationality of apostates can be revoked (Article 4). These distinctions stand in tension with the spirit of Article 35 of the Constitution, which states, 'Freedom of belief is absolute. The State protects the freedom of practicing religion in accordance with established customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or morals.'

2.2.3 MUSLIM/NON-MUSLIM, SUNNI/SHIITE

The Muslim/non-Muslim binary is another divisive categorisation of Kuwaitis. Though less visible due to the overwhelming majority of Kuwaiti Muslims (there are only about 12 Kuwaiti Christian families[12]), this distinction is nonetheless significant in perpetuating the hegemony of a particular patriarchal interpretation of Islam. While Article 35 of the Constitution defends 'absolute freedom of belief', the phrase 'provided that it does not conflict with public [...] morals' is open to more extreme Islamist interpretation. In 2012, for example, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah, decreed that existing Christian houses of worship should be destroyed in the Arabian Peninsula and further church-building banned. This came after a query by a Kuwaiti Islamist MP about barring the building of more churches in Kuwait, threatening the freedom and security of religious minorities in the country (Esposito, 2012).

Also in 2012, Kuwait's parliament approved a new blasphemy law by an overwhelming majority of 40 to 6, making blasphemy against *Allah*, his prophets, the prophet Muhammad's family or the *Qur'ān* a crime punishable by death (unless the accused publicly repents, in which case the sentence would be reduced to a minimum of five years in prison or a fine of about £23,000). Amnesty International called this 'a massive step backwards for Kuwait' and 'a flagrant breach of the

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[12] See Arab Times interview with Reverend Amanuel Benjamin Ghareeb: http://www.arabtimesonline.com/NewsDetails/tabid/96/smid/414/ArticleID/147658/reftab/96/Default.aspx.

country's international human rights obligations'.[13] It is, once again, a constitutional caveat that permits this: 'Freedom of opinion and of scientific research is guaranteed. Every person has the right to express and propagate his opinion verbally, in writing, or otherwise, *in accordance with the conditions and procedures specified by law*' (Article 26; emphasis added). The legal amendment was proposed by Islamists in parliament after a Shiite citizen was accused of insulting the prophet Muhammad and his wife and companions in an online tweet. He was also accused of insulting the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and spreading false news that undermines Kuwait's reputation. While the tweeter would not be tried under this new legal amendment, some Sunnis did indeed call for his death because of his tweets about the prophet.[14] In June 2012, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison.[15] Interestingly, one month before this incident, a Sunni tweeter (and employee of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic affairs) was accused of disparaging Shiite beliefs, spreading false news and promoting an illegal undercover group; when the latter two charges were dropped, his sentence for insulting the Shiite faith was reduced to six months.[16] The stark contrast in reactions to comparable 'crimes' highlights the unequal status of Sunni and Shiite perspectives in drafting laws and enacting rights. Not surprisingly, Shiite MPs voted against the proposed blasphemy law as well as the aforementioned proposal to change Article 2 of the Constitution regarding *shari'a* law. In June 2012, the Amir rejected the blasphemy bill, though parliament can revisit it in a future legislative session and pass it with a two-thirds majority.

Shiites (who currently make up about one third of the Kuwaiti population, according to the 2011 Kuwait Census), while sharing equal (or indeed unequal in the case of

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[13] See http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/kuwait-s-parliament-must-halt-plans-introduce-death-penalty-blasphemy-2012-04-17.

[14] As reported by Amnesty International on 7 June 2012 (http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/kuwait-faces-prison-sentence-over-blasphemous-tweet-2012-06-06).

[15] As reported by the AFP on 4 June 2012 (http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iZHr0WOwTLhER7vdd3MeWSKuPr-g?docId=CNG.b26c1e2023c689d8f030dd199ad027b2.5c1).

[16] As reported by Kuwaiti Times online on 31 May 2012 (http://news.kuwaittimes.net/2012/05/31/kuwaiti-tweeter-jailed-six-months-for-insulting-shiites-jail-term-reduced-after-acquittal/).

female and naturalised citizens) legal status and rights with Sunni citizens, are nonetheless perceived lower on the scale of what Tétreault (2000a) dubs, 'Kuwaitiness' (p. 33). The stratification of Kuwait historically marginalised this minority group religiously, economically, socially and politically (Crystal, 1990). Moreover, the government encouraged sectarianism to counter opposition movements, manipulating elections and electoral constituencies to control parliament (Longva, 2000).

2.2.4 ḤADHAR/BEDOUIN

The government similarly used the bedouin population, naturalising massive numbers of tribesmen in the 1960s and 70s to garner support for the regime and counter the demands of the merchant *hadhar* (sedentary town dwellers) for more participatory politics; this naturalisation shifted the demographic of Kuwait from a *hadhar* majority to a bedouin one by the 1990s and created resentment in the former group (Longva, 2000). This resentment was aired on a private Kuwaiti satellite television channel, Al-Soor, in 2009 by its owner, Mohammed Al-Juwaihel, during which he stated that the bedouins are not real Kuwaitis as they were not in Kuwait in 1920 when the *soor*, or wall, was built around the town to protect Kuwait from attack.[17] In 2012, Al-Juwaihel was elected into parliament.

The deep cleavage between the merchant *hadhar* and the naturalised bedouin populations stems in part from perceptions of loyalty and identity. The first conceptualisation of a Kuwaiti national identity came in 1920 when Kuwaitis were faced with potential attack from Ibn Saud. The town dwellers spent months building a wall to protect the town and were successful in fending off the attack. These Kuwaitis are perceived as first-degree citizens, and their loyalty is never questioned; newcomers after 1920, including the bedouins naturalised in the 60s and 70s, never achieved the same recognition (Longva, 2000). In part, this hostility was born of the government's aforementioned use of naturalisation to manipulate elections and maintain power. The 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq also deepened the divide

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[17] As reported by Middle East Online on 20 December 2009 (http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=36281)

between the *hadhar* and bedouins. The bedouins were not involved in the resistance movement, and early in the occupation, there was a tribal exodus to Saudi Arabia; this was perceived as a lack of loyalty by the *hadhar*, despite bedouin protestations that most of the Kuwaiti army was recruited from tribes and because they lived closer to the Iraqi border and were no match for the invaders, they feared for their safety (Longva, 2000).

In response to the Al-Juwaihel affair, one youth blog, Buzberry, offered another analysis:

> Mohammad Al-Juwaihel's attacks speak to a bigger problem: our understanding of citizenship. I've watched several interviews and read a number of statements, by him and others like him. There exists one unifying factor between them all. They aren't defending "Kuwaitness" or "Kuwait," but the set of entitlements that are offered to Kuwaitis. They all argue against "new" or "unauthentic Kuwaitis" enjoying equal privileges: free health care, free education, free services that should be made available to citizens only. In other words, an increase in "citizen" population means less entitlements for each one individual. I haven't reached this conclusion haphazardly. Think of the phrases that Al-Juwaihel and others like him continue to use: "yo3amel mithlina" [he gets treated as an equal], "yakel min 5airna" [he eats from our portion of the pie]. NOT ONCE have I heard "they aren't working as hard" and "they aren't accomplishing as much." So this isn't about Kuwait per se, but their refusal to share the goods.[18]

This view is shared by the bedouin respondents in Longva's (2006) study, who feel that the *hadhar* are unwilling to share their economic privileges and who, in response to *hadhar* claims that they are a burden on the welfare system, argue that they are simply exercising their citizen rights. Both the bedouin and *hadhar* quoted in Longva's (2006) study also cite cultural differences as contributing to the tensions. Six years on from the study, in which several bedouin and *hadhar* respondents said it would take decades for this gap to shrink, Al-Juwaihel's election platform (based on his claims against the bedouins being real Kuwaitis, including calls to have police test their DNA[19]), the subsequent burning down of his campaign tent by bedouin citizens

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[18] See http://www.buzberry.com/?m=200912. Note that the use of numbers in the Arabic phrases is an informal method of transliteration.

[19] As reported by the AFP on 31 January 2012 (http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/insulted-kuwaiti-tribesmen-burn-down-tent-of-election-candidate).

and his eventual election into parliament demonstrate that it does not appear to be diminishing yet.

2.2.5 THE *BIDŪN*: 'CITIZENS WITHOUT CITIZENSHIP'

The Arabic word *bidūn* (not to be confused with bedouin) means 'without'. In Kuwait, this term is used to refer to the population that is *bidūn jinsiyya*, or 'without citizenship'. When Kuwait became an independent nation in 1961, many of the *bidūn* did not become citizens – either because they could not prove residence in Kuwait before 1920 or because they simply did not register. In the 1980s, the *bidūn*, who had been viewed as 'citizens in all but name', were reconceptualised by the government as 'illegal residents' in a bid to expel them from the country (Refugees International, 2011, p. 5). Currently, there are more than 100,000 *bidūn* in Kuwait (HRW, 2011).

In February 2011, inspired by the protests in Tunisia and Egypt, the *bidūn* in Kuwait took to the streets to demand nationality rights. In response, the parliament planned a two-hour session for 8 March about the plight of the *bidūn*. On the day, MPs voted with a two-thirds majority to delay the session and instead focus on 'issues that concern Kuwaitis' (Refugees International, 2011, p. 11). On 11 March, the *bidūn* demonstrated again, chanting their love for Kuwait and the Amir and demanding their rights; the government responded with excessive force, using teargas, beatings and arbitrary detentions to break up the crowds (Refugees International, 2011). In June, it was decided that some 500 *bidūn* would be granted citizenship by mid-month. The remaining *bidūn* are to be issued ID cards, colour-coded to reveal whether or not they qualify for future naturalisation; those who do not and who are suspected of disposing of their original passports from other countries will receive a red card, serving as a warning for them to legalise their status.[20] This is not as simple as it sounds, as many *bidūn* were encouraged by government committees to buy forged foreign passports (Beaugrand, 2011) or were coerced to attest to being

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[20] As reported by Kuwait Times online on 2 June 2012 (http://news.kuwaittimes.net/2012/06/02/500-bedoons-to-be-naturalized-soon/).

citizens of other countries in order to receive a legal five-year residency (HRW, 2000).

The *bidūn* continue to be denied legal documents, including birth, death and marriage certificates, making it almost impossible for them to access social services such as education, healthcare and housing. They have also been excluded from most public sector employment, and the private sector is inaccessible because they do not have legal status in the country. The children of Kuwaiti women married to *bidūn* men are not naturalised, leaving them without citizenship – a violation of the UNCRC.

Human Rights Watch first released a comprehensive report regarding the plight of the *bidūn* in 1995, entitled 'The bedoons of Kuwait: Citizens without citizenship'. The recommendations made in their 2011 report, 'Prisoners of the past: Kuwaiti bidun and the burden of statelessness', demonstrate how little has changed in almost two decades. In June 2012, the Deputy Middle East Director of Human Rights Watch was quoted as saying, 'Following decades of broken promises, Kuwait needs to act now to address the plight of the *bidūn*.'[21]

2.2.6 CONCLUSION: EXCLUSION FROM WITHIN

Joppke (2008) analyses citizenship according to three aspects collectively: status, rights and identity. Kuwaiti citizenship and identity have been formulated and imagined in a way that essentialises and excludes various groups and prevents full access to their rights. Among these, as we have seen, are women, naturalised citizens, non-Muslims, Shiites, bedouins and the *bidūn*. The limitations of each of these categorical distinctions intersect, so that a naturalised Kuwaiti female bedouin citizen faces all the inequalities of each of the marginalised categories she falls under. The group with the most recognition is small: 'original' Kuwaiti male Sunni Muslim *ḥadhar* citizens.

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[21] See http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/02/05/kuwait-promises-mostly-unfulfilled-citizenship.

2.3 EXCLUDING THE OTHER: CITIZENSHIP AND THE 'NON-KUWAITI'

The politics of exclusion become even more significant as we contrast citizens with non-citizens. According to the 2011 Kuwait Census, the total population is just over three million, with expatriates outnumbering nationals approximately two to one. While the Constitution guarantees (some) citizens their political and civil rights as well as several social services and thus promotes nationalism and patriotism (Crystal, 1992) and feelings of superiority (Tétreault & Al-Mughni, 1995) in this group, the majority expatriate population has restricted rights and limited access to services (Parolin, 2006). This is done, Ismael (1993) argues,

> [...] to control the immigrant population by a system of insecurity in terms of their tenure in Kuwait; on the other hand, through paternalistic policies toward the Kuwaiti population, to engender dependence on the ruling class and status distinctions between the Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti groups (p. 25).

The 'non-Kuwaiti' designation thus immediately puts the majority population in an inferior and subordinate position to the Kuwaitis, who are legally their sponsors. This sponsorship system, or *kafāla*, coupled with the stringent naturalisation laws ensures the transience of the expatriate labour force (Longva, 1997). The 1959 Nationality Law renders the naturalisation of expatriates almost impossible. Article 4 of the law limits it to Muslims living in Kuwait for a minimum of 20 years upon application, though for Arab applicants it is 15 years. Both Articles 4 and 5 lay out further limitations. Importantly, however, even if an individual meets all the criteria, the final decision remains the discretion of the Minister of Interior, and a person can only be naturalised by ministerial decree. This leaves the majority expatriate population (including second and third generation residents) little hope of ever securing permanent status in Kuwait. Once at the age of retirement, they are expected to leave the country.

During their stay in Kuwait, expatriates are often subjected to rights violations at the hands of their Kuwaiti sponsors as well as the legal system (see Amnesty International, 2011; UNHCR, 2010; HRW, 2010a). They face numerous political, social and economic limitations (Crystal, 1992). As discussed, the naturalisation laws

restrict expatriates from participating in the political sphere (even those who do become citizens, as they have to wait 20 years before they can participate politically). Expatriates are also kept separate in the social sphere through residential zoning, and economically, they are usually paid less than Kuwaitis, enjoy fewer benefits and cannot own land or participate in the stock market (Crystal, 1992).

Kuwait also adopted 'Kuwaitisation' policies to replace foreign workers with nationals in both the public and private sectors. However, this tended (and still tends) to take place at upper levels of employment. Young Kuwaitis perceive public sector jobs as entitlements, a perception born of the government's use of the public sector primarily to redistribute oil wealth irrespective of job performance; as a result, young Kuwaitis have become increasingly unwilling to take on lower level jobs because 'work as labor' (as opposed to entitlement) is perceived as being the domain of foreigners (Longva, 1997, p. 65).

Underlying Kuwait's sponsorship system, stringent naturalisation laws, unequal treatment of migrants and the Kuwaitisation policies is a profound fear of cultural extinction in the face of a majority expatriate population. This is due, in part, to a highly exclusive conceptualisation of Kuwaiti citizenship and identity. Kuwait, historically a port town, was always a multicultural society in which 'the migratory flux itself constituted a constant feature of social life' (Longva, 1997, p. 34). However, its cosmopolitan character was all but extinguished in a bid to protect the political, economic and cultural interests of a select few.

2.4 CHILDREN: 'CITIZENS-IN-WAITING'

Bradley (1996) calls age 'the neglected dimension of stratification' in discussions about identity (p. 145). In Kuwait, this is particularly cogent given that children under 18 are not formally citizens. Kuwaiti children, while 'Kuwaiti' by description and passport, cannot obtain the country's legal citizenship documents (*jinsiyya*) until they turn 18. While this may seem like a formality, it begs the question of why these documents are not given at birth or why they even exist. As it stands, the system

seems to relegate children to a position described by Osler and Starkey (2005) as 'citizens-in-waiting' (p. 38), a situation confirmed by the fact that they have been historically marginalised in the democratic process in Kuwait, with no access to political structures and no voice in decision-making processes.

However, social networking and blogging have informed, empowered and emboldened Kuwaiti youth in a way that their education fails to do, and more young people are engaging with politics online. The 2006 *Nabīhā Khamsa* (We Want It Five) movement, which succeeded in lowering the voting constituencies from 25 to 5 to curb vote-buying, began with online campaigns by young people. A young activist, Abdullah Buftain, said at a rally, 'They branded us as children. Yes, we are. But children who love their country and who are determined to force positive change.'[22] These young people belonged to secular groups and fought against Islamists who tried to take credit for their victory (Ottaway & Hamzawy, 2009).

The Constitution and Human Rights (CHR) module, which came into effect the autumn after the *Nabīhā Khamsa* movement, seemed well-timed to equip Kuwaiti youth with knowledge, skills and values related to democratic participation and anchored in more inclusive interpretations of universal human rights.

2.5 EDUCATION IN KUWAIT: AN OVERVIEW

Article 11 of the Kuwaiti Constitution states, 'Education is a fundamental requisite for the progress of society, assured and promoted by the State.' Article 40 (1) further states, 'Education is a right for Kuwaitis, guaranteed by the State in accordance with law and within the limits of public policy and morals. Education in its preliminary stages is compulsory and free in accordance with the law.'

Education in Kuwait is indeed free for the children of all Kuwaiti male citizens. Children of Kuwaiti women married to 'non-Kuwaiti' or *bidūn* men and children of expatriates, however, do not qualify for public education unless their parents work

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[22] As quoted and translated by Omar Hassan on Middle East Online on 29 May 2006 (http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=16581).

in the government sector. Prior to 1990, education was much more accessible to Arab expatriates; in fact, Ministry of Education statistics show that throughout the years from 1985 to 1988, expatriates outnumbered Kuwaitis in public schools (Longva, 1997). Moreover, private schools were heavily subsidised by the government, making them affordable to expatriates; such subsidies stopped after the Iraqi invasion in 1990 (Longva, 1997). With the expulsion of most of the Palestinian population from the country – the largest expatriate group in public schools (Longva, 1997) – Kuwaitis became the majority in the schools. This was also due to the aforementioned Kuwaitisation of the public sector, with fewer expatriates employed and therefore fewer of their children eligible for free education.

While access to education is equitable between males and females in the primary and secondary years, Kuwait University regulations favour males, with quotas in place to ensure their admittance. Unlike affirmative action, this quota system was not put in place to right a previous wrong but rather to ensure that males, who are outnumbered and significantly outperformed by their female counterparts (see MoE, 2010c), secure places. No such quotas were enforced in parliament when women were enfranchised in 2006, and inequitable access to jobs for females (as addressed by Al-Mughni, 1993) is also not addressed in this way.

Beane (2005) points out that discussion about democratic schools have centred on the issues of access and participation. In addition to inequitable access, nothing in the Kuwaiti Constitution guarantees the right of young people to participate in decision-making processes, even those that directly affect their educations and lives. Apart from the aforementioned articles pertaining to education, only two articles in the Constitution mention youth, neither of which mentions participation:

> Article 10: The State cares for the young and protects them from exploitation and from moral, physical, and spiritual neglect.

> Article 40 (3): The State devotes particular care to the physical, moral, and mental development of the youth.

Even in those arenas where students do have a say, their participation is often interfered with by adults. For example, the student union of Kuwait University is

monopolised by Islamist MPs (Al-Kazi, 2011). In addition, the youth groups that have risen in recent months are backed by opposition MPs, with the latter often speaking for them at rallies and protests.[23] This means that while young people are becoming more involved in the national arena, this participation is rarely authentic and often perpetuates the status quo. Without formal structures in place that safeguard young people's participation, it is difficult to ensure that their voices are being heard unadulterated.

Educational reforms have dealt less with equitability and empowerment and more with what Muasher and Faour (2011) call 'engineering aspects' (p. 3). In Kuwait, these include a focus on technology (as will be discussed in Chapter 6). Reforms have also followed the neo-liberal pattern of greater standardised testing and market-driven training. Notably, the Vision Kuwait 2030 report (Tony Blair Associates, 2009), commissioned by the Kuwaiti government, states the following:

> A reinvigorated education system will enable the smooth integration of locals into a demanding and competitive labour market. By 2030, Kuwait will have an education system that allows it to recapture its former leadership in the region as the "School for the Arab World"' (p. 221).

Three pillars of education are then listed, the first of which reads: 'A high quality, performance-oriented education system that matches the needs of the local market' (p. 221). The points of action under this and the following two pillars are all linked directly to these 'needs of the market', and economic discourse is used throughout: 'investments', 'examinations', 'management', 'results', 'career advancement', 'incentives', 'diversified', 'strictly monitored' and, of course, 'training' (p. 222-223). Such 'perpetual training', as Deleuze (1992) calls it, reduces education to fulfilling the needs of the economy. This is furthered by Kuwait's adoption of the *jawda* (quality education) initiative in 2009. Drawing on William Edwards Deming's work on 'total quality management' in business, which he extends to education (see, for example, Deming, 2000), marketplace discourse was appropriated to describe educational goals, with the student as consumer being the recipient of the product of knowledge.

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[23] See, for example, the article by James Calderwood on *The National* website on 8 February 2011 (http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/youth-group-fifth-fence-calls-for-kuwaitgovernment-to-go?pageCount=0).

This type of training for the market reinforces Kuwait's highly prescriptive, segregated, exam-driven approach to the secondary curriculum. Every academic year, departments within secondary schools are given a list of overarching goals and outcomes. The individual modules do not have lists of outcomes relating back to the overarching goals; the *muqarar al-dirasī*, or 'programme of study', is synonymous with the textbook. Module textbooks are all published by the Ministry of Education.[24] They are distributed to teachers at the start of each academic year with a timetable that has the exact page numbers a teacher should be covering on any given day in order to ensure the students have memorised the information in time for the four annual exams.

The first and third quarter exams are written and controlled by the districts themselves. These exams account for 25% of the students' quarter grades and are therefore called the 'small exams'. The second and fourth quarter exams are issued and controlled by the Ministry. These exams make up 75% of the students' quarter grades; they are called the 'big exams'. Moreover, unlike the first and third quarter exams, students are not permitted to see their second and fourth quarter graded exam papers. The only modules for which there are no Ministry exams are PE, IT, CHR and *Qur'ān* [25]; schools are responsible for writing their own exams for these subjects, under district supervision. Control of the exams for these subjects is devolved to the districts and schools for various reasons. In the case of the *Qur'ān* module, learning is centred on memorising the *Qur'ān*; the evaluation is therefore recitation. For IT and PE, learning is based on computer skills for the former and physical activity for the latter; it is therefore more challenging to qualify these in a written exam. The same could be said for CHR, which is meant to promote various skills and attitudes as well as knowledge-based learning. It, like IT, is also a newer addition to the curriculum and could therefore be perceived as less important than the traditional social studies and science modules. Its relegation to one year would support this analysis.

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[24] The only exceptions are the secondary English textbooks, which are published by the United Arab Emirates' Ministry of Education.
[25] In addition to Islamic Studies, students take a *Qur'ān* module based on memorising the *Qur'ān*.

Within the secondary school, there is a *nithām muwaḥad* (unified system), whereby all grade 10 students enrol in the same classes in both the sciences and social studies. In grades 11 and 12, however, students are streamed by choice into either science or social studies specialisations and only take subjects within their field of study (see Appendix 2.1). This means that for those students in the science stream, there are no social studies modules apart from CHR within which to learn about human rights and citizenship. (The only social studies subject apart from CHR that science students take in secondary school is the Arab World module in tenth grade.)

Despite the exam-driven approach to a specialised education, Kuwaiti students fare poorly by international standards, coming close to bottom in both the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assessments (Mullis et al, 2007; 2008; Martin et al, 2008). Problems that have been identified include comparably lower budgetary spending on books and resources as well as a shorter academic year by international standards (Burney & Mohammed, 2002). The guarantee of a public sector job also contributes to a demotivated student body (Tony Blair Associates, 2009).

Beane (2006) highlights the fact that the issue of curricular reform is raised less frequently in debates about democratic education. In Kuwait, such reforms come second to debates about issues like gender segregation at universities (Tony Blair Associates, 2009) – a proposal raised and passed by Islamist MPs in 1996. (Primary and secondary schools were already segregated.) Such Islamist influence on education has been strong, often hindering moves to develop curricula. Human rights curricula have not been immune to such influence. In 2006, the year the CHR module was introduced, a decision was made to remove Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), guaranteeing the freedom of religion (including the right to change one's religion – considered apostasy in Islam), from the secondary curriculum. In response to this, Kuwaiti reformer Ahmad Al-Baghdadi (2006) asked:

> Why does the education ministry bother to prepare a curriculum with international contents if it plans to distort it and present it in an

> inappropriate manner? Moreover, why should a teacher refer to religion
> when teaching a curriculum on human rights? Is the Education Ministry
> required to introduce religion into all topics of study? If it is, then why
> not hand over the schools to the religious education authorities and be
> done with it?[26]

This Islamist pressure over the Ministry of Education coupled with the highly prescriptive and centralised curriculum are explained by Faour and Muasher (2011), speaking about the Arab World in general, as follows:

> [T]here exists today an unwritten alliance between governments on the
> one hand, and authoritarian political parties and religious institutions,
> on the other hand – the two major political forces in the Arab World,
> against any radical education reform. Both sides want their version, their
> interpretation, to be the only one imparted to the next generation in
> order to keep a monopoly on what students are taught about history,
> religion, and values. Students are not supposed to question, think about,
> analyze, or consider any other interpretations. (p. 3)

Faour and Muasher (2011) also stress the need for research on educational reforms that highlights gaps between what they do and do not encompass and ideas on how to bridge this gap. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Kuwait suffers from a dearth of educational research, both official and academic. The most comprehensive publicly available educational report of the 2000s was commissioned by *Al-Qabas*, a Kuwaiti daily newspaper, and carried out by Dr. Fawzi Ayoub, a Lebanese academic specialising in curricula. The 2012 report, entitled 'The crisis of education in Kuwait: Why? And what are the solutions?', summarised its findings in 14 points. Among these are the frequent changes in ministerial cabinets as well as the tensions between the cabinet and the parliament, both of which contribute to the lack of educational reforms; the absence of a clear educational vision; curricular deficits, including Islamic tensions; and a drop in educational motivation and standards due, in part, to the absence of expatriates within the student body and the tendency of Kuwaiti students to opt for easy courses of study and easy employment. Though parts 13 and 14 of the 14-part report address the strengths and weaknesses of the citizenship education approaches espoused by the two primary modules, My Country Kuwait and National and Civic Education, the CHR module is absent from the report.

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[26] As reported and translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute on 2 March 2007 (http://www.memri.org/report/en/print2071.htm).

2.6 CONCLUSION

> Overlapping yet irreconcilable experiences demand from the intellectual the courage to say that *that* is what is before us [...] The intellectual's provisional home is the domain of an exigent, resistant, intransigent art into which, alas, one can neither retreat nor search for solutions. But only in that precarious exilic realm can one first truly grasp the difficulty of what cannot be grasped and then go forth to try anyway. (Said, 2004, p. 143-144)

This chapter has highlighted several 'overlapping yet irreconcilable experiences' in Kuwait. Democratic aspirations and a constitution that aims to balance the secular with the religious stand in tension with the often discriminatory and increasingly Islamist interpretations of these aspirations within the legal system. Consequently, Kuwait's historically plural society is divided through intricate politics of exclusion, creating an imagined national identity that marginalises all but a distinct few. The comparably egalitarian rent distribution of the rich, oil-producing nation has nonetheless cemented such divisions. The education system is not immune from these tensions and often mirrors and perpetuates them. This is most visible in the inequitable access to education, the lack of opportunities for meaningful student participation and the centralised, exam-drive curriculum. It is also evident in the struggle between humanistic and religious curricula.

In the chapters that follow, the goal of this study is to highlight that 'that is what is before us' and to 'then go forth to try anyway'. It does this by engaging with others who are similarly going forth, building on their experiences to suggest a more maximal interpretation of citizenship and human rights education in Kuwait – one more in keeping with its Constitution and history of pluralism and democratic participation.

3   THEORISING HUMAN RIGHTS: DIALOGIC UNIVERSALISM

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Theories and justifications of universal human rights often begin with debates about human nature and are therefore extremely contentious. It has been argued, however, that the lack of a defensible theory of human nature is not particularly problematic to the universalism project as there is already near global consensus on the rights laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (Bobbio, 1996; Freeman, 2002; Donnelly, 2003). Freeman (2002) highlights Maritain's (1949) warning following the inquiry into the theoretical issues surrounding the drafting of the UDHR: an agreement on words does not necessarily equal an agreement on implementation. Bobbio (1996) argues that the worldwide agreement on the content – or words, to use Maritain's (1949) distinction – of the UDHR is reason enough to move past trying to find a *justification* for human rights and to focus instead on 'a wider and more rigorous *implementation* of the rights proclaimed' (p. 10; emphasis added); it is the implementation and not the proclamation that spurs resistance. Despite such arguments, there have been countless efforts to theorise, justify, expand on and protect the concept of universal human rights. Such efforts demonstrate that the UDHR is still 'embryonic', to use Bobbio's (1996) word – 'the beginning of a long process' (p. 17).

The purpose of this chapter is not to present an exhaustive analysis of the various historical, philosophical, sociological and political theories surrounding human rights but to justify a theoretical perspective of universal human rights as an ongoing human construction achieved through dialogue and to present human rights education (HRE) as a potential space for this dialogic process. Section 3.2 begins with an exploration of various efforts that have been made to theorise human rights, focusing on the notions of human suffering, agency and capability. Section 3.3 then further defines this conception of universalism by clarifying what it is not. Specifically, it addresses the normative grounding of universal rights, their Western origins and the challenge of group rights. Next, the issue of recognition within this

framework is clarified through an engagement with the debate surrounding Islam in the public sphere (3.4). Section 3.5 focuses on the dialogic nature of human rights, highlighting solidarity and criticality as well as Benhabib's (2008) notion of mediations between the universal and particular and between the ideal and real. Section 3.6 untangles utopianism within human rights from the idea of an impossible ideal, coupling it instead to the dialogic process of universalisation itself (Benhabib, 1992). To end, HRE is identified as a space within which we can begin 'reclaiming dialogic universalism' (Benhabib, 2008, p. 20) by fostering solidarity, criticality and hope.

3.2 THEORISING UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS: FOUNDATIONALISM OR SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM?

> There is a poetry in human rights that defies the rationalism of law: when a burnt child runs from the scene of an atrocity in Vietnam, when a young man stands in front of a tank in Beijing, when an emaciated body and dulled eyes face the camera from behind the barbed wire of a concentration camp in Bosnia, a tragic sense erupts and places me, the onlooker, face to face with my responsibility that does not come from codes, conventions or rules but from a sense of personal guilt for the suffering in the world, of obligation to save humanity in the face of the victim. (Douzinas, 2000, p. 245)

Turner (1993; 2006) builds on the notion of suffering, arguing that human rights need to exist to protect human beings from it. He contends that the universality of human rights is based on human embodiment – that as human beings, we are vulnerable and therefore in need of protection. He labels this an ontological need for security and argues that it acts as a moral safeguard against cultural relativism and endorses rights claims against suffering and indignity. Turner (2006) goes on to identify numerous social and economic rights (which, as Donnelly (2003) points out, generate much more scepticism in the West than political rights) that are linked to human embodiment: reproduction, family life, health care, protection from medical and technological exploitation, a clean environment and protection from pollution. By anchoring the concept of human rights within the body of human beings, not only does Turner's approach appear to defy relativism, it also addresses the strong feelings of empathy towards human suffering laid out in the quote above.

Ignatieff (2001) proposes a seemingly more minimal liberal theory of human rights based on what he perceives as evidence that humans do not have a natural instinct towards empathy and solidarity. He argues that the UDHR was an attempt to re-establish rights during a period when they had not been evident in natural human behaviour and therefore that human rights as moral universals 'must counteract rather than reflect natural human propensities' (p. 80). Ignatieff (2001) stresses the capacity of all humans for 'limited empathy' and the facts of conscience and free will (p. 89) – we can feel pain, recognise the pain of others and are free to choose good over evil – as the basis upon which the belief that all humans should be protected from cruelty is built. He links rights to the protection of human agency, which, building on Berlin (1997), he defines as 'the capacity of each individual to achieve rational intentions without let or hindrance' (p. 57). He further explains that by 'rational', he simply means 'those intentions that do not involve harm' (p. 57). Human rights, Ignatieff (2001) concludes, are therefore empowering because they safeguard the right of individuals to protect themselves and to choose how they want to live their lives. His suggestion is to limit universality to negative rights without prescribing what a good life looks like.

Following Appiah's (2001) and Orentlicher's (2001) responses, Ignatieff (2001) concedes that the notion of an intrinsic human dignity is necessary for human rights approaches to be sustainable; however, he does so with hesitation, as he argues that dignity itself is open to relativist forms, some of which, like various religious rituals, are inhumane. He deals with this discomfort with the notion of human dignity by attaching it to human agency. In this sense, people are free to choose to view dignity as they wish not as they are instructed to do. While the arguments for human agency are important and the notion of plural views of human dignity is appealing to guard against religious or other preconceived views of what constitutes a woman's dignity, for example, Ignatieff's (2001) minimalist approach does not provide definitive answers to relativist challenges (Orentlicher, 2001). In response, Ignatieff (2001) wields the slogan, 'Putting Cruelty First'; he argues that his minimalism is the 'most we can hope for' (p. 173).

Hollinger (2001) believes that there is room for a little thickness in justifications for rights. He states that the reason to allow for this space is simply because 'we need all the help we can get' (p. 125). He argues that the frustrations and complexities of human activities and human rights politics necessitate the confidence that thicker conceptions can provide. Turner (2006) suggests that Ignatieff (2001) actually offers the foundation for a thick rights theory based on his notion of pain and humiliation. It is here that Turner (2006) proposes human embodiment. Connecting our dignity and our rights to our vulnerable bodies mitigates cruelty and suffering, whether overt or under the guise of cultural beliefs or practice. It also adds elements beyond Ignatieff's (2001) negative rights of freedom from cruelty or freedom from suffering; one such right is the right to subsistence, which Gutmann (2001) points out is a necessary right in order for humans to be able to act as purposive agents. Turner's (2006) approach thus redefines dignity and seems to rid it of relative interpretations and the limitations of negative rights.

However, the question remains about what constitutes cruelty and suffering. Ignatieff (2001) discusses genital mutilation, arguing that it is not for activists to coerce women to choose to refuse to undergo the practice but rather that they should 'enlarge their sense of what the choices entail' so that the women themselves can act as purposive agents (p. 72). This, then, seems to involve a thicker conception of rights than simply freedom from cruelty. In order to have the agency to make choices based on enlarged perceptions of varying viewpoints, there needs to be more than freedom from bodily harm.

Turner's needs of the human body and Ignatieff's negative rights therefore satisfy what Donnelly (2003) describes as the *scientific* human nature but not the *moral* human nature. Donnelly (2003) starts out with a conceptual theory of human rights that is substantively very thin – he describes the character of human rights without naming them. This character stems from a human being's moral nature. Human nature is not simply derived from scientific needs, but is a moral recognition of human possibility. Donnelly (2003) argues that 'human rights are needed not for life, but for a life of dignity' (p. 14). Rather than linking dignity solely to the human

body or to a minimal conception of agency, he links it to a thicker realisation of human possibility.

Nussbaum (1999), taking the capabilities approach, generates a list of ten central capabilities in answer to the question, 'What are the functions without which (meaning, without the availability of which) we would regard life as not, or not fully, human?' (p. 39):

- Life
- Bodily health
- Bodily integrity
- Senses, imagination, thought
- Emotions
- Practical reason
- Affiliation
- Other species
- Play
- Control over one's environment (political and material) (p. 41-42)

Building on Amartya Sen's pioneering approach, the list focuses on capabilities and not functionings, allowing for multiple perceptions of the good life while stressing the ten elements as minimum requirements. Returning to the example of genital mutilation, Nussbaum (1999) points out that this practice deprives women of the choice of sexual functioning (which falls under the 'bodily integrity' capability). She states that 'choice is not pure spontaneity, flourishing independently of material and social conditions' (p. 45). This is a crucial point that Ignatieff (2001) seems to agree with but to simultaneously leave out of his minimal theory. Crucially, Nussbaum (1999) stresses that while the list is purposely general enough to achieve the type of overlapping consensus first described by Rawls (1971) (whereby people from many different backgrounds with many different perceptions of the good can agree on what is needed as the basis for the pursuit of a good life), it is always open to contestation and remaking.

The capabilities approach is closely aligned with the international human rights approach because both are based on the idea that individuals have entitlements simply by the virtue of the fact that they are human beings (Nussbaum, 2011). Donnelly's (2003) version of a thicker human rights model based on human dignity

and possibility lies within the UDHR. In this model, the list of rights laid out in the declaration form the substance, and the foundation is a liberal belief in the moral equality of all human beings and in their autonomy to pursue their own versions of a good life, so long as in doing so they do not deny others this same right. Though the consensus reached on the UDHR is based on many overlapping conceptions of human rights, these conceptions usually endorse the idea of human beings as having equal and inalienable rights and as being entitled to equal concern and respect (Donnelly, 2003). Donnelly (2003) suggests that those who are not part of this community of consensus should be sought out and listened to – both to try to change their minds and to allow for external critique; however, he argues that it is legitimate to consider such opposing views as 'unreasonable' (p. 52). Nonetheless, like Nussbaum (1999), Donnelly (2003) does not see the universalism project as completed; global changes in society, politics, technology and perceptions of human dignity as well as human rights struggles and successes will inevitably contribute to its evolution.

Using these thicker frameworks, universal human rights can be conceived of as human constructions that are historically and contextually bound, based on consensus and open to revision. In order to expand on this definition, the following section will address what universal human rights are *not*.

3.3   DEFINING UNIVERSALISM: WHAT IT IS NOT

Substantive lists and models claiming universality necessarily raise crucial questions, the most pressing arguably being: Who decides what is or is not fundamental to a life of dignity and flourishing? This raises issues about Truth, hegemony, culture and religion. This section will address relativist challenges to claims of universality by attempting to tease out what universalism is *not* (in theory if not practice).

3.3.1   NOT METAPHYSICAL

Donnelly (2003) and Nussbaum (1999) both support universalism while recognising the distinction between a normative grounding and a metaphysical or religious one,

arguing that the first is not dependent on the latter. Donnelly (2003) highlights that the overlapping consensus on the UDHR is political rather than moral or religious. Nussbaum (1999) argues that human ideas do not need to occur outside of history or human experience in order to be considered universal. She argues that as universal ideas, they are grounded in that very experience, pervading human interpretations of human norms. Ignatieff (2001) further cautions against human rights as idolatry, rightfully explaining that by elevating them to a metaphysical status of worship, their universal appeal is actually lowered among other religions and cultures. Moreover, such a status would preclude change.

Douzinas (2000) goes further, linking the universality of human rights declarations to existential freedom, which he defines as 'the ability of modern man to transcend the constraints of nature and of second nature: those historical and cultural determinations which then ossify into nature-like external impositions' (p. 200). With this model of universalism, Douzinas (2000) is critiquing both diehard universalists and relativists: 'Its defiance of tradition and its negation of reified constraints applies equally to the local cultures of relativists and to the universal laws of the arrogant orthodoxy of globalised humanity' (p. 201). While Douzinas (2000) concedes that social and historical constraints and structures do, in fact, have an effect, this makes the theory of a detached declaration no less appealing and arguably more empowering.

3.3.2 NOT 'BY THE WEST FOR THE REST'

Arguments about the Western origins of human rights do not equate to arguments against their applicability or need elsewhere; religions, cultures and countries borrow things from each other all the time (Donnelly, 2003; Nussbaum, 2011). Donnelly (2003) points out that capitalist markets and sovereign states instigated social changes that then triggered the emergence of human rights. He explains that this emergence does not reflect Western 'virtue or merit' (p. 62), but is rather due to the simple fact that the West experienced the injustices of modern markets and

states first. Put another way, '[h]istorical priority does not confer moral superiority' (Ignatieff, 2001, p. 91).

It is therefore not the Western origin but rather the charge of Western imperialism that universalism must respond to. The legacy of imperialism demands of Westerners that they exercise caution and sensitivity when promoting universal values and that they remain aware of 'the power that lies behind even their best-intentioned activities' (Donnelly, 2007, p. 52). This means avoiding both 'do-gooder colonialism' and 'an uncritical validation of the status quo' (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 32). Universality also requires the West 'to practice what it preaches' (Ignatieff, 2001, p. 92). From the perspective of cosmopolitan democracy, Archibugi (2012) argues that the human rights agenda is not written 'by the West for the Rest'; it is a transnational attempt to create a common human rights agenda. The implicit dialogue this perception entails is not compatible with Western hegemony (Delanty, 2000). The normative hegemony of the UDHR therefore rests not in its Western roots but rather on the fact that it is 'the only plausible vision of human dignity that has been able to establish itself widely in practice' (Howard-Hassman & Donnelly, 1996, p. 405).

3.3.3 'NOT A CELEBRATION OF THE BEAUTY OF A COLLECTION OF CLOSED BOXES'

Appiah (2005) presents the analogy of 'closed boxes' to highlight the nature of the cosmopolitanism he defends, which is *not* 'a dialogue among static closed cultures, each of which is homogenous and different from all others' (p. 256). He argues that the only way we can learn from each other's stories is if 'we share both human capacities and a single world: relativism about either is a reason not to converse but to fall silent' (p. 257). Nussbaum (2000) responds to relativism similarly, critiquing the assumption of homogeneity and agreement within groups upon which cultural claims are often built and addressed. Moreover, she argues that supporting relativism by deferring to local norms often entails supporting norms that take themselves to be absolutely rather than relatively true – this renders relativism 'self-subverting' (p. 49).

Kymlicka (1995; 1999) approaches the issue of group rights with understandable caution, distinguishing between two distinct forms: internal restrictions and external protections. In the first, an ethno-cultural group is able to restrict the rights of its members in order to preserve tradition. This, he argues, is an unacceptable conception of a liberal theory of group rights because it creates injustice within the group. The second form takes the shape of rights that minority groups claim against society as a counterbalance to the economic and political power of the larger society. This is the form acceptable to Kymlicka (1999). However, it is unclear how the first can be definitively prevented (i.e. restrictions on the rights and autonomy of individual members) while defending the second (i.e. an autonomous culture with autonomous group rights). It is precisely what makes a group 'different' that Kymlicka (1995) is defending, but at the same time he relies on a liberal theory of individual rights to protect members from their own potentially suppressive cultures. In such cases, then, he is not protecting the group's right to be illiberal, but rather to simply exist, or, as often argued, to survive (though survival inevitably perpetuates the protected cultural norms, whether liberal or not). This all rests on two significant assumptions: first that 'culture' is a fixed category and second that cultures must survive intact.

To address the first, I turn to Modood (2007), who criticises Kymlicka for not treating religion as a category in the same way as he does culture. To Kymlicka (1995), the difference is that religions are often internally intolerant of dissent. The same, however, can be said of authoritarian cultures and societies. To Modood (2007), this characteristic is not unique to religion, and he consistently argues that demands for equality based on religion mirror those of anti-racists and feminists (see also Modood 2003; 2004).

This raises the issue of the various ways in which people identify themselves and how these categories are not only not necessarily the same but also not often agreed upon. As Butler (1990) argues of 'women', '[T]here is very little agreement [...] on what it is that constitutes, or ought to constitute, the category of women' (p. 2). Moreover, the intersection of 'race', class and sexuality (among other

categorisations) with gender disrupts such a category (Brah & Phoenix, 2004). Wolf (1994) also points out that women do not constitute a minority in the same sense that various cultural groups do; the similarity between these categories therefore has more to do with facing oppression. In response to Taylor (1994), who argues for a politics of recognition that publicly recognises groups based on their differential identity, Wolf (1994) also stresses that 'the question of whether and how significantly and with what meaning one wants to be recognized as a woman is itself a matter of deep contention. For clearly there is a sense in which women have been recognized as women – indeed as 'nothing but women' – for all too long [...]' (p. 76).

Appiah (1994) shares this concern and worries that public recognition of specific identities in specific forms will perpetuate a 'scripted' existence. He argues that in replacing what he calls 'negative life-scripts' that resulted from not treating people with equal dignity with 'positive life-scripts', we are inadvertently replacing 'one kind of tyranny with another' (p. 161). He exemplifies this in the context of his own life:

> If I had to choose between the world of the closet and the world of gay liberation, or between the world of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or Black Power, I would, of course, choose in each case the latter. But I would like not to have to choose. I would like other options. The politics of recognition requires that one's skin color, one's sexual body, should be acknowledged politically in ways that make it hard for those who want to treat their skin and their sexual body as personal dimensions of the self. And personal means not secret, but not too tightly scripted. (p. 163)

He also highlights that contemporary multicultural arguments presuppose unsubtle conceptions of the ways in which both individual and collective identities develop. Nussbaum (1999) stresses that 'cultures are not museum pieces, to be preserved intact at all costs' (p. 37). She, too, argues against 'unrealistic notions of culture', which do not acknowledge the ways in which cultures borrow from each other (2000, p. 49).

Nussbaum (1999) also stresses criticality. She warns that hasty judgements of cultural practices may risk an imposition of one's views on another – what she calls 'do-gooder colonialism', but by the same token, accepting all actions defended as cultural uncritically may allow evil to continue – 'an uncritical validation of the status

quo' (p. 32). The worst option of all, she stresses, is to avoid the issue altogether. Malik (2002), too, highlights the importance of criticality and judgments, arguing that to see cultures as equal denies the human capacity for social, moral and technological progress; the very fact that we are culture-bearing means we are social beings and therefore transformative beings with 'the capacity for change, for progress, and for the creation of universal, moral and political forms through reason and dialogue' (p. 9). Rockefeller (1994) ties such progress (and the cultural transformations it can result in) to an attempt to realize the democratic ideals of freedom and equality. In arguing from this liberal democratic standpoint, Rockefeller (1994) distinguishes between primary and secondary identities. A person's primary identity, he posits, is the universal human one. All others – citizenship, gender, 'race', ethnicity, etc. – are secondary.

From a constitutional perspective that protects the legal rights of individuals, Habermas (1994) asks,

> Can a theory of rights that is so individualistically constructed deal adequately with struggles for recognition in which it is the articulation of collective identities that seems to be at stake? (p. 107)

He argues that the criticism that befalls individual rights theories is largely due to a faulty understanding of the system itself. He explains that public and private autonomy go hand in hand, and that failing to recognize this will result in viewing the universalising of rights as merely the levelling of differences.

> To the contrary, these differences must be seen in increasingly context-sensitive ways if the system of rights is to be actualized democratically. The process of universalizing civil rights continues to fuel the differentiation of the legal system, which cannot ensure the integrity of legal subjects without strict equal treatment, directed by the citizens themselves, of the life contexts that safeguard their identities. (p. 116)

If the actualization of rights is understood thus, he concludes, the idea of collective rights would unnecessarily tax the theory of individual rights and is normatively questionable, as cultural conservation robs its members of the autonomy and freedom to choose whether and how their culture is preserved.

Donnelly (2003) agrees that liberal human rights can and often do take into account group interests, and in those instances when they cannot, he argues that group rights are usually no more successful. Freeman (2002) answers the relativist challenge another way: 'The charge that human-rights principles cannot solve all minority problems can be admitted, for the concept of human rights is intended to set *minimum standards* and not to solve all social problems' (p. 118). Appiah (2005) similarly argues that 'not every good needs to be explained in the language of human rights' (p. 263). He supports the notion of human rights as a language 'for deliberation, or argument, or some other form of conversation. And it is conversation, not mere conversion, that we should seek' (p. 264). This notion of the conversation is an important one. Habermas (1994), too, sees communication and discussion within a liberal democratic culture as the means for different ethnic groups and their cultural norms to coexist.

Sections 3.2 and 3.3 have highlighted the constructivist approach to universal human rights that frames this study. Underlying human rights are the liberal notions of equality, freedom and justice, and the universal framework offered by the UDHR forms their substantive content. Though normative, this framework is not seen as exhaustive and unquestionable; through dialogue, it is open to contestation, change and evolution. However, the notion of 'conversation' is often confused with relativism. The following section teases out this confusion by distinguishing between two forms of recognition: recognition of the right to be part of the ongoing dialogue of human rights and recognition based on group rights. Section 3.5 will then discuss the dialogic approach to universalism that is central to this thesis.

3.4   ISLAM AND UNIVERSAL RIGHTS

This section addresses the differing notions of a politics of recognition based on group rights and one based on the right to be part of 'the conversation'. It does this through an exploration of the Islamic case. The reasoning for choosing Islam for this analysis is two-fold. First, it is relevant to the context within which this research study is carried out. Second, Islam has become increasingly debated in the context of

human rights after 9/11, the 2005 London bombings and most recently, the Arab Spring. Such debates have re-examined the role of religious identity, the role of the secular state towards religion and the public/private issue, among others.[27] This section will explore what it means to recognise religion in the public sphere, beginning with brief summaries of two polar views to trigger the analysis.

Malik (2002) argues that 'culture, faith, lifestyle, feelings – these are all aspects of our private lives and should be of no concern to the state or other public authorities'. He compares multiculturalist policies with Orwell's (1949) Thought Police. Modood (2003; 2004, p. 62), in his defence of multiculturalism from such 'savage attacks' by anti-racists, argues that recognizing plurality includes tackling all forms of discrimination. He compares religion to gender, race and sexual orientation and argues that like these, Islam must be recognized and respected in the political public space.

Malik (2002) denounces multiculturalism as uncritical relativism and asks,

> Why should I, as an atheist, be expected to show respect for Christian, Islamic or Jewish cultures whose views and arguments I often find reactionary and often despicable? Why should public arrangements be adapted to fit in with the backward, misogynistic, homophobic claims that religions make? What is wrong with me wishing such cultures to 'wither away'? And how, given that I do view these and many other cultures with contempt, am I supposed to provide them with respect, without disrespecting my own views? (p. 11-12)

Nussbaum (1999) makes an important and distinct point about respect, namely that it entails respecting a person's autonomy to define the meaning of their lives their own way. Her conception of human capabilities and the UDHR's consensus on content rather than philosophical foundations support this freedom. Malik's (2002) dismissal of religion fails to take this into account and ignores the reality that people already *do* assert their religious convictions publically and politically. An-Na'im (2008) stresses that it is better to acknowledge and try to regulate this than deny religious expression and force it to go underground. What Malik (2002) seems to be critiquing is not multiculturalism in general but rather conceptions of it that he views

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[27] On a more personal level, exploring this particular angle helped me work through my own, fiercely secular views to ensure they did not cloud my analysis (see Chapter 4.2).

to be uncritical attacks on universalism that hinder the potential for transformation: 'Campaigning for equality means challenging accepted practices, being willing to march against the grain, to believe in the possibility of social transformation,' versus 'Celebrating differences between peoples allows us to accept society as it is – it says little more than "We live in a diverse world, enjoy it"' (p. 10). Diversity is important not as an end itself but because it promotes dialogue 'that can create more universal values and beliefs' (p. 14).

Modood's (2003, p. 106) definition of 'difference-affirming equality' and his conceptualisation of respect, recognition and identity do not at first glance seem to describe the type of multiculturalism that Malik (2002) argues against. He suggests that policy demands by Muslims in the UK have three dimensions, starting out quite thin and then getting progressively thicker. He identifies the first dimension as eliminating religious discrimination and rightly argues that Muslims having to protect their right to religious freedom through an appeal to racial equality does not make sense, given that individuals from a variety of 'races' identify themselves as Muslims. In invoking human rights laws, Muslims have been able to trigger dialogue and change in order to make legal rights try to 'catch up', to use Modood's (2003) words (p. 107). For the next dimension, Modood (2003) identifies what he perceives as a need for religious parity between established religions and Islam. He points out that public funding for faith schools is not allocated equally. Here Modood (2003) argues that pulling state funding from all faith schools, what he calls 'equalizing upwards' is not desirable (p. 107), insisting that the issue at stake is religion as a public presence. What he neglects to address, however, are challenges to the notion that faith schools are able to promote multiculturalism. Okin (1999), for example, distinguishes between 'teaching religion' and 'teaching about religion' (p. 130), highlighting the role of the latter in securing people's autonomy and choice in religion. Davies (2008, p. 67-84) offers twelve arguments for why she believes faith schools could be a threat to social cohesion:

- Isolation
- Parents choosing separation
- Compounding other forms of segregation
- Lack of opportunity for dialogue

- Promoting superiority
- Locking in cultural identity
- Compromising autonomy
- The problem of critical thinking
- Imagining community
- Gender inequality
- The use of state funding
- Problems of exit

Modood (2003) does not engage with any such challenges. He goes on to extend this notion of parity to the need to include Islam within the statute on blasphemy and to make incitement to religious hatred an offence. The former, which used to only protect Christianity, was later repealed, and the latter was added to the existing offence of incitement to racial hatred. These issues were dealt with within the existing rights framework – or as Habermas (1994) argues, through the actualisation of its system. The final and thickest dimension that Modood (2003) identifies is the positive inclusion of religious groups in the public sphere: 'Muslims should be treated as a legitimate group in their own right, whose presence in British society has to be explicitly reflected in all walks of life and in all institutions' (p. 108).

While Modood (2003) uses the words 'recognition', 'the politics of recognition' and 'the politics of difference' in this article, he does not make any explicit reference to a politics of recognition based on group rights. However, he later makes this aspect of his argument more explicit when he criticises Kymlicka (1995) for excluding religious groups from his notion of external protections, arguing that it 'puts religious groups and especially Muslims *outside* multiculturalism as a civic or policy idea' (2007, p. 30). In this later work, he does not address any of the challenges against the relativist form of recognition in general nor the critique of religious relativism in particular. More specifically, he does not deal in any depth with the issue of women's rights and the issue of apostasy – two frequent criticisms brought up in discussions about human rights in Islam.

Modood (2003) makes a distinction between a Muslim identity and Muslim views. He argues that objections to 'conservative views on gender and sexuality professed by some Muslim spokespersons' are not the same as objections to identity (p. 110).

This dismissive statement fails to explain this separation of identity from views (arguably a debate about being versus doing; see Pullman, 2005). Moreover, in arguing for a distinction to be made between 'radical Islamists and the wider Muslim opinion' (p. 112), he contradicts this notion of views versus identities.

In a discussion on the potential reinterpretations of identities that can take place as individuals bring together different identity-defining commitments (e.g. being British and being Muslim), Modood (2007) argues that one such reinterpretation has been about equality. He states that debates about gender equality have resulted in severe critiques of Muslim cultural practices through 'fresh readings of the Qur'ān', 'tracing the emergence of conservative and restricted interpretations at moments when other interpretations could and should have been favoured' (p. 141). He attributes this argument parenthetically to three Muslim feminists: Mernissi (1991), Ahmed (1992) and Wadud (1999). That is the beginning and end of his discussion on gender.

The Qur'ān is indeed being not just reread but reinterpreted by Muslim women. They do not stop at arguing what 'could and should' have happened, but rather they are attempting to change the perceived 'identity' of women in Islam. These attempts are happening in markedly different ways than before. Karmi (1996), for example, points out that both apologetic interpretations of Qur'ānic verses that are discriminatory to women and the use of such verses to rail against Muslims and Arabs are not helpful. Instead, through a contextualised and nuanced analysis of contradictory verses in the Qur'ān, she suggests that the Qur'ān is two documents in one: 'one eternal and unchanging and the other conditional and adjusted to social circumstance' (p. 83). She argues that this analysis is possible under ijtihād, or Islamic interpretation. Karmi (1996) importantly points out how shari'a laws governing several aspects of life have already been altered (e.g. amputations), but highlights that those pertaining to women have hardly been changed. This is a reflection of 'a hierarchical social structure which ensures male supremacy [that] is fundamental to the Qur'ānic view of society' (p. 79), in which, she additionally argues, women are infantilised. Karmi (1996) stresses that the real problem for women is patriarchy itself, 'which will exploit any opportunity it perceives to

legitimise its objectives' (p. 83). Hundal (2007), in his response to Modood (2007), shares this concern: 'In this context, where policymakers deem minority cultures to be preserved and respected as patriarchal entities, multiculturalism is inevitably skewed against women and liberals seeking to challenge such views.' It is precisely such processes of *ijtihād*, of reimagining Muslim identity in more egalitarian ways, that cementing existing patriarchal identities into the public sphere through a relativist recognition will interfere with. The same arguments discussed in the previous section against hindering the processes of cultural change and progress by fixing them in space to ensure their survival as is are therefore applicable here.

Kymlicka (1995) challenges the extension of the neutral stance taken by the liberal democratic state in dealing with religion, arguing that it is not appropriate for the relationship between the state and ethnocultural groups since states inevitably have to make choices about which language, holidays, etc. to make official. Modood (2007) uses Kymlicka's arguments about the incoherence of cultural neutrality to dismiss neutrality in religion as well. An-Na'im (2008), on the other hand, argues that the only way for him to be able to be a Muslim by conviction and not coercion is to secure the neutrality of the state, by which he means that the state should remain secular. *Shari'a* law, he argues, is a concept (Islamic law) as well as a methodology of human interpretation (*ijtihād*), which makes it a human construction. This means that it is subject to change and reform; a secular state protects this freedom to change and adapt. An-Na'im (2008) does not equate this separation of Islam and state with a separation of Islam and politics (i.e. a relegation of Islam to the private domain). He believes that religion in the public sphere will ensure that Muslim (and other religious/moral) principles will be considered and implemented in drafting policies and legislation. He sustains the distinction between the state and politics through constitutionalism and the protection of the human rights of all citizens, which need the active participation of the citizens themselves to succeed. This permanent tension between the state and politics, he posits, 'should be mediated through the requirements of civic reason within the framework of constitutionalism, human rights, and citizenship [...]' (p. 85). He defines civic reason as 'reasons that can be publically debated and contested by any citizen, individually or in community

with others' (p. 85). In his analysis, An-Na'im (2008), like Karmi (1996), highlights the unequal treatment of women as well as non-Muslims.

An-Na'im's (2008) conception of recognition and debate in the public sphere within the framework of human rights resonates well with Turner's (2006; 2011) 'critical recognition theory'. For Turner (2006), recognition of the other is based on our shared vulnerability and opens up opportunities for social solidarity. In this conception, recognising the other is not enough; opportunities must exist for mutual reflection and dialogue as well as mutual criticism. Turner (2011) argues that Hegelian recognition ethics have been applied to multicultural societies with a primary focus on cultural rights, which he describes as the 'soft' part of the debate (p. 167). Within this approach, establishment of justice comes second to recognition of difference; the debate has also neglected the legal framework, which Turner (2011) argues can support and facilitate dialogue. Turner's (2011) critical recognition theory is concerned with both cross-cultural debates as well as internal debates; the notion that Islam cannot and does not provide women with the same rights as the West presupposes that there are no longer debates within each about how women should be treated. Here he stresses that neither the common (secular) law nor *shari'a* are 'static, homogenous or consistent systems' (p. 167).

Turner (2006) builds his theory and the potential for dialogic recognition on Habermas' notions of discourse ethics and the ideal speech situation. The next section begins with a brief overview of Habermas' discursive universalism and then builds on An-Na'im's (2008) notions of mediations and civic reason and Turner's (2006) notions of mutual criticism and dialogic recognition through an engagement with feminist conceptions of universalism in order to arrive at and define the overarching theoretical perspective of this thesis.

3.5   DEFINING DIALOGIC UNIVERSALISM

Habermas (1990, p. 89) proposes discursive universalism, which requires an ideal speech situation to be created for individuals to agree on the validity of norms; his rules for this situation are as follows:

1. Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.
2. a) Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatsoever;
   b) Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatsoever into the discourse;
   c) Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires and needs.
3. No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in (1) and (2).

Habermas (1998) argues that discourse ethics provide an answer to the real predicament that moral communities transitioning into increasingly plural societies face when their consensus on moral norms is 'shattered' (p. 39). His theory is based on the assumption that participants want to resolve their issues through communication rather than violence or compromise. He defines the universalisation principle, 'U', as follows: 'A norm is valid when the foreseeable consequences and side effects of its general observance for the interests and value-orientations of *each individual* could be *jointly* accepted by *all* concerned without coercion' (p. 42). By arguing that individuation can only occur through socialisation, Habermas (1998) therefore connects justice with solidarity. His approach to universalism is 'a *nonleveling* and *nonappropriating* inclusion of the other *in his otherness*' (p. 40).

Dean (1996) highlights the various feminist critiques against procedural theories, which rest on the failure of such theories to include women's concerns due to their blindness to both context and persons. Both Lister (2003) and Dean (1996) insist that despite difficulties, universality that incorporates feminist concerns is worth pursuing. Dean (1996) acknowledges the critiques of discourse ethics by emphasising the theory's fallibility, which she argues appears at three levels. First is Habermas' appeal to procedural rationality. Dean (1996) points out that rational reconstructions – as opposed to pure philosophy – are fallible because those who create them are fallible. Therefore, they always remain open to further critique. This leads to the

second point, which is that the rules of the communicative theory, as rational reconstructions, are themselves fallible. Dean (1996) points out that these rules are therefore also not beyond questioning. The final fallibility of discourse ethics lies in the fact that consensus itself can always be questioned. Benhabib (1992) sees this as resulting from Habermas' (1998) distinction between 'U', defined above, and 'D', which he defines as follows: 'Only those norms can claim validity that could meet with the acceptance of all concerned in practical discourse' (p. 41). Benhabib (1992) sees 'U' as redundant because she believes that consensus should not be perceived as an end-goal but as a process.

When we shift the emphasis off consensus onto the ongoing moral conversation, the consequence is that

> we begin to ask not what all would or could agree to as a result of practical discourses to be morally permissible or impermissible, but what would be allowed and perhaps even necessary from the standpoint of continuing and sustaining the practice of the moral conversation among us. The emphasis now is less on *rational agreement*, but more on sustaining those normative practices and moral relationships within which reasoned agreement *as a way of life* can flourish and continue. (Benhabib, 1992, p. 38)

In this way, universalisability evolves into 'the utopian projection of a way of life in which respect and reciprocity reign' (Benhabib, 1992, p. 38).

Dean (1996) similarly describes discourse ethics as 'the contextual conversation of humanity' (p. 155). She explains that it is contextual because when individuals offer reasons in practical discourse, these are not removed from time and place nor are they devoid of feelings and sentiments. This contextuality takes into account the relationships we have with others because as previously mentioned, we become individuals through our interactions with others. Dean (1996) adds that entering into an ongoing conversation presupposes a relationship of solidarity, which is expressed by the reciprocity of the process and by our very willingness to enter into discourse instead of violence. She stresses that Habermas' distinction between justice and the good life, rather than separating public and private and therefore potentially ignoring concerns of women, recognises that there are a several issues on which

consensus may never be reached. This resonates with Sen's distinction between capabilities and functioning, with room left for people to pursue their own versions of a good life.

Such a conception carries on the feminist critique of 'binary oppositions'; it refuses the oppositional constructions of the universal and particular and the public and private, the latter of each signifying women (Dean, 1996, p. 173). Lister (2003) supports a differentiated universalism, which is not a choice between a gender-neutral (universal) or a gender-differentiated (particular) model of citizenship – both of which are constructed against a male standard. Cautioning against ignoring power relations, Lister (2003) balances the differentiation within the category 'woman' without getting rid of it. This is particularly important in contexts where women have yet to achieve full public participation rights or where this right is under threat. Fakhro (1996) highlights the case of Arabian Gulf States (including Kuwait), where women's influence on reforming Islamic laws that govern them is still limited (as seen in Chapter 2).

Benhabib (2008) raises the significant issue of the tension between cosmopolitan norms and the boundedness of political membership. She responds to this tension as follows:

> Unlike communitarians who reduce the demands of morality to those claims that are deemed valid by specific ethical, cultural and political communities, and unlike realists and postmodernists who are skeptical that political norms can ever be judged in the light of moral ones, I will insist *on the necessary disjuncture as well as the necessary mediation between the moral and the ethical, the moral and the political.* The task is one of mediations, not reductions. How can one mediate moral universalism with ethical particularism? How can one mediate legal and political norms with moral ones? Such a strategy of mediation is crucial to reclaiming dialogic universalism. (p. 19-20)

Benhabib (2008) argues that when rights are rearticulated in the public sphere through the demands of previously excluded groups, the limitedness of the original articulation of the right reveals itself; this limitedness extends to its 'context-transcending validity' (p. 60). Sometimes, she argues, the law facilitates this process, while at other times, it needs to be adjusted to fit popular consciousness. This

echoes Turner's (2011) argument that laws – whether secular or *shari'a* – are not static. It also fits with Habermas' (1994) conception of the actualisation of rights as not a levelling of difference but rather a process guided by individuals and their varying contexts and identities, '[fuelling] the differentiations of the legal system [...]' (p. 116). Hunt (2007) similarly stresses that human rights history highlights how rights are ultimately best protected by the struggles of individuals fuelled by their sense of outrage, particularly when international bodies and conventions are slow to respond due to geopolitical considerations.

The previous two sections (3.4 and 3.5) have therefore drawn out the dialogic nature of the universal framework for human rights developed in sections 3.2 and 3.3. While the discussion highlights the problems of the public/private divide and acknowledges the rights of individuals and their multiple identities to be part of the human rights dialogue, criticality and solidarity are stressed as guiding what Benhabib (2008) points out is a process of mediation between the universal and particular and the ideal and real. This thesis will argue that HRE is a potential space to facilitate such mediations and, to use Benhabib's (2008) words, '[reclaim] dialogic universalism' (p. 20). As Benhabib (1992) also points out, this process is not understood as leading to a utopian end; rather, it is the conversation itself that is utopian. The next section will further address the utopian nature of this process, not to imply that it is unachievable, but to temper its difficulty with hope.

3.6   DIALOGIC UNIVERSALISM: A UTOPIAN PROCESS

Cassese (2012) opens his plea for realistic utopias by highlighting Huxley's (1927) oppositional categorisation of sociologists as either technicians or utopians. The first, he argues, uncritically accept the framework of the structure they are trying to improve, while the latter pay attention to what ought to be at the expense of what is. Both mindsets, Huxley (1927) argued, are not useful to a third category, judicious reformers. Within the framework of international law, Cassese (2012) draws on two theoretical assumptions; the first is that the law must be simultaneously unambiguous and yet changeable, and the second is that no mechanisms exist to

effectively reform international law. Cassese (2012) stresses that the international community has not kept up with changing times, resulting in numerous problems. Among these he identifies the lack of access of individuals to international proceedings and the tension between state sovereignty and international norms. Cassese (2012) proceeds with a plea for a realistic utopia, which he argues is not the dream of an ideal international community but rather an articulation of suggestions for improvement in utopian terms: 'We have not looked at the stars, but closer to home, to the planets that turn about the earth' (p. xxii).

Wright (2010) situates the project of 'envisioning real utopias' within what he calls 'emancipatory social science' (p. 10), which aims to generate knowledge to challenge human oppression. He argues that to achieve this involves three tasks: 'elaborating a systematic diagnosis and critique of the world as it exists; envisioning viable alternatives; and understanding the obstacles, possibilities, and dilemmas of transformation' (p. 10). Wright's (2007) approach takes into account the tension between taking aspirations for a more just world seriously and addressing the 'hard constraints of realism' (p.27). In doing this, he identifies the problem of the viability of alternatives as the most pressing one, as it becomes harder to envision what is possible beyond what already exists. Young people are instrumental in identifying alternatives, as they are able to see the world differently (Fielding & Prieto, 2002).

As previously mentioned, Benhabib (1992) sees universalisability as 'the utopian projection of a way of life in which respect and reciprocity reign' (p. 38). Douzinas (2000) contends that 'the end of human rights comes when they lose their utopian end' (p. 380). 'Human rights were born as the last utopia – but one day another may appear,' warns Moyn (2010). In schools, the implications of a human rights approach that centres on freedom in a social context include a potential loss of control; however, '[t]he implications of not adopting such an approach may be that young people remain apathetic or that they become tempted by alternative major utopias' (Starkey, 2012, p. 33). The following section will analyse the implications and potential of a utopian, dialogic approach to HRE. Drawing on the discussion so far, it will focus on solidarity, criticality and hope.

3.7 DIALOGIC UNIVERSALISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Freire ([1970] 1993) defines dialogue as 'the encounter between men [and women], mediated by the world, in order to change the world' (p. 70). Dialogue can therefore only take place between people who similarly want to 'name the world'; those who are denied this right must first reclaim it and 'prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression' (p. 69). Within dialogue, Freire ([1970] 1993) identifies both reflection and action: 'to speak a true word is to transform the world' (p. 68). He anchors the dialogical commitment to freedom in love.

Freire ([1970] 1993) points out that faith in people is a prerequisite for dialogue. This is rearticulated by Dean (1996), who argues that solidarity is implicit in the reciprocity of dialogue. This solidarity is not just a matter of 'gestures' but is an 'act of love' (Freire, [1970] 1993, p. 32), requiring that 'one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary' (p. 31). Such deliberation is best achieved within multicultural school settings, to which students from diverse backgrounds bring diverse convictions (Gutmann, 2004). A dialogic school does not segregate (Flecha, 2009). It also does not separate students from the content of education nor from the process (Freire, [1970] 1993).

Solidarity does not preclude mutual criticism (Turner, 2006). HRE provides opportunities for criticality that wider citizenship agendas often sacrifice in favour of nationalism and obedience (Osler & Starkey, 2010). Davies (2008) supports a value system for education that is created by human beings and is based on human rights, interruptive democracy and critical idealism. She contrasts this with a value system based in religion, where obeying authority and accepting 'the path' are paramount (p. 181). The latter system, she argues, cements extremist attitudes and divisions. Davies (2008, p. 182) describes five kinds of criticality:

- a sound political education which includes conflict studies, comparative religion, non-nationalistic citizenship and political skills – *critical scholarship*
- sound understanding of universal rights and responsibilities – *critical (dis)respect*
- skills to weight up alterative ideals and means to pursue them – *critical thinking*

- the acceptance that ideals should be provisional – *critical doubt*
- the acceptance that ideals and their holders can be mocked – *critical lightness*

Opportunities for these types of critical reflection based in a human rights framework will only be meaningful insofar as they lead to action. Both reflection and action are needed to transform the world (Freire, [1970] 1993). Banks (2008) highlights an important distinction between active and transformative citizens:

> [T]he actions taken by active citizens fall within existing laws, customs, and conventions, whereas the actions of transformative citizens are designed to promote values and moral principles – such as social justice and equality – and may violate existing conventions and laws. (p. 137)

This latter type of citizenship, he argues, is the goal of education. As Tibbitts (2005) points out, the empowering quality of HRE that facilitates individuals to make changes in themselves and their environments has the potential to support and enrich transformative learning.

Building on Freire's (1995) notion that transformative action and hope cannot be separated, Duncan-Andrade (2010) proposes three types of critical hope: material, Socratic and audacious. Material hope results when education provides students with the resources required for them to develop a sense of control over their lives. To achieve this, Duncan-Andrade (2010) argues, 'we have to bust the false binary that suggests we must choose between an academically rigorous pedagogy and one geared towards social justice' (p. 236). Building on Socrates, who said that the 'unexamined life is not worth living', and Malcolm X, who added that the 'examined life is painful', Duncan-Andrade (2010) argues that Socratic hope 'requires both teachers and students to painfully examine our lives and actions within an unjust society and to share the sensibility that pain may pave the path to justice' (p. 237). His research suggests that this hope can be fostered by 'treating the righteous indignation in young people as a strength', which he links to Freire's (2004) 'pedagogy of indignation'; this, in turn, fosters solidarity, leading to audacious hope, which requires that we struggle together, sharing victories and pain, down the path to change.

Halpin (1999) stresses the need for utopian thinking within education and argues that it entails 'being hopeful, radical and realistic' – all of which are powerful motivators (p. 347). As hooks (1994) reminds us,

> The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labour for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (p. 207)

3.8   CONCLUSION

This chapter can be seen as a journey through the various contestations and debates surrounding the notion of universal human rights. The goal of this journey has been to arrive at, define and justify the dialogic perspective of the universalisation of human rights that frames this study and to which the study aims to contribute within the field of education. Rejecting both homogenised conceptions of universality and relativist calls for group rights, this perspective stresses the continuous dialogue that surrounds universal human rights. It is a perception that rejects oppositional binaries in favour of a dialogue that recognises differences both within and across categories. This type of dialogue both requires and fosters solidarity, criticality and hope. In education, this translates into a citizenship programme whose aim is to aid in the development of transformative citizens seeking greater equality, supported by a value system firmly anchored in human rights.

The purpose of this study is not to conflate human rights education with citizenship education (see Kiwan, 2005) or to suggest that the one cancels out the need for the other. Rather, as Arab countries embarking on democratisation construct their own conceptions of citizenship (Faour & Muasher, 2011), I argue that HRE can help promote more inclusivity, equality and justice. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there is a need for research that highlights gaps between what educational reforms do and do not encompass and ideas on how to bridge this gap. Kuwait's human rights-based approach to citizenship education is one such reform, and it is the purpose of this research to highlight its strengths and gaps and to suggest ways forward through a

contextualised dialogue with the research participants and in conference with the theoretical field.

4 METHODOLOGY: A CRITICAL CASE OF WHAT COULD BE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 introduced the notion of education about, through and for human rights, and Chapter 3 developed a conceptual framework around the dialogic nature of universal human rights. This chapter presents a methodological framework in keeping with both of these, with methods matched to motives as closely as possible. Section 4.2 situates the study within the constructivist paradigm and highlights issues surrounding consensus, generalisation and reflexivity. In section 4.3, the specificities of case study research are discussed, including case selection and data collection and triangulation. Each of the data sources – documents, observations, interviews and student research workshops – is then covered in depth, and the ways in which the data were collected and organised is explained (4.4). Section 4.5 presents the ways that the data were analysed and written up. Finally, ethical issues surrounding the study are discussed in section 4.6.

The research questions that were presented and explained in Chapter 1 are repeated here for ease of reference:

- What are the implications of introducing universal human rights to the formal curriculum given Kuwait's traditional approaches to citizenship education?

    o Specifically, to what extent are nationalist discourses and religious authority subject to critical appraisal in the case study school's enactment of the CHR module?

- What opportunities to enact human rights ideals are available at the case study school?

    o In particular, what opportunities are afforded by the school's enactment of CHR and its membership of UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network?

- How do students in the case study school perceive their learning about and experiences of human rights, citizenship and democracy?

Plummer's (2005) conceptualisation of 'critical humanism' as a research orientation is apt for this study. He asks, 'Just why would one even bother to do research were it

not for some wider concern or value?' (p. 361). While this may be overstated, he lists the potential values to include, at a minimum, human rights and equality, an ethics of care, a politics of recognition and the importance of trust. As the research concerns and aims of this study reflect, I do have a wider concern surrounding these values, and it is this concern that drives the research – from data collection methods to analysis and writing up. Plummer's (2005) approach seeks to strike a balance between criticality and humanistic idealism. His version of humanism resonates well with the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3, as it acknowledges the complexities of the term 'humanism' rather than equates it with a hegemonic and completed universal.

4.2 CO-CONSTRUCTING HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION RESEARCH: QUALITATIVE ETHNOGRAPHY AND I('S)

> [H]uman rights are not the product of the natural certainties of a pre-
> social human essence, but constitute a constructivist project; they have
> to be achieved rather than being discovered. (Delanty, 2000, p. 80)

As discussed in Chapter 3, human rights are described and achieved through dialogue and consensus. This 'dialogic' and 'polyvocal' nature of human life (and human rights) is a principle of postmodernism, which takes into account the 'plurality of experience' (Angrosino, 2007, p. 13). In keeping with this conceptual framework, I believe that any research exploring human rights issues is also a constructivist project. Such an approach necessarily entails the exploration of different perspectives within a study (Patton, 2002), including those involved in it and affected by it. In research about social justice, the voices of those on the periphery are advantaged, and the goals potentially include empowerment and social change (Weiss & Greene, 1992). In research on human rights education (HRE), this group would include young people, whose voices are so often ignored in education research and decision-making processes.

As Guba and Lincoln (1989) point out, constructivist research is another contribution to the journey towards consensus. This research study, while striving to provide a more maximal interpretation of HRE, therefore does so with full recognition that this

is not a completed normative project but rather another contribution to be discussed, added to and changed as the journey progresses. As Foucault (1991) puts it,

> I wouldn't want what I may have said or written to be seen as laying any claims to totality. I don't try to universalize what I say [...] What I say ought to be taken as 'propositions', 'game openings' where those who may be interested are invited to join in; they are not meant as dogmatic assertions that have to be taken or left en bloc. (in Ball, 2007, p. 106-107)

It is important to point out, however, that a dismissal of claims to totality does not necessarily equal a dismissal of the possibility of worth. Schofield (2007) points out that qualitative researchers have become increasingly interested in generalisability, formerly argued to be beyond the scope of qualitative research. She points out that this has led to a reconceptualisation of generality as 'fittingness' (Guba & Lincoln, 1981) or 'comparability' and 'translatability' (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Building on this, Schofield agues for three targets of generalisation in qualitative research: studying what is, what may be and what could be. The last classification is significant to this study. Studying what could be entails 'locating situations that we know or expect to be ideal or exceptional on some *a priori* basis and then studying them to see what is actually going on there' (Schofield, 2007, p. 195). In choosing to conduct a case study of a school that I believe to be what Yin (2009) calls a critical case, I have purposely avoided the typical for the exceptional. Again, this does not mean that what is learned can only be applied to similarly exceptional schools, but rather that it may 'fit' in various ways with other cases. Its 'extension of experience' may also prove useful to practitioners and policy makers (Stake, 2005, p. 460).

Particularly important to Schofield's (2007) notion of studying what could be is remaining open to having expectations disconfirmed. This has a great deal with realising and constantly engaging with one's subjectivities, or, as Peshkin (1988) calls them, the subjective I's. Like Peshkin, I discovered my own subjective I's over the various phases of my research. One is Peshkin's own 'Nonresearch Human I' (p. 20), whose affection lessens the distance between the researcher and the research participants. As I returned to the case study school over three years and spent weeks at a time with the teachers and students, I naturally became friendly with many of

them, but particularly Amani, a social studies teacher. In Amani, I found inspiration and was often humbled by her attempts to pursue social justice and equality. Realising that this could make me biased, I was very conscious of juggling such feelings with 'dispassion' to allow for criticality (Peshkin, 1988, p. 20). Another 'I' that both Peshkin and I encountered was the 'Justice-Seeking I'. As I experienced life as the students at the case study school did and as I became more engaged in the tumultuous politics in Kuwait during the years of my research (discussed in Chapter 2), I, like Peshkin, realised that I would need to take account of my feelings. The 'Justice-Seeking I' had wider concerns than the experiences of one school. While I did not approach my research as a means to 'give voice' to the marginalised (Weiss & Greene, 1992), I did hope that by listening to, working with and building on these voices, we could reach more maximal understandings and interpretations. Gewirtz and Cribb (2006) argue that it is possible to strike a balance between avoiding 'value bias' on the one hand and 'contributing to political and social change through research' on the other (p. 141). They propose 'ethical reflexivity', which deals not only with how the researcher's involvement in the field shapes their data collection and analysis, but also their 'ethical and political beliefs' (p. 147).

This led me to discover another 'I', who I call the 'Fiercely-Secularist I'. As Islamists continued to gain power in Kuwait and as I witnessed the hegemony of Islam in the curriculum and school, I realised, as I became increasingly upset, that I needed to address these feelings and the resultant potential bias sooner rather than later. After the first phase of my research in 2009 and as I began analysing the data, I decided that before I headed back into the field, I needed to explore my views on secularism and on religion in the public sphere. I therefore set myself the task of writing a paper on the topic – an undertaking that my supervisor agreed would be useful. Doing this academic work allowed me to distance myself from the subject and gain a more open perspective. This paper was ultimately incorporated into my theoretical framework (in Chapter 3.4).

Perhaps the most persistent 'I' throughout my research was the 'Chicken Nugget I'. As stated in Chapter 1, I have never felt like a chicken nugget (someone 'brown on

the outside and white on the inside') despite being perceived as such growing up. In the field, this perception returned with force. Conteh et al (2005) build on Peshkin's notion of recognising and working with subjectivities by adding that a researcher should maintain and not try to eliminate the 'insider/outsider duality' (p. 9). An outsider, they argue, tries to make the strange familiar, while an insider needs to make the familiar strange. I found that I fell in the middle of this duality. As a Kuwaiti female in a Kuwaiti all-girls school, I was an insider. I was also perceived as an insider because I was both a student and a teacher. Though teachers started calling me 'Abla Rania' (abla is the Arabic title for a female teacher) in front of the students, I was careful not to assume the role of teacher so as not to distance myself from the students. More frequently, however, I was perceived as an outsider – someone more Western than Kuwaiti, someone whose Arabic made students and teachers giggle and someone who seemed oblivious to various parts of cultural life that many of the teachers and students engaged with. While such differences could have been potentially threatening to some, I did not get the sense that the members of the case study school saw it as such at all. In the instances where participants became aware that there may be differences in my perceptions or attitudes, I believe I was seen more as an 'acceptable incompetent' than a threat (Lofland, 1971; cited in Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 99); this was a role that, as an ethnographic researcher, I embraced to ensure that my own perceptions and attitudes would not bias my data collection or analysis.

In order to deal with these various selves, both brought with me and created in the field (Reinharz, 1997), I became very conscious about actively and critically reflecting on myself and the research throughout all the stages – in shaping my research ideas, in shaping my identities in the field and my interactions with the research participants and in the process of writing (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). I found journaling to be particularly useful in promoting such reflexivity. In the field and throughout the analysis and writing processes, I kept a research journal in which I recorded feelings, frustrations, reactions, successes and struggles. Being able to articulate these experiences helped me come to terms with them. As Kearney (2005) states, 'Sometimes I don't know what I think until I write it down' (p. 24). My journal was a

place where I was able to candidly express both my expectations (born of my own myriad of identities and presuppositions) and my surprise at findings I was not expecting. This honesty facilitated my data analysis and the writing process because I had become accustomed to balancing my experience and knowledge with things I was learning in the empirical field and through the theoretical field. In this way, criticality and hope merged, leaving me open to explore dialogically more maximal interpretations of HRE than I believed existed when I started my research journey, while still allowing me to identify persistent shortcomings.

4.3   CASE STUDY RESEARCH: 'WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM A SINGLE CASE?'

> People find in case reports certain insights into the human condition, even while being aware of the atypicality of the case. They may be *too* quick to accept the insight. The case researcher needs to provide grounds for validating both the observation and the generalization. (Stake, 2005, p. 456)

While reflexivity helps researchers become aware of their own positioning within their research, the issue of validity remains strong in case study research. An important question can help address this concern: 'What can we learn from a single case?' (Stake, 2005, p. 454).

4.3.1   WHY NOW AND WHY THIS SCHOOL?

In Yin's (2009) conceptualisation of a case study, both the contemporaneity and the context of the phenomenon being investigated are significant. In this research study, the phenomenon being explored is HRE. Two important factors make this a contemporary issue worthy of exploration in Kuwait: first, the addition of the three-year Constitution and Human Rights (CHR) programme to the secondary curriculum in 2006 and its gradual reduction to a one-year module from 2008 to 2010; and second, the political turmoil unfolding in Kuwait surrounding human rights issues during these years (discussed in Chapter 2). My research was the only academic educational study to be carried out during these years that sought to capture these phenomena simultaneously as they were unfolding.

The selection of the context for this contemporary study is also significant. I chose Fatima Bint Asad Secondary School for Girls for its particularities – for those qualities that make it atypical within the Kuwaiti school system.[28] At first glance, Fatima School seems like a relatively representative case. It is a Kuwaiti public school, operating within the Ministry of Education's regulations and working from the centralised national curriculum. However, it is also a member of UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) and has been recognised for work on human rights issues.[29] Moreover, it is situated within a politically liberal and economically affluent area. Schofield (2007) points out that when studying what could be, case selection is often based on 'outcomes achieved' or 'the conditions obtaining there' (p. 195). Fatima School's status and location make it a best-case scenario within which to explore the potential of the HRE approach espoused by the CHR programme. As Stake (2005) succinctly argues for this rationale, 'My choice would be to choose that case from which we can learn the most' (p. 451). Eysenck (1976) similarly argues, '[S]ometimes we have to keep our eyes open and look carefully at individual cases – not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something' (in Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 224). Flyvbjerg (2006) points out that 'the force of example' is often underestimated in discussions about the potential aims of qualitative research (p. 228).

Both Flyvbjerg (2001; 2006) and Yin (2009) call this type of example a 'critical case'. Yin (2009) argues that 'such a study can even help refocus future investigations in an entire field' (p. 47). While my aspirations are obviously more modest, I do believe that the critical case of Fatima School *could* help trigger and refocus future educational investigations in Kuwait and *could*, to use Shofield's (2007) words, 'provide an opportunity to gain some insight into how and why [things] go well [at the case site] and into what the still-intractable problems are' (p. 196). Fatima School's enactment of HRE also presents a 'viable alternative', to use Wright's (2010,

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[28] The names of the school and all the research participants have been changed to protect anonymity. This will be discussed in section 4.6.
[29] I have purposely left details of this recognition vague to protect anonymity.

p. 20) words – one that can counter hegemonic powers by demonstrating what could be.

In this sense, I am studying this case in the hopes of better understanding not just the school but the key issues raised in the research questions surrounding the tensions within HRE, its potential incompatibility with authoritarian school ethos and so forth. These issues, as Stake (1995; 2005) clarifies, help us gain a deeper understanding of the case, and may, in the case of what he terms instrumental case studies, facilitate (and perhaps expand) our understanding of these issues outside the case. This is in keeping with the 'critical humanism' approach discussed earlier.

4.3.2 COLLECTING AND TRIANGULATING DATA: FROM WHOM AND HOW MUCH?

In selecting a critical case, one inevitably has expectations at the outset. It is therefore important to triangulate the data to safeguard the study's construct validity. This is done by collecting multiple sources of evidence. Within constructivism, a research issue is constituted from at least two sources (Flick, 2007). In this study, four sources are drawn from – documents, observations, interviews and student research workshops, reflecting the perspectives of the Ministry of Education, the researcher, the teachers and administrators and, importantly, the students.

A significant point of departure between case study research and other ethnographic approaches is that the former relies on theoretical propositions to guide and limit the data collection and analysis (Yin, 2009). As Yin (2009) points out, actually articulating such propositions helps guide the researcher on where to look for data. Following Yin's (2009) case study design, propositions were formulated that linked back to the research questions and highlighted specific areas for study. For example, research question two addresses opportunities for the enactment of human rights ideals. An associated proposition that was formulated was that authoritarian control mechanisms would hinder maximal enactments of HRE. During data collection, I therefore looked for such mechanisms. In a converse relationship, data collection

can also guide propositions. For example, in relation to the aforementioned research question, I had not included propositions about the effects of authoritarian mechanisms on teachers' enactments. During data collection, however, the proposition was expanded to include this. It is also important to include rival propositions in the design phase to avoid bias. I was therefore careful not to assume that the CHR module and ASPnet membership necessarily did offer opportunities for enacting human rights ideals and that there were no other opportunities in other arenas.

Data collection was carried out over three years to cover the phasing out of the CHR module. Each phase of research was conducted towards the end of the spring term for two reasons. First, by waiting until the academic year was almost over, the students would have almost completed their programmes of study and would potentially reflect this learning. Similarly, teachers would have been teaching their modules for almost an entire year at least. Second, Fatima School held most of its UNESCO activities during this term.

	OBSERVATIONS	INTERVIEWS	STUDENT RESEARCH WORKSHOPS
PHASE 1 **2009**	2.5 weeks	• CHR teacher • CHR teacher/student council adult rep. • Arab World teacher • Principal • UNESCO rep. Total: 5	3 grade levels (10 & 11: 1 class each; 12: 2 classes) (71 students)
PHASE 2 **2010**	4.5 weeks	• CHR/Psychological Health teacher • CHR/Philosophy teacher • Geography teacher • Principal • UNESCO rep. • Former UNESCO rep. Total: 6	3 grade levels (2 classes each) (119 students)
PHASE 3 **2011**	---	• CHR/Psychological Health teacher • Ministry official Total: 2	1 grade level (1 class) (21 students)

Table 4.1: Summary of data collection

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The first phase of research was carried out in March and lasted two and a half weeks. This phase helped to identify the 'parts of the story' (Stake, 2005, p. 457), thereby refining the research questions and the data collection for the second phase. For example, Amani's name came up a great deal during the first phase, tuning me in to the fact that she was a significant part of Fatima School's story. The second phase was conducted in March and April of 2010 and lasted four and a half weeks. The intention was to stop after the second phase. However, as the one-year CHR module was introduced in the 2010-2011 academic year, it was crucial to conduct research workshops with students that year to compare and contrast their experiences with those who had completed the three-year programme. I returned to Fatima School in April 2011 for this purpose. A summary of the phases of research is presented in Table 4.1 above. Further details will be provided in each of the data collection sections below.

4.4 MATCHING MOTIVES TO METHODS

> The new participatory, feminist, and democratic values of interpretive qualitative research mandate a stance that is democratic, reciprocal, and reciprocating rather than objective and objectifying. (Lincoln & Denzin, 2005, p. 1118)

4.4.1 DOCUMENTS AND DOCUMENTATION

> Education information systems tend to be weak in the MENA region, as demonstrated by the many gaps in basic educational data available to the public. (The World Bank, 2007, p. 23).

Stake (1995) stresses that no matter how much a researcher plans in advance, finding documents can be challenging. Aware of the weakness of information systems mentioned above, I knew that finding official educational documents would be a particularly challenging task in Kuwait. My first challenge was in deciphering the meaning of the word 'menhej'. This word has three main English equivalents: 'curriculum', 'programme' and 'methodology'. In general Arabic educational discourse, the word is used to denote 'curriculum'. However, I soon came to learn that what I was expecting – a national curriculum document similar to that of the UK – did not exist in Kuwait. What do exist are lists of overarching primary, intermediary

and secondary school goals and separate sets of goals and outcomes for each of the two secondary school departments of Arts and Sciences. Though Individual modules have listed outcomes, these are often not distributed to teachers, who rely on the textbooks instead (as will be discussed in Chapter 5). What *are* distributed are timetables called 'course distribution' (*tawzī' al-muqarar*), which outline which pages in the textbooks have to be covered on which days. I therefore came to understand that in Kuwait, the word *menhej* is used primarily to indicate teaching methodology and that module outcomes basically boil down to the textbook content itself.[30]

In the absence of a national curriculum document or even a consolidated booklet containing all the various goals, I had to search for each of these lists independently. I also needed copies of various textbooks related to this study. I started with the Ministry of Education's website but quickly discovered that it was in its nascent stages and did not have such information uploaded yet. I therefore decided to head to the Ministry of Education itself. An excerpt from my 2010 research diary perhaps best illustrates my experience:

> I found the blocks of buildings that make up the Ministry of Education and made my way to the information desk in the main building. I confidently asked where I could get a copy of the CHR curriculum (*menhej*). The woman I asked looked at me in confusion. I altered my question a little, this time using the word 'textbooks'. She seemed a little less puzzled but no more certain of where to direct me. The man in line behind me told me to go to a different building. I made my way there and was greeted by a man who seemed to understand exactly what I needed. He promised me that Building 7 was where I needed to be. I walked there and was very relieved to see the big sign, 'Curricula' (*menāhij*), above the entrance to the building. My relief waned as I walked into what looked like a derelict building. I peeked around passageways, hoping to catch a glimpse of anyone. I finally did, and as I explained to her that all I needed were copies of the CHR textbooks, she gave me the name of the Director of the Curriculum Department and took me to his secretary. I felt ever closer to my goal, as I recognised the name she gave me as one of the authors of the CHR textbooks. I sat in front of his secretary and asked whether I would be able to meet with him. The secretary said that I would and then told me to go to Qurain, an area about 20 minutes away by car from where we were. I asked what was there, and the secretary told me it was the director's office. I looked at him, confused. I asked again whether he

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[30] The sample interview transcript excerpt in Appendix 4.7 exemplifies this ambiguity.

was the director's secretary. He nodded. I then confirmed that his own office was in this building. He nodded again. I was not sure why the director's office was 20 minutes away from that of his secretary, but I decided to let it go. I asked the secretary if I could at least get copies of the CHR textbooks before I left. He shook his head and said that this building was empty. I asked whether it was the curriculum building, to which he replied in the affirmative. I asked what purpose it served if there were no copies of any curricular materials and if the head of the department himself worked in another district. 'We have meetings here once in a while,' was the secretary's reply. I thanked him, got in my car and drove to Qurain.

Once in Qurain, I was able to find some of the documents I was looking for. However, the search continued and it took years before I felt that I had found everything I needed. Educational policies and reports were particularly challenging to get hold of. While the 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report mentioned in Chapter 1 was available on the Ministry website, most other reports I was only able to find through contacts I made at the Ministry or through newspaper archives. Newspapers proved invaluable as events in Kuwaiti politics were unfolding daily surrounding education, human rights and democracy. However, aware of the potential bias, I used these primarily for corroborating the events themselves rather than for their analysis. Administrators and teachers at Fatima School were very generous in supplying me with several of the documents I needed. These included rosters of students and teachers, the course distribution timetables (which came from the Ministry), copies of the 'small exams' (those not written by the Ministry), textbooks, documents pertaining to the aforementioned *jawda* (quality education) initiative (created by both the Ministry and Fatima School) and UNESCO-related materials.

The challenges I faced in collecting relevant documents were compounded by the fact that there are relatively few academic educational articles on Kuwait from which to glean support, particularly in the field of citizenship and human rights education. This made it a lonely journey. However, documenting this journey and providing the names of these various documents as well as analysing their content is an important contribution this thesis makes to future educational researchers in Kuwait, who, as a result, will not have to go through the challenge of first identifying and then finding

such reports. A list of the official reports and textbooks referred to in this study is found in Appendix 4.1.

It is important to point out that the documents that I collected are primarily used to situate and contextualise the study. In the case of the curricular reports, aims and textbooks in particular, such documents are not merely accepted at face value but are rather critically analysed (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Yin, 2009).

4.4.2   OBSERVATIONS AND FIELDNOTES

At Fatima School, as explained in section 4.2, my identities in the field frequently alternated between insider and outsider. Spradley (1980) highlights these simultaneous and alternating categories as they relate to participant observation in ethnographic research. During my observations, my status alternated between observer (outsider) and participant (insider), and often, as Spradley (1980) argues can happen, I experienced both simultaneously. I spent a great deal of time sitting in the back of classrooms while taking notes about what I was observing. On a few occasions, I was invited to participate in classroom discussions and activities by the teachers and students; this usually took the form of being asked a question or an opinion. Sometimes, during whole school events, for example, I participated more, walking around and chatting with people. During the student research workshops (to be discussed in detail in section 4.4.4), I actively participated, in the sense that I developed and initiated the workshops.

Being a participant-observer means making oneself aware of things one may have learned to tune out (Spradley, 1980). Spradley compares this to a wide-angle lens, 'taking in a much broader spectrum of information' (p. 56). He explains that the types of observations change throughout the course of the research, from broad to focused to selective, all of which continue to include general descriptive observations. During the first two phases of this study, I spent the entire school day at the case study school as opposed to coming and going for specific observations such as CHR classes. This was to ensure that I was able to achieve a deeper

understanding of the case as a whole rather than simply the 'pieces of the story'. While my observations during phase one were more general, those in phase two were more focused around the propositions born out of the research questions and phase one's data. Appendix 4.2 details the types of observations carried out over the two phases.

In 2009, I set out into the field, new notebooks in hand. I was very pleased with the fact that I had labelled sections in the books for the various aspects of my fieldnotes, and I was confident that collecting, collating and interpreting these notes would be easy as a result of my forward thinking. Two weeks later, I was exhausted. Taking notes onto blank pages, while effective for some, proved tedious for me. Every night, once my day of observations was over, I would sit and type up pages and pages of notes, spending a great deal of time reorganising them as I went along. I knew that for the next phase of research, involving more weeks in the field and more observations, this system would no longer be effective for me.

I began sketching tables that I felt could organise my fieldnotes of classroom organisations without forcing my thinking down a particular track. I included elements suggested by Spradley (1980), Moyles (2002), Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and Lincoln and Guba (1985)[31] as well as my own. The list of necessary items included the following:

- details about the date, time, place, participants, related audio and visual files, etc.
- detailed notes, divided into time periods, outlining what is happening in the classroom (without my analysis or input, to the extent possible)
- my reflections, particularly how this may feed into my research or guide further observations (even in different directions than anticipated)
- general notes (e.g. about layout of space)
- questions and items to follow up on
- key propositions to keep in mind

I first created a classroom observations template based on these criteria and then followed this with forms tweaked for events and meetings, staffroom observations

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[31] As collated in Cohen et al (2007).

and general information and observations as well as a form to record detailed notes on physical spaces within the school. I also created templates for interviews and the student research workshops. I printed several copies of each and took them with me everyday. I also had extra pages so that running out of space did not constrain my copious note-taking. To keep all of these organised, I created a cover template for each day, which included the day's schedule, reminders and my daily journal. The cover template and classroom observation template are found in Appendices 4.3 and 4.4.

It is important to point out that while these templates *organised* my fieldnotes, they were not intended to *structure* my observations. This is not to imply that I entered the field with a 'completely blank slate' (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) argues, 'While the inductive nature of qualitative inquiry emphasizes the importance of being open to whatever one can learn, some way of organizing the complexity of experience is virtually a prerequisite for perception itself' (p. 279). My templates helped me break up the vast amounts of potential data into 'distinguishable, manageable, and observable elements' (Patton, 2002, p. 279).

Emerson et al (1995) discuss the role of note-taker in fieldwork. I established this role early on, explaining to the research participants that they served as a memory aid to ensure accuracy. In the early days, in situations such as casual conversations, I would ask permission before taking notes to make sure I was not making anyone uncomfortable. As time passed, my role as note-taker became more cemented, and the social studies teachers even joked about it on one occasion, marvelling at the things I found interesting. Such humour is not an unusual reaction, and Emerson et al (1995) reported a similar reaction.

As much as possible, I would take notes on the spot. However, when it interfered with my observations, I would wait, watch and then write my notes as soon after as possible. I therefore left myself ample room to fill in remembered details after the fact. I made sure to fill these in using pen to distinguish them from the notes I took *in*

situ, which I preferred to write in pencil because I write more neatly and quickly in pencil. All fieldnotes and journal entries were written in English.

4.4.3 INTERVIEWS AND TRANSCRIPTS

> The qualitative research interview is a construction site of knowledge.
> An interview is literally an inter-view, an inter-change of views between
> two persons conversing about a common theme. (Kvale, 2007, p. 21)

Interviews were carried out with the adult participants in all three phases of research. These included teachers, UNESCO council and student council adult representatives, the principal and a Ministry official. These interviews provided both the official perspective of the national educational system as well as the perspectives of those actually enacting the official policies and curricula within the case study school. Appendix 4.5 provides a complete list of the interview participants and dates. The interviews with administrators were intended primarily for contextualisation and clarification, though as with documents, these were also critically analysed. The interviews with teachers were aimed more at knowledge construction. These interviews were *thematically* driven; they pertained to the 'theoretical conceptions of the research topic' (Kvale, 2007, p. 57).

The interviews were semi-structured in that I used an interview guide (Kvale, 2007; Patton, 2002). This ensured that I covered the main issues of concern but also left room to delve deeper into issues raised by the participants. Each teacher interview began with a couple of questions about lessons I had observed before moving on to more general questions. Patton (2002) points out that interview guides can be designed in greater or less detail, depending on 'the extent to which the interviewer is able to specify important issues in advance' (p. 344). In phase one, my guides were less detailed, and the interviews helped me identify more issues to be studied. This led to more detailed guides for phase two; the phase two guides were also targeted to the individual teachers rather than a single guide being used for all as it was in phase one. The interviews involved mostly 'what' and 'how' questions, designed to glean descriptions rather than the kinds of speculations that would arise from 'why' questions (Kvale, 2007). When 'why' questions were posed, they were targeted

more at understanding the participants' 'own reasons for their actions'; however, these were infrequent to avoid creating an examination (or indeed interrogation) atmosphere (Kvale, 2007, p. 58). In all the interviews, the interviewees were given the final say (Patton, 2002). My 2009 interview guide for teachers is found in Appendix 4.6.

All the interviews were carried out at the case study school and were audio recorded (apart from the interview with the Ministry official, which he requested in written form). The recorded teacher interviews ranged from 16:55 minutes to 1:58:28 hours. The longer interviews were carried out over two days. The interviews were all conducted, transcribed and analysed in Arabic. I translated them into English for the write-up, aiming for accurate approximations that remained faithful to the original rather than literal (word-for-word) translations.

I took notes during the interviews, and these proved invaluable to the data collection and analysis processes. First, as Patton (2002) points out, such notes helped formulate clarification questions and new questions as the interview unfolded. In addition, my interview templates were designed with time slots so that key information could subsequently be easily found in the recorded audio files. My notes also highlighted key issues that were raised and therefore facilitated future analysis. An excerpt from a teacher interview and its English translation are found in Appendix 4.7.

4.4.4 STUDENT RESEARCH WORKSHOPS AND POSTERS

Student participation was a major consideration in my research design. I wanted to involve students in the research, but I was very concerned about how to safeguard authenticity. Christensen's (2004) dialogical approach to the participation of young people in research appealed to me because of its salience with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3 as well as the constructivist epistemology discussed in section 4.2. For this dialogic research process to be realised, Christensen (2004) argues that the researcher must strive to enter 'children's cultures of

communication', constantly negotiate what it means to be an adult and pay particular attention to issues of power (p. 166).

As discussed, I constantly negotiated my identity in the field to avoid being perceived as a teacher. I emphasised my student identity and reinforced this by asking questions, taking notes and dressing young, often opting for jeans. While the teachers used the title '*Abla*' (teacher) before my name in front of the students, they were keen to show me and teach me new things. I doubt this went unnoticed by the students, who were also eager to take me around the school and answer my questions. In addition, I regularly wore nail polish, which I later discovered may have been perceived as an act of rebellion by the students, who were forbidden from wearing it. One day, a social studies teacher came back to the office after class and told me that when she had asked a student to go remove her nail polish, the student had responded by saying, 'But *Abla* Rania wears nail polish.' This anecdote highlighted to me that the students may have begun to see me as 'other' than a regular teacher, despite the use of the title '*Abla*'.

In thinking about the students' 'cultures of communication' and the issues of power Christensen (2004) raised, I first thought about doing focus group discussions with students. However, I was conscious that various classroom dynamics would have potentially formed by that stage in the year, and some students may therefore dominate discussions more than others. Also, I was wary of the deference to adult authority that could occur. More importantly, I did not trust that I would not ask questions that would inadvertently focus the students' attentions in various ways rather than allowing them to highlight the issues that mattered to them.

I therefore designed what I call student research workshops and carried these out towards the end of each research phase, after the students had time to get to know me and be around me enough to dispel suspicion. During these workshops, I began by reintroducing myself as a PhD student and explaining my research, although by that stage most of them knew what I was studying. I also explained that it was very

important to me to hear their views on the key topics being studied. I then went on to explain that there were three posters, each with its own question (in Arabic):[32]

- What have you learned in this school about human rights?
- What have you learned in this school about democracy?
- What have you learned in this school about citizenship?

Students were asked to write down anything they felt was important for me to know, and I explained that they could expand the question if they needed to. Before the posters were distributed, students started reacting about their *experiences of* these concepts rather than their *learning about* them. They asked me if this was part of the question, and I immediately explained that yes, since it mattered to them, it was. I made sure to add this element to all the subsequent workshops. While I had initially decided to leave the question on the poster simple on purpose, I felt that by using the words 'learning *about*', I was potentially limiting the topic to official curricular content. Making the question more explicit by expanding its explanation to include both *learning about* and *experiences of* human rights, citizenship and democracy proved critical, and most students were more concerned with the latter part of the question. In this way, the students' responses guided the data collection and analysis, and the notion of more maximal interpretations was born. Christensen (2004) shared a similar experience in her research with children:

> In my attempt to unravel particular parts of my fieldwork, my engagement with the children would provoke new lines of thinking and demonstrate in a quite practical way how data production and analysis are inextricably linked together. In this way the understandings of children participating in the study came to contribute very importantly to the shaping of key analytical themes of the research. (p. 172-173)

Before distributing the posters, students were divided into three groups based on where they were sitting. They joined tables together and a poster was put in the middle of them. Students were first asked to respond individually in black ink. This was to ensure that every student who wanted to had a chance to respond without interference or domination from others. Then, each of the three groups was free to discuss the issues and add any more comments to the posters in blue ink. In phase

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[32] The Arabic questions read, '*Mātha ta'alemti fī hathihi al-madrasa 'an ḥuqūq al-insān* (or *al-dīmuqrāṭiyya* or *al-muwāṭana*)?'

one, each group only responded on one of the three posters because I was worried about time constraints. However, I realised for phase two that there was enough time to rotate the posters so that each group responded on each of the three posters. To avoid undue influence from the responses of the previous group, the participants covered their responses with post-its before handing over the poster to the next group. I clarified that this was just so that everyone felt comfortable sharing their own ideas and did not feel pressure to conform or respond to what someone else had written. Students asked what language to use, and I stressed that either Arabic or English was fine. They also asked whether they could use colloquial Kuwaiti Arabic and whether they could write in what they called 'MSN language' – students who use the internet chat feature often combine English letters and Arabic numerals to write 'in Arabic'. I agreed to both. Once students were done all three posters, if time remained, we had whole-group discussions about the posters before moving on to the UNESCO post-it activity. To explore student perceptions of their school's membership to the ASPnet, each student was given a post-it on which to express their views. These were then collected and placed on blank grade-level posters.

Most of the time, the teacher whose class I was engaged with would leave the room before the activity even started and would not come back for the duration of the class period. I encouraged this. On the occasions where the teachers stayed, I ensured they did not interfere with the students' responses or discussions. Wary that their presence may affect the students' responses anyway, I emphasised to the students that nobody but I would be reading the posters. I also stressed anonymity again.

The three phases of student research workshops – carried out in 2009, 2010 and 2011 – coincided with the reduction of CHR from a three-year programme to a one-year module. In 2008-2009, the grade 10 component had already been cancelled. The grade 11 and 12 students were in their second and third years of the three-year programme, respectively. In 2009-2010, the grade 11 component was cancelled. The grade 10 and grade 11 students were not taking CHR. The grade 12 students were the second and last group to complete the three-year programme. In 2010-2011, the

one-year module was introduced to grade 12. The phases of research and how they coincided with this rollback are illustrated in Appendix 4.8, which also includes a table outlining the numbers of grade levels, classes and students involved across the three phases. A photo of a completed poster appears in Appendix 4.9.

Once completed, the content of each of the posters was transcribed and analysed in their original form, and they were translated into English for the write up. Because these were written texts and I was conscious of the potential bias in translations, I translated the posters myself but also had a professional translate them separately. I then compared and contrasted the two translations and, where necessary, revisited the originals. I also audio recorded the workshops and took extensive notes throughout so that I could go back and triangulate the written data against the discussions and observations that were carried out.

After almost every one of the workshops in all three phases, students came up to me and thanked me for letting them air their views. Some of them asked why I wanted their opinions, and I explained again that as students, they are at the very heart of education, and so it was crucial for me to understand their perspectives. I stressed that my research would not be complete without their views. While the posters perhaps yielded a smaller quantity of data than interviews or focus group discussions may have, they provided an uninterrupted space for students to respond and, importantly, to highlight what *they* perceived to be significant.

4.5   FROM ANALYSIS TO THEORY AND BACK AGAIN

> In my analysis, I do not seek to describe the world or even to describe
> fully the case. I seek to make sense of certain observations of the case
> by watching as closely as I can and by thinking about it as deeply as I can.
> (Stake, 1995, p. 76-77)

Case studies are notorious for stalling at the analytic stage (Yin, 2009), and I was determined not to fall into the trap of drifting along until data collection was completed. My analytic strategy combined suggestions from Yin (2009) and Miles and Huberman (1994). Unlike in pure ethnographic approaches, in this case study,

the data were not analysed without any theories or propositions in mind. After phase one, I approached my data with theoretical propositions that were generated from my research questions (following Yin, 2009). I decided to start with the student research workshop posters. In noticing how many students were concerned with human rights learning *beyond* the official textbook – particularly surrounding the enactment of rights and opportunities for participation – I began coding their complaints and suggestions around these issues. I then searched for and found similar categories of themes in my observation and interview data. As I did this, I looked for other themes, and following Yin (2009), I also actively searched for rival propositions. Within the resulting overarching categories, several more sub-categories emerged. Building on this analysis, I created a loose analytical framework centred on the notion of maximal interpretations of HRE (Figure 4.1 below). This refined my research questions and initial propositions and further guided – though did not completely limit – my data collection in phases two and three.

Curriculum	knowledge, skills, values
Participation	in-class activities vs. transformative action
Recognition	human rights dialogues
CONTEXT & ETHOS	
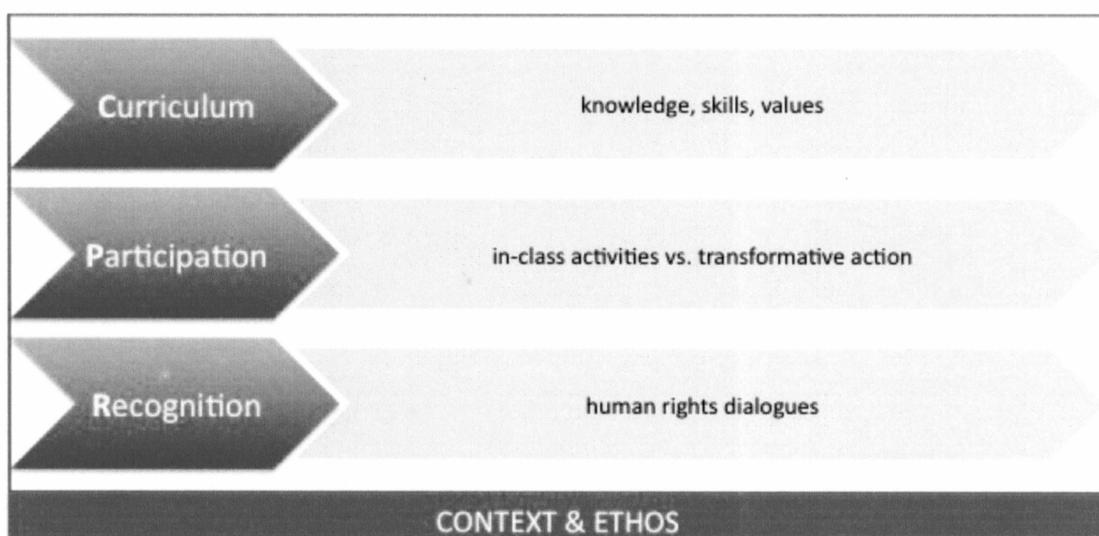
Figure 4.1: Analytical framework born of phase one data

It is important to point out that this skeletal frame was born of the data from phase one and went through several changes and expansions in phases two and three. Moreover, they are the data themselves that subsequently helped flesh out what began as an analytical frame. In concert with the theoretical field, this led to the creation of the proposed *Continuum of Human Rights Education* (to be discussed within the empirical chapters and then presented in full in Chapter 9).

This analytical approach draws on the key features and stages that Miles and Huberman (1994) lay out. Briefly, these are as follows:

- Code fieldnotes from documents, observations, interviews, etc.
- Make reflective notes and comments
- Identify similarities, patterns, relationships, themes, differences, etc. by sifting and sorting through materials
- Take these identified elements into the field for next stage of data collection
- Begin constructing generalisations covering the consistencies in the database
- Test the generalisations against the literature of the field

In the initial stages, during what Miles and Huberman (1994) class as coding, I made large binders with print outs of my observations, interview transcripts and poster transcripts. I also had a binder of documents and textbooks. I went through each, coding them according to the basic list of themes generated from my research questions and associated propositions. As I did this, the data generated new themes, and I kept a running list close at hand as I went through all my binders. This coding went on throughout the data collection, analysis and write up. Though a fan of NVivo, a data organisation software, I felt that physically handling my data kept me close to it. I did, however, use a variety of visual methods to organise and analyse my data. For example, with the posters, I used tables to arrange student quotes according to thematic categories and families of categories. As I was coding and categorising my data, I took extensive notes. However, I also often wrote these up into narratives with 'thick descriptions' (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Geertz, 1973). As Gibbs (2007) points out, these narratives are an important part of the analysis as they involve interpreting what things are happening and what they might mean. They also helped me to identify patterns and relationships between data and across various types of data and to highlight potential embedded units of analysis within the case for further investigation. This writing practice and the constant reflexivity it provoked throughout the analysis facilitated the writing up process.

One dilemma I faced during analysis and writing up was about how to justify my selection of included data. Again, this made me reflect seriously on how to stay as faithful as possible to the data and not to force it in various directions. The first step was to identify those issues that were observed and discussed by students and

teachers most frequently – not to count instances and reach generalisable conclusions, but to highlight key issues and pressing concerns. However, in a constructivist study, I do not believe it is the voices of the majority that must prevail. I therefore analysed single occurrences as well as issues raised by individuals. This highlights a distinction between qualitative and quantitative analysis:

> The qualitative researcher concentrates on the instance, trying to pull it apart and put it back together again more meaningfully – analysis and synthesis in direct interpretation. The quantitative researcher seeks a collection of instances, expecting that, from the aggregate, issue-relevant meanings will emerge. (Stake, 1995, p. 75)

Within this is the implicit understanding that cases are contextually bound and so, therefore, is the knowledge generated from them. Flyvbjerg (2006) argues, 'Predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs. Concrete, context-dependent knowledge is, therefore, more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals' (p. 224). I would argue that it is through the study of qualitative cases from a myriad of contexts that we can reach deeper understandings about human issues and a more maximal interpretation and realisation of human rights. The universal is not 'found', but is perpetually constructed and reconstructed through endless dialogue.

4.6   ETHICS AND EMPOWERMENT

This study adheres to the research ethics guidelines set by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004) and was approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee at the Institute of Education. This section discusses the particular ethical issues surrounding access, anonymity and informed consent as well as the potential positive and negative effects on participants.

Access was a much easier part of the research process than I had anticipated. The first step to gain access to schools in Kuwait is to apply for permission from the district within which the study will be carried out. I did this for each of the three phases of research (see Appendix 4.10) and received written permission within a week of applying. When I first arrived at the case study school before phase one, I was worried about how willing and open the members of the school community

would be because I knew case studies were not usual occurrences. However, I was overwhelmed by the support I received from every member of the school. I was immediately welcomed into classrooms, meetings and events. If teachers ever saw me sitting in the social studies office, they would invite me to observe their classes or to tag along on their visits to other schools. Everyone was also extremely forthcoming and helpful with access to information, classroom materials and so forth. From day one, I, too, was very open about my research aims and questions, and I believe that this reciprocity strengthened my field relations and consequently my data collection and analysis.

My first concerns surrounding ethics were anonymity and consent. While I could ensure that names of the school and the research participants were changed, Kuwait is a small country, and it would not be difficult to figure out where the study was carried out. To safeguard against this, I have omitted details about the school's location and left other details vague as well. Upon arrival at the school, I explained my research to the principal and teachers first, and they signed consent forms. Before carrying out the student research workshops, I also explained my research in detail to the students verbally and in writing. Consent forms were also provided for the students and their guardians to sign. (All the consent forms are found in Appendix 4.11.) I worried that the forms would arouse suspicion because, as rare as this type of research is, asking permission from students and parents is rarer still. However, after clarifying some parental concerns about the use of photographs, every student and parent signed their consent forms.[33] All the consent forms highlighted the right of participants to withdraw at any stage during the research and explained that real names would not be used. Interestingly, several students and teachers were initially offended by my promises to safeguard anonymity, and many asked if I could use their real names. I explained the ethical guidelines I was following and why I felt it was important to use pseudonyms, and they acquiesced.

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[33] Parents were concerned that photographs may have been taken while students had their headscarves off at school, and they did not want these published. I assured them that any photographs that were taken were solely to be used as memory aids and would not be seen by anyone but me.

This issue of anonymity came up throughout the study, and two incidents in particular led me to delve deeper into the issue.

I was sitting in the social studies office one day in the final days of phase two in 2010, after all the student research workshops had been completed. Several of the social studies teachers were at their desks, and students were coming in and out to get their various workbooks marked. On her way out of the office, one student passed by where I was sitting and handed me some papers. She left without saying a word. I looked down and saw that she had written a four-page letter, documenting several concerns she had about the public school system. She had written her name at the top of the first page. I was speechless. I left the office, found the student and asked her what prompted her to write the letter. She explained that it was difficult for her, as a student, to find a forum to air her views and that she wanted to make a difference. She told me to use what she had written, and she asked me to use her real name. I had to explain once again that for ethical reasons, I could not. She seemed disappointed but still wanted me to use what she had written. Similarly, in 2011, after my final interview with Amani, I was showing her my research reports on her (that basically summarised Chapter 8 of this thesis). Again, though she approved of what was written, she begged me to use her real name. She explained that she was proud to have contributed to the research.

In thinking about potential positive effects my research would have on the participants, the most I hoped for was that I would open up a space for students and teachers to reflect on their learning and experiences – a space I felt they did not currently have in the school system. What I had not expected, however, was the level of commitment and agency that the participants displayed throughout the research. The incidents above led me to believe that perhaps, in a small way, my research had provided opportunities for these participants to exercise their agency and to 'feel proud', to use Amani's words, of what they contributed.

Patton (2002) highlights challenges to the protection of privacy by research participants insistent on 'owning their own stories' (p. 411); this raises issues about

whether such privacy policies are 'protective or patronizing' (p. 412). However, as neither I nor the participants know what kind of responses my research could trigger due to the rarity of this kind of study (though I doubt it would be negative), I do not feel justified in using real names. Though the participants agreed to the use of pseudonyms, I found this to be a potentially negative effect of my research in the sense that it may have lessened their ownership of the information.

This concern led me to think about exploitation in research. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) describe this as follows: '[Those studied] supply the information which is used by the researcher and get little or nothing in return' (p. 273). They highlight that researchers often study those 'less powerful than themselves' and stress that exploitation can happen even 'in those situations where the researcher has an intellectual and emotional commitment to the people being studied and seeks to establish a non-hierarchical relationship with them' (p. 274). I was often uncomfortable when I first looked at the student research workshop posters and when I first listened to the interview recordings. On numerous occasions, what I saw and heard did not match my propositions and did not fit into my preconceived notions. While I knew that this was inevitable and desirable, it was nonetheless uncomfortable as it meant relinquishing a great deal of control and power to the participants and to the data. As uncomfortable as it was, I do believe it safeguarded my own 'ethical reflexivity' and also facilitated the empowerment of the participants. Such empowerment is listed by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) as a potential way to 'give something back' (p. 274).

In assessing the potential negative effects on participants – or 'costs', to use Hammersley and Atkinson's (1995, p. 274) word, I took every precaution to ensure that teacher interviews and students research workshops were scheduled in advance to avoid disrupting timetables and learning. I also ensured that these encounters were not too long; each workshop lasted one class period, and if the interviews went over 40 minutes, I gave the participants the option of continuing on another day. I felt that these issues, coupled with the problem of anonymity, did not outweigh the agency and empowerment that resulted. It is, however, important to point out that

such costs and benefits are speculative and can never be measured (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has laid out the methodological framework of the research study. It has sought to highlight how the choices in design and analysis were made to coincide with the theoretical frameworks developed in Chapters 1 and 3. A key issue is the involvement of young people in the research and the ethical considerations encountered as a result. I believe that the costs of such an endeavour are far outweighed by the potential for agency and empowerment. As Osler (2010) suggests, the data generated from students were accompanied by data from official perspectives, teachers and my own observations. In analysing these various sources of evidence together, a deep understanding of the case is possible, as is a potentially deeper engagement with the overarching issues within the research aims and questions.

5 CITIZENSHIP AND HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN KUWAIT: AN ANALYSIS OF POLICIES AND AIMS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Kuwait's conceptualisation of citizenship education has most often been given the name 'muwāṭana'. This word, like its nearest English translation, 'citizenship', is inseparable from the notion of nationality. This is perhaps even more the case in Arabic, since the term 'muwāṭana' stems from the word 'waṭan', or 'nation'. The word has appeared in numerous official education documents, and it has often been defined as or at the very least linked to ideas of loyalty to and love and defence of country. Despite educational directives using this terminology, however, no recent purposive curricular or systemic agenda for citizenship or human rights education existed at the secondary level prior to 2006.

As discussed in Chapter 1, maximal conceptions of citizenship education are underpinned by human rights and the universal concerns of justice and equality. In 2006, Kuwait adopted this human rights framework by adding a new module to the secondary school (grades 10, 11 and 12) curriculum: al-dustūr wa ḥuqūq al-insān, or The Constitution and Human Rights (CHR). Markedly absent from this module's philosophical foundations, goals and textbooks are the terms 'muwāṭana' and 'muwāṭin' (citizen or more literally, national). Instead, 'dimūqraṭiyya' (democracy), ''insān' (human), ''afrād' (individuals) and ''afrād al-mujteme'' (members of society) are used. The module's strong focus on universal human rights seems to be a step away from a purely national conception of citizenship education towards a more cosmopolitan one. However, official policy documents and initiatives still use the word 'muwāṭana', suggesting, perhaps, that the vision is to deliver human rights education (HRE) and/within a broader citizenship programme. This chapter draws on data from document analysis and student research workshops to explore Kuwait's experiences with citizenship education generally and the human rights approach espoused by the CHR module more specifically.

Section 5.2 analyses Kuwait's Development of Education Report (MoE, 2008a), its secondary school and social studies goals (MoE 2008b; 2010d) and its Islamic Studies curriculum (MoE, 2008d), revealing a fragmented approach to citizenship and human rights. Section 5.3 then explores the inception and proclaimed intentions of the CHR programme as well as its relegation to a one-year module. These are analysed in section 5.4 alongside Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report (the most comprehensive report on citizenship education to date) to uncover the CHR module's interruption of the goals laid out within it. In section 5.5, the disjuncture between official reports stressing *muwāṭana* (citizenship) and actual curricula are highlighted through an analysis of students' familiarity with the term. Finally, section 5.6 tracks the sites of students' learning about human rights, identifying the contribution of CHR as particularly significant.

5.2   CITIZENSHIP, NATIONALISM, DEMOCRACY, ISLAM AND HUMAN RIGHTS: A TANGLING OF TERMS

Kuwait's attempts at citizenship education, education for democratic citizenship and human rights education have not formed a cohesive, integrated approach. The main approach discussed in official policy statements, education reports and the national curriculum have focused on *muwāṭana* (national citizenship), though this has often been conflated with *waṭaniyya* (translated as both nationalism and patriotism), as demonstrated by its frequent association with loyalty to and love and defence of the country. As mentioned in Chapter 1, *waṭaniyya* focuses on emotional aspects at the expense of conscious, political understanding, which can promote social and political participation (Alharbi, 2010).

The 2004-2008 'National Report on the Development of Education' by Kuwait's Ministry of Education (2008a) describes a form of what could be called education for national *democratic* citizenship, though this is not stated explicitly anywhere in the report.

> Education is entrenching principles of democracy and respect for the Constitution, laws and regulations through political education, curricula and behavioural practices, as in [the] case of elections in schools [and] the teaching of some articles of the Constitution through the teaching

courses, and also seeks to strengthen the education concept of national unity and strengthen the spirit of citizenship [*muwāṭana*], loyalty and belonging to the homeland.[34] (MoE, 2008a, p. 23)

In this extract, the terms 'respect', 'laws', 'regulations', 'national unity', 'loyalty' and 'homeland' seem to point towards educating for a more traditional version of national citizenship. The terms 'democracy', 'the Constitution', 'political education', 'national unity', 'citizenship', and 'belonging' begin to expand on this traditional national approach.

Kuwait's Ministry of Education provides a list of nine overarching goals for state secondary education. Four of these deal specifically with issues pertaining to citizenship:

1. Building character that is capable of facing the future with emphasis on the national cultural and the Arab and the Islamic identity without extremism that prevents the development of global thinking
3. Establishing religious and behavioural values [...]
6. Acquiring the practical humanistic concepts of this era to harness them for the service of the society
7. Developing an appreciation for responsibility and working to gain awareness of one's rights and responsibilities[35] (MoE, 2008b, p. 14)

In the first goal, 'cultural' and 'national' are put together, implying that Kuwaitis share one culture. This ignores the plural nature of Kuwait discussed in Chapter 2. Moreover, both goal one and goal three cement religion into this imagined national identity. Goal six highlights the students' need for humanistic concepts; however, it does not clarify what is meant by 'practical' or the specificities of 'this era'. Goal seven begins and closes with mentions of responsibilities, but also crucially mentions the need for students to gain awareness of their rights.

It is important to point out here that Kuwait's unified system (described in Chapter 2), whereby students take the same classes in both social studies and sciences in grade 10 before specialising in one or the other in grades 11 and 12 (see Appendix 2.1), makes it particularly challenging to meet citizenship education goals. Leaving the CHR module aside for a moment, in grade 10, the only social studies module

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[34] This report was published in English, and the excerpt appears in its original form.

[35] All excerpts from official reports, aims and textbooks in this chapter were translated from Arabic by the author of this thesis unless otherwise stipulated.

students take is Arab World (al-waṭan al-'arabī). In grades 11 and 12, science-streamed students take none at all. All grade levels do, however, take Islamic Studies twice a week (and Qur'ān once a week). Prior to the introduction of the CHR programme in 2006, Islamic Studies was the only module that dealt in depth with human rights, which it presents from a purely Islamic framework that it posits is superior to any others. The grade 10 Islamic Studies chapter entitled 'Human Rights in Islam' begins:[36]

> The principles established by Islam to safeguard human dignity and rights remain in their glory and serenity more magnificent than anything created by humans or arrived at through progress. And if a person weighs what Islam has created against the various human laws arrived at through the human mind, he would realise that the Islamic principles related to human rights are more true and just and that they have guaranteed a person rights that are not present in other laws and they have safeguarded for a person his character and dignity. (MoE, 2007, p. 147)

What is troubling in this approach to rights and responsibilities is that Islam is simultaneously portrayed as a religion to be obeyed and as superior to manmade frameworks and laws. The chapters do not engage with manmade rights and responsibilities in any other way, suggesting that Islam takes precedence over such frameworks. This tension is furthered by the chapter entitled 'Punishments in Islam as Protection for the Individual and Society'. This chapter, in addition to describing the various types of punishments in Islam for not obeying Islamic laws, ends with the following section, entitled 'Civil Laws':

> With a quick look at the civil laws, we find they are lacking to protect the individual and society, and the proof of this is that we find an increase in crime and deviant behaviours, so either the punishments do not fit the crime or they are in excess to it. And in Western countries, despite the many laws in existence, we nonetheless find an increase in crime averages as well as the seeking of opportunities to violate the laws, in contrast to the God-fearing Muslim. In his faith in Islam, he fears God and does not commit prohibited acts, even when alone. (MoE, 2007, p. 164)

To begin with, no 'quick look' is taken at the existing legal system in the textbook, suggesting that the elusive 'we' have deemed their 'lacking' as reason enough to exclude them from the book altogether. Additionally, a false dichotomy is created

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[36] The content of the chapters dealing with human rights and responsibilities in the grade 10 Islamic Studies textbook (which deals with rights most explicitly) is summarised in Appendix 5.1.

between the West and Islam. The textbooks are rife with comparable 'us' and 'them' discourses.

The content within the listed rights is equally troublesome, with excerpts from the *Qur'ān* and *ḥadīth*[37] being presented to support rights without any discussion or engagement with the ideas themselves. For example, under the right to equality in the grade 10 textbook, three lines state that God created everyone from mud with equal rights and responsibilities. The textbook then presents an excerpt from the *ḥadīth* against racism and another from the *Qur'ān* stating that men and women were created in the same way. However, the latter does not explicitly declare equality between men and women. This is particularly problematic given that several interpretations of Islamic laws do not treat men and women equally (e.g. marriage and inheritance laws, among others). By choosing an excerpt that merely states they were created in the same way leaves room to justify such unequal treatment. Indeed, the following chapter on punishments presents an excerpt that justifies men hitting 'disobedient' women, without similar punishment deemed acceptable for men. This example highlights the tension between Islamist views and a universal framework; within the latter, beating a woman would be conceived of as an attack on her dignity.

By stressing the primacy of Islam and punishments for non-compliance and by failing to address the patriarchal bias of Islamic interpretations, the Islamic Studies module puts Islam in tension with all other rights frameworks – legal, constitutional and universal. This is clearly seen in the chapter entitled 'Responsibilities of the Muslim Leader'. Among the listed responsibilities is the enforcement of Islamic *shari'a* law. Such content is at odds with Kuwait's democratic aspirations as outlined in Article 2 of the Constitution. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Islamist MPs have already demanded that Islamic *shari'a* be named in the Constitution as *the* source of legislation rather than *a* source. Its inclusion in the curriculum may serve to support this change in the future at the expense of more maximal interpretations of human rights.

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[37] In Islam, the *ḥadīth* are those acts, sayings, etc. attributed to the prophet Muhammad rather than the *Qur'ān*.

In addition to the overarching secondary school goals mentioned above, the Social Studies Department have their own list of goals and outcomes, which includes a subsection entitled 'The Civic Aspect' (al-jānib al-medenī). Nine outcomes are listed:

1. Loving of his nation and feeling belonging to it
2. Conscious of his rights and committed to his responsibilities
3. Respectful of societal systems and laws
4. Active participant in general life through his surroundings
5. Appreciative of the value of work and engaged in group work
6. Accomplishing of work that shows his representation of citizenship values and teamwork
7. Embodying of the values of tolerance, solidarity and group work, opposed to violence
8. Protective of his environment, able to benefit from it
9. Able to choose a profession appropriate for his abilities and the aspirations of his society (MoE, 2010d, p. 23-24)

Interestingly, the teachers at Fatima School did not use the previously mentioned overarching goals in their planning of lessons, although they did have the list. In our interview in 2011, a Ministry official stated that this is largely due to the fact that the district inspectors do not often check that teachers are lesson planning with these goals in mind. Based on my interviews with teachers, I would add that the Ministry exams themselves do not take these goals into account and instead rely solely on the content within the textbooks (as will be further explored in the following chapter). In my three years at Fatima School, not one teacher had the list of social studies outcomes above. When I asked teachers, they said that the outcomes were the textbooks themselves. However, in 2012, in a follow-up visit with the interviewed Ministry official, I was presented with a booklet containing all the social studies goals and module outcomes that had been published in 2010. When I asked why I had not seen it in the case study school, he explained that the booklet is not distributed properly.

Nonetheless, the addition of the Constitution and Human Rights (CHR) module to the secondary curriculum in 2006 was an important step toward realising these goals and outcomes. It was also a potential bulwark against the Islamic dominance over the teaching of rights and responsibilities. With a focus on human rights and democracy, the module seemed to mark a shift away from the notion of 'muwāṭana' (national citizenship) to a more cosmopolitan conception. In addition, for those

grade 11 and 12 students majoring in science, it became the first and only social studies requirement, illustrating the lack of a purposive citizenship education strategy prior to 2006. The following section will explore the introduction of the module into the secondary school curriculum before analysing its contribution to Kuwait's broader citizenship education goals that were published in 2010.

5.3   CHR: THE INCEPTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

In the late 1990s, Kuwait's Ministry of Education set up a committee to address education on human rights and the Constitution; this committee was made up of members of the Ministry's Curriculum Department as well as specialists and teachers in the fields of international law, the Constitution, human rights, political science, foundations of education and curricula, social studies and the Arabic language. The background, principles and goals of this module were published in a pamphlet by the Ministry of Education entitled 'The State of Kuwait: Experience in the Field of Human Rights Education'.[38] This pamphlet was created to present to the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for Kuwait's Universal Periodic Review in 2010. It describes the philosophy agreed upon for this aspect of the curriculum as based on two guiding principles:

1. The importance of the Constitution and the articles within it that guide the relationship between individuals and the governing power or between individuals themselves, that organize their lives in the political, economic and social fields, and that ensure their rights and outline their duties.
2. The universality of human rights and the fact that they are an inseparable part of human life on which an individual's existence, happiness and prosperity rest; through these rights, human dignity, justice and equality are achieved, as well as all that achieves the well-being of the individual and society through an integrated approach. (MoE, 2010a, p. 8)

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[38] Interestingly, the CHR outcomes are not included in the social studies goals and outcomes booklet mentioned in the previous section. The interviewed Ministry official also confirmed for me that teachers did not get a copy of the pamphlet discussed in this section, which included overarching aims but again, not outcomes. Nonetheless, the pamphlet reflects the official intended aims of the module, and these are therefore analysed in this and following sections. The pamphlet was created in both Arabic and English. The English excerpts are therefore original, though spelling and grammar mistakes were corrected by the author of this thesis using the Arabic as a reference. The document is referred to in this thesis as the CHR information pamphlet.

While the first principle describes citizenship, it does not use the word *'muwāṭana'*. Instead, the words 'rights', 'individual', 'relationship' (between the individual and the State as well as between individuals themselves), 'dignity' 'justice' and 'equality' are used, suggesting a less nationalistic conception of citizenship. This terminology continues through the module's goals and textbooks. It thus leaves the door open for expanding the exclusive national narrative and identity discussed in Chapter 2 (and further developed in section 5.4). Describing people as humans and as members of society rather than as nationals strips back the various layers of exclusivity and untangles rights and citizenship from the 'national'.

Three sources were identified for the curricular approach: Islamic *shari'a*, international agreements and the Kuwaiti Constitution. The committee then set seven general goals for the curricular module:

1. Learner awareness of the importance of democracy, the Constitution and human rights
2. Learner familiarity with the knowledge and information related to democracy, the Constitution and human rights
3. Preparation of the learner to live in accordance with the principles of democracy, the Constitution and human rights
4. Promotion of human values related to the Constitution and human rights in the learner
5. Formation of positive attitudes towards democracy, the Constitution and human rights in the learner
6. Development of feelings of loyalty and belonging in the learner to his nation
7. Development of critical thinking in the learner (MoE, 2010a, p. 9)

These goals clearly focus on human rights, the Constitution and democracy. Though loyalty to the nation is mentioned, it is linked to the feeling of belonging. Additionally, critical thinking is highlighted in these overarching goals rather than simply being listed as a skill. By presenting human rights from the three perspectives mentioned above, the CHR module did indeed have the potential to promote such criticality. The committee went on to decide that in order to realize these goals, education needs to address knowledge, skills and values; however, the content within these categories was not outlined in any detail beyond a simple definition of each category, inadvertently leaving room open for teachers and students to further develop these categories, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 7.

The module was named 'The Constitution and Human Rights' and was introduced to the three years of secondary school, starting with grade 10 in autumn 2006, grade 11 a year later and grade 12 in 2008. In speaking about citizenship education in the UK, Harber (2002) asks the question, 'What's in a name?' (p. 226). This question is particularly relevant to the CHR module. Once again, what is markedly absent from its name is the word *'muwāṭana'*, or citizenship. Though the module also addressed democracy, choosing a name that focuses on human rights highlights their significance.

The second question Harber (2002) asks about citizenship education is, 'Who will teach it?' (p. 227). When CHR was introduced, the Ministry expected social studies teachers to take it on. This included teachers of psychology, philosophy, geography and history. In June 2006, the summer before the module was first introduced, training was offered by the Ministry; this was delivered as a short series of lectures and workshops firmly based in the traditional didactic teaching methods of Kuwait's school system (which will be analysed in Chapter 6). This formal training was only offered in the first year and was not complemented by any citizenship or human rights education additions to the teacher-training programme at Kuwait University's Faculty of Education, from which most teachers in the government school system graduate.

Moreover, while introducing education about human rights and democracy as a separate subject ensured it was not lost in the curriculum or appropriated by other subjects, its incorporation into the existing authoritarian structures (to be described in Chapter 6) lessened its potential impact. The single, 45-minute subject was added to the curriculum once a week, and teachers were given the same type of timetable as they were for other classes. This ensured they made their way through the textbooks towards the exams, which, though not created by the Ministry but rather the district (as explained in Chapter 2), nonetheless made CHR part of the standardized, grade-focused national curriculum. This failure to address potential limitations within the current teaching environment that could diminish the efficacy of the CHR module extended to the drafting of the substantive content of its

textbooks, which primarily presented 'factual' information and asked simple recall questions (as Chapter 7 will explore in detail).

Nonetheless, the substantial content on human rights within the CHR programme was a radical addition to the Kuwaiti curriculum, one that presented an alternative perspective to that offered by the Islamic Studies module. However, in the autumn of 2008, two years after the programme was first introduced and the same year it was finally introduced to grade 12, the grade 10 module was cancelled. This was followed by the grade 11 module a year later in 2009. In the autumn of 2010, a new, condensed, one-year version of the three-programme was introduced to grade 12 only. As explained in Chapter 1, the only reason in print for this rollback appeared in the aforementioned CHR information pamphlet presented for Kuwait's 2010 Universal Periodic Review. It states that the Ministry decided to limit this module to grade 12, when students are 'ready' for its 'specialised information about [...] human rights' (MoE, 2010a, p. 12).

Apart from an analysis of the grade 10 textbook by a Ministry-appointed committee, no official studies were carried out to assess the effectiveness of the module before its phase out. In addition, no academic research was published that explored this module's contribution to the curriculum apart from two articles by the author of this thesis (Al-Nakib, 2011; 2012). Moreover, while the 'specialised information' regarding human rights was deemed too much for students in grades 10 and 11 in the case of the CHR module, the equally 'specialised' Islamic rights information in the grade 10 Islamic Studies module presented in section 5.2 continued to be taught.

5.4   CHR AND THE CITIZENSHIP STRATEGY REPORT

As mentioned in Chapter 1, in the summer of 2010 before the one-year version of CHR replaced the three-year programme, Kuwait's Ministry of Education published a report entitled, 'Strategy for reinforcing the concepts of citizenship, loyalty and belonging among young people through educational curricula in Kuwait' (MoE, 2010b), outlining the state's new citizenship education agenda in great detail. This

section explores this strategy, with particular attention to the human rights component and to how the CHR module contributes to or indeed hinders this new approach.

The report begins by contextualizing its proposed strategies, identifying eight challenges facing the country, summarised below:

1. A weakening in the status of the law
2. Multiple citizenships and feelings of belonging to different ideological, tribal and class levels as a hindrance to social integration and national unity
3. Focus on the individual versus the common good
4. Lack of focus on 'bright national history and cultural heritage' that protect Kuwaiti identity
5. Demands for rights without fulfilling minimal responsibilities, and unwillingness of population to change culture of dependence
6. Inappropriate borrowing of behaviours from societies foreign to Kuwait culturally, religiously, socially and historically
7. Regional security and military challenges and Kuwait's relationship to these new conditions
8. Cultural, economic, political and intellectual effects of globalization on cultural identity, the state, borders and sovereignty

The first listed challenge is perhaps not surprising, given the strongly Islamic perspective within the curriculum that is in tension with a more secular approach, including the aforementioned criticism of laws that do not strictly adhere to *shari'a*.

Challenge number five is the only one to mention rights explicitly. However, rather than mentioning the ongoing issues in the country related to discrimination or human rights violations, it states,

> The existence of an incorrect social culture driving many citizens [*muwāṭinīn*] to urgently demand their economic, social, service, cultural, health and educational rights without fulfilling even minimal responsibilities and without the willingness to accept attempts by the State to change this culture or consumer mentality that is completely dependent on the State. (MoE, 2010b, p. 24)

The wording and tone of this perceived challenge is problematic for three reasons. First, as Osler and Starkey (2010) point out, rights should not be contingent on fulfilling duties towards the state. The second issue with this statement is its criticism of the 'consumer mentality' of citizens. The wording suggests that this is a negative mentality. However, the *jawda* initiative launched by the Ministry of

Education in 2009 (introduced in Chapter 2 and further explored in Chapter 6) is based on reconceptualising students as consumers of knowledge, thus perpetuating the perceived negative mentality through the discourse of educational approaches. Moreover, development reports in Kuwait have also continued to use market discourse and assign monetary awards to promote education (see, for example, Tony Blair Associates, 2009). Finally, the wording of the statement places the blame for the culture of dependence wholly on the citizenry, who are 'unwilling' to accept changes to this culture. However, as Chapter 2 revealed, this dependence was in fact encouraged by the government in an attempt to retain power. The implicit solution in the tone of the statement above is to shift focus away from rights and onto responsibilities. Putting this perceived 'challenge' side by side with the decision to rollback the three-year CHR programme – the entire second year of which dealt exclusively with rights – seems to bring the CHR module more in line with this new focus. It also reinstates Islamic Studies as the main vehicle for HRE.

Five of the remaining six challenges deal with the issue of national unity and identity, which are perceived as being under threat by external forces, by individual interests and by a lack of focus on the nation's 'bright history'. Partrick (2012) argues that Gulf States, including Kuwait, seek to focus national identity above all other identities and to assert a supposedly indigenous culture. Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report confirms this stance by conflating citizenship and national identity and focusing on national identity above all other subnational or transnational affiliations. The second listed challenge states the following:

> The obstacles standing in the way of social integration due to multiple citizenships and ideological, tribal or class affiliations that create cracks in the structure of the State and in the ties of national unity. (MoE, 2010b, p. 24)

By putting ideological and tribal affiliations with class, it posits that such feelings of belonging are problematic to national unity. However, by instead advocating a 'national identity', the assumption is that this is an agreed upon category, which is not the case. As discussed in Chapter 2, analysing national identity from a purely legal perspective, it is currently only 'original' Kuwaiti adult male citizens who are fully recognised and who enjoy the full range of rights and protections in Kuwait.

Analysing national identity by adding the element of belonging, the group can be further limited to 'original' Kuwaiti adult male citizens who are Sunni ḥadhar.

The report also lists feelings of belonging to the Arab and Muslim worlds as values to be fostered, suggesting that an Islamic identity is necessarily part of Kuwaiti citizenship. In doing so, the report ignores the tiny Kuwaiti Christian population and the much larger expatriate Christian and Hindu populations. In addition, the Islamic Studies content and pedagogical methods assume a patriarchal interpretation of Islam as finished, expecting obedience without discussion and debate. This leaves no room for anyone to interpret the religion differently or to opt out. Indeed, the national grade 10 Islamic Studies textbook states that death is the Islamic punishment for apostates. This precludes Kuwaitis from asserting an alternative religious identity, a clear violation of Article 18 of the UDHR, which guarantees the right to change one's religion.

It is not just Islam that is built into the imagined Kuwaiti identity, but particularly a Sunni perspective of Islam. In 2010, the former Minister of Education was almost forced to resign over a dispute about an Islamic Studies exam. Concerns were raised by a number of Shiite MPs over a few exam questions that they described as heretical and that they argued cause sectarian tension. The former Minister removed the questions, triggering a huge backlash from Sunni Islamist MPs. MP Falah Al-Sawagh stated the following:

> We will not allow the minister to amend the curricula, and nobody will dare mess with the faith of Kuwaiti people. This issue is not only a red line, it is multiple red lines together; messing with these issues could shake the whole country if the Minister does not stop.[39]

The quote suggests that 'the faith of the Kuwaiti people' is a singular one. MP Walid Al-Tabtabae, another Sunni Islamist, shared this view, stating, 'Ask your father and your grandfather about the belief of Kuwaitis, and they will tell you'[40]; this suggests that those MPs who requested the change in the curriculum are, in his view, not 'Kuwaiti'.

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[39] As reported by Ahmad Saeid on Kuwait Times online on 1 July 2010 (http://www.kuwaittimes.net/read_news.php?newsid=NjM0NjcxODkx).
[40] Ibid.

The eight challenges in the 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report make no mention of extremism nor what Kuwaiti reformist Ahmed Al-Baghdadi (2006; 2007) describes as the introduction of Islam into every teaching subject. This omission is perhaps not surprising given that ministers who have tried to alter Islamic curricula have come under attack from Islamist MPs (as we have just seen[41]). The strategy report also fails to address challenges specific to the context of education, and the situation of women is completely ignored.

Moreover, following the cue of the Sunni Islamists and their 'multiple red lines', the Minister banned schools from discussing sectarian issues altogether a few months after the exam incident above.[42] Such a directive implies that despite the goals listed in the report, the approach to citizenship education seeks to focus on Kuwaiti identity as a singular category by ignoring the reality of plurality both within and across individuals. As will be developed in Chapter 7, the CHR module, while also meant to foster loyalty and belonging to the State, did not do so by conceptualising plurality as something to be ignored. In fact, with a focus on human rights and democracy, plurality was implicit.

Six areas of focus for the formulation of the strategy for citizenship education are listed after the challenges. Once again, four out of six of these areas discuss national unity and identity as desirable conditions, as demonstrated by phrases like 'protecting Kuwaiti essence', 'deviant behaviours that are foreign to Kuwaiti cultural identity and that threaten our intrinsic constants' and 'overcoming particular affiliations' (p. 25). However, one of the areas of focus is identified as follows:

> Emphasis on the value of dialogue, human rights and respect for the opinions of others in young people, and the utilisation of democratic means to resolves conflicts of opinion and interest; this makes it possible for children in the future to treat the deficiencies in political practice in society. (MoE, 2010b, p. 25)

Though this point conceptualises students as future participants rather than

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[41] See Tétreault (2000a) for discussion of the no-confidence motion against another former Minister who attempted to reduce the Islamic content of the curriculum.
[42] As reported on Arab Times online on 24 September 2010 (http://www.arabtimesonline.com/NewsDetails/tabid/96/smid/414/ArticleID/159916/reftab/96/t/Mudhi-instructs-schools-not-todiscuss-sectarian-issues/Default.aspx).

participants who can invoke change now, it does stress the role of human rights, dialogue and democracy as *loci* for political reform. As will be uncovered in Chapter 7, the CHR module was a potential anchor for this as well as for the three overarching goals outlined in the report:

1. Gaining civic knowledge by learning about the principles of democracy, human rights, the Constitution, political and social institutions, and historical and cultural diversity.
2. Fostering values and attitudes that an individual needs to be responsible and good, and this is achieved through gaining self-respect, respect for others, equality, dignity and responsible participation.
3. Developing skills for active participation in society, and this is achieved through communication skills, sharing information and ideas, dialogue, critical thinking, volunteering, working with others, independent learning and problem-solving. (MoE, 2010b, p. 26)

These goals stand in stark contrast to the tone of the previous challenges and areas of focus; this can be explained by the fact that the first part of the report, outlining the challenges, was written by a different author than the desired outcomes, which were written by one of the authors of the CHR textbooks. 'Human rights', 'equality', 'dignity', 'participation', 'dialogue', 'critical thinking', 'independent learning' and 'problem solving' are terms that were absent from the 'National Report on the Development of Education' mentioned in section 5.2. All these terms expand on the concepts added to the curriculum by the CHR goals, suggesting that this strategy would continue to build on the CHR programme to perhaps develop a more comprehensive citizenship program. These overarching goals as well as the lists of specific goals under knowledge, skills and values (to be addressed in Chapter 7) suggest the need for a curricular component as well as opportunities for participation and a supporting ethos. However, rather than expanding the CHR programme, it was reduced to a one-year module in the autumn term following the release of the 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report. While this decision does not coincide with the goals in the report, it does seem to support the approach hinted at in the identified challenges, with less focus on rights and a return to nationalism and loyalty to the State.

5.5   CITIZENSHIP STRATEGIES VS. CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Despite the repeated use of the term *muwāṭana* (citizenship) in official educational directives, students at Fatima School were not familiar with the word. When it came to the citizenship (*muwāṭana*) posters in the student research workshops carried out over three years, every single group asked me what the word meant. This includes both the groups taking CHR and those not taking it. It also includes the students in the academic year after the 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report was published. I gave a purposely brief explanation of citizenship as people living in a country and having rights and responsibilities. While those taking CHR were then able to respond on their posters, those not taking CHR still appeared confused. The table below outlines the most frequently made comments by this latter group about their citizenship learning.

2009 Grade 10	There is nothing in curriculum about citizenship. I wish we had the CHR module.
2010 Grade 10	I did not learn about it. I do not know what it is.
2010 Grade 11	I do not know what it is. I learned about it in the flag-raising/national day celebrations.

Table 5.1: Where students not taking CHR felt they were learning about citizenship

It is interesting that half of the tenth graders in 2009 (the first 10th grade class after CHR's cancellation) mentioned the CHR module on their citizenship posters, as illustrated in the sample quotes below:

> In our curriculum, we do not take CHR and we don't study it to become more educated about citizenship. (grade 10 student, 2009; no CHR)

> In the curriculum, there is nothing about citizenship to learn about it seriously, and I wish we had a module that teaches us about citizenship like the CHR module. (grade 10 student, 2009; no CHR)

On the other hand, students taking CHR identified it most frequently as their source of learning on citizenship. They also raised questions about the ambiguity between citizenship and nationality as well as concerns over the resulting racism and discrimination (as will be discussed in Chapter 7). Unlike those not taking CHR, only a

small minority of those taking CHR mentioned 'love of country' as part of their learning on citizenship, and they hardly mentioned national celebrations and the morning flag-raising as sites of citizenship learning. A few of the grade 12 students enrolled in the three-year programme in 2010 who did mention them still seemed to sense a difference between *muwātana* and *wataniyya*:

> Maybe I saw citizenship in the morning line-up when we raise the flag and hail it in loud voices because that is a duty on us; I don't really know the meaning of citizenship and we didn't really learn a lot of things about this word, so maybe what I am talking about leans more towards nationalism [*wataniyya*]. (grade 12 student, 2010; third year of three-year CHR)

> I think that the flag-raising is the thing with the most nationalism [*wataniyya*], and school activities promote citizenship [*muwātana*]. (grade 12 student, 2010; third year of three-year CHR)

One grade 12 student used the term 'belonging' to the nation, rather than 'love of' the nation. The only two who used 'love of' the nation also mentioned learning not to discriminate between people as part of that love and educational progress as demonstrative of that love, respectively.

Interestingly, the only students enrolled in the one-year CHR module who mentioned *wataniyya* in their responses used it interchangeably with *muwātana*.

> And to me, citizenship [*muwātana*] means feeling nationalism [*wataniyya*] and belonging to the country and love of country and asking to provide for the country and protect it and defend it and represent it always [...] and to also protect its progress and development. (grade 12 student, 2011; only year of one-year CHR)

> The national anthem and national [*wataniyya*] feelings that strengthen our love for our country Kuwait. (grade 12 student, 2011; only year of one-year CHR)

> Topics on nationalism [*wataniyya*] are presented to the students every year. (grade 12 student, 2011; only year of one-year CHR)

Moreover, while none of the students in the three-year programme discussed rights and responsibilities as explicitly linked on their citizenship posters, students taking the one-year module did, stressing the latter.

> But I don't understand the meaning of this word [*muwātana*] and I don't think it has anything about a human's rights and his responsibilities. It is all

> responsibilities towards the State. (grade 12 student, 2011; only year of one-year CHR)

> Citizenship is that every person who lives on the land of his country has rights from the government and he has responsibilities in return for these rights. (grade 12 student, 2011; only year of one-year CHR)

> We learned in school that citizenship means that an individual must give the State some things that help it develop and progress and also the State has to provide some of the means that help us to work and progress. (grade 12 student, 2011; only year of one-year CHR)

This shift in focus from rights to responsibilities toward the State potentially reflects the new approach to the challenges laid out in the 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report (discussed in section 5.4). However, though these students mention responsibilities more than their three-year CHR counterparts, they do not display less dependency. Overall, their tone, though equally frustrated, is in fact less confident and independent and more passive than those taking the three-year CHR (as Chapter 7 will uncover further). Nonetheless, like those taking the three-year programme, these students mentioned CHR most frequently as a site of citizenship learning at school.

Therefore, although the students in the research workshops were not familiar with the term *muwāṭana*, once it was explained, those taking CHR identified the module as being where they learn most about it. This group also named CHR most frequently as the site of learning on human rights, surpassing mentions of Islamic Studies. The following section will explore the interruption CHR presented to the Islamic dominance over HRE identified in section 5.2.

5.6   SITES OF LEARNING ON HUMAN RIGHTS: CHR VS. ISLAMIC STUDIES

The concept that students seemed most familiar with during the research workshops was human rights. These were the only posters on which students actually made references to specific things they were learning, including naming specific rights from the Constitution, international agreements and Islam. Students also linked these rights to democracy, arguing that as citizens with rights, they had the right to

be heard and to be involved in decision-making processes. It was on these posters that the students mentioned CHR most frequently.
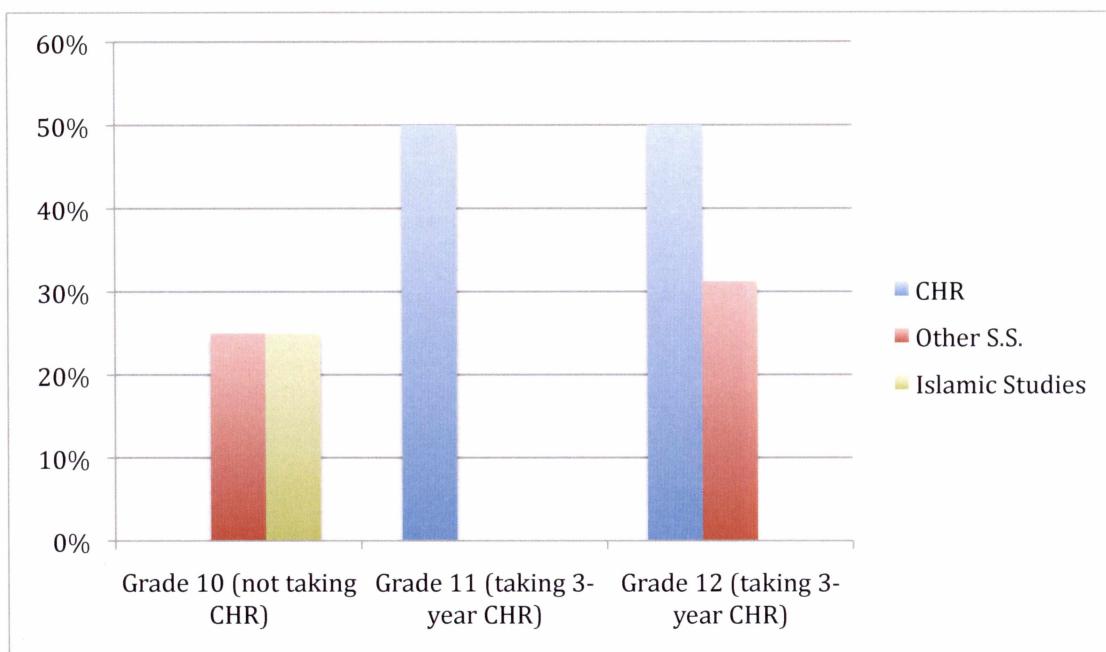
Figure 5.1: Where students in 2008-2009 said they learned about human rights

During the 2008-2009 academic year (see Figure 5.1), half the grade 11 and 12 students in the three-year CHR module mentioned it as the site where they learned about human rights. Many of those who did not mention it by name nonetheless made references to specific learning that could be traced directly back to the CHR textbooks (though these were not counted in the figures above and below). None of the students mentioned Islamic Studies. Those 12th graders who mentioned other social studies modules did so by name, highlighting topics they felt were related to rights. None of the grade 11 students mentioned other modules, which is perhaps not surprising since the grade 11 CHR module dealt exclusively with human rights. The 10th grade students that year were not taking CHR as this was the year it was cancelled from grade 10. They were, however, taking Islamic Studies, which, as outlined in section 5.2, dealt heavily (and problematically) with Islamic rights. These students identified Islamic Studies as well as their social studies module (Arab World) most frequently as their source of learning on human rights.
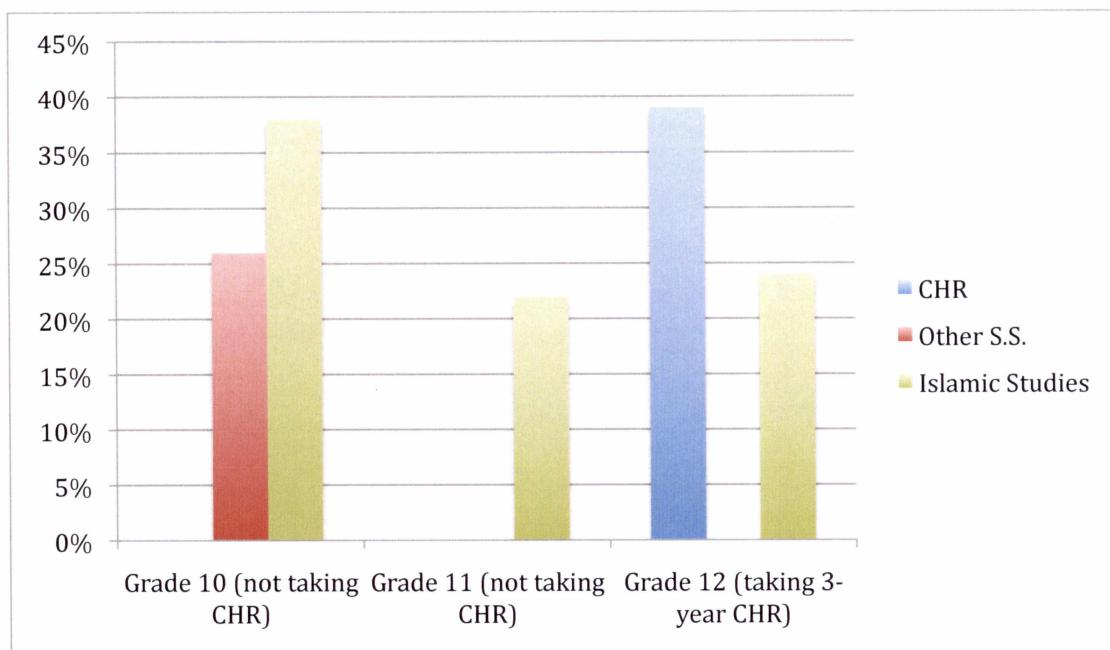
Figure 5.2: Where students in 2009-2010 said they learned about human rights

During the 2009-2010 academic year (see Figure 5.2), CHR was cancelled from grade 11. Students in grade 11 identified only Islamic Studies as teaching about human rights. This is a significant shift from the year before. The grade 12 students, who were the last group to complete the three-year CHR programme before the one-year programme replaced it the following year, still mentioned it most frequently as their site of learning about human rights. Interestingly, however, while in the previous year some students also mentioned other social studies modules, the only other module named by these students was Islamic Studies. This omission of other modules is particularly surprising given that this was a larger sample of students than the previous year. More mentions of Islamic Studies than other social studies modules were made across all three grade levels during this year than the previous one. This increase in Islamic Studies being mentioned as sites of learning about human rights supports two arguments. First, it supports Al-Baghdadi's (2007; 2008) claims that Islamic influence over the curriculum is increasing. Second, it demonstrates that CHR was an interruption to the dominance that Islamic Studies had on human rights teaching. While this increase could be dismissed as a product of varying sample sizes over the two years, this does not seem likely given the consistent increase in mentions of Islamic Studies across all three grade levels.

During the 2010-2011 academic year, the one-year version of the CHR module was introduced for grade 12 students only. Of the students in the research workshop that year, only approximately 14% mentioned CHR as where they learned about human rights. This decrease is not surprising given that in the three-year CHR programme, an entire year was devoted solely to rights. This group did not make references to any other modules; because this was a science-streamed class, the students took no social studies modules besides CHR. While none of the students explicitly mentioned Islamic Studies, its influence was certainly present, as evidenced by comments such as the following:

> Not everywhere are children's rights enforced. For example, in Islamic countries they are applying the rights of children, but in foreign countries they violate the rights of children by killing, torturing and abandoning them. (grade 12 student, 2011; only year of one-year CHR)

> In the State of Kuwait, there are laws that do not match some of the crimes. For example, there is no appropriate punishment for adultery. (grade 12 student, 2011; only year of one-year CHR)

> There are many Arab regimes that violate human rights. Saudi Arabia applies all the Islamic regulations, except for equality between women and men. (grade 12 student, 2011; only year of one-year CHR)

These comments are directly traceable to the Islamic Studies textbooks. In the first comment, Islamic countries are contrasted with 'foreign' countries, the former being perceived as more protective of rights. This echoes the grade 10 textbook's dichotomy between the West and Islam addressed earlier. The second comment, though not mentioning Islam explicitly, finds fault with Kuwait's civil laws. In the chapter on punishments mentioned above, the Islamic Studies module lists 'adultery' as among those crimes whose punishments have been laid out by Islam and are beyond question (for adultery, it is stoning to death, though this is not mentioned in the chapter) and that only the *'imām* (or Islamic leader) (here the textbook qualifies this with 'i.e. the ruler', thus implying they are the same) can decide whether a case is one of adultery. The final quote refers to Saudi Arabia's full application of Islamic *shari'a* law as a positive example of a regime that supports human rights, echoing the aforementioned desire of some Islamist MPs to make *shari'a* the only source of legislation in Kuwait.

The data therefore demonstrate that in the years during which the CHR module was a three-year programme, it provided an alternative perspective on human rights to that which was presented by Islamic Studies. However, once the module was reduced to one year, its impact was lessened. CHR has been reduced to a weekly lesson in grade 12; for science students, it is the only social studies module they take after Arab World in grade 10. Islamic Studies, on the other hand, continues to be taught to students in both the arts and the sciences twice a week (plus an additional *Qur'ān* class once a week) in grades 10, 11 and 12.

5.7   CONCLUSION: CHR AS AN ANCHOR FOR CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Academic analysis is inevitably critical in nature. However, to sustain a belief in the possibility of change, particularly in research on education, it is necessary to highlight alternatives that have been uncovered along the way. As previously mentioned, Wright (2007), in his discussion of envisioning real utopias, calls these alternatives 'waystations'. While the CHR module had its limitations, as revealed by the analysis in this chapter (and as will be further explored in Chapter 7), it did provide a potential waystation on Kuwait's journey to realising its long-named but little-enacted citizenship education ideals. By anchoring the module in human rights and the Constitution, space was created to untangle citizenship education from the inevitable connotations of the 'national'. It also prioritised the criticality that is so often left out of broader citizenship education goals in favour of allegiance to the state and patriotism (as argued by Osler & Starkey, 2010). In addition, the module provided an interruption to the Islamic dominance over the curriculum that has become increasingly pronounced with the rise of Islamists in parliament.

The following chapter explores the context of the Kuwaiti school system within which CHR is enacted, highlighting tensions discovered at Fatima School that may limit this enactment. Chapter 7 then analyses the substantive content of the human rights approach taken by the CHR module in depth alongside the broader 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report and the decision to reduce the programme to one year. It also examines Fatima School's rearticulation of the module in order to uncover

possible alternatives.

6 EXPLORING THE CONTEXT OF HRE: POPULATIONS, SPACES AND ETHOS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Human rights education (HRE) does not occur in a vacuum (Lansdown, 2002). As introduced in Chapter 1, maximal approaches that encompass education *through* citizenship and education *through* human rights stress the need for coherence between educational curricula and the contexts within which they are enacted. This chapter describes and analyses the context of the Kuwaiti case study school in order to highlight the tensions between Kuwait's authoritarian school system and the human rights curriculum espoused by the Constitution and Human Rights (CHR) module. Data from observations, interviews and student research workshops are used to explore the school populations with which students interact, the space and time within which they learn and the ethos that permeate their daily educational experiences.

Section 6.2 explores the homogenous school populations created by gender segregation, the exclusion of the country's majority expatriate population and school districting. Section 6.3 describes and analyses the built environment of the school and the physical and metaphorical walls that confine students within the educational context, identifying various characteristics of enclosure that facilitate this confinement. In section 6.4, specific mechanisms of control are highlighted to dissect the authoritarian ethos of Kuwaiti schools, focusing specifically on the didactic teaching methods, the centralised curriculum and exams and the hegemony of the nation, Islam and the corporation. Each of these three sections explores the effects of the contextual elements on human rights and HRE. Section 6.5 uncovers interruptions and opportunities afforded by the case study school's membership to UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet).

6.2   HOMOGENEITY: MASKING HUMAN RIGHTS TENSIONS

As described in Chapter 2, citizenship and identity in Kuwait are conceptualised in multi-layered binaries. There are Kuwaitis and 'non-Kuwaitis'. There are Muslims and 'non-Muslims'. There are 'original' citizens and naturalised citizens. There are men and women, adults and children. There are Sunnis and Shiites, bedouins and *ḥadhar*. In each of these binaries, the second group is the less recognised. In schools, these layers and binaries are often kept separate. This section explores the resultant homogenous school population and examines its role in masking inequalities and perpetuating the status quo.

6.2.1   SEGREGATION, EXCLUSION AND DISTRICTING

As I spent time at Fatima School for Girls, I noticed that gender was simultaneously completely absent and ever present. On the one hand, being in an all-girls school meant that girls could forget about boys and about their relative positioning to them and just be. In this sense, gender was absent; the girls were teenage students, and the majority of the concerns they raised in the research workshops (as will be uncovered in this chapter and the next) were related to this status. On the other hand, with no males around, injustices between the genders were masked, and the female gender was magnified instead.

Only two students at Fatima School mentioned gender inequality during the student research workshops. Both comments were related to the fact that Kuwait University requires higher grades for entry from females than males: 'The percentage for admittance into the university is less for boys than for girls and this is a clear prejudice. I mean prejudice, plain and simple' (grade 10 student, 2009). In 2011, Amani, one of the CHR teachers, explained to me in our interview that female students are already at a disadvantage because in her experience, female teachers are more strict when it comes to marking exam papers. She explained that when district teachers have to come together to double-mark the final exams of grade 12 students, she always notices that the male teachers are more lenient. This, she argues, means that the boys' grades are already more inflated than the girls' grades,

putting the latter at a double disadvantage when it comes to university acceptance. Perhaps not surprisingly, an opposite view to Amani's is usually taken by males. In her research interviews in Kuwait, Tétreault (2000a) found that students, parents and professors often argued that the superior academic achievement of females is unfair because culture dictates that they have to stay home and therefore can do nothing else but study. Tétreault (2000a) points out that Islamism appeals to 'angry young men at Kuwait University and in Kuwait's secondary schools': 'It is the image [Islamists] project of female subordination and its translation into policies erecting barriers to women's academic and economic advancement that attract large numbers of young men to support Islamists politically' (p. 161-162). Such barriers, including segregation, mean that they do not have to compete with women, thereby safeguarding their own positions and interests (Tétreault & Al-Mughni, 1995).

Islam is also used in schools to perpetuate particular gendered codes of behaviour. For example, girls at Fatima School learned in Islamic Studies that they have to be obedient wives; according to their textbook, failure to do so justifies their beating (as discussed in Chapter 5). There was also an expectation to wear the *ḥijāb* (headscarf). Girls who did not (a small minority in every class – usually between 10 and 20%) complained during the research workshops that they were constantly rebuked about the length of their skirts, which had to be below knee-level, and the colour of their hair if they chose to highlight or dye it. They also complained about the Ministry ban on trousers in girls' schools. Again, Islam was used to justify and enforce these dress codes.

It is difficult to question and challenge gendered roles and obligations from within a homogenised context that justifies separation and inequality through religion. With schools segregated from primary to university levels, men in Kuwait are more easily able to ignore the realities of women's experiences. It is also more challenging for women to access the power structures to invoke change. As Gordon (2006) argues, 'The exercise of citizenship requires the notion of the 'I' – perceiving oneself as a person who can enact. But that perception should be located in a more collective context, because the success of 'I' without recourse to 'we' is likely to be curtailed'

(p. 289-290). The various additional layers of separation within society – and, I would argue, schools – make change even more elusive as they hinder the formation of a female solidarity movement (Al-Mughni, 1993).

In addition to being segregated by gender, Fatima School, like all Kuwaiti public schools, excludes all other nationalities with few exceptions. The 'non-Kuwaiti' population at Fatima School was very small, mostly limited to the daughters of public school teachers. These students stood out in their otherness to the majority Kuwaiti population. During one of the 2010 grade 11 research workshops, the group of girls with the citizenship poster had finished writing and had started drawing Kuwaiti flags on the poster. When the time came to exchange posters, one 'non-Kuwaiti' girl was still finishing up colouring her Kuwaiti flag. A Kuwaiti girl in the next group, impatient to get the poster, called out, 'Come on! Give up! They are never going to give you a nationality!' The Arab girl did not respond and finished colouring her flag before handing the poster over. What this incident highlights is the knowledge young Kuwaitis have of the transient status of expatriates in Kuwait. It also demonstrates the dominance of the Kuwaiti population over the expatriates (as argued by Longva, 1997). Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report lists 'respect for foreign workers' among the values that an education in citizenship should foster. However, by simultaneously preventing these workers and their children from attending public schools and receiving a free education, the Kuwaiti educational system perpetuates the separation fostered by the State's 'us' and 'them' policies (outlined in Chapter 2) that keep expatriates' status in the country subordinate and precarious.

Closely related to this division is the resultant Muslim population of schools. At Fatima School, over 99% of the students and 100% of the teachers were Muslim. This majority facilitates ignoring the reality of religious plurality in Kuwait. It also supports the hegemony of Islam in schools (which will be developed in section 6.4.3).

The situation becomes even more complicated as one moves from these clear

categories to the less obvious ones. Reading through the class rosters at Fatima School, I noticed that the majority of students came from well-off, predominantly Sunni *ḥadhar* families. This perhaps goes some way in explaining why students did not mention tensions between Sunnis and Shiites or bedouins and *ḥadhar* during the research workshops. As well-off Sunni *ḥadhar*, the students at Fatima School belong to the more secure groups within society (as discussed in Chapter 2). The 2010 Ministry ban on discussions of a sectarian nature (discussed in Chapter 5) may have also played a part. Only one student at Fatima School – a grade 11 student in 2010 (enrolled in the three-year CHR programme) – mentioned sectarian tensions within the school context; she did so on the citizenship poster:

> One of the negatives aspects of the educational system and particularly the Islamic Studies module is that it points to certain faiths and labels their beliefs blasphemy, and this does not support the national spirit but causes a destabilisation in principles, and it plants the spirit of separation in the souls of citizens.

As one moves across the various districts, the school populations change. These district lines divide across class, sect and cultural, economic and political backgrounds, resulting in schools that mirror and perpetuate the separations within their districts. The danger of this segregated approach lies in its potential to 'destabilise', to use the student's word from above – to perpetuate supremacist attitudes in schools that represent the dominant populations (male, Sunni, *ḥadhar*) and reactive angry attitudes in schools that represent the marginalised populations (female, Shiite, bedouin). It also prevents groups from engaging with each other and with difference.

6.2.2 PREFIGURING A MORE INCLUSIVE POPULATION IN SCHOOLS

A homogenous school population is in tension with subsection (1) (c) of Article 29 of the UNCRC, which Gamarnikow (2011) explains,

> is fundamentally concerned with a re-orientation of the aims, ethos and content of education from its traditional focus on, and promotion of, national identity and the imagined community of the nation state, to embrace *a recognition of the growing multi-cultural pluralism of contemporary nation states*. (p. 45; emphasis added)

Implicit in this recognition of the pluralism of the nation state is a school population that reflects it rather than masks it with segregation policies or glosses over it with curricula built around a static conception of national identity. Greene (1993b) argues that categorising people is done by conceptualising the self as 'predefined, fixed, separate' (p. 213). This categorisation in Kuwait, like other places in the world, tends to perpetuate hierarchical patriarchal structures to favour men of a certain class, sect and cultural background over all others. Rather than prefiguring a more inclusive society, the Kuwaiti public school is made up of homogenous populations and thus cements divisions between groups in order to preserve the current structure by sacrificing what Freire ([1970] 1993) calls the 'totality' in favour of the 'focalised view' (p. 122), whereby people are kept largely blind to issues outside their immediate context. In such a context, education about human rights remains theoretical, as do the skills and values of dialogue, empathy and solidarity. *Inclusive populations* within schools, on the other hand, have the potential to confront and bridge these divisions.

6.3 CLIMBING THE WALLS: THE LACK OF FREE SPACES

The environment within which students at Fatima School learn can be envisioned as shrinking concentric circles (Figure 6.1 below). The largest circles represent the national and local communities within which the school exists. In the case of Fatima School, these are Kuwait and the school district respectively. The area the school is in forms a smaller third circle. Each of these three contexts is kept firmly outside the fourth circle, the school itself, with seemingly impermeable walls. This circle contains an even smaller circle, referred to in a Ministry of Education directive as 'the fixed classroom', whereby students remain in one classroom for most of the day and teachers come to them. It is within this most confined of spaces that Kuwaiti students, both at Fatima School and other secondary schools, spend most of their school day, with exits into the larger school circle firmly controlled by bells and teachers. The lack of student-centred spaces and the rigid timetables and short breaks facilitate this control.

the fixed classroom

the school

the local community

the school district

the country
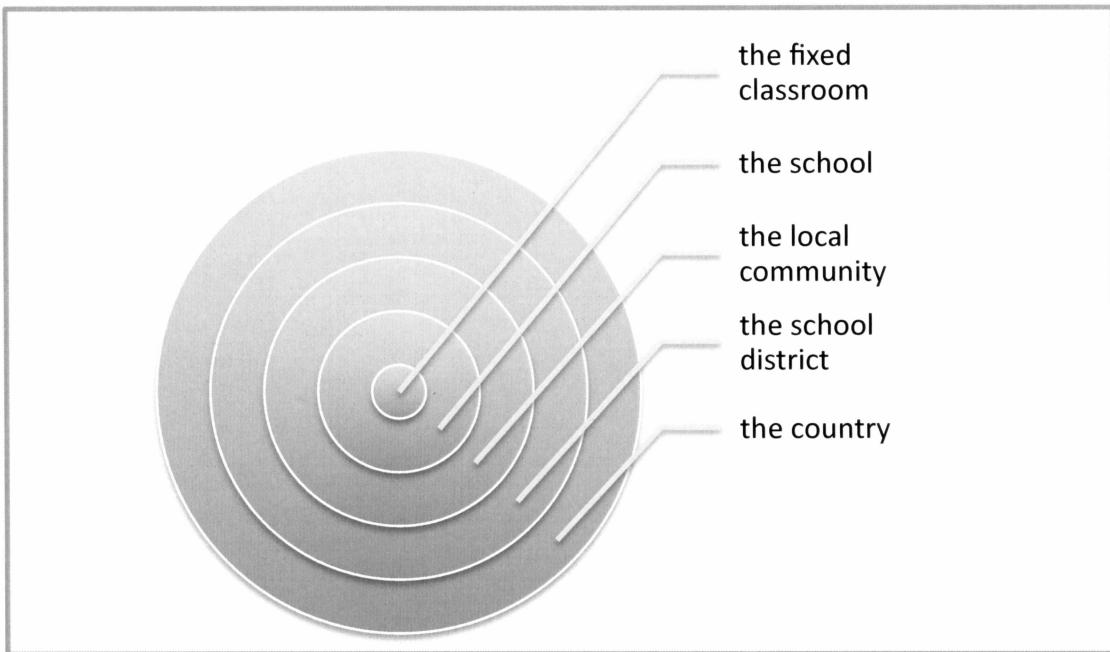
Figure 6.1: The Kuwaiti learning environment

This section explores the separation of the various circles from each other and identifies elements within each that support and perpetuate this separation. It is argued that this purposive enclosure of students hinders any efforts towards an authentic human rights curriculum and renders learning largely theoretical.

6.3.1 EVERYTHING BUT THE SCHOOL

As one enters Fatima School, one leaves behind the rest of the local, national and global communities. The walls of Fatima School are high, and there is a guard at the door ensuring that all who enter belong to the school. Students are dropped off in the morning by parents and drivers, and they remain in school until they are picked up again at the end of the day. Once they enter the grounds, going off-campus is strictly prohibited, and so the circles outside it are no longer easily accessible. This enclosure of students is not unique to Kuwait. It is commonly taken for granted that such measures are, in fact, for students' own safety and protection. However, students at Fatima School challenged this assumption in the research workshops I conducted with them.

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Though many students at Fatima School stated that they did not know what citizenship (*muwāṭana*) was or that they did not receive citizenship education at school (as we saw in the previous chapter), several students did link citizenship learning to fieldtrips into the community; five grade 11 students in 2010, for example, referred to trips they had taken to hospitals, the parliament building, Failaka Island and two Kuwaiti museums (though four of the students only named one trip each and one named two). Many students from all grade levels also said they wanted more fieldtrips, which they argued would enhance both their learning and their morale; however, they lamented the fact that such fieldtrips were often promised and rarely delivered or delivered unequally. During my observations at Fatima School in 2009, I was sitting in a classroom observing a lesson when a teacher walked in, pointed to several students and announced they were going on a fieldtrip to the offices of the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). I was invited to go along, and when I later asked why some students were picked over others, I was told that these were members of the student council, who, as will be discussed in further detail in section 6.4.1, were selected by the administration on the basis of good grades and behaviour. There was nothing about this trip that would make it geared specifically towards this group of council members. Fieldtrips were therefore viewed both by teachers and students at Fatima School as a reward rather than an opportunity to enhance learning.

During the KUNA fieldtrip, one girl asked the tour guide whether they had female correspondents who travelled abroad to cover news. When the guide responded in the affirmative, the girl seemed very surprised and interested, and Amani asked her whether it was something she would want to do. The girl excitedly said she would. While this may seem like an insignificant encounter, it did, even if only for a brief moment, make one girl aware that her gender did not mean she did not have the right and the agency to pursue a career that involved independent travel. If this student came from a more conservative background, this may have been her only opportunity to come to such a conclusion.

The Ministry provides a list of approved fieldtrips, and trying to get approval for trips other than these is a lengthy process. Amani also explained to me in our interview in 2009 that the focus on exams leaves little time to allocate to such trips. Fatima School circumvented the bureaucracy and restrictions surrounding fieldtrips by occasionally inviting members of the community onto its campus, though even this required permission. While this offered an interruption to the separation of the school and the community, students nonetheless argued that they wanted to be the ones venturing outside the school walls. Having people come to them reinforces their role as passive recipients within the system. It also decontextualises the opportunities for learning about human rights and citizenship, thereby creating distance between reality and education.

Controlling students' access to the outside world also involved the banning of phones and cameras and the limiting of internet access. Many students expressed their dissatisfaction with these rules, arguing that they should be allowed to document their school experiences and memories with cameras. As for mobile phones, one grade 10 student in 2010 wrote in the research workshops, 'I don't see a convincing reason to forbid the mobile phone.' This simple statement highlights the disjuncture between taken-for-granted assumptions by adults and the desires and beliefs of young people. While the latter may not always reflect what adults think is in young people's best interests, the student quoted above is simply asking to be convinced as to why this is the case. As soon as the final bell rings, students at Fatima School retrieve their phones from their parents or drivers, and they have access to the world that the school tries to keep outside.

One grade 10 student in 2010 compared the enclosure she feels at school with that of a prison. I argue that such enclosure is particularly at odds with an education about, through and for human rights. In order for students to critically engage with human rights issues, their access to wider communities is important both to uncover various injustices but also to seek redresses for them. By locking them into school walls, the school system is facilitating their exclusion from human rights dialogues, thereby locking them into their current realities.

6.3.2 THE SCHOOL

Once students enter the walls of Fatima School, they are herded into straight lines by grade level in the central courtyard for the daily flag-raising. Teachers monitor their behaviour throughout this routine, and as soon as it is over, teachers lead each of the classes to their respective classrooms in lines. Once deposited in their 'fixed classroom', the students are continuously supervised by the various teachers who come to them for each of their lessons.

Students in Kuwaiti government schools, including Fatima School, have two breaks in their timetables – the first is 15 minutes long and the second 10. As I walked around campus in 2009 during these break periods, I noticed several significant issues with the layout of the school grounds and the use of space. First, because my observations were carried out in March and April and the temperature was already well into the thirties, I noticed that there was no shaded area outdoors where students could sit. The school 'garden' was cordoned off by locked aluminium doors. When I asked why this was the case, I was told that the cleaning staff use it to store their supplies. As I peeked inside, I could see a few mops and buckets as well as a couple of plastic chairs for the cleaners to sit on when not working. Though the courtyard where students lined up in the morning was partially covered, there were no seating areas; students were sitting on the hot pavement to eat their lunches. Because they spend the entire day in their 'fixed classroom', most students preferred not to stay there for their breaks.

This then led me to explore other indoor spaces where students could go. I soon discovered that due to a Ministry of Education regulation filed under health and safety, school cafeterias are banned from public secondary schools in Kuwait. Students at Fatima School had to bring lunch from home or buy an unhealthy snack from a small card table set up near the courtyard during break time; this is called the *maqṣaf*, or 'canteen', and the snacks are arranged by the Ministry. I found one room labelled, 'Student Lounge', but the door was locked. When I asked teachers if the room was used, I was told it was not, though no reason was provided beyond a shrug

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of the shoulders. I walked to the library, and though tables were set up, students were not allowed to be there during break times. The same was true of the main auditorium. I saw a mosque on campus, but it was locked. One of the teachers explained to me that it was always locked, even though students were expected to pray (as well as eat and use the bathroom) during their breaks; the second break is, in fact, called the prayer break on the official timetable. Even the bathrooms were shared with teachers, though the teachers' stall was locked.

The specific contribution of the built environment to the authoritarian structure of schools is an area that is underdeveloped in the literature on citizenship and human rights education. As the case study of Fatima School uncovers, denying students areas to sit down, congregate and readily communicate – intentionally or not – makes it easy to keep them in check. It can be argued that this further hampers opportunities for uncovering injustices and/or forging solidarities. Students at Fatima School often discussed these issues during the research workshops using human rights discourse. Several described the lack of a cafeteria and healthy food options and the lack of time and space for relaxation and fun as violations of their rights.

> The absence of a cafeteria – we have the right for there to be a designated space for eating. (grade 11 student, 2010)

> Teachers deny us the right to a break period, which is only 15 minutes anyway. (grade 12 student, 2011)

One of the most frequently raised themes across the grade levels was the appropriation of break times by various teachers who had not finished the day's lesson and needed extra time to cover information before the exams. This, the students complained, happened very frequently. Between that and praying, hardly any time was left to eat, let alone relax and communicate with their friends. Timetables are indeed another significant element of enclosure within Kuwaiti schools. The school day starts at 7:30 a.m. to coincide with the start of the workday in the government sector, within which the majority of Kuwaitis work. The end of the school day also coincides with the workday, with schools finishing at 1:35 p.m. This results in a comparatively short school day, with seven class periods and two breaks

divided across the six hours and five minutes (see Appendix 6.1). Five minutes are offered in between lessons for one teacher to gather up her belongings and the next teacher to make her way to the classroom; students do not leave the room during these transitional five minutes. In addition, this travel time is not afforded to students around their break times, as seen in the timetable in Appendix 6.1, which means that the time it takes them to leave and get back to their classroom cuts into their 15 and 10 minutes of partial freedom.

By breaking up the day into 45-minute increments and by limiting free time as much as possible, the timetable offers another layer of control within the school. While this regulation of time is enforced by the teachers, they, themselves, face similar issues with timetables. At the start of each academic year, teachers in Kuwait are provided timetables for each of the subjects they teach. These lay out the exact page numbers they should be covering from the Ministry textbooks on any given day. Mid-year and final exams are also created by the Ministry, and teachers do not know their content in advance. This, teachers at Fatima School explained to me, makes them wary of veering off the timetables and textbooks for fear of their students' marks suffering. This, in turn, leaves little time for fieldtrips, action-based learning or engagement with a wider variety of resources.

While teachers at Fatima School had a great deal of free time everyday, they, like the students, did not have much space to spend it in. There are no staff lounges, and food is not provided. Moreover, teachers are not permitted off campus without permission from the administration. Fatima School's dozen or so social studies teachers (the numbers fluctuated as teachers went on and off maternity and sick leave) had a tiny kitchenette, where they made and ate their breakfast in shifts.

We therefore have a scenario where students are controlled by teachers and school administrators, who, in turn, are controlled by the district, which serves almost exclusively to disseminate information created by a national authority (the Ministry) and enforce the regulations it creates. In the same way that the walls separate the school from the outside world, these multiple layers of control separate members of

the educational community from each other and ensure that power stays at the top. Over the three phases of my fieldwork across three years, I never saw teachers or students involved at the district or national levels.

6.3.3 'THE FIXED CLASSROOM'

In 2009, on my first morning at Fatima School, I filed into one of the 'fixed classrooms' with the students. Having chosen this school in part because it was in an affluent, liberal district and therefore a 'best case scenario' within which to explore my research questions, I was taken aback by what I saw. The dirty white walls of the classroom were completely bare except for an old whiteboard. I was later told that the walls are kept bare on purpose to ensure that students cannot use posters or displayed work to cheat from during exams. The individual student desks and chairs were extremely old, mismatched and covered in graffiti dating back years. There were no books in the room, nor were there any other resources, supplies or technology. There was one cabinet in the corner, but when I looked inside, it was bare. The teachers' wooden desk was chipped, and the chair looked like it was on the verge of collapse. Because the desk was shared between all the teachers who come into the classroom to teach, it remained empty. The room was set up with the teachers' desk at the front and the students' desks facing it in straight, separate rows. There were no rugs, curtains or furniture to create warmth. This was not a classroom you would expect to see in an affluent district of a rich, oil-producing country. This, it seemed to me, was a cell.

I took a seat in the back corner of the room and watched as the rest of the students filed in, dumped their bags on the floor by their desks and sat down in the wooden chairs. The teacher was the last one in, and as she entered, the students rose to their feet to greet her formally. The next time students left their seats was to greet their second period teacher, who came in to take over from the first teacher forty-five minutes later, and then when the third period teacher entered after that. Though students spent practically the entire day in this classroom, it was clear that it was not 'theirs'. They were not permitted to put anything on the walls, and there was no

space to add any more inviting furniture. The only space they had any control over was their desk and chair, and they covered these with graffiti. After two lesson observations in the hard wooden chair, I was relieved to make my exit from the room and head to another classroom for my next observation. As I walked in, I was greeted by the same situation.

These rooms were all about control. There was nothing students could look at, interact with, read or do in their classroom. Students were separated from each other, and the teachers' position at the front of the room highlighted their dominance. By anchoring students in one room, controlling their movements is easy. By restricting their access to resources within these rooms, their knowledge consumption is limited to that deemed appropriate by the educational authorities, and opportunities for critical engagements with a variety of ideas is rendered difficult.

The 'fixed classroom' policy also facilitates the control of teachers in Kuwaiti schools, who consequently do not have their own classrooms to set up, design and stock at will. They move from room to room, minimising the feasibility of using a variety of resources and technology, which they would have to carry with them. I often saw the geography teacher at Fatima School hobbling along the hallways, trying to juggle her bag with a huge rolled-up map. Moreover, social studies teachers at the school share an office, with a minimum of 12 desks set up around the perimeter of a 5x5-metre room. There is one computer in the room and one small printer. All teachers' conversations, activities and resources are therefore constantly visible to all other teachers. Photocopies of materials have to be requested downstairs in the administration office, adding another level of surveillance.

6.3.4   REIMAGINING SPACE IN THE CONTEXT OF HRE

We therefore have, in addition to homogenous school populations, a manipulation of space and time that facilitates further control. This often comes at the expense of the rights of those being controlled, thereby putting it in tension with a HRE. By

reimagining school spaces from a human rights perspective, confinement and control are replaced by *free spaces* that facilitate and encourage student autonomy, agency, collaboration and solidarity. Ideally, such free spaces would be designed in collaboration with students.[43]

6.4   AUTHORITARIAN ETHOS: AT ODDS WITH HUMANISTIC IDEALS

> [T]he school is [...] divided into hierarchies of those who 'know' (the teachers) and those who do not (the pupils). This form of school organisation [...] is an education in domination and submission not one of enquiry and independent critical thought. This, presumably, is why most governments around the world have not been in any hurry fundamentally to alter the nature of schooling. Few governments want a politically informed, articulate, confident and critical population – and I am referring here to many governments in democracies as well as in authoritarian regimes. (Harber, 1995, p. 7)

6.4.1   BREEDING STUDENT PASSIVITY

On the fourth day of the second phase of my fieldwork in March 2010, Manal, a history teacher, shared an anecdote in the social studies office, which I documented in my fieldnotes:

> Manal just got back from her history class and told us that for some reason, for the past three days in a row in class, she has been writing '1995' on the board with the day's date instead of '2010'. She has no idea why but was stunned that not a single student pointed out her mistake. The only way she realised what she's been doing was when she started checking the students' workbooks and noticed that almost all of them had written '1995' with the day's date. When she asked them why, they told her it was because that was what she had written! Manal was shocked that they had just copied the incorrect date without question.

This anecdote shocked me as much as it did the rest of the teachers, but I was not as confused as some of them appeared to be about how this could happen.

In the 'fixed classrooms' of Fatima School, the students sat at individual desks in rows facing the front. When their teacher entered the room, the students stood to greet her. Almost immediately, they were told to open their textbooks and their

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[43] See Woolner (2010) for a detailed discussion on a collaborative and transformative design of schools.

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workbooks. The teacher would write the date and the title of the lesson on the board, and class would begin. The majority of classes observed at Fatima School involved the teacher instructing students to read from the textbooks, during which time the teacher would write down the main points on the whiteboard for students to copy verbatim into their workbooks; teachers would check these workbooks regularly.

As the lesson progressed, the teacher would ask students short-answer questions. Students would raise their hands and call out, 'Abla! Abla! Abla!' (teacher), repeatedly to get their teacher's attention. Once a student was selected, she would stand, and as she started speaking, the teacher would often provide the first few words of the answer to guide her or would take over for her before she had finished. Several teachers used questions in an attempt to keep students focused or to summarise a point that was just made. For example, in one history class in 2010, Manal said to her students, 'There were eight movements in all. How many movements?' The students responded in unison, 'Eight.' Maya, a CHR and philosophy teacher, also used questions to keep her students focused, often using the infamous phrase, 'This question will be on your exam – memorise it.' Wafia condensed responses given by the students in her Arab World class 'to make them easier to memorise for the exam'. Even on those rare occasions when teachers would ask students to respond without opening their books and to rely on their understanding of the lesson, they would immediately stop students when they used words that strayed from the textbook, interrupting and taking over for them. It is no wonder, then, that in almost every class I observed at Fatima School, before offering an answer to a question, students would ask their teachers, 'From the book?'

Another feature of classes at Fatima School was the level of the teachers' voices. As I walked by classrooms over the first few days in 2009, I was amazed at the number of teachers who appeared to be yelling at their students. As I started observing more classes, however, it turned out that this was just the standard volume they used in their teaching. The teacher's control was audible in this volume and tone, and as a result, the voices of the students were inevitably muffled.

Within the classroom, students did as they were told, or they were punished. For example, several teachers at Fatima School made students who arrived late to class after their break stand for a period of time ranging from 2 to the entire 45 minutes. On the other hand, 'good' behaviour was celebrated; for example, when a student gave a correct answer, the teacher would instruct the class to applaud her.

In a handful of classes, a few of these authoritarian control mechanisms seemed less prominent. For example, in Dana's philosophy class in 2010, students were instructed not to rely on the textbook; when one student asked if she should answer from the book, Dana said sarcastically, 'OK, if you do not mind giving your voice away.' A young philosophy teacher, Dana seemed happy to rock the boat, asking students for their opinions and examples from real life. However, as she encouraged students to take the lead, she, like other teachers, often became uncomfortable and resorted back to asserting her control. For example, in one of her classes, she had asked one of her students to take the lead in teaching the lesson. The student began by asking her peers to share examples that illustrated the main point just raised. The students seemed to struggle in communicating their ideas. Within three minutes, Dana, who had taken a seat at the back, took her place at the front of the room again and guided the students back to the textbook. This is not surprising given that student-led learning is a new concept in Kuwait. As Maya explained in our interview in 2009, 'It was only about a year ago that we became allowed to let students take charge of the lesson in the form of presenting slides to the class.' This tokenistic view of participation extends beyond the classroom.

At Fatima School, 'good' students were appointed by teachers and the administration to the student council. Several students complained about this during the research workshops, arguing that they should have the right to vote. Maya was the student council teacher representative in 2009 and 2010. In our 2009 interview, she explained to me that the council members were selected based on grades and behaviour. No elections were held. The council did not meet regularly; they only met if there was a project or event underway that needed their attention or if the principal called on them to organise something. During my fieldwork in 2009 and

2010, no meetings were held. While Kuwaiti schools are required to have student councils, as this case reveals, decisions regarding the selection processes and the power enjoyed by the council rest with the schools. Moreover, no matter how active or participatory a school council may be, its actions are limited to within its school. At the district and national levels, these councils are not involved in any decision-making processes at all. In 2009, I was invited to a district meeting of student councils. While I was expecting it to be student-led, it was instead a lecture on leadership carried out by adult district officials without any student participation.

Students at Fatima School wrote '1995' as the date for three days in a row in 2010 because that was what their teacher wrote. The passivity required for this level of compliance is fostered through authoritarian classroom and school ethos in which adult voices (loudly) dominate.

6.4.2   ENSURING AUTHORITARIAN CONTROL: THE CURRICULUM AND THE EXAM

Students from every grade level across the three years of fieldwork complained about exams during the research workshops, as the following quotes demonstrate:

> There is no democracy in school at all because the teachers are strict and they do what they like without taking our opinions. At least they could for the small exams or for the handing in of workbooks or for the number of exam pages. (grade 10 student, 2010)

> There is no democracy at school because they control us in everything and they don't take our opinion in exams and homework [...] (grade 11 student, 2010)

> If there is a tough exam, such as what happened with the math exam, all students, from tenth to twelfth grade, complain about it. When we complained, we did not see any action, and our marks in the final certificate went down because of it. (grade 12 student, 2011)

Though students only have to memorise facts to do well on exams, the quotes still demonstrate the pressure they feel. Their references to democracy indicate that this stems from their inability to participate in their own learning, leaving them without agency.

Every teacher I interviewed at Fatima School over the course of three years also expressed frustration over the issue of exams. In 2009, Ruqaya, an Arab World teacher, told me that in her view, the memorisation required for the rigid Ministry exams stands in tension with the discussions, flexibility and criticality that are involved in social studies subjects. She described the exams as being copies of the textbooks, which precludes teachers from having their students engage with other resources or in active learning. That same year, Amani, in addition to describing exams as the 'main restriction' teachers faced, argued that by providing 'model answers' from which to grade papers, the Ministry hindered teachers' and students' opportunities for thinking in ways other than those in the textbooks. This becomes demotivating. As Dana argued in 2010, she tries to incorporate discussion and criticality into her lessons, but once she sees the exams, she feels she is wasting her time because they simply require facts to be recalled.

Moreover, because teachers do not have an educational framework within which they can situate their module and connect it to others, the modules remain firmly separate. The social studies teachers at Fatima School did not have a list of goals for the grade-10 level, during which students took both science and social studies classes. They also did not have the Science Department's goals, though they taught science students CHR and offered them various electives. The goals of the English, IT and Islamic Studies departments were also separate. Teachers were not expected to engage with the goals of the other departments, keeping each department isolated from the rest. Modules within departments were also isolated from each other, as teachers had no need to engage with any textbooks but their own. Teachers are left without a sense of where their teaching fits into a more cohesive whole because of this highly segregated approach. In fact, there is no 'whole' framework, curriculum or approach that teachers can refer to (as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5). While this lack of a national curriculum document could suggest a more open, flexible and potentially cooperative approach, the textbooks, timetables and exams belie this possibility and instead suggest another layer of authoritarian control that relies on a divisive approach to teaching and learning.

We therefore have a centralised curriculum, with educational authorities deciding what counts as knowledge. This is usually reduced to quantifiable factual information to be memorised and recalled on exams, rendering the roles of both teachers and students passive and controlled.

6.4.3 MAINTAINING HEGEMONY: THE NATION, THE RELIGION, THE CORPORATION

Each day at Fatima School begins the same way. The students line up in the courtyard and sing the national anthem. A small group of students plays the accompanying music on instruments, as another small group marches to the flagpole in military formation and raises the flag. Once the anthem is completed, this small group leads the school in hailing the Amir, Kuwait and the Arab Nation. Then, a selected student reads an excerpt from the *Qur'ān*. Across Kuwait, all government schools are expected to carry out this exact morning *ṭabūr* (line-up). The nationalistic and Islamic overtones of this morning *ṭabūr* permeate the rest of the school day, both visibly and ideologically.

As analysed in Chapter 5, citizenship education in Kuwait often gets conflated with *waṭaniyya*, or national education, which has always been associated with love of and loyalty to the State. Moreover, the 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report stresses the need for the national identity to transcend all other particular affiliations, which it posits are hindrances to national unity. Around campus, visible elements of the national include the almost exclusively Kuwaiti population as well as national symbols like the flag and photos of the Amir and Crown Prince. Furthermore, in textbooks, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, nationalism overrides opportunities for criticality, with Kuwait presented in an ahistoric and decontextualised way that again focuses on an imagined national unity centred around a singular conception of national identity.

However, what is even more visible than national symbols around Fatima School are religious posters, found on walls in every hallway despite the fact that the school is located in a more liberal area and district. As mentioned, Islam is also used by

teachers to enforce the dress code, which is comprised of a strict uniform and numerous regulations about shoes and socks, accessories and makeup. Several students from all grade levels complained in the research workshops about what they perceived as meddling in the specifics of their dress code choices. In 2009, I became accustomed to seeing teachers walking to their classes with nail polish remover and cotton swabs because nail polish was forbidden. However, what surprised me was how teachers used religion to enforce this rule. What follows is a short exchange I heard between Maya and one of her students:

Maya:	Did you pray today?
Student:	Yes. (The student's tone of voice was confused.)
Maya:	Well, God did not accept your prayers because you have nail polish on. Go take it off.

Islamic content also seeps into every curricular subject (Al-Baghdadi, 2006; 2007), as discussed in Chapter 5. This content stresses the primacy of Islam above all other legal and ideological frameworks, and therefore reinforces its power within the school system. Confronted with religion, students are expected to obey rather than argue. With Islam permeating the school this way, it becomes increasingly difficult for people to opt out or even interpret the religion for themselves. It also makes it challenging to engage with topics without Islam becoming an issue. For example, Kuwait's secondary philosophy textbook, like all other textbooks, frequently refers to Islam. In 2010, one of the lessons Dana's class was studying in the book centred around Plato's ethics of the good, the beautiful and the just. To clarify the distinction, Dana suggested to her students that the Islamic call to prayer may not sound 'beautiful' to non-Muslims; this was an interesting choice of examples, as she did not have to draw on religion here. She contrasted this with giving charity, which she argued is an example of 'good' versus 'beautiful', irrespective of religion. At this point, one student mentioned that in Islam, charity is an obligation, while in other religions it is not. Dana asked whether all Muslims are charitable, to which the student responded in the negative. Dana then asked whether non-Muslims can be charitable. The student responded that they can, but again insisted that Islam makes it an obligation, suggesting that Islam is superior because it promotes 'good'. The student was persistent, even after Dana stated that Plato predated Islam. The

discussion went on, with Dana stressing to her students that philosophy is all about listening to a variety of ideas and engaging in discussion. She later seemed to backpedal a little by saying to students that several ideas they encounter may go against Islam, and so not all ideas have to be accepted. Nonetheless, Dana encouraged dissent in her classroom. She was also known to have no qualms about sharing her own opinions, no matter how different they were, and about seeking what she saw as justice for herself and other teachers. This rubbed some people the wrong way, and in her interview with me in 2010, Dana revealed that she had been asked to put in for a transfer. When I returned in 2011, Dana was no longer teaching at Fatima School.

When Islam permeates the curriculum, teachers and students are trained through the extensive Islamic content to contribute to securing its power within the school system. A seminar I observed at Fatima School in 2010 highlights this well. I happened by the lecture hall one day, where a group of students told me that they were presenting a seminar on the prophet Muhammad. I asked who they were, and they told me they were part of an extracurricular student-led Islamic group. I went in and took a seat at the back, noticing that there were many students there; I discovered later that almost all the teachers had sent their classes to the seminar at some point throughout the day, as it was held three times. There were also teachers there from the Arabic and Islamic Studies Departments, and they remained at the back of the room for most of the seminar. This gave the impression that the students were indeed in charge. As the seminar got started, two students made their way around the hall, giving each member of the audience a blank slip of paper. A student at the front of the hall asked the audience to write down the name of a person, dead or living, that is a role model in their lives. The student encouraged the audience to be honest and assured them that they could say anything they wanted.

The seminar then began with a video of a man reading the *Qur'ān*; as he read, he became increasingly hysterical until he was screaming and crying. I heard one girl seated in front of me turn to her friend and whisper, '*Allah!*' – pronouncing it *Ullah* in a way that denotes shock in Kuwaiti Arabic slang the same way that 'Jeez' does in

English. I shared her surprise. After the video came to an end, the two students at the front presented a slideshow about the prophet Muhammad, stressing the importance of making him a role model in one's life. One of the presenters asked the audience what they had done to continue the prophet's legacy. She answered for them, 'Nothing.' The speaker then asked students to close their eyes before continuing:

> Picture yourselves in your bedroom, doing your homework, on the phone, on the internet. Now imagine that someone knocks on your bedroom door, and you open it to find a man standing there. You ask him, 'Who are you?' and he answers, 'I'm the prophet.' How would you feel? For him to see you in your clothes? With your music playing? With posters on your walls? Would you feel good?

Some of the students squirmed in their seats. One of the teachers at the back suddenly said in a very loud voice, 'When we see girls sitting around on the ground when we enter campus, their legs are spread apart in a "show" (she used the English word here). What would happen if the prophet was there?' She tells the students that exposing their genitals this way is shameful and that they are causing those who look at them, including the (heterosexual, female) teachers, to sin. The students at the front and the teachers at the back continued to jump from topic to topic in this way, with everything but the presented (arguably Sunni) Islamic perspective deemed sinful. For example, one of the teachers – unable to stay at the back any longer – came and stood at the front and stated that music is *ḥarām* as it renders people unable to memorise the *Qur'ān* – this despite the fact that music is offered as an elective in many Kuwaiti schools and that some girls at Fatima School were at that time representing their school in a district-wide all-girls dance competition.

The student speaker took over again and recounted a story:

> The prophet sent a messenger to a group of men who were drinking alcohol, and the messenger asked them whether they had heard the verse that had come down in the *Qur'ān* regarding alcohol. They said no and asked what it said. He read it to them, and what did they do?

Here the student paused for effect before responding to her own question, 'They immediately poured it out and threw it away without asking any more questions or trying to confirm the information or asking for proof.' This suggests that the

presenters were similarly asking the rest of the students to accept what was being said without question and stands in stark contrast to the message Dana was imparting to her students.

To end the seminar, the presenters tallied up the audience responses about their role models. In the audience of 40, 10 named the prophet, and most of the rest mentioned parents and teachers. The presenters and teachers 'tut tut' their disapproval. Then, one of the presenters read out the only response where a student had named a celebrity – a famous Arab singer. This time there were several shocked intakes of breath, and the presenter and teachers exclaimed, '*Istaghfar Allah*' (God forgive). Such responses suggested to the audience that anyone other than the prophet, including a (Muslim) parent or teacher, is an inadequate role model for students to learn from or emulate.

However, despite her earlier grunts of disapproval, the teacher at the front reminded students before they left that respect for teachers is an Islamic imperative. In this way, she shifted the Islamic focus to her favour, using it to try to force student compliance. She also told the students that God chose them to attend this seminar, and so they should remember what was said. In what felt to me like a foreboding close to the seminar, the group's slogan, 'We will leave a mark' (*Seyebqā lenā athar*), was left on the screen.

Such Islamic influence coupled with a static, stagnant conception of what constitutes the 'national' leaves Kuwait's education system firmly entrenched in patriarchal authoritarianism. Students are encouraged to memorise all neutralised 'facts' presented to them by teachers and educational authorities and to display love and loyalty towards the State. They are simultaneously taught to blindly accept anything presented as 'Islamic'. Any tensions that arise between these two forces are simply left unresolved, not open to discussion (as will be analysed in Chapter 7).

Educational reforms in Kuwait, rather than empowering young people, have followed the neo-liberal pattern of greater standardised testing and market-driven

training, as described in Chapter 2. This was supported by Kuwait's adoption of the *jawda* (quality education) initiative in 2009 (introduced in Chapter 2). In January 2010, government schools were supplied a detailed list of steps for preparing the educational community to accept the principles of *jawda*. Next to each step was a list of the people who were to be involved in that particular process. Not one of these steps listed students as participants, even those that named them the 'target group' at whom the step was aimed. The only teachers listed as contributors were those who were on schools' *jawda* teams.

At Fatima School, this team was selected by the principal and was made up of teachers from the various departments. During my fieldwork at the school that year, I attended five of their *jawda* meetings as well as two district meetings and one national workshop. I also attended a workshop at Fatima School aimed at spreading *jawda* awareness among district teachers. None of the meetings at the school, district or national levels had students present. At the national level 'workshop', the Ministry's four-member *jawda* team each gave a lecture using PowerPoint. Once the floor was opened to questions, Amani asked why the 'team' did not have student representation. She also asked how she can achieve *jawda* when she is constrained by regulations from the Ministry. One of the members of the team asked her who she was, though she had already given her name and school affiliation. After she introduced herself again, he pointed out to her that technically, she was not supposed to be at this meeting as she was a teacher and it was for principals only. Amani replied that she was asked by the principal to attend on her behalf as she was occupied at school. She also asked what the big secret was that teachers and students were not allowed to hear. The speaker said that there were some things they were just not ready to share. He then began to answer her question regarding regulations when a technician came to take back the microphone Amani had been using. Amani asked if she could keep it, and the technician obliged. However, the official stopped answering and said to her, 'Give him the microphone.' Amani explained that she wanted to keep it in case she needed to follow up on his response: 'So we can discuss,' she said. He replied, 'We are not going to discuss. I listened to you, and now I will give my response.' Amani handed over the

microphone, and one of the other members of the 'team' responded to her question by stating that regulations are not a hindrance; nobody addressed the lack of student involvement.

Amani was not the only one rebuked at this meeting. Before her, a principal from another school raised her hand to ask a question. When she was handed the microphone, she thanked the panel for their lectures and then clarified that she was only thanking them to be polite. She pointed out that this was meant to be a workshop and that delivering four lectures on the same topic was redundant and ineffective. The same official who told Amani that she was not supposed to be there said that the lectures covered different angles and therefore were not redundant. He then moved on to the next question, clearly annoyed. The woman who asked the question got up and left. After Amani, a male administrator commented favourably about the content of the lectures. The official exclaimed, 'Yes! *This* is the positivity we want!' Yasmeen, the other Fatima School teacher attending with Amani, whispered to me, 'So basically what he is saying is that nobody should challenge what they've said.'

The clear desire to maintain control displayed by the *jawda* team was mirrored in one of the school-level meetings I attended. In this particular meeting at Fatima School, the *jawda* committee were thinking of possible outcomes for the initiative. Amani suggested 'the sharing of power'. The principal started to note it down and then stopped, saying that it should actually be 'the sharing of *responsibilities*', not '*power*'. Amani insisted that it had to be stronger and more decisive than that. The principal said the word 'power' made her nervous, and so she wrote down, 'the sharing of responsibilities'. The notes and decisions from all these meetings go into a folder, which the principal said would be reviewed monthly by the district.

This top-down approach firmly rooted the *jawda* initiative in the existing authoritarian system, as did the other point raised by Amani at the national meeting – the restrictive regulations. Principals were told at that meeting that they had to achieve *jawda* without circumventing or trying to change existing rules and

regulations. At another Fatima School meeting, Amani suggested that the students have to have a cafeteria or common room. The principal said that her hands were tied when it comes to food-related or building issues. Amani then mentioned how dirty the classrooms are because no one feels responsible for them. She argued that giving teachers their own classrooms could solve this issue and make the classroom a more pleasant place for the students. Again, the principal shook her head and pointed out that 'the fixed classroom' is a Ministry directive that they cannot change.

Consequently, the outcomes set by Fatima School ended up being very general and echoed traditional goals set by the educational authorities. For example, one teacher mentioned *muwāṭana* (citizenship), and as they set out to define this, it ended up as 'love of the society and State'. The other outcomes included teamwork, building character and the sharing of responsibilities. Interestingly, Islam was never mentioned at Fatima School's *jawda* meetings until one of the district meetings used a *ḥadīth* (a saying attributed to the prophet Muhammad) to illustrate how Islam supports *jawda*. At the very next meeting at Fatima School, the same *ḥadīth* was quoted.

At the two district-level meetings I attended, one speaker said that teachers were not taking *jawda* seriously because they thought it was just a fad – the latest thing that would eventually die down. She, on the other hand, was clearly a believer in this initiative and expressed her certainty that it could promote needed reforms and improvements in Kuwait's educational system, which, she argued, had lagged behind the rest of the region. The principal at Fatima School also seemed very excited about and committed to the *jawda* initiative, as did several of her teachers, including Amani and Yasmeen. In my last week at Fatima School in 2010, I saw posters going up around the campus, explaining *jawda* and providing examples of *jawda* from around the school. Exactly one year later, when I returned to Fatima School for the final phase of fieldwork in April 2011, the posters were gone. In my final interview with Amani that year, I asked her if they were moving ahead with *jawda*. She said

that the initiative had not even been mentioned that academic year. The more sceptical teachers had been right.

Rather than the deeper potential hoped for by teachers like Amani, the initiative therefore revealed itself to be more of a 'rebranding' of 'the school' as 'the corporation'. This simply entailed changing the existing labels – 'student' to 'consumer', 'knowledge' to 'product' – within the existing authoritarian structures and ethos. Using economic jargon provided justification for staying focused on exams. To ensure the initiative did not evolve into anything more, students were left out of the process, as were, for the most part, teachers. Rules and regulations were non-negotiable. As Fielding and Moss (2011) argue, 'With the leaching of politics and ethics and their replacement by management, technology and production comes cliché-ridden jargon ("quality", "excellence" and "world-class"), vacuous at best, technologies of normalisation at worst' (p. 24). The *jawda* initiative provided the jargon and justification for a system already engaged in normalisation.

6.4.4 ALIGNING HRE WITH HUMANISTIC ETHOS

With school systems and spaces focused on confining students, and curricula imparting a limited number of biased facts and forcing obedience through religious content, a shift away from authoritarianism is challenging. As Faour and Muasher (2011) point out,

> There has been no real interest in *comprehensive* education reform. Rather, the reform has focused on the "engineering" aspects. But improvements to the physical infrastructure of schools and even curriculum revisions are of limited value, unless they are coupled with a much greater investment in the *human* infrastructure of a free, democratic citizenry. (p. 3-4; emphases added)

I would argue that investing in this 'human infrastructure of a free, democratic citizenry' requires a shift from authoritarian to **humanistic ethos** in schools. When the humanity of students is acknowledged through a full recognition of their rights, including their right to participate, this may then foster the kind of open dialogue that can bring about meaningful transformations.

6.5   UNESCO: AN INTERRUPTION

As the former sections have demonstrated, despite Fatima School's position within an affluent, politically more liberal area, its homogenous population, spaces of enclosure and authoritarian ethos anchor it firmly in Kuwait's traditional patriarchal school system. However, the school's membership to UNESCO's ASPnet introduces elements that interrupt the traditional control mechanisms. The ASPnet seeks to put UNESCO ideals into action. Associated Schools are 'engaged in fostering and delivering quality education in pursuit of peace, liberty, justice and human development in order to meet the pressing educational needs of children and young people throughout the world'; among the themes of study is the concept of human rights, a goal of which is 'raising awareness of human rights in theory and practice, sensitizing students to their own rights and responsibilities, including the rights of others'.[44] This entails an education *for* human rights *through* human rights.

Soon after I arrived at Fatima School in March 2009, preparations for the school's International Day were in full swing. This was an annual event held by the English Department; however, it was carried out as a UNESCO-associated event, and the national UNESCO administrators were invited to attend. The first thing I noticed was that International Day was run by the students. There was no selection process for who participated – anyone who wanted to was free to do so. Groups of girls chose countries to represent and worked together to bring them to life within their auditorium. For several days leading up to the event, I watched as unsupervised students filled the auditorium, designing table displays, decorating posters, rehearsing skits, writing up brochures, filling gift bags, preparing slideshows and so much more. Students were talking, cooperating, laughing, arguing and really enjoying themselves without any watchful eyes on them. The students were clearly in charge, and they conducted themselves impressively and treated each other with respect. Timetables were completely disrupted as teachers let students out of their classes to finish up their preparations. The walls of the 'fixed classrooms' came down, and students were all over the campus, using the library, the computer lab,

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[44] Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/networks/global-networks/aspnet/.

the auditorium and teachers' offices to find information and materials they could use. Everyone at school – students, administrators, teachers, auxiliary staff and I – grew increasingly excited as the day drew nearer. As Amani said on the morning of the event, 'I think I am more excited than the students!'

International Day drew large numbers of parents, ambassadors, reporters and UNESCO officials. Classes were cancelled, and students were all in the auditorium. The auditorium was bustling with music, skits, food, information packs, photo slideshows, speeches, costumes, experiments, posters and more. Girls from the United States group wore provocative gowns to emulate Hollywood film stars, and Marilyn Monroe topped her outfit with a blond wig and bright red lipstick. With men at this event, some teachers and parents raised their eyebrows, but nobody complained. In the Kuwait corner, several teachers and students could not help but dance to the beat of their favourite local tunes, again shrugging off the presence of men. Yes, some of the stations fell prey to reducing countries and cultures to the four F's – food, fashion, festivals and folklore (Banks, 2002) – but there was depth to be found as well.

Amani told me that as the day was drawing near, one student had approached her about participating in the event. The student, one of the handful of 'non-Kuwaitis' at Fatima School, was Iraqi. Aware that her nationality may offend some people because of Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the student still felt strongly about participating. She sought out Amani and asked her opinion. Amani, of course, encouraged her wholeheartedly, pointing out that this was an international event and that she was part of the international community in Kuwait. The student went ahead and organised her Iraq table, and when the day came, her peers shared it with the same curiosity and excitement as they did other tables. Though the Iraqi student's desire to make her (other) national identity visible cannot be linked directly to her CHR or UNESCO experiences (though the fact that she sought out her CHR teacher and no one else is interesting), the example nonetheless serves to demonstrate what allowing students the space to explore their identities and those of the other can do. An Iraqi table at International Day may not heal all wounds, but

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it offers a forum for dialogue. As Fatima School was making Iraq visible in its International Day, national history textbooks were leaving the invasion out altogether. This decision can be interpreted in many ways, and as official reasons were not provided, one can only speculate. A more sceptical reading would be that removing the invasion would preclude critical interrogation of the events leading up to the invasion and potential criticism of the handling of the situation from above. A more optimistic reading would be that the move was (naïvely) meant to improve relations with Iraq. Fatima School opted for engagement over erasure and in doing so promoted dialogue with and understanding of the perceived other.

That same year, there was also a Palestine table. Again, the students enjoyed this without reservation. I did hear two parents, however, grumbling about it, muttering to each other about how it seems that some have forgotten 'how the Palestinians supported Saddam'. That the young people did not share their parents' misgivings is interesting and reminds us not only of their capacity to see beyond what exists but also of their ability to restart dialogues that adults may have closed off. While the older generation's mistrust of the expatriate population encouraged the expulsion of Palestinian residents in 1991 (Partrick, 2012), Fatima School's inclusion of this group in their International Day challenged this suspicion with direct engagement.

The students spoke excitedly to ambassadors that visited their tables, sharing what they learned and also asking questions. At the UNESCO table, students handed out fliers they had made describing the organisation and the ASPnet. They spoke at length to Kuwait's UNESCO coordinator, who seemed impressed with their presentation.

In the student research workshops I conducted, students were asked to reflect on their school's membership to the ASPnet on post-its. Several students mentioned International Day, stating that it 'broke routines' and also facilitated more 'mixing with the community'. The area where most students felt the ASPnet added significant value to their educational experiences was in the provision of opportunities for student participation and collaboration, which they felt raised their

agency. Another benefit that the students felt was introduced by the ASPnet was the introduction of an international, global presence to their school. This came through International Day and also the various other annual themes and projects advocated by the network, such as events to mark World Water Day and World Health Day.[45] However, while these events were clearly significant to students, it is important to point out that they were a case of the international coming in, not the students going out. One student member of Fatima School's UNESCO council complained that while she was chosen with six other Kuwaiti students to travel to Argentina for a UNESCO conference on violence in schools, she did not end up going. When I asked her why, she explained that most of the girls were not allowed to travel alone, so the trip was cancelled. In the ASPnet Global Review Report (Davies et al, 2003), Kuwait's profile mentioned that the coordinator sees sub-regional, regional and international exchange as important. However, for girls in public schools in Kuwait, moving beyond the local network is difficult.

In 2010, I once again attended Fatima School's International Day. That year, the event was given the title, 'The World Under [Fatima's] Roof', highlighting this notion of the international coming to them. The event opened with the national anthem, a reading from the *Qur'ān*, three speeches (by a student, the principal and then MP Massouma Al-Mubarak, who was one of the first four female Kuwaiti MPs), a skit, a musical performance and a slideshow.

In her speech, MP Al-Mubarak reminded the audience that 'God created us all different'.[46] She went on to explain that this included our religion, food preferences and more. She explained that this was done 'to open channels of communication and understanding'. The student speech also focused on difference:

> I stand here in front of you today to welcome you to this very special event, where the world is gathering under [Fatima's] roof where we have a journey to be shared and shaped and re-made by people who have the courage to believe that they can make a better world. Let us strengthen our

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[45] For a complete list of benefits students felt they enjoyed as members of the ASPnet, see Appendix 6.2.

[46] Because International Day was linked to the English Department, all speeches and activities were conducted in English, so the excerpts appear in their original forms.

international ties. We have been brought up to believe that all human beings have equal rights despite their nationality, color, race or gender. Let us have freedom that involves attention, awareness and discipline. Freedom to truly care about others and to sacrifice for them as well. My hope is that you decide to keep these principles alive in your own life and in the life of this world. You will be tested. You won't always succeed. But know that you have it within your power to TRY. Past generations of different cultures have already paved the way for us. So with Allah's care, our efforts and willingness, the world will continue on its precious journey towards that distant horizon and a better day. Thank you.

Though both speakers mentioned God, they simultaneously highlighted the role of humanity – MP Al-Mubarak by referring to communication, and the student by mentioning both 'Allah's care' and 'our efforts'. The focus remained on humanistic issues – mutual understanding, working together and hope – rather than religion. Interestingly, these humanistic themes were also the focus of the students' post-its during the research workshops. Only one student out of the 190 across the three grade levels over two years who did the UNESCO post-it activity mentioned religion when asked her thoughts about her school's association with the ASPnet. Even this student did not discuss religious ideology: 'Ambition to achieve the types of inventions and discoveries made by previous Muslim scientists' (grade 10 student, 2010). Students did link UNESCO to human rights, as demonstrated by the sample of quotes below:

> [ASPnet membership] is something good that benefits students and protects his rights. (grade 11 student, 2009; second year of three-year CHR)

> [ASPnet membership] demonstrates that the school is concerned with my rights. (grade 11 student, 2009; second year of three-year CHR)

> I'm proud that my school is a member of UNESCO because it demonstrates the democracy of Kuwait and its enforcement of human rights. (grade 12 student, 2009; third year of three-year CHR)

Significantly, only those students taking the three-year CHR programme made this connection.

As Kuwait's national UNESCO coordinator revealed in the country profile of the aforementioned ASPnet Global Review Report (Davies et al, 2003), the ASPnet does not help shape education policy in Kuwait. When students were asked during the

research workshops about what they learned in school about human rights, democracy and citizenship, only two students mentioned UNESCO across all three grade levels over three years, illustrating the disconnect between what students perceive as official school (curricular) learning and the learning that comes from UNESCO projects. Moreover, all the deficiencies highlighted by the students on their ASPnet post-its centred on two main ideas: the inability of the ASPnet projects to penetrate the curriculum and ethos of the school and the disjuncture between UNESCO ideals and their lived experiences at school:

> There are some disadvantages for the UNESCO membership: the rules in school, lack of encouragement and lots of frustrations. (UNESCO student council representative, 2009)

> I don't feel like my school is a member of UNESCO because there is no democracy at school. (grade 11 student, 2009)

> We lack integrated activities. (grade 11 student, 2009)

> It doesn't mean anything to me because I don't care about the school's participation in anything or its membership to any organisation since my aim in coming to school is to learn and get a degree, not to take interest in its peripheral activities. (grade 12 student, 2009)

> All schools are the same to me, and they have the same system. (grade 10 student, 2010)

> I never feel like the school is participating in UNESCO except one day of the year. (grade 12 student, 2010)

However, as the ASPnet Global Review Report (Davies et al, 2003) points out, although some of the ASPnet projects and events (such as International Day) are temporary, they 'do give young people a sense of agency which might continue in the long term' (p. 34). The themes promoted by the ASPnet, coupled with the opportunities for active participation and collaboration did seem to raise student agency at Fatima School. As the principal stated in her International Day speech, 2010 was the International Year of Youth, and Fatima School's youth that day both expressed and displayed a belief in humanistic values and the hope necessary to invoke change. They also said how good it felt to show people what they could do. In their opening slideshow, they set the slides to the soundtrack of 'Mission

Impossible', and the words that flashed on the screen were interspersed with pictures of the students in the days leading up to the event. Cameras, usually banned from school, were allowed in for this project, and the results showed students all over the school, working together, laughing, reading, writing, talking, etc. The words on the slideshow included the following:

> Some people believe that some things are impossible, but here at [Fatima Secondary School] we KNOW that nothing is impossible. Working to make International Day 2010 a huge success is our proof. We have worked hard, hand in hand, to understand the meaning of teamwork, independence, hard work and the value of friendship, all while learning about other countries, other cultures [...]

These words demonstrate the agency the students felt and their belief that, through independence, teamwork, friendship and hard work, they can achieve anything. It is interesting that they wrote both 'independence' and 'teamwork', highlighting both their agency and their belief in working together towards a common goal.

Membership to UNESCO's ASPnet therefore interrupted several of the authoritarian mechanisms of control described in previous sections of this chapter. Events like International Day broke the monotony of the daily timetable and facilitated the appropriation of spaces around campus by the students. It also traded student passivity with student-led learning and focused on humanistic ideals − highlighting difference in order to uncover shared humanity. Because international organisations are recognised in Kuwait, being a UNESCO ASPnet school affords administrators, teachers and students a safe space from which to promote such interruptions.

6.6   CONCLUSION: THE CONTEXT OF HRE

A maximal enactment of human rights ideals is made challenging in Kuwait by the authoritarian organisation of the school system, characterised by enclosure, control, segregation, passivity and obedience. The control of physical spaces and the rigid timetables keep students in check and preclude opportunities for engagement with others. This is facilitated by the homogenous school populations created by the State's segregation and districting policies, which perpetuate societal divisions rather than prefigure more inclusive possibilities and offer opportunities for dialogue with

the other. In classrooms, centralised curricula and exams and religious dominance further cement students' passivity.

Membership to UNESCO's ASPnet presented an interesting interruption to the traditional educational environment at Fatima School. It offered students a more inclusive conception of rights, opportunities for active participation and a connection to the world outside the school walls. Students spoke very highly of their ASPnet experiences, though they also pointed out that the membership had not yet penetrated their daily experience of schooling.

Building on the empirical findings, this chapter suggests *inclusive populations*, *free spaces* and *humanistic ethos* as contextual elements that support a more maximal enactment of HRE. In the following chapter, the content of Kuwait's human rights and citizenship curriculum is analysed within the context of the case study school. Once again, both limitations and possibilities of this content are highlighted in order to build a *Continuum of Human Rights Education* in which context and content are brought together to offer starting points for an ever-evolving framework of HRE.

7 EXPLORING THE CONTENT OF HRE: CURRICULUM, PARTICIPATION AND RECOGNITION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 identified CHR as a beginning of a new direction for citizenship education in Kuwait, one anchored in the universality of human rights. As uncovered in Chapter 6, this approach stands in tension with the context within which it is enacted, with authoritarian control limiting it to education *about* human rights rather than education *through* and *for* human rights. This chapter draws on data from document analysis, observations, interviews and student research workshops to explore the content of the three-year Constitution and Human Rights (CHR) programme and its enactment at Fatima School. Specifically, it analyses the tensions between the universal and particular interpretations of rights presented in the textbooks, the opportunities afforded for student participation and the disjunctures between textbook learning and the students' lived experiences at school. In short, it analyses the three aspects of a more maximal approach to human rights education (HRE) – education *about*, *through* and *for* HRE – and identifies elements that help realise each. Through this analysis, the *Continuum of Human Rights Education* is developed as a potential anchor for Kuwait's broader citizenship education agenda. However, it is also applicable to other areas in the region and the world as, rather than prescribing a framework to follow, it suggests starting points for what is conceptualised as the continuous journey of HRE and human rights – dialogic universalism.

In section 7.2, the curricular content of the human rights approach espoused by the CHR module is explored, focusing on knowledge, skills and values. Section 7.3 addresses the opportunities for participation afforded by the approach as well as the school system and identifies and theorises two distinctive forms of participation: 'sanctioned' and 'unsanctioned'. Section 7.4 identifies recognition as a pressing issue for students and particularly challenging and necessary in light of Kuwait's exclusive conception of citizenship (discussed in Chapter 2).

7.2 THE HUMAN RIGHTS CURRICULUM: KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND VALUES

As presented in Chapter 1, while many have stressed the significance of HRE, empirical research that explores its substantive content is rare (Hahn, 2005). This section explores the content of Kuwait's CHR module in detail, focusing on the knowledge, skills and values presented in the aims and textbooks as well as Fatima School's interpretation of these. Through this analysis, the strengths and gaps of the approach are identified and analysed, contributing to the creation of the *Continuum of Human Rights Education*.

7.2.1 KNOWLEDGE

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the knowledge outcomes of the CHR module are somewhat vague, with simply the following stated:

> Knowledge: By means of what is offered in the way of information about the Constitution and human rights in order to create a thick knowledge framework with awareness and *understanding* of the Constitution and human rights. (MoE, 2010a, p. 8; emphasis added)

The seven listed general outcomes also include *critical thinking* and stress the importance of anchoring the module's conception in educational, political and *legal* systems of thought. I base my analysis in this section on these three crucial phrases: understanding, criticality and legal frameworks.

The knowledge outcomes described above translated into the grade 10, 11 and 12 textbooks of the three-year CHR programme as follows:[47]

- Grade 10: The principles of democracy, the Constitution and human rights
- Grade 11: Human rights
- Grade 12: The Constitution and the public authorities

Each chapter in the textbooks was relatively short, with information mostly presented in a brief paragraph or a short bulleted list. The number of pages of questions following each chapter usually matched the number of pages of content. They consisted of fill-in-the-blank or short answer questions relying completely on the student's ability to recall information from the chapter rather than to interpret,

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[47] For a complete overview of the contents of each grade level textbook, see Appendix 7.1.

analyse, synthesise or apply. Students were never asked to write a paragraph, essay or research paper or to engage in any form of action. However, the questions in the CHR books did sometimes ask the students to engage with other sources, including their own knowledge and experience. For example, the grade 10 textbook asked them to name Kuwaiti public institutions they know about and to list the services they provide. It also asked them to define terms (e.g. democracy) using other resources, such as the internet. However, such types of questions still did not require any critical thinking on the part of the students.

Moreover, all information in the CHR textbooks was presented as factual, even that which was based on religion. This point is particularly relevant to the grade 11 textbook, which presented a substantial list of human rights (see Appendix 7.1) from three perspectives: Islam, international agreements and the Kuwaiti Constitution, in that order. Each chapter presented the three 'factual' perspectives on the rights being discussed. However, the textbook did not provide any intended opportunities for engagement with the obvious tensions between these three perspectives. In addition, with Islam always being presented first, the implication was that it takes precedence. This is confirmed by the CHR information pamphlet, which states, 'There are rights that cannot be accepted as they are in conflict with *shari'a'* (MoE, 2010a, p. 7). It then provides two examples: gay marriage and equality between males and females in inheritance. (Islamic inheritance laws stipulate that male offspring inherit double their female counterparts.) This justification of allowing universal and constitutional rights to come second and third to Islamic interpretations fails to address the problem of subjectivity in religion. It expects obedience without acknowledging the potential patriarchal bias of these interpretations. The justification also does not take into account that as signatory to the UDHR and its two associated covenants (UN, 1966a; 1966b), Kuwait has made a commitment to uphold the *indivisible* rights contained within them. This has been a contentious issue between Kuwait and international organisations (HRW, 2010b; UNHCR, 2010).

Furthermore, while the CHR module aspired to include legal frameworks, this did not materialise to any significant extent in the grade 11 textbook, which did not introduce any legal rights or their potential tension with the other rights presented (Islamic, universal and constitutional). The only substantial mention of the legal system is in the grade 12 textbook, which simply explains the system and does not include any of the actual laws in existence or under review today. As argued in Chapter 3, this relationship, or 'disjuncture', to use Benhabib's (2006) word, between ideal rights and actual legal rights is an important one; it is one that Benhabib (2006) argues requires constant 'mediation'. This mediation simultaneously requires and promotes criticality. However, though critical thinking was an intended goal of the CHR module, it is the disjuncture in this relationship between the ideal and the real that the grade 11 textbook (with its exclusion of Kuwait's legal interpretation of its Constitution) did not purposefully bring to the surface. This is particularly significant in the case of Kuwait because as explained in Chapter 2, the Kuwaiti Constitution leaves a great deal of scope for the legal system to restrict citizens' rights. Nonetheless, the CHR module's rearticulation at Fatima School *did* provide opportunities for thicker engagements with a variety of sources that helped uncover the tensions and disjunctures between the different rights frameworks.

In 2009, one of Amani's CHR classes that I observed was working from the 'Children's Rights' chapter of the grade 11 CHR textbook. After beginning the lesson with a discussion about news articles pertaining to children's rights in a local newspaper, Amani moved on to the overview given in the textbook on children's rights. She explained that according to the Kuwaiti Constitution, the students were children until the age of 18 and had rights that were attached to this status. In the next breath, she explained that in Islam, they were classified as children until they reached puberty. This meant that under the first definition, all of the girls in the class were children, but under the second, none were. This tension was not dealt with by the textbook or by Amani. The issue seemed left at that: two contradictory facts. Students did not ask about or discuss the definitions provided. However, as the lesson unfolded, it became apparent through the class discussions that both Amani

and her students took for granted that the legal definition of their status (based on the Constitution) was the one they were working from and with. I later asked Amani about this tension. She explained to me that much earlier in the school year, she had discussed with her students the difference between Islamic *shari'a* law and Kuwait's Constitution and legal system, which draw only in part from *shari'a*. They discussed how the legal system protects against the misuse of people's subjective interpretations of *shari'a* law to justify various actions. They also concluded that because the legal system is manmade, it is possible to change and develop it, unlike a religious text. This explained to me why the students did not seem confused by the presentation of two competing ideals in this lesson. Amani's students critically engaged with the Islamic, universal and constitutional rights presented in the textbook and then extended this by interrogating legal realities. They uncovered these realities by exploring their own lives, current events in newspapers and other sources. The textbook, though presenting both definitions of a child as fact, did not address the contradiction in any way.

In 2010, in another of Amani's lessons, she asked her students which of them would like to be a judge one day. One student responded by saying that in Islam, women are prohibited from being judges. Amani explained that Kuwait's Constitution does not ban women from holding such a position. It is important to note that Kuwaiti women were fighting for this right at the time of this discussion (see Chapter 2). The students discussed and debated this issue, and one student boldly announced that she would like to be a judge – a decision met with encouragement from her teacher. By allowing opportunities for students to question the tensions that were unintentionally raised by the factual presentations in the books, Amani created an environment where it was safe to question the status quo and particular religious interpretations. After further discussion about all the benefits of being a judge, Amani joked to the girl who said she would like to become a judge that if being a judge is prohibited in Islam, well then perhaps she could do it temporarily, reap all the benefits and then retire and repent. All the girls laughed with Amani. Davies (2008) would call this 'critical lightness', which she defines as 'the acceptance that ideals and their holders can be mocked' (p.182). She argues that this is crucial to the

critical idealism necessary to counter extremism. The girls in Amani's class learned that they should be able to be judges in Kuwait despite what particular religious interpretations have taught them, and they also learned that it is OK to laugh at themselves as they work through some of the tensions between ideologies. This learning is in tension with – and is therefore in a position to challenge – the 2012 amendment that subsequently banned this right (see Chapter 2).

In addition to the absence of elements of Kuwait's legal framework within the CHR textbooks, the information presented was not historically and geographically contextualised. The grade 10 CHR textbook, for example, presented a brief (three-page) historical account of the Greek origins of democracy and a brief (three-page) historical account of the pre- and post-Islamic notion of *shūrā*.[48] It also presented a chapter on the historical development of human rights, with five lines dedicated to specific human rights struggles in England, the U.S. and France. However, there is no contextualisation of the information at the national and regional levels. This 'historical void', in addition to masking unjust realities, does not open up space for a more 'optimistic curriculum' (Santomé, 2009, p. 76):

> Such a curriculum should facilitate understanding how humanity has, in many cases, successfully improved living conditions for all through strategies developed by different social groups to challenge, and to seek alternatives to, personal, social, economic, cultural, scientific, and religious problems. (Santomé, 2009, p. 76)

The grade 12 CHR textbook discussed how Kuwait went through three stages in the development of its voting constituencies. Each stage was presented in two to three lines. Under the final stage, it was stated that the number of constituencies was reduced to five in 2006. However, it did not discuss how this development came about by a youth movement who demanded change in order to curb the corruption of buying votes that was prevalent in Kuwait at the time (see Chapter 2).

A similar approach was taken with women's rights, which were presented as a *fait accompli*. The textbook did not present Kuwaiti women's successful rights struggles,

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[48] *Shūrā* is the Islamic notion of consultation. For further discussion on this, see Esposito and Voll (1996) and Al-Jabri (2009).

including their fight for the right to vote and run for office, which was realised in 2005, nor their ongoing struggles, including the lack of rights for those married to foreigners. While a list of five ways in which women's right have been historically violated was presented, none related to Kuwait specifically: female infanticide; female sacrifice; the treatment of women with contempt and as of lesser status than men; the categorisation of women with children and the insane; and the view of women as personal possessions. This use of the past tense in presenting this list implied that women are no longer treated this way, whether in Kuwait or elsewhere. In the half page that dealt with women's rights in Kuwait, a list of four ways that their rights are protected was provided, the first of which argued that the Constitution uses the word 'individual' and therefore does not distinguish between men and women. The second stated that the Constitution stresses justice, freedom and equality as fundamental pillars of society. However, these points on their own do not highlight the fact that Kuwaiti women do not have equal legal rights to men (as discussed in Chapter 2). The third and fourth list items cited the family as the foundation of society and the rights connected with breastfeeding, maternal leave and 'all that is particular to the woman' (p. 63).

It is in noticing these omissions that Amani's students began filling in the gaps. According to Amani in our interview in 2009, when her students read the grade 11 CHR book, they alerted her to many violations against women's rights that she admits she did not even know about. One student asked her what the point was of a woman being allowed to study and to become a professor or a member of parliament if her husband still has the legal right to ban her from travelling if he so chooses. What this example demonstrates is that whether or not the CHR module directly addressed contextual realities, students, armed with the knowledge of their constitutional and universal rights, started uncovering and interrogating them. In 2009, Maya's grade 12 CHR class were learning about the ways in which the judiciary branch functions in Kuwait. Once the material in the textbook was covered, Maya and her students moved on to discussing actual court cases that they personally were engaged in or ones that they heard about through family, friends or the media. With these discussions came engagements with actual laws and actual human rights

struggles, and students were able to discuss these alongside their learning about Islamic, universal and constitutional rights.

Such engagement with other resources was possible for two main reasons: the CHR textbooks covered over three years were short, and the Ministry devolved the writing of the exam to the districts and schools, as mentioned in Chapter 2. With fewer textbook pages to 'cover' and without the pressure of an unseen Ministry exam, Amani and Maha felt comfortable using other resources and taking time to listen to their students. In doing so, their own teaching began to change (as Chapter 8 will demonstrate). When the CHR module was reduced to one year in 2010, the three textbooks were bound as one without summarising or reducing content. While this means that no content was lost, putting all the information into one book left time for little else, and the traditional memorisation mode of teaching and learning returned. This return to rote-learning comes at the expense of the critical, contextualised engagements that the three-year CHR programme (intentionally or unintentionally) left room for. As a grade 12 student taking the one-year CHR module in 2011 stated, 'The curriculum does not touch the daily, real aspect, only the theoretical one.' It is through these *critical engagements* – or 'mediations' – with the disjunctures between ideals and legal realities that human rights knowledge evolves into critical understanding. Moreover, it is through this understanding that the transformative nature of HRE can be realised, as will be discussed in further sections of this chapter.

Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report (MoE, 2010b, p. 27-28) discussed in Chapter 5 lists the following desired knowledge outcomes for students:

1. Full knowledge of his country Kuwait's geographic location and history
2. Full knowledge of the Kuwaiti Constitution and its contents
3. Knowledge of the public institutions of Kuwait and the services they provide
4. Knowledge of the Kuwaiti political system and its components
5. Complete familiarity with his rights and responsibilities
6. Being informed about current events in the nation and its surroundings
7. Understanding of the social problems specific to the State of Kuwait

This report did not include plans to add anything to the national curriculum to meet these goals. In fact, in the 2010-2011 academic year following the release of this report, the one-year CHR module replaced the three-year programme. However, as science-streamed students do not take any social studies modules in grades 11 and 12 and only one in grade 10 (Arab World), CHR is the only viable place where students can gain this knowledge. As uncovered in this section, the CHR textbooks included content on points 2, 3, 4 and 5 above. Moreover, because they had more time, several teachers at Fatima School were also able to include points six and seven by incorporating other resources into their teaching.

When teachers at Fatima School filled in the gaps in the CHR textbook with other resources and when the students began to interrogate their lived realities in light of their learning about human rights, the CHR module started to evolve into a space where knowledge was co-constructed by the teachers and students. The type of criticality that this involved was perhaps not expected; the phase out of the three-year version suggests that at best it was not noticed or at worst that it was noticed and deemed undesirable. The 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report lists 'positive critical thinking' as a desired outcome (p.29; emphasis added). Perhaps the criticality resulting from the CHR module was not 'positive' enough. With its reduction to one year, Kuwait's HRE programme is in danger of being reabsorbed into a curriculum that stresses nationalism and religious obedience, precluding opportunities for such criticality.

7.2.2 SKILLS

As already uncovered in the section above, the three-year CHR programme involved more than the traditional memorisation approach (described in Chapter 6). Students taking CHR at Fatima School often took the lead in lessons, drawing on their own life experiences and other resources to ground the lessons and critically engage with the content in their textbooks. In doing this, students developed the general academic skills of information gathering, giving presentations, public speaking and critical thinking, among others. However, these skills are not specific to HRE. The CHR

module's intended skills outcomes are as vague as those mentioned under knowledge:

> Skills: By means of social and academic skills and practical application in various contexts specific to the Constitution and human rights. (MoE, 2010a, p. 8)

The 'social and academic skills' are not made explicit, nor are specific opportunities for the 'practical application' of learning provided. What the CHR module did offer, however, was the time and space for teachers and students to once again decide what was needed to further their understandings of rights and to construct these skills together. Three skills identified by my analysis of the empirical data from classroom observations, interviews with CHR teachers and the student research workshops as being most relevant to HRE are what I call the three D's: discourse, dialogue and demands.

In the 2009 CHR lesson on children's rights I observed (mentioned in the previous section), Amani and her students moved on from the textbook's presentation of children's rights and began a discussion about their perceptions of their rights in Kuwait as children and as students. The students shared many rights they felt were being violated in their home and school lives. After letting the students vent their concerns and frustrations, Amani gave each of them a brightly coloured sheet of paper and asked them to create placards demanding what they felt was theirs. They looked at her. One student asked, 'From the book?' 'No. Not from the book,' Amani swiftly responded. She asked them to write down their demands for rights they felt were being violated. As students began to slowly write, she circled the room, encouraging them to use large lettering and bright colours. I observed some students hesitating and flipping through their textbooks to come up with ideas, while others filled their posters in less than a minute with their textbooks remaining closed. As the students finished, Amani asked them to stand and imagine themselves at a protest. She turned her eyes to me and told them to pretend that I was from the Ministry of Education, there to listen to their needs. The students stood, and some of them turned towards me giggling, asking if I really was from the Ministry. I smiled and told them I was not, but that I was happy to hear their views. Amani encouraged

the students to make noise. She approached student after student, asking each what her demands were. When one student voiced her demand, Amani asked why she should have it met. At first, the student looked confused. Then she responded, 'Because it is my right.' 'Says who?' Amani pressed her. The student replied, 'The Constitution.' 'Which article?' Amani insisted. The student looked stumped. Amani then encouraged the students to find support for their demands in the copies of the Kuwaiti Constitution that she had always had on hand for them to use. She also had them look in their textbooks to find support from the UNCRC and other international agreements. As they continued with their mock protest, I watched students become more confident as they faced their teacher, me and their peers to make their demands heard, using voices that got louder and discourse that came from the Constitution and international agreements. I heard Amani repeatedly remind students that they have the right to be heard by those who make decisions on their behalf without ever consulting them.

As I tried to capture the energetic atmosphere in the room in my fieldnotes, I looked around at the students' faces, seeing their foreheads sometimes creased in concentration, but their lips often turned up in smiles. I listened to voices that were loud and increasingly confident. Students were still sometimes asked to copy things directly from the whiteboard into their notebooks, and Amani sometimes fell prey to answering for her students before giving them a chance. However, she managed to counterbalance these with discussion, real engagement with her students' views and action. She often made the students close their textbooks so that they relied on their own experiences and ideas during discussions. She also seemed comfortable allowing them to discuss and debate amongst themselves without controlling them. When she did want to interrupt, she asked for permission. The students asked thought-provoking questions about the lesson but also about the larger context of their rights. They also talked directly to each other when they disagreed or when they needed clarification. Amani linked what they were discussing to psychology, drawing on her own speciality to present a different yet related perspective to the topic, and she listened when students presented their own perspectives. The lesson was a serious one, and the debates were heated, but there was laughter and the

camaraderie that comes with being in a trusted environment. When the students seemed disheartened about how long it could take to make changes, Amani encouragingly said to them that it does not matter how long it takes. She told them that making their voices heard is a start.

When the bell rang and students started to file out of the room for their break, Amani and I discussed what had happened during the lesson. Amani was adamant that human rights cannot be taught as facts that students memorise and recall on an exam. She argued that teaching and learning them this way is pointless, and students will continue to be in the dark about how to demand their rights and how to participate in society. She explained to me that when her students held a mock demonstration, they were learning the *discourse* to express and support their claims. Osler and Starkey (2010) point out that human rights discourse provides a common language for people everywhere to express their struggles. Amani's students used this discourse to express the struggles they were facing in school and at home. This skill, in addition to giving credibility to their demands, ensures that young people are equipped to participate in the universal dialogue on human rights. Amani described two additional skills as crucial to taking transformative action: engaging in *dialogue* helps uncover rights violations and promote solidarity, and making *demands* once injustices are discovered invokes change.

I describe the type of action in the CHR classrooms at Fatima School as *sanctioned*, in that it was planned either by the teachers alone or in partnership with the students as part of a learning experience. Through such sanctioned activities, Fatima School was able to hone skills related specifically to human rights – skills that were not named in the CHR goals and textbooks or in the 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report. The latter focused instead on general skills, such as problem solving and social communication skills, as well as participation skills, such as volunteer work and collaborative work. It also listed defending the country and sacrificing for it under desired skills. Four of the ten skills that are mentioned are described using normative phrases: 'positive critical thinking', 'positive behaviour', 'correct democratic practice' and 'positive participation in the progress of society' (p. 29). What constitutes the

'positive' and 'correct' is never described. This suggests a more controlled skills set, and with the CHR content reduced to one year and less time for active learning, such control is facilitated, at the expense of dialogue and action.

7.2.3 VALUES

Education *through* human rights suggests that schools embody the values they want to foster in students. The listed CHR values outcomes are again brief, leaving room for interpretation and expansion. They do, however, stress human rights and the values on which the Constitution is based.

> Values and attitudes: By presenting values related to the Constitution and human rights to form a positive attitude towards them and a sense of their importance for the individual and the society. (MoE, 2010a, p. 8)

As the previous sections have shown, knowledge can be expanded to achieve critical understanding by using sources outside the textbooks, and active learning can promote skills when the allotted time allows. However, promoting values related to human rights while simultaneously violating them is challenging.

Students enrolled in the three-year CHR programme problematised such disjunctures in the research workshops. In 2009, the grade 11 students were studying human rights with Amani. During the workshops, the theme raised most frequently by these students on the human rights posters was the right to be heard and to participate. Overt 80% of the students mentioned their lack of ability to have their opinions listened to and acted upon in school. Over a third of these students contrasted this with CHR, where they felt that their opinions *were* respected. One year later, in 2010, the grade 11 students had moved on to grade 12 and were in their third year of CHR. Once again, the theme raised most frequently was the right to be heard, mentioned by almost half the students. These students, though still aware of the disjuncture between their learning in CHR and their lived experiences during the rest of the school day, nonetheless displayed a belief in their right to be heard and an appreciation for the reciprocity built into this right, as the following quotes demonstrate:

I learned in school to express my personal opinion with total confidence and that it is the right of every human to express his opinion, and no individual can be banned from expressing his opinion. (grade 12 student, 2010; third year of three-year CHR)

I learned how to engage in dialogue with every individual without discrimination. (grade 12 student, 2010; third year of three-year CHR)

Listening to the other is the first step in democracy. (grade 12 student, 2010; third year of three-year CHR)

In 2011, the one-year version of CHR came into effect. The responses of these grade 12 students (who had not taken CHR in grades 10 and 11) were very different from their predecessors (who had). Less than 10% of these students mentioned the right to be heard, and those who did felt they were not being listened to. These students did not contrast their experiences in CHR with the rest of their school lives, nor did they mention the importance of listening to others. They still made demands on the State, such as improved and easier curricula and exams, gender equality in university acceptance, more financial support and better healthcare, streets, buildings and public utilities, but unlike the students in the three-year CHR programme, these students did not express their right and desire to be involved in the decision-making process. As we saw in Chapter 5, these students also mentioned Islamic Studies more frequently as the site of learning about human rights, citizenship and democracy. Their responses lack the agency and confidence displayed by the students in the three-year CHR programme, as the two contrasting examples illustrate:

I demand from the State that it improves curricula, the streets and the teachers. (grade 12 student, 2011; only year of one-year CHR)

I refuse to accept any regulations issued by the Ministry unless agreed upon by the students. I suggest that there be [...] an open discussion about education and how to achieve it. (grade 12 student, 2010; third year of three-year CHR)

These data suggest that the three-year CHR programme was able to foster a belief in the importance of dialogue in the students, which they felt was underpinned by their mutual right to be heard and participate; it did this by giving the teachers time and

space to listen to their students and involve them more actively in their own learning. This belief in dialogue, coupled with the skills students were learning and the agency this promoted, seemed like an important step towards more transformative changes within Kuwait's school system and, ultimately, the country itself.

Crucial to this process is what Duncan-Andrade (2010) calls 'critical hope', which he argues is made up of three elements: material hope, Socratic hope and audacious hope (as explained in Chapter 3). Fatima School's enactment of CHR was able to produce material hope by providing students with the necessary resources to counter perceived injustices, including full knowledge of their universal rights. It also promoted Socratic hope by offering students the time and space to 'painfully examine', to use Duncan-Andrade's (2010, p. 237) words, their lived realities as well as those of others in their quest for greater justice. Finally, it fostered audacious hope and solidarity as students and teachers shared struggles and transformative successes. Despite the frustrations voiced by the three-year CHR students, with the help of Amani, they maintained hope and belief in the possibility of change. Amani, in addition to stressing knowledge and action, was adamant about reminding her students that no matter how small their efforts seem in the scheme of things and no matter how long it takes to see change through, it is crucial to keep hope alive and to keep trying. 'Leave a fingerprint,' she would tell them repeatedly when they expressed their frustrations to her. One of her grade 11 CHR students in 2009 echoed such hope on the human rights poster:

> Human rights are not complete and there are many rights not available to us, particularly at school, where they constantly impose their opinions on us and they don't listen to what we want [...] but still, there is hope. (grade 11 student, 2009; second year of three-year CHR)

This hope, anchored in human rights values and buoyed by critical knowledge and agency, has the power to realise the transformative nature of HRE.

Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report lists 17 values that citizenship education should foster. Among these are a sense of belonging and loyalty to Kuwait, the Arab World and the Islamic world; protection of national unity; avoidance of extremism in

all its forms; faith in social pluralism; respect for other people's beliefs; and tolerance, peace, democracy and human rights. This list, though still encompassing the more traditional values of loyalty and patriotism, widens the net to include more cosmopolitan values. However, these humanistic, cosmopolitan values are in tension with an authoritarian school context that does not itself recognise the human rights of its students. Eschewing extremism while introducing Islam into every aspect of schooling is contradictory, as is expecting faith in social pluralism while segregating schools on multiple levels. Promoting **humanistic values** is concomitant with embodying these values.

7.2.4   CONTINUUM OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION: CURRICULUM

Drawing on this analysis, the curriculum portion of the proposed *Continuum of Human Rights Education* includes the following elements:
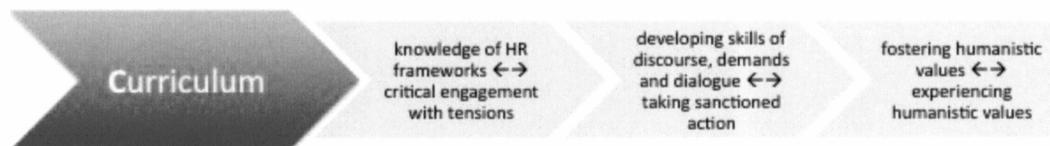
Figure 7.1: The curriculum in the *Continuum of Human Rights Education*

In this portion of the continuum, knowledge *about* human rights frameworks and critical engagements with the tensions that may arise between different frameworks – as arose in the data in section 7.2.1 – complement each other (as demonstrated by the two-way arrows) and help deepen understandings of ideal and real rights. In Fatima School's enactment of CHR, learning extended beyond the textbooks, and the students developed skills specifically related to human rights – namely, discourse, demands and dialogue, which facilitated the sanctioned active learning within the CHR classes (section 7.2.2). The sanctioned activities, in turn, further strengthened these skills. Finally, as the CHR teachers and students gained deeper understandings of human rights and as they engaged in human rights dialogues, the CHR classrooms evolved into spaces where these rights were recognised and enacted. Students experiencing the humanistic values they were learning about were then able to point out disjunctures between these experiences and those outside the CHR classroom (section 7.2.3). The 'values' element of the proposed HRE curricular component is

furthest along down the blue arrow not to suggest that it *must* follow linearly after knowledge and skills, but because, as the data in this section have demonstrated, armed with knowledge and the skills to engage in dialogue, the teachers and students at Fatima School experienced and embodied humanistic values. In this way, education *about* human rights occurs in tandem with education *through* human rights. The further one moves forward along the arrow, the more likely the transformative potential of HRE is realised. However, the arrow does not lead to an end goal, but rather represents the ongoing process of HRE.

Rather than discarding the old and starting from scratch, the continuum adopts the strengths of both the CHR textbooks and Fatima School's articulation of the module. In dialogue with teachers and students, it also builds on this foundation to address the various disjunctures and absences that were identified. In this way, the curriculum is transformed from a prescription of what adults think is important to what Apple and Beane (2007) describe as a 'democratic curriculum [that] invites young people to shed the passive role of knowledge consumers and assume the active role of "meaning makers"' (p. 17). Based on this understanding, this curriculum is never finished, but rather continues to evolve with the help of the young people who are at its heart.

The following two sections address further elements in the school system beyond the curriculum that inhibit HRE from evolving past education *about* human rights, namely participation and recognition. These were identified by students and teachers at Fatima School and triangulated by my observations and the existing literature.

7.3 HRE AND PARTICIPATION: TAKING UNSANCTIONED ACTION

Holden and Clough (1998) use a Yoruba metaphor to argue for the participation of young people: 'The child carried on the back does not know the length of the road' (p. 13). They argue that allowing a child to walk down that road – with the support they require – ensures their participation as 'a traveller on the journey.' (p. 13). In

the human rights journey, this participation is key. As uncovered in the previous chapter, education is a largely passive experience for students with minimal opportunities for meaningful participation. The CHR module, coming on the heels of the 2006 *Nabīhā Khamsa* (We Want It Five) youth movement discussed in Chapter 2, seemed well-timed to equip Kuwaiti youth with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for democratic participation anchored in the universal concepts of human rights, equality and justice. None of its overarching goals, however, mention the participation of young people, and its incorporation into the existing authoritarian system lessened its potential impact.

In every student research workshop over the three years of this research study, the vast majority of students explicitly stated on their democracy posters that they did not feel their right to participate in decision-making processes was being met. This was the same for every grade level, regardless of whether they were taking CHR or not, as the quotes below illustrate:

> Although I am currently living in a democratic country, I do not feel that I am getting my full democratic rights, particularly at school with mandatory laws and official curricula... If I want to discuss a particular issue related to a topic with a teacher, she merely gives me what she thinks is a model answer and she closes the subject. (grade 10 student, 2009; no CHR – one-year CHR in 2012)

> We do not have rights within the Ministry of Education. We can't get our voices heard and we can't have our say about the curriculum or the system. (grade 11 student, 2010; no CHR – one-year CHR in 2011)

> CHR is an amazing module where we learned about democracy, but in school, they don't give us the chance to discuss and give our opinions. We want one lesson a week to present and discuss all our problems as students. (grade 12 student, 2010; third year of three-year CHR)

As the quotes demonstrate, most students made references to rights violations they felt they were experiencing as students in school. The students also identified three main spaces where they felt their right to participate *was* met in school: their CHR classes, their UNESCO projects (discussed in Chapter 6) and the 'Meet to Develop' (MTD) student group (to be discussed in Chapter 8). The following sections will focus on two types of action that came about through the CHR modules; I call these

'*sanctioned*' and '*unsanctioned*' action. Both relate to action that is specifically related to human rights agendas rather than the general right to participate.

7.3.1 SANCTIONED ACTION IN CHR

As seen in the sections on the curriculum above, the CHR module offered time and space for greater student participation, whether in the form of mock elections, trials, demonstrations or student-led learning. These forms of sanctioned action were planned by the teachers – sometimes with student involvement – to support the students' learning *about* human rights and democracy and to perhaps move towards a more maximal interpretation that encompassed education *for* human rights and democracy. I call this action '*sanctioned*' because students were participating under the authority of their teachers. Through these sanctioned actions, the agency and confidence of students enrolled in the three-year CHR programme was raised, as illustrated by the following comments from the student posters on democracy:

> Ms. Amani taught me how to engage in dialogue and how to express my opinions respectfully and how to discuss issues with the administration, and she listens to our opinions, and we implement what we can. (grade 12 student, 2010; third year of three-year CHR)

> In CHR class in particular we can express our opinions, both about issues within the lesson and outside the lesson. (grade 11 student, 2009; second year of three-year CHR)

> I learned that it is the student's right to suggest any opinion that affects her, for the benefit of the school. (grade 12 student, 2009; third year of three-year CHR)

In contrast, students taking the one-year CHR module only ever made vague references to 'learning *about* democracy' in CHR, with no mention of specific knowledge or skills; they also complained about the rote-learning involved in the programme:

> I learned about democracy in CHR class. (Approximately 20% of the grade 12 students taking the one-year CHR module in 2011 said this verbatim.)

> The CHR class dealt with democracy. (grade 12 student, 2011; only year of one-year CHR)

The CHR curriculum depends on memorisation [...] I would prefer it to be an elective module and not a requirement. (grade 12 student, 2011; only year of one-year CHR)

With three textbooks bound into one, the loss of student action and participation and the agency this promoted is not surprising.

7.3.2 FROM SANCTIONED TO UNSANCTIONED ACTION

So far, the participation of students enrolled in the three-year CHR programme at Fatima School falls low on Hart's (1992) ladder of young citizen participation. It can be described as 'assigned but informed' or 'consulted and informed' (p. 11-12), with teachers still in charge but students involved to varying degrees in the process. This is already a step up from the participation – or lack thereof – that was observed in other classes at Fatima School, where teachers controlled and dominated, as well as the overall school system, which promotes passivity (as discussed in Chapter 6).

However, a further interruption to the authoritarian control over classrooms and schools became apparent through my observations and interviews at Fatima School. In 2009, the grade 11 students in the three-year CHR programme were leaning how to demand their rights in their CHR class. As previously discussed, this involved mock demonstrations that equipped students with the skills necessary to identify rights violations and then make demands to redress such situations. These students, having identified the banning of cafeterias as both a violation of their right to a healthy diet as well as their right to relax, congregate and enjoy each other's company, decided to take action. This decision was made outside any classroom and without direct teacher involvement. The students made placards and protested outside the offices of the school administration to demand a lifting of the ban on cafeterias by the educational authorities. Although this protest never made it into the news and therefore did not reach the powers that be, this is still an example of what I term 'unsanctioned action' – action that is planned and carried out by young people for the specific purpose of addressing a violation of their rights (or, indeed, the rights of others) that they have identified. The criticality and skills they needed

to do this were learned in CHR, but the will to carry such learning and apply it to better their lives and the lives of their peers became their own.

The same students that year also felt that their break times were too short: the first break is 15 minutes and the second, 10. As discussed in Chapter 6, students complained that their teachers often usurped even these short breaks to finish off their lessons. Between praying and eating, this left students little time to rest before they were back in their 'fixed classrooms'. One day in 2009, as the bell rang signalling the end of the break, the grade 11 students all sat down on the ground in the main courtyard. When asked why they were not going to class, they explained that they were having a sit-in to protest their short breaks.

In both these instances of unsanctioned action, the students were peaceful and articulate. They were confident and hopeful, and failure to invoke change the first time did not stop them from trying again. These students had their voices heard in CHR. They participated in sanctioned action with their teachers' permission. It was when they moved beyond the classroom independently that their HRE became truly transformative. Through their unsanctioned actions, the CHR students remind us of their ability to see the world differently and to work towards a more just tomorrow. The possibly accidental interruption to the authoritarian realities of Kuwaiti schooling that the CHR module afforded, rather than being explored, encouraged and expanded on, was erased with the relegation of the module to one year.

Against the backdrop of the Arab Spring, the year 2011 saw many students protesting on the streets of Kuwait. These protestors grounded their demands in their right to be heard, and with no electoral power until the age of 21 and no other access to decision-making processes, they described this unsanctioned action as necessary. This is an important step for Kuwaiti youth, who, as highlighted in Chapter 2, are unable to speak for themselves in an official capacity. In October 2011, secondary school students took to the streets to demand that a new grading regulation be revoked. The new regulation reduced the percentage of the attendance and oral participation component, leading to an increase in the

percentage of exams in the overall final mark. Students argued that introducing this regulation in their final year basically nullified their entire academic career and rested their university acceptance on exam marks only. While the students' arguments against high-stakes testing are valid, it is the reasoning that the students use that is problematic. Rather than arguing against high-stakes testing explicitly, students were protesting the lowering of the attendance/oral participation component. This component required nothing more than students showing up to class and reading answers from their textbooks when asked questions. The 35% was used by teachers to help students pass difficult classes or to help them get the grade they need to get into specific university faculties.[49] Students were therefore actually demanding greater passivity.

Students at Fatima School complained repeatedly about what they perceived were stressful demands made of them in terms of lengthy school days and heavy course loads. As explained in Chapter 6, the school day in Kuwait is only six hours and five minutes long. The textbooks for most modules are short, and exam questions rely on students memorising and recalling information. There are no essays or research papers to write and no books other than the textbooks to read. Moreover, studies show that grades are very inflated in Kuwaiti state schools; still, students struggle to meet grade requirements and do poorly by international standards (Tony Blair Associates, 2009; Mullis et al, 2007; 2008; Martin et al, 2008). This again suggests that the students' perspectives of what constitutes a demanding education are grounded in their experiences as passive learners.

The secondary school students protesting in October 2011 were joined by teachers and university students, both demanding higher pay – the teachers in the form of their salaries, and the university students in the form of the stipends they already receive simply to attend university. Kuwaiti teachers at Fatima School taught an average of 45 minutes a day, four days a week for approximately 1000 KD for new

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[49] As reported by Adel Marzouk Al-Khayat on Kuwait News online on 6 October 2011 (http://www.kuwaitnews.com/locals/15139-2011-10-06-11-50-54).

teachers (roughly £2,225).[50] All Kuwaiti students at Kuwait University received a minimum stipend of 100 KD a month (roughly £225); these students live at home, with their food expenses covered by their families, who get food subsidies from the government. After these protests, both the teacher salaries and the student stipends were increased. Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report problematises such 'dependence on the State' (as discussed in Chapter 5), but through its educational system, it fosters this dependence through its focus on passive learning. To try to ease the dependence on the State by enforcing greater control and using money to appease students is contradictory and ends up promoting the very attitude it criticises.

Fatima School's interpretation of the three-year CHR module offered an alternative in the form an educational experience promoting individual agency and action that is supported by critical thinking and humanistic values. Yes, it may have encouraged students to take *unsanctioned action*. The question is, is the nature of this action, anchored in understanding and dialogue, worse than action that furthers dependence on the State? The answer depends on the perceived role of education. As Faour and Muasher (2011) argue, 'the political commitment to produce independent, creative students has been weak in Arab countries for reasons of self-preservation – doing so would produce citizens capable of challenging authority' (p. 13). Giving voice to and indeed giving in to demands for more money are perhaps more appealing.

7.3.3 HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE, OR THE 'SUBNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL'

HRE and the universal human rights project are global pursuits. From Tahrir Square to Wall Street, people are fighting for their right to enter into the dialogue and invoke changes towards a more just world. Helping young people become part of this dialogue requires of HRE that it simultaneously stay rooted in and transcend its

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[50] It is important to note that this salary is not taxed.

contextual local realities. Delanty (2000) argues that democratic citizenship should be seen as operating on the 'subnational, national and transnational levels' (p. 136). Human rights perceived as a universal dialogue necessarily operate on these same three levels.

As the previous sections discussed, the three-year CHR programme offered students at Fatima School opportunities to participate. However, this participation remained rooted in the school – or subnational – context because though the students demonstrated the ability to participate and to make their voices heard, their voices did not transcend the school walls, and they had no say in decisions that came from above, even those pertaining directly to their lives. As Chapter 6 highlighted, the confinement of students within school walls and their 'fixed classrooms' contributes to their inability to participate in national issues. This coincides with the fact that active national participation of young people is not institutionalised in Kuwaiti governance (as discussed in Chapter 2). As seen in the various quotes in this and previous chapters, students are frustrated by this lack of formal opportunities for participation.

The 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report stresses active participation as one of its three overarching goals. It also stresses community service, volunteer work, cooperative work and democratic participation. However, it also implies that these are goals to prepare for *future* citizen participation rather than for children *now*, as seen in the following quotes:

> Emphasis on the value of dialogue, human rights and respect for the opinions of others in young people, and the utilisation of democratic means to resolve conflicts of opinion and interest; this makes it possible for children in the *future* to treat the deficiencies in political practice in society. (MoE, 2010b, p. 25; in section on areas of focus for education; emphasis added)

> Preparing the learner for following a *future* life as a good citizen. (MoE, 2010b, p. 26; in overarching goals; emphasis added)

> [...] To practice democratic values and skills that society seeks to realise in [the learners] in their *future* lives. (MoE, 2010b, p. 31; in section on the role of education in citizenship; emphasis added)

This focus on students as future citizens detracts from their ability to act as agents of change now. The decision to relegate CHR to a one-year module was also justified by perceiving grade 10 and 11 students as not yet ready to learn about human rights and democracy (MoE, 2010a). As a result, students perceive their status as children as a hindrance to being heard and taken seriously. Not much changes when they 'become' citizens at 18 when they get their *jinsiyya* (nationality) papers, as they cannot participate politically until the age of 21.

Kuwait is signatory to the UNCRC, Article 12 of which *does* protect children's right to participate in human rights agendas. Lansdown (2001) explains the implications of this article as follows:

> Article 12 is a **substantive** right, saying that children are entitled to be actors in their own lives and to participate in the decisions that affect them. But, as with adults, democratic participation is not an end in itself. It is the means through which to achieve justice, influence outcomes and expose abuses of power. In other words, it is also a **procedural** right enabling children to challenge abuses or neglect of their rights and take action to promote and protect those rights. It enables children to contribute to respect for their best interests. (p. 2)

The transnational forms of regulation described by Delanty (2000) are particularly important to human rights issues and struggles. The UNCRC, UDHR and other international agreements are transnational agreements to uphold universal rights. However, furthering such rights within national contexts is particularly difficult for children, who are often locked into their local and national realities without access to the transnational community.

The CHR textbooks encompass a transnational perspective of human rights as laid out in international agreements like the UNCRC and the UDHR. However, by decontextualising rights from both their local realities as well as contemporary global struggles and successes, the module failed to critically engage with either the national or transnational levels and once again reduced HRE to theoretical learning. Fatima School, in addition to bringing national realities and active learning into the CHR module, was able to further interrupt the theoretical experience of rights and participation and add a transnational component through its association with

UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network, as discussed in the previous chapter. These two forces combined promoted student agency and participation that had the potential to transcend the school walls as learning evolved into education *for* human rights.

7.3.4   CONTINUUM OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION: PARTICIPATION

This analysis can therefore be summarised in the second dimension of the proposed *Continuum of Human Rights Education*:
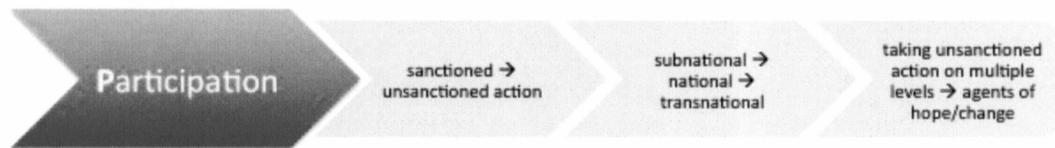
Figure 7.2: Participation in the *Continuum of Human Rights Education*

Limiting the participation of students to sanctioned, often tokenistic, classroom activities is another level of control that curtails the transformative nature of HRE. However, as students at Fatima School engaged in meaningful active learning, this then evolved into unsanctioned action that they decided was necessary due to violations they experienced. At Fatima School, such action was enhanced by the transnational element afforded by their ASPnet membership. Taking unsanctioned action on multiple levels increases agency and hope, and young people become agents of change in the universal dialogue of human rights rather than passive recipients trapped in the status quo.

7.4   RECOGNITION: FROM SELF TO OTHER

Amidst the numerous divisions outlined in Chapter 2 in Kuwait's population – Kuwaiti/'non-Kuwaiti'/*bidoon*, Sunni/Shiite, bedouin/*ḥadhar*, male/female, 'original'/naturalised citizen – youth are often overlooked in discussions about citizenship and national identity, both in terms of their lack of status but also in terms of their potential contribution to or interruption of these various and often discriminatory divisions. As mentioned, Kuwait relegates young people to the category of 'citizens-in-waiting' by delaying the issuance of legal citizenship

documents until the age of 18. While seemingly innocuous, this move nonetheless leaves young people without official status in Kuwait's citizenship system. This lack of status, coupled with the lack of opportunities to participate outlined in the previous section, potentially precludes young people from interrogating what constitutes 'the national identity' that is repeatedly mentioned in Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report (discussed in Chapter 5) and from expanding this category to include marginalised groups. This is furthered by the educational contexts within which students learn. As argued in Chapter 6, the homogenised nature of Kuwait's schools segregates the various groups within it based on gender, nationality and religion most obviously and on class, sect and cultural backgrounds more subtly.

Striking a balance between universalism and the recognition of a multiplicity of identities can be challenging, as discussed in Chapter 3. The students at Fatima School, however, stripped this debate to a simple request: they argued that they needed to be recognised as humans first. Their comments suggested that their age, gender, academic status and other categories assigned to them by adults hindered the perception of them as humans with rights, as the following quotes demonstrate:

> We are human. We need our rights. (grade 12 student, 2011; only year of one-year CHR)

> Because we are girls, the administration persecutes us and makes us feel like we are inanimate objects. Humans have feelings. (grade 11 student, 2010; no CHR – one-year CHR in 2011)

> We have no right to anything. And even if we speak, in their opinion we are still young and our words aren't taken into consideration and we don't know what's in our own interest. (grade 10 student, 2010; no CHR – one-year CHR in 2012)

> When we wear [jewellery], they compare us to animals... Let them treat us like humans first and we will go from there. (grade 10 student, 2010; no CHR – one-year CHR in 2012)

In this sense, the students are asking to be recognised, not in their particularities, but as human beings with rights. This recognition does not necessitate abandoning

all but the identity of rights-bearer; it merely stipulates this identity as a minimal prerequisite to developing the agency needed to participate actively.

There also appears to be a cyclic nature to Kuwait's educational approach that prevents it from evolving beyond its exclusive interpretation of citizenship. With students firmly conceptualised as knowledge recipients and future citizens and with participation remaining tokenistic, the status and rights of students are not fully recognised. In turn, this lack of recognition locks them into the passive roles that their rote learning and lack of action encourage. CHR offered an interesting interruption to this reality. As discussed, students recognised as rights-bearers in CHR developed the confidence to take both sanctioned and unsanctioned action to further what they perceived to be injustices against them. Once students experienced this recognition as rights-bearers and the subsequent agency this promoted, a significant progression took place. Students began exploring the role of 'the other' in Kuwait. The grade 12 students in 2010 who had taken three years of CHR were the only ones in all the research workshops over three years who brought up racism, mentioned by over a third of the respondents. This was not raised in the context of things they were learning in school, but rather their frustration with the realities they were witnessing and experiencing:

> We in Kuwait discriminate a lot between nationals and residents, and I think that is racism. (grade 12 student, 2010; third year of three-year CHR)

> There are immigrants who are not treated well and they are not respected, and to me that is racist discrimination and I don't like it. No to racism in Kuwait! (grade 12 student, 2010; third year of three-year CHR)

> I personally am not Kuwaiti, but through my time in Kuwait, it has become clear to me that a citizen is a national, and that is the only thing I know about citizenship, and maybe it is an issue of racism. (grade 12 student, 2010; third year of three-year CHR)

> [...] It is clear in the majority of Arab countries that their catchwords are discrimination and racism. (grade 12 student, 2010; third year of three-year CHR)

In gaining recognition and autonomy for themselves as humans first, students are then able to develop the agency that enables them to engage in the universal rights

dialogue as students, young people, girls, Kuwaitis and so forth, potentially furthering the rights of these multiple conceptions of self as well as those of others who have been similarly marginalised based on various other criteria. The CHR module, by leaving national identity out of its founding principles and overarching goals and focusing instead on belonging (as explained in Chapter 5), left room to expand on what has developed into an exclusive conception of Kuwaiti national identity within an increasingly young and plural society.

The school is a safe place to engage in this type of dialogue, which is premised on feelings of solidarity (as argued by Dean, 1996; discussed in Chapter 3). This, however, would involve rethinking the segregated, homogenised organisation of schools described in Chapter 6. By keeping students separate, solidarity becomes a theoretical concept rather than a value that is fostered and acted upon. With textbooks that do not contextualise human rights or present the various historical and local struggles for rights, this becomes even more challenging.

7.4.1   CONTINUUM OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION: RECOGNITION

What emerges from the analysis, then, is a need for recognition that is anchored in universal rights and in our awareness that, with agency, we can transcend present realities by engaging in dialogue with each other, forging solidarities and ultimately furthering recognition for ourselves and others (all of which are mutually supporting). It is a recognition of the diversity of humans that bear equal, or indeed, unequal rights that promotes the imagining of possible alternatives. This is summarised in the recognition portion of the proposed *Continuum of Human Rights Education*:
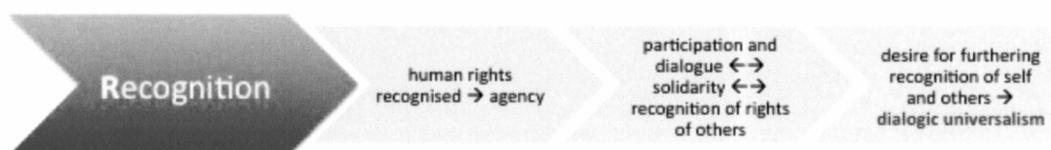
Figure 7.3: Recognition in the *Continuum of Human Rights Education*

As seen in the figure above, recognition in a maximal conception of HRE is therefore the locus for 'reclaiming dialogic universalism', to use Benhabib's (2008, p. 20)

words. When human beings are recognised as such, they are immediately eligible to be part of the local and global human rights project, thus realising dialogic universalism. The journey involves consistently '[working] towards the safeguarding of the rights of those without rights' (grade 12 student, 2010; third year of three-year CHR). The continuum does not strive to reach a utopian end; the journey itself embodies utopian ideals.

7.5   CONCLUSION: THE CONTENT OF HRE

By focusing on citizenship as rights, the CHR module provided a promising start to a more maximal citizenship agenda that recognised humans as rights bearers with the agency to actively participate in and change the status quo. Though substantively thin, its enactment at Fatima School revealed thicker possibilities. The addition of the universal element in the CHR textbooks safeguarded idealism, while Fatima School's engagement with contextualised realities honed criticality. This led to two significant developments. First, students took unsanctioned action in the pursuit of greater justice for themselves. Second, they began to examine the roles and rights of the other in Kuwait, feeling empathy and solidarity despite the homogenised realities of their schools.

Building on the strengths of the three-year CHR programme and its enactment at Fatima School, the proposed *Continuum of Human Rights Education* suggests a human rights curriculum that highlights tensions between universal ideals and legal realities, allowing students to develop critical understanding as they 'mediate' between the two. It also affords opportunities for sanctioned action that develops the skills of discourse, dialogue and demands. This curriculum both embodies and fosters the humanistic values of solidarity, reciprocity and critical hope. However, for HRE to realise its transformative power, learning must move beyond the curriculum, with students acting as agents in multiple contexts, taking unsanctioned action to further the rights and recognition of themselves and others and thus becoming part of the universal dialogue of human rights. These three elements – curriculum,

participation and recognition – work together to expand HRE into education *about*, *through* and *for* human rights.

The following chapter will uncover Amani's prefigurative practice, highlighting how she incorporated several of the more maximal conceptions of context and content developed in Chapters 6 and 7 into her teaching. Finally, Chapter 9 will bring context and content together and present the entire proposed *Continuum of Human Rights Education*.

8   AMANI: LEAVING A FINGERPRINT

8.1   INTRODUCTION

> All too frequently, teachers who advocate for the democratic way are imagined as a certain stereotype: They are young, dress informally, have unkempt hair, wear sandals, ride bicycles to work, shop at health food stores, only watch public television, and always insist that students call them by their first names. (Beane, 2005, p. 86-87)

Amani is not your stereotypical democratic teacher. She is perhaps a far cry from what many would picture when speaking of radical democratic practice in the West. She also does not fit contemporary Middle Eastern stereotypes. She wears a *ḥijāb*, but her conservative clothes are bright, well-accessorized and eclectic – mixing Eastern and Western styles. She prays five times a day, was married at a very young age and has six sons. She also joins political groups, makes her husband do all the cooking and is set on sending her children to the West for their college educations. Amani's teaching also combines the stereotypical and traditional with the atypical and progressive. Unlike the tensions we have seen arising from such overlapping ideals and experiences within the national context (Chapter 2) and the education system (Chapters 5, 6 and 7), in Amani's teaching, the tensions are worked through with criticality and hope.

Amani graduated from a Kuwaiti public school and went on to attend Kuwait University, majoring in psychology. She began and continues teaching in the Kuwaiti pubic school system. At Fatima School, Amani teaches Psychology and Psychological Health (*al-ṣiḥa al-nafsiyya*; similar to the UK's PSHEE). She was also one of the teachers asked to take on the Constitution and Human Rights (CHR) module. As the case study of Fatima School unfolded, the emerging data revealed numerous references to Amani in the observation fieldnotes, interviews and student research workshops. This chapter brings these data together to present Amani as a viable case of prefigurative practice. Prefigurative practice is that which embodies the 'viability and desirability' of alternatives in its structures, processes and relations (Fielding, 2007, p. 544). Fielding (2007) identifies seven key strands of prefigurative practice: overt democratic coherence, endorsement of a vibrant, inclusive public

realm, interpersonal and structural integrity, radical approaches to curriculum and assessment, insistent affirmation of possibility, delight and belief in intergenerational reciprocity and interrogative, dialogic openness.

This chapter will identify these strands within Amani's practice, focusing on elements of the *Continuum of Human Rights Education* presented in the previous chapters. Section 8.2 analyses Amani's views on and use of space in the school, and section 8.3 uncovers the arguably radical ways in which she co-creates curricula with her students. In section 8.4, Amani's recognition of her students' rights is discussed, highlighting the agency this promotes and the unsanctioned action that results. Section 8.5 presents student voices on Amani. The final section discusses Amani's opinion of the 2010 *jawda* (quality education) initiative and her hopes for the future.

8.2   AMANI AND FREE SPACES: 'A SCHOOL WITHOUT WALLS'

> [The school] is the environment that embraces the student throughout the years of his learning, and it has an important educational role and mission that aims to shape the whole identity of the student and prepare him to be a good citizen who contributes to the development of his country (MoE, 2008e, p. 87).

So begins the chapter entitled 'Psychological health and the school' in the Ministry of Education's Psychological Health elective textbook. Section 1 of the chapter is entitled 'Provision of a sound school atmosphere', under which sub-section A reads 'The aesthetic design or engineering of the school'. However, according to Amani, who teaches the elective, the goals quoted above cannot be met within the current physical and metaphorical school walls.

During the 2008-2009 academic year, when I first visited Fatima School, I asked Amani in our first interview what she would like to see implemented in Kuwait's school system. She responded without hesitation, 'A school without walls.' For Amani, this secondary school would be one where students had the freedom to leave campus during the school day. She argued that this would make them more self-reliant, offer them alternatives and choices and ultimately, strengthen their

agency. In the current system, she explained, students have limited choices within school. As one student expressed it,

> I feel that democracy at school is not complete because the student does not enjoy all its aspects; he doesn't choose what he wears, the books he reads, what he wants to eat... And the lessons in which he enjoys his freedom are few and extremely rare. (grade 12 student, 2011; only year of one-year CHR)

Amani likened the students' experience within the school to being in a box – a box that she said the students understandably try to escape from:

> When I feel bored, when I feel like I am constrained... Let someone constrain you and put you in a box. How would you feel? You are going to try to open that box and get out any way you can.

She asked what the harm would be in letting students be part of the process in deciding where they should be at any given point in the school day. She provided an example from the previous academic year, when she said they had an extremely challenging grade 11 class. With the principal's approval, the teachers decided to tell the students that if they did not want to be in the classroom, they could leave. This was not said threateningly, and students were not to be sent to the principal's office. The principal herself told them that they could go down to the main hall and even buy snacks from the snack table. The idea for the teachers and administration was that this way, those students who constantly disrupted the class would leave, and the rest could continue on with their lessons in peace. The next day, Amani told me, not a single girl left the classroom, and there were no disruptions. The principal, used to having girls sent to her office, walked to the hall to see just how many girls had decided to leave class. When she saw no one there, she got suspicious and walked to the students' classroom. There they all were, 'by choice', Amani stressed to me. There were no disruptions. This was not a case of reverse psychology, she assured me; the students knew they had a real choice and that they would not be penalised for it. They weighed the options, she said, and were free to make an informed choice without constraints.

Amani took this idea further. 'Why can't secondary school students go off campus to get a snack when they have a break?' Amani asked as she shook her head and shrugged. She told me that we are kidding ourselves if we think we are shielding our

students from a world they have access to via their computers and mobile phones. Amani ended her passionate description of the 'school without walls' by arguing that at least for the three years of secondary school, students should be free to take responsibility for themselves and that school should not be a way to box them in.

As I walked around Fatima School that year, I could see why Amani opted for the box analogy. As discussed in Chapter 6, due to the Ministry of Education's 'fixed classroom' policy, I watched students sit through lesson after lesson in their same bare classroom for hours on end, leaving only for two short breaks and the occasional weekly science lab or elective. There was nothing on the walls to look at, nothing in the classroom to read and no technology or other resources to access the outside world. The students sat at individual desks in straight rows, making it difficult to engage with one another and with their teachers, who, for the most part, remained at the front of the classroom. Like the students, even on my first day in one of the 'fixed classrooms', I was happy to exit the 'box' when my first two observations of the day were over.

When I interviewed Ruqaya, another social studies teacher, in 2009, I asked her what she thought of the layout of these classrooms. She responded that she did not find it conducive to learning but complained that it was a fixed setup that she could not change. That year, I noticed that all the social studies teachers but one resigned themselves to this layout. It was only when I entered my first CHR module with Amani in March 2009 that I saw this configuration change. As soon as Amani walked into the students' classrooms, she would ask them to form a 'U' with the desks. Rather than staying anchored at the teacher desk at the front of the room, Amani floated around the entire room, often sitting down at student desks as her class held discussions, heated debates and mock demonstrations. On several occasions, I heard Amani complaining about the 'fixed classroom' policy, including during a school *jawda* meeting (as mentioned in Chapter 6).

During the 2009-2010 academic year, the classroom configurations had not changed. However, on my first day back at Fatima School, Amani eagerly led me to her new

'lab'. On the way there, she explained to me that she felt students needed to be able to move around their school freely. She also explained to me that she wanted a space where students felt unconstrained and were able to engage with each other and participate in their own learning. Most importantly, she felt that the environment of the 'fixed classroom' was in tension with the goals of the curriculum, particularly those of the new Psychological Health elective. For these reasons, at the start of the 2009-2010 academic year, Amani approached the principal at Fatima School and requested a classroom for herself. She argued that her Psychological Health (PH) elective was a science and therefore required a lab; this was the only way she could skirt the 'fixed classroom' regulation. The principal, who I observed to be very sympathetic to Amani's various projects and very respecting of her teaching methods, immediately acquiesced.

As we walked into Amani's 'lab', I was struck by the difference between this space and any other I had seen at the school. The walls were still white, but the curtains were bright, making the light coming in from the windows warm and inviting. All over the walls were student-created posters or posters that the students had brought in to share because they had some significance in their lives. A television and DVD player stood in the corner, flanked by speakers to play music during class sometimes to create what Amani called 'a relaxing vibe'. The room even smelled different, with fragrances wafting from the potpourri that Amani had out.

The most striking difference to me was the layout of the space. There were no individual desks in the room; instead, there were three large tables, set up in a 'U' shape around the room. Amani explained to me that finding these tables was extremely difficult. The only other classroom at Fatima School where I saw tables was in the English language lab. On each of the tables were snacks that Amani or her students brought in to share. This was something I did not see in any other room in the school, where eating is strictly confined to the 15- and 10-minute breaks. Games were also set up; Amani always stressed to me, other teachers and her students the need for creativity as well as for learning through play. I also noticed a pile of small books that lay on each of the three student tables. I looked more closely and saw

that they were copies of the Kuwaiti Constitution. I discovered that Amani now held all her classes in this 'lab', including CHR. I also discovered that she used the Constitution in her PH module as well as CHR. Amani was the only teacher I observed who had copies of the Constitution readily available for her students to use.

Amani then guided me to her locked cabinet, opened it and pointed to the pile of PH textbooks and workbooks that she said remained in that cabinet overnight and did not go home. This was surprising, as in every other class, students were set daily assignments from the textbooks and were under constant pressure to memorise everything in them for the exams. Amani explained to me that as an elective, this module did not have an exam, and so she avoided being confined to the textbooks as much as she could. She then showed me her student workbooks, which she had her students personalise on the first day of class. Each one was different, with collages and colours bringing out each student's individual personality.

When I asked Amani how she had decided on the layout of her new 'lab', she told me that it had been designed with her students, and it was obvious from my observations that the students loved being there. Although Amani had a very open door policy, allowing students to leave the room whenever they wished, I never saw a student do so. Their behaviour was also markedly different in the 'lab' than in other spaces I had observed them. Amani confirmed to me that the rules that applied in every other room in Fatima School did not apply in their 'lab'. This, she explained, was another reason why she wanted an independent space – a space that was unburdened by pre-existing notions of 'good behaviour'. In the 'fixed classrooms' with other teachers, I observed students asking for permission before doing anything. They stood before speaking. They did not eat or drink. I often saw those who did not know the answers to questions phase out and quietly turn their attention to doodling on their desks and chairs. In Amani's 'lab', however, students would eat and drink, use the materials in front of them and walk around without ever asking permission. However, this was all done without disrupting the collective learning environment. The students were fully engaged in class discussions and activities, and I did not see any graffiti on any of the tables or chairs.

As I roamed the halls of Fatima School, I became familiar with the voices of teachers that floated out, quite loudly, from each of the 'fixed classrooms'. Once in a while, I would hear applause as a teacher would tell her class to clap for a student who gave a correct answer, usually memorised from or read straight out of a textbook. As I walked towards Amani's 'lab', on the other hand, I almost always heard the voices of students. While they sometimes fell into the habits they learned in other classes, such as standing to answer questions or make comments – a habit Amani repeatedly worked to break, they nonetheless spoke with confidence and authority in every lesson I observed. They discussed topics in groups, and their voices sometimes became louder as they became more engaged in the debate or project at hand. Amani took this in her stride, stopping them only to remind them that 'this is a democracy' when she felt that some quieter voices were being drowned out.

The 'lab' that Amani and her students designed was one that prefigured the learning environment described in the PH textbook. The space they created helped shape the students into what they imagined 'good citizenship' to look like. The 'lab' developed into a 'vibrant and inclusive realm' (Fielding, 2007, p. 546), where students' rights were respected, they participated in the discussions and processes affecting their lives and they developed the agency to make changes they felt were needed. This 'dialogic space' (Fielding, 2007, p. 547) encouraged 'interrogative, dialogic openness' (p. 553) as others became curious and excited about what was going on there and were eager to visit. I observed several teachers visiting Amani's room, both to ask about and learn from her set-up and to take a break from the monotony of the 'fixed classrooms'. More than once, I heard students ask their teachers if they could have their lesson (whatever it happened to be) in *Abla* Amani's room. Each time I heard this, the teachers were happy to oblige, and Amani was always willing to hand over her key. Amidst policies and regulations designed by the educational authorities without teacher or student input, Amani seemed able to find loopholes and to create spaces that empowered students. Her 'lab' prefigures the 'school without walls' that she is so passionate about.

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8.3 COMPOSING THE CURRICULUM: STUDENTS AS 'MAESTROS'

> [As a school system] we call for democracy... We added modules, we added life skills... But it's not a curriculum that you introduce and you deliver. It's the law itself and the routines. Remove them so that I can have democracy. We really do not have democracy. There is no democracy. (Amani interview, 2010)

Amani recognises the tensions between the human rights and democratic aspirations in the CHR curriculum and the realities of the educational system. In order to address this disjuncture, she approached the national curriculum in a similar manner to that which she approached school spaces. While she has to use the books provided by the Ministry, she explained to me in 2010 that she and her students also set their own goals, which usually involve more than memorising from a textbook. One thing that works in her favour, she told me, is that the subjects she teaches (CHR and PH) are less constrained by Ministry exam pressures (discussed in Chapters 2 and 6).

8.3.1 LEARNING TOGETHER IN CHR

When Amani was asked to take on the CHR module in 2009, she had received no training and was therefore a little nervous. However, as she explained to me in our interview in 2010, she was always passionate about human rights, and so the grade 11 module (which dealt exclusively with rights) was exciting for her. Amani said that from the start of that module, she was learning alongside her students. As they tackled the various tensions and made decisions together on how to proceed (as discussed in Chapter 7), Amani admitted to me that her students often took the reins and taught her a great deal: 'They alerted me to rights violations I had never known about.' Amani seemed very comfortable sharing this with me, displaying what Fielding (2007) describes as 'delight and belief in intergenerational reciprocity' (p. 552).

As we saw in Chapter 7, Amani's grade 11 CHR classes in 2009 were also rife with student action. She said that this was a learning curve for her as well. She explained to me that she could not just reel off a list of article numbers about the rights of

young people for her students to memorise. She knew she had to make it mean something by having them experience what they were reading about and discussing. Amani told me about one of the first times she had her students engage in more active learning. During a lesson early in the academic year, the issue of student rights came up, and her students decided that their right to have their opinions listened to was not taken seriously. 'I had them draft an official complaint to the principal, starting with the line, "Based on Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child...", and they took this down to her office during our lesson. I immediately got a call from the principal asking what this was, to which I replied, "This is my lesson for the day."' Amani said that at least one of her students then took the lesson further: 'The next day I had a parent come see me. Apparently, her daughter had approached her about the delay in her monthly allowance, using articles we had discussed from the Constitution to back up her demands.' Amani laughed as she shared this anecdote, telling me she was proud of her student for applying what she had learned.

8.3.2 APPLYING LEARNING IN PH

When I arrived at Fatima School in 2010, Amani was teaching the new PH elective. Fortuitously, I arrived just as her class had started the chapter mentioned above on 'Psychological health and the school'. I settled into an inconspicuous spot in Amani's 'lab', admittedly sceptical that observations in this class would yield as much usable data as those in her CHR classes. I was wrong.

Amani handed out the textbooks she kept locked in her cabinet, and students turned to the chapter in their books. After a brief overview, Amani and her students launched into a more personal discussion of school and how it affects their psychological wellbeing. The students trustingly provided examples and anecdotes from their school experiences, and Amani listened and responded without judging and without balking when students named teachers and administrative staff in their anecdotes. As the dialogue continued, I noticed Amani asking several key questions related to the main topic at hand, such as 'What do you think would improve your

daily experience of school?' However, it did not seem to me that she was anticipating responses the way I had seen other teachers do as they guided students towards answers provided by the textbooks. Amani seemed to be really asking, and this was confirmed by the excitement and curiosity she displayed when students responded with completely different ideas to those in their books. For example, in answering the question Amani posed, one student suggested a graffiti wall on which students could express their feelings. With graffiti a punishable offense at Fatima School, and with pictures in the textbook showing uniformed girls standing in straight lines in a courtyard, this idea was definitely and uniquely student-created. Amani loved it and related it to *jawda*, arguing that listening to students is part of a quality educational experience and that a graffiti wall could be an effective way to communicate. She encouraged her students to pursue the idea and offered her support.

Amani then handed out blank sheets of paper, asking students to write their demands for a better school environment. This creation of protest placards was the same one I had observed in the CHR module the year before and seemed to have become something of an Amani trademark, coinciding well with her discourse of rights and participatory democracy. Like the year before, Amani reminded students to use internationally recognized discourse and to support their demands with specific articles numbers when possible. Every student in the PH class either mentioned the lack of a cafeteria or the lack of a space where they could 'hang out' together. Amani asked them what they could do about this, reminding them how their 'lab' had looked before they had redesigned it. Unlike the teachers I had asked about the 'fixed classrooms', who were not able to envision alternatives to the layout even though the desks and chairs were not nailed to the floor, the students had several exciting suggestions.

As they discussed and debated, laughing with and at each other in a very pleasant way, an idea began to emerge. Together, the class set themselves an ambitious project: to transform the outdoor garden space currently behind locked doors and forbidden to students (mentioned in Chapter 6) into what they named '*Wāḥat Al-*

ṣiḥa Al-Nafsiyya' (The Psychological Health Oasis). The choice of the word 'oasis' seemed to me to be an apt one. This project, which was completely generated by the students, was to be tackled over the coming weeks. The following week, as the class began to discuss the project again, one student suggested changing the name of the new space they were creating into *'Wāḥat Al-Rāḥa'* (The Relaxation Oasis), which rhymes in Arabic. They put it to a vote, and the name was changed. Then, a student suggested *'Nefsītī Biyadī'* (My Disposition in My Hands). Another student responded to her by saying that the name would work more for their 'lab' but that it does not mention anything about nature or a garden. She suggested instead, *'Bī'atī Biyadī'* (My Environment in My Hands). The students voted between the name that had been agreed on and the two new suggestions; *'Nefsītī Biyadī'* (My Disposition in My Hands) received the most votes, and so the name was changed again. Rather than hurry the students along during this exchange, Amani encouraged each suggestion and engaged in the discussions of the pros and cons with the students, though they led the discussion. She also paused after votes to ask whether anyone had any objections; this, she argued, was important to ensure minority opinions were listened to and acted upon as well. The students' choice of a name that highlights their agency resonates with the discourse Amani uses and encourages her students to use all the time.

Next, Amani asked her students what their goals were for this project. To help guide them, she put up three categories under the heading 'applied skills': 'cognitive', 'social' and 'psychomotor'. By force of habit when a teacher started to write on the board, I flipped through the chapter in the textbook, as did several students. Amani told them not to bother because they were not going to be working from the book at all. As I skimmed through the chapter, I found the listed categories, but there was nothing more said about them, nor was any mention made of students or teachers setting their own goals. Amani's students came up with outcomes under each category – for the creation of the space as well as for their own learning. They set themselves the following two cognitive tasks to start the project:

- Brainstorming for a name
- Collecting and analysing information about:

- o the space to be used
- o the initial clean-up required

One student pointed out that the cleanup and maintenance of the garden could be linked to the school's *Nabīhā Nathīfa* (We Want It Clean) campaign, an environmental awareness campaign started by Amani that stressed students picking up after themselves and keeping their 'fixed classrooms' clean. Amani, who had stressed to me her dismay over the lack of opportunities for integrated learning in our interview in 2009, praised the student's suggestion and encouraged the students to explore it further. They discussed posters they could create for their garden but also for the whole school with slogans that mimicked the name of their garden, such as *'Bī'atī biyadī, ma'an naḥmīh'* (My environment in my hands, together we protect it).

In order to start thinking about the space, Amani's students decided they needed to explore it right away. Their teacher agreed, and together they made their way to the garden, with students taking notes about what they saw, what they envisioned and what needed to be done. This was the first time I saw students leave their classroom during a lesson at Fatima School, unless they were walking over to the only hall that had a projector for a PowerPoint presentation. The students' excitement as they explored the space was palpable, as was Amani's.

A few days later, Amani told me she got permission from the principal to go ahead with the garden project. The students, who were very excited about the project and could not wait for their weekly PH class to work on it, started it on their own time. Amani told me that the students wanted to put tables and chairs in the garden so that they would finally have somewhere to eat and congregate other than their classrooms and the hot asphalt ground. She said that she had found plastic chairs and tables in a storage room that she felt would work well. The students also wanted to take out a few pieces of sporting equipment that were not being used, including a table tennis table and a basketball hoop. When Amani tried to remove these items from storage, a member of the administration told her she could not. When Amani asked her why, she responded that she would be held accountable for it. Amani

assured her that she herself would take full responsibility, and the staff member finally relented.

Over the next two weeks, I watched as students brought in paint for the garden walls, new plants and flowers, a basketball and even a couple of pet rabbits. Amani would often ask her students, 'Are you up to this?' They were always quick to respond positively, and their hard work demonstrated that they were. I found out during my interview with Amani the following year in 2011 that she and her students had successfully completed their garden and that they had had an official opening to which they invited the whole school and the parents. Other teachers had become involved in the project, as Amani and her students linked what they were doing to other social studies and science modules. They added a whiteboard and more chairs to the space, and classes were sometimes held there, offering a reprieve from the 'fixed classrooms'. Students were also permitted to go there alone when their teacher assigned them a study period. The space became a central part of the school, Amani told me, and students congregated there during every break, happy to have a space of their own.

The learning I observed in Amani's PH class while I was at Fatima School was student-led and action-based. The students were engaged, excited and involved in cross-curricular learning. The textbook, which they did not use at all for this unit after the initial overview, presents lists of what a school should provide and do to support psychological health. Ironically, it contradicts several of its own suggestions. For example, while it states that a school is no longer a place that only supports the cognitive development of a student and that intellectual, social, physical and artistic activities are necessary to promote other skills, the very layout of the book and the focus of the questions at the end of the chapter resort to the traditional knowledge-based mode of teaching and learning. As Amani explained to me, not having a Ministry exam that would inevitably rely solely on the information in the book meant that she and her students could move away from reading about all the skills that a school should promote to actually taking action to help develop said skills as well as to help create a school environment that actually meets the goals listed in the

textbook. In this way, Amani and her students ensured the 'interpersonal and structural integrity' of their approach (Fielding, 2007, p. 548); their goals were aligned with their learning processes as well as with the organisational structures and relationships within their 'lab'.

In our final interview in 2011, I expressed to Amani how different her approach was and how much freedom she afforded her students to create their own goals and to guide their own learning. I also commented on how the learning I witnessed seemed much deeper and more meaningful than anything offered in the PH textbook. Amani replied, 'Yes, students can be maestros when you give them a chance.'

8.3.3   MAKING A STAND

In our 2011 interview, after Amani told me about the success of the garden project, I asked her how the PH module was going that year. She sadly told me that she had cancelled it. She said that they had started the year as they had the year before, and all had been going well. Then, later in the first semester, during the first exam period, she got a call from the administration one Sunday telling her she had to set an exam that Tuesday. The Ministry had decided that PH, though an elective, should have an exam. Amani refused. They told her she did not have a choice, and they tried to appease her by saying, 'Make it open-book.' She asked them what the point of that was, to which they just repeated that she had to set an exam. Amani explained the struggle she went through trying to decide what to do. She said that to her, this ad hoc decision to introduce an exam in the middle of the semester went against everything she and her students were working towards in the class. Their more radical approach to a 'co-constructed curriculum', to use Fielding's (2007, p. 551) words, was in complete tension with the existing framework and assessment methods. Amani felt that this decision from above, made without consulting any teachers or students, was a wrong one and not one that she could comfortably accept.

Amani met with each of her PH students to discuss her decision with them, and then regretfully informed the principal that she was cancelling the elective. The principal, who Amani says could have gotten into a great deal of trouble over the issue, supported Amani and disseminated the students into other electives, such as PE and Art, which did not have exams. Amani's courageous stand illustrates that her approach has 'an intended and proclaimed democratic coherence' (Fielding, 2007, p. 545). This coherence was something she felt was non-negotiable. By taking a stand, Amani showed her students (and the powers that be) that resisting things that subvert the rights and participation they were fighting for in their classes is both possible and important.

8.4   AMANI AND STUDENT RIGHTS: TAKING UNSANCTIONED ACTION

> You teach students their rights, you teach them democracy, and at the same time, you say to them, do not exercise these rights. (Amani interview, 2010)

Amani's interactions with her students illustrate her recognition of their rights. In all of her classes, her students exercised these rights, and, as the previous discussion has illustrated, their agency grew. I was therefore initially surprised to learn that Amani was not involved with Fatima School's student council. When I asked her why, she said that it was a powerless group, with students appointed by teachers based on their grades and behaviour. As highlighted in Chapter 6, I only ever saw any members of Fatima School's student council when there was a district-wide meeting, where the students were lectured at by members of the Ministry about leadership for an hour. One student at Fatima School described the student council as being 'for show', and several expressed their dismay during our research workshops that they were not able to elect their council representatives.

The group that *was* extremely visible and active during my observations at Fatima School was a student group called '*nelteqī linartaqī*' (Meet to Develop). In an unsanctioned move, Amani created this group to liaise with about the *jawda* initiative. When the Ministry of Education introduced the initiative during the 2009-2010 academic year (discussed in Chapters 2 and 6), they asked each school in

Kuwait to form a committee made up of teachers from the various departments. The Ministry did not mention student involvement, but Amani insisted that students had to participate. Amani described this student group to me as being much more democratic and active than the official student council. While Fatima School's group of volunteer students were not permitted to attend the school's *jawda* campaign meetings, they did hear about them from Amani. Unlike in Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report, where students are perceived as future citizens, in the MTD group's self-designed manifesto, they described themselves as 'the present and the future', demonstrating their belief in their right to be involved *now*. The manifesto highlighted their role as mediators between teachers and students and as agents of change, with the goal of making 'a change in the atmosphere of schooling'.

In 2010, it was hard to miss the MTD group. They donned fluorescent orange vests so that other students could easily identify them. They were often called upon by teachers to help out at various events and meetings. They also took on their own projects. For example, in March 2010, they organized the school's first Sports Day, with students and teachers participating. The students also frequently named this group along with the CHR modules and the UNESCO projects in the research workshops as spaces where they felt their right to participate was recognised (as mentioned in Chapter 7). This unsanctioned group gained confidence and agency and took on more responsibilities. While the official student council still existed alongside the MTD group, they were invisible, as even teachers and administrators only ever engaged with the latter.

Another interruption to official routines came when students expressed feeling bored by the morning line-up, particularly the radio broadcast that was aired through the school sound system after the flag raising and *Qur'ān* reading. Teachers were responsible for this broadcast, and it usually involved a series of announcements about student achievements, exams and other administrative matters. Amani, recognising that the morning routine was a strict Ministry regulation, decided that at the very least, the broadcast could be turned over to the students. The principal agreed, and the microphone was handed over. The morning

line-up took on a new vibe as teachers stepped back and the students stepped forward, injecting fun into the proceedings with lively and interactive broadcasts. The MTD group also decided that rather than being watched over by teachers during the line-up, they could watch over themselves. Fatima School's morning routine still looked like the photo in the PH textbook mentioned in section 8.3.2 of a traditional school courtyard with girls lined up straight, but now, thanks to Amani, the girls were heard as well as seen.

By sidestepping the 'fixed classroom' regulation and designing an independent space, by abandoning the official textbook and allowing her students to co-create the curriculum, by learning about rights in CHR and fighting alongside her students for their rights and by listening to students and helping them interrupt official routines, Amani, like her students, became engaged in *unsanctioned action*. This extended beyond the walls of Fatima School.

In 2010, during our second interview, Amani told me that after teaching human rights in CHR for a full year, she became very unsettled by her students' inability within the current power structures of the educational system to make their voices heard. She therefore started working with a human rights lawyer on a complete 'constitutional document' for a student association made up of female secondary school students from all districts of Kuwait that could work directly with the Ministry on all matters pertaining to their education. The 15-page document was divided into five parts and a total of 28 articles. The five parts are listed below.[51]

Part 1:	Definition and Objectives
Part 2:	Membership
Part 3:	The General Assembly
Part 4:	Finances of the Association
Part 5:	Student Committees

Article 1 under the objectives reads: 'The protection of the interests of the members (the students) and the defence of their student and educational rights and gains.' I noticed that Amani used the feminine form of the word 'students' in the document:

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[51] Please note that this document does not appear in the list of references to protect anonymity. It is quoted here with Amani's consent.

ṭālibāt. I asked Amani why she had decided not to include males. She said that while she would be happy for males to become a part of it, she was presently more concerned with the status and rights of females within the education system and the larger context of the country. She argued that 'we were swindled' because while there has been a great deal of attention surrounding women's recent political enfranchisement in Kuwait, and rightfully so, it has consequently detracted attention from the fact that many of our fundamental rights have yet to be recognised. Amani explained further that though we take steps forward, we are always halted by 'customs and traditions'. Unfortunately, she pointed out, girls are often the ones constrained by said traditions. If we look at the status of Kuwaiti women, she argued, 'the picture may have changed but not the frame.'

Amani told me that she wished I could hear what her students said about the types of gender discrimination they face in their everyday lives. She said that those with brothers – even younger brothers – often complain that while they are rarely allowed to leave the house unless they are supervised and their parents approve of who they are going out with, where they are going and what time they are coming home, their brothers are permitted to go out, no questions asked. Amani then told me that she hears her own friends telling their daughters off when they quarrel with their brothers, saying, 'That's your brother,' irrespective of his age and the reason for the quarrel, as though his gender were reason enough for him to be right. One of her friends, Amani told me, always has her son sit in the front passenger seat in the car and her elder daughter in the back. When Amani asked her why, she responded with, *'mā 'abī aksira'* – a Kuwaiti idiom that literally translates as, 'I don't want to break him' but that idiomatically means 'I don't want to emasculate him.' 'What about the daughter?' Amani asked me. 'We are teaching girls that boys have full rights and you don't.' Amani argued that while girls notice the preferential treatment of boys, what this treatment does is make them unaware of their own rights. It also means that when they engage with the world, they are 'passive citizens', unable to demand the rights they do not even know they have. We have taught them, Amani said to me, to accept everything and not to question it. As we segregate them in schools, she went on, we keep them ignorant of the real world and we teach them to

fear that world. As argued in Chapter 6, this segregation also separates young people the same way it does adults, rendering it difficult to forge solidarities and invoke change. As Al-Mughni (1993) argues,

> Given the uncompromising stance of male society, it is clear that the challenge facing Kuwaiti women is daunting and changes will be slow to achieve. But, in the face of such a challenge, unity is a step forward for women towards the remaking of their own history and the realization of a better future (p. 148).

Amani said to me, 'In front of the world, we appear to have gotten our rights, but in reality, we are still bound.' With her help and the help of HRE, limited though it has become, her students are becoming aware that this reality does not have to be accepted. Amani's female student association presents an opportunity for females to join together across groups and to imagine 'a better future'.

When Amani presented her impressive document to the Ministry, they refused to even consider it, beseeching Amani, 'Please do not open their eyes.' Amani told me she believes that it was this same logic in operation when the decision was made to roll back the CHR programme to one year. Amani's female student association is not something she is willing to let die in the water. 'It will happen,' she assured me in true Amani form. In the meantime, in my observations over the years, I saw Amani constantly opening her students' eyes and supporting their rights and participation.

8.5   STUDENT VOICES ON AMANI

In the student research workshops I conducted, 40 mentions of teachers by name were made as positively influencing their learning on and experience of human rights, democracy and citizenship. As seen in Figure 8.1 below, one student mentioned me, saying that I gave students a space to express their opinions freely and openly. Another mentioned the school counsellor, Manar. Six mentioned their English teacher, Ibtihal, two mentioned their English teacher, Amina, and yet another mentioned her former English teacher, Hanan. Three students mentioned Maya, and three others mentioned Wafia – both CHR teachers. *Twenty-three* students mentioned Amani. The references to Amani came from students in each of the three grade levels and were not limited to those who took her classes.

Moreover, her name was mentioned on the posters of each of the three concepts being explored; however, most students identified her as being an advocate of their human rights, as seen in Figure 8.2.
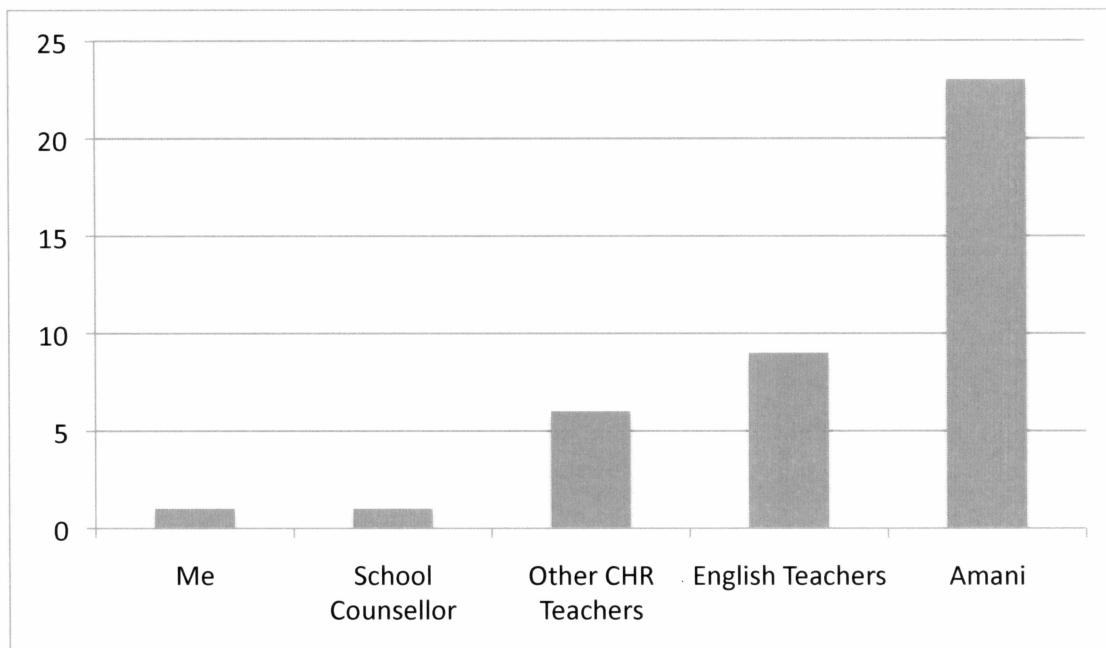

Figure 8.1: Student perceptions of who has influenced their learning on and experience of human rights, democracy and citizenship
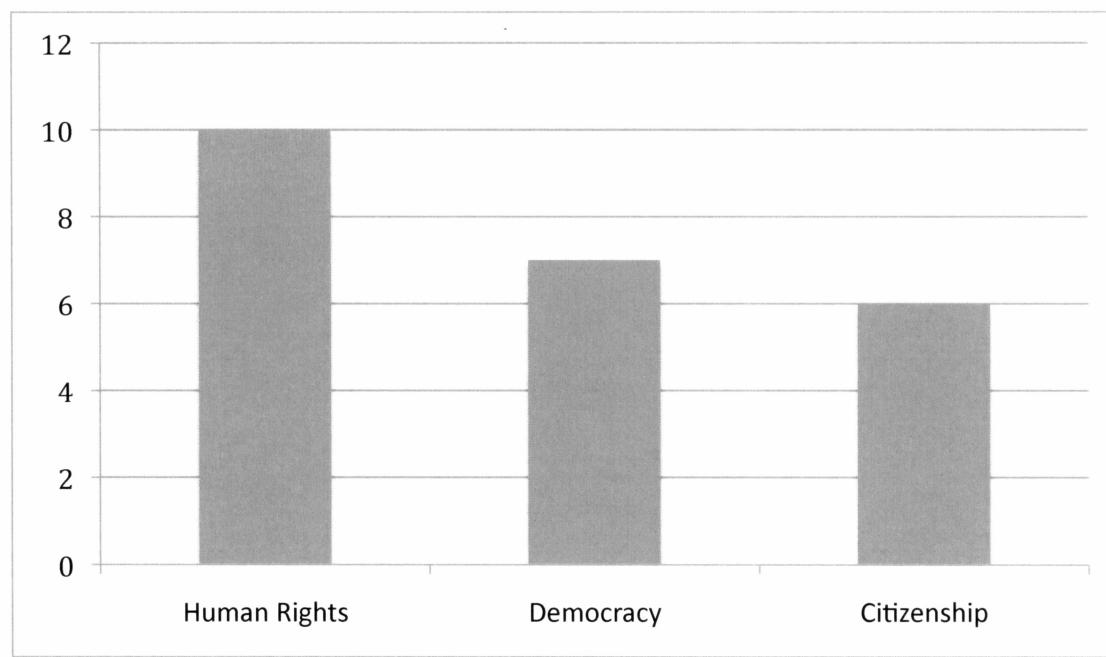
Figure 8.2: Mentions of Amani within the three concepts addressed in the student research workshops

Several students contrasted their experience of rights with Amani with the rest of their lived realities at school, as the following examples demonstrate:

> *Abla* Amani tries so hard to give us our rights, and she is the only person at the school who tries to give us our rights [...] I respect *Abla* Amani and I love her so much because *Abla* Amani is something different. (grade 11 student, 2009)

> There are many people I feel who care about human rights, and others who try to rob people of them. I would like to mention living examples of those who acknowledge rights and they are truly my role models: Ms. Ibtihal and *Abla* Amani. (grade 12 student, 2010)

Amani's students also named her when listing specific examples of learning on human rights issues, and they highlighted skills they learned from her and the agency and action this promoted:

> I learned from *Abla* Amani about Kuwaiti women's citizenship rights, such as her political rights in parliament, her rights in marriage and her economic rights. (grade 12 student, 2010)

> Ms. Amani taught me how to engage in dialogue and how to express my opinions respectfully and how to discuss issues with the administration, and she listens to our opinions, and we implement what we can. (grade 12 student, 2010)

Some also expressed that Amani fostered humanistic ethos and relationships:

> There was a big influence from *Abla* Amani in helping us [the students] become closer to each other. (grade 11 student, 2010)

Many referred to Amani in the context of democracy and their right to participate, identifying her as a supporter of this right:

> Some of our rights here at this school are violated, and there is no democracy except in CHR class because *Abla* Amani knows the meaning of democracy. (grade 11 student, 2009)

> My opinion is heard in *Abla* Amani's class, and she is a complete teacher in every sense of the word. (grade 11 student, 2009)

These quotes demonstrate that the students at Fatima School have noticed Amani's coherent approach to human rights and her belief in their agency and right to participate. Their comments also highlight that they appreciate the alternative that Amani offers to the rest of their educational experiences.

The students were not the only ones at the school who trusted and respected Amani. During my observations, I often heard teachers asking her about various rights-related issues and her democratic teaching methods. More than once, I heard teachers encourage her to take on administrative, decision-making roles (to which she always replied that she wanted to remain in the classroom). In 2010, the principal was explaining to me in our interview that there were ways to work around regulations when it came to humanistic issues; she cited Amani's creation of the MTD group as an example of a way to promote student rights while technically remaining within the confines of the regulations. In my observations, the principal frequently supported Amani's efforts.

8.6   THE ROAD TO *JAWDA*: A DEAD END?

When the Ministry of Education introduced the *jawda* initiative during the 2009-2010 academic year, Amani was immediately asked by the principal to be on Fatima School's *jawda* committee. She was very excited by the possibilities, and I did not see this excitement wane despite the many setbacks she encountered (discussed in Chapter 6). She included students in the initiative, although the Ministry did not ask her to. She talked about sharing power with students, no mater how nervous it made the principal. She made her voice heard to members of the Ministry's *jawda* 'team' at the district *jawda* meeting, even though her microphone was taken away. She was constantly reminded that regulations were non-negotiable, and yet she found ways around them. Through it all, she remained hopeful.

When a colleague from her department asked if Kuwait would ever really achieve 'quality education', Amani explained the steps and possibilities to her with a great deal of optimism. While optimistic, Amani is not naïve. In her 2010 interview with me, she told me that there is potential for change, but that it will come about much more slowly if the Ministry is not willing to change anything from above. In the car on the way back from the aforementioned district meeting in 2010, Amani explained that the problem is that we want to move towards something better, but we are bound by regulations, and few are willing to take responsibility for breaking them.

In 2011, when I visited Amani for our third interview, she informed me that the *jawda* initiative had not progressed. She said they had not done anything related to it that academic year at Fatima School, nor had they heard anything about it from the Ministry. When Amani saw my reaction, she asked why I was surprised. I explained that it had seemed like the Ministry was very committed to *jawda* the year before. Amani agreed but also pointed out that that was the year before. 'We start over every year,' she said sarcastically. She went on to explain that this phenomenon of resorting back to the same routines and regulations was endemic to the Kuwaiti educational system. As she spoke, she drew a diagram in the air with her finger to illustrate her point. I quickly sketched it into my notebook as she laughed.
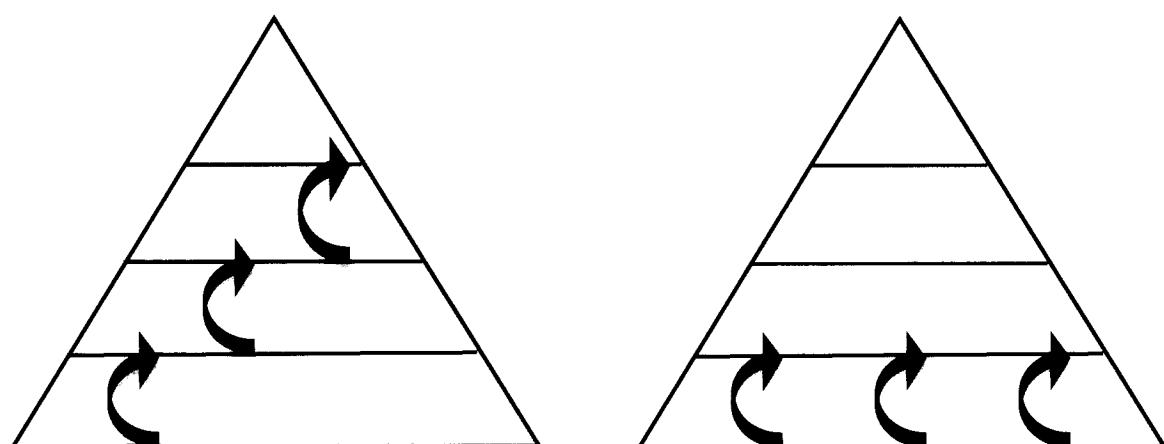
Figure 8.3: Amani's representation of the lack of continuity in Kuwait's educational system

Jawda failed, she argued, because the educational authorities went back to the default setting of reining teachers and students in with regulations. She pointed out that teachers and students have no power over their own teaching and learning, nor do they have the freedom to make decisions and choices. Without this, she argued, 'quality education' cannot be achieved; it is just another name for the status quo. Her illustrations, she explained, show that rather than development and progress, all we have in Kuwait is the repetition of the same cycles, with any progress made by teachers and students demolished at the start of each academic year, and fresh regulations and initiatives set in place. As I thought about the CHR module and the *jawda* initiative, Amani's diagram seemed to fit.

Despite this setback, Amani still seemed as full of hope and as committed to her students as ever. I asked her how she stays motivated. 'Because,' she told me laughingly, 'I break the rules!' As I thought of all the lessons I had witnessed in Amani's 'lab', I knew that this was true. As I left that day, I, too, felt optimistic. Amani's 'insistent affirmation of possibility', to use Fielding's (2007, p. 551) words, was clearly contagious.

8.7 CONCLUSION

> If educators are to revitalize the language of civic education as part of a broader discourse of political agency and critical citizenship in a global world, they will have to consider grounding such a pedagogy in a defence of militant utopian thinking in which any viable notion of the political takes up the primacy of pedagogy as part of a broader attempt to revitalize the conditions for individual and social agency while simultaneously addressing the most basic problems facing the prospects for social justice and global democracy. (Giroux, 2011, p.74)

Amani and her students constantly mediate between universal ideals and imperfect realities. They maintain hope while critically analysing their contexts and lives and taking action to improve these realities. Significantly, their approach simultaneously prefigures the ideal and works towards recognising that ideal. For Amani and her students, this ideal is a more democratic system in which all their rights, including that of participation, are recognised.

Amani's approach to education *about* human rights engages with the universal and/or the ideal and uses it to critically explore the local. By mediating between these two categories and discussing the tensions, Amani and her students develop critical understanding of local realities while preserving idealism to better the status quo. This learning is made more meaningful because it occurs *through* human rights, in a context where the students' rights are recognised. Amani's 'lab' offers a viable alternative to the authoritarian classrooms described in Chapter 6. In this 'lab', the combination of critical understanding and the recognition of rights helps to promote the agency of both Amani and her students. This then promotes unsanctioned action to improve their realities, thus realising education *for* human rights. Amani's approach therefore prefigures a more maximal interpretation of human rights

education. This is not limited to her CHR classes but underpins her pedagogy in general.

When Amani's students start to complain about how long it will take to change anything, she reminds them: 'You may not make a difference right away, but you can at least leave your fingerprint.' Amani left her fingerprint on my research data. She was in my fieldnotes daily, as she was involved in so many aspects of the school day. She was mentioned to me in interviews and in the student research workshops. She spent hours and days asking about my work and sharing her own. Amani offers a viable alternative to the disjointed approach to human rights and citizenship education that is currently in place. The three-year CHR programme may have been phased out, but its affects on Amani and her students carry on.

9 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 CONTINUUM OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

As Chapter 3 discussed, the postmodern critique of the universalism of human rights has produced variations that seek to incorporate difference while maintaining the promise of a universal ideal. The discussion highlighted the critiques and contributions of cosmopolitan and feminist theories to this conception, identifying dialogue, solidarity, contextuality, criticality and hope as particularly significant. Building on this literature, this thesis proposes human rights education (HRE) as a space to begin 'reclaiming dialogic universalism', to use Benhabib's (2008, p. 20) words.
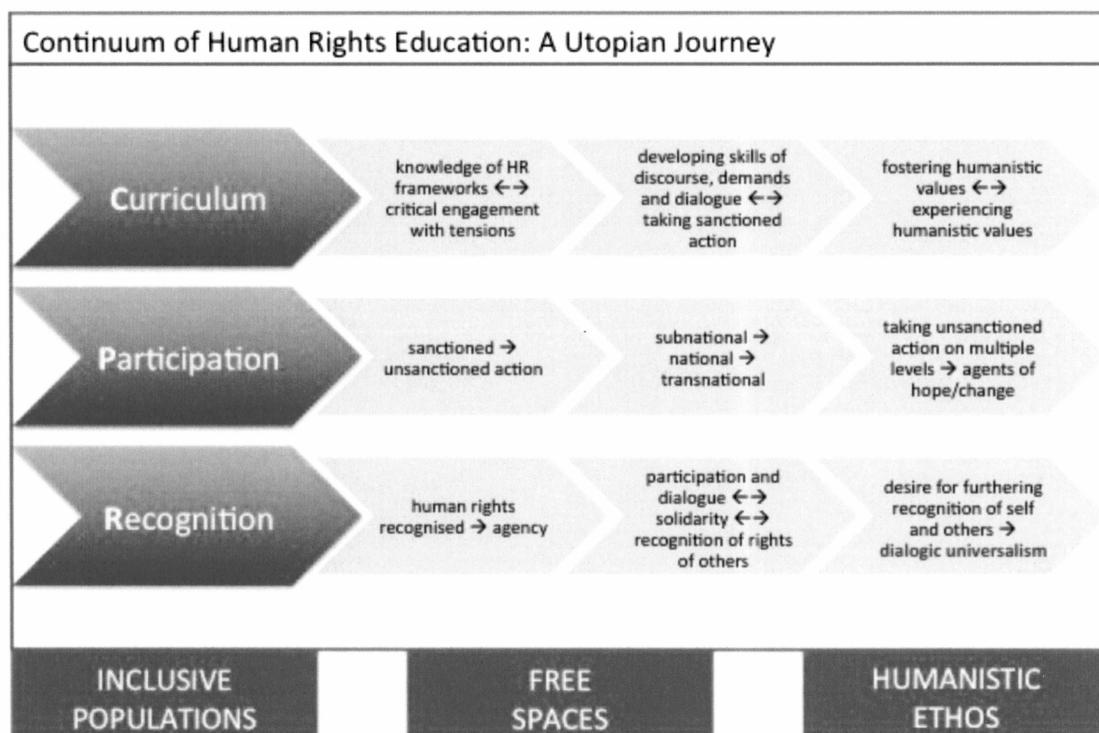
Figure 9.1: *Continuum of Human Rights Education*

Kuwait was the first country in the region to offer a designated space in the curriculum for HRE (MoE, 2010a). For this study, this approach was explored in order to highlight its strengths, identify its gaps and, in dialogue with both the theoretical field and the research participants, suggest a more maximal interpretation. The *Continuum of Human Rights Education* in Figure 9.1 above was born of observations,

interviews with officials, school administrators and teachers and most importantly, data from research workshops with students, where they reflected on their own learning and expressed their frustrations, concerns and hopes for the future. Far from being a completed, prescriptive project, this continuum is presented as a normative step that will (and needs to) change, progress, regress and progress again in a never-ending journey of human rights. HRE can prefigure this utopian journey of dialogic universalism; within an inclusive, unconstrained and non-authoritarian educational context, this journey is taken in partnership with young people who are informed by and who inform the curriculum, who take sanctioned but also unsanctioned action in order to invoke change and who are tied together by a fundamental feeling of solidarity.

This chapter will summarise the key findings of the empirical chapters of this thesis and highlight their contributions to the continuum above.

9.2   EXPANDING THE CONTENT OF HRE

Kuwait's addition of a designated space for HRE within the national secondary curriculum shifted its traditionally nationalistic focus to more cosmopolitan ideals. While the content of the module's programme of study did not deliver a contextualised, critical approach to human rights, it did provide alternatives to the national and Islamic discourses that dominated the curriculum. Moreover, though it relied on traditional textbook teaching about rights, the time afforded by the three-year programme provided opportunities for the students and teachers at Fatima School to expand and act on this knowledge. This section will summarise the three main themes that emerged from the analysis of the CHR module and its enactment at Fatima School: the curriculum, participation and recognition. The main contributions of each to the proposed *Continuum of Human Rights Education* will be highlighted.

9.2.1 THE HUMAN RIGHTS CURRICULUM: FROM KNOWLEDGE TO CRITICALITY

The analysis of the CHR module in Chapter 7 uncovered a potential weakness in its approach to human rights. Though presenting human rights through the varying perspectives of Islam, international agreements and the Kuwaiti Constitution could be seen to promote dialogue about the tensions between these sources, further study into the actual content revealed a different story. The rights from all three perspectives were presented as facts, including those based on religion. Furthermore, provisions within the approach to universal rights in the planning stages of CHR state, 'There are rights that cannot be accepted as they are in conflict with shari'a, such as equality between males and females in inheritance' (MoE, 2010a, p. 7). This is problematic not only because it is based on an assumption that all Kuwaitis are in agreement about a singular interpretation of Islamic shari'a, but also because it cites an example of gender inequality and legitimises it through religion. Giving a patriarchal interpretation of Islam a higher moral ground than other frameworks thus precludes critical discussions that question issues such as why the inheritance law cannot be changed but other laws like those related to financial interest can. Finally, though constitutional rights are also presented, this does not necessarily uncover the legal interpretations of these rights. As has been argued, several Gulf constitutions, including the Kuwaiti one, leave too much room for the legal system to fill in the substantive content for rights, often resulting in discriminatory practices (Parolin, 2006; UNDP, 2009). This means that presenting constitutional rights does not necessarily reveal the many levels of discrimination within the legal system (uncovered in Chapter 2). In this type of HRE approach, then, human rights are presented in what can be called a white-washed way, glossing over the numerous injustices and inequalities that occur as a result of the Kuwaiti legal system's interpretation of Islamic, constitutional and universal rights.

This approach precluded the types of mediations advocated by Benhabib (2008) – between the universal and particular and between ideal moral rights and real legal rights. The UDHR and other international agreements presented in the grade 11 CHR textbook are a viable starting point for a more cosmopolitan approach to HRE.

However, as seen from the empirical data in this study, such frameworks, decontextualised from the legal and political realities within nation states, can mask injustices and inequalities based on gender, 'race', age and religion, among others. This suggests a need to mediate the moral force of international agreements alongside the ethics of existing legal and political norms within HRE. As Osler and Starkey (2010) point out, 'human rights education is necessarily transformative since it is based on a commitment to social justice and cannot condone systems that simply reproduce social inequalities. Human rights education takes a critical approach to knowledge and to authority' (p. 131). Opportunities for such critical engagements are dependent on contextualised presentations of rights, which can then can help realise this transformative scope.

The empirical data uncovered a rearticulation of the textbooks' sterilised approach in the case study school. When Amani and her students decided to use the legal system of rights in Kuwait as the framework from which to start their dialogues on human rights, students were able to critically engage with these laws and use the Constitution and international agreements to interrogate them. When religion came up, it was jointly agreed upon that the subjectivity of religious interpretations ruled it out as a protective framework of rights and rights dialogues. Furthermore, CHR students anchored their lessons on human rights in the actual events happening in Kuwait (through, for example, the discussion of daily newspapers and actual court cases).

The reluctance of the Kuwaiti educational system to promote such criticality is perhaps best demonstrated in its use of the phrase '*positive* critical thinking' as a desired outcome of citizenship education (MoE, 2010b, p. 29; emphasis added). Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report presents a detailed (and worrying) vision for citizenship education in Kuwait. The only major change to the secondary curriculum that occurred in tandem with the launching of this new citizenship vision was the reduction of the three-year CHR programme to a one-year module. The former, with its short textbooks and without a Ministry exam, offered enough time and space for teachers to veer off the textbook and to co-construct the curriculum in

dialogue with their students, allowing an arguably less 'positive' criticality to develop. Condensing three years of book-based knowledge into one year reverted the module back to the traditional memorisation model, with no time left to do anything else but cover the textbook. The empirical data also suggest that religion regained its status as the primary site for learning about rights, which are rooted firmly in a patriarchal interpretation of Islam, with obedience mitigating any criticality. Fatima School's interpretation of the CHR module used knowledge about universal and constitutional ideals to critically interrogate religious and legal realities. This mediation transformed their knowledge into critical understanding. **Knowledge of human rights frameworks** and **critical engagement** with the tensions between them are therefore mutually reinforcing, as illustrated by the first part of the curriculum component of the *Continuum of Human Rights Education* (Figure 9.1).

In addition to knowledge *about* human rights, the CHR module aspired to develop skills and foster values specifically related to human rights. However, without a list of intended outcomes and with textbooks presenting only 'factual' information, teachers and students at Fatima School figured out what these skills and values ought to be for themselves. This was again facilitated by the lack of a constraining Ministry exam and the space afforded by the three-year CHR's short textbooks.

The **sanctioned action** in Amani's CHR classes helped develop three skills specifically related to human rights: **discourse, demands and dialogue**, illustrated in the second part of the curriculum component of the continuum (Figure 9.1). Amani helped her students become well-versed in all the various rights frameworks and insisted that they become able to use the discourses of human rights contained within them. This included using specific dates and article numbers to defend any claims to rights they made. This skill equips them to be part of the universal dialogue on human rights. As the students uncovered what they perceived to be violations of their rights, they learned how to use this discourse to make demands. As they created posters and held mock demonstrations in class, they honed the skills for this type of demand-making. However, knowing how to use discourse and make demands were not enough, Amani argued, if these skills were not supported by a belief in the value and

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power of dialogue. Freire (1998) links dialogue to the idea of the human as unfinished, arguing that education as a permanent process is grounded in our awareness that we are unfinished beings. He argues that knowing we are unfinished means we are aware that we are conditioned beings. He also argues that being conscious of our conditioning means that we can transcend it. This implies a dialogic element to our existence:

> It is […] in this [unfinished] sense that the possibility of true *dialogue*, in which subjects in dialogue learn and grow by confronting their differences, becomes a coherent *demand* required by an assumed unfinishedness that reveals itself as ethical. (p. 59; emphases added)

This notion of the unfinished protects against the imperialism of human rights and their appropriation by powers that seek to force consensus or force difference. People are free to discuss and defend their multiple identities but also to interrogate them. Dialogic universalism thus engages diversity while still promoting solidarity and consensus as a journey to be taken together. Far from being a homogenising process, this conception seeks to engage in dialogue not to force integration into pre-configured ideals but rather to leave the possibility open that through dialogue, the unknown may present itself in ways that further our understandings and our protections of humans in all their forms. The safe and reciprocal atmosphere created by Amani and her students in their CHR lessons certainly promoted this type of dialogue.

As demonstrated by the student responses on the human rights and democracy posters in the student research workshops, students taking CHR developed an understanding of and appreciation for their right to be heard as well as the reciprocity built into this right. They were also adamant about pointing out that young people are not being listened to in schools and the larger educational community. Their tones revealed a great deal of frustration, and for those who only took the one-year version of CHR, this frustration was compounded by feelings of helplessness and hopelessness that revealed a lack of agency. On the other hand, the tone of students taking the three-year CHR programme was more confident and hopeful. They repeatedly made reference to their CHR modules as spaces where their rights were recognised and their opinions valued. They contrasted this

experience with the rest of their lived experiences at school, which were in tension with the values that CHR was trying to promote. Education *through* human rights requires that students **experience humanistic values** in their daily school lives, as seen in the final part of the curriculum component of the continuum (Figure 9.1).

To summarise, the curriculum component of the *Continuum of Human Rights Education* includes knowledge of the various, often competing, moral, legal and political frameworks of rights and critical engagement with the tensions between them; sanctioned active learning that promotes the skills of discourse, demands and dialogue; and a cohesive approach that embodies the humanistic values it seeks to promote. The categories of knowledge, skills and values are represented linearly on the continuum not to suggest that one comes before the other but because skills and values are often more elusive within authoritarian contexts that assign students the passive role of knowledge recipients. This human rights curriculum, like humans and the human rights journey itself, is perpetually unfinished and as the students at Fatima School argued of curricula in general, must be agreed upon in dialogue with the young people that will be affected by it.

9.2.2 THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE: FROM SANCTIONED TO UNSANCTIONED ACTION

Every poster in the research workshops carried out with students at Fatima School displayed repeated references to the lack of democratic participation of students in the process of education. Students identified this as a violation of their right to express their opinion and to be heard. Article 12 of the UNCRC, to which Kuwait is signatory, does indeed protect the right of young people to be heard and for their opinions to be taken seriously. However, Kuwait's citizenship laws, by delaying the issuance of the *jinsiyya* until age 18, have assigned young people the role of future citizens. This is reinforced by the passive nature of their learning experiences as well as the lack of structures in place for student interaction, either with each other or with the local and national educational authorities. In analysing opportunities for students to participate at Fatima School, two markedly different types of action surfaced – what I term **sanctioned and unsanctioned action**.

Perhaps the most interruptive form of sanctioned action observed at Fatima School was its enactment of its various UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) activities, including International Day. I call it interruptive because it completely disrupted schedules and spaces within the school as unsupervised students took charge of their own learning. During the research workshops, students expressed the empowerment such opportunities for action and collaboration made them feel. However, students were also quick to point out the disjuncture between these opportunities and their daily experiences of the curriculum and school. In this sense, the space for action afforded by the ASPnet membership was kept separate from the classrooms.

The space that students identified most frequently as an opportunity for participation was the three-year CHR programme. Students in CHR classes at Fatima School often took the lead in their own learning. They held mock elections and protests, during which they were able to express their opinions and frustrations in a safe space. These were activities that were sanctioned by their teachers, and both teachers and students stated that they learned a great deal. What was particularly significant, though, is how students and teachers alike, learning from these sanctioned activities began to take *unsanctioned* action. Students taking the three-year CHR identified the lack of cafeterias as a violation of their rights and therefore organised a peaceful demonstration in their school courtyard to make their voices heard. Frustrated by the lack of time to eat, the students held a sit-in after their break one day in protest. These actions were unsanctioned in that they were student responses to perceived rights violations, and they were completely organised and carried out by the students themselves. The discourse and skills used during these cases of unsanctioned action echoed those used during the sanctioned activities within the students' CHR classes. The respect and dignity the students displayed mirrored the treatment they received by their teachers and peers in the CHR classes. This move from sanctioned to unsanctioned action reveals a major success in Fatima School's interpretation of CHR. The unsanctioned activities demonstrated that the students were learning about their rights but that they were also learning the skills needed to practice and protect these rights in their daily lives. The way in which they

carried out these acts demonstrated a respect for dialogue and a belief in its transformative potential.

This move from sanctioned to unsanctioned was also observed in the teachers' actions. Amani's interpretation of the CHR module was supported by her respect for her students' rights and, in turn, fostered her belief in their agency. As she witnessed the actions they were taking, this belief continued to grow. She consequently began to change other aspects of her daily teaching routines – demanding an independent space, involving her students in planning their curriculum (even in other classes besides CHR) and implementing more action-based learning as well as opportunities for student action in all areas of the school (such as the MTD student group). These moves away from the traditional mode of teaching can be interpreted as taking unsanctioned action – action that was born of Amani's belief in the agency of her students and not of initiatives or permission from above.

When sanctioned action moves in this way to **unsanctioned action**, progress is made on the *Continuum of Human Rights Education* (Figure 9.1). It is this unsanctioned action that HRE has the potential to support, encourage and even help trigger – action that stems out of students' appreciation for humanistic values and their critical identification of things that need changing. In this way, students evolve from what Banks (2008) terms active citizens to transformative citizens.

Ideally, such sanctioned and unsanctioned action extends across what Delanty (2000) calls the *'subnational, national and transnational levels'* (p. 136). Fatima School managed to foster more meaningful structures and spaces for students to take both sanctioned and unsanctioned action. However, such opportunities did not transcend the school, and, as observed in the district student council meeting, participation at this higher *subnational* level remained purely tokenistic. During the poster activity, students were also extremely vocal about their lack of access to *national* decision-making processes, particularly regarding their rights as students. The analysis of Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report suggests that young people's participation in the human rights project is not desirable if it instigates

changes to the status quo and the current balance of power. However, Kuwaiti youth are becoming more engaged in social networking and blogging. In this way, they are educating themselves and becoming more politically active. Without an education system that protects and fosters humanistic ideals, this engagement has the danger of developing undemocratic, extreme values instead or of being appropriated by stronger voices. This has the potential to be more of a threat to the balance of power than an education based on human rights. As Gutmann points out, 'Destructive tensions [within democratic societies] occur when dominant members of the government or opposition groups subordinate the very aim of educating children as civic equals to perpetuate their own power' (2004, p. 74). In Kuwait, this includes dominant Islamist opposition MPs who often hinder more maximal interpretations of HRE.

Mention of the *transnational* in Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report is limited to the perceived potential threat of globalisation to national identity and customs. However, the CHR module, by stressing belonging and by anchoring rights in universal frameworks and international agreements, added a more cosmopolitan element. At Fatima School, this element was enhanced by the school's membership to UNESCO's ASPnet. The internationally-themed events and projects that this membership promoted provided students a space to explore and engage with perceived others. This was demonstrated by their inclusion of Iraq and Palestine in their International Day event despite the fact that their history textbooks were erasing the 1990 invasion and their parents were stubborn about restarting dialogues. While such engagements were a case of the transnational coming in, they nonetheless interrupted the focus on static conceptions of the national by allowing for meaningful engagements with perceived differences, through which students were able to forge solidarities and uncover their shared humanity.

Through unsanctioned action on all levels, young people become *agents of hope and change*, and the transformative scope of HRE is realised. However, human rights and citizenship education, including participation, are often built on an assumption that young people are recognised as human beings with dignity and rights. This is often a

false assumption, rendering much of the learning on rights and responsibilities theoretical at best and superficial at worst. The following section discusses recognition within HRE.

9.2.3 RECOGNITION: FROM SELF TO OTHER

As previously mentioned, in Kuwait, denying young people under the age of 18 official citizenship status with the State's *jinsiyya* papers is a clear indication that they are not yet recognized as such. Their absence from any and all decision-making processes confirms this lack of recognition. There is a danger that young people who are not and who do not feel recognised as human beings become passive and therefore invisible. This is demonstrated by the contrast between the students at Fatima School who took the three-year CHR programme and those who took the one-year module.

Both groups expressed that they did not feel recognised for their humanity but rather for particularities such as their age, gender and academic standing. Adult interpretations of these various categories often led to discrimination, the students claimed, and as I observed, locked them into their passive roles within the educational system. The workshop responses of the group taking the three-year CHR, however, indicated that they were aware that even though they lack official status, they nonetheless have rights as human beings. They also perceived their rights as being recognised by their CHR teachers. As mentioned, this recognition coupled with the criticality and action they were engaging in helped strengthen their agency. This, in turn, led them to confront the issue of 'the other' in Kuwait, and they explicitly denounced racism. On the other hand, the tone of the students taking the condensed version of CHR, though echoing the same frustrations, lacked agency. These students, learning about rights and democratic participation through the traditional memorisation method as passive recipients of knowledge and through a curriculum more heavily based on Islam, did not feel recognised. Their learning, devoid of opportunities to critically participate, left them feeling invisible and hopeless.

The analysis of Fatima School's interpretation of the CHR module demonstrated that when HRE is anchored in the *recognition* of the status and rights of young people as equal human beings, it can move beyond one-dimensional teaching *about* rights to the actualization of rights within the system and process. Within such a supportive system, young people are able to realise and act on their agency, engaging in human rights dialogues to both to further their own recognition but ideally, also that of others whose rights have also not yet been fully recognised. HRE therefore evolves into education *for* human rights – *a utopian journey of dialogic universalism*.

To sum up, the three key elements of the substantive content of HRE in the proposed *Continuum of Human Rights Education* are a curriculum that supports criticality and fosters the skills and values needed to apply rights learning to daily life; opportunities to take both sanctioned and unsanctioned action at all levels in order to invoke change; and recognition of rights throughout the process of teaching about rights in order to facilitate human rights dialogues. However, these elements are not, and indeed should not be, separate from the context within which HRE occurs. The next section discusses the context within which it occurs in Kuwait, identifying its limitations. It also builds on the data analysis to add contextual elements to the continuum.

9.3 THE IMPLICATIONS OF IGNORING EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

The data analysis in Chapter 6 revealed that for students as well as teachers at Fatima School, the context within which HRE occurs is as important as its content. The three main problem areas related to this context drawn out by the analysis are the homogenised nature of Kuwaiti schools, the confining properties of school structures and the authoritarian ethos. In this section, implications of these findings will be discussed and suggestions for a context that supports a more maximal interpretation of HRE added to the *Continuum of Human Rights Education*.

9.3.1 RECOGNITION AND THE IMPLICIT PROMISE OF PLURALITY

Section 9.2.3 identified recognition as an important aspect of HRE. Through it, education *about* human rights occurs *through* a recognition and enactment of rights, thus transcending theoretical learning. This discussion presupposed young people as a category. While this is crucial to highlight the lack of status and consequent agency of this group within the context of education, the fact remains that within this category are a myriad of plural identities. The school's role in supporting or subverting such identities cannot be ignored. Parker (2004) posits the following:

> The curriculum introduces students to one world or another, helping to reproduce many aspects of social life, including the divisions that mark off various 'thems' from 'us'. Schooling everywhere has been not as often a way out of inequality as its seal. (p. 433-434)

As discussed in Chapter 2, Kuwait's divisive citizenship laws create several layers of 'them' and 'us' binaries within its society. The education system perpetuates these distinctions by creating homogenised schools that simultaneously magnify difference but also mask it completely. The analysis in Chapter 6 revealed that the population of Fatima School is extremely homogenised, made up predominantly of Kuwaiti, Sunni Muslim, *ḥadhar*, liberal, middle class girls. This segregated approach to education seems to be at odds with the main goal of Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report: national unity. By segregating schools, dialogue about differences is precluded, as is the potential for solidarity between groups. This intention was highlighted by orders from the former Minister of Education in the autumn term of 2010 barring schools from discussing sectarian issues. This divisive approach to education, then, suggests the desire to maintain power and perpetuate a traditional and patriarchal conception of national identity.

As argued in Chapter 2, the only citizens in Kuwait to have realised their full status and sense of belonging in Kuwait are 'original' Kuwaiti, Sunni Muslim, *ḥadhar*, male adults. By imagining Kuwaiti nationality as a singular category and by conceptualising all other affiliations as a hindrance to national unity, Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report ignores the fact that the legal system discriminates against several of its own nationals, not to mention the *bidūn* and expatriates, through the denial of

many civil, political, economic and social rights. It also assumes a patriarchal interpretation of Islam as part of this national identity and perpetuates this within the education system. Moreover, the dominant nationalistic and Islamic discourses embedded in the curriculum textbooks make it difficult for individuals and groups not to give in to the pressures of conformity.

At Fatima School, the CHR module was interpreted by several teachers and students as a way out of these restrictive modes of being. With universal rights in dialogue with all other rights and with time and space to examine real, contextualised rights violations, students began to explore, express and interrogate their own identities. Female students were allowed to question and decide for themselves whether becoming a judge is against Islam by mediating between Islamic laws and constitutional rights. These types of interrogations had the potential to realise larger social changes in the country, where male Islamists decided that, despite what the Constitution says, Islam bars women from working in such positions. However, with the loss of two of the three years of CHR, time constraints make this type of engagement more challenging. Moreover, the homogenised schools preclude dialogues between more diverse individuals and groups.

In denying students the time and space to question their belief systems by forcing obedience to dominant interpretations of Islam, students – and particularly female students – are unable to critically engage with and perhaps alter such interpretations. In denying males and females the opportunity to engage in dialogue and in making an imagined and exclusive 'national identity' a goal of citizenship education, dialogue and solidarity between the sexes that could invoke change is subverted. In denying Sunnis and Shiites, bedouins and ḥadhar and liberals and conservatives the chance to discuss their differences, the school system reinforces the discourses of 'us' and 'them' firmly engrained in society. In denying expatriates the right to public education, Kuwaiti students are kept blind to the identities and experiences of two thirds of the country's population as well as to the various and numerous human rights violations they experience.

Building on Fatima School's enactment of CHR, the proposed continuum suggests that in order for dialogue to occur, difference cannot be made invisible. School populations need to mirror the actual population of countries rather than exclude or segregate groups. By adopting a human rights approach within a heterogeneous school population, real dialogues between different identities is possible. Without such opportunities, students are confined by the State's perceptions of their identities into homogenised groups from which it becomes increasingly difficult to break free. For this reason, *inclusive populations* are seen as an important element of the dialogic nature of HRE, as illustrated by the first blue box under the content arrows in the continuum (Figure 9.1).

9.3.2 SCHOOLS AND THE CONFINEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The sense of enclosure brought about by the homogeneity of school populations in Kuwait is exacerbated by the confining use of space and time. Three levels of confinement were identified in the empirical data: the lack of access to the wider community, the restrictive spaces and timetables within the school and the 'fixed classrooms'.

At Fatima School, walls keeping students in simultaneously kept them on the outside of the wider contexts of the community, nation and world. This was reinforced by the banning of mobile phones and cameras, the lack of internet access (except in the computer lab) and the restricted possibilities for fieldtrips. Once within the walls of Fatima School, additional layers of control kept teachers and students in check. There were no spaces for students to congregate or relax outside their 'fixed classrooms': cafeterias are banned by the Ministry, the library was off-limits during break times, the mosque and student lounge were always locked and there were no tables or chairs anywhere outside. This lack of student-centred space coupled with the minimal breaks offered by the timetable meant that students spent the majority of their day confined under the watchful eyes of their teachers in the 'fixed classrooms'. The walls of the rooms were white and bare, and the individual desks and chairs were set up in separate rows facing the teacher. Apart from the students'

textbooks, there were no books in the classrooms nor was there any technology. This arrangement kept students distanced from each other and their teacher as well as controlled their access to information. Dialogue is therefore discouraged through a purposeful control of the physical environment.

There is a dearth of literature addressing 'the relationship between human values, educational aims and architectural form'; moreover, young people are often not consulted in matters relating to school buildings (Halpin, 2007, p. 247). In research about citizenship and human rights education specifically, space is often discussed in abstract terms (e.g. as opportunities for participation), often ignoring the actual physical and temporal spaces within school structures. However, as evidenced in this study as well as that conducted by Osler (2010), the built environment and its affects on learning experiences matter to young people. During my research workshops, the students at Fatima School described their confining experiences within the school environment as a hindrance to the realisation of their rights and their ability to act on these rights.

Two spaces in Fatima School were designed in collaboration with students: Amani's Psychological Health 'lab' and the garden that they took over as a class project. These spaces were markedly different that any others in the school. The 'lab' had collaborative tables set up in place of desks and chairs. The tables were set up in a 'U' shape around the room rather than in rows. There were posters, technology, music, curtains, plants, games, food and a strict open-door policy. The garden had tables and chairs to sit during breaks, pets for students to care for, sports equipment for team and individual sports and again, an open-door (-gate) policy. Building on the student responses and their reappropriations of space, it can be concluded that a school context without such *free spaces* (the second blue box under the content arrows in Figure 9.1) runs the risk of becoming a place of enclosure and control rather than a place where rights are protected and issues discussed freely and openly.

9.3.3 AUTHORITARIAN ETHOS AND HRE: IN TENSION

A more maximal interpretation of HRE aims to promote the recognition and respect of young people and to listen to their views. It is therefore in tension with the traditional, authoritarian school structure dominant in many parts of the world (Lansdown, 2002). As highlighted in the previous sections, the homogenised and confined setting of Fatima School – a setting shared by most Kuwaiti government schools – limited student interaction and dialogue. It firmly situated students within fixed identities and spaces, facilitating their control. The empirical data revealed that this controlling, authoritarian quality persists throughout Kuwait's school ethos. Three factors within this ethos were identified as being particularly threatening to HRE: student passivity, the centralised curricula and exams and the hegemonic power of nationalism, Islam and the corporation.

The 'fixed classrooms' at Fatima School were, for the most part, strictly run, with the teacher at the front and students in straight, separated rows. Teaching and learning were dominated by what Harber (1995) calls 'rote, retention and regurgitation' (p. 5). Teachers, following their strict Ministry timetables, copied information from the textbooks onto the board, and students copied it into their notebooks to memorise for the Ministry exams. This approach rendered education a passive experience for students, who were excluded from the process. It also diminished the agency of teachers, who had to follow their timetables and who were provided with minimal resources beyond the textbook. As highlighted in Chapter 5, goals and outcomes are largely theoretical concepts; the main outcome, as teachers were trained to believe, was to cover the textbook. The three-year CHR classes, which took place once a week and were less constrained by exams, seemed to trigger a gradual shift in this approach at Fatima School, with students taking on more and more of their own learning and with teachers happily admitting that they were learning alongside and from their students. This fostered solidarity and respect between adults and young people. Amani, learning from this experience, invited students into making curricular decisions in her Psychological Health elective, though this was again constrained once an exam became required.

Within the textbooks and the school ethos, national and Islamic discourses dominate. As previously discussed, Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report presents national identity as a singular, fixed and completed notion. It, like other educational policies (mentioned in Chapter 5), links citizenship education closely to love of and loyalty to the nation. *Muwāṭana* (citizenship) and *waṭaniyya* (nationalism/patriotism) are often used interchangeably, and while the former is mentioned frequently in official policies and reports, the students at Fatima School did not know what it meant. Students taking the one-year CHR module used *muwāṭana* and *waṭaniyya* synonymously during the research workshops, and they covered their poster with patriotic slogans, flags and hearts with 'Kuwait' written inside. The students taking the three-year CHR programme did not display this love of country with symbolic hearts and flags. However, their desire for change and their willingness to engage with the opinions of others demonstrated what could be analysed as a deeper and more meaningful nationalism.

Arguably more entrenched in school curricula and ethos is the Islamic influence. Islamic content is infused into all subject textbooks and is always presented as factual, making it difficult to offer alternative interpretations. Before the CHR programme was introduced, only the Islamic Studies module had extensive content on human rights. While the section on human rights in the textbook begins by defending equality between the sexes, it later sanctions the beating of disobedient wives and uncovers other unequal treatment. Moreover, it discusses *shari'a* as though it were Kuwait's legal system. With Article 18 of the UDHR erased from Kuwaiti curricula and with this textbook presenting apostasy as a crime punishable by death, opting out is not an option. As argued, the CHR module, though still presenting the Islamic perspective on human rights, also presented international agreements and the Kuwaiti Constitution, and this interrupted the Islamic hegemony. During Fatima School's enactment of the three-year programme, students mentioned CHR more frequently as the site of human rights learning than Islamic Studies. This shifted drastically once the one-year module was introduced.

Islam was also used to control students throughout the day and to perpetuate gendered codes of behaviour. As mentioned previously, there was an expectation for students to use their break times to pray, limiting their time to do anything else; students who violated the 'no nail polish' dress code rule were told that they prayers were not heard; and students who did not wear the *ḥijāb* said that they felt judged and insulted when they were told off for their dyed hair and shorter (though still below the knee) skirts. Through such persistent religious control, teachers and students become indoctrinated to contribute to the hegemony of Islam in the school, as evidenced by the seminar on the prophet that Fatima School students conducted.

Educational reforms that shift this balance of power are resisted in the Arab World by both governments and opposition Islamists (Faour & Muasher, 2011). As discussed in Chapter 5, in Kuwait, Islamist MPs have brought interpellation motions against ministers of education who try to reduce or change Islamic content in the national curriculum. Reforms focus instead on technology, greater standardised testing and training for the work force, thereby reducing the role of education to serving the needs of the economy.

The nation, Islam and the corporation are powerful forces to contend with in schools and are often in tension with HRE, whose aim is to produce transformative citizens. As a point of contrast, students in Kuwait take the CHR module once a week, while they take three religion classes (two Islamic Studies and one *Qur'ān*). Nonetheless, as mentioned above, the CHR programme did interrupt the religious dominance over right discourses. However, its reduction to one year resolved this imbalance. Fatima School's association with UNESCO's ASPnet also offered an interruption to the traditional authoritarian system. Since the UN and its various affiliated organisations have credibility in Kuwait and are seen as desirable, Fatima School never had trouble promoting its membership and using it as a vehicle for greater student participation. Its numerous projects, such as International Day, were carried out under the auspices of Kuwait's UNESCO office, and the administration invited a great deal of media attention to the school to promote them. Students at Fatima School described

their involvement in these projects, which focused on humanistic rather than purely religious ideals, as empowering and the learning stemming from them as lasting. Such experiences were in tension with the daily school ethos, and it is interesting to think about how this tension may be mediated in the long term. In the meantime, the *humanistic ethos* fostered in the CHR classes and the ASPnet activities at Fatima School provided space for the realisation of a more maximal interpretation of HRE (see the third blue box under the content arrows in Figure 9.1).

Section 9.3 has underscored the centrality of context to the HRE journey. The discussion of the data analysis draws out three main elements as being necessary for HRE to evolve from the theoretical to the transformative: inclusive populations that reflect national and transnational realities; physical spaces that seek not to confine but to allow students the freedom to congregate, interact and engage in dialogue without constant monitoring; and humanistic, non-authoritarian ethos that recognise and protect human rights while supporting the furthering of rights education and dialogue. These contextual elements are illustrated in the *Continuum of Human Rights Education* as the blocks that support the substantive content of HRE (Figure 4.1).

9.4 HRE: THE UTOPIAN JOURNEY OF DIALOGIC UNIVERSALISM

The journey of HRE within the *Continuum of Human Rights Education* is conceptualised as utopian not because it is unattainable but because the dialogic nature of the journey is itself 'the utopian projection of a way of life in which respect and reciprocity reign' (Benhabib, 1992, p. 38). The journey is the process of HRE, but it is also the goal of HRE. There is no end destination but the journey itself – the journey of dialogic universalism.

As the first country in the region to afford space in the curriculum for a module anchored in the universality of rights, Kuwait is an important case that can offer insights. This thesis has identified the strengths and gaps of Kuwait's approach as well as analysed its enactment at a 'best case scenario' case study school. Though

there are still tensions within the system to be mediated, the continuum highlights the viability of HRE and its potential to transform. In Kuwait, where divisive binaries and tensions between government and parliament continue to stall its evolution as a democratic nation, HRE that promotes solidarity and dialogues with difference can support this evolution. However, the decision to cut back the programme to one year and introduce a citizenship education strategy that seems to shift away from a human rights underpinning hinders this potential.

In the wake of the Arab Spring, young Kuwaitis are engaging in politics online and are taking their human rights issues to the streets. However, their involvement and their voices are being appropriated by dominant political Islamist opposition groups. Without schools and structures that support their authentic participation, opportunities to explore the unique alternatives that they may offer are lost.

9.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

'The Arab Plan for Human Rights Education' by the League of Arab States (2010) may drive more countries in the region to address human rights in their national curricula, particularly in the context of the Arab Spring. Qualitative studies that explore new approaches and actual enactments as well as supportive efforts of non-governmental and international organisations can offer different and arguably deeper perspectives than the more traditional quantitative, standards-based evaluations. One such study that is already underway is a citizenship education project by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Led by the Middle East office in Beirut, this project is being carried out by researchers and professionals working in this field around the region. The goal is to continue to research, hold workshops and compare findings and then finally, to disseminate these for the benefit of policymakers. My research on Kuwait is part of this effort, and the project has already revealed numerous similarities as well as significant divergences. As Arab youth have been the driving force behind most of the human rights protests around the region, it is crucial that research on HRE directly involves them. This thesis has shown that listening to young people highlights their capacity to offer different

perspectives to taken-for-granted assumptions. The workshop methodology employed in this study provided a safe and authentic space for students to share their perspectives, which helped guide the trajectory of the study.

In Kuwait, qualitative research is rare. It is hoped that this study will trigger more like it in the future. Areas for such research include future reforms stemming from Kuwait's 2010 Citizenship Strategy Report, which, as this thesis has revealed, seems to be moving away from the human rights underpinning offered by the CHR programme. Research that explores the implications of this shift are important, particularly given the political climate in Kuwait and the numerous rights issues that have begun to surface (as discussed in Chapter 2). Additionally, more research is needed to investigate the cohesiveness of the human rights approach across the primary, intermediary and secondary levels. Studies that compare and contrast the enactment of HRE in girls and boys schools are also crucial, as is further research into the depth of Islamic influence on the curriculum and how this differentially affects girls and boys.

The *Continuum of Human Rights Education* presented in this thesis is an invitation into dialogue and is perhaps my 'fingerprint' (as Amani would call it) on Kuwait's journey through HRE. Some may view such efforts as transgressions, and they would be right.

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APPENDICES

2.1 MODULE DISTRIBUTION FOR KUWAITI SECONDARY SCHOOLS[52]

GRADE 10 ('unified system')		GRADE 11 (streamed)				GRADE 12 (streamed)			
Subject	**times/ week**	**Subject**	**times/ week**			**Subject**	**times/ week**		
Qur'ān	1	Qur'ān	1			Qur'ān	1		
Islamic Studies	2	Islamic Studies	2			Islamic Studies	2		
Arabic	6	Arabic	6			Arabic	6		
English	5	English	5-6[53]			English	5		
PE	2	PE	1			PE	1		
IT	2	IT	1			IT	1		
Math	6	Free Choice	2			Free Choice	2		
Physics	3	Free Choice	1[54]			Free Choice	1		
Chemistry	3	Constitution & Human Rights	1			Constitution & Human Rights	1		
Biology	2								
Arab World	3	**Science Students**		**Social Studies Students**		**Science Students**		**Social Studies Students**	
		Math	6	History	3	Math	6	History	3
		Physics	3	Geography	3	Physics	3	Geography	3
		Chemistry	3	Intro. to Psychology & Sociology	2	Chemistry	3	Intro. to Philosophy	2
		Biology	2	French	5	Biology	3	French	5
		Geology	2	Math & Statistics	2			Math & Statistics	2

[52] Adapted and translated from MoE (2008b). Note that the table above reflects the rollback of the CHR module to one year that occurred in the 2011-2012 academic year.

[53] In grade 11, science students take English five times a week, and social studies students take it six times a week.

[54] Students get to choose one elective from a list of electives that meet twice a week and another from a list that meet once a week.

4.1 MINISTRY DOCUMENTS AND TEXTBOOKS REFERRED TO AND ANALYSED IN TEXT

<u>Documents</u>

Constitution and Human Rights (CHR) information pamphlet:
Ministry of Education (MoE). (2010a). *The State of Kuwait: Experience in the field of human rights education.* Kuwait: MoE.

Citizenship Strategy Report:
Ministry of Education (MoE). (2010b). *Strategy for reinforcing the concepts of citizenship, loyalty and belonging among young people through educational curricula in Kuwait ('istrātijiat tekrīs mefāhīm al-muwāṭana wa al-walā' wa al-'intimā' ledā al-nesh' fī al-menāhij al-dirāsiyya bidawlet al-Kuwait).* Kuwait: MoE.

Development of Education Report:
Ministry of Education (MoE). (2008a). *The national report: Development of education in the State of Kuwait 2004-2008.* Kuwait: MoE and Kuwait National Commission for Education, Science and Culture.

Overarching secondary goals:
Ministry of Education (MoE). (2008b). *The fundamental policy for the secondary stage in the State of Kuwait (al-wathīqa al-'sāsiyya lil-marḥala al-thānawiyya fī dawalet al-Kuwait).* Kuwait: MoE.

Social studies departmental goals and outcomes:
Ministry of Education (MoE). (2010d). National policy to build the social studies curriculum in the State of Kuwait (*al-wathīqa al- waṭaniyya libinā' mehej al-ijtima'iyyāt fi dawlet al-Kuwait*). Kuwait: MoE.

MoE statistics:
Ministry of Education (MoE). (2010c). *Educational statistical group 2009-2010.* Kuwait: MoE.

Vision Kuwait 2030:
Tony Blair Associates (2009). *Vision Kuwait 2030.* (Unpublished).

Al-Qabas Education Report:
Ayoub, F. (2012, March 31). The crisis of education in Kuwait: Why? And what are the solutions? (*'azmat al-terbia fī al-Kuwait: limāthā wa mā al-ḥulūl*). *Al-Qabas.* Retrieved from http://168.187.3.44/node/62857

Textbooks

The Arab World:

Ministry of Education (MoE). (2007a). *The Arab World for grade ten (al-'ālem al-'arabī lil-ṣaf al-'āshir)* (2nd ed.). Kuwait: MoE.

The Constitution and Human Rights (CHR):

Ministry of Education (MoE). (2007b). *The Constitution and human rights for grade ten (al-dustūr wa ḥuqūq al-insaān lil-ṣaf al-'āshir)* (2nd ed.). Kuwait: MoE.

Ministry of Education (MoE). (2007c). *The Constitution and human rights for grade eleven (al-dustūr wa ḥuqūq al-insaān lil-ṣaf al-ḥādī 'ashar)*. Kuwait: MoE.

Ministry of Education (MoE). (2008c). *The Constitution and human rights for grade twelve (al-dustūr wa ḥuqūq al-insaān lil-ṣaf al-thānī 'ashar)*. Kuwait: MoE.

Ministry of Education (MoE). (2010e). *The Constitution and human rights for grade twelve (al-dustūr wa ḥuqūq al-insaān lil-ṣaf al-thānī 'ashar)*. Kuwait: MoE.

Islamic Studies:

Ministry of Education (MoE). (2008d). *Islamic Education for grade ten (al-terbia al-Islāmiyya lil-ṣaf al-'āshir)* (2nd ed.). Kuwait: MoE.

Psychological Health:

Ministry of Education (MoE). (2008e). *Psychological health for grade twelve – elective (al-ṣiḥa al-nefsiyya lil-ṣaf al-thānī 'ashar – 'ikhtiyārī ḥur)*. Kuwait: MoE.

4.2 TYPES OF OBSERVATIONS CARRIED OUT

PHASE 1 March 2009	• Constitution and Human Rights (CHR) classes • Arab World classes • 'Model (CHR) Lesson' at another school in same district • UNESCO/English Department International Day • UNESCO World Health Day event • District student council meeting • Fieldtrip to Kuwait News Agency • Science Fair • Daily morning line-ups (explained in Chapter 6) • Daily informal observations/conversations: around school during break times; in social studies teachers' office and kitchen
PHASE 2 March/April 2010	• CHR classes • Arab World classes • History classes • Philosophy classes • Psychological Health classes • Math classes • English classes • Islamic Studies classes • UNESCO/English Department International Day • UNESCO event at another school in same district • Student-led seminar on the prophet Muhammad • Rehearsal for dance competition • Lecture for students by invited guest speaker (human rights lawyer) • Seminar for teachers on teaching resources • Seminars for teachers and press on computer-assisted learning • Daily morning line-ups (explained in Chapter 6) • Daily informal observations/conversations: around school during break times; in social studies teachers' office and kitchen • Fatima School *jawda* (quality education initiative) meetings/workshop • District level *jawda* meetings • National workshop on *jawda*

4.3   FIELDNOTES COVER TEMPLATE

TODAY:

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

Schedule:

Journal:

Fieldwork Day:
_____

Highlighting Key:
Green – clarify/ask
Yellow – to do/follow up
Orange – important

Misc. Notes:

4.4   TEMPLATE FOR FIELDNOTES ON CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS[55]

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS		Fieldwork Day:	Highlighting Key:
Class: _____ Teacher: _____		_____	Green – clarify/ask
Grade: _____ Students: _____			Yellow – to do/follow up
Period: _____ Date: _____			Orange – important

Time (e.g. number of mins.)	Observations:	General Notes (physical space, students, teachers, etc.):	Reminders (key themes, things to look out for, do, clarify, etc.):
			1
			2

General thoughts on how this may feed into my research:

3

Attachments: _____   Recordings: _____   Photos: _____

[55] Note that the three sections of the template each represent one A4-sized paper but have been reduced to one page here to save space.

4.5 SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS

	Date	Pseudonym	Position
Phase 1: 2009	06/04/2009	Amani	CHR/Psychology teacher
	06/04/2009	Maya	CHR/Philosophy teacher
	06/04/2009	Ruqaya	Arab World teacher
	06/04/2009	Huda	Principal
	08/04/2009	Anoud	UNESCO rep.
Phase 2: 2010	27/04/2010	Amani (part 1)	CHR/Psychological Health teacher
	28/04/2010	Amani (part 2)	CHR/Psychological Health teacher
	14/04/2010	Dana (part 1)	Arab World/ Philosophy teacher
	27/04/2010	Dana (part 2)	Arab World/ Philosophy teacher
	20/04/2010	Hanan	Geography teacher
	21/04/2010	Huda	Principal
	28/04/2010	Anoud	UNESCO rep.
	28/04/2010	Sara	UNESCO rep. (previously)
Phase 3: 2011	20/04/2011	Amani	CHR/Psychological Health teacher
	20/08/2011	Mr. C	Ministry official

4.6   PHASE ONE INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

1. Where does the observed lesson fall within the module's programme of study and the overarching secondary school aims?

2. How did you perceive the students' engagement with the lesson?

3. To what extent do you have choices in the resources you use and the activities you propose to the students? Can you give me an example?

4. For CHR teachers: How did you come to teach CHR? What kind of training did you receive?

5. What are your views on the rollback of the CHR programme?

6. Where within the national curriculum (or modules and textbooks) are there opportunities to address themes such human rights, citizenship and democracy?

7. What opportunities exist for students and teachers to exercise their rights and to participate within the school system?

8. What (if any) constraints do you face as a teacher? What about students?

9. How do you think being part of UNESCO's ASPnet affects this school?

10. Do you ever plan your lessons around UNESCO ideals or ASPnet learning themes (such as justice and human rights)?
    a. If so, can you give me an example?
    b. If not, why not?

11. Are there any other issues you would like to discuss?

12. Do you have any questions for me?

4.7   EXCERPT OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Name: Amani, CHR/Psychology teacher
Date: 06/04/2009
Duration: 30:09 mins.

Original Arabic

ر: أول شي. كنت أبي أسألك عن الدرس اللي انا حضرته عندك. اللي هو كان عن حقوق الطفل. اين يتلاءم هذا الدرس ضمن البرنامج الدراسي لهذه المادة وضمن الاهداف العامة للمرحلة الثانوية؟

أ: طبعا احنا بالنسبة لنا باعتبارنا بمدرسة حكومية. إلتزامنا الاساسي الكتاب المدرسي. لكن بما اني انا أدرس مادة الدستور [CHR]. المرجع الثاني حقي - طبعا المرجع الاول هو الكتاب الدراسي   المرجع الثاني على طول المجتمع. المجتمع شنو يمثله؟ عندنا الجريدة   أول ما دخلتي شفتي   وبعدين ناخذ أمثلة من حياتهم اليومية. نشوف شنو درجة استيعاب الطالب. شنو عنده معلومات. نبتدي ناخذها المرجع الآخر لنا. ومن خلالها نجمع هذه المعلومات... بالنهاية نوصل لمعلومات الكتاب. احنا إلتزامنا بالكتاب المدرسي نفسه.

ر: ولازم تتابعون الكتاب على نفس الجدول؟ مثلا كل اسبوع. كل اسبوعين. يوميا ...

أ: لازم. لأنه المنهج كله قائم عن الكتاب. لأن احنا الامتحان ما يتعدى الكتاب. عنده معلومات الطالب. نعطيه. بس   وعنده معلومات خارجية   لكن بالنهاية المعلومات الخارجية تصير ثانوية. يخليها. مع انه هي ممكن تكون المؤثر الاساسي حقه. ولكن التطبيق العملي راح يلتزم بمعلومات الكتاب اللي هو راح يمتحن فيها.

ر: ايه   لاني لاحظت حتى الدرس النموذجي اللي رحت لـ ثانوية   ق   هم كان عن نفس الموضوع. حقوق الطفل. حتى كانوا بنفس الموقع بالكتاب. انتوا تمشون كلكم على نفس الجدول.

أ: نفس الشي لازم. لأن هذا يحاسب عليه المعلم. تطلع. تاخذ   سوينا لوحات. خذينا أفكار. خذينا   بس بالنهاية الكتاب. على أساس ان الطالب لا يشط وايد بعيد عن الموضوع. بالنهاية انت راح تمتحن بهذه المادة.

ر: شنو معناة كلمة المنهج بالنسبة لك؟ هل المنهج هو الكتاب؟

أ: المنهج هو الكتاب. لا. شوفي. عفوا. المنهج يختلف بتاتا   يعني دايما احنا نخلط بين المنهج والكتاب. المنهج هي طريقتي انا كمعلمة   شنو المنهج   والطريقة لها خطوات معينة التزم فيها لاكمل توصيل المعلومة. هذا المنهج. الكتاب هو المادة العلمية. احنا. لو تسألين أغلب المعلمات يقولون شنو المنهج المنهج هو الكتاب والعكس صحيح. خطأ.

ر: بس الوزارة   ما يعطونكم شي، اسمه المنهج الرسمي؟

أ: يعطوني توزيع المحتوى يسمونها. مو منهج. انا أقولك المنهج اللي هو انا طريقتي. منهجي انا... هذا شي خاص فيني. يعطونا شي اسمه توزيع المحتوى. مثلا. انت بالشهر الفلاني تكوني خالصة المادة العلمية من الصفحة كذا للصفحة كذا. بس. لكن طريقتك. اسلوبك... هذا يعتمد عليك انت كمعلم. عندك موجه يدخل يطالع هذه المادة نفسها. منهجك. انت شلون مشيتيه. شلون طريقتك. طبعا مع ان احنا عندنا قوانين ونظريات معينة ننتبه عليها. تحاسبين على هذه الطريقة. قد تضيفين. بعض التوجيه يقولك انا والله استوعب الخبرات الجديدة. انا احب الافكار الجديدة   اطلعين انت ساعات افكار جديدة   وقد ساعات لا. انت تكون أفكارك رتيبة   اللي   هو اخذ وعطاء. مناقشة... هذا هو.

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ر: ايه... وشلون شفتي مشاركة الطالبات في الحصة؟

أ: يعني. انا بالنسبة لي. انا ما أقدر أحكم على حصتي. انت تحكمين...

ر: لا انا لاحظت ان وايد كانوا مشاركين...

أ: ايه انت اللي تحكمين   يعني انا لو تجي تقوليلي انا في البداية قبل ما أدخل حصة. قبل المنهج أحطه على جنب   اللي هو المادة   أجي أقول كم طالب عندي راح يتحرك؟ كم طالب أستطيع اني أخليه أستثير طريقة تفكيره؟ انا هذا دوري   خاصة مادة الدستور [CHR]   اثارة تفكير المعلم. فانا دوري كله   المتعلم عفوا اشلون   كم طالب استثار تفكيره؟ فبعضهم لما يرفعولي اللوحات. بعضهم حطيتها اكس. لا انتي جبتي   ما جبتي معلومة جديدة. فانا هم أعتبر نفسي اني انا فشلت لأن انتي جبتي معلومات الكتاب. انا ما أبي معلومات الكتاب   انت موجودة عندك. روحي البيت وحفظيها [...] اذن انا كم طالب   فعلا كلهم اشتركوا. اذا تشوفين انا عندي 23 طالبة. كلهم اشتغلوا. بس انا بالنسبة لي كقياس. اللي اطلعولي 10 افكار. اذن انا استثرت 10 طالبات وفشلت اني استثير البقية. عطوني لأن معلومات معينة. التزموا. انا ما ابي الالتزام هذا. هذا هني العمل. فرق يعني. فلما اجي أقيم انا اقيم نفسي بطريقة مختلفة بناتا يعني. يعني لما تقوليلي هذي الحصة. أقولك انا 10 اللي عطوني افكار ثانية. الباقي لازلنا لازلنا على   شلون انت تدرس دستور [CHR] وما تعرف تعطيني وما تعرف تتكلم عن حقوقك؟ اذن لازلنا. اذن انت بعد لسة محتاج. نقعد... خلينا نقعد مرة ثانية بالدرس. مرة ثانية ومن اول وجديد ونعيد معلوماتنا.

English Translation

R: **First, where does the lesson I observed fit within the module's programme of study and the overarching secondary school aims?**

A: Of course, we, as a government school, our main requirement is the textbook, but because I teach the Constitution module [CHR], the second resource for me – of course the first resource is the textbook – the second resource right away is the society. What represents society? We have the newspaper, as you saw when you first came in, and then we take examples from their everyday lives. We see what level of understanding the student has. What information does he have? We start to use that as another resource for us, and from there we start to collect this information. In the end, we get to the information in the book. Our obligation is with the book

R: And so you have to follow the book on the same schedule? For example, weekly, every two weeks, daily?

A: We must. Because the whole curriculum [*menhej*] rests on the book. Because our exam does not go beyond the book. The student has information, we give him, but – and he has external information – but in the end, the external information becomes secondary. He leaves it, although it may be the main influence for him, but the practical application [is that] he is going to adhere to the information in the book that he is going to be examined on.

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R: Yes – because I noticed even in the 'model lesson' that I attended at [X] secondary school that the same lesson on children's rights was being taught. They were even in the same place in the book. You all work on the same schedule.

A: The same thing. We have to. Because the teacher is held accountable for that. You leave [the book], you take [ideas] – we made placards, we took ideas, we took – but, in the end the book, so the student doesn't stray too much from the topic. At the end you are going to be examined on this subject.

R: What does the word curriculum [menhej] mean to you? Is the curriculum the textbook?

A: The curriculum is the book. No. Look, sorry, the curriculum differs completely – of course we always mix between the curriculum and the book. The curriculum is my way [methodology] as a teacher – what is the curriculum? – and the methodology has specific steps that I follow to get the point across, that is the curriculum. The book is the educational module. We, if you ask most teachers what is the curriculum they will tell you it is the book and vice versa. Wrong.

R: But the Ministry doesn't give you anything called an official curriculum?

A: They give me content distribution they call it, not a curriculum. I tell you, the curriculum is my methodology, my curriculum... This is something particular to me. They give us something called content distribution. For example, in month so and so you will have finished the educational module from page such to page such, that's it. But your methodology, your style... That depends on you as a teacher. You have an inspector who comes in and watches this module, your curriculum [menhej], how you take it forward, what is your methodology. Of course we also have various regulations and specific theories we pay attention to. You are held accountable on this methodology. You may add, some of the guidance [the inspector] tells you I acknowledge new experience, I like new ideas – sometimes you bring out new ideas – and then sometimes no, your ideas are monotonous, give and take discussion... That's it.

R: **Yes... How did you perceive the students' engagement in the lesson [on children's rights]?**

A: I mean, to me, I can't judge my own lesson, you judge...

R: No I noticed that they participated a lot –

A: Yes, you judge – I mean if you come and tell me... Me, in the beginning, before I enter the lesson, first I put the curriculum [menhej] on the side –

which is to say the subject – I say, how many of my students are going to move? How many students' ways of thinking can I provoke? That is my role – particularly in the Constitution [CHR] module – provoking the thinking of the teacher. So my entire role – of the learner, sorry – how – how many students' thinking was provoked? So some of them when they raised their placards for me, some of them I put an X. No you brought – you didn't bring something new. So I also considered myself to have failed that you brought me information from the book. I don't want information from the book – you have that, go home and memorise it [...] So then how many students did I – indeed they all participated. If you see I have 23 students, all of them worked. But to me as a gauge, what came out was 10 ideas, so then I provoked 10 students and failed to provoke the rest because they gave me specific [official] information. They adhered. I don't want this adherence. This is where the work is. It's different I mean. So when I come to gauge, I gauge myself in a completely different way I mean. I mean if you tell me this lesson, I tell you that 10 gave me other ideas. The rest, we remain, we remain – how do you study Constitution [CHR] and you don't know how to give me and you don't know how to speak about your rights? In that case, we remain [continue]. In that case you still need. We sit... Let's sit again with the lesson, another time and from the beginning and we repeat our information.

Transcription symbols

,	(comma)	pause
...	(ellipsis)	longer pause
.	(period)	stop
–	(dash)	interruption
[ ]	(brackets)	added to clarify
b	(bold)	questions from interview guide

4.8 STUDENT RESEARCH WORKSHOPS

Participants

| ACADEMIC YEAR	CLASS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
2008-2009	GRADE 10/2	20
	GRADE 11/A2[56]	23
	GRADE 12/A1&2	28 (2 classes: 13/15)
	TOTAL	**71**
2009-2010	GRADE 10/5	22
	GRADE 10/6	20
	GRADE 11/A1	16
	GRADE 11/S2	20
	GRADE 12/A1	24
	GRADE 12/S(mix)	17
	TOTAL	**119**
2010-2011	GRADE 12/S1	21
	TOTAL	**21**[57]
TOTAL OVER 3 YEARS:		**211**

Phases of student research workshops coinciding with CHR rollback

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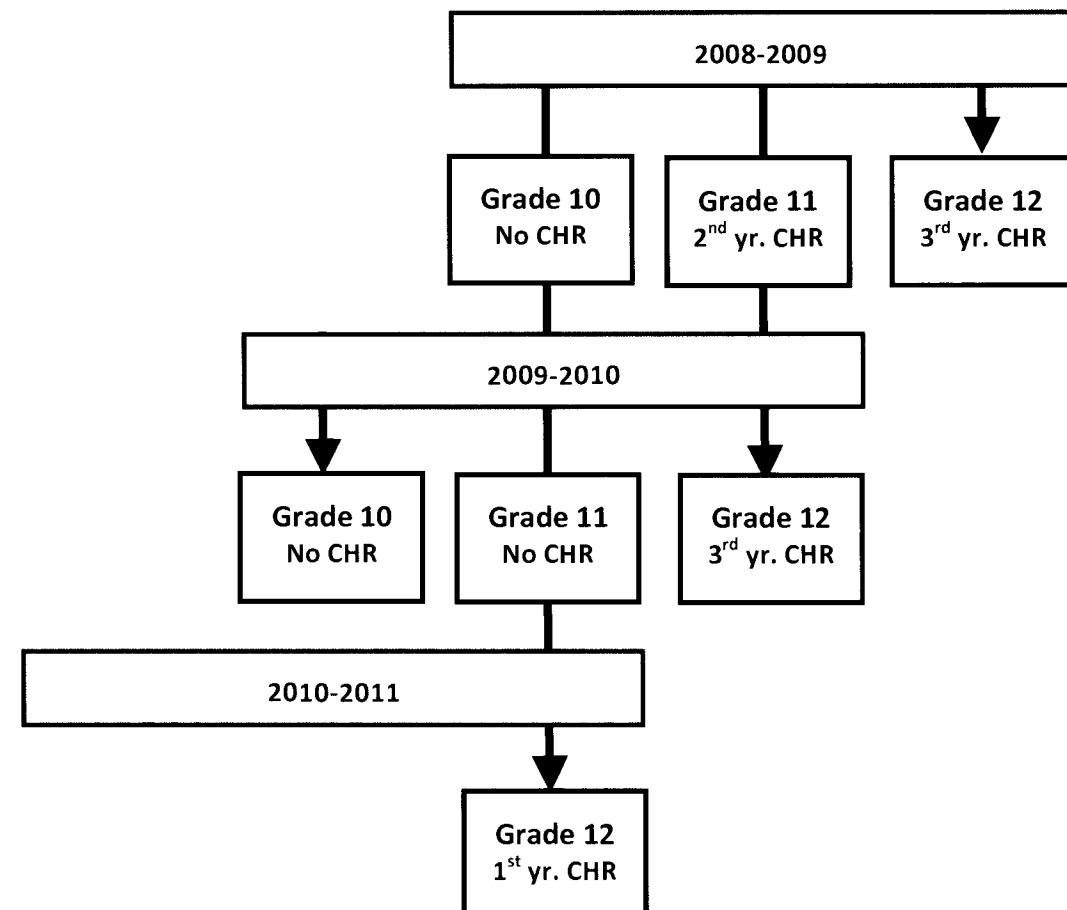
[56] The 'A' and 'S' next to the grade 11 and 12 classes refer to the 'Arts' and 'Science' streams.
[57] Due to time constraints, the UNESCO post-it activity was not carried out in 2011.
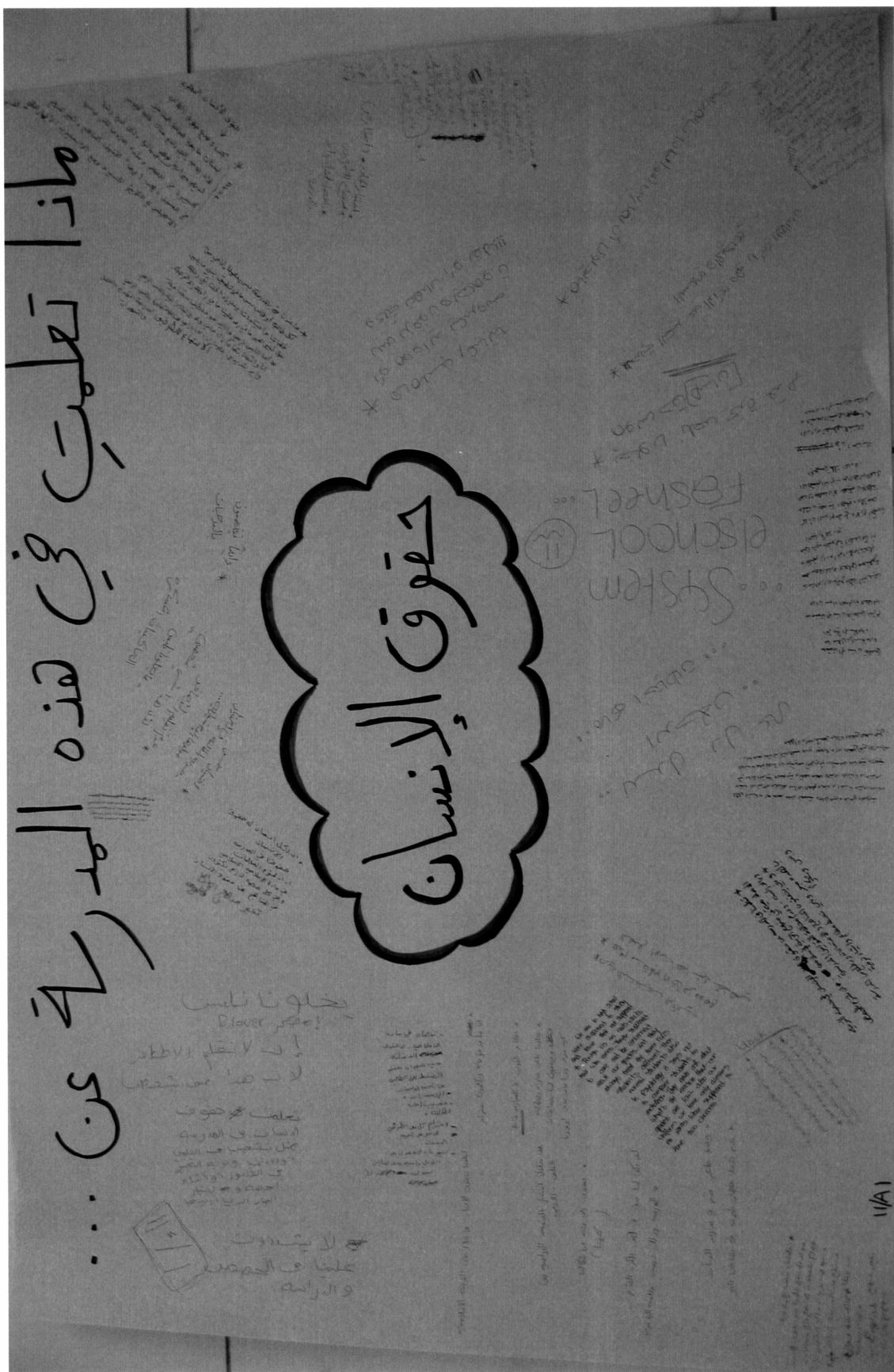
4.10   REQUEST TO MINISTRY FOR ACCESS TO CASE STUDY SCHOOL

Letter to district for 2009 access[58]

2 March 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Rania Al-Nakib and I am a PhD student at the University of London's Institute of Education. I am studying Education and I am very interested in researching Kuwait's human rights curriculum and its UNESCO Associated Schools. For this purpose, I would like permission to visit [Fatima Bint Asad] Secondary School in [name of area] for 2-3 weeks to observe it, attend classes and talk with the principal, teachers and students. I have spoken to the principal, who is happy to have me do this once I have permission from you. I will be conducting this research from the end of March to the middle of April. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any additional information you may need.

Thank you for your assistance and support. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Rania Al-Nakib

Supervisor support letter to district for 2009 access

2 March 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to certify that Rania Al-Nakib is a PhD student at the University of London's Institute of Education. As part of her research, she would like permission to visit [Fatima Bint Asad] Secondary School in [name of area]. She would like to visit this school for 2-3 weeks to observe it, attend classes and talk with the principal, teachers and students. She will be conducting this research from the end of March to the middle of April. Please let me know if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,
Hugh Starkey
Course leader MA Citizenship/History Education by distance learning
Co-director International Centre for Education for Democratic Citizenship
Fellow of Centre for Distance Education

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[58] Note that the same letter was used for all research phases with dates and time periods adjusted accordingly.

4.11 CONSENT FORMS

Student/parent consent form[59]

28 March 2010

Dear Students,

My name is Rania Al-Nakib and I am a doctoral student at the Institute of Education, University of London. My PhD research seeks to explore human rights education in Kuwait, and I am interested in discovering what insights your school has to offer. I have chosen to study your school because it is a member of UNESCO's Associated School Project Network and because I have heard many positive things about it. The Ministry and your principal have agreed to let me visit the school for a few weeks to observe classes and conduct student research workshops during which you will be able to tell me about your own learning and experiences. During my time at the school, I will take notes to help me remember information and I may use audio recordings to make sure I am accurate in my research reporting. I may also take photos during school and classroom activities to use as memory aids; however, these will not be seen by anyone but me. An important part of research is to make sure people's personal information is kept confidential. That is why student participation will be anonymous, and I will not be using real names in any of my reports. I would like your permission to use the data I collect from you. If you agree to participate, please sign the slip below and then take it home for your guardian to sign as well. Please note that my research will not interfere with daily learning, and you may withdraw from the study at any point. Thank you for your help!

Sincerely,
Rania Al-Nakib

Name: _____

Class: _____ Teacher: _____

☐ I understand what has been explained to me about the research study, and I do not mind taking part.
☐ I understand what has been explained to me about the research study. However, I would rather not take part.

Student signature: _____ Date: _____

Parents, if you do not mind your child participating, please sign below.

Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

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[59] This was the form used in 2010 and reflects the adjustments made due to concerns raised during phase one about the use of photographs.

Principal consent form (2009/2010)

I understand that the researcher has obtained permission from the school district to conduct a research project at my school. The project was explained to me by the researcher, and I agree to take part in it. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any point. I am also aware that the name of the school and my own real name will not be used. I am willing to have the researcher attend classes, plan student research workshops with the classroom teachers (with their permission), interview teachers (with their permission) and interview me at my convenience. I also understand that the researcher will take notes, photographs and audio recordings, and I do not have any objection to this.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Teacher Consent Form (2009/2010/2011)

I agree to take part in the research project that was explained to me by the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any point. I am also aware that my real name will not be used. I am willing to have the researcher attend my classes, possibly plan a research workshop with one of my classes and interview me at my convenience. I also understand that the researcher has permission to take notes, audio recordings and photographs, and I do not have any objection to this.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

5.1 COVERAGE OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE GRADE 10 ISLAMIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK

CONCEPT 5	Legislating right and wrong [*ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*] as protection for human rights
Lesson 17	Human rights is Islam
Lesson 18	The five grand concepts and their protection (religion, the self, money, honour, the mind)
Lesson 19	Punishments in Islam as protection for the individual and society
Lesson 20	The assault on religion and its sanctity
Lesson 21	The assault on the self and its sanctity
Lesson 22	The assault on money and its sanctity (stealing, bribery, cheating, fraud)
Lesson 23	The assault on honour and its sanctity (slander, adultery, homosexuality)
Lesson 24	The assault on the mind and its sanctity (alcohol, drugs)
CONCEPT 6	Islam determines and organises the responsibilities of individuals in society
Lesson 25	The responsibility of the Muslim leader
Lesson 26	The responsibility of the Muslim individual
CONCEPT 7	Contractualising rights in Islam and the responsibilities of Muslims towards them
Lesson 27	Contractualising rights in Islam
Lesson 28	First: Documenting debt (loans) in writing and with witnesses
Lesson 29	Second: The mortgage contract
Lesson 30	Third: The lease contract
Lesson 31	Fourth: The will and testament

6.1 MINISTRY TIMETABLE FOR KUWAITI SECONDARY SCHOOLS

	Morning line-up	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	First break	Period 4	Period 5	Prayer break	Period 6	Period 7
From:	07:30	07:40	08:30	09:20	10:05	10:20	11:10	11:55	12:05	12:50
To:	07:40	08:25	09:15	10:05	10:20	11:05	11:55	12:05	12:50	13:35

6.2 BENEFITS OF ASPNET MEMBERSHIP IDENTIFIED BY FATIMA SCHOOL STUDENTS

Year	Class	CHR	Benefits
2009	10/2	X	• distinguishes school • widens vision/awareness • helps prove our existence
	11A2	✓ (3-yr.)	• distinguishes school • promotes progress • protects rights • provides opportunities to participate • promotes (cultural) activities/celebrations
	12A1&2	✓ (3-yr.)	• provides awareness about the environment • provides awareness about health issues • enforces rights • provides superior teaching methods • promotes progress • provides opportunities to participate • provides role for student • breaks routines • provides opportunities to mix with the community • allows students to collaborate/work together • allows students to collaborate with the administration • promotes interaction between countries • provides information about world events • contributes to education
2010	10/5 10/6	X	• provides opportunities to participate • promotes activities/exhibitions • raises Kuwait's profile in the international forum • promotes ambition • provides opportunities to experience other countries (through International Day)
	11A1 11S2	X	• distinguishes school • provides opportunities to show our skills/talents/ capabilities • provides opportunities to participate • allows students to collaborate/work together • provides opportunities to learn about other countries/cultures • promotes activities • provides entertainment • promotes discussions • protects freedom of speech • promotes creativity
	12A1 12S(mix)	✓ (1-yr.)	• promotes activities/exhibitions • promotes progress/progressiveness • provides opportunities to show our skills/talents/ capabilities • provides opportunities to participate • motivates • consolidates perseverance/hard work • contributes to education • promotes creativity

7.1 CHR TEXTBOOK CONTENT BY GRADE LEVEL

	GRADE 10: The principles of democracy, the Constitution and human rights	GRADE 11: Human rights	GRADE 12: The Constitution and the public authorities
Chapter 1	Democracy: A historical perspective (p. 9-13)	Human rights (p. 9-12)	The historical development of the democratic system in Kuwait (p. 9-14)
Chapter 2	Al-Shūrā (the principle of consultation in Islam) (p. 18-20)	The right to life (p. 19-23)	The separation of powers (p. 19-21)
Chapter 3	The Constitution (p. 23-27)	The right to equality and non-discrimination (p. 27-30)	The public authorities in the Kuwaiti democratic system (p. 27-41)
Chapter 4	The Kuwaiti Constitution (p. 31-34)	The right to human dignity and the prohibition of torture (p. 35-38)	The legislative authority (p. 51-58)
Chapter 5	The historical development of human rights (p. 39-44)	Freedom of belief (p. 42-44)	The judiciary authority (p. 65-69)
Chapter 6	International human rights regulations (p. 50-55)	Freedom of opinion and expression (48-50)	The relationship between the public authorities: Checks and balances (p. 75-80)
Chapter 7	The United Nations and human rights (p. 62-64)	The right to education and learning (p. 53-56)	
Chapter 8	Agencies of the United Nations (specialised organizations) (p. 68-71)	Women's rights (p. 60-63)	
Chapter 9	International law and the human (p. 77-80)	Children's rights (p. 67-71)	
Chapter 10	Human rights in the Kuwaiti Constitution (p. 85-87)	Political rights (p. 77-78)	
Chapter 11		Individual duties (p. 83-85)	
Average no. of content pages/chapter	4.3	3.7	7.2
Average no. of question pages/chapter	4	3.6	5.3

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