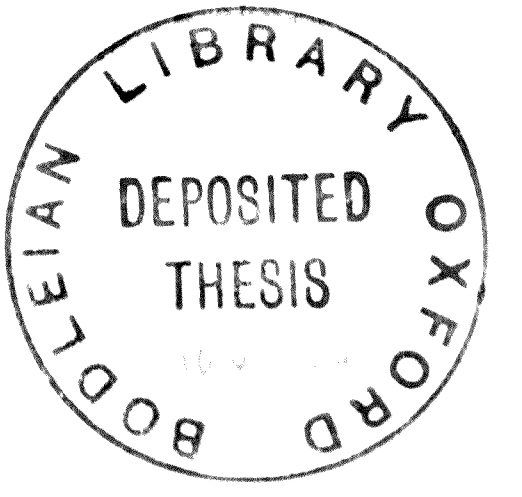
Education, Gender and Cross-Cultural Experience with Reference to Elite Arab Women

SERRA KIRDAR

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ABSTRACT

EDUCATION, GENDER AND CROSS–CULTURAL EXPERIENCE WITH REFERENCE TO ELITE ARAB WOMEN

SERRA KIRDAR
ST. ANTONY'S COLLEGE

DPHIL in EDUCATIONAL STUDIES
HILARY 2004

The core of the thesis investigates the role of education in the engendering of cultural change and leadership among a select group of a powerful 'first generation' of Arab women; specifically, the role of dual educational/cultural experiences, both Arab and Western. The broader aim of the study is to analyze the merging of cultural traditionalism and modernity and how dual education has enhanced the ability of women, especially Arab women, to become leaders in their professional careers, and within their respective communities, whilst still maintaining strong ties to their culture, religion and traditions, albeit to varying degrees

The writer has chosen to investigate the association between cultural identity and educational experience of elite educated Arab women, through a small sample, who have had exposure to both Western and Arab educational systems at different points in their lives. The researcher's heritage has led to a fundamental ideological interest in the coexistence of traditionalism and modernisation and whether the two can complement one another. There are now a significant number of Arab women who have had the privilege of education and exposure to the two types of systems. Yet, gender constraints and predefined gender roles still very much dictate the socio-cultural contexts in which such women have to operate. The patriarchal 'system' is omnipresent in the West as well as in the Arab world. The challenges the writer has faced even as a 'Western' Arab to reconcile tradition and intellectual and educational exposure has served as a greater impetus for this investigation.

The investigation and the intent of this thesis as described above, is to test the preliminary hypothesis that, in the context of elite Arab women, their exposure to both West and Arab educational cultures is germane to their potential for influencing female professional development. How their educational experiences have influenced their own identities and their ability to adhere to the gender roles prescribed is of significant interest. What influence has such education had on these women's prospects for instituting and pioneering change in their respective societies and professions? Is the synergy of certain aspects of modernity and tradition possible? The general conclusion is that it is.

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INTRODUCTION

In no area has the force of tradition been felt more strongly and the effect of globalisation been more apparent than that of the status and roles of women. The position of women in the Arab world, in particular, is neither uniform nor static. Whereas some societies in that region have encouraged women to work in professional fields, other more traditional societies have limited women's work and areas of study to the arts and humanities, hoping thereby to preserve their roles as wives and mothers. The writer's previous research indicates that professional careers available to women in many communities have tended to be mere extensions of their traditional roles.[1] The intent of this doctoral thesis is to investigate the role of education in the engendering of cultural change and leadership amongst a select group of powerful, 'first generation professional', Arab, Muslim women; specifically, the role and impact of their dual educational/cultural experiences, both Arab and 'Western'. The empirical dimension specifically deals with a small echelon of educated Muslim women from different Arab countries that are not representative of all Muslim Arab women. In fact, let it be known from the onset that this doctoral thesis by no means aims to generalise. The women selected as samples come from: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Morocco, Egypt and Jordan. However, the issues and themes which this thesis attempts to address are not simply relevant and limited to this small echelon of society. Indeed, issues pertaining to the quality of a nation's educational system, the changing roles of women and the challenges they face as they seek empowerment, both within their respective societies and in their professions, can be applied to many cultures, communities and nations. The impetus of the study is to analyze the merging of cultural traditionalism and modernity and how their dual education has enhanced the ability of these women to become leaders in their professional careers, and within their respective communities, whilst still maintaining strong ties to their culture, religion and traditions, albeit to varying degrees.

Is the co-existence of culture and modernity possible to mutual advantage? It is with great academic and personal interest that I have chosen to consider the dynamics that influence the ability to balance cultural-traditionalism and modernity. Cultural – traditionalism in

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[1] Kirdar, S. The Path to Choice: The Growth of Women's Education in the Arab World, Unpublished BA Dissertation: University of Oxford, 1997, p. 2

this context refers to the specific cultural affinity of the Arab region to Islam and traditional, tribal customs and practices that vary from one Arab country to another. Within the context of the different countries in the Arab Middle East, there are competing definitions of modernity that are now emerging as a result of the heated debate between secularists and the new emerging Islamists. That said there is no one definition of modernity and with each interpretation comes differing prescriptions of gender roles. For the purpose of this thesis, modernity is defined in terms of 'Western' institutional paradigms that have come to represent globalisation through various manifestations.

The challenge, in the 21st Century, facing countries and individuals alike, is to find a working balance between the preservation of identity and community whilst partaking successfully within a globalisation system. It is erroneous to assume that merely existing superficially within this globalisation system will produce the desired state of equilibrium; in fact, all that will transpire will be confusion; 'participation comes at the price of a country's identity, if individuals feel their olive tree roots crushed.'[2] It is Friedman's metaphorical use of the Lexus and the olive tree that so accurately depicts the need to reconcile culture within a globalised dynamic, to create a synergy and co-existence of globalisation trends with the preservation of cultural identities. Where olive trees represent everything 'that roots us, anchors us, identifies us and locates us in this world – whether it be belonging to a family, a community, a tribe, a nation, a religion or, most of all, a place called home', the Lexus symbolically represents ideals of improvement, prosperity and modernization; 'the Lexus represents all the burgeoning global markets, financial institutions and computer technologies with which we pursue higher living standards today.' [3]

The attempt of this doctoral thesis to investigate how certain women in different Arab countries have been able to achieve Friedman's balance through their dual educational experiences is of significance. It warrants serious study. The choice to do so through interviewing ten 'high-profile' Arab Muslim women, who have used their significant educational achievements towards engendering change within their respective communities, stems from a personal ideological interest in the role and influence of education in redefining identity. There are a large number of women from Arab countries who have had the privilege of education in

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[2] Friedman, T. The Lexus and the Olive Tree, New York: Anchor Books, 2000, p.42
[3] Ibid., pp. 31 & .33

their own countries as well as in the West. However, gender constraints and predefined gender roles still very much dictate the society in which these women operate. The patriarchal system is omnipresent. The challenges I have encountered, even as an 'international' Arab Muslim woman, in reconciling certain traditional mores and intellectual and educational exposure has only served as a greater impetus for this doctoral thesis. Middle-class urban Arab Muslim women have particularly enjoyed improved levels of education and social mobility, yet, this has not translated into significant power in civil society where women have been excluded or marginalised from decision-making processes. The working women in the Arab world tend to be elite and middle class, many of whom have been educated in the West. It is from the examination of the perceived experiences of this category of women, through qualitative procedures, and a selected sample of cases that the researcher will connect with broader problematic issues of education and development in the Arab world.

The thesis is divided into three parts. Chapters One and Two comprise Part A which addresses the development of women's education in the Arab world and the problems of the current educational systems. This also discusses contextual realities, as well as case and country profiles of the interviewed samples and the countries from which they come. Chapters Three and Four, making up Part B, deal with methodological considerations and the data analysis arising from the interviews. Chapter Five in Part C addresses the issues arising from the data analysis: These issues are a critique of the current educational systems in the Arab world, gender stereotyping and barriers to women's employment and cross-cultural concerns.

The Arab world, that is to say those countries that have an affinity with the Arabic language, Islam and Arabic culture, has struggled to redefine women's roles in society and identify ways of reconciling tradition and modernity. Increasingly, leaders of these Arab countries have recognised the need for modernisation and change, often drawing inspiration from the West and overcoming the force of tradition, regarded by many, as an obstacle to change. Nonetheless, they have remained cognisant of the pre-eminent role that Islam holds amongst their people, and have had to contend with subscribing to and abiding by religion as a source of a cohesive trans-national Arab identity, recognising it to be a source of legitimacy and popular mobilisation: 'no place has the tension and conflict between tradition and modernity been more prevalent and evident than in the ambivalent and contradictory paths pursued with

regard to women's role and emancipation.'[4] Thus, while education and family reforms were pursued by some Arab governments, there was also a continued pursuit of traditional values in tandem. In other cases, as in the Gulf States, there was a stricter adherence to tradition as illustrated in the strict laws of sex segregation in Saudi Arabia. However, it is arguable that such differences are as much related to the political economy as they are to religion and culture. In the non-oil-producing countries, with weak economies, women often found employment opportunities, spurred on by financial necessity that served to alter their role, both within the societal and the familial domains. Nonetheless, in many such circumstances, when the demand for extra labour subsided, the newly emancipated professional woman was expected to resume her place within the walls of her home. The result of the emergence of oil wealth and cheap foreign labour in many of the Gulf States resulted in a reinforcement of traditional cultural norms and values regarding a woman's place in her society, her family and socially acceptable professions. It is the interaction between the region's economic structure and its conservative culture, in which traditional gender roles are strongly enforced that is largely responsible for the lower levels of female education and labour force participation. It must be noted that these 'traditional cultural norms' are arguably more related to tribal customs than to Islam itself. Though Islamic law did stipulate parameters for behaviour, the Quran did not replace Arabian, patriarchal tribal society and customs. In fact, many of the customs practised today were a result of local contexts and social class, which varied from urban to rural and from one country to another. Appendices 2A, B and C provide for the reader's interest aspects of the way in which the Quran relates to women.

Gender issues and the quality of education are of vital importance to a nation's development. Indeed, 'improving the quality of education is the most rewarding investment a country can make.'[5] It is of even more significant importance to the Arab nations where only 20 percent of women in the Middle East region partake in the labour force, the lowest level of any world region.[6] By comparison, Indonesia, having the largest Muslim population of any country, has a profile where women constitute 38 percent of the labour force participation.[7] To maintain

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[4] Esposito, J. & Haddad, Y. Islam, Gender and Social Change, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 16

[5] Roudi –Fahimi, F. & Moghadam, V. Empowering Women in Developing Society: Female Education in the Middle East and North Africa, MENA Policy Brief: Population Reference Bureau, 2003, p.7

[6] Ibid., p. 4

[7] United Nations: The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics, www.unstats.un.org,

living standards in a region where more than half the population is under the age of eighteen, it is imperative that governments improve labour productivity and increase female participation in the workforce. The future advancement of the women in the Arab world is inextricably linked to the socio-economic progress of the entire region.[8] However, as mentioned above, in the Gulf States women have the lowest representation rate in the labour force as a consequence of the more traditionally and conservatively held views of women. In Saudi Arabia, for example, women comprise a mere 7 percent of the labour force. Education and employment have been the main channels that provided women of all classes with mobility and self-awareness, but access to either or both has been largely constrained by the economic and political systems of their respective countries:

> '*It is clear that the women of the wealthy upper class... have utterly different concerns than those of the economically less fortunate classes.*'[9]

It is only women of the educated elite who have been able to step outside these circumscribed boundaries[10]; and this is precisely the reason why ten of those educated elite women were selected as samples for this thesis.

Often, it has been political conflicts that have fundamentally impacted the way active and educated women view the world and their own role in the process of change. Nationalism has helped project women into the public arena and has acted as a means for emancipation. Although males were the initial advocates for women's emancipation at the turn of the 20th Century in Egypt, it was not long before women, themselves, and through newly established women's organisations, called for religious, educational, political and social reforms. The influence of 'modernisation' during the 20th Century is evident in the legal reforms, voting rights, and educational and employment opportunities that altered and broadened women's roles and positions in their respective societies. Active, conscious and politicised educated women are demanding the restoration of control over their own lives and over their ability and power to

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[8] Kirdar, S. The Path to Choice: The Growth of Women's Education in the Arab World, Unpublished BA Dissertation: University of Oxford, 1997, pp.55-56

[9] Seikaly, M. Women and Religion in Bahrain, in Esposito, J. & Haddad, Y. Islam, Gender and Social Change, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.178

[10] Roudi –Fahimi, F. & Moghadam, V. Empowering Women in Developing Society: Female Education in the Middle East and North Africa, MENA Policy Brief: Population Reference Bureau, 2003, p.5

make their own decisions and choices.[11] No longer are women simply wives and mothers; today they have entered different areas of public space, ranging from politics to the professions. However, one must caution generalisation. Such progress is not true for all women; in fact, it is only a relatively small percentage of Arab Muslim women who apply to this group, and even within the group it varies greatly from one region to another.

Nonetheless, things are in fact changing. Women from the educated elite are now challenging the status quo and demanding equality in family and society, calling for women's economic, political and social empowerment. Though the intensity of this trend varies from one Arab country to another, it is still visible in even the most conservative of nations. The feminist discourse has reached new levels. No longer must a woman fighting for her rights as an equal citizen fit the 'Western' secular paradigm. On the contrary, many women who have aligned themselves with the Islamic revival movement in different Arab countries have gone to considerable lengths to proclaim their independent initiative. These Islamic women, in continuing their fight for equality, see no conflict between the conventional roles of mothers, wives and professionals. Indeed, the subjugation of women does not have its source in Islam; rather, 'it is a manifestation of the region's vulnerability to many of the dictatorial and authoritative regimes under which human rights, those of women included, are repressed.'[12] Today, there exists dual pressure in calling for political reform and economic pressure and changes that recognise the need to bring forth the women from the safety of their homes into the public arena. Very recently, the writer personally witnessed two incidents that indisputably illustrate this revolutionary change in women's empowerment. The first happened to be *muhajabbat*[13] women protesting in the streets of London calling for the wearing of the *hijab*[14] as a matter of choice. The second incident was an article in the Wall Street Journal of a prominent Saudi businesswoman, 'ranked among Fortune's top 50 powerful women outside the US.'[15] She spoke out about the future of Saudi Arabia's economy and growth at the Jeddah Economic Forum, held in early 2004, in the presence of her male counterparts. Given the fact

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[11] Chu, J. & Radwan, A. Raising Their Voices, TIME Magazine, Vol.163, No.8, February 23, 2004, pp.42 - 46

[12] Kirdar, S. The Path to Choice: The Growth of Women's Education in the Arab World, Unpublished BA Dissertation: University of Oxford, 1997, p.4

[13] Muhajabbat is the Arabic name given to the women who wear the Islamic headscarf to cover their hair. This is often incorrectly referred to as the 'veil'.

[14] Hijab is the Islamic headscarf worn by women.

[15] A Saudi Vision for Growth, Jeddah Economic Forum, www.saudi-us-relations.org, 2004

that Saudi Arabia calls for sex segregation and does not routinely host mixed conferences in which women themselves are keynote speakers, only further reinforces this notion of change and empowerment that women themselves are demanding, even in the most conservative of societies.

The women selected to exemplify this developmental change have gained recognition within their respective professions, within their communities and in the international arena. Their professions cover academia, business, sports, biotechnology, human resource development and education. To varying degrees they have created their own formula that has resulted in a sense of empowerment and leadership. The empirical selection of this thesis investigates their sense of empowerment through their educational achievements and experiences and the challenges and conflicts that they have encountered along the way. The rationale for limiting the samples to ten case studies was to gain in-depth insights into each woman, her personal perspective and views. As previously mentioned, the purpose of this study is not to generalise, but rather to understand how certain first generation of professional women have managed to forge that balance and redefine their identities within a 'glocultural' dynamic, [16] and to interpret the findings in the context of selected issues of significance in the region, at the present day.

[16] Reference is made to a synergy between global and cultural paradigms.

PART A

Part A comprises two chapters. Chapter One investigates the development of Women's education in the Arab world from the turn of the Twentieth Century. It traces the growth and expansion of female education and analyses what women have been studying and to what purpose. Chapter Two proceeds to take a closer look at the problems facing the educational systems in the region as a whole and then focuses specifically on five Arab countries. Country profiles of the five different Arab countries from which the ten interviewees originate are given as well as biographical profiles of the ten interviewees themselves.

CHAPTER ONE

DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN THE ARAB WORLD

An Introduction to the Current Situation

Over the last four decades, Arab nations in pursuit of modernisation have recognised the strategic role played by education in developing their human resources.[1] In Egypt, Jordan and the Gulf states, increased education for women has raised new issues regarding women's employment. This is responsible for enhancing the emergence of new agendas and demands drawn up by women, themselves, and has stimulated the ongoing struggle to obtain more choices for women. Education has been directly responsible for curbing fertility rates by increasing women's knowledge, of and interest in, family planning.[2] It has also gained them entry to the wage labour force in various Arab countries. However, it must be noted that in the developing world, girls rarely receive the same education as their male counterparts and most often, enter fields of study that are predominantly female populated, which serves to further reinforce the prescribed gender roles within the respective Arab cultures.[3]

> *'Gender denotes the social organization of sex differences and is a socio-political definition of women and men as they function in societies; ethnicity, political status, economic power and social class influence gender.'*[4]

Gender roles, evolving over time and varying from one socio-cultural environment to another, are susceptible to change through education.

Towards the last decades of the 20th Century, most nations, under obligation from UN international conferences on women, began establishing 'Women in Development Units' (WID) in their governmental bureaucracies. From the perspective of this issue in Arab nations and societies, the culminating meeting of this series being located in Cairo in 2000 was in itself significant and potentially influential. The purpose of these initiatives was to ameliorate the conditions of women in all sectors of society in developing countries and stimulate opportunities for them. Despite noble intentions, and the establishment of formal machineries and policies

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[1] Gollin, A. Foreign Study and Modernisation, the Transfer of Technology Through Education, International Journal of Social Science, Vol.19, No. 3, 1967, p.359

[2] Allman, J. Women's Status and Fertility in the Muslim World, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978, pp. XXV &X1

[3] Kelly, G. Setting State Policy on Women's Education in the Third World, Comparative Education, Volume 23, No. 1, 1987, p. 95

[4] Mainstreaming – The needs of Women, Women and Gender Equality Unit, Bureau of Strategic Planning, Paris: UNESCO, 2002, p.3

recognising women's rights, the efficacy of these units, events and reports arising are limited. The very form and funding of WID units have been insufficient to address fundamental and crucial issues effectively. With particular reference to education, efforts have been primarily limited to alleviate immediate problems regarding poverty, social welfare and urgent basic health needs of women. The tendency to focus on uneducated and poor women is evidenced in the suggested educational activities and policies which have concentrated on the provision of literacy, income generation, health, nutrition and related issues that are welcome but that reinforce domestic roles. Their very programmes which denote a utilitarian view of women and their link to family responsibilities reinforce prescribed gender roles. Educational policies address immediate and tangible issues at the expense of long-term and contextual structural needs of the society. The very need for the state to confine women's issues to only low-income women is clear evidence that there exists a very selective recognition of women's concerns. In assuming a 'patriarchal', or at best, 'paternalistic' role, the State endeavours to treat women as 'dependent' and 'in need of assistance', and so fails to address and initiate fundamental modifications in the arena of formal education that are needed. This approach is advantageous to such male dominated governments; the mere existence of the WID units proves that the government is intent on addressing gender issues, though in effect, their efficacy and radical threat to the system is at most, modest.

Concentration on conventional gender roles has intentionally diverted efforts away from reassessing the importance of formal schooling and its content. With a mere one-fifth of educational priorities of such units dedicated to curriculum content and teacher training issues, it is no wonder that gender identity formation through schooling has remained unchanged.[5] To claim that the existence of WID units reflects a fundamental ideological shift to alter the reproduction of gender relations institutionally, via schooling, would be disingenuous as well as erroneous. This was one of the findings of the research conducted by Brock and Cammish for ODA/DFD in a number of developing countries.[6]

It is also necessary to dispel the notion of the 'Arab woman'. Sharp disparities exist among the various Arab countries and cultures in the so-called 'Arab World'. However, there

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[5] Stromquist, N The Institutionalization of Gender and its Impact on Educational Policy, Comparative Education, Volume 34, No.1, 1998, pp.85-100

[6] Brock, C. & Cammish, N.K. Factors Affecting Female Participation in Education in Seven Developing Countries, DFD, 1997

exist some common denominators such as language, cultural heritage and Islam. It is worth noting that Islam is not only a spiritual religion, but encompasses a social, legal and moral code of behaviour which is integral to its constitution. The position of women in the Arab world is neither uniform nor static. Despite rapid development at the economic level in certain Arab countries, social change, namely that concerning the role and status of women in the region, has lagged behind to varying degrees. Whereas some poorer Muslim Arab nations, such as Tunisia, have reformed many laws affecting women and encouraging female education, some other wealthier countries, such as Saudi Arabia, have introduced few reforms endorsing the empowerment of women.[7] Some societies have encouraged women to work in professional fields while the more traditional societies have limited women's work and areas of study to the arts and humanities, hoping thereby to preserve and limit their role to that of wives and mothers. Despite the fact that there has been significant expansion of female education throughout the Arab world, many governments have begun to think of women's education as less important than that of males and hence have justified their stance by highlighting research portraying women's educational outcomes as inferior or not equal to those of men. They have tried to argue that women who are educated do not engage in the work-force at the same rate as do men educated to a similar level and thus the rates of return on investment in education appear lower for women than for men.[8] Though this has by no means deterred the rapidity of the process of expansion of female opportunity, it has had a significant effect on the ranking, priority and weighting given to women's education and its promotion at all levels of schooling and fields of study. Nevertheless, this is by no means a valid argument for denying women education or for erecting discriminatory barriers to certain professions which attract lower incomes.

Laws and decrees in nearly all Arab states provide equal educational opportunities for both sexes; however, the number of schools for boys exceeds that for girls and few are co-educational. Textbooks generally serve to reinforce traditional attitudes towards the role of women in society where women are portrayed as conforming to expected domestic roles or to 'acceptable' professions. Primary education expansion varies from nation to nation within the

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[7] Azzam, H. & Abu Nasr, J. & Lorfing, I. An Overview of Arab Women in Population, Employment and Economic Development, Women, Employment and Development in the Arab World, ed. Julinda Abu Nasr, Nabil F. Khoury, Henry T. Azzam, Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1985, p.5

[8] Kelly, G. Setting State Policy on Women's Education in the Third World, Comparative Education, Vol. 23, No. 1987, p.96

region but the inequality between educational opportunities available to boys and girls and between urban and rural areas is common and entrenched throughout the Arab world. Secondary school enrolment of girls has increased at a slower rate than that of primary school and vocational training for girls is still under-developed. Nonetheless, substantial headway made in terms of the number of Arab girls that are enrolled in schools has had a significantly positive influence on the work potential of Arab women. Their education has improved the employment opportunities for women and has encouraged more female mobility in search for work possibilities.[9] Legal allowances have also been made on behalf of inclusion and protection of women in the labour market. However, the educational opportunities available to women have been limited by the attitudes of a conservative society which 'deems only certain activities appropriate for women to pursue outside the traditional roles of marriage and childbearing.'[10]

Merit in investing in the education of women and girls in developing countries can no longer be refuted. There is ample developmental research that shows the positive correlation between female education and economic development.[11] In the Arab world, as in many other developing regions, one of education's many by-products is to enhance women's participation in the workforce in greater numbers. Nonetheless, although government policies in the region all attest to the need to further develop and encourage female education, the lack of supportive implementation undermines the rationales of these very governments for providing education on economic grounds. As noted through much gender developmental research, female education has a positive effect on mortality rates, child nutrition, fertility and population control and children's success in schools. Yet government goals will remain elusive and unrealised if women are left unschooled or even inadequately schooled. The existing disparities that persist between female and male enrolments is not so much a 'function of 'culture', religion or level of a nation's development; rather disparities can be and have been changed as a result of

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[9] Azzam, H., Abu Nasr, J. & Lorfing, I. An Overview of Arab Women in Population, Employment and Economic Development, Women, Employment and Development in the Arab World, ed. Julinda Abu Nasr, Nabil F. Khoury, Henry T. Azzam, Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1985, pp. 10-11

[10] Ibid., p.11

[11] Heward, C. & Bunwaree, S. Gender, Education and Development: Beyond Access to Empowerment, London: Zed Books Ltd, 1999

government policy.'[12] Such disparities may originate in social class and ethnic inequalities, or at least be related, but some are crude gender discrimination. Mere increase of access for girls has not and will not solve the problem of female under-enrolment, as much of the problem lies in the very essence and integrity of the schools themselves. In Kuwait, the provision of single-sex schools has not served as an impediment to women's educational opportunities. Hence, the issue at large is in providing the 'right' kind of education appropriate and acceptable for meeting the local needs of each community and the society. Today, more than ever, governments in the Arab world, are being urged to re-evaluate and re-examine the nature of what schools teach, how they teach, 'and the sex role socialization implicit in texts and curricular materials' which have served to reinforce prescribed, accepted gender roles.[13] Evidence from industrialised nations such as the USA indicate that women's employment and long-term commitment to schooling was a direct result of government policies promoting 'affirmative action programmes' which sought to develop non-discriminatory wages for female labour. Hence, the perpetuation of gender inequalities and predetermined 'sex role socialization' among Arab communities can be moderated and even defeated if governments develop policies that promote women's education by providing incentives for women to stay in schools longer and addressing discriminatory practices in wages, barriers to entry in employment and promotion within it.[14] This situation is even exacerbated by the fact that women do not figure in Arab women and development literature, for example, in a recent book on Arab countries and their development in the 20th Century, there is not one single reference about women![15]

The debate was in fact initiated at the turn of the century by Qasim Amin, an Egyptian intellectual who regarded women's education as necessary for the advancement of the nation. Amin believed that a woman needed to be educated in order for her to be a good wife, home keeper and mother. It was her responsibility to raise the future generation, and thus the fate of the nation was in her hands. He wished to enhance the position of women in society not for

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[12] Azzam, H., Abu Nasr, J. & Lorfing, I. An Overview of Arab Women in Population, Employment and Economic Development, Women, Employment and Development in the Arab World, ed. Julinda Abu Nasr, Nabil F. Khoury, Henry T. Azzam, Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1985, p.97

[13] Education for All in the Arab States, Regional Conference on Education for All for the Arab States: Cairo, 2000

[14] Arab Human Development Report 2003, United Nations: www.undp.org,

[15] Dawisha, A. Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003

their individual sakes, but for the sake of Egypt's progress. For Amin, education was a major factor in achieving national objectives, and although he wished to improve educational opportunity for women, he did not challenge their prescribed role within the existing framework of society.

Later, however, when women themselves took up the call for better female education, they had a different agenda. In the early part of the 20th Century, Egyptian women like Huda Shaarawi and Nabawiyyah Musa took the debate further and saw it from a feminist standpoint. Their main objective was to gain political rights and social recognition for women. Access to better education, they argued, was a woman's individual right, not simply a matter of turning her into an instrument of social change. Their demands were eventually answered with the establishment of girls' schools in Egypt throughout the 1950s, 60s and 70s, and this trend spread through the whole Arab world. The battle for female education was, to a large degree, won during these years - an achievement that led to new demands and a gradual increase of women's participation in the wage labour force.

Female enrolment has risen substantially at every educational level in the Arab countries. But in what fields are women being educated, and for what purpose? Though the disaggregated statistics are impressive, closer investigation shows that women are mostly seeking education in the arts, humanities and education.[16] According to a statistical report issued by UNESCO, though the Arab states have high female school enrolment ratios, they have higher gender gaps than other developing regions, such as those of Sub-Saharan Africa.[17] One cannot then but question what is being taught in these schools that perpetuates and maintains significantly high levels of gender disparity. In addressing this, one must call into question the contents of the curricula which appear to be reinforcing culturally prescribed gender roles and inequality of the sexes. In many respects, females are still not part of the economic system; certainly they are not equal contributors with males to their nation's development. The level of women's employment, which varies from country to country, is

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[16] Ministry of Higher Education, Statistics of Higher Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Issue 17, 1993-1994, p.37 & pp.51-52

[17] Gender-Sensitive Education Statistics and Indicators, Training Material for Workshops on Education Statistics and Indicators: UNSECO, 1996

influenced by economic need, at state, community and individual level. This can be seen in Jordan, where labour shortages led to female integration in the wage labour force.[18] In Saudi Arabia, by contrast, the country's abundant wealth has kept women's studies and employment within the confines of tradition - a restriction reinforced by political opposition to women's emancipation and to the lifting of segregation.[19]

To appreciate the extent to which the Egyptian feminists succeeded in elevating women's position in society through educational reforms, one need only look at women in the university sector. A co-educational institution, Cairo University in 1929 had women enrolled in the faculties of Arts, Classics, Law, Arabic Literature and Philosophy.[20] In 1935, when a Faculty of Commerce was created, it was open to women from the start, and 1936 saw the graduation of the first woman from the Faculty of Medicine. In a speech delivered in 1935, Huda Shaarawi declared that there were 88 women studying in the Faculty of Arts, 40 in Medicine, 27 in Science, 10 in Law and eight in Commerce. By 1940 the number of women students at the university had risen to 450.[21]

Women of all classes who believed that their role in society was no longer subordinate to that of men pursued graduate qualifications. Whereas in 1930 only 0.3 percent of the students in higher education were women, by 1950 the proportion had risen to 7 percent.[22] Though still low compared to some other parts of the world, this figure represented a substantial victory for the feminist movement in Egypt.

Male support for women's education, whether progressive or conservative, was a mechanism and a tool for advancing the nation as well as preserving family values; the rights of women, *per se,* were a secondary consideration. Even the nationalists who had argued that women's liberation was a prerequisite for the country's liberation proved unwilling, when it came to the point, to grant women their political rights or open the university to the first

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[18] Ibrahim, B. Arab Society, edited by Saad Eddin Ibrahim & Nicholas Hopkins, Cairo: American University Press, 1985, pp.261-263
[19] Fakhro, M. Women at Work in the Gulf, London: T.J. Press Ltd., 1990, pp.116-118
[20] Allman, J. Women's Status and Fertility in the Muslim World, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978, p.148
[21] Ibid., pp.150-151
[22] Ibid., p.151

Egyptian women with state degrees.[23] The feminist movement, by contrast, sought the personal advancement of women themselves. Although they disguised their gender struggle with nationalist rhetoric, their ultimate goal was to enhance women's position in society and the family through improved education. Though men initiated the debate, it was women who altered their own conditions.

Throughout the 20th Century, every feminist movement in the Arab world has seen education as the key to women's emancipation. However, despite this pressure, in most Arab countries the education of women was not fully institutionalised until the last few decades. To understand why this should be so, it is necessary to examine the development of the region's educational systems from the late 19th Century to the modern day. The focus will be on Egypt as it pioneered female education in the region; however, consideration will be given to the progress made by other Arab countries in granting women access to higher education and vocational training programmes.

Access, however, is not the only issue. While statistics may show a general increase in the number of women in education, in order to evaluate the significance of the trend, one must look at the content of that education. What are women studying? What are they encouraged to study? What curricula, courses and degrees are available to them, from primary school through to university? The answer varies from one country to the next, representing a gradual evolution in society's perception of the purpose of women's education. It is worth noting that analysis of the spread of education among females is closely tied to evidence concerning how education affects their roles and behaviour. Parental expectations of these effects are crucial not only in terms of initial access to schooling but also in the performance of the girls in the school; this in turn affects their progress through school and what they learn.[24]

In 1932, schooling was made compulsory in Egypt; the law was intended to benefit girls as well as boys, but the shortage of schools was such that children were often compelled to leave after one or two years, returning to illiteracy. Although girls were theoretically granted full access to the educational system in the 1930's, in effect it was not until 1952 that Egypt's

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[23] Ibid., p.53

[24] Bowman, M.J & Anderson, C. A. The Participation of Women in Education in the Third World, Women's Education in the Third World: Comparative Perspectives, ed. Gail Kelly and Carolyn Elliott, Albany: State University Of New York Press, 1982, p.30

government first implemented the law of free compulsory education for girls and boys.[25] The establishment of co-education succeeded in doubling literacy levels and abolished the segregation by gender, which had dominated the internal organisation of schools until that time. As a result of the new government's policies, the number of girls enrolled nearly equalled that of boys, a change which influenced other Arab countries to raise the standard of their education for women.

Between the 1920s and 1950s, therefore, a change occurred in Egyptian society's perception of the purpose of women's education. It was accepted that girls had an equal right to education, first at primary and later at secondary level, and that the curriculum offered to them should not be substantially different from that of boys. Free universal education for both genders was seen not only as a human right, but also as a practical necessity for a modern and progressive nation wishing to make the most of its human resources.

The turning point was the military-led revolution of 1952, which converted Egypt from a monarchy to a republic and rejected all forms of 'Western' domination. In 1962 the government led by President Nasser declared that higher education would be provided free of charge, a reform which dramatically increased the number of students at Cairo University. The figure rose from 18,555 in 1951 to 150,000 in 1983.[26] Moreover, from the mid-1950s, at Nasser's instigation, other institutes were established which focused on preparing people for careers in industry, commerce, agriculture, health and teaching.

With the coming of coeducation in the 1930s, Egyptian women of all classes increasingly made their presence felt in the workplace, but entry to the professions or careers in public service was in practice restricted to middle- class women who wanted a measure of financial and personal independence.[27] The percentage of women in the various faculties of Cairo University in 1951-52 is a guide to their aspirations at the time. They formed 24 percent of the student population in the Arts, 13 percent in Science, 11 percent in Medicine, 13 percent

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[25]Allman, J. Women's Status and Fertility in the Muslim World, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978, p.382
[26] Ibid., pp.176 & 221
[27]Badran, M. Feminists, Islam and Nation, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, p.170

in Pharmacy and only 0.2 percent in Engineering.[28] But in this area, too, the revolution of 1952 was a milestone. In making higher education freely available to all Egypt's citizens, the government was driven by a belief that the previous system had served imperialist interests, with student enrolment unduly limited by class and wealth. Later it published a report claiming that the establishment of social justice and equal opportunity had transformed higher education. Until the 1950's, it can be shown, women of the upper and middle classes tended to use higher education as a means for cultural refinement, whereas women from the poorer levels of society used it to gain skills in embroidery, cooking and other trades that led to paid employment.[29] After the revolution, however, education became the means by which any Egyptian citizen, male or female, advanced in society.[30]

These political and cultural changes in Egypt during the mid-1950s were of particular significance to Arab women elsewhere, whose access to higher education increased sharply from this point. Iraq and Tunisia, too, were considered progressive countries in their educational policies for women. Iraq's first secondary school for girls was opened in 1929,[31] under the British mandate, and in both Iraq and Tunisia female enrolment in secondary education tripled in the period 1965-76. In the year 1975-76 the proportion of female students in engineering reached 18 percent in Iraq, in Syria it was 11 percent, and in Tunisia 6 percent. Such technical subjects tended to be more popular in countries with a relatively long history of female access to vocational education.

From the 1960s, primarily influenced by Egypt's example, governments throughout the Arab world made a great effort to increase female participation in higher education. The number of women students, in consequence, rose from 6000 in 1950 to 237,000 in 1975.[32] Not surprisingly, however, the pattern of women's enrolment continues to show some class-related bias. Women from the more privileged sections of society have tended to focus on scientific

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[28]Reid, D. Cairo University And The Making of Modern Egypt, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.108

[29]Al Sanabary, N. Continuity and Change in Women's Education in the Arab States, Women and Family in the Middle East, edited by Fernea, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985, p.93

[30] Ibid., p.93

[31] Al Kadhi A.B. Women's Education and its Relation to Fertility: A Report from Baghdad, Women and Family in the Middle East, in Fernea, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985 p.145

[32] Al Sanabary, N. Continuity and Change in Women's Education in the Arab States, Women and Family in the Middle East, in Fernea, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985 pp.102-108

and professional education, whereas women of humbler origin have concentrated on social science, humanities, teaching and nursing. Today, in fact, teacher education attracts the largest female enrolment in the Arab states as a whole. Next comes medicine, where female enrolment is also high. In Jordan, for example, the proportion of females among students of medicine is 53 percent; in Sudan, it is 18 percent.[33]

However, the pattern of female study can vary widely from country to country. In countries such as Egypt and Iraq, where modernisation became a priority in the mid-twentieth century,[34] women are drawn to a wide variety of subjects, whereas in the more traditional states they tend to concentrate on the humanities, teacher education and social sciences. The percentage of women in higher education, and its rate of change, varies widely from one country to the next. In Egypt, for example, it rose from 21 percent to 30 percent in the years 1965-76. In Saudi Arabia, it rose from 3 percent to 20 percent over the same period, and in Kuwait, the first of the Gulf States to be developed; it rose from 48 percent to 57 percent.[35] Egypt's position in this table is more an indication of poverty than conservatism. In state education, as in other public services, the pace of development is largely determined by national wealth, and the growth of higher education for women has been especially rapid in the oil-rich states such as Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

There are also considerable disparities in the growth of women's education when it is considered by age level and sector. In primary education, for example, female enrolment doubled in the period 1965-76, and today two thirds of the primary schoolchildren in the Arab world are girls. In secondary education, by contrast, the enrolment of girls has been slower and less complete, only rising from 23 percent to 33 percent in the years 1950-75; here again, the wealth of the oil states gave them the fastest rate of change. While in Egypt and Jordan the number of girls in secondary schools doubled over this period, it quadrupled in Kuwait, and increased by 30 times in Saudi Arabia.[36]

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[33] Ibid., p.105

[34] Modern Iraq in this context refers to the mid 20th Century and does not refer to what went on under the regime of Saddam Hussein.

[35] Al Sanabary, N. Continuity and Change in Women's Education in the Arab States, Women and Family in the Middle East, in Fernea, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985 p.96

[36] Ibid., pp.95 & 98

Regional Leaders and Followers

Nonetheless, looking back over the century as a whole, it is Egypt that has led the way in Arab education, particularly for women. Egypt was the first country to institutionalise primary and secondary education for girls. It also pioneered vocational and technical education for women, which as late as 1960 did not exist in countries such as Jordan, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Most importantly, it was Egypt that initiated the spread of state universities throughout the Arab world. Cairo University paved the way for the University of Libya in 1955, King Saud University in 1969, and Jordan's state university in 1952.[37] The last four decades, indeed, have seen an explosion of education at every level in the Arab world, with primary school enrolment up from 61 percent in 1965 to 91 percent in the year 1999/2000, with Gross Enrolment Rates (GER) at primary school level for girls at 85 percent and 97 percent for boys.[38] For the first half of the 20th Century, the feminist movement in the Arab world was focused on establishing education for women. After 1950, however, it became more concerned with making full use of the access to education gained. The preoccupation of women who had received an educational training was to extract the maximum benefit from it, both as women and as citizens. It was education indeed that made the later feminists aware of their political environment and socio-economic situation. By improving their literacy rate, education propelled women into the labour force, and it drastically changed the role of Arab women's organisations, accounting for their sharpened political consciousness.

To understand the impact that education made on Arab women through the middle decades of the 20th Century, it is necessary to look at the experience of several different countries. Literacy rates, population growth, women's employment and their political activity were all affected, but the pace and direction of change was not uniform, and women reacted differently to their new opportunities in various parts of the Arab world.

In Egypt, the catalyst for change was the socialist regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser. Even if motivated by the need for an expanded labour force, the government's educational policies coupled with its egalitarian principles transformed the position of women. Primary

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[37] Reid, D. Cairo University And The Making of Modern Egypt, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.200

[38] Arab Regional Report 2002, Educational Statistics, Paris: UNESCO, pp.40-41

education was made compulsory in 1952, and a few years later education became free at every level, including university.[39]

At a broader social level, increased education in Egypt improved women's literacy, increased their participation in the workforce, and led to a decline in fertility in the 1960s, as single girls began to represent a larger proportion of the population. Although the regime encouraged the spread of education as a whole, it had a particular interest in increasing the scientific and technical capabilities of the population. There was a drive for wider enrolment in the applied sciences at universities, which was free of gender discrimination. In medicine and science, both as subjects in university and as professions, women were encouraged to participate on an equal basis with men. Although the system still favoured the better-off classes and urban families, these educational changes transformed the whole status of women in Egypt. In 1962 women constituted only 4 percent of the wage labour force, whereas by 1982 the proportion had risen to 15 percent, with a million women in employment outside the home.[40]

The experience of women in Egypt was not unique, though in other parts of the Arab world female roles developed in various ways and at different levels. Not only the growth of education, but economic conditions were responsible for changing women's place in society throughout the Middle East. As a result of the region's shift from an agriculturally based economy to a mixed industrial economy, a growing number of women ventured out of the home in search of paid labour. The higher cost of living, aggravated by inflation, meant that men were often no longer able to support their family on their own. Moreover, male migration to other Arab countries, such as the oil-rich states of the Gulf, in search of work inevitably placed an increasing number of women at the head of their household.[41] Such broad social changes affected the entire matrix of values around which the Middle East's lifestyle was built, and nothing symbolised the trend more clearly than the transformation of the Arab woman, liberated from the close confinements of her home and family to work in modern factories and offices.[42]

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[39] Leila Ahmed, Women and Gender in Islam, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992, p.210
[40] Ibid., p.211
[41] Al Kadhi, A.B. Women's Education and its Relation to Fertility: A Report from Baghdad, Women and Family in the Middle East, in Fernea, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985, p.267
[42] Nath, K. Education and Employment among Kuwaiti Women, Women in the Muslim World, edited Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978, p.173

A vivid example of the process can be seen in Kuwait, where education revolutionised the concept of a woman's place in society.[43] In the first two decades of the oil boom, from 1950 to 1965, Kuwait was modernised with great rapidity, and the presence of women in the nation's work force rose from 0.4 percent in 1961 to 5.2 percent in 1970. This increase, by far the highest in the Middle East, arose from a massive growth in women's education. By the late 1960s, almost half the pupils in government schools were girls; furthermore, over 5000 women were attending adult education centres and the University of Kuwait, established in 1966.[44] Not only were women seeking education for their personal satisfaction, but as leaders of change. These young women from Kuwait's merchant families were entering government service in increasing numbers as civil servants, teachers and social welfare workers. It was educated Kuwait women who discarded their veils, and it was even reported that in 1956 some senior girls in secondary school in 1956 burned their 'boshias' in protest against the veil.[45] In 1960, the first Kuwaiti women earned degrees from Cairo University; in 1970, the first Kuwaiti woman to attend an American university obtained a degree in physics. Women graduates of Kuwait University itself, all with degrees in Liberal Arts, increased from 38 in 1966 to 155 in 1968, and to 246 by 1970. For many of these educated women, polygamy became a thing of the past, and most of them married husbands who themselves had university degrees, providing the country with a first-generation, meritocratic elite.

Education in Kuwait was free at all levels, for both men and women, and in 1966 was made compulsory up to the age of 14.[46] Women who pursued their education further were divided between those who wanted a career for economic reasons and those who perceived education to be socially prestigious and a useful aid to homemaking. Whatever their motivation, education had propelled Kuwaiti women to a new and previously undiscovered place in society - though they had not broken away from their conventional roles quite so much as the statistics suggest. Of the Kuwaiti women graduates who had opted for a career, for instance, about 99 percent were working for the Kuwaiti government, and more than half were employed in the Ministry of Education as teachers in girls' schools, researchers and social

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[43] Statecraft in the Middle East, edited by E. Davis & N. Gavrielides, Miami: Florida International University Press, 1991, p.163
[44] Ibid., p.175
[45] Ibid., p.175
[46] Ibid., p.179

workers - occupations which were acceptable to the male members of their family because they were segregated by sex.[47]

However, regardless of their employment, educated career women were regarded as a symbol of Kuwait's modernisation, participating in and contributing to their country's progress. Older male members of the family not only encouraged women's work but deemed it a natural thing for the educated woman to do, and practices such as the harem, polygamy, arranged marriage, and segregated higher education were discarded as obsolete.

For a male-dominated society of the Arabian Gulf, this was a real revolution. Indeed, what is the purpose of all this education if women are going to extend their traditional female roles to the public domain and remain in the shelter of the government, which is in actuality an extension of the patriarchal system? True change will not come to Kuwait until the curriculum in secondary schools and universities is modified to encourage women into technical courses and vocational training, a change that should be carried through into appropriate salary structures and incentives for women who seek careers in previously untried fields.

Another example of the link between women's education and their participation in the wage labour force is provided by Bahrain. The American Arabian Mission established the country's first primary school for girls in 1892. Female enrolment in primary education increased from 100 in 1931 to 1288 in 1946 and to 23,459 in 1974; even so, in 1990, women accounted for 80 percent of Bahrain's illiterate population between the ages 10 and 44 - a problem that has an immediate bearing on the nation's future; the higher the level of women's education, the greater their employability; the higher the level of women's illiteracy, the lower their access to non-agricultural employment, resulting in a lower per capita GNP.[48] Of the 7,874 women employed in Bahrain in 1981, only 631 were illiterate; nine percent had had access to primary education, 42 percent had had secondary education, and 32 percent had acquired university degrees.[49]; the rate of female literacy has increased significantly to 69 percent in 2001.[50] Clearly, therefore, if Bahrain needs to bring more women into the labour force, it must raise the female literacy rate further. Such backwardness as remains in the

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[47] Ibid., pp.180-182
[48] Fakhro, M. Women at Work in the Gulf, London: T. J. Press Ltd., 1990, pp. 115-118
[49] Ibid., p.115
[50] US State Department, www.state.gov, p.5

educational system for women is due to the fact that enrolment is voluntary. Because it is not compulsory, rural families remain apprehensive about sending their girls to school. But the eradication of women's illiteracy is crucial if Bahrain is to fulfil its requirements in the professional and technical field. Without a change in its educational and training programmes, the country will continue to place an excessive reliance on non-nationals in its labour force.

No survey of women's education in the Arab world would be complete without some reference to the Palestinian women who have grown up under Israeli occupation. Given their circumstances, they sought skills and knowledge not simply to join the labour force but to contribute to the development of their nation through a greater participation in socio-political activities and organisations. To the women of Palestine, education has been used as a weapon, a means through which they can join the struggle to liberate their land and improve the conditions of their people.[51] It is also, nonetheless, an economic necessity. Palestinian families have become increasingly aware of the importance of educating their daughters in order to help them assume productive roles in society; simultaneously, women's groups have fought to raise the educational standards of Palestinian women, regarding this as a crucial necessity for national development. The result of this dual concern has been a dramatic increase in women's education. From 1967, when 74.3 percent of West Bank women had no education at all, female enrolment in schools rose to 45.1 percent in 1982, and in the same year it reached 42.1 percent in the universities of the Occupied Territories.[52]

No country illustrates this situation better than Saudi Arabia, where girls' education did not begin until 1956 under the determined patronage of Queen Iffat, the wife of King Faisal. The purpose of the original school was to train good housewives and mothers.[53] Because this became official Saudi policy the government have always excluded women from some types of education. In 1969-75, for example, the only studies available to them at university were Arts and Education. Petroleum, Medicine, Science, Agriculture, Pharmacy and Engineering were reserved for men;[54] 'women students now pursue their studies in a wide range of subjects

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[51] Tucker, J. Palestinian Women Under Israeli Occupation, Arab Women, Old Boundaries, New Frontiers, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993, p.111
[52] Ibid., p.111
[53] Brooks, G. Nine Parts of Desire, New York: Doubleday, 1995, p.146
[54] Women in the Arab World, Paris: UNESCO, 1984, p.21

including Arabic language, English language, geography, history, sociology and social work.'[55] However, of the country's nine universities and colleges, two are closed to women, namely, the Islamic Madina University and the King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals. This fact alone reflects the government's attitude to female education and its purpose. The pattern of women's studies is also revealing; statistics for 1999/2000 enrolment at King Abdul Aziz University reported 59 percent of total enrolment was men and 41 percent female. Women's enrolment was highest in the Faculty of Arts with 4218 females versus 3336 males; the university reported that 3122 men studied Economics and Administration, compared with 1756 females; the most telling of the statistics was with regard to the Faculty of Engineering where no record was found for any female enrolment as compared with 1907 males.[56] Such proportions can only reflect a social and political tradition that discourages women from entering certain professional fields. Few Saudi women, it is clear, pursue skills beyond those required by their conventional roles as mothers and keepers of the home. Their acceptance of this limitation can only be encouraged by the segregation of the sexes that still exists, even in universities and the work place. According to Dr. Mai Yamani, not only are women encouraged by the government to join certain professions and not others, but also the whole issue of women's integration in the Kingdom's development has been neglected.[57] Here, therefore, is an Arab country where favourable economic circumstances have combined with political decisions to keep women in a subordinate role.

Though there are important variations between the six Gulf countries, the situation of women in Saudi Arabia has many parallels in the region. In most cases, it is true to say, the progress of women's education in the Gulf is not as substantial as it seems. Though the statistics show impressive gains, equality of educational opportunity between men and women is far from being realised.[58] Women still lag behind, and the reasons are various.

The prime cause, common to every Gulf country except Bahrain, is the lack of financial need at family level. The employment of women is seen as a family decision, determined by the household's existing resources. 'They have no need of her salary, so she has never gone

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[55] Information accessed from the King Saud University website, www.saudinf.com, 2004
[56] Information accessed from Statistical Facts 2000, King Abdul Aziz University, www.kaau.edu.com,
[57] Yamani, M. Women in Saudi Arabia, Feminism and Islam, New York: New York University Press, 1996, p.272
[58] Women in the Arab World, Paris: UNESCO, 1984, p.23

to work.'[59] The very high level of welfare payments in the Gulf, available to all social classes, perpetuates this domestic position. The region's oil wealth, distributed through public benefits, makes it possible for a woman of the Gulf, however well educated, to remain in her traditional role of urban housewife.[60]

In the Gulf, however, women's power to change their own situation is limited. Although numerically well represented in education and the media, they have not acquired the political strength or cultural influence to alter their own society's prevailing concepts about the proper role of women.[61] Such concepts, therefore, continue to restrict the education and training that is offered to women in the region; they also restrict the careers available to women by favouring those, such as teaching or nursing or welfare, which can be seen as extensions of traditional female roles.[62]

Education and Cultural Reproduction in the Arab Context

Hence, it can be argued that education programmes, though specifically designed to address gender inequalities, have in actuality adopted a rather simplistic and ineffective approach, as it has not been embedded in a comprehensive understanding of Arab and Islamic society and the role that schooling plays in perpetuating gender inequalities. Though indeed there has been a marked explosion of female educational enrolment in the Arab world, to date, this has not been reflected in the labour market where women constitute a large portion of low skill jobs but very few senior management positions.[63] Much discourse arose during the last decade of the 20th Century to achieve universal education and to commit more money, time and energy to eradicating the gender gap that exists in schools and in the labour force in the developing world. International donor agencies, conferences, NGOs and local governments have pledged their unwavering commitment to achieving such educational goals. However,

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[59] Ibrahim, B. Arab Society, edited by Saad Eddin Ibrahim & Nicholas Hopkins, Cairo: American University Press, 1985, p.263

[60] Al Falah, N. Power and Representation: Social Change, Gender Relations, and the Education of Women in Kuwait, in E. Davis & N. Gavrielides, Miami: Florida International University Press, 1991, p.167

[61] Toubia, N. Women of the Arab World, London: Zed Books Ltd, 1988, p.17

[62] Barakat, H. The Arab World, Berkeley: University of California Press Ltd., 1993, p.102

[63] Leach, F. Gender Implications of Development Agency Policies on Education and Training, International Journal of Educational Development, Issue 20, 2000, p.335

much of this has only resulted in a mass of documentation and empty slogans. Among such goals were the:

> *'....removal of sexual stereotyping from the curriculum, hiring more female teachers who were trained in gender awareness, and support for women to move into vocational and professional occupations not considered conventional for women.'*[64]

However, most of these goals have yet to be realised.

It can be fair, therefore, to ask why progress has been so slow if there is such a concerted effort and public commitment by donors, banks and governments to formulate programmes directly responsible for achieving these aims. Herein lies the crux of the issue. One main explanation can be found in the analysis of major education policies and the impact they have on gender equity. A closer look at such policies reveals the existence of strong contradictions between macro educational reforms, led by international donor banks and the actual goal of eradicating gender inequalities on education. It is the fundamental failure on the part of the international and national agencies to fully comprehend the degree to which gender ideology is embedded in all educational institutions which serves as the state's primary agent of socialisation of its people. These policies which are no more than mere slogans have been rendered inefficient and sometimes even destructive. This is because where decentralisation has been encouraged in some Arab communities so as to allow greater flexibility and efficiency in the schools, in other local communities, such decentralisation would serve to leave the education of girls in the hands of the people – people who perhaps were less inclined towards or less sold on the value of educating their girls beyond a certain level. Indeed, shifting the onus of educational control into the hands of the local community may only serve to create a greater disparity among regions within the Arab world. If the very argument being posed calls for a restructuring of educational programmes for the benefit and redefinement of the roles ascribed to Arab women, then governments themselves must bear the burden of this responsibility; leaving it to the discretion of the local community may only serve to exacerbate and reinforce the status quo.

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[64] Ibid., p.336

> *'If full community participation' amounts to substantial decision – making authority, it is not said what effects there will be for educational transformation if parents and other community members subscribe to views of girls merely as potential mothers and consider as a relevant curriculum only one that trains women for domestic roles.'*[65]

Hence, a unanimous, clear agenda as to the purpose of education, namely female education, in each Arab country is vital as it is the demand side which needs much attention. Such demand side of education entails changing attitudes and re-educating parents and society at large about the benefits of female education. Demand – side strategies are complex and ambitious as they call for the revision of curriculum, elimination of gender bias and the introduction of gender training workshops. It equally calls for significant changes in the attitudes of those who teach the revised materials and a fundamental change in the dominant culture of these schools. Such tasks are highly contentious and challenge many existing cultural values which could set off tensions in existing traditional power relations. The purpose of such strategies is not simply to increase girls' enrolment and attendance rates but ultimately to integrate them into their society's mainstream development where they may exert their influence within all hierarchical structures and in all fields. Much of this is hindered at the grass roots level where most school heads, governors and teachers in positions of authority are male and thus, are unlikely to be ardent supporters of:

> *'....broadening female pupils' horizons beyond early marriage and childbearing into higher education and worthwhile careers. The record to date of teachers as a force for change in developing countries is poor.'*[66]

It suffices to say that such educational development programmes have only served to perpetuate unequal gender relations within both the educational systems of the Arab world and the broader global society, at large. They have hardly weakened the control apparatus that is in place today and have not served to transform society's rationale, which primarily promotes the reproductive role of women as opposed to their productive role. Even when the importance of women's education is encouraged and shrouded in a productive context, ultimately it is in terms of her contribution to the family welfare and not in terms of her ability to earn an independent income or to foster her own independence or autonomy. Education is, in the Arab

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[65] Stromquist, N. Gender and Basic Education in International Development Cooperation, New York: UNICEF, 1994, p.26

[66] Leach, F. Gender Implications of Development Agency Policies on Education and Training, International Journal of Educational Development, Issue 20, 2000, p.338

world, a vehicle serving to spread existing attitudes and practices in society which compromises the equality of women as well as maintains the status quo. It reflects continuing inequities in male and female access to power, and perpetuating traditional stereotypes as to what are considered appropriate male and female roles, at large.

The viewpoint that the existing school systems fuel this social reproductive theory is mirrored in radical feminist writings on education and gender.[67] It highlights that formal curricula, their component subjects, textbooks and teaching methods, overtly support this reproductive theory along with the more subtle, hidden curricula which reinforce gender roles through teacher behaviour, attitudes towards their students, expectations of male and female achievement and school structures and regulation. Such gender role differentiation is arguably institutionalised through a socialisation mechanism where girls and boys are often segregated, and mutually excluded from taking certain subjects. Textbooks clearly depict stereotypical roles and expectations of student performance. Teacher training programmes covertly perpetuate gender stereotypes as does the organisation and management of the schools themselves. This can be clearly manifested by the mere fact that schools, today, in most cases in the region, are managed through a male dominated hierarchy. Most head teachers are male; female teachers teach so-called 'less important subjects' and are often given extra – curricular tasks such as organising social events, counselling and contacting parents while the men take charge of curricula, examinations and resource allocation. Hence, one cannot but take note that such male/female teacher dynamic has a significant influence on student perceptions of male/ female status and what should be expected of them in their future.

Much radical feminist discourse regarding this social reproduction theory argues that because the very crux of the educational system is a mere reflection of the patriarchal society in which these women are subordinate subjects to men in all fields of life, be it in the school, at work or within the confines of the home, schools are nothing more than mechanisms of social control rather than of social change.[68] Hence, it is fair to say that achieving equal opportunities for both sexes within existing Arab educational systems is futile. Perhaps focus must be given first to re-educating such societies before their respective educational systems can be re-configured? Re-evaluating the education process is a key factor to redefining what role Arab

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[67] Ibid., pp.342-343
[68] Ibid., p.343

women must play within their social arena and to providing the necessary opportunities to maximise their potential.

The Influence of the Economic Factor

As Jordan's experience demonstrates, such prejudices can be overcome when economic factors are strong enough to alter domestic priorities and reduce the opposition of husbands.[69] The assurance of economic support within kinship structures has served to minimise women's financial pressures and has thus made it possible for many women, namely those in the Gulf States, to stay economically inactive and more compliant to existing gender roles. Conversely, in some countries, such as Egypt, inflation and economic pressure especially in the urban areas have played a crucial role in inducing women to seek employment and expand the domain of female activity. Nevertheless, women are still the Arab world's unutilized and unrecognized human reserve.[70] As increasing numbers of educated women join the urban work force, a cultural climate is created in which the traditional opposition to female employment is undermined. Such climate does not apply to the entire region, but rather varies from one context to another. Financial need becomes the 'salient force in family decisions that result in employment for daughters and wives.' A professionally successful woman, in fact, is often an asset in the eyes of prospective suitors who believe they can enhance their financial position with a working wife.[71]

In the Gulf, such a culture shift has hardly begun. Though women's employment has become an economic need in Bahrain, and though it is viewed with relative respect in Kuwait, in the region as a whole it is not much encouraged, being seen as financially unnecessary and socially undesirable. But can the Gulf afford to treat its women so? Research has shown that, despite the region's huge investment in higher education and vocational training, it is still

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[69] Ibrahim, B. Arab Society, edited by Saad Eddin Ibrahim & Nicholas Hopkins, Cairo: American University Press, 1985, p.261

[70] Azzam, H. & Abu Nasr, J. & Lorfing, I, An Overview of Arab Women in Population, Employment and Economic Development, Women, Employment and Development in the Arab World, ed. Julinda Abu Nasr, Nabil F. Khoury, Henry T. Azzam, Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1985, p.31-32

[71] Ibrahim, B. Arab Society, edited by Saad Eddin Ibrahim & Nicholas Hopkins, Cairo: American University Press, 1985, pp. 264 &267

unable to meet its requirements in the professional and technical fields.[72] A report issued by the World Bank predicted that the Gulf's reliance on foreign imported labour will not change unless there is a transformation of its educational and training programmes.[73] At present, education in the region has a high religious content, which can lead to a conflict between traditional Islamic values and the needs of modern economic development. Saudi women, for example, are barred from the country's Islamic higher educational institution which provides religious instruction and has a deep influence on the whole educational system. In the West, by contrast, most educational institutions avoid religious indoctrination, encouraging students to learn and grow through reasoning, scepticism, and the use of their critical faculties. The vertical expansion of female education in the Gulf countries has not been accompanied by a horizontal diversification in the field of study that female students pursue. Over half of Kuwaiti girls at the University of Kuwait are in schools of arts and education and out of these the majority study education, sociology and psychology. Accounting, business administration, and engineering are fields which attract little female enrolment and most female university graduates often gravitate to professions in teaching, social work or office jobs that call for minimum male interaction.[74]

The Arab nations as a group devote more public resources to education than any other developing region; UNESCO reported Saudi Arabia spends 9.5 percent of its GDP on education, Jordan 5.0 percent, Egypt 4.1 percent, and Morocco 5 percent.[75] Yet the outcome, in human resource development, is disappointing. Too large a share goes on higher education; too low a share on primary education.[76]

The education of Arab women has enlarged their participation in the region's economic development. However, unless they are trained to meet the demands of their nation, they will continue to be regarded as 'stop gap' agents only used when both state and family are in financial difficulties. Economic need has proven to be the decisive factor in suppressing discrimination against women's integration in the work force. Where, however, that need does

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[72] World Bank, Claiming the Future, The International Bank of Reconstruction and Development: Washington, D.C, 1995, pp.5-8
[73] Fakhro, M. Women at Work in the Gulf, London: T.J .Press Ltd., 1990, pp. 116-117
[74] Azzam, H The Arab World Facing the Challenge of the New Millennium, London: I.B Tauris, 2002
[75] Fakhro, M. Women at Work in the Gulf, London: T.J .Press Ltd., 1990, p.51
[76] Arab Regional Report 2002, Educational Statistics, Paris: UNESCO, P.56

not exist, as in the Gulf, women may have to wait many years for unhindered access to jobs based on their true abilities, and even training. Initiatives have focused on the supply side of female education where concentration and priority has been on getting more girls enrolled in school and keeping them there. However, little attention has been given to addressing the problem of girls' education within a gendered framework and acknowledging the importance of the schooling process itself in perpetuating gender role bias. As a result, much of the progress made in the last century has had less impact on gender equity, whether in terms of closing the gender gap in education, or in raising the status of women in Arab society and alleviating prescribed purposes of education for women. Chapter two takes a closer look at the contextual issues and realities that must be taken into consideration.

CHAPTER TWO

PROBLEMS and PROFILES

Contextual Realities

A knowledge-based society can be defined as one where diffusion, production and application of information are responsible for organising culture, society, the economy, politics and private life. As defined by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) [1] knowledge, and in turn education, can provide the means to expand the scope of and opportunity for human freedoms through the practice of good governance whilst also achieving justice and human dignity. Socialisation, family, and education – both formal and informal, define knowledge dissemination for this purpose - encapsulating the role and influence of the media. However, such processes of knowledge dissemination in the Arab world are plagued with deep-seated social, institutional, economic and political impediments. Among such obstacles is the limited availability of resources at the individual and institutional level, as well as the restrictions that are imposed on them. As a result, the diffusion of knowledge falls short of preparing the society, at large, for active information production. The very fact that the most widespread style of child rearing in Arab families models their respective authoritarian regimes is indicative of where the problems begin. It not only reduces the child's independence, self-confidence, and social efficiency, but also fosters passive attitudes and discourages decision-making skills. In short, it suppresses the mechanisms of questioning, exploration, and initiative in the child's natural thinking process. Impressive gains have indeed been made in the Arab countries in the last half of the twentieth century in the quantitative expansion of education, and in particular female education, Nevertheless, it remains comparatively modest as compared with those developing countries which are progressing such as Malaysia (predominantly Islamic) and China. Whereas the Arab countries combined measured an increase in the percentage of females in higher education from 0.56 percent in 1960 to 5.61 percent in 2000, Hong Kong, Korea and Taiwan combined measured 4.80 percent of females in higher education in 1960, followed by an increase to 10.73 percent in 2000.[2]

However, the most important challenge facing the region's educational systems is not so much the quantitative development of education as much as its quality. The quality of education cannot be improved in a vacuum. If education is to encompass both the formal and the informal, then it must be noted that mass media play a significantly influential role as an

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[1] Arab Human Development Report 2003, United Nations: www.undp.org, p.3
[2] Ibid., p. 196

agent for public diffusion of such knowledge and change. However, contemporary Arab countries have lower 'information media to population ratios' compared to the world average. For example, there are fewer than 53 newspapers per 1000 Arab citizens, compared to 285 papers per 1000 people in developed countries.[3] One of the reasons for this can be attributed to the environment in which the media itself are operating – an environment that sharply restricts freedom of the press and freedom of expression and opinion. Clearly, restrictions of similar freedoms of expression and opinion are mirrored in the very educational systems and institutions that formally educated the respondents in the empirical component of this study and that continue to do so twenty years later.

Education and the dissemination of knowledge cannot be looked at as an entity on its own. Indeed, it is vital to consider the societal, cultural, economic and political environment. Arguably, among the most important of these determinants is culture, which plays a dominant role in Arab society, at large. The Arabic language is the medium of this culture and Islam is the main and all-encompassing belief system that guides cultural life. The synthesis of the language and the religion serve to govern moral, social and political values, and dictate behaviour in the Arabic cultural system. Ironically, it is the Arab-Islamic civilization's enthusiastic interest in worldly affairs and the sciences that encouraged the pursuit of knowledge and sciences of various forms during the so-called 'dark ages' of European decline![4] However, it is the alliance between some oppressive regimes and certain conservative religious Islamic scholars that led to interpretations of Islam which to date have served governmental agendas, yet are contrary to freedom of thought, the interpretation of judgments, the accountability of regimes to their citizens, and women's participation in public life. Hence, a review of the expansion of education among the women of the Gulf Peninsula reveals that points of convergence and divergence between education and the broader socio-cultural contexts exist. The analysis reveals that the apparently impressive expansion of women's access to educational resources at all levels has, in fact, resulted in reinforcing and re-emphasizing already existing gender inequalities. The education process to date only

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[3] Ibid., p.3
[4] Hourani, A. A History of the Arab Peoples, New York: Warner Books Inc., 1991

confines the Gulf women to largely secluded social settings, hence reproducing their subordinate social positions[5]

Some political movements that identified themselves as Islamic have resorted to restrictive interpretations and even violence as a means of political activism.

> *'They have fanned the embers of animosity towards both opposing political forces in Arab countries and "the others", accusing them of being enemies of Islam itself. This has heightened the tempo of conflict and friction with society, the state and "the others".'*[6]

Due to certain political factors around the turn of the millennium, Islam as a religion has been exposed to a wave of provocation and criticism, which has often reflected total ignorance and explicit fabrication. In reality, the Islamic religion unquestionably encourages seeking knowledge, and the establishment of such ideals as the premise for society at large. As mentioned above, the era that witnessed when Arab science came to fruition and prospered was a result of the dynamic synergy between the Islamic religion and science.

Historically, Arab culture did not constitute a closed system, rather, it displayed a profound ability to develop and embrace innovation. It welcomed and adopted the experiences of other cultures and nations in its own society. Two significant influences illustrate this point. The first dates back to the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. when the Arab-Islamic civilization embraced the age of scientific codification as a result of its encounter with Greek civilization and sciences. The second influence came when the modern Arab world encountered 'Western' civilization and opened up to science, literature and other influences of "Western" culture at the onset of the 19th Century. The result was a renovation and modernisation of Arab cultural heritage. However, like many other cultures, Arabic culture is facing challenges as it confronts an emerging global homogenous culture as a result of globalisation and cross-cultural interaction. Such challenges pertain to cultural multiplicity and the issue of the 'self' and the 'other', which echoes and reflects the very challenges facing the respondents in the survey central to this study. It is concern about the diminution and dissipation of Arab-Islamic

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[5] Mazawi, A. The Contested Terrains of Education in the Arab States: An Appraisal of Major Research Trends, Comparative Education Review, 1999, Vol. 43, No. 3, p.338

[6] Arab Human Development Report 2003, United Nations, www.undp.org, p.7

identity that is becoming ever apparent and omnipresent in Arab thought and culture; hence affecting the role, purpose and agenda of education in the respective societies of the region. This dilemma is further heightened, when in truth, the Arab region wants to partake in the benefits of and engage in the new global arena. The region can no longer be content with living on history, protected within its own cocoon. For this reason the role of education in building a knowledge/skill based society is imperative and non-negotiable.[7] Global culture is being disseminated multilaterally. It encompasses openness, interaction, assimilation, absorption, revision, criticism and examination. Suffice it to say that it cannot but stimulate creative thinking in Arab societies despite varying local constraints that have been put in place by more conservative elements.

Consideration of the economic and political atmosphere of the region is essential as a backdrop in understanding the issues at hand. One of the main characteristics of the region which has had and continues to have a tremendous influence on education and knowledge acquisition, is the high dependence on raw materials, namely oil, and a reliance on external rents. Many of the countries in the region have been dubbed 'rentier states' as it is precisely this rentier economic pattern that entices such societies to continuously import expertise from abroad. Doing so weakens the local demand for similar skills, and has been an impediment to taking up opportunities to produce locally and partake effectively and actively in the local economy. A substantial portion of economic activity in the Arab world is dependent on primary commodities such as agriculture, and mineral oil, and manufacturing licences obtained from foreign companies in the industrial sector. It is due to the lack of transparency, weak Arab economic competitiveness and the limited size of the Arab markets that there is a lack of competition, limited demand for industrial products and therefore a lack of demand for knowledge and skills in the economic arena.[8]

As the economy has power to influence what skills and knowledge are demanded from its citizens, so too does politics. Political conditions play a decisive role in establishing societal incentives. The educational debate is couched within this dynamic. Among those countries that gained their independence from colonial rule, many came under national political regimes

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[7] Ibid., pp. 7-8
[8] Education for All, Regional Report on Education for All in the Arab States, UNESCO: www.unesco.org, 2000

that hardly strayed from what some may term autocratic rule. Social and individual freedoms were restricted to varying degrees, which in turn had profound effects on the morals and practical values of the people. Similarly, the distribution of power and wealth has also affected the value systems of societies and individuals. In countries such as the Gulf States, the oil boom in the 1970s played a significant role in eroding certain values and societal incentives that indirectly discouraged creativity and the acquisition of knowledge and skills. As creative abilities were neglected, the social standing of the intellectual elite such as scientists, educated people and intellectuals disproportionately fell. Social value donned a new garb, that of financial supremacy. Independence, freedom of thought and the supremacy of a critical mind had been replaced. Today, citizens of the various Arab countries have been increasingly marginalized and discouraged from effecting changes in their countries. It is not the mass that can engender changes but rather the educated elite who are in positions of influence or power. The women interviewed for the purpose of this study have been selected on the basis that they are among the influential and core educated elite of their respective countries and societies.

Studies undertaken by such bodies as UNESCO and the World Bank focus mainly on the input – output dynamics of educational systems, addressing issues regarding educational planning, investment and infrastructure.[9] However, to be constructive in the re-thinking and re-structuring of the role and purpose of education in the Arab world, contextualisation is imperative. Bourdieu and Passeron go so far as to discuss the perverse effects of non-contextualised quantitative analysis on the understanding of educational processes. They argued that due attention must be paid to the broader socio-historical, cultural and economic dimensions in which systems operate.[10] It must be noted that educational discourses are deeply rooted in the regional, ideological, socio-cultural, and political contexts that serve as a backdrop to analysis. Furthermore, when analysing girls' access opportunities compared with those of boys', socio-cultural, regional, geographic and economic variables must be considered.[11]

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[9] Arab States Regional Report 2002, UNESCO Educational Statistics, Paris: UNESCO

[10] Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J. La Comparabilite des Systems d' Enseignement, in Education Development et Democratie, ed. R.Castel and J.C. Passeron, PARIS: Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes; The Hague: Mouton, 1967, pp.21-58

[11] Brock, C. & Cammish, N.K. Factors Affecting Female Participation in Education in Seven Developing Countries, London: DfID, 1997

Selected Contextual Issues

It is essential to this discussion that some background and contextual information be given at this stage regarding specific aspects of the Arab Middle East in respect to education before providing profiles on the countries of origin of the case sample. The national governments play a dominant role in education, including the majority of schools and universities. They typically control curricula, even at private schools. Most teachers are government employees, and most education is publicly financed. Many of the Arab countries have two or more separate governmental agencies that manage education: typically, one for K-12, another for post-secondary education, and often others for technical, military, or, as in the case of Saudi Arabia until very recently, for girls' education. A common characteristic of formal education in the region is that it is free, or at minimal cost. Government spending in the Arab world on education is relatively high, while private spending is low. As a whole, the Arab states devote approximately 5.4 percent of their Gross National Product to education; this proportion is equivalent to the level in North America and is higher than the global average of 4.9 percent, and higher than levels in all other areas of the world; South Asia is 3.3 percent, East Asia 2.9 percent, Latin America 4.6 percent, and Europe 5.3 percent. Education commands between 13 and 25 percent of national budgets in almost every Arab country; the only exception being the case of Lebanon, where private education is very strong, hence their national budget for education is at the lower rate of 8.2 percent.[12] Four particular aspects of contemporary education in the Arab world require special mention: privatisation; curriculum; study abroad; and women in contemporary contexts.

Privatisation

Although education is primarily in the hands of the governments, in recent times there has been a growing trend, small but significant, toward privatisation of Arab education due to the emergence of some new privately owned and funded educational institutions. It is not the first time private educational institutions have surfaced in the Arab world. Indeed, in the past, private individuals and non-governmental organizations established schools and universities,

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[12] Rugh, W. Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform, The Middle East Journal, Vol. 56, Issue 3, 2002, p.396

but they were subsequently nationalised. However, the winds are changing and there is now a re-emergence of private education. The recognition of the merit in private education and re-appearance of new private Arab institutions follows a trend that has existed in the developing world since the 1960s, particularly in the Far East, where more than 75 percent of students in Japan, Korea and the Philippines are now in private schools.[13] Of the 175 Arab universities existing in the year 2000, 47 (27 percent) were non-governmental. These non-governmental institutions existed in only nine Arab states, and over half were in Lebanon (9 of its 10), Palestine (7 of its 8) and Jordan. This trend is fairly recent. In the case of Jordan, all nine of its private universities were established after 1990.[14] Of the 108 Arab universities established since 1980, 33 are private. In 1986 the Jordanian government authorized the establishment of private universities, and today there are nine of them, which enrol more than one-third of university students. In Oman, after the government opened Sultan Qabus University in 1985, it later allowed nine private post-secondary educational institutions to open, and today they account for nearly 30 percent of all college students. In Oman as in some other states, privatisation was partly in recognition of the fact that government financial resources could not keep up with the demand for higher education. Egypt's only private university until 1996 was the American University in Cairo (AUC), which was chartered in the United States in 1866, as opposed to in Egypt, because private universities were not then permitted. It was not until 1995 that the Egyptian government decided to authorize private educational institutions; subsequent to this, four new universities have been established. The trend is continuing. In Saudi Arabia, the private Effat College for women has only opened in recent years, and plans for Dar al-Faysal, a private university for men in Riyadh, have just been announced. Lebanon is unique in that more than half of Lebanese students at all levels enrol in private educational institutions; this is somewhat incongruous in the regional context since, in the majority of the other Arab countries, private education serves fewer than 25 percent of students.[15]

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[13] Ibid., pp.396-397
[14] Higher Education in the Arab States, UNESCO Regional Office for Education in the Arab States: Beirut, 2002, pp. 9, 22, 40
[15] Arab States Regional Report 2002, UNESCO Educational Statistics, Paris: UNESCO

Curriculum Content

Over the course of the last few decades, the study of Islam has remained a strong element in the curriculum throughout the region. In some Arab countries, the first schools established were Qur'anic, but then in the third quarter of the 20th Century the very rapid growth in education was mostly in secular schools, where the curriculum broadly resembled public schools in the West. Simultaneously, however, there was an expansion in some Arab countries of schools and universities whose curricula were primarily centred on religious subjects and the Arabic language; minimal attention was given to science, mathematics, and other 'secular' subjects. To some extent, it can be argued that the persistence of Islamic education in today's curricula is a reaction to the growth of secular education, by conservatives who want to foster Arab and Muslim civil society, in the face of 'Westernisation'. In most Arab states, the regular curriculum of the public schools, which the majority of students attend, has a considerable amount of Islamic religious instruction. Islam is a required subject at every grade level from one through twelve. The amount of time dedicated to Islamic instruction varies. In Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, and Kuwait, for example, an average of about 10 percent of total class hours are devoted to religious instruction each year. In Saudi Arabia this figure is significantly higher, as religious studies consumes 32 percent of class time for grades 1-3, 30 percent in grades 4-6, 24 percent in grades 7-9, and then 15 percent or more for grades 10-12. The figures for Qatar are 17-20 percent in grades 1-6, 14 percent in grades 7-10, then 8-11 percent in grades 11-12. However, these statistics refer only to religious instruction and do not suggest that that is the only reference made to Islam; in fact, other aspects of the curriculum, such as history, social studies, and Arabic all share a fair amount of Islamic content. In Lebanon, however, because of the large number of non-Muslims in the society, the public school curriculum contains no religious instruction for the first five grades, and in high school offers only one or two hours per week of religion and civics, out of a total number of 30 hours. As previously mentioned, more than half of all Lebanese students are in private schools, most of which are supported by religious institutions, including such Christian ones as the Jesuits, the Maronites, the Greek Orthodox, the Protestants, and the Quakers, each teaching its own brand of religion to its students.[16] The case of Saudi Arabia is somewhat special, since it has secondary school level Islamic Institutes which are managed by Imam Sa`ud University and the

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[16] Rugh, W. Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform, The Middle East Journal, Vol. 56, Issue 3, 2002, pp.400 - 401

Islamic University with substantial levels of enrolment. Three of the country's seven universities, comprising approximately one-third of all of the country's 200,000 university students, offer a primarily religious education. Bahrain is another country that offers secondary education in religious institutes, where more than 25 percent of class time is devoted to Islam; their graduates are, however, not automatically eligible to enter Bahrain University.[17]

The value attributed to 'Western' styled education has been reflected in the creation of hybrid educational institutions in the Arab world that have tried to reap the benefits of 'Western' education without fully implementing the very premise and essence of what the 'Western' school paradigm entails. These hybrid institutions are characterised by teaching in English/French and Arabic, using English or French as the mode of instruction in the classroom along with 'Western' textbooks on certain 'secular' subjects, whilst employing the use of the Arabic language for Islamic studies, Arab history and culture. Behind these attempts to combine both the modern 'Western'-style learning with solid traditional, cultural education, is a belief that the former is necessary for the Twenty-First Century economy while the latter is important for traditional Arab civil society, and both are therefore important for distinct reasons. Lebanon, for many years, has had such institutions; examples include the American University of Beirut dating back to 1866 when it was founded as Syrian Protestant College, and the Lebanese American University, also founded in 1885 as the Beirut College for Women. Similarly, 1919 witnessed the founding of Egypt's American University in Cairo. More recently, a number of new English-medium grade schools, high schools, and even universities have emerged in Egypt, the Gulf, and elsewhere. Moreover, at most Arab universities, courses in medicine, engineering and science are taught in English. This is in recognition of the fact that new developments in these fields are almost always published in English well before they appear in Arabic; hence, the need for students to study these subjects in English in order to be up to date with development. In the immediate post-colonial era, Arabisation of the curriculum and nationalization of the teaching staff were articulated as a goal, especially in the former French colonies.

Also evident is a modest trend in post-secondary education to adopt the American semester and credit hour system, in both English-medium and Arabic-medium institutions. This

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[17] Ibid., p.401

has already happened in almost all Jordanian universities in most fields of study, and in some Saudi and Egyptian universities; a testament to the power and pressures of globalisation. Lebanon was a pioneer in this area, through the American University of Beirut and Beirut University College. The American University in Cairo followed and then Al-Akhawayn University in Morocco opened in 1993 with an American-style curriculum with English as the main medium of instruction. Private individuals have established some of the newest American-style institutions, such as the ones in Egypt; however others, like the ones in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), are government funded. In the UAE, the American University of Sharjah, the Dubai American University, and Zayid University, were all established in the 1990s by the governmental authorities in the Emirates of Sharja, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi, respectively. These institutions use English as the medium of instruction, have American-style curricula, with some connections to US-based universities. However, in recognition of the synergy of cultures and the rapprochement of globalisation, governments of the Arab world have admitted the need to embrace the West. Arguably, though, as the following chapters will highlight, such an agenda to combine the best of the 'Western' educational system with the cultural richness of the local educational paradigm leaves much to be desired and has done little more than incorporate superficial amendments that do not permeate to the fundamental underpinnings of education and its purpose in the Arab world.

Study Abroad

The interviewees selected for this study all experienced some form of higher education in 'Western' institutions, with some having had some degree of educational instruction in other neighbouring Arab countries. The number of Arab students studying abroad had reached 175,000 by the mid-1990s, of which 21 percent were in other Arab states. Evidence shows that study abroad rises steeply with level of education. Almost all Arabs studying abroad are post-secondary students and most of those are in graduate school. Fewer than 6 percent of bachelor's degree candidates are studying abroad, but 13 percent of master's candidates and over 34 percent of Arab doctoral candidates are studying outside their home countries.[18] Over the past three decades, there has been a steady stream of students from all Arab countries going to the USA in pursuit of higher education. However, their numbers have been relatively

[18] Higher Education in the Arab States, UNESCO Regional Office for Education in the Arab States: Beirut, 2002, pp.12 & 35

modest. The second half of the 1970s witnessed an increase in numbers, peaking at 34,000 students in 1979. Nevertheless, that only accounted for 12 percent of the world total. Since then, it has declined. For example, in 1979 there were 10,000 Saudi students and 5,000 Jordanian students in the USA; today there are only half those numbers. The figures have only increased in few countries such as the UAE, Bahrain, and Oman, mainly due to the fact that they were under British control until 1970. Only when the British ended their colonial relationship, did many Gulf Arabs begin going to the American system instead of the British. Today, the total number of Arab students in the USA is only around 25,000, which is under 6 percent of the foreign student total of 450,000. The largest number of students comes from Saudi Arabia, with over 5,000, followed by Kuwait and the UAE, with over 3,000 students each, and Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and Morocco, with around 2000 each.[19] Of those who do go abroad, they do so to acquire skills to help them with their careers, tending mostly to study science, engineering and business. This is very much in keeping with the realities of the women under study.

Women in Contemporary Societies

Contemporary Arab societies have begun to bear witness to changes in attitudes toward traditional sex-role orientation among Arab women, most noticeably among the young, educated and economically productive. Women are becoming significantly less traditional in their own outlooks of self than are the men in their respective societies. It appears that men generally still support the traditional norms with regard to female gender coding and their prescribed roles in society.[20] The criteria for identifying the women profiled in this study are that all ten are engaged in social, economic or political change and are among the first generation of professional Arab, Muslim women. They are regarded as leaders, innovators ad role models within their communities as a result of their willingness to embrace and promote change, thereby differentiating themselves from other women.

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[19] Rugh, W. Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform, The Middle East Journal, Vol. 56, Issue 3, 2002, pp.401-403,

[20] Loring & Abu Nasr, J. Women, Employment and Development in the Arab World, ed. Abu Nasr, J. Khoury, N. Azzam, H., Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1985, pp.132 - 135

These profiles provide important insights into the experiences of select urban Arab women of fortunate means. For this reason, they cannot be considered technically representative of Arab women in general, or of women from these particular countries. The orientation of this project is not to assess overall levels or degrees of action, but, to understand current action by locating it temporally and contextually. The profiles provide in-depth information about the experiences of ten individuals, through which the reader can gain a better understanding of the complex processes that lead to empowerment, leadership and change. Although situated within a framework informed by the literature on gender, education, development and empowerment, the narratives and insights gained from the interviews retain the uniqueness that arises from the telling of personal, undocumented histories and experiences. This section of the chapter is intended to give the reader a deeper understanding of the contemporary environment that many Arab women inhabit in their different countries of origin. One characteristic of the contemporary socio-cultural context is the prevalence of a complex blending of respect for, and resistance to, established traditions.

In principle and in law, women in most Arab states enjoy equality with men in education, employment and in other spheres of public life, with some exceptions. Religion is a vital force in Arab countries and, while not all Arabs are Muslims, Islamic tenets and mores are prevalent throughout the Arab world. Islamic law gives women the right to own property, conduct business, and enter into contracts without their husbands' or fathers' consent. However, popular notions of women's abilities arise from traditional patriarchal stereotypes that depict men as rational, strong and decisive and portray women as emotional, weak and compulsive. Such gender constructs effectively contradict Quranic texts, in which no distinction is made between men and women with respect to belief and practice, and consequently, with respect to the determination of the individual's worth from the perspective of Islam. An excerpt from the Quran clearly states that:

> *'Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily to him will We give a new Life and life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions.'*[21]

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[21] Quran, Sura Al Nahl, Verse 97

Not only does the Quran emphasise that righteousness does not differentiate between the sexes, it clearly affirms women's equality with men and their fundamental right to actualise the human potential that they share equally with men. In fact, when seen through a non-patriarchal lens, the Quran goes beyond egalitarianism in its stipulation of equality; it exhibits particular solicitude toward women. Both historically and temporally situated, Islamic Law, *Shari'a,* has been rendered understandable to each age and community by male jurists, all of whom presided within closed patriarchal societies, which embraced traditions and customs prevalent during their times. Consequently, the five major schools of Islamic interpretation and law that predominate today continue to reflect the assumptions and biases of the historical reality from which they arose, thus reducing the status of women to that of inactive, dependent beings who are neither full-fledged citizens of the state, nor in full control of their destinies. The contrast with the status of Muslim women during the life of the Prophet Muhammad, however, is striking and illuminating; the early Muslim women of that time were actively engaged in every aspect of public life as business women, poets, religious leaders and even warriors.[22]

Gradually, Arab women are recognising their rights, expanding and enriching prevalent gender constructions, and attempting to separate religion and tradition. It is essential for women in Muslim societies to attain a more comprehensive understanding of their legal rights and to become well-versed in Islamic teaching. Only in this way will they be able to advocate and exercise those rights on a personal and collective level, and to play a pivotal role in instituting social change that truly reflects the egalitarian principles of Islam.

Some of the factors that are characteristic of the contemporary Arab world to date relate to education and gender. Problems of the system, as a whole, affect both the demand and the supply side of education. In terms of demand, socio-economic factors, such as limited employment opportunities for graduates, coupled with cultural factors, such as the lower priority of girls' education, the role of the girl/woman as a wife and mother, and the fact that female education is perceived in some places to be incompatible with traditional beliefs, are all impediments to gender equality in education. On the supply side, political and institutional factors are responsible for promoting educational programmes that suffer from poor quality; the lack of correspondence of education systems to local learning needs; the lack of a clear

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[22] Haddad, Y. & Esposito, J. Islam, Gender and Social Change, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. xiii

strategy for women and girls' education; and the lack of public support for women in scientific activities. Another set of factors pertaining to the supply side of education that has served to exacerbate problems in educational systems are those linked to the school: teachers are untrained and not sensitised to gender issues; the school curricula and textbooks only reinforce and reproduce stereotyping; and girl's education is generally oriented to non-scientific fields. [23] As a result, there is low female participation in scientific and technical fields, a high proportion of illiterate women, only low-scale employment opportunities, a reduced contribution to national economic and social development, and the absence of women from the political decision-making processes.[24]

As in all developing regions, the number of female illiterates is higher than that of male illiterates; in the Arab states, the percentage of male illiteracy, in 2000, was measured at approximately 30 percent and female illiteracy at over 53 percent.[25] Put in relative global terms, the highest level of female illiteracy rates are found in Southern Asia, followed by the Arab States and Sub-Saharan Africa.[26]

In 2000, a Regional Conference on Education for All, for the Arab States, was convened in Cairo, Egypt, in which the education systems of the region were analysed and a trajectory for future plans was drawn up. The conference called for a special emphasis on the education of girls and women, stressing:

> *'....the forms of learning and critical thinking that enable individuals to understand changing environments, create new knowledge and shape their destinies.'*[27]

Furthermore, it noted that the continuing challenges to the goals of Education for All mainly pertain to the education of women and girls, the training, status and motivation of teachers, and the role of the family and the local community in education. Though the Arab states concurred with the agenda to improve their educational systems, quality is still the main concern that has yet to be seriously addressed. The efforts at the international and regional levels have

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[23] Gender-Sensitive Education Statistics and Indicators, UNESCO, 1996, p.9
[24] Roudi – Fahimi, F. & Moghadam, V. Empowering Women, Developing Society: Female Education in the Middle East and North Africa, MENA Policy Brief: Population Reference Bureau, 2003
[25] UNESCO Institute for Statistics, www.unesco.org,
[26] Ibid., www.unesco.org,
[27] Education for All in the Arab States, Regional Conference on Education for All for the Arab States, Cairo, 2000, p.4

culminated in various policies, laws, programmes and activities at the level of each Arab State; in turn, there have been improvements made with impressive gains made at the quantitative levels, with some countries attaining higher numbers of graduates than others. Nonetheless, quality of education still suffers regardless of quantitative expansion and 'early childhood education still does not achieve the required attention.'[28] The gender gap is the strongest element and explanatory factor in the spread of illiteracy in the Arab States. The high rate of illiteracy in the Arab region not only represents a great challenge to these states in terms of development, social justice and the quality of life, but also serves as a serious indictment to the educational systems themselves. The issue of efficient educational management constitutes a serious challenge in the Arab States in order to meet improved standards, in terms of both attainment and quality.

A multitude of challenges face the education systems of the region in the Twenty-First Century. Among them are: the ability to make use of technology in terms of skills and knowledge; how to process and evaluate the relevant information that has been learnt or transmitted via technology; addressing linguistic problems such as mastering a foreign language, and the 'Arabisation of technology'.[29] The solutions are also numerous, but several have been highlighted as crucial for the future progress of the region through education.[30] The basic principle is to educate the students in a holistic manner, in order for them to understand their environment, and for the school to meet the students' needs and develop their personalities in an integrated manner. The intent is to provide a:

> *'....learner-friendly environment' providing quality education that is relevant to the student and to the demands of the changing society, fostering the attitudes that enhance values of respect, tolerance and pluralism, promoting independent thinking and self expression and not least, providing committed teachers 'keen to discover the learners' potentials and to work for their development.*[31]

Transforming the existing curricula into one that would achieve the aforementioned goals, calls for the incorporation of all educational programmes into an integrated national vision. This in turn, would link the educational plans to the economic and social development plans of the

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[28] Ibid., p.5
[29] Ibid., p.9
[30] Arab Human Development Report 2003, United Nations: www.undp.org,
[31] Education for All in the Arab States, Regional Conference on Education for All for the Arab States, Cairo, 2000, p.12

country, whilst also encouraging a revision of employment policies in unison with training and education.[32]

The Commission on the Status of Women in 1994[33] compiled an action plan to enhance women's status in the different Arab societies of the Middle East. In their Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women, several realities were highlighted. Among them were:

> *'The inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels'*, the *'insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women'*, the *'inequality in women's access to and participation in the definition of economic structures and policies and the productive process itself'*, and the *'inequality in access to education, health, employment and other means of maximizing awareness of rights and the use of their capacities.*'[34]

The report clearly articulates that among the challenges facing the Arab States is the lack of conceptualisation of human development which does not account for expanding choices, justice and equality between the sexes, creation of conditions conducive for democracy and pluralism, citizen participation in decision-making and the lack of genuine plans for the development of female potential. Despite the desire of most Arab countries to improve the status of Arab women in the power structure and the decision-making process, and the translation of this desire into laws and social regulations promoting the status of women, women's participation still remains too lofty an ideal for achieving a female power structure. During the past several decades, Arab women have been exposed to various factors and changes in the field of education, especially following the oil boom of the 1970s which led to an increase in school enrolment rates along with the commitment of a considerable number of Arab countries to social welfare. However, despite the quantitative rise of engagement at various levels of education, significant gender differences still exist and females continue to enrol in stereotyped 'women's' courses, which limits their abilities and directs them away from scientific and technological fields.

Popular media in certain regions of the Arab world continue to portray women in a way that merely emphasises and reinforces traditional stereotyped roles, thereby downplaying more

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[32] Ibid., p.15
[33] Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000, Commission on the Status of Women, 1994, www.un.org
[34] Ibid., pp.3-4

positive, progressive, changing roles in which women participate with male colleagues in highlighting new concepts related to improving the quality of life and contributing to the process of social, political and economic development. In light of this, the Commission on the Status of Women called for women to be actively involved in drafting laws relating to civil service: improving educational quality through a continued training and evaluative system for teachers where emphasis is placed on the quality of the education provided, rather than on the number of graduates; evaluation of the school curricula, with added emphasis on women in the formulation of educational policies for all stages of education, where the curricula would stress the cohesion of the family unit, the rights of women and their role in the development process; the elimination of stereotyping and gender discrimination and coding from curricula, textbooks and teacher materials.[35]

The contemporary environment has much to aspire to, yet one must not forget how much has been achieved in certain countries of the Arab region in less than a century. Nonetheless, whilst much has been accomplished in terms of infrastructural and quantitative advancements, the Twenty-First Century calls for an improved quality of education applicable to the needs of the respective societies of the Arab world and especially the female dimension.

Case Profiles

For conventional reasons of anonymity, each of the ten case women has been given false names. The women selected for the case sample have all been educated in both 'Western' educational institutions and Arab educational institutions. They are Muslim women who originate from different Arab countries and are among the first generation of professional women in their communities. The criteria for their selection were their dual educational experience at some level, and the leadership they have manifested within their respective communities and internationally. These women are part of a small group of educated elite Muslim women who are instituting changes at the grass root level. Whereas in some cases the women selected are recognised internationally, in other cases the researcher selected them through learning about their active roles in their professional fields and within the international

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[35] Ibid., pp.13 - 26

forum. Further information on the process of selecting the interviewee sample is discussed in the methodology section in Chapter Three.

Yasmin

Currently, and since 2000, the Chair of the Educational Technology Department at a Bahraini University, Yasmin has spent the last ten years specialising in educational development and technology. Prior to her position as Chair, she was Assistant Professor in Educational Technology and the Co-ordinator of the Diploma Program in Educational Resources. She was responsible for teaching courses in the integration of computers in the educational system as well as co-ordinating with the Ministry of Education in Bahrain in designing technology projects and redesigning subject curricula with the aim of introducing technology in the classrooms. Yasmin's expertise in the field of technology was strengthened as a computer curriculum specialist at the Ministry of Education where she was solely responsible for introducing computer science in Bahraini public schools as a subject and computers as wider educational tools. She set in place guidelines for computer science curricula and co-authored computer studies textbooks. Her contribution extended further to the training of computer teachers on hardware maintenance and to designing training programs for 250-300 teachers from different subject areas each year. She was a member of the Executive Committee for Introducing Computers in Bahraini Public Schools and so was able to help guide her specific expertise into an area of widespread access in her country and beyond.

After having completed her entire grade school in a Bahraini public school for girls, Yasmin obtained her B.Sc. degree in Biology at Concordia University in Canada and then went on to Columbia University, New York where she received her MA in Computing in Education, a Master of Education in Instructional Technology and Media, and then her Doctorate of Education in Instructional Technology and Media.

Her active dedication and ongoing commitment to education, to development and to women's empowerment, coupled with her prominent role in the redesigning of curricula in Bahrain schools has been reflected in the various organisations of which she is and has been a member. Among Yasmin's affiliations, she has been an Eisenhower Fellow since 1996, is a

member of the International Society for Technology in Education based in the USA, and a founding member of the Bahraini Society for Creativity and the Academics Society. She has been a member of the Women Supreme Council since 2001, a member of the Distance Learning Committee for Universities and Higher Educational Institutions of Gulf Co-operation Council countries, and a Board Member of the Bahraini Society for Women Development since 2002.

Yasmin's publications have been numerous, extending from 1989 through to 2002. She has been published in the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States Press where she wrote about *technology training for teachers*, and *the computer inside the classroom*, which was presented at the 10th Annual Educational Conference in 1994 under the Ministry of Education, *women, technology and communication: new challenges for the Bahraini woman,* presented in 1997 at the conference on Women and Development: other publications and presentations include *the Role of Bahraini Women in the Development Process for the Next Century; women's interaction with science and technology, technology and creativity, the role of ICT in education,* presented at the 16th Annual conference of Education in 2002, and *the role of discussion rooms in developing e-Learning community,* presented at the International Conference on Computers in Education in New Zealand in 2002.

Yasmin has been an active member of the Organizing Committee for the Annual Educational Conferences and multi-media shows in Bahrain and is the Chairman of the Organising Committee of the "e-Classroom" symposium at the University of Bahrain, where she was responsible for introducing the first course based on complete asynchronous e-learning. She initiated a TV series called *Educational Messages* which has run since 2000.

Lina

After completing a BA in Business Administration at the American University of Cairo in 1987, Lina pursued an MSc in Analysis, Design and Management of Information Systems at The London School of Economics and Political Science, (LSE), University of London, graduating in 1992. Today she is the Manager of Corporate Social Responsibility Programs for Microsoft Middle East and Africa.

After 1992, Lina spent several years in the Egyptian Cabinet as a Program Officer in the Information and Decision Support Centre and from 1996 until 2003 was the Director of the Kids and Youth Department at the Regional Information Technology and Software Engineering Centre (RITSEC) in Egypt. RITSEC was founded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) and the Information and Decision Support Centre of the Egyptian Cabinet. RITSEC, a non-profit organization financed by its co-founders, has a mandate to help accelerate the region's development in information technology and software engineering. Among RITSEC's partners are UNICEF, Microsoft and the Egyptian Ministry of Education. It provides professional services to governments, institutions and organisations to support the development of the Information Technology industry within the Arab region through joint technological and human resource development projects, along with advanced applications and training. The mission is to empower Arab children through the use of ICT to become critical learners and thinkers and thus encourage cross-cultural dialogue to build a generation of global citizens.

Lina's work from 2002 has also included numerous consultancies for the Ministry of Culture. She is also a consultant to the Human Resource Development and Curriculum Development Programs and is closely involved with the 'IT – in-Schools' project, which is a national initiative to establish smart schools using the state of the art technology at a selected number of Egyptian schools. She has worked closely with the Schools Online International Organization based in California, and the scale of her consultancy work has especially been demonstrated in her management of the MENA Regional Program to establish internet learning centres at schools in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. Such initiatives have involved her managing international online educational programs and projects such as *'Think Quest'* and *'iEARN'* that target and educate children on the use of IT and other communication skills. *'Think Quest'* is a new learning initiative which has encouraged students to develop educational websites through a long process involving collaboration, innovation and intensive teamwork and research; the program consists of workshops, seminars and hands-on activities for both students and teachers. *'iEARN'* is a project also funded by RITSEC whereby 34 schools engage with online collaborative projects that encourage students and teachers to participate in civic, human and social initiatives with peers from 97 countries around the world.

Lina embarked on her vision to create the first internationally acclaimed Egyptian website for children known as *'Little Horus'* which she managed. In an effort to pursue her dream she expanded her vision and became the co-founder of *'21st Century Kids Clubs'*; technology centres that provide the latest hardware, software and communication facilities for youth in Egypt. Her entrepreneurial endeavours are numerous. The many projects she has spearheaded include the joint management of establishing centres of excellence in Africa with *'Schools Online in USA'* and she is a co-founder of the *'Schoolnet Africa'* initiative and initiated '*Think Quest Africa*', a sub-set of Think Quest International.

Lina is an Eisenhower Fellow and is an Eisenhower Fellowship International Advisory Committee Member, an Advisory Board Member for the International Children Digital Library, USA, as well as a Board Member at School Net Africa.

In recognition of her commitment, the First Lady of Egypt, Suzanne Mubarak, presented Lina with an Honorary Award for the establishment of the first Information Highway for Kids and the establishment for the first 21st Century Kids Club. She was also presented with an Honorary Award by the Internet Society of Egypt for her outstanding contribution in the use of the internet in education and knowledge for kids. *'Little Horus'* website was referred to as the first project in the White Paper Empowerment 2001, Government Technology for the 21st Century, and the website itself received the first prize at the Cable and Wireless Childnet International Award in 1999.

Dalia

Dalia has worked for nearly thirty years nationally, regionally and internationally to promote a range of global causes, most notably in the areas of human development, gender equity and the well-being and development of children. Her Royal Highness is very actively involved in various forums such as the United Nations, and has made significant contributions to health, education and the advancement of women. Among her endeavours are sustainable development programmes that address the social and economic needs of marginalised groups.

After receiving her primary education in Ahliyyah School in Amman, Jordan, she was enrolled at Benenden School in England and then continued on to Oxford University where she specialised in languages and moved on as a DPhil student, also at Oxford until 2001 when she was awarded her DPhil degree. Her thesis examined the evolution of Jordan's development process as shaped by political and economic factors. Within this context, the thesis traced the growth of components of civil society, particularly those working in social development and how they respond to conditions at the local, national and international levels.

Dalia has received recognition for her work and commitment to her cause over the years. Among the awards she has received are: the Dr Naito International Childcare Award, the UNESCO 50 Years Commemorative Medal and the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws from the University of Reading. She was voted Arab Woman of the Year 1995 at the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting of the Fourth World Conference on Women, and is an Honorary Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford.

In recognition of her role in promoting human development issues with special issues on women's rights, she has been invited by leading United Nations agencies to join other international figures in representing and furthering their causes. In 2001, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) appointed her as Goodwill Ambassador, and she had earlier, in 1995, been the Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). In 1993, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) appointed her as an Honorary Development Ambassador, and this has furthered her capacity to launch numerous initiatives on the national, regional and international levels. Her involvement with the UNDP was further strengthened in 2000 in the light of her active role in human development in Jordan when she was invited to act as the Honorary Person of the International Year of Volunteers 2001.

Throughout the 1990s Dalia served as an active member of the World Health Organization, of the High-Level Advisory Panel to the UNDP Administrator – helping to define the organisation's strategies beyond 2000 and as an active member of UNESCO's International Panel on Democracy and Development. Aside from her developmental work, she has also been a member of, and worked closely with, the Earth Council which was responsible for

overseeing the implementation of the results of the Rio Earth Summit in 1997. Dalia is an active patron of several women's societies and numerous national and local organisations in Jordan. The most notable of these are the Women's Police, and the Private Schools Council. She is also a member of the Board of the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Jordan.

Apart from her professional work, Lina has contributed to research projects and has herself conducted research on the transfer of Information Technology (IT) to developing countries, on the effect of IT on organizational culture, the different methodologies for institutionalising such technologies, and the impact of IT and communication on learning. Her research papers include *DSC-Egypt and Culture Change*, a case study drawn from the Ministry of Tourism and presented at London School of Economics, (LSE), in 1992. Other papers have included *Technology Transfer to Developing Countries* and *IT and Organizational Culture*, also presented at LSE. Regionally, she is a member of UNICEF Civil Society Organization Steering Committee for the Middle East.

Rania

Born and educated in Lebanon, Rania moved to Jordan and became a Jordanian citizen in 1965. Upon completing her primary and secondary education in Lebanon, she pursued her BA and MA in Literature from the American University of Beirut. Several years later, as the wife of the Jordanian Ambassador to the United States from 1967 – 72, and then the wife of the Jordanian Ambassador to the United Nations from 1972-1976, she furthered her interest in education through various courses and diplomas. Her contribution to, and prominent role in Jordan and Jordanian politics, was reinforced when she returned there in 1976 and where she has remained ever since. Her husband's appointments as the Chief of the Royal Court and then Prime Minister of Jordan set the stage from which she would become an active member of the political arena.

From the early 1960s Rania was actively involved as a Member of the Board of Directors for the *Mouvement Social* in Lebanon, whilst she also worked hard as the Editor, newscaster and special interviewer for the Lebanese Television News Department until 1965.

From the 1970s, she became very much involved with issues pertaining to Islam, women and awareness; becoming the President of the Muslim Women's Association of Washington D.C. Her role as the President of the Islamic Cultural Society in New York, and then her active membership in the Ministry of Culture back in Jordan, all furthered her active role and influence as a representative for Jordan.

Although her husband passed away in 1980, she has remained very politically active and inclined throughout the last two decades. In the early 1980s she served on Jordan University's Board of Trustees and then furthered her commitment to education by becoming a Member of the Jordan Board of Education. Having deeply entrenched herself within Jordanian politics and being a recognised face within the political arena, she went on to become a Member of Cabinet and the Minister of Information in Jordan. By the late 1980s Rania played a decisive role in Parliament, as a Member of the Royal Commission for drafting the National Charter, whilst also becoming a Senator in the Jordan Senate (Upper House of Parliament), from 1989 – 2001. Throughout the mid 1980s though the late 1990s, she was an active member and on the Board of Trustees for the Arab Organization for Human Rights, based in Cairo.

As a member of the Jordanian Senate, she presided over the global meeting of women parliamentarians in 2000 in Amman, Jordan, which involved more than 140 women parliamentarians from 90 countries as part of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Her prestigious role and commitment to women's empowerment was very much reflected in her speech at the event; she highlighted the need to address social, economic, political and humanitarian conditions of women caught up in war and who were subject to war crimes and sexual violence. She further pursued the idea of a dialogue among civilizations and cultures in the meeting, as she believes Jordan is where the three great religions were revealed, and encouraged mutual understanding and co-operation.

Her present offices and multitude of public service activities only reinforce her dedication and commitment to the betterment of Jordan whilst highlighting the importance of international and global awareness. Currently, she is the Chairperson for the Philadelphia University in Jordan, the President for the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature and the

Vice President of the Arab Foundation for Modern Thought. She serves on the Board of Trustees of the Arab Institute for Human Rights in Tunisia, the American University of Beirut, (in Beirut and New York), American – Mideast Educational Training Services, King Hussein Foundation, American Centre for Oriental Research based in Jordan, and several other key institutions. In addition to her role as a Trustee to several national institutions, she remains dedicated to and actively involved in gender and educational issues on an international level, and is a Member of the World Affairs Council and of the Advisory Academic Council (AAC) – United Nations University for Peace.

Sultana

Sultana is Chief Executive Officer of the Olayan Financing Company, a Riyadh-based holding company for the Olayan group's operations in Saudi Arabia that ranks number eight in the list of the Kingdom's Top 100 companies; she has also been ranked by Fortune magazine among the top 50 most powerful women outside of the USA. Although a Saudi woman herself, her self-image is neither centred nor defined in gender terms, but rather as a professional person who has a job to do. As the CEO of the OFC, her challenges span the corporate world in New York, Tokyo and Riyadh.

After primary and secondary schooling in Lebanon, Sultana moved to the USA. Acquiring a BSc in Agriculture from Cornell University, she went on to pursue her MBA at Indiana University, and continued in the financial field by joining Morgan Guaranty in New York until 1983 when she moved to the Olayan Group in Saudi Arabia.

Olayan Financing Company (OFC), established in 1969, holds and manages all of The Olayan Group's businesses and investments in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, including joint ventures with major multinationals. Today, it is a fully diversified industrial, trading, services, and investment conglomerate, with some 40 affiliated companies. One such joint venture is the alliance with Kimberley-Clark Corporation. Distribution operations are currently concentrated in fast-moving consumer goods, hospital supplies, office automation products, building supplies, telecommunications equipment, and industrial equipment. Other OFC companies are engaged in industrial services, project and construction management, real

estate development, property management, financial and investment services, and food services.

While approximately 8000 Saudi women are employed within Sultana's own branch of the company, she believes and stresses the need to create more opportunities through a trilateral effort on the part of education, government organizations and media. She strongly stresses that the issue is not so much of the gender as it is a corporate and educational issue. Within her own company Sultana has adopted the 'Saudisation' approach, whereby each company level providing training programs with job replacements is given to Saudis as priority. Today she is an active leader in the business world of Saudi Arabia and recently was the keynote speaker at the Jeddah Economic Forum, attended by nation leaders and the most influential businessmen of Saudi Arabia, where she called for change, privatisation and human resource development

Sultana is actively engaged in world issues; she is a member of INSEAD International Council; World Links Advisory Council, World Bank; Women Leadership Initiative and Arab Business Council Executive Committee and the World Economic Forum. She is also a member of the Board of Trustees for the Arab Thought Foundation and was a former member of Cornell University Council and the Saudi Arabia International School Committees.

Aisha

Aisha is the Executive Director and Acting Supervising Trustee at the Help Centre for Children with Mental Disability in Saudi Arabia. Upon completing secondary schooling in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, she proceeded to Mills College, California where she completed her BA in Education and Child Development. While at Mills College, she was also awarded the Child Life Therapist Certificate and Pre-School Diploma. Though a Saudi national, she is a licensed elementary education teacher in the state of California public school system. Aisha reinforced her specialization in child development by attaining an MA in Special Education at San Francisco State University in California.

Aisha's work has been primarily focused on children and social work. Over the last twenty years she has worked as a nursery school teacher in California, a life therapist and social worker in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Her keen interest in special educational needs and working with children's disabilities has led her to spend some time as a developmental disability counsellor, an advisor for the Council on the Handicapped in Saudi Arabia, as the Director of Therapeutic Services at the Help Centre, and she is now the Centre's Executive Director.

She has presented and been a keynote speaker at numerous conferences and academic institutions in the Middle East and the USA. Her expertise at such events has stemmed from examining issues of mental retardation in Saudi Arabia, the importance of 'play therapy' for the development of disabled children, vocational training for the mentally disabled youth and the purpose and services of the Help Centre itself. Much of her presentations within Saudi Arabia have been at the King Abdul Aziz University and at the Help Centre.

Established in 1986, The Help Centre in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, provides an environment conducive to developing, to the fullest, the potential of children with physical and mental disabilities. Such children are taught by specialists who understand their problems and who devise programs to help them live and function as independently as possible, within the mainstream community. Beginning with three children and three therapists, the centre has grown into a world-class school for the physically and mentally challenged. In 1995, it moved into a new 107,000-square-foot building on 10 acres of land. Today, the school has 275 students and 180 staff, including 150 teachers and therapists who underwent special training at the Centre. From its inception, Aisha has been responsible for several facets of the Help Centre. She designed the strategy for the Centre and assisted with the design of the educational plan. Aside from managing the Centre's 400 programs for students and over 150 employees, she was also responsible for establishing the Early Intervention Program, devised the current five-year plan to improve training and adoption programs, designed the Centre's Training Program and Social Work Plan and formed a local committee whose primary goal is supporting the cause of the handicapped.

As a major contributor to the Help Centre's *Newsletter,* she has been able to disseminate and share her expertise with other centres and workers in Saudi Arabia. She not

only serves as an advisor to more than six schools for mentally handicapped children throughout the Arab world, but is also actively involved in Special Olympics in Saudi Arabia and was granted the Award for Humanity Services by the Disabled Children Association of Saudi Arabia in 2001.

Nadia

A Saudi national educated in the West, Nadia was the first woman from her country to get a DPhil from the University of Oxford. As a social anthropologist she has become a specialist on social, political and human rights issues in the Arab states, particularly the Gulf Cooperation Council states. Today, she is an Associate Fellow both at the Middle East Program of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, (Chatham House) and at the Centre for Islamic and Middle East Law at the School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

Nadia's particular interest in women and women's rights in the Middle East led her to pursue the study of social anthropology initially at Bryn Mawr University, in the USA where she gained her first degree. She then proceeded to further her anthropological expertise at the University of Oxford where she received her MA and then her DPhil on 'Formality and Propriety in the Hijaz' in 1989.

Throughout her doctoral study, Nadia lectured in anthropology and sociology at the King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Soon after receiving her DPhil, in 1990-2001, she became an Academic Advisor to the Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University in Washington DC. Whilst her affiliation with Georgetown University extended over a decade, she was also a Research Fellow at the Centre for Cross Cultural Research on Women at Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford. She then became a researcher at the Centre of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law, (CIMEL) at SOAS and to this date, is an Associate at the Centre. While still a researcher at CIMEL, Nadia organized two acclaimed Lecture Series: 1993/94 on *Feminism and Islam* and in 1996/97 on the *Rule of Law in the Middle East*. Currently she is an Associate Fellow at the RIIA (Chatham House), in the Middle East Program.

Nadia's expertise on socio-political, economic, cultural and human rights issues in the Arab states has led to extensive lecturing around the world and wide broadcasting experience in Arabic and English. She is also a frequent commentator in the media on Middle East Affairs.

Nadia's publications are numerous. She is the author of the highly-praised *Changed Identities, The Challenge of the New Generation in Saudi Arabia,* 2000; a book based on interviews with Saudi youth, age bracket 15-30, discussing their ideas about identity and self, ambitions and negotiations between tradition and modernity. Her other works also include 'Challenge by example: Globalization and the new Arab awakening', in *Globalization and the Middle East,* 2002, *The Rule of Law and Human Rights in the Middle East and the Islamic World,* 2001, 'The new generation in the GCC: the Case of Saudi Arabia', in *Oil and Regional Developments in the Gulf,* 1998, and *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives,* 1996.

Malika

At 22 years of age, Malika was the 400-metre hurdles champion at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles and at 40 has become a pioneer in gaining acceptance for women's athletics in Muslim countries. In 2002, as a member of the Laureus World Sports Academy, she unveiled a new initiative to encourage women in sport in her native Morocco. Running has given her an opportunity to represent women's rights, as she is the first Arab, African and Muslim woman to win an Olympic Gold medal. Such an accomplishment has promoted her instantly to the status of national and international hero; so much so that the King of Morocco decreed that all girls born on the date of her victory be named in her honour. Her Olympic achievement was not only a personal triumph, but was also the breakthrough that gave Moroccan women belief and courage, resulting in more Olympic success for them in the late 1990s.

Born in 1962, Malika completed her high school Baccalaureate degree in Casablanca, Morocco, before going on to pursue a BS degree in Physical Education at Iowa State University, USA. She then went on to become the first Moroccan woman Minister of Youth and Sports in 1989 – 1998. Since 1998 she has been Executive Director at the BMCE Bank Foundation for Education and Environment in Morocco, a non-profit association; its central

mission being to contribute to the promotion of education integrated into sustainable development for Morocco. However, her humanitarian beliefs have also compelled her to assume the role of UNICEF Good Will Ambassador in Morocco since 1999 and become a founding member of the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation since 2000. The Foundation is an innovative charitable venture consisting of a dedicated team of 44 of the world's most legendary sportsmen and women whose efforts are dedicated to recognising the powerful role that sports plays in uniting society at large and enabling others to participate.

Her memberships of numerous foundations span from national to international organisations. On a national level, she is, to date, Vice-President of Moroccan Royal Federation of Athletics and has been proposed as a candidate for the IIAF Council for the female individual membership spanning the next 4 years. She is also a member of the National Olympic Committee of Morocco, President of the Moroccan Association for Family Planning in Casablanca and the Founding Member and President of the Moroccan Association 'Sport and Development'. Within the international arena, she is a Council Member for the International Athletic Foundation in Monaco, a member of the International Olympic Committee in Switzerland and a Council Member of the African-Athletic Confederation, Senegal.

Her athletic performances have won her a plethora of awards. Amongst the many are the Gold medal in the Mediterranean Games, Morocco in 1983, Gold Medal, Olympic Games, Los Angeles, 1984, Gold Medal, African Championships in Egypt, 1985 and the Gold Medal at the University Games in Yugoslavia in 1987. Her awards also include 1997 Hall of Fame at Iowa State University, 'Merite National d'Ordre Exceptionnel' awarded by King Hassan II of Morocco in 1983, All American Track and Field Team, National Champion Division1, USA in 1984, the World Trophy –Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles in 1985 and the Flo Hyman Award by 'The Women's Sport Foundation USA', in 2003.

Mother of two, and fluent in Arabic, English and French, she has attended many sports congresses, meetings, award ceremonies and seminars worldwide and has served as a Jury of Appeal at Atlanta 1996 and Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Today she plays a pivotal role in education and development in Morocco and has recently set up sports clubs at three

disadvantaged and poor villages in Morocco, as she believes sport is a powerful tool through which to help women take initiative.

Fatima

A bio-chemist, Fatima is the CEO of Egypt's leading biotechnology company, Shoura Technology. She is at the forefront of developments that are looking to have a profound impact on Egypt's economic future. Her company is currently leading several mega projects to create new agricultural areas in the economically depressed southwest of Egypt. By fostering these new growth areas, the projects have the potential to eliminate the crippling population congestion in the Nile Valley. Her company is dedicated to bringing Egypt's biotechnology industry out of its infancy, with the aim of addressing critical economic and environmental concerns.

As the CEO of Shoura Technology, she is also in charge of the management of a technology company which is the biotech affiliate of the Shoura Group. She directs and oversees staff, and the operations of the technology transfer laboratory at Shoura Technology. Her time is also dedicated to teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in Horticulture at the University of Cairo, School of Agriculture.

After completing her BSc at Cairo University, Faculty of Agriculture in 1979, she went on to complete an MSc in 1990 in Ornamental Palm Micro propagation, also at Cairo University. In 1996, she pursued her MPhil in Date Palm Micro propagation at the School of Biomedical Sciences at Southampton University, UK and then completed her PhD in 1999 in Date Palm Micro propagation, also at Southampton University.

Fatima's commitment to increasing global awareness and exchanging perspectives, on research, regulation, ethics and cooperation in the biotechnology field is reflected in her role as an Eisenhower Fellow. Her fellowship objectives and goals are ambitious and at the forefront of change and discovery. Among her goals are, to exchange information regarding the latest in plant micro propagation techniques; visiting biotechnology and tissue culture centres to gain further insight and knowledge of plant micro propagation and genetic engineering; exploration

of innovations in palm breeding after micro propagation; and gaining an overview of the latest tissue culture techniques in medicine.

Huda

Of Jordanian descent, Huda is a managing partner at MMIS Management Consultants based in Jordan and has had over 17 years of experience in Organization/Marketing/Business Strategy and Management Training. She is an investment specialist with much experience in addressing sector development constraints. Her emphasis is in developing strategic options for future growth and long term sustainability. Prior to joining MMIS Management Consultants in 1988, she worked with a management and engineering consultancy in Beirut and Cairo from 1979 – 1985, and then went on to join the Arab Organization for Administrative Sciences in Jordan from 1985-1987.

After completing her BA in Business Administration at the Arab University of Beirut, Lebanon in 1974, Huda earned a MSc. in Industrial Management from the University of Birmingham, England in 1979.

Her professional experiences have covered business strategy formulation, which involved the development of plans and programmes for private and public sector organizations in Jordan and the Middle East region. She is responsible for developing a sectoral study, sponsored by the Industrial Development Bank of Jordan and the Arab Monetary Fund for the pharmaceutical industry in Jordan to identify investment opportunities and define major structural problems affecting exports. She is responsible for having developed a tourism strategy for the Ministry of Tourism in Jordan and was retained to participate in the organizational restructuring of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in Jordan which involved the design and implementing of an action plan for the new structure.

Huda has conducted numerous training programs in the Arab region for marketing research strategy, management consultancy, organizational development system design and leadership skills. These were also developed into a set of training management packages and modules in leadership skills and management techniques, which are widely used in the area.

Huda's work has not been limited only to the business world but has extended to the Ministry of Education where she was involved with the evaluation of the elementary school health education program in Jordan in coordination with UNICEF. She is also dedicated to resolving issues at both the international and national level.

Huda was selected as an Eisenhower Fellow from Jordan for the 1996 award program, and is the Founder and Chairperson of the Institute of Management Consultants in Jordan. Her involvement with the Higher Council for Jordanian National Forum for Women reflects her commitment to women's issues, whilst her continuing commitment to enhancing and developing Jordan's trade industry continues vigorously. She is the Chairperson of the Training and Development Committee, the Founder and Board of Trustee Member for the Jordan Quality Association, as well as a Board Member of Jordan Trade Association.

Country Profiles

Bahrain

Bahrain is a small island located adjacent to the Arabian Peninsula. It has a modest population size of 645,351 (2001) of which 66percent of the population is originally from the Arabian Peninsula and Iran; the remainder of the population consists of Europeans and South East Asians.[36] Though a great deal of dependence in recent decades has been on this portion of the expatriate labour population, Bahrain is an Islamic country where the official language is Arabic.

Bahrain is a hereditary emirate under the rule of the Al Khalifa family. The Amir, Shaykh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, his uncle--Khalifa bin Sulman Al Khalifa (Prime Minister) and Crown Prince Shaykh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa (Commander of the Bahraini defence forces), govern Bahrain in consultation with a council of ministers. As it is a constitutional monarchy, power is divided among the ruling family, and the government faces few judicial checks on its actions. Since 1998, the new Amir has been working to make Bahraini society

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[36] US State Department: www.state.gov p. 5

more democratic and open. Efforts to realise this goal have been manifested in such changes as the return to the Constitution as the supreme source for the country's laws as well as the legalization of nongovernmental organizations. Along with improvements in basic civil rights protections and freedoms of expression and association, the government took the first steps to return to the Bahraini people the right to elect a legislature. In October 2001, the Amir opened the tenth session of the Consultative Council, by declaring his intention to hold municipal elections in 2002 and legislative elections before 2004. He also stated that the legislative branch of government would consist of two houses, one directly elected by universal male and female suffrage and the other by appointment. In light of such structural changes, it is clear to see that there has been a steady progression toward political and economic reform within the country.

Bahrain has a complex system of courts, which is based on a diversity of legal sources, including Sunni and Shi'a *Sharia* (religious law), tribal law, and other civil codes and regulation, created with the help of British advisers in the early 20th Century. It is the responsibility of the judiciary to administer the legal code and review the laws to ensure their constitutionality. Since achieving independence from Britain in 1971, Bahrain has been successful in maintaining friendly relations with most of its Gulf neighbours and with the world community and has enjoyed membership to the Gulf Co-operation Council, established on May 26, 1981, along with five other Gulf States.

History

Since the late 18th Century, Bahrain has been governed by the Al Khalifa family, who established close ties to Britain by signing the General Treaty of Peace in 1820. A binding treaty of protection, known as the Perpetual Truce of Peace and Friendship, was concluded in 1861 and further revised in 1892 and 1951. This treaty was similar to those entered into by the British Government with the other Persian Gulf principalities. It specified that the ruler could not dispose of any of his territory except to the United Kingdom and could not enter into relationships with any foreign government other than the United Kingdom without British consent. The British promised to protect Bahrain from all aggression by sea and to lend support in case of land attack.

After World War II, Bahrain became the centre for British administration of treaty obligations in the lower Persian Gulf. In 1968, when the British Government announced its decision (reaffirmed in March 1971) to end the treaty relationships with the Persian Gulf sheikdoms, Bahrain joined the other eight states (Qatar and the seven Tribal Sheikhdoms, which are now called the United Arab Emirates) under British protection in an effort to form a union of Arab emirates. However, by mid-1971, the nine sheikhdoms still had not agreed on the terms of union and as a consequence, Bahrain sought independence as a separate entity, becoming fully independent on August 15, 1971, as the State of Bahrain.

Economy

Bahrain has a mixed economy, with government control of many basic industries, including the important oil and aluminium industries. Between 1981 and 1993, Bahrain Government expenditures increased by 64 percent, at which time the revenues of the government continued to be predominantly dependent on the oil industry, increasing by only 4 percent.[37] Bahrain's estimated per capita income in 2001 was $12,790 with 46 percent of GDP coming from the industrial sector.[38] Petroleum and natural gas are the only significant natural resources in Bahrain; it dominates the economy and provides approximately 60 percent of budget revenues. Although it was the first Arabian Gulf state to discover oil, due to limited reserves Bahrain has had to work to diversify its economy over the past decade; an impending reality, not yet acknowledged by other neighbouring Gulf States that continue to rely heavily on their oil reserves. The government has used its modest oil revenues to build an advanced infrastructure in transportation and telecommunications. Bahrain is a regional, financial and business centre and has used regional tourism as a significant source of income. During the region's economic boom in the late 1970s and 1980s, the country benefited tremendously with the government emphasizing infrastructural development and other projects to improve the standard of living; health, education, housing, electricity, water, and roads were areas that received considerable attention by the government during that time.[39] The country's development as a major financial centre has been the most widely heralded aspect of its diversification effort; it has managed to differentiate itself from its neighbours by evolving into a financial hub in the region. Its success in carving a niche for itself is a direct result of the

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[37] US State Department: www.state.gov p. 3
[38] Ibid., p.3
[39] Ibid., pp.4-5

government's invitation to international financial institutions to operate, both as offshore and onshore companies, without any impediments.

Education

Bahrain has traditionally boasted an advanced educational system, as compared to other Gulf States. Schooling and related costs are entirely paid for by the government, and, although not compulsory, primary and secondary attendance rates are high. According to the statistics taken in 2001, the attendance of students in schools was at 73 percent, with literacy rates being at 85.2 percent; 89 percent of males are literate with female literacy somewhat behind at 69 percent.[40] The government encourages institutions of higher learning, drawing on expatriate talent and the increasing pool of Bahrainis returning from abroad with advanced degrees. The establishment of the Bahrain University was for the standard pursuit of undergraduate and graduate study, and the College of Health Sciences, operating under the direction of the Ministry of Health, is responsible for training physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and paramedics.

One of the stated principles and objectives of education in Bahrain as referenced by the UNESCO report on Bahrain dated 2000, is:

> *'To inculcate pride in belonging to the Arab and Islamic nations based on the awareness of the genuine value of Arab Islamic thinking, its historical role in developing human civilization and advancement of science and art, and the awareness of the potentials of the Arab nation, and its ability to achieve progress and unity'.*[41]

The current educational priorities and concerns of the country include special attention and commitment to ensure education for all by ensuring that the Ministry of Education are equally responsible for both formal and informal education and eventually, 'delegating most of the functions the schools in order to achieve full decentralization.'[42] However, this has yet to be realised. In fact, schools have little autonomy and though the intent may be there, control remains in the hands of the higher authorities.

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[40] Ibid.,p.5
[41] UNESCO World Data on Education, Bahrain, 2000, p.2
[42] Ibid., p.4

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the administration of the public education in Bahrain. It consists of five sectors: Educational Planning and Information; General and Technical Education; Curricula and Training; Educational Services and Private Education and, Financial and Administrative Affairs. Since the early 1980s, the Ministry of Education has attempted to promote decentralization and a consultative democratic policy, by creating channels of expression and interaction amongst educational officials, involving all educational personnel in developmental committees and taking the appropriate decisions to raise educational efficiency. Nevertheless, it has been noted that there is no place for student bodies to express their ideas and opinions. Regardless of the Ministry's attempt to decentralize schools and empower school authorities, teachers and administrators have yet to have full rein in their pedagogy. Conversely, it is reported that higher education institutions enjoy more autonomy in administrative and technical matters. Ironically, however, the Ministry of Education is considered as the highest official authority which is responsible for some of these higher educational institutions, such as the University of Bahrain and the Arabian Gulf University, where the Minister of Education, himself, is the chairman of their Board of Trustees.

Arabic is the language of instruction at the different levels in public schools for all subjects, but English is also taught as a secondary language starting at Grade 4 at the primary level. The school structure is such that Primary education includes the first two cycles of basic education. It lasts six years and caters to children aged 6-11. In the first three grades (first cycle), the system follows a class-teacher structure. In the second cycle, Grades 4 -6, an associate class-teacher system is applied, whereby there are two teachers, one for Arabic language, Islamic religion, and social studies, and the other for mathematics and sciences. The third cycle of basic education is called intermediate education; this cycle lasts three years. Students are admitted upon completion of primary education, or its equivalent in literacy classes, and a subject-teacher system is applied. It must be noted that public schools are not co-educational, meaning that there are separate establishments for boys and girls.[43] Secondary education lasts three years and students have a choice to pursue different curricula: scientific, literary, commercial, applied or technical. Within the applied curricula track, there are five branches: agriculture and livestock resources (for boys only); printing (for boys only); textile and clothing (for girls only); graphic design (for girls only); and hotel management (for boys only). It is quite clear that what is acceptable for girls to study is distinctly different than what is

[43] Ibid., p.9

acceptable for boys; evidently, the prescribing of gender roles is made explicit at this stage of the student's education. Furthermore, the pursuit of religious education at higher levels is offered by a specialized institute under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. However, once again, it is for boys only. This type of religious education consists of similar curricula content as that of basic and general secondary levels, with the same duration of study and admission age. Nonetheless, the curriculum has a strong emphasis on Islamic studies in order to prepare men with an appropriate background in religious affairs; interestingly, women are neither admitted into this field nor are encouraged to study their faith in greater detail.

All services affiliated with education are financed by the State budget. Public education in Bahrain is free in all its forms and types and is provided by the State as a right for every Bahraini citizen. The Directorate of Curricula at the Ministry of Education has the full responsibility of planning and providing the study programmes and syllabi for all educational levels and types in Bahrain public schools. Specialists are asked to participate in this process, together with the principals and teachers and, when deemed necessary, outside experts are also sought for advice and consultation.

Egypt

The Egyptian constitution provides for a strong executive, with authority vested in an elected president who has the power to appoint one or more vice presidents, a prime minister, and a cabinet. Although opposition parties are permitted to make their views public and represent their followers at various levels in the political system, power is ultimately in the hands of the President and the National Democratic Party which constitutes the majority in the People's Assembly; both of these two arms of the government dominate the political system, arguably and quite ironically, the President, himself is thought to control the National Democratic Party. However, in addition to the ruling National Democratic Party, the Egyptian government legally recognizes 16 other political parties. The November 2000 elections were generally considered to have been more transparent and better executed than past elections, because of universal judicial monitoring of polling stations. Nevertheless, opposition parties continue to express credible complaints about electoral manipulation on the part of the government. In theory, Egypt is a Republic and a 'democratic' one at that, yet there are significant restrictions on the political process itself as well as the freedom of expression for

non-governmental organizations, including professional syndicates and organizations promoting respect for human rights.[44]

Egypt's judicial system is based on European, namely French, legal concepts and methods. Under the Mubarak government, the courts have demonstrated an increased level of independence. However matters pertaining to marriage and personal status, such as family law, are primarily based on the religious law of the individual concerned, which for most Egyptians is Islamic Law -*Sharia*.

Following Nasser's heavy handed socialist regime, Sadat in the 1970s assumed a more 'liberal' approach; as President, Sadat introduced greater political freedom and a new economic policy that called for relaxed government controls over the economy and encouraged private investment. Although unable to successfully dismantle the highly centralized, bureaucratic political machine erected by Nasser, Sadat did manage to flush the system of some of its ailments. Sadat tried to expand participation in the political process in the mid-1970s, but later abandoned this effort, as Egypt was racked by violence arising from discontent with Sadat's rule and sectarian tensions.[45] In 1981, upon Sadat's assassination, Mubarak became president and has since been committed to maintaining Egypt's quest for peace with Israel and the peace process while at the same time re-establishing Egypt's position as an Arab leader; in light of his efforts, Egypt was readmitted to the Arab League in 1989.

Since 1991, Mubarak has endeavoured to implement a domestic economic reform program to reduce the size of the public sector and expand the role of the private sector. However, there has been a less than genuine commitment and progress made to political reform. The November 2000 elections witnessed a clear majority win by the National Democratic Party by 388 seats out of 454, causing many to question the efficacy of Egypt's democracy.[46]

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[44] US State Department, Egypt, www.state.gov , pp.5-6
[45] Ibid., p. 8
[46] Ibid., p.9

Economy

Egypt's per capita income is $1,420 p.a. with an annual growth rate of 5 percent in the 1990s, and a population of 64 million in 2000.[47] At the end of the 1980s, Egypt has long faced problems of low productivity and poor economic management, compounded by the adverse social effects of excessive population growth, high inflation, and massive urban overcrowding. In light of these pressures, in 1991, Egypt undertook wide-ranging macroeconomic stabilization and structural reform measures. The reform effort was supported by three successive IMF structural arrangements. Although the pace of reform has been uneven and slower than envisaged under the IMF programs, substantial progress has been made in improving macroeconomic performance, as Egypt has been moving toward a more decentralized, market-oriented economy. These economic reforms and growing investment opportunities have prompted increasing foreign investment, but Egypt's economy has been affected by the slump in tourism due to instabilities in the region and internal fundamentalism. Realizing the county's dire need to boost its economy; comprehensive economic reforms initiated in 1991 have resulted in relaxed price controls, reduced subsidies, and partially liberalized trade and investment. However, manufacturing is still dominated by the public sector, which controls virtually all heavy industry. A process of public sector reform and privatization has begun in order to alleviate some of the government's burden. Agriculture and farming, accounting for approximately one-third of Egyptian labour is now mainly in private hands and has been largely deregulated, with the exception of cotton and sugar production. Construction, non-financial services, and domestic marketing are largely private and have promoted a steady increase of GNP and the annual growth rate.[48]

History and Society

Egypt has long been the cultural and informational centre of the Arab world, with Cairo being the region's largest publishing and broadcasting centre. The majority of political parties have their own newspapers and since 2001, new private satellite-based television stations

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[47] The World Bank, Egypt, www.worldbank.org , pp.1-2
[48] US State Department, Egypt, www.state.gov, p.1

have emerged, reflecting a change in Egyptian government policy. The government still controls the Egyptian ground-broadcast television and the radio.[49]

Egypt is the most populous country in the Arab world and the second most populous on the African Continent, with over 90 percent of its entire population living in Cairo, Alexandria, along the Nile, in the Nile delta and along the Suez Canal.[50] Egypt's vast and rich literature constitutes an important cultural element in the life of the country and in the Arab world as a whole. Egyptian novelists and poets were among the first to experiment with modern styles of Arabic literature which later became the blueprint for Arabic literature. It is a country that has a very rich history and its culture is a reflection of the cultures preceding the Arabs. Egypt has been conquered by the Greeks, Romans, Persians, Arabs, and Ottoman Turks and was colonized by the British towards the later part of the 19th Century, gaining its independence in 1922. However, British influence continued to dominate Egypt's political life and fostered fiscal, administrative, and governmental reforms until Nasser's socialist revolution in 1952. Egypt is now the major recipient of international aid in Africa.

Education

Egypt has long prided itself on its policy of free education from primary through university, with compulsory education commencing from ages six through 15. Yet, adult literacy is still only at 50 percent.[51] Of the ninety-three percent of children who enter primary school, about one-quarter drop out of the system after the sixth year.[52] Egypt's educational facilities consist of 20,000 primary and secondary schools with some 10 million students, 13 major universities with more than 500,000 students, and 67 teachers colleges. Among the major universities is Cairo University with 100,000 students, Alexandria University, and the 1,000-year-old Al-Azhar University, which is one of the world's most distinguished centres of Islamic learning.[53]

Among Egypt's principles and objectives for education is the equality of educational opportunities for all its citizens right through to university. Higher education is not seen to be a

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[49] Ibid., p.4
[50] Ibid., p.9
[51] Economist, School's Out, Vol. 342, Issue 8001, 1997, p.44
[52] US State Department, www.state.gov, p.5
[53] Ibid.,p.9

privilege for the rich, but a right for all who want it. The country's current educational priorities are to increase the national income, distribute justice, raise the standard of living, as well as increase job opportunities and link wages to production.[54] Furthermore education is used to 'safeguard the original features of the Egyptian family as represented in its values and traditions. Moreover, the State cares for the protection of motherhood, children, and youth'.[55] Since the onset of the 1990s, education and culture have been a priority, reflected in the government's efforts to develop education at all levels as the cornerstone of progress. The education policy specifies a number of approaches aimed to upgrade education in quantity and quality. Among these aims have been: reform of teachers' conditions; improved flexibility among different types of education where a system was set up to help technical education graduates enrol in universities and higher education institutes; initiatives in curriculum development focusing on the acquisition of basic skills, self-education, and the use of new technologies whilst teaching religion to mould and instil values and principles.[56] However, though the efforts to improve the educational system are impressive, the process of reform has encountered difficulties. Financing, the number of schools necessary to honour full enrolment with reduced class sizes, upgrading teachers' professional and scientific qualifications, and the generalization of compulsory education, particularly in rural areas and among disadvantaged people, especially women and girls, are just some of the strong challenges facing educational reform.

The government believes that education is a human right and supervises all levels of education. Since 1981, compulsory education covered eight years and included two cycles: primary education, lasting five years, and the three-year 'preparatory' cycle. However, since 1999 the law was modified so that compulsory education now lasts nine years, age group 6-15, and covers the six-year primary education cycle and the three-year preparatory cycle. The Ministry of Education (MOE), is responsible for all matters concerning educational policy, planning, budgeting, implementation and follow-up, except for higher education. It is equally responsible for determining curricula, textbooks and educational aids and identifying the necessary qualifications of teaching staff; the Ministry co-ordinates with various universities, higher education institutes, other ministries, organizations and institutions of the State, in order

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[54] UNESCO World Data on Education, Egypt, p.2
[55] Ibid., p.2
[56] Ibid., p.3

to ensure that the educational plan is consistent with the plans of these organizations. It is also the Ministry's responsibility to assess the educational process in the country, and to issue yearly reports.[57] Educational Directorates in the governorates are responsible for all practical matters pertaining to the schools in their areas. This includes appointment and placement of staff, school health care issues, analysis of the governorate's environment and its educational needs. They are responsible for implementing the educational policy in the governorates, supervising the educational process in all pre-tertiary stages in their areas and participating in developing administrative, technical and communication structures. In the case of higher education, the Ministry of Al Azhar Affairs is responsible for the educational policy and plans of the Al Azhar schools, colleges and university. The Al Azhar school system is supposedly more or less identical with the secular system of basic education, the difference being that Islamic studies are given more emphasis.[58] Recognizing that the state needs to relinquish some of its financial burden, the Ministry of Education has encouraged private-sector higher education, resulting in the opening of four private universities in 1996.[59]

Decades of underinvestment and surging population have strained public education. From the earliest primary years, schooling is characterized by examination orientation and ritualisation. These features, in addition to Egypt's relatively late drive towards modernisation accompanied by centralisation and newly forged social divisions, 'clearly categorise Egypt as a victim of the "diploma disease"'.[60] Attempts to reform the assessment system are being hampered by the continuing perception of current school qualifications as the means to success, whether in the public or private sector, within Egypt or abroad. This national selection examination determines each student's future financial and social opportunity, rendering it vital. Hargreaves argues that selection for higher education and then employment became the driving force behind schools which resulted in the diploma disease, or paper qualification syndrome. Two distinct features of the qualification system are: firstly, all university graduates were guaranteed a government job as one of the socialist policies following the 1952 revolution; secondly: entry to university depends on passing the secondary leaving certificate,

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[57] Ibid., p. 6
[58] Ibid., p.6
[59] Economist, School's Out, p.45
[60] Hargreaves, E. The Diploma Disease in Egypt" Learning, Teaching and the Monster of the Secondary Leaving Certificate, Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice, Vol.4, Issue. 1, 1997, p. 1

but the subject a student studies at university depends on the overall percentage from the certificate.

> *'Students with over 92 percent for example may enter the faculties of engineering or medicine and then may work for the government bureaucracy in these fields, while students with low marks can only study to be teachers and may work afterwards in government schools. Since selection grades are norm referenced, as competition increases, so do grade requirements.'*[61]

The fact that it is the low performing graduates who then become teachers is worrying because they are responsible for the first educational impressions of future generations. The sad reality is that 'students who enter the employment market straight from secondary school often face the worst unemployment and negative rates of personal and social return'; thereby exacerbating the tensions of the youth, their disillusionment with their socio-economic status, their government and education in general.[62] Exam results not only determine whether a student may qualify for higher education, but also dictate the faculty. Because of low salaries, teacher training colleges only attract the worst performing graduates. Consequently, teaching is uninspired and pedagogy is traditional, promoting rote learning in place of critical thinking.

Learning and teaching is characterized by ritualisation. Emphasis is on pupils' exam - taking skills starting from Grade 1; education has become synonymous with the final examination, to the extent that children, parents and teachers see each class as one vital stepping stone towards the ultimate examination, rather than as a period in the child's life with inherent opportunities. All schools, private and state, use the same textbook for each subject. This textbook is the curriculum for that subject and, effectively, the examination syllabus. The textbook arrives from the government at the beginning of the academic year, accompanied by the official syllabus which states which unit of the book to teach in which month. Frequent visits by government inspectors ensure that teachers remain on course.[63]

In summary, the educational system is dominated by examinations; education in Egypt has not helped in alleviating economic instability and has only contributed to the bloated bureaucratic system in operation. The lack of teacher training and resources, the ritualized, restricted and pressurized learning and teaching system, and the highly centralized system

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[61] Ibid., p.2
[62] Ibid., p.4
[63] Ibid., p.5

have served to weaken the institution of education in Egypt and have not done justice to education and its potential, given the receptive culture. Clearly, Egypt's school system reflects the larger dynamics in play; only when the government can provide for citizens' social and economic needs, and allow popular participation, can the meaning and purpose of education for the all-round development of the individual and the community be realized.

Saudi Arabia

The central institution of the government of Saudi Arabian is the monarchy with Saudi law stating that the Kingdom is a monarchy ruled by the sons and grandsons of King Abd Al Aziz Al Saud, and that the Holy Qur'an is the constitution of the country, which is governed on the basis of Islamic law (*Shari'a*). There exist no political parties or national elections and the choice of selecting the King is in the privileged hands of the leading members of the royal family who choose from among themselves, with the subsequent approval of the ulema, religious clergy. Although there are no elections or political parties, the King's powers are limited as he must observe the *Shari'a*, Islamic Law and other Saudi traditions; it is also upon him to retain a consensus of the Saudi royal family, religious leaders (*Ulema*), and other important elements in Saudi society. Since 1953, the Council of Ministers, appointed by and responsible to the King, has been the advisory body responsible for the formulation of general policy and direction of activities pertaining to the growing bureaucracy. This council consists of a prime minister, the first and second deputy prime ministers, 20 ministers (of whom the minister of defence also is the second deputy prime minister), two ministers of state, and a small number of advisers and heads of major autonomous organizations; this structure has gradually evolved into a central government over the last several decades.

Legislation is by resolution of the Council of Ministers, ratified by royal decree, and must be compatible with the Islamic law. Justice is administered according to the *Shari'a* by a system of religious courts whose judges are appointed by the King on the recommendation of the Supreme Judicial Council, composed of 12 senior jurists. However, the King acts as the highest court of appeal and ultimately holds the power to pardon.

Economy

Although oil was discovered in Saudi Arabia in the 1930s, large-scale production did not begin until after World War II, when it consequently led to what has been termed the 'oil boom of the 70s'. It has been as a result of the tremendous amount of oil wealth amassed in the 1970s and 80s that Saudi Arabia has been able to achieve such rapid economic development, which began in earnest in the 1960s and accelerated spectacularly in the 1970s, thereby transforming the Kingdom. With a per capita GDP of $7,654, Saudi Arabia is the world's leading oil producer and exporter with its oil reserves being the largest in the world. Oil accounts for more than 90 percent of the country's exports and nearly 75 percent of government revenues, with proven reserves estimated at 260 billion barrels, approximately one-quarter of the world's oil reserves.[64] Due to a sharp rise in petroleum revenues in 1974 following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, and the creation of OPEC, Saudi Arabia became one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. It enjoyed a substantial surplus in its overall trade with other countries; imports increased rapidly and ample government revenues were available for development, defence, and aid to other Arab and Islamic countries.[65] The Islamic Development Bank is based in Jeddah.

The intention to open up and join globalization by accelerating institutional and industrial reforms was made explicit in April 2000, upon the establishment, by the government, of the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority, with the purpose of encouraging foreign direct investment into Saudi Arabia. Although Saudi Arabia maintains a list of sectors in which foreign investment is prohibited, the government plans to open some closed sectors such as telecommunications, insurance, and power transmission/distribution over time.[66] Through 5-year development plans, the government has sought to allocate its petroleum income to transform its relatively concentrated and undeveloped, oil-based economy into that of a modern industrial state with a diversified economy, whilst maintaining and upholding the Kingdom's traditional Islamic values and customs. Although economic planners have not achieved all their goals, the economy has progressed rapidly; oil wealth has increased the standard of living of most Saudis. However, there still remains a heavy dependency on petroleum revenue, even though manufacturing industry and agriculture now account for a larger share of economic

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[64] US State Department, Saudi Arabia, www.state.gov p. 4
[65] Ibid., p.4
[66] Ibid pp.4-5

activity. Nevertheless, the principal obstacle to economic diversification and development is still the remaining mismatch between the job skills of Saudi graduates and the needs of the private job market at all levels. Out of a population of 22.7 million, approximately 4.6 million non-Saudis are employed in the economy.[67] Clearly, the economy's heavy dependence on foreign expertise leaves one to question the performance of the Kingdom's educational policies and facilities.

Whereas Saudi Arabia's first two development plans, covering the 1970s, emphasized infrastructure, the emphasis changed in the third plan, spanning from1980-85, where spending on infrastructure declined, rising markedly instead on education, health, and social services. By 1990, the country's basic infrastructure was viewed as largely complete, yet education and training remained areas of concern; private enterprise was encouraged, and foreign investment in the form of joint ventures with Saudi public and private companies was welcomed; the private sector began taking on more of a prominent role, accounting for 70 percent of non-oil GDP by 1987.[68] This initiative reflects the country's willingness to promote the policy of 'Saudization'; incentives for Saudi companies to establish their in-house Saudization programs through training schemes have been established in order to ensure the creation of more jobs for Saudis and to increase the percentage of Saudis in the country's total workforce. This has led to banks, hotels, travel agencies and many other sectors of industry to organize in-house training programs for potential local employees.

History

The Saudi state began in central Arabia in about 1750 when an alliance was forged between a local ruler, Muhammad bin Saud, and an Islamic reformer, Muhammad Abd Al-Wahhab, leading to the creation of a new political entity. The modern Saudi state was founded by the late King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, also known as Ibn Saud, in 1932, after the consolidation and unification of land, forming the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. King Abdul Aziz died in 1953 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Saud, who reigned for 11 years, after which succession continued through fraternal lineage.

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[67] Ibid., pp.5-6
[68] Ibid., p.6

Until the 1960s, most of the population was nomadic or semi-nomadic; however, due to rapid economic and urban growth, more than 95 percent of the population is now settled.[69] However, the number of young people in the Kingdom, (75 percent of the population is now under 30), is causing many to worry about the country's future.[70] Saudi Arabia is known as the birthplace of Islam and the custodian of the Two Holy Muslim Mosques. The cultural environment in Saudi Arabia is highly conservative; the country adheres to a strict interpretation of Islamic religious law, *Shari'a*; hence, cultural presentations must conform to narrowly defined standards of ethics. The implications of this mean that men and women are not permitted to attend public events together and are segregated in the work place. Most Saudis are ethnically Arab and there are only approximately 100,000 'Westerners' living in Saudi Arabia.[71] With such a small minority of 'Westerners', it is a country with little diversity; Islam is the religion of the land and Arabic is the official language.

Education

The principles and objectives of education in Saudi Arabia are to have students understand Islam in a correct and comprehensive manner; to plant and spread the Islamic creed; to furnish the students with the values, teachings and ideals of Islam; to equip them with various skills and knowledge; to develop their conduct in constructive directions; to develop the society economically and culturally; and to prepare the individual to be a useful member in the building of his/her community.'[72] Educational indicators show a remarkable growth, as a result of free education for all citizens. The general education enrolment increased remarkably and reached more than four million male and female students in the school year 1996/97.[73] The Educational Policy Document, issued by the Council of Ministers Resolution No. 779 of December 17, 1969, provides the basic reference on the fundamentals, goals and objectives of education. It is a comprehensive document emphasizing the necessity of an Islamic orientation and provides for extensive scientific and technological developments, with the ultimate objective of promoting human dignity and prosperity, albeit within the limits defined by the government. Although there is no specific law concerning compulsory education, provision of education is granted to every school aged child, along with the provision of free transportation

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[69] The League of Arab Nations, www.middleeastnews.com, p. 5
[70] Powell, B. Is Saudi Arabia headed for a fall? Fortune, Vol. 144, Issue 12, 2001, P. 192
[71] US State Department, www.state.gov, p.7
[72] UNESCO World Data on Education, Saudi Arabia, 2000, p. 2
[73] Ibid., p.2

to both male and female students, financial assistance to students to motivate them to continue their education, and provision of free textbooks to students at all stages.

Education in the country is under the responsibility of four main authorities: the Ministry of Education; the Presidency General for Girls' Education; the Ministry of Higher Education; and the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training. The Ministry of Education is in charge of educational provision for boys, regarding general education - elementary, intermediate and secondary, teacher training, special education, and adult education and literacy. Because education is separate for boys and girls, there are different administrative bodies that are responsible for each. Hence, it is evident that Saudi Arabia looks at boys and girls as completely separate entities, fulfilling distinct roles and purposes. The Presidency General for Girls' Education was established in 1960 to define study programmes and curricula for girls' education, in order to 'satisfy the ambition of the Saudi people to educate girls in accordance with the teachings of Islam.'[74] The establishment of the Presidency General for Girls' Education marked a turning point for a rapid development of girls' education. The presidency controls kindergartens in addition to girls' general education - elementary, intermediate and secondary, teacher training, colleges of education, adult education and literacy and vocational education and training. To this day, the GPGE continues to be responsible for girls' education at all levels with the exception of the women's programmes in the universities founded for men. The GPGE is independent of the Ministry of Education and has a separate budget, but it is not a ministry and its head does not sit on the Council of Ministers, while the Minister of Education for boys does.

The Ministry of Education's goals for girls' elementary education were certainly conservative in that they aimed to prepare women for little more than running a household and becoming accomplished at tasks such as sewing and cooking; but it must be acknowledged that the provision of basic education in literacy and numeracy for girls in Saudi Arabia was a great step forward at a time when most Saudi women were illiterate.[75] In 1964 the first four government intermediate schools for girls were opened, with goals very similar to those of the elementary schools and in the same year the first secondary school was opened, with the goal of preparing girls for domestic roles and also for university studies. The general opinion at the

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[74] Ibid., p.5

[75] Al Rawaf, S. & Simmons, C. The Education of Women in Saudi Arabia, Comparative Education, Vol. 27, Issue 3, 1991 p. 4

time regarding girls' education was that the elementary and intermediate schools catered for those parents who wanted only that their daughters become better wives and housekeepers, but that the secondary schools served the purposes of that small group of parents who wanted their daughters to be able to study up to and including college level.[76] As a result of the oil-boom in the 1970s, there was more money readily available for new buildings. Thus the GPGE greatly expanded its operations and by the mid-1970s was responsible for a new generation of educated young mothers who had a much greater interest in their children's academic achievements than the previous generation. However, the expansion of girls' education did not mean the disappearance of traditional attitudes towards the place of women in society or of the fear that girls' education was a 'Western-inspired' innovation. Indeed, an examination of textbooks for girls' schools, especially at the elementary level, demonstrates that the GPGE worked hard to ensure that traditional values in society were upheld. Even in the intermediate and secondary school level, where the curriculum, in many areas, is the same as that for boys, the GPGE issues its own books for girls, even when they are identical to the boys' books. The main difference between the two curricula is that physical education and sport are replaced, for girls, by home economics and embroidery. Suffice to say that education in Saudi Arabia is a means of reproducing gender divisions, and power relations. The country has drawn both upon Islam and its oil wealth to expand female education vastly within traditional boundaries. Its model of female education is unique among all Islamic countries, in its structure and strategies for the reproduction of gender divisions, through a dual system of male and female education, a gender-specific educational policy that emphasizes women's domestic functions, gender-segregated schools and colleges, and curriculum differentiation at the various educational levels.[77]

Saudi Arabia's general education policy affirms the rights of all citizens to free public education from the primary level to the college level. This general policy, coupled with generous financial allocations made possible by oil wealth, has resulted in a massive expansion of public female education since its inception in 1960. By 1990, more than I million (1,130,000) girls were enrolled: 770,370 in primary education, 308,700 in intermediate and secondary education, and 50,000 in higher education. The gender gap in education has been

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[76] Ibid., p.4

[77] El-Sanabary, N. Female Education in Saudi Arabia and the Reproduction of Gender Division, Gender & Education, Vol. 6, Issue, 2, 1994, p. 1

greatly narrowed as indicated by the percentage of females to total enrolment at the various educational levels: 45 percent at the primary level, 42 percent at intermediate and upper secondary levels, and 40 percent at the higher level. Female literacy increased from about 5 percent in the 1960s to 42 percent in 1990. There is therefore a comprehensive set of measures to ensure that women are educated. While credit can be ascribed to this, it cannot be overlooked that the country has a gender-specific policy which restricts and limits the type of education that women can receive, and what they can do with it after graduation.[78]

The Ministry of Higher Education was established in 1975 to supervise the execution of the Kingdom's policy in the field of higher education, previously under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. It is responsible for the supervision of the following universities established between 1957 and 1975: King Saud University, King Abdul Aziz University, Imam Mohammad Bin Saud University, King Fahad University, King Faisal University, and the Islamic University.[79] The General Presidency of Girls' Education in Saudi Arabia is the sole supervisor of all forms of girls' schooling as far as higher education and plays a major role in the supervision of women's higher education. The Universities of Saudi Arabia, like the schools, were established in the first place for men, since co-education is not acceptable in the Kingdom. However, because of the demand by women for higher education, the universities opened some colleges especially for them and established separate female campuses in others. Thus the Centre for Girls' Studies at King Saud University opened in 1976 with courses in Arabic, history, geography and English, and eventually all the colleges of King Saud University built centres for women, except the College of Engineering and the College of Architecture and Planning. Women are currently studying Public Administration, Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing and Education at King Saud University, although they do not enjoy the same level of facilities in terms of libraries and laboratories as the men. At King Saud University, women study on two campuses, one for science, (with a male dean) and one for arts subjects, (with a female dean). The students are taught by women teachers, directly, or by male teachers, indirectly, through the medium of closed circuit television.

The criteria for entrance to the colleges were, from the beginning, the same for both sexes. Thus, completion of secondary school education with a minimum of 50 percent in the

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[78] Ibid., pp.4-5
[79] UNESCO World Data on Education, Saudi Arabia p.5

secondary school certificate was an essential requirement for men and women, but students with the highest marks were admitted first. Four other universities in Saudi Arabia are open to female students: the University of King Abdulaziz in Jeddah admitted women from 1967 to economics, arts, science, medicine, nursing, home economics and education. Of the remaining universities, Umm at Qura in Mecca admitted women in 1971 to every department except Physical Education, the Training of Judges and Islamic Economics; the University of King Faisal, in 1978, opened a centre for women which included colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Agriculture, Nutrition, Home Economics and Education; and Interior Design, in the College of Architecture, followed in 1982.[80]

Saudi Arabia has made tremendous progress as a result of the oil wealth that facilitated the vast infrastructural developments; the challenge now facing the Kingdom is the ability to educate its citizens to meet the local demands of its economy and diversify its industries. Though the intent is there, there is much work to be done with regard to the educational system that is not properly teaching its graduates the skills required to function successfully in the modern technological world at large. Education is still a means of Saudi control and is the very institution that is perpetuating gender divisions and gender coding most strongly. Economic crisis will eventually demand the restructuring of the education system and its objectives.

Jordan

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy based on the Constitution established in 1952. Executive authority is vested in the King and his council of ministers, albeit the King signs and executes all laws. Although his veto power may be overridden by a two-thirds vote of both houses of the National Assembly, he is responsible for the appointment and dismissal of all judges by decree; he has the sole power to approve amendments to the constitution, declare war, and command the armed forces. Even cabinet decisions, court judgments, and the national currency are issued in his name. The King, who may dismiss other cabinet members at the prime minister's request, appoints the council of ministers, led by a prime minister.

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[80] Al Rawaf, H. & Simmons, C. The Education of Women in Saudi Arabia, Comparative Education, Vol. 27, Issue 3, 1991 p.7

Legislative power rests in the bicameral National Assembly; and the king appoints the 40-member Senate for an 8-year term.

King Hussein ruled Jordan from 1953 to 1999, surviving a number of challenges to his rule, drawing on the loyalty of his military, and serving as a symbol of unity and stability for both the East Bank and Palestinian communities in Jordan. In 1989 and 1993, Jordan held free and fair parliamentary elections and in 1992, political parties were legalised.[81] King Abdullah II succeeded his father Hussein following the latter's death in February 1999. Since then, King Abdullah has worked tirelessly to reaffirm Jordan's peace treaty with Israel, whilst working hard to refocus the government's agenda on economic reform. Jordan's continuing structural economic difficulties, growing population, and more open political environment has led to the emergence of a variety of political parties. Moving toward greater independence, Jordan's Parliament has become the major forum in which differing political views, including those of political Islamists, are expressed. However, in June 2001, the King dissolved Parliament with a view to hold Parliamentary elections in 2002, which he did.[82]

History

Part of the land known as Jordan is within the richly historical Fertile Crescent region, but most is not. This mainly desert land has had over the course of history many invaders and settlers including Hittites, Egyptians, Israelites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arab Muslims, Christian Crusaders, Mameluks, Ottoman Turks, and, finally, the British. In 1922, the British divided their mandate in the area by establishing the semi-autonomous Emirate of Transjordan, ruled by the Hashemite Prince Abdullah, while continuing the administration of Palestine under a British High Commissioner. The mandate over Transjordan ended in 1946; immediately after the country became the independent Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan.[83] Transjordan was one of the Arab states which moved to assist Palestinian nationalists opposed to the creation of Israel in May 1948, partaking in the warfare between the Arab states and the newly founded State of Israel. In 1950, the country was renamed the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to include those portions of Palestine annexed by King Abdullah I. The 1967 war led to a dramatic increase in the number of Palestinians living in

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[81] US State Department, Jordan, www.state.gov p. 3
[82] Ibid., p.4
[83] Ibid., p.5

Jordan with the number of Palestinian refugees increasing from 700,000 in 1966 to 1,000,000 in 1968, mostly from the West Bank. The period following the 1967 war saw an upsurge in the power and importance of Palestinian resistance in Jordan, which by 1970, began to constitute a growing threat to the sovereignty and security of the Hashemite state.[84]

Economy

Jordan is a small country with limited natural resources; only 4 percent of the land is arable, and agricultural production is subject to the vagaries of a limited water supply. While Jordan's economy has traditionally been centred on phosphates, potash, fertilizer derivatives, remittances from Jordanians overseas, tourism, and foreign aid, the government is now working to reinvigorate economic growth by focusing on information technology, tariff-free export areas, as well as expanding tourism. Though Jordan is looking to attract foreign investment, the high level of bureaucracy and less than fully developed legal system remain obstacles for achieving this. A heavy debt burden and a large public sector are added constraints that continue to challenge the economic growth in the Kingdom. Jordan had a per capita income of $1,500 in 2000, a population at approximately 5 million in 2000, of which 54 percent are between the ages of 15-64; a predicament shared by most of the countries in the region.[85]

Jordan benefited from increased Arab aid during the oil boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s, when its annual real GNP growth averaged more than 10 percent. However, from the mid 1980s, reductions in both Arab aid and worker remittances slowed real economic growth to an average of roughly 2 percent per year.[86] The Gulf Crisis that began in August 1990, however, further exasperated Jordan's already serious economic problems, forcing the government to suspend restructural reform programs and cease the majority of debt payments. It was a time when aid from Gulf Arab states, worker remittances, and trade all contracted simultaneously; whilst at the same time Palestinian refugees flooded the country. Consequently, it led to serious balance-of-payments problems, stunted GDP growth, and strained government resources. The economy rebounded in 1992, largely due to the influx of capital coming from workers returning from the Gulf; nevertheless, recovery has not been

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[84] Ibid., p.6
[85] The World Bank, Jordan: www.worldbank.org pp. 1-2
[86] The League of Arab Nations, Jordan: www.middleeastnews.com, p. 4

evenly keeled. Debt, poverty, and unemployment remain Jordan's biggest ongoing problems. While pursuing economic reform and increased trade, Jordan's economy will continue to be vulnerable to external shocks and regional unrest. Without calm in the region, economic growth seems destined to stay below its potential.[87]

Education

The literacy rate in Jordan according to 2001 statistics is at 90 percent.[88] The general objectives of education are to build citizens 'believing in God, affiliated to their country and nation, endowed with human virtues and perfection, and having a fully developed personality in all its various aspects – physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social'.[89] The 1994 census indicated about one-third of the population to be involved in some form of education. In the same year, illiteracy rates were 9.8 percent for males and 20.7 percent for females, while in 1979 the rates were 19.9 percent and 49.6 percent, respectively. The Ministry of Education (MOE) supervises all educational institutions with the exception of higher education. Most schools are administered by the MOE; in the academic year 1997/98, 70.7 percent of the total number of students enrolled in schools administered by the MOE.[90]

Given the dearth of natural resources, Jordan began a comprehensive review of its education system in the mid-1980s with the belief that human beings are the best resource for achieving comprehensive economic and social development. Ensuing from the value given to education, free compulsory education is provided until the age of ten years. The structure of the educational system is: kindergarten cycle – a two-year programme, basic education – a ten-year programme, and secondary education – a two-year programme, consisting of comprehensive secondary education - academic and vocational, and applied secondary education. Secondary education comprises two major streams: the comprehensive secondary (academic and vocational) and the applied secondary. The two-year comprehensive secondary education programme concludes with the General Secondary Education Certificate Examination in the following academic specializations: scientific, literary and *Sharia* or Islamic law and vocational: industrial, commercial, agricultural, nursing, hotel and home economics. The two-year applied secondary education programme is aimed at providing vocational

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[87] US State Department, www.state.gov, p.2
[88] Ibid., p. 2
[89] UNESCO World Data on Education, Jordan, p. 2
[90] Ibid., p.2

education and training with the intention of creating a skilled labour force, both at vocational centres and through apprenticeship schemes.[91]

The country completed the implementation of the first phase of the Educational Development Plan, between 1989-95, which focused on providing the necessary infrastructure for the development of the education system and encompassed the following aspects: philosophy and objectives of the educational policy, restructuring the education system, new curricula and textbooks, educational technologies, buildings and facilities, certification and training, educational planning, research and development, co-operation with universities, pre-school education, literacy and adult education, educational evaluation and administration, computer services, and educational innovations. Although an extremely comprehensive and ambitious plan, the years 1996-98 did achieve some significant goals. Among them was the introduction of appropriate regional and international developmental models and experiences and educational innovations, with the aim of improving the quality of the education system, and designing the methodology and the implementation mechanism for the preparation of the second educational development plan of 1999-2005, with the intent on focusing on the quality of education and social development.[92]

While there is every intention to restructure the Jordanian educational system to better serve the demands of the country and better prepare its citizens for realizing the broader economic and social development agenda, education is directly under the control of the Ministry of Education, the very structure of the institution of education hardly subscribes to a decentralized or 'democratic' philosophy. The Education Act No. 3 of 1994 regulates kindergarten, basic and secondary education. It articulates the philosophy and objectives of education, the educational policy, the functions of the Ministry of Education, and the tasks of the Boards of Education; it also regulates curricula and textbooks, general examinations, the structure of the Ministry, as well as the functioning of private and foreign educational institutions with interests in Jordan.[93] Furthermore, the Ministry of Education defines the administrative structure of the Ministry and its basic units and committees at all levels (central level, governorates and districts), their main tasks, as well as the scientific research for the development of the educational process. The objectives of educational research are

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[91] Ibid., p.13
[92] Ibid., p.4
[93] Ibid.,p.5

established by the Ministry, which also defines the tasks of the Research Committee for developing the educational process. With regard to higher education, a Higher Education Council was established in order to define its authority and responsibilities; it contains some regulations concerning the functioning of higher education institutions and has specific authority and responsibility in relation to private universities. In 1998, the Parliament approved that the Higher Education Council formulates the general policy related to higher education in the Kingdom, and co-ordinates university education policies, along with supervision over private university education.[94] In summary, the role of the Ministry of Education is not simply limited to establishing and administering public education; it also supervises private education institutions, designs the educational policies, the implementation and supervision of these plans and administers vocational education.

The Jordanian National Committee for Women's Affairs has worked alongside the government in attempting to realize the government's agenda to boost women's participation in the economic, political and social realms of the society. With specific reference to education, the committee has worked to make efforts to present:

> *'....a balanced picture about the family, in general, and women and girls, in particular, in school curricula and textbooks, by showing a picture of a productive working woman who effectively participates in the various developmental activities at home and in society, in addition to her role as a mother and housewife.'*[95]

There have been efforts made by the committee to see that educational and vocational training services be expanded for women, especially in such fields as industry and the service sector. There has also been the development of educational and vocational guidance services at educational and media institutions in order to encourage girls to choose the academic and professional careers best suited to their capabilities. Gender discrimination in education hinders the advancement of women and although women in Jordan have achieved progress in the field of education, there are still some areas of the country that subscribe to traditional attitudes, placing more importance on the education of boys. This is reflected where the number of females obtaining graduate degrees did not exceed 5.3 percent in 1998, while the

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[94] Ibid., pp.6-7
[95] Jordanian National Committee for Women's Affairs,1993: www.un.org, p.7

percentage for male graduates reached 10.5 percent.[96] This gender divide is also manifested in the work force, but Jordan has made considerable efforts to enhance female participation. An example of this is that women's participation in the labour force increased from 3.5 percent in 1952 to 14.1 percent in 1998.[97] Nevertheless, there still remains a considerable gap between men's and women's participation in the economic arena with 14 percent of women working, in comparison with 69 percent of the male population over the age of fifteen.[98] Even among those who are employed, most work within the government sector, with limited participation in business and engineering activities.

There is no other recourse for Jordan than to look to its educational system as a means of boosting the economy, and improving the lives of the citizens. The intention to further develop the human resource of men and women in the country and the value that has been placed on modernizing and partaking as an active contributor and member of the global arena is evident. What is needed is for these intentions to be met by a holistic restructuring of the educational system that can redefine the gender coding that still exists. Only then will Jordan be able to fully realize its commendable goals.

Morocco

With an estimated population of about 30.75 million, 99 percent of Moroccan society is of Arab – Berber ethnic origin, where the majority of the inhabitants are Muslim.[99] Morocco shares a similar characteristic to many other North African and Middle East nations in that the majority of the population, in this case 60.93 percent are between the ages of 15 – 64.[100] Although Arabic is the official language, as a result of their French colonial history, French remains the language of business, government and diplomacy.

The Kingdom of Morocco is a constitutional monarchy that gained its independence from the French in 1956. Evidence of its colonial past is evident in the country's legal system

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[96] Princess Basma's Resource Centre, Jordanian Women Past and Present, www.awc.org.jo , 1999, pp.3-4
[97] Ibid., p.4
[98] Ibid., p.5
[99] League of Arab Nations, Morocco, www.middleeastnews.com, p. 2
[100] Ibid., p.2

which is a combination of Islamic law and French and Spanish civil law systems. The executive powers are theoretically in the hand of the Chief of State and the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. However, the Chief of State is in fact the monarch himself, King Mohammed VI; the appointment of the Prime Minister is by appointment by the King, following legislative elections and the Cabinet members and Council Ministers are also chosen by the monarch exclusively. There are no elections held by the Executive branch of the government as the monarchy is hereditary. Ultimate authority rests with the King. He presides over the Council of Ministers; appoints the Prime Minster following legislative elections; appoints all members of the government taking into account the Prime Minister's recommendations; and may, at his discretion, terminate the tenure of any minister, dissolve the Parliament, call for new elections, or rule by decree. The King is the head of the military and the country's religious leader. Upon the death of his father Mohammed V, King Hassan II succeeded to the throne in 1961. He ruled Morocco for the next 38 years, until his own death in 1999. His son, King Mohammed VI, assumed the throne in July 1999.

Since the constitutional reform of 1996, the legislative branch of the government consists of a bicameral Parliament with an upper house or Chamber of Counsellors with 270 seats; members are elected indirectly by local councils, professional organizations, and labour syndicates for nine-year terms; one-third of the members are renewed every three years, and a lower house or Chamber of Representatives with 325 seats; members are elected by popular vote for five-year terms.[101] The Parliament's powers, though limited, were expanded under the 1992 and 1996 constitutional revisions and include budgetary matters, approving bills, questioning ministers, and establishing ad hoc commissions of inquiry to investigate the government's actions.

In March 1998, King Hassan named a coalition government headed by opposition socialist leader Abderrahmane Youssoufi and composed largely of ministers drawn from opposition parties. Prime Minister Youssoufi's government is the first government drawn primarily from opposition parties in decades, and also represents the first opportunity for a coalition of socialist and nationalist parties to be included in the government.[102]

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[101] Ibid.,p.5
[102] US State Department, Morocco, www.state.gov p. 3

History

Arab forces began occupying Morocco in the seventh century A.D., bringing with them their civilization and Islam. The Alaouite dynasty, which has ruled Morocco since 1649, claims descent from the Prophet Muhammad. Morocco's location and resources led to early competition among European powers in Africa, beginning with successful Portuguese efforts to control the Atlantic coast in the 15th century. France showed a strong interest in Morocco as early as 1830. Following recognition by the United Kingdom in 1904 of France's 'sphere of influence' in Morocco, the Algeciras Conference (1906) formalized France's 'special position' and entrusted policing of Morocco to France and Spain jointly. The Treaty of Fez (1912) made Morocco a protectorate of France. By the same treaty, Spain assumed the role of protecting power over the northern and southern (Saharan) zones.

Nationalist political parties, which subsequently arose under the French protectorate, based their arguments for Moroccan independence on such World War II declarations as the Atlantic Charter; a joint U.S.-British statement that set forth, among other things, the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they live. A manifesto of the Istiqlal (Independence) Party in 1944 was one of the earliest public demands for independence which subsequently provided most of the leadership for the nationalist movement; on March 2, 1956, the Kingdom of Morocco recovered its political independence from France.[103]

Economy

Morocco faces the problems typical of developing countries—restraining government spending, reducing constraints on private activity and foreign trade, and keeping inflation within manageable bounds. Since the early 1980s the government has pursued an economic program toward these objectives with the support of the IMF, the World Bank, and the Paris Club of creditors. Macroeconomic stability coupled with relatively slow economic growth characterizes the Moroccan economy over the past several years. The present Youssoufi government has introduced a number of important economic reforms over the past several years. However, the economy still remains overly dependent on the agriculture sector. Morocco's primary economic challenge is to accelerate growth in order to reduce high levels of unemployment. It had a per capita income estimated at $1,181 in 2002, with an economy that

[103] Ibid., p.2

straddles both industrial and agricultural production. Fourteen per pent of Morocco's Gross Domestic Product come from agricultural products such as wheat, barley, citrus fruits, vegetables, olives, livestock and fishing; with thirty – two percent of GDP coming from industries such as phosphate mining, manufacturing and handicrafts, construction and public works and energy.[104] However, economic growth has been erratic and relatively slow; partially as a result of an over-reliance on the agriculture sector where production has been extremely susceptible to rainfall levels it ranges from 13 percent to 20 percent of GDP.[105] Given that almost 50 percent of Morocco's population depends directly on agriculture production, droughts, in the past, have severely affected the economy. For this reason, Morocco has little choice but to diversify its economy away from agriculture to developing a more stable economic basis for growth.

Education

Education in Morocco is free and compulsory through primary school, until the age of fifteen. It is also almost completely public where 95 percent of schools belong to the public sector.[106] Nevertheless, many children, particularly girls in rural areas, still do not attend school. The country's illiteracy rate has remained at around 50 percent for some years but has been reported to reach as high as 90 percent among girls in rural regions.[107] Morocco has approximately 230,000 students enrolled in 14 public universities. The oldest and, in some ways, most prestigious among them is Mohammed V University in Rabat, with faculties of law, sciences, liberal arts, and medicine. One of Morocco's higher educational institutions, Karaouine University, in Fez, has been a centre for Islamic studies for more than 1,000 years. Morocco has one private university, Al-Akhawayn, which was founded in 1993 by King Hassan II and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia; the university is styled according to the American university model, using English as the medium of instruction and comprising approximately 1,000 students.[108]

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[104] Ibid., p. 2
[105] Ibid., 4
[106] Ameziane, A. & Lietz, J. Educational Accountability: The Structure of Education in Morocco, Education, Vol. 103, No. 4, 2001, p.382
[107] US State Department, www.state.gov. p.1
[108] Ibid., p.1

The Kingdom of Morocco has developed an educational system that has attempted to incorporate the traditional customs and values of the people with the system of accountability practised by its former colonial ruler, France. As a consequence, it involves a highly structured curriculum for each educational level and a minimum competency requirement at each grade level. "Western" educational practices were introduced in 1930, and upon its independence in 1956, Morocco's primary objective for its education was to enable the kingdom to become a modern state. Students are enrolled at age seven and although primary education was made compulsory for all students aged seven through thirteen in 1963, only 35 – 40 percent of the children of this age in fact attended school. Upon completion of elementary school, students are given a nationally sponsored examination. For those students applying for secondary schooling, another school examination is given, regardless of whether they pass the examination for the Certificate of Primary School. Clearly, attendance for secondary schooling in not performance based. Within the first cycle of secondary schooling, the curriculum hardly differs from that of the primary, as there are no electives or special provisions for students with learning disabilities. However, unlike primary school, students have different teachers for each subject matter. Though one may draw similarities between the average American public school curriculum and that of the Moroccan, there is one significant difference, religious studies. Upon completion of the first cycle of the secondary school, students are given an examination which will allow them to continue through to the second cycle of the secondary phase. It is after satisfactorily passing the examination that students are then allowed to choose between various programs for further study. The course content between these programs varies widely, but the course content within each program is identical throughout the country. The rationale for the uniformity of the curriculum at this level is to provide a fair measure of performance. After the successful completion of three years of secondary schooling, the students are given the final Baccalaureate examination required to graduate. Since all secondary school course-work in Morocco is in preparation for a specific college program, there is little need for a generalised high school curriculum. One negative aspect of this is that students are 'locked into a particular "vocational" track much too early in their academic careers.'[109]

Under the first structural adjustment programme of the early 1980s, the Moroccan government identified the expansion of female education as a social priority. However, there

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[109] Ameziane, A. & Lietz, J. Educational Accountability: The Structure of Education in Morocco, Education, Vol. 103, No. 4, 2001, p.382

still remain large disparities between female and male enrolment, as girls in the rural areas are obliged from an early age to work with their mothers. Of the 761,000 urban women accounted for in the Moroccan labour force, only 14.6 percent are employed in the liberal and scientific professions, with almost a third of state employees being women.[110] Although there are promising developments being made where women are managing to secure jobs in the civil service, the situation is characterised by a preponderance of women assuming the lowest paid jobs. Perhaps this is the case as the traditional domain of female employment in France served as the blueprint for the educational infrastructure of Morocco, with almost a third of all state employees being female primary school teachers. As is the case for many other Arab nations, gender roles are ingrained in the very institutions that are meant to remove the gender disparities that perpetuate Moroccan society.

Nevertheless, the enrolment of urban girls in secondary schools and universities is increasing and educated women are finding jobs available to them in the state sector. However, there is a need for more long-term policies which target those sections of the population whose economic potential is being under-utilised, such as the highly educated female unemployed workforce, the under-educated rural female workforce and the educated rural female population, who are currently not using the skills they acquired in primary, secondary and tertiary education outside of the domestic work domain in the rural economy. There is clear evidence that education in Morocco has had a highly positive effect on employment chances of women.[111] The higher the level of education, the higher the chances for a woman to gain employment in the urbanised cities, and the lower the degree of gender discrimination in the most highly educated section of the work force, where sixty-nine women are employed for every one hundred men.[112] Nonetheless, without any specific internal social development plans for females, it cannot be expected that the female population of Morocco will be able to narrow the social development gap in the area of education and employment.

Contextual realities, country profiles and case profiles were addressed in this chapter to give an overall understanding of some of the issues that plague the region's educational and

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[110] Griffiths, C. Social Development and Women in Africa – the case of Morocco, Journal of Gender Studies, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1996, p.74
[111] Ibid., p.78
[112] Ibid., p.78

socio-political systems. In the next chapter, methodological considerations are addressed, shedding light on how this study was constructed and conducted.

PART B

Part B comprises two chapters, Chapter Three and Four. Chapter Three relates to the methodological element of the research and is followed by data analysis of the empirical findings. The chapter on methodology investigates the methodological contexts and considerations of the study. Justification is given as to why a qualitative method was chosen to conduct the empirical study as well as the ethical implications and issues of reliability and validity. The chapter also explains how and why the case samples were chosen and the basis and criteria for their selection. Chapter Four consists of the data analysis resulting from the interviews conducted in the empirical study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGICAL CONTEXTS and CONSIDERATIONS

Towards a Conceptual Framework

The primary purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe and discover the role of education in forming the cultural identity of a small group of educated elite Arab women. At this stage in the research, one needs to gain the reflections of these women on their ability to reconcile cultures through the education they have received, and their own subsequent experiences. This will help in ascertaining the essence and meaning of education for them and the juxtaposition of their educational development to the formulation of the cultures and traditions they have experienced. The phenomenological approach to data generation provides a platform from which the researcher can identify key cultural concepts under examination such as gender roles, behaviours and acculturation.

The central question at hand in this study relates to the *meaning* behind the educational experiences of a select group of Arab and successful women, and their own insights into the role of their education as affecting gender roles and engendering change within their own lives, and those of others. However, the central question itself gives birth to a whole set of sub questions, which, according to Stake [1], can be divided into issue *questions* and *topical questions.* Issue questions:

> *'.....are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical, and especially personal contexts...Issues draw us toward observing, even teasing out the problems of the case, the conflictual outpourings, the complex backgrounds of human concern'.*

Topical questions that may arise, according to Moustakas' [2] procedures in data analysis, relate to examining the underlying themes and contexts that account for the experiences of these women who come from different Arab countries, and hence varying socio-political and economic climates. The possible structural meanings of these personal experiences, the universal structures that precipitate thoughts and feelings regarding their educational experiences, and the salient structural themes that help in fully understanding the dynamics in which these women operate in order to facilitate such personal experiences, are all part of the context for this study and the data generation and analysis arising from it. While broader

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[1] Stake, R. The Art of Case Study Research, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995, P.17
[2] Moustakas, C. Phenomenological Research Methods, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994, P.99

frameworks tend to be derived from macro-analysis of small – scale projects, socially responsive educational research focuses on micro-analysis of events at the local level.[3]

It is out of a documented need in the literature for increased understanding and dialogue about Arab women, gender roles and education that this study aims to focus on personal experiences relating to such issues. This is with the aim to establish a new line of thinking and perhaps assess the issue of education and its role in selected Arab contexts on the basis of the perspectives of a sample of educated elite women. As Barritt[4] suggests, the rationale for research is:

> *'....not the discovery of new elements, as in natural scientific study, but rather the heightening of awareness for experience which has been forgotten and overlooked. By heightening awareness and creating dialogue, it is hoped that research can lead to better understanding of the way things appear to someone else and through that insight lead to practical improvements in the societies in question.'*

'Phenomenological study', as described by Creswell[5], portrays the 'meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon.' It is through this means of study that the researcher explores the structures of 'consciousness' in human experiences. Husserl [6] reinforces this point by emphasizing the central underlying salience or essence of the experience, which then serves as the basis from which to analyze the specific statements and themes, and search for all possible meanings when conducting data analysis. It is essential at this juncture to practise what Husserl terms 'epoch'. This means that the phenomenological approach demands that the researcher suspends all prejudgments, intuitions and personal experiences until there is reason grounded on certain foundations. Creswell also states that it is essential to refuse the 'subject – object dichotomy' so that the reality of the object is only perceived within the meaning of the individual's experience and hence only viewed within a context[7]. For this area of study, the psychological approach within the phenomenological dynamic has been chosen as it focuses on the meaning of different individual experiences and perspectives of different women of similar cultures, in order to better

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[3] Stringer, E. Socially Responsive Educational Research, Theory and Concept in Qualitative Research, Flinders, D. & Mills, G. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 160
[4] Barritt, L. Human sciences and the human image, Phenomenology and Pedagogy, 1986, 4(3), P.20
[5] Creswell, J. Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998, pp.51 – 52
[6] Husserl, E. Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology, (D. Carr, Trans.). Evanston, Il: North Western University Press, 1931
[7] Creswell, J. Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998, pp.52 - 53

comprehend what their experiences mean for them, from which general or universal meanings may possibly be derived. Phenomenology:

> *'.....is a school of philosophical thought that underpins all qualitative research.....in the conduct of a phenomenological study, the focus would be on the essence or structure of an experience.'*[8]

Patton[9] reinforces this point by stressing the essence and existence of core meanings to shared experiences.

As suggested by Creswell and Moustakas, separately, phenomenology is understanding a concept where the focus of the study is not on the life of the individual but rather in this case, on the phenomenon of education, its role in shaping cultural identity and the extent to which it has been responsible for engendering change within the lives of the interviewees. This form of study has been chosen to try and discern the meaning of the educational experiences of selected individuals, as perceived by them, and in relation to their wider achievements. Within qualitative research, there is a paradigm of philosophical assumptions which guide the inquiries. Amongst such philosophical and theoretical frameworks are ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches. Moustakas succinctly and accurately summarizes this notion of phenomenology, which serves as a theoretical and philosophical framework for this study. He states:

> *'The challenge facing the human science researcher is to describe things in themselves, to permit what is before one to enter consciousness and be understood in its meanings and essences in the light of intuition and self-reflection. The process involves a blending of what is really present with what is imagined as present from the vantage point of possible meanings; thus a unity of the real and the ideal.'*[10]

Philosophical Basis

The philosophical framework for this particular study is of an ontological nature whereby the nature of reality for the qualitative researcher is addressed. The interviewees

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[8] Merriam, S. Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998, p.15
[9] Patton, M.Q. Qualitative Evaluation Methods, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1990
[10] Moustakas, C. Phenomenological Research Methods, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994, p. 27

themselves, the researcher and the reader interpreting the study, construct the reality. Hence, multiple realities exist simultaneously. It is for this reason that such realities need to be identified, addressed and considered throughout the study. Interpretations, quotes and differing perspectives of the interviewees on varying themes, need to be incorporated throughout the narrative in order to fully explore and illustrate the phenomenon in question.

Though the ontological, philosophical assumption for this study have been identified and stated, it is worth noting that the research also commands a need to consider an ideological dynamic. One could argue that this study is also couched within an ideological, post-modern framework. There is the conceptual perspective at the outset, which looks at the role of education in a particular *milieu* and as well as in society in general. However, arguably, there could also exist a gender approach, which addresses such issues as gender relations and prescribed gender roles. The application of critical theory could result in the scientific study of education in the Arab world and its transformation though interpreting meanings of social life and social struggles: a critique of societies in the Arab world and the envisioning of new possibilities. Such an approach would require certain methodological stances. For example, questions could be put encouraging interviewees to examine the conditions of their existence, within the restrictions that may exist in their traditions and culture. The intention of such an approach would be to comprehend the underlying orders of social life, social theorizing and through such critiques, discern the ideological effects on schools and the culture's view of education and its purpose. Doing so would ultimately require an emphasis on multiple methodologies as well as multiple perspectives on the issues in question. Working within such an ideological framework also means that the researcher is part of a wider cultural backdrop and setting. The phenomenologist, from the outset, examines the meaning of the experience for the individual. The premise is that human experience makes sense before any theorizing takes place. Therefore, objective understanding of the experiences operates within a subjective framework, since the experiences themselves are laden with subjectivity.

In this study, the exercise of gaining information through a qualitative approach using phenomenology is multi – stepped. In order to fully comprehend the philosophical perspectives of the women in question and the concept of studying people's experiences, it is imperative to pay heed to the aforementioned notion of 'epoch' where the researcher 'brackets his or her

own preconceived ideas about the phenomenon to understand it through the voices of the informants.'[11] Contextualizing the women in terms of their social/economic/political backgrounds and countries from which they originate is crucial to understanding their insights and the dynamics in which they operate. Such background information is reliant upon secondary source documentations. The research questions that have been compiled explore the meanings of their experiences within these contexts and ask each individual to present a descriptive analysis of her education and background, as well as perspectives on certain issues pertaining to the role of education and gender roles within their wider communities. The data collected from these select women, who have experienced and recognized the importance of education in their world is achieved through semi – structured, in-depth interviews where the number of interviewees is ten. It is after such data is collected through recorded interviews that the phenomenological data analysis begins. Creswell describes this phase through a process of '*horizonalization*', where statements from the interviews are clustered into meanings until some sort of general description of the experiences and the role of education in the formulation of their cultural identity is identified. He argues that a 'single unifying meaning of the experience' emerges as a result.[12]

Generating Theory

Theory and method are inextricably linked. Theoretical frameworks, intentions and purposes determine much of the researcher's questions and the method by which the data is collected. LeCompte and Preissle [13] define theories as being 'statements about how things are connected. Their purpose is to explain why things happen as they do.' Theories vary in their underlying premises, whereby some explain the general phenomenon in a predictive fashion, and others are descriptive and narrative. For the purpose of this study, as the theories formulated are explanations of individual cases, they are not for the purpose of generalization. It is important to stress this point, as these individual cases cannot be used to predict the causes of others. Instead, they can be used in a comparative fashion to alert researchers to themes or events, which might then prove common to similar phenomena under different

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[11] Creswell, J. Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998, p.54
[12] Ibid. p.55
[13] LeCompte, M & Preissle, J. Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research, New York: Academic Press Inc, 1993, pp.118-119

conditions. Such theories are expressed in narrative prose in the form of statements describing a phenomenon with the use of examples, descriptions and anecdotes. For the purpose of this study, the first step in the theory-laden stage is to identify concepts and group ideas into categories, which share common characteristics through identification and description. Answers to questions regarding what patterns can be seen from the data and 'is there anything going on?' need to be addressed. However, it is crucial that one puts aside any preconceived notions or presumptions regarding the presence of a phenomenon, which indeed, may or may not exist in that particular case. Once such concept identification has been successfully accomplished, LeCompte encourages connecting and linking these constructs together to show the existence of any relationships that could express causality, correlation, description or explanation. In this particular study, the connections cannot lead to generalization on a broad level, but the connections and relationships identified can help formulate themes and theories about the phenomenon in question. This is akin to what Yin describes as replication logic.[14]

Issues of Bias

When addressing the issue of validity in research, one must bear in mind that theories are human constructions that are derived from information gathered informally and formally. Informal theories and explanations are formulated in one's everyday life and based on hunches and personal reasoning and rationale. They are socially derived from individual personalities, cultural background and upbringing, academic training and general life experiences. One cannot underestimate the degree to which this serves as a significant potential for researcher bias. The questions a researcher poses, and the sort of interpretation that the data is subjected to, depends very much on the researcher's position and personal agenda. Characteristics such as age, sex, ethnicity, economic status, and country of origin unquestionably shape the questions researchers ask, as well as the information their interviewees are willing to share. It is no surprise then that much research reflects themes focused on aspects of the researcher's personal identity. Hence, inquiry and research do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, they are laden with and affected by, the researcher's own personal history, along with the general socio-cultural framework in which the researcher lives and the

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[14] Yin, R. Case Study Research, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1994

philosophical traditions to which the researcher ascribes. Evidently, whether consciously or sub-consciously, these personal influences will affect the assumptions the researcher makes about the nature of reality, the ontological perspective of the study, values, and not least, the actual questions formulated. The writer's own intrigue and background concerning the role of education in sex-role enculturation in the Middle East and the construction of women's cultural identity in the Arab-patriarchal paradigm through schooling and family, very much govern the nature of this study. Many of the questions posed in this study are lodged within ideological commitments of the researcher as explained above; in a similar way that Apple and Weis's 1983 collection of studies on schooling and curriculum reflect their concern with the origin of pervasive inequalities in education and society.[15] Other questions from this study also derive from a curiosity about ordinary phenomena, personal experiences and perspectives about education, its purpose and the tension that exists between acquiring skills and reproducing cultural traditions. Although the aforementioned factors do affect the 'objectivity' of the researcher, it must be noted that, due to the nature of this research, the researcher is not partial to, or imprisoned by, any particular disciplinary tradition that could predispose her to examine phenomena from certain perspectives at the expense of ignoring others. This in turn, would affect the analytic framework in which the researcher might begin work, as well as the conclusions reached or explanations given for the existence of particular phenomena. LeCompte and Preissle both emphasize the need to take into account the influence of the researcher's own cultural ideologies and background on the choices of research design and execution. Because these affect what the researcher deems important to observe and analyze, it is important not to 'write the researcher out of the story', as it would only give 'an incomplete portrait of the group under study'.[16] It is the data collected that very much reflects the researcher's view of the world.

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[15] Apple, M & Weiss, Ideology and Practice in Schooling, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983

[16] LeCompte, M. & Preissle, J. Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research, New York: Academic Press Inc, 1993, p.125

A Qualitative Approach

The methodology employed for this research study is of a qualitative nature with supporting qualitative and quantitative secondary documentary sources. In determining the method of investigation for this study, it was not so much the superiority of one approach over another, or the preference for one particular method, but rather the appropriateness of a qualitative method of investigation for this particular research which counted. As stated by Trow: [17]

> *'Let us....get on with the business of attacking our problems with the widest array of conceptual and methodological tools that we possess...This does not preclude discussion and debate regarding the relative usefulness of different methods for the study of specific problems or types of problems. But that is very different from the assertion of the general and inherent superiority of one method over another on the basis of some intrinsic qualities it presumably possesses'.*

Burgess supports this research methodology as he believes researchers:

> *'....who have utilized a qualitative approach in their investigations have tended to use a range of methods, styles and strategies based on interviewing.....and the collection of documentary materials'.*[18]

When conducting qualitative educational research projects, Burgess highlights some issues which must be considered. Among them is the question of when theory is used and for what purpose. Although for some researchers, theoretical perspectives are used in the formulation of the initial questions and in establishing a working hypotheses, the theoretical perspectives for this study are not merely confined to the beginning or the end of the research, but rather, evolve and come to fruition throughout the data collection and are then formally generated at the final stage of data collection. The interviewing process calls for the researcher to think reflexively about the research process and the position taken in conducting the investigation. This is more of a challenge in situations such as this where the researcher, at different points, related to the interviewees and some of their experiences, even predicaments. It is in such

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[17] Trow, M. Comment on Participation Observation and Interviewing; A Comparison, Human Organization, 16 (3), 1957, p.35

[18] Burgess, R. Issues in Educational Research: Qualitative Methods, London: The Falmer Press, 1985, P.4

situations that reflexivity on the part of the researcher as well as flexibility in collecting and analyzing data are crucial to the validity and reliability of the study.

In looking closely at a select group of Arab women's personal educational experiences and the formulation of their cultural identity through education, it can be argued that there is an underlying concern with the sociology of education where the micro-macro problem between school and society has been the subject of a great deal of theoretical debate. According to Hargreaves, 'the sociology of education....was segregated into what might be called studies of the schools and studies of 'the system.'[19] By taking an up-close, personal and anthropological look at certain members in a particular society, this approach may lend itself to a better understanding of how that particular society shapes and is shaped by the schooling system and the educational culture in which it is embedded. The impetus of this research is to initiate some sort of dialogue between theories and evidence where each is continually interrogated against the other...' as well as being tested for its internal consistency and coherence'.[20] Personal perspectives from a certain group of women, coupled with existing knowledge on the educational systems and societies of the Arab world, can serve as a dialogue through which understandings of that social world can become valid knowledge and information.

Creswell defines qualitative research as:

> *'An inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants....'*[21]

The nature of this research is qualitative as it relies on a few cases and many variables and attempts to engage in the complex, time – consuming process of data analysis resulting in a few themes and categories. A qualitative method of inquiry is most appropriate for this study, as the variables are not easily identified and theories are not available to explain behaviour of the interviewees, but need to be generated from a detailed examination of the topic. The study has been formulated so as to ask open-ended research questions in order to explore and capture the personal perspectives of the participants. Through the examination of the qualitative data, the researcher's aim was to work inductively from 'particulars to more general

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[19] Hargreaves, A. The Micro-Macro Problems in the Sociology of Education, in Burgess, R. Issues in Educational Research: Qualitative Methods, London: The Falmer Press, 1985, p. 22
[20] Ibid. p.28
[21] Creswell, J. Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998, p.15

perspectives, whether these perspectives are called themes, dimensions...or categories'.[22] According to Patton, there are different typologies of questions intended to elicit differing data. Among those included in this study are: experience and behaviour questions that elicit 'what respondents do or have done'; opinion and value questions that elicit how respondents think about their experiences, how the respondents react or feel about their experiences; sensory questions regarding what and how they perceive the world around them; and background and demographic questions that elicit their descriptions of themselves and their community.[23] Schatzman and Strauss reaffirm the use of qualitative research and interview technique as a way to acquire and reveal how participants conceive of their worlds and how they explain these conceptions.[24] The interview schedule closely designed and piloted for this study resembles what Denzin and Patton both call a standardized open-ended interview where the questions asked are worded and arranged so that each respondent is interviewed in the same way and asked the same questions in the same order.[25] The purpose is to create a conversational-style interview which Schatzman and Patton both believe will elicit trust, confidence and ease among the interviewees necessary for 'yielding elaborate, subtle and valid data'.[26] The use of the qualitative method for the purpose of this study is as a means of explaining and exploring the interface between personal life and social structure for these Arab women, whilst conducting meaningful research for the writer. 'All researchers operate from within a theoretical framework or overview' which inevitably affects the data at all stages.[27]

A qualitative research method was chosen as a method that would allow the women to discuss their lives in their own voices. What was needed was a method that was collaborative

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[22] Ibid., p.20
[23] LeCompte, M. & Preissle, J. Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research, New York: Academic Press Inc, 1993, p.171
[24] Ibid. pp.171-172
[25] Denzin, N.K. The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods, New York: McGraw-Hill. 2nd ed., 1978.
Patton, M.Q. Utilization-Focused Evaluation, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1978
Patton, M.Q. Qualitative Evaluation Methods. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1980
Patton M.Q. Ethical Dimensions of Qualitative Inquiry: Cultural and Research Contexts, in M.J. McGee-Brown (Ed.), Processes Applications, and Ethics in Qualitative Research, Athens, GA: College of Education, University of Georgia. 1990, pp. 7-38
Patton, M.Q. Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods 2nd ed., Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990
[26]Schatzman, L. & Strauss, A.L, Field Research Strategies for a Natural Sociology, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1973
[27] Scott, S. Feminist Research and Qualitative Methods, in Burgess, R. Issues in Educational Research: Qualitative Methods, London: The Falmer Press, 1985, p.74

and that would allow the researcher to practise the self-reflexivity necessary for revealing the researcher's biases as well as the emergent and evolving nature of the researcher's understandings. The initial attraction to qualitative research methodologies, according to Munro, was the:

> *'.....acknowledgment of multiple and partial truths, the inter-subjective nature of the construction of knowledge and the need for contextual and holistic descriptions.'*[28]

Not only do life histories studies provide an opportunity to explore the effects of social structures on the case sample, but also to portray the ways in which the interviewees, themselves, create culture. According to the Personal Narratives Group, life histories are especially suitable for illuminating several aspects of gender relations, including gendered self-identity, the relationship between the individual and society in the creation and perpetuation of gender norms and the dynamics of power relations between men and women.[29] Like many engaged in collaborative research, the researcher in this study was looking to establish an egalitarian, reciprocal relationship that acknowledged the mutual and two-way nature of the research. Both the researcher and the researched are active participants in the research relationship and knowledge is viewed as socially and inter-subjectively constructed. The researcher's relationships in the interviews not only provided the source of primary source data, but suggested that, in the process of self-reflection, the relationships became the epistemological basis from which both interpretations and claim originate and are hence negotiated.

Ethical Considerations

However, conducting such research has ethical problems, which must be addressed. As Finch[30] rightly points out, a major problem the researcher may have faced in conducting gender-specific interviews with women of similar backgrounds is that the researcher could have

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[28] Munro, P Continuing Dilemmas of Life History Research, Theory and Concept in Qualitative Research, Flinders, D. & Mills, G., New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1993, p. 164

[29] Ibid., p.165

[30] Finch, J. It's great to have someone to talk to: The Ethics and Politics of Interviewing Women, in Bell, C. & Roberts, H. (Eds.) Social Researching: Politics, Problems and Practice, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984

used other women's experiences to further the researcher's own aims. Heed must be given in qualitative analysis as the researcher is placed in the powerful position of translator and presenter of other women's lives and thoughts with the use of transcripts to aid in the development of an argument.[31] It was vital that triangulation and varying methodologies were exercised throughout the research to ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis. Reflexivity on the part of the researcher, and open inclusion of the researcher as an integral part of the research design and execution from the onset, are vital in enhancing the degree of reliability and validity obtaining.

The objectivity of qualitative research is evaluated in terms of the reliability and validity of the data generated. However, the issue of validity is a fundamental problem of theory according to Kirk and Miller as some phenomena may be improperly labelled.[32] Their sub – categorization of different notions of validity: apparent, instrumental and theoretical validity, help in addressing this issue. Where apparent or obvious validity may be difficult to elicit, instrumental validity can be achieved if it can be shown that observations or findings match those generated by alternative valid procedures. This can be done through triangulation and the use of documentary sources. Theoretical validity exhibits measurement procedures and can be proven if there is substantial evidence that the theoretical paradigm accurately corresponds and correlates to the data findings and observations made. However, this form of validity is difficult to determine by methods other than qualitative research. Kirk highlights different types of errors, which cause invalidity, but stresses that the source of most validity errors stems from asking the wrong questions. Hence, devices to guard against asking the wrong questions are crucial to the researcher. One such device is by diversifying the methods used to advocate a validity check.

> *'The most fertile search for validity comes from a combined series of difference measures, each with its idiosyncratic weaknesses....When a hypothesis can survive the confrontation of a series of complementary methods of testing, it contains a degree of validity unattainable by one tested within the more constricted framework of a single method.'*[33]

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[31] Scott, S. Feminist Research and Qualitative Methods, in Burgess, R. Issues in Educational Research: Qualitative Methods, London: The Falmer Press, 1985, p. 80

[32] Kirk, J. & Miller, M. Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research, London: Sage Publications, 1986, p.21

[33] Ibid. pp.29 - 30

Reliability also poses a problem when conducting qualitative research. Reliability depends on explicitly described procedures. However, in the study of socio-cultural phenomena, it is dangerous to assume that data would be 'isomorphic' across intervals of time. Hence, the main thrust of methodological development in qualitative research over the last century has focused on greater validity and the links between reliability and validity.[34] As Hirsch argues, human beings do not simply perceive, then interpret, but rather go through a cognitive process as they experience. Therefore, through interpretation, they are linking experiences with precepts and already existing theories, which are not always culture-free. Their vision is one of a perspectivist, which is partial in nature. Hence, Kirk and Miller argue that reliability is meaningful only in reference to a theory.

One final ethical consideration is making sure that access gained has been on the basis of informed consent. Anonymity and confidentiality of the interviewees must be guaranteed and the challenge is to make sure this promise is kept, given the richness and personal nature of the data generated. In some cases the identity of the interviewee may be easily deduced given the unique and particular nature of the data; discretion is key yet challenging. Issues such as what to ask, how to ask it and what the interviewee allows the researcher to tell, are all ethical considerations which must be addressed.

Interviewing

Semi-structured interviewing was used to explore the individuals' views, understandings, experiences and interactions and also to gain legitimate access to their accounts, the way they see it. Through this mode of research, the researcher can observe the way each individual articulates her understandings and responses, and the researcher can follow up specific responses and take cues from the interviewee.[35] Questions varied from general information to more open-ended in order to incite the thoughts of the interviewee. Open-ended questions have a number of advantages. Because they are more flexible, they allow the interviewer to probe and go into more depth when needed. Cohen and Manion state that such open-ended questions help establish a rapport between the interviewee and the

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[34] Ibid. pp. 41-42
[35] Mason, J. Qualitative Researching, London: Sage Publications, 2002, pp.38-40

interviewer, access the true knowledge of the respondent and help the researcher make a truer assessment of what the respondent truly believes.[36] An interview is one 'initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation.'[37] For the purpose of this research, the aim was to achieve depth and roundedness of understanding in each woman's accounts and experiences, rather than a broad understanding of surface patterns; this was done through the administration of questions inviting factual answers as well as those inviting opinion; hence, the decision to use qualitative semi-structured interviews.[38] Whereas there are standardized and non-standardized models, this particular research study was based on a *semi-standardized interview* model. This means that the interview involved a number of predetermined questions which were asked in a systematic and consistent order. The interviewees were allowed freedom to digress from the original questions and the interviewer was able to probe beyond the answers to their prepared questions. [39] The empirical data needed can only be generated through this method, as it does not exist in any other form. Through qualitative interviewing, the interviewee's representation is more likely to be fairer and fuller. It is one of the most appropriate and practical ways to get 'at what qualitative researchers see as the central ontological components of social reality.'[40]

Sampling

Within the overall need to limit the range of nationalities, it is the selection of women who have dictated which countries have been chosen for background to this study. The countries under discussion are Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Egypt. In many ways the women who have been selected for interviewing belong to a certain intellectual elite and influential class. Building trust, getting the information desired, and breaking through 'habitual packaging of words and ideas,' were concerns that needed to be taken into account

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[36] Cohen, L & Manion, L. Research Methods in Education, London: Routledge, 1994
[37] Robson, C. Real World Research, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p.229
[38] Mason, J. Qualitative Researching, London: Sage Publications, 2002, p.41
[39] Berg, B. Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences, California: Allyn & Bacon, 2001, pp.70-71
[40] Mason, J. Qualitative Researching, London: Sage Publications, 2002, p.59

when interviewing such people.[41] However, in this particular case, access did not prove to be too much of a challenge as the researcher had direct access to many such women in that part of the world given her family background. Nevertheless, though access itself may not have proven to be too difficult, it was not enough. Access is not the same as establishing trust which is crucial to getting significant data, and one must also bear in mind that there is an on-going process of being 'checked out' by the subjects themselves.[42]

This particular sample is not aimed to be representative of the population. It is aimed to provide a 'close-up, detailed, *meticulous view of particular units,* which may constitute processes, types, categories, cases or examples which are relevant ...' One unit may be selected for detailed scrutiny...such as 'a person, a lifetime...a social experience.' The purpose of selecting 'one or more units is to demonstrate in a detailed and rounded way the operations of a particular set of social processes in a specified context.' In such a case, the relationship is not one of straightforward representation and the sample is directly linked to the process of 'generating theory and explanation *inductively* from or through the data collected.'[43] According to Mason, by constructing a non-representative sample in this case, the aim is to make key comparisons and test theories, which she calls *'theoretical sampling* or *purposive sampling.'* By this, she means that for this particular research, sampling means selecting:

> *'....groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance' to the research area, 'the theoretical position and analytical framework...and the explanation or account' which is being developed.*[44]

Case Studies

Because the unit of analysis is small, the individual women themselves, one could consider the research to be a series of case studies on different individual women all with dual educational experiences in the Arab world and in the West. They are representative of a range

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[41] Gamson, J. Stopping the spin and becoming a prop, in R. Hertz & J.B Imber, Eds. Studying Elites Using Qualitative Methods, London: Sage Publications, 1995, pp.83-93
[42] Ostrander, S.A, Surely you are not in this just to be helpful, Access, Rapport and Interviews in Three Studies of Elites, Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 22 (1), pp.7-27
[43] Mason, J. Qualitative Researching, London: Sage Publications Inc., 2002, pp.92-93
[44] Ibid. pp.93-94

of professions whilst all having similar socio-economic status. Prior to conducting the case study, defining the problems or issues to be studied is imperative. The ability to interpret the information gathered and make intelligent decisions about the data collected is also apart of conducting case studies.[45] The case study design is selected in this particular project because it is appropriate to the nature of the research problem and the questions being asked. It offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of importance for understanding the phenomenon under study. As the unit of analysis for these multiple case studies are the women themselves, the study results in a rich and holistic account of these women's educational experiences and perspectives, therefore offering insights into the formulation of cultural identity and role of education within their communities. In this case, the case study approach has the potential for playing a decisive and important role in advancing the knowledge base of this particular topic. The nature of this type of case study is that of multiple cases, which involves collecting, and analyzing data from several women/cases. The mere inclusion of multiple cases in this study is a common strategy for 'enhancing the external validity or generalizability of the findings', according to Merriam.[46]

> *'By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where and, if possible, why it carries on as it does. We can strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings.'*[47]

Although the unit of analysis is the individual woman in this study, case studies in education draw upon sociology when investigating the constructs of society, socialization and social life regarding the roles people play in it. According to Hamel[48], 'as a sociological approach, the case study strives to highlight the features or attributes of social life.' Case studies in education and in this study, are influenced by disciplines of sociology in theory construction and focus on questions, issues and concerns broadly related to pedagogy and learning. The educational atmosphere and environment, curriculum and culture are areas that are central to the overall understanding of the role and culture of education in the Arab world. However, it is important to

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[45] Yin, R. Case Study Research, California: Sage Publications Inc., 1994, pp.54-59
[46] Merriam, S. Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998, p.40
[47] Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1994, p.29
[48] Hamel, J. Case Study Methods, Qualitative Research Methods, Vol.32, Thousand Oaks; Sage, 1993, p.2

note that just like other methods of research, case studies have strengths and weaknesses, which need to be addressed. There is the potential in case studies to ' oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to erroneous conclusions about the actual state of affairs.'[49] Case studies are limited by the nature and sensitivity of the researcher; being the primary instrument of data collection and analysis the researcher is solely reliant upon her own instincts and abilities throughout most of the research which can have obvious effects on the nature of the study. This requires the researcher to be overly cautious and aware of biases and problems of ethics whereby the writer 'could so select from among available data that virtually anything he wished could be illustrated.'[50]

Pilot Study

In order to maximize the quality of the research, the first intention was to conduct a pilot study. Through conducting the pilot study, the researcher was able to refine the data collection plans with respect to both the content and the procedure.[51] Not only did it help to test the questions formulated, but it was also invaluable experience for how to interview, listen, use the digital recorder and transcription devices and operate under an interview atmosphere. Through piloting, any queries on the structure of the questions, the format or even the different stages surfaced, thus helping better refine the real thing. As Oppenheim suggests, it is:

> *'....essential to pilot every question, every question sequence, every inventory and every scale' in the study.*[52]

The pilot helped highlight poor questions that could bring a narrow range of responses or any misleading questions that are ambiguous in their meaning. Equally, some of the open-ended questions needed revising as they may have been too broad and therefore needed some introductory sentences in order to explain more clearly what was being asked. Modifications to the interview schedule and approach were made in light of the changes indicated from the pilot analysis.

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[49] Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y.S. Effective Evaluation, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981, p.377
[50] Ibid., p.378
[51] Yin, R. Case Study Research, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1994, pp.74-76
[52] A.N. Oppenheim, Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement, London: Pinter Publisher Ltd, 1999, p.49

The respondents in the pilot study were similar in profile to those in the main enquiry so as to test the relevance and sensitivity of the questions. By piloting the 'explanatory' interview, the researcher was aiming 'to develop ideas and research hypotheses rather than to get facts and statistics.'[53] Testing the hidden agenda of the main enquiry with a pilot study is important as it is through the skill of the interviewer that 'emotionally loaded topics, feelings, experiences and insights will surface. The practice for achieving spontaneity in the interview and collecting the interviewee's ideas were vital to the success of the main enquiry. The main objective is for the pilot to assist in making the delivery of the 'in-depth interviews' as smooth as possible with the aim of eliciting the ideas and precepts of the respondents in their own words.[54] Another role of the pilot was in the preparation of a detailed final interview schedule, which covered how to introduce questions, prompt, skip sequences and compile synoptic closing remarks. This is particularly important as the questions asked are of a personal and sensitive nature and therefore tact and skill were required if any substantive information was to be gained from the interviewees. The format of the questions is such that the first few questions ask for concrete details and background information of the interviewee. This basic information is elicited as a foundation and confidence builder before exploring their attitudes and opinions regarding their experiences. The concrete details constitute the experience; attitudes and opinions are then based on them. Without these concrete details, the attitudes and opinions elicited from the interviews seem groundless and lacking context.

Finally, from the analysis of the pilot transcripts an initial category coding system was developed that served to inform adjustments for the main survey and also refine the analytical structures to be used in the consideration of data generated by that survey. The pilot served as a trial –run for the main enquiry process. After the pilot had been transcribed, the next step before analyzing the data was to highlight and bracket interesting passages issuing from the text. Through conducting the pilot, the researcher became aware of and sensitive to the way issues of gender play out in the individual's life and the way hierarchy and power affect people. The aim was to develop profiles of the individual participants and group them in categories that made sense, whilst marking individual passages and studying them for thematic connections

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[53] Ibid. pp.62&67
[54] Ibid. pp.70 & 74

within and among them.[55] The pilot also helped in preparing the researcher to link the individual's experience to the social and organizational context within which she operates.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the crux of this study. The researcher's mission after gathering all the transcripts was to search for patterns and connections among the excerpts within the defined categories and for connections and themes between such categories. Attention to themes, patterns and comparisons and links between the experiences of these women was at the heart of the analysis procedure. Highlighting passages that connect to other passages and the repetition of an aspect of experiences 'takes on weight and calls for attention to itself.'[56] Just as some passages may reinforce others, one must also be aware of contradictory passages that may seem decisively inconsistent with others. The challenge during this process was for the researcher to not resist the temptation to force excerpts into predefined categories and hence into themes that she already had in mind. Rather, the need is to let the themes and categories develop from the experiences of the interviewees as represented in the interviews. It is *their* experiences that are being investigated and therefore, the meaning *they* make of them. The researcher is there to make connections among the experiences of the women who belong to the same or similar cultural dynamics. It is from such interpretation and analysis that this inductive approach to research leads to a deeper understanding of the gender role issues, educational structures and processes, policies and social contexts that imbue the interviewees' stories and experiences. The following chapter addresses and analyses the data generated from the interview process.

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[55] Seidman, I.E. Interviewing as Qualitative Research, New York: Teachers College Press, 1991, p.91
[56] Ibid, p.100

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

There is no such thing as the quintessential 'Arab woman'. She does not exist. In fact, respondents in this research makes it clear that they are by no means all the same, though there does exist evidence of similarities and common traits among them. The struggles and challenges facing different Arab women vary from case to case and country to county. For example, women from Saudi Arabia are allowed and encouraged to excel in their education and professions so long as they do not threaten or invade the 'male domain'. There are many Saudi women who are mothers and professionals at the same time; they operate in various professional fields and are respected. However, this is only the case in so far as they operate within the 'female domain' and from the males' perspective in 'non-threatening- fields. The Saudi women interviewed for this research, however, work and operate in 'co-ed' environments. They are leaders in their fields and at the forefront of professional activities within the 'male domain'. The challenges they have encountered, and the struggles to carve a niche for themselves as mothers and professionals, have not been experienced by all working Saudi women. Just as there exist differences within Saudi society, women's roles in the Arab world differ from context to context.

In the case of Egypt, women struggle substantially less within their society than in the other cases. It is perhaps no coincidence that the key early figures of female advance in the Arab world, identified in Chapter One, were Egyptian. In that country, the economic environment and other contextual factors influence, to a significant degree, women's professional careers. For example, where there is high unemployment as in the case of Saudi Arabia, men will be chosen and preferred over women.

The sample of ten women from a range of countries in the Arab world is the total source of the empirical data compiled through one to one in-depth interviews. They are among the first real generation of professional women in the Arab world; leaders in their communities and in their fields – nationally and internationally. They represent change in their respective communities and have been able to marry traditional – cultural responsibilities with national/international success that is irrespective of gender and nationality. They are at the top of their fields and are among the highest achievers by international standards and recognition. Perhaps, leadership among these select women has been due to their dual educational

exposure in the Arab world and 'Western' educational institutions and to their predicament and environment in which these women have had to compete and prove themselves?

The data generated have been clustered into a number of areas for the purpose of analysis: East – West interface: challenged identity; the impact of formal education versus the family; curriculum perspectives; teaching methods; transition to university; effect of system change; views of education: role and purpose; pros and cons of two systems: personal perspectives; perspectives on women's issues; historical view of women and suggestions for change.

East – West Interface: Challenged Identity?

Exposure to new cultures through travel and education was responsible for the increased self-awareness experienced by all interviewees. Confronted with different values, mannerisms and customs, these women all described themselves as 'the other'. It was this notion of 'the other' that initiated self - exploration. Exposure did not serve to challenge their own identity as Arab Muslim young women directly, but conflicts arose when cultural expectations demanded certain behaviour in the face of a new culture. They were at the interface of two different cultures, and though this interface did not serve to overtly challenge their beliefs, it did provide covert struggles. All ten respondents stated that their interaction in "Western" educational institutions forced them to formulate their self-identity and how they wanted to be defined. Their exposure and perception of themselves from the outside compelled them to refine their own interpretations of their own culture and identity as Muslim, 'Arab' women. Three of the respondents were exposed to 'Western' culture in their early primary school years through family and travel. However, regardless of when they had their first 'Western' exposure, none of the ten women interviewed ever felt threatened or unsure as to who they were and what they came from. Seven of the ten respondents had their first significant introduction to foreign cultures at university level. Nevertheless, though they all stated that they took pride in who they were, the interface of different cultures did provoke them to consider themselves as entities on their own – away from social and cultural influences. This independence, which all ten believed helped them achieve a sense of empowerment, was a by-product of the exposure they received when they went to 'Western' countries for their

education. Four respondents believed the interaction of both cultures provoked thought, questioning, and self - discovery and covertly challenged how they wished to be perceived in this new community. One woman stated:

> *'I became aware of what I wanted to be and what I believed in when at a debating session in university. Through my interaction with other people, I realised that I wanted to learn more about who I was and about my religion and decided then, at university and through the debating sessions that I wanted to wear the hijab.*[1] *It was precisely this interaction and exposure that made me want to reconnect with my own culture and better understand it. Yet, I believe that embracing Islam and publicly demonstrating my allegiance to it in a foreign environment strengthened my sense of self and did not conflict with my pursuit of education and ambitions.*[2]

Another respondent felt:

> *'I needed to dispel certain stereotypes and prejudices about Muslim women in the West. After winning the Gold medal in 1984 at the Olympics, I used a press conference in Los Angeles, California to illustrate how my culture and religion did not stop me from excelling as the top in her field. Clad in shorts and a sleeveless t-shirt, my audience was stunned that a Muslim woman – the pride of my nation- looked the way I did and had competed in an international forum, and won'!*[3]

In the face of foreign culture all ten women felt that they were able to strike some inner equilibrium, reconcile the two cultures and achieve a balance and clear sense of who they are and what they stand for. They did not feel compelled to grapple with choosing one over the other, but instead adopted what they believed to be the best from their new environment, coupled with using their own culture as a source of security and safety netting. Those women, who were more politically inclined, proved even more steadfast regarding their cultural roots and self-identity. The interface of both cultures reinforced who they were and enticed them to work and disprove the false preconceptions formulated around Muslim women and the various cultures in the Middle East. They used the 'West' as a platform from which to dispel erroneous beliefs and better themselves from an educational and professional standpoint. It served to challenge them to learn more of their culture, as they were now being made conscious of their 'otherness'.

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[1] *Hijab* – a scarf worn by Muslim women to cover their hair; also known as 'the veil' yet the veil is an inaccurate term as it implies covering the face.
[2] Interview conducted September 8, 2003 in Bahrain.
[3] Interview conducted September 2, 2003, Switzerland.

Reconciliation of the two different cultures and the balancing between has been an ongoing endeavour that each woman has undertaken and the amount of balancing required to reach that equilibrium has been dependent on how much exposure was integral to their younger, developmental years and their present lifestyles and career responsibilities. Awareness of good and bad in both are evident; 'one works with what is at hand to one's advantage.' This is clearly manifested from one respondent who said:

> *'I feel that I have managed to balance by looking for the good in each. From America, I have adopted the simplicity of life and lack of pretension and from the Arab culture; I enjoy the family unit and extended family support and stronger commitment to friendships.'*[4]

The more relaxed, anonymous, liberal approaches to thinking and operating in the 'Western' culture is what many of these women have adopted, yet they celebrate their own 'Arabness' and certain values and cultural behaviours that come with it. Understanding other cultures and peoples is vital to creating sustainable society; however, it does not detract from keeping one's own identity whilst intermingling with others. One respondent said that:

> *'Even though I had decided to wear the hijab, I mixed with many Canadian and American students. Two of my closest friends were Canadian and Indian respectively, and they would come to my room and sit in my dormitory at university and we would confide in one another and share views and thoughts. It was through this interaction with other girls that made me see the merits in other cultures and different perspectives at the same time allowing me to appreciate who I was and in what I believed.*[5]

The interviewees respected sensitivities and differences that exist and the need to juggle and 'play roles' depending in which environment they are operating. All ten respondents felt they have achieved a balance - balance included appreciation for others and learning from others, whilst not abandoning their own culture; in fact, learning more about it and embracing some aspects more than others through self-awareness.

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[4] Interview conducted August 18, 2003 in France.
[5] Interview conducted September 8, 2003 in Bahrain.

One respondent felt that:

> *'The need to balance and make the gap between cultures has been crucial, particularly in the last decade when Arab and Muslim women's issues have become more prevalent in the political arena of the region. Over time I have tried to balance the two and shrink the gap in my own way'.*[6]

Exposure to 'Western' cultural influences was the most significant and pronounced when the interviewees actually travelled to countries abroad and were confronted with differences. The differences they noted were physical, geographical, behavioural, the anonymity and freedom to be themselves, etiquette, manners and social and liberal attitudes. Parents, especially their fathers were pro – West at the time as there was little animosity towards the West in those days. As girls, they were exposed to media, films and travel at early ages. However, though they were exposed to movies and media influences and leisure travel with family, the stark awareness of 'me' versus 'them' only came when they moved to Europe and North America for studies at different stages in their educational career. For most of them, this did not occur until their BA or even postgraduate levels. Two of the interviewees continued their secondary schooling in Europe and were therefore exposed much earlier than the other interviewees. One of these women noted that upon landing in Amsterdam airport at the age of eight, she was overwhelmed with the sight of green fields. She had never left desert countries and it was her first time to Europe. She was bewildered by the sight of the field and of blond haired people, different looking people and the different languages around her. She mentions that this was her first encounter of the 'West' and she remembers dancing, jumping and singing with joy at the immigration counter. It was then that she recalls her mother telling her to behave like proper girls from her culture.[7] Another respondent stated that she remembers as a fifteen year old, travelling for the first time alone on an airplane for athletic competitions, when she was exposed to other cultures. It was then that she realised people looked at her differently and referred to her as the 'girl from the Sahara', the 'Muslim athlete' or the 'Muslim queen.'[8] Another respondent commented on her first exposure at university when she was given a social security number, a number at her department and she was left alone. She mentions that it was this total anonymity to who she was, and whose daughter she was, that she found the

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[6] Interview conducted September August 24, 2003, Jordan
[7] Interview conducted August 11, 2003 in London, UK.
[8] Interview conducted September 2, 2003, Switzerland.

most comforting. The lack of interest in 'who she was' was the first thing she loved and found completely different to her own culture. She felt at peace with just being herself and not needing to behave in a certain manner because of society and social expectations.[9]

All the women believed that their exposure to dual educational systems and their move to 'Western' educational institutions for university had great influence on their identity, self-awareness and development as women. In the cases where women went to the USA for undergraduate or graduate work, they unanimously agreed that the different culture, the liberation of the professors as role models, exposure and interaction with other students from diverse backgrounds played very significant roles and had significant effect on fostering personal growth in each of the women. The system as a whole and the overall teaching culture, allowed the interviewees to 'blossom', evolve, and develop their individual personalities and identities.

Impact of Education versus Family

Though exposure and study in dual educational systems and environments very much influenced who these women are today, all ten women responded that their family was primarily responsible in fostering their cultural identity. Six women responded that the family unit had the greatest impact and influence in their lives in terms of shaping their capacity to step outside traditional roles and promote changes. All ten women stated that there was no differentiation within their respective families between men and women. Many of the women attained higher educational honours than their brothers, yet the perception of women attaining equal or higher degrees to the male family members was equal and non-discriminatory. However, though family provided the support mechanism that encouraged the women to pursue their goals, six of the respondents claimed they juggle traditional stereotypes and roles with their careers and liberal influences. These struggles manifest themselves within the family unit. Today, all the women who believe that they have not encountered any cultural challenges as an 'Arab' woman operating in two different cultures, in terms of being a woman in male dominated professions, do indeed struggle to balance careers and their expected roles as

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[9] Interview conducted August 18, 2003 in France.

mothers, wives and daughters. Though they all had no problems operating in two different cultures, six women felt that they faced quite a challenge, culturally, within their own societies and families. These six women felt the problems they were facing included: disappointing family expectations; justifying and defending who they were; grappling with stereotypes construed in 'Western' societies; breaking from the mould of traditional stereotypes in their local communities; and the low level of expectations, in terms of their capabilities, from their own societies.

The influence and role of family in the Arab world in gender coding and engraining in the child that she is a Muslim Arab girl was present in the upbringing of several of the interviewees. Though certain schools in many of the countries of the Arab world did indeed reinforce gender roles and cultural traditions, it was, primarily, introduced by the family. Identity formulation was driven by the families and endorsed by the school and the curriculum. It was only when the women moved out of their incubated communities - comprising family and school – that this reinforcement ceased. The process of self-exploration, and the solidifying who these women really were, came to fruition at university abroad. Six women answered that family had the greatest influence in shaping their identities. However, when the respondents were asked their opinion on which factors were responsible for shaping women's capacity to step outside the traditional roles and promote change, five answered 'family' and the other five answered 'social networks'. Social networks encompassed friends, colleagues and teachers. The educational experience itself, they felt, had less influence on shaping their identities but more influence in forcing them to clarify and redefine their personalities and image as 'the other'. It was the social milieu and exposure to different peoples and perspectives that affected half of the women interviewed. Exposure to other mannerisms, beliefs, ways of working, studying and thinking all served to have a significant effect on broadening their horizons and hence prompting self analysis and self criticism. It provoked independence, responsibility and self-accountability; in turn they became aware who they were and what they wanted to be. The change of environment allowed their inner voices to be heard and expanded their minds to other possibilities and opportunities regarding their future aspirations, goals and ambitions. They realised the scope of their potential. One respondent felt particularly strongly regarding the influence of social networks on her and her future:

> *'I felt that going to England for my Masters had opened my mind to new and different ways of doing things and how people from various cultures responded in varying methods to the same issue at hand. It was through my interactions that I gained an insight to understanding how other people operate which was tremendously helpful to me when I began working in Jordan where I had to understand and see things from other perspectives in order to solve the problem.'*[10]

Education was the support system that provided effective tools. Exposure to great teachers influenced and guided the professional and future aspirations of some of the women. In some cases they presented opportunities and options that later led to career choices. Six women felt that educational exposure in Arab and 'Western' institutions influenced their future professional careers; four of the women knew what they wanted to do regardless of their educational history and six women knew they wanted to be career women. One respondent recalled that:

> *'It was my University teacher that prompted me to pursue Information Technology at BA level; later I went on to do my MA which guided me to my current profession and job.'*

Professional aspirations were influenced to a limited degree though education itself. All ten women knew early on in their developing years that they were going to have some sort of career and knew vaguely what field, and what interested them. Their interest and commitment to working and pursuing some sort of professional career was there from the outset but was refined through the education they received. One respondent:

> *'...wanted to be a brain surgeon in my school days and went to Canada to study Biology. In Bahrain, at the time, only three professions were available to women: Medical doctor, engineer or teacher. Yet, it was at university that I became aware of all the different possibilities, specialisations and professions that existed. It was this exposure that prompted me to change my professional career and specialisation which later led me to furthering my studies and dedicating myself to my line of work'.*[11]

Curriculum Perspectives

All ten women went to a secondary girls' school. Eight of these women were also educated in an all girls' primary school and two had begun in a co-ed primary school but then moved to all girls' secondary schools. Regardless of whether they were in co-ed primary or

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[10] Interview conducted September August 23, 2003 in Jordan.
[11] Interview conducted September 8, 2003 in Bahrain.

single sex education, there was no difference in the responses of the interviewees regarding their identity. This difference in primary school did not skew their sense of gender integrity. In all cases, their teachers were predominantly female. They all had mostly women teachers throughout most of their schooling years, except for the few male teachers who taught such subjects as: sciences, religion, Arabic history and mathematics. Men in all cases always taught these subjects.

Whether the women were educated in their early years in Saudi Arabia, Jordan or Lebanon, the cultural basis of the teachers was always Arab. Teachers were either Egyptian or Lebanese or Palestinian. Not many of the Gulf States had yet developed their educational systems at the time and, therefore, teachers and teacher training were still in their formative phase. Because Egypt and Lebanon had historically developed their educational systems much earlier, at the turn of the 20th Century, most teachers in the Arab world were from these countries. In schools that were run by the English in these Arab countries, such as Egypt, some teachers came from the UK and the USA. In the cases where two of the ten women continued their secondary school in Europe, the case was evidently different. Seven women were educated primarily in the Arabic language for most subjects but had either French or English taught to them as a language. The other three women were taught in English or French as the main language of subjects, but were only taught in Arabic for specific subjects, such as religion, Arabic history and Arabic literature. However, the language of learning and instruction did not prove significant in terms of adopting more or less of their respective cultures.

The content of the school curriculum very much reflected the countries in which these women were living at the time. The curriculum content of those women educated in Saudi Arabia was heavily biased in terms of Arab - Saudi perspectives. The curriculum was known to be strong in mathematics and sciences but the government supplied the core curriculum to the private and public schools and chose what they believed should and should not be taught. It was very limited in scope and rigid in its method of teaching; for example, geography did not even acknowledge Russia and China on the map![12] The perspective of the content was completely Arab - Saudi centric, and anything else outside of that framework was deemed too

[12] Information attained from an interview conducted September 4, 2003 in London.

different and therefore dangerous. In those days, Saudi Arabia had not fully developed its own 'Saudi image' *per se*; therefore the general perspectives were a combination of 'Arab' and 'Saudi'. On the other hand, although Morocco had more of a developed educational system, it was still very Morocco specific and Arabic centric with much emphasis on religion, Moroccan geography, history and old Arabic history and deep anti-'Western' rhetoric. In one case, the respondent explained that:

> *'....in my Moroccan school, we were given pictures of men dressed in traditional clothing and 'Western' clothing and were told to cross out the 'bad' pictures of men dressed in 'Western' clothes'.*[13]

In the case of Jordan, the curriculum was also very Arabic centric with much emphasis on ancient Arabic history. Very little attention was given at the time to modern history. The reasons for this must have been due to the political uncertainties and issues regarding Jordan's precarious geo-politics. Indeed, the Jordanian curriculum was apparently very political given the political sensitivity of Jordan and her neighbours. Subjects and curriculum content were built around the Arab culture, in general, with minimal international perspectives given; they were monitored and dictated by the government in spite of the fact that one of the interviewees educated in Jordan attended a private Catholic school there.

Women educated in Lebanon were subjected to the most neutral and liberal of perspectives in terms of curriculum content, with very little intervention from the State. The schools determined their own curriculum. In the case of interviewees educated in Lebanon, they were given global/international perspectives on the whole, and particularly in certain subjects such as history, and geography, where they were taught world history and world geography. One respondent educated in Lebanon stated that:

> *'Though the curriculum was very French oriented we would discuss and even analyse themes and topics relating to French history from an Arab perspective, as we were Arab students and were taught by Arab teachers. I remember learning about the French Revolution and discussing the role of democracy through Arab eyes.'*[14]

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[13] Interview conducted September 2, 2003 in Switzerland.
[14] Interview conducted August 24, 2003 in Jordan.

Women educated in Egypt were more influenced by the British systems and were exposed to some American and English teachers. In this case, both women educated in Egypt felt that they were given broad perspectives on world history, world literature and that Egyptian history was not used as propaganda. They were equally exposed to English classical literature as well as Arab and Egyptian. The literature curriculum encompassed Shakespeare, Dickens, and D.H. Lawrence along with poetry from Arab and English poets. It was through such comprehensive and extensive coverage of English and Arabic literature and history that these women felt they were given broader insights to other cultures. Their Egyptian curriculum at that time was, in effect, a combined British and Egyptian syllabus. Indeed, there was so much emphasis on the British syllabus at the time that British history was stronger than Egyptian in some cases.

At the time one of the interviewees was educated in Bahrain, the Ministry of Education did not yet fully exist. In light of this, schools were given textbooks from the Egyptian Ministry of Education. This respondent illustrated the Egyptian centric curriculum when she stated that:

> *'History was in fact Egyptian history and the sciences were taught using examples specific to Egypt. In one case, I recall learning science and having specific examples of parasites that only live near the Nile River!'*[15]

Though the entire Bahraini syllabus was also Egyptian centric, having simply been imported into Bahrain without any references or examples relating to Bahrain, the English literature and language aspect of the syllabus was British centric; textbooks were designed and produced by a British company in England. Obviously, this is no longer the case. The Ministry of Education in each of these countries is now devising their own agendas and developing their own curriculum content and textbooks for their schools. Each of these countries today has much emphasis on nationality, national identity and culture. Education in the Arab world is no longer disseminating general 'Arab culture'. In fact, governments have used their modern educational systems to create national identities, write their own histories and encourage national allegiance and belonging instead of promoting borderless nationalism.[16] This very much mirrored the role of emergent state suppliers of education in the European nation –

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[15] Interview conducted September 8, 2003 in Bahrain.
[16] Information gathered from the interview conducted August 23, 2003 in Jordan

states of the 18th and 19th centuries.[17] In the case of one respondent who pursued her secondary level education in Switzerland:

> *'The education reinforced French perspective and French patriotism whilst emphasising the need for women to be pretty, subservient and non- confrontational. Interestingly, it reinforced certain cultural traits that were similar to my Saudi primary education where gender coding was very prevalent and apparent.'*[18]

In summary, from the perspective of curriculum, seven of the ten women's primary school curriculum had heavier Arab perspectives on subjects such as history and geography. Three women were given Arab and international perspectives in subject matters; these women were educated at primary and secondary schools in Egypt and Lebanon. The only exceptions were the two women who moved to secondary schools in Europe. These women were then exposed to more French and English perspectives reflected in subject matter. Out of all ten women, five believed that their education, on the whole, had prepared them to question and re-evaluate given traditionally held views. Of these five women, two went to secondary school in Lebanon, where the education was more liberal and two other women went to secondary school in Europe. Therefore, it is safe to deduce that 80 percent of those women who felt the need to challenge traditional views in their culture were educated at secondary level in the more 'liberal' systems relative to the other interviewees.

Teaching Methods

The teaching methods used in the various countries at school level were, on the whole, of a rigid, classical learning style. The role of the teacher was one of authority whereby the blackboard was used as the main mode of transmission. The interviewees were instructed to copy down the information on the blackboard and answer the questions. There was very little room for debate or discussion as in the more 'liberal' school environments – the students were given the opportunity to raise their hand and demonstrate the correct answer on the

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[17] Green, A. Education and State Formation: The Rise of Education Systems in England, France and the USA, New York: St Martin's Press, 1990

[18] Interview conducted August 11, 2003 in London.

blackboard. However, the norm was to copy the assignment and work silently. One respondent described a typical scenario whereby:

> *'There was a concept of the teacher – who would stand in front of the blackboard and sometimes the students would be asked to go and solve a problem on the blackboard or indicate something on the blackboard...very classical.'*[19]

The schooling experiences of the women interviewed were not at all 'democratic'. The schools dictated what subjects the students should take, which sports to practise and which novels to study. There was hardly any room, if at all, for students to make choices regarding issues such as Music, Arts, and Sports. Decisions were made on their behalf by the school. The schools themselves, in most cases, were under the command of higher authorities such as the government, so the school itself had little room for manoeuvre in the way teachers taught or what they taught. Lack of choice, until today, reflects the larger communities in which schools operate and the socio- political atmosphere of these countries. Students were told what to learn and to know. Differences between students in many of the cases were not encouraged, in fact, the learning environment promoted uniformity rather than individuality.

Choice for these women began and ended at a particular educational phase. It was limited to the last three years of secondary school where students were allowed to decide whether to pursue the Sciences or Arts. At this point, they chose to study and follow the pre-set Sciences syllabus or pursue the pre-set Arts and Literature syllabus. Beyond this, there was no choice except limited freedom to choose within the pre-selected menu. Schools are said to be microcosms of society. If that is the case, then it is not surprising that these schools reflected the socio-political culture at large. The school system, as an entity, remains built around a particular culture that leaves very little room neither for manoeuvre nor for much flexibility, freedom of expression or individuality. Educational systems in Arab countries, especially those under authoritarian regimes, are still a method and a means of state control. The students are told what to learn and are not encouraged to question, debate and share opinions; indeed it reflects the larger system quite accurately in every sense.

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[19] Interview conducted August 24, 2003 in Jordan

In the Saudi school system experienced by some of the interviewees, rote learning and memorization were the standard ways of learning. The students were told what and what not to know and there was absolutely no interaction in the classroom or opportunity to share and express individual thoughts; the system heavily discouraged idea formulation. In the words of one respondent:

'We were supposed to memorize everything the teacher told us.[20]

In many ways, the school experience of one of the Moroccan interviewees was very similar to that of the Saudi case. In the Moroccan system, students were taught anti – 'Western' propaganda, as mentioned previously. The girls were told to highlight the 'bad' pictures of men dressed in 'Western' clothing. Clearly, this was a method of disseminating prejudice and instilling negative views of women. Nevertheless, the interviewee did mention that students were able to share ideas to a limited degree in her Moroccan school.

In the case of one particular school in Lebanon, though the school itself was very classical in terms of its teaching style, the teachers did encourage critical study in the sense that they analysed the French Revolution and the concepts of democracy, terror and other themes. This school, unlike many others in Lebanon, was not a missionary school and was known to be the first private national school in Beirut, the capital. The school was distinctly different from any other in the region as it theoretically, philosophically and practically implemented the notion of democracy in its curriculum. Extracurricular activities were compulsory, but the school's mission was to encourage the girls to have an opinion, express themselves and have a cause and interest in issues. The school encouraged them to become active in public affairs, and community service. The pivotal role in conducting and implementing this mission was that of the Principal of the school. Her message was to encourage and enable the students to be independent thinkers, to give and take and empower them through their ideas. The interviewee believes it was for this reason that the school was able to set its own agenda and dictate its own curriculum and teaching methods.[21]

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[20] Interview conducted August 11, 2003 in London
[21] Information gathered from the interview conducted August 24, 2003 in Jordan.

In the case of Egypt, the teaching methods used were very similar in that the blackboard was the focal point in the classroom with the teacher at the head of the room. However, it was markedly different from some of the other systems as there was more scope for group projects with some encouragement of analysis and cultural thought as it was based on British traditions. In all cases, the women described their classrooms as comprising rows of desks each, shared by two students, facing the teacher and the blackboard. The teacher controlled the class and students were there to follow.

In the case of secondary schooling in Switzerland, discussions were outside of classroom time. However, analytical and critical thinking were not developed or encouraged and the system relied more on memorization.

Transition to University

In the cases where the women moved from their schooling in the Arab world to pursue higher education in Europe and North America, there was an obvious shift from dependency to independency. The transition marked a turning point at that stage of their development, and the Arab/West cultural interface was more apparent than in any other interaction at other educational levels. Respondents described the system change in similar ways; the system as a whole did not encourage or promote, 'hand holding'. They were given essays to write without being given any direction or guidelines. The university institutions encouraged independent work where students were left to write long essays and make their own notes from lectures. This was very unlike the Arab system where the lecturer gave students a summary of the lecture and walked them through the process; the concept of writing eight-page papers was alien to all the women coming from Arab secondary systems. The 'Western' higher educational institutions drove the women to be independent workers and thinkers and not to depend on the system as a crutch. Philosophically, it is clear to see how this reflects the broader arena in which such systems operate and the forum in which students were taught to be independent citizens. In contrast, in the Arab context, there is little encouragement to be free thinkers and the system is very much akin to the socio-political system which encourages its citizens to be

dependent, to varying degrees, on the specific country. It should be noted, however, that the case varies to a certain degree from country to county within the Arab context.

The transition to 'Western' institutions at tertiary level was the beginning of freedom; freedom to think and to formulate one's own opinions. There was not any one way of doing something nor the 'right' way, but a multitude of ways. Exposure to other people's views, backgrounds and cultures unveiled an entirely new arena in which to discover, explore, question and compare. Differing perspectives and the freedom and encouragement to formulate and share their thoughts starkly contradicted what had been preached and practised in their previous Arab school systems, though to varying degrees. The 'debate' was one of the teaching methods that were used as a way to encourage students to think and share their thoughts. Debates were not part of any of the women's previous educational experiences at any level in the Arab system; this was the case as debating only takes place in open/ democratic societies that embrace differences, tolerance and freedom. Be it at university in England, the USA or Canada, the interviewees felt that the course work they pursued and the information available to them was delivered in neutral terms. They did not feel there was any imposition to think a certain way nor was there any apparent, or covert indoctrination. The women were left to their own devices and to use the information given to them in their own way.

Movement from one system to another at university level allowed the women to open their horizons, 'blossom' and cultivate their personalities and fine-tune a sense of who they are and who they want to be. It was the time in which they developed and refined their sense of identity. In some cases, teachers were instrumental in facilitating such growth and opening up. One of the most common challenges shared by all the respondents was how to express their thoughts and ideas through writing. They found this to be a tremendous challenge, as they had not previously been taught to formulate opinions or express their views in writing. They found themselves to be deficient in writing skills because of their Arab schooling that put no emphasis on expression or writing such thoughts, plus the fact that it had to be in a foreign language. Consequently, the outcome was initially poor. In most cases, respondents had only been taught to memorize and answer correctly. As their schools had not endorsed much independent thought, the system change proved extremely demanding from the onset. The

concept of writing with a structure, or analysing data and writing up one's analysis was totally alien and had never been factored into their previous teaching/learning curricula in their respective Arab schools. The problem was highlighted and pronounced when some of the respondents moved from the Sciences to the Liberal Arts where exact expression and critical analysis is the sole medium for describing and analysing information. There was a constant struggle when asked "what do you think of x or y and why?" One respondent commented that:

> *'I still struggle from the lack of good education process in the earlier years. The challenge for me, until today, has been the scientific method of analysing the results of data generated from a project and then writing up the analysis.'*[22]

Another respondent commented:

> *'I was not prepared for giving presentations and for debating; we lacked the confidence to share our ideas and ask questions in the large college auditorium. I was completely lost in my first year at college as I was deficient in writing and in expressing my ideas.'*[23]

This was when the fundamental discrepancy between systems emerged in the writer's present analysis.

In the cases where the respondents pursued one of their higher degrees at universities in the Arab world, the situation was different. In the context of Egypt, teaching was in the mass. There were a very large number of students and no individuality. Similar to the school years, the teaching approach comprised a blackboard and textbooks. There was a standard philosophy where 'one size fits all.' Being taught at university in different countries in the Arab world meant being infused with pro-Arab ideas in the heat of nationalism. The agenda was not to teach skills or how to think, but to impose on and flavour the course with Arab culture and pro-Arab propaganda. In some cases anti-'Western' thought was encouraged and 'Western' influences were diluted. University was used as a platform to spread and engrain cultural identity and belongingness and patriotism at a time when the political environment was generating nationalistic rhetoric. There was substantially less emphasis placed on the quality of either learning or instruction. System analysis of this kind illustrates how the political

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[22] Interview conducted September 8, 2003 in Bahrain.
[23] Interview conducted August 18, 2003 in France

environment determines the message disseminated at university. In this context, university is not so much a place where people are free to contemplate and formulate ideas and conduct research; rather it is a place which is an extension of the larger socio-political arena and is simply a means of disseminating and reformulating what is controlled conventional wisdom on the outside – and hence inside to the students. However, there were two respondents who pursued the American university system, in Lebanon, American University of Beirut – AUB, and Egypt, American University of Cairo - AUC. These universities followed the American system. In fact they *were* American universities in Beirut and Cairo. The majority of the teachers were American and the teaching process was very 'liberal' compared to other systems in the region. Discussion seminars existed in small numbers and students were encouraged to express themselves and analyse. This system set its own agenda and used 'Western' syllabuses but also used local examples for case studies. In AUB, the teaching was very liberal at the time, as compared with other higher learning institutions in the region. Students were encouraged to become active in public affairs and develop their opinions and interests. One of AUB's educational missions was to foster politicisation. Students were encouraged to be more politicised and opinionated and get involved with public issues. It was these characteristics of this 'external' tertiary system that distinguished them from other neighbouring higher educational institutions.

Effect of System Change

All the respondents, at one stage in their educational history, experienced the effects of transition from one system to another. Through experiencing this transition at the tertiary level of their education, they acknowledged the need to challenge and question things. It was almost necessary for them to have experienced the rigid education in their Arab schools in order to have a point of comparison. Respondents' answers indicated that early Arab schooling did not instil confidence in the student. Lack of confidence building in the school years led to difficulties in questioning and sharing personal views in public settings such as auditoriums; lack of participation initially in lectures stemmed from the issue of lack of self-confidence which was prevalent with most girls coming from such backgrounds. The women felt they had neither been prepared for debates nor for making presentations. The effect of system change had significant influence on their perceptions of self. The educational process

brought with it exposure to other people and modes of working. By working with other students from different backgrounds the interviewees were able to learn how other students thought and operated. This has proven a vital tool, absolutely necessary in the working arena and in the global world today.

The effect of system change played a dominant role in making the women significantly aware of the need to challenge and question things that had not been previously questioned. Without the experience of education in other countries, they would have had nothing with which to compare. This transition marked a turning point as the interviewees realised the notion and necessity of change and its dynamic process. It was the transition at higher education that initiated enlightenment and self-awareness; at this point, the women's potential began to come to fruition. It was significant in the development of personal confidence and through the academic process that the respondents encountered different perspectives and saw the merit in thinking on different levels and outside of the initial traditional framework that was culture-bound.

However, there was one case where one of the interviewees did not change systems until doctorate level when she went to England. In her particular case, it is interesting to see that she never felt the need to challenge or question certain 'givens' in her culture and society. She explains:

> *'Though I did not like certain things, I never believed in going against the system. I was taught to accept the system and work within its boundaries; I was taught not to go outside the limitations or indeed rebel.'*[24]

This was interesting and indeed revealing. It raised the question whether her response was related to the fact that she had continued her education through BA level in the same system in which she had been brought up. Unlike other respondents who either moved countries at that level or enrolled in the American University, she remained in Arabic- styled education. The confrontation of self versus others and need to question, critique and test boundaries in the case of the other respondents, came when they changed educational environments on initial entry to university, that is to say at BA level; in her case this was delayed by several years.

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[24] Interview conducted August 25, 2003 in Egypt.

This respondent further commented that:

> *'I was not rebellious against traditions because I knew that this was the whole system and knew not to go against that system...if you do not like the system then move but do not challenge it while you are in it.'*[25]

Questioning instead of challenging was the common theme for the majority of the women who moved from schooling in one educational system into initial higher education in another. They realised that there previously had been no forum for discussion, for sharing or eliciting personal opinions and freedom of expression. None of the women actually challenged who they were or what socio-cultural responsibilities they had. Instead, they learnt the meaning of questioning and through the dual educational process, were able to analyse and critique themselves. It was an opportunity in which they learnt about and fully developed their own cultural identities in terms of what they wanted to do, to accomplish, to believe in and in discovering who they are. Their higher education brought with it new opportunities. It furthered their development and academic and professional accomplishments. At that time, issues pertaining to the 'role of women' were not the driving force for their success; rather, it was the broader cultural and societal environment which drove them to find and test their individual interests, skills and ambitions.

Views of Education: Role and Purpose

All ten women interviewed felt that 'who they are today', was largely due to their educational experiences. Education brought them confidence, self-esteem, exposure, encouragement, ambition, and opportunities and gave them clarity with regard to their professional careers. The opportunities that presented themselves as a result of their educational experience were largely due to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, a sense of empowerment and self-confidence. All felt that education had provided reinforcement of their strengths and their ambitions. Higher education in England and North America, afforded them the capacity to clarify where and how to focus their energies. The process of academic achievement such as gaining a PhD fostered and refined particular skills that helped plot their

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[25] Interview conducted August 25, 2003 in Egypt

professional paths and build certain life skills. The skills (they) included: fostering a sense of meticulousness, a sense of priorities, sharpening the mind and especially, the ability to conceptualise and follow through with clarity. This influence came more at university, especially postgraduate level and in 'Western' institutions rather than elsewhere. Higher degree studies gave guidance and sharpened goals. Education now meant reflection, through which new professions became evident and accessible. Education now opened up new horizons and demolished old barriers to opportunities. Whereas many societies in the Arab world offered conventionally construed and demarcated jobs for females, education abroad allowed these women to chart new professional territories including those traditionally regarded as 'male' domains. Expertise gained at higher levels in their fields put them at the forefront of achievement among their peers. Opportunities in business, academia, development work, biotechnology, and education itself presented themselves after gaining credentials such as an MBA, MA or PhD. Confidence through educational achievements made dreams more realisable. It brought tolerance, understanding and effective information processing. These women gained the respect of peers and competitors, especially men. Their educational achievements distinguished them from others and gave them a comparative advantage. It allowed them to compete aggressively in the same workspace and for the same jobs as men, as a result of their qualifications. Their dual educational experience and success placed them in a league of their own where they were recognised for their excellence, knowledge and skills. As a result of their self-confidence, these women felt a sense of empowerment to pursue new ideas and initiatives and achieve whatever they want.

The opportunities that presented themselves were not simply professional. All respondents pointed out that there is not just one role model of a woman. From the interviews it was clear to see that they believe that women have different qualities from men and have additional responsibilities. Though most tended to equate education and opportunities with financial independence, it would be erroneous to use this as the prime motivation. The respondents in this study felt that education and opportunity were inextricably linked to changes and progress in spheres other than purely financial and professional. Such opportunities included greater awareness and involvement in women's issues and movements, and with that a sense of responsibility to build connections between other young, educated and professional

women. Whether implicitly or explicitly they were able to accept a leadership role, primarily through example and being the role models so previously lacking in their traditional cultures.

All the women shared the exact same beliefs in terms of the basic role and purpose of education: to impart information, knowledge and skills. However, for this to be the only objective is a narrow and instrumental view; these respondents also define education as a way to develop the individual to learn how to think, build skills, formulate opinions, critique, analyse and be exposed and open to new and different perspectives; it involves building a more broadly cultured society and fostering creativity at school level, not simply at university. Development of the personality is, in essence, the holistic development of the individual, intellectually, spiritually, physically, culturally and morally. The importance is to learn how to think and access information and then know how to process it and what to do with it, thereby developing selectivity skills. Once given the tools through the appropriate education, students, they feel, are then prepared for the competitive world and can seize and create opportunities.

All these women felt that education is the ability to foster reflection, self-awareness and the expression of one's ideas and opinions. Self-expression and communication of thoughts is now fundamental and second nature to them. Education is a service provided by teachers and others, responsible for guiding students to identify and develop their strengths and talents. It has the responsibility of imparting basic knowledge such as literature, sciences, religion and mathematics, but together with the freedom to think for themselves and to make their own decisions. It is not to be used to reinforce and dispel prejudices, boundaries, and restrictions; rather it is to demonstrate freedom of expression and choice. Herein lies a significant departure from the style of schooling they received in the Arab world, even at university level. One fundamental observation of the writer, regarding these women's definition of 'education', was that less emphasis was placed on the content and more on the pedagogy of education. All ten respondents highlighted the pivotal role of teachers as being crucial in opening the minds of students of all ages to allow them to expand their thinking process and encourage expression. They felt that the standard and quality of teachers need considerable improvement in the Arab States. Although curriculum itself plays a major role in the quality of education provided, the influence and effect of teaching styles and classroom skills is of equal, if not more importance.

When asked what purposes higher educational institutions play, the unanimous response was that university is there to engender further specialisation, and focus on areas of interest with the aim of preparing to be competitive in the global world and to add value. Further learning at tertiary level is to strengthen knowledge in a specific field, but the essence of education, as indicated above, is implanted at early learning stages. The fact that they mostly came through more restricted school environments than in 'the West' was, as indicated earlier, more a function of their families' influences. University, they believe, is for professionalism. Though it is there as a preparation for the job market, its main role is to offer different interest areas to students and promote continuous skill building and flexibility of thought in order to adapt to any job without limiting oneself. One interviewee supported this view by giving the example that:

> *'Even Medical students should take Liberal Arts classes, such as Philosophy, in order to continuously develop their humane side; I urge that education cannot forget its responsibility to students in developing their soul, psyche, building skills and nurturing their values and sense of morality.'*[26]

The role and purpose of education from the perspectives of the interviewees is that it is there to create open societies, to challenge, change and improve people by breaking down prejudices, providing new and different perspectives and creating tolerance. Education is necessary to organise knowledge in a manageable way, but also to teach them science and literature creatively, to acquire skill- building and information selectivity, while religion and culture are there for the development of the soul. None of the ten women interviewed believed that creativity and religious/spiritual – moral consciousness are mutually exclusive.

From the data gathered for this research, it became apparent that education was deemed by the respondents to be synonymous with change and opportunities. The 'right' educational choices would lead to the empowerment of women. In the words of one respondent:

> *'Education is a tool – a weapon with which to defend yourself. Women need to work against the tide to prove oneself and not be at the mercy of men and society.'*[27]

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[26] Interview conducted August 24, 2003 in Jordan.
[27] Interview conducted September 2, 2003 in Switzerland.

For some of the interviewees, change was identified in tandem with the role and influence of the teacher. Emphasis was placed on the profound effect teachers have on students and in fostering change. Teachers can instigate change through the total curricular experience if they are well adapted to the same goals. However, much of the problem in Arab states is that new, more flexible, programs are being introduced but the teachers have no interest in changing their ways. They remain unmotivated to learn and improve themselves. Change can be positive, and a by-product of education, but only if it is in acquiescence with the appropriate pedagogical environment. An example of this was given by one of the respondents who stated that:

> *'Once we did a study for the use of formal education and you had to introduce curriculum for the first and third year students including issues such as brushing your teeth and other children related issues; it was introducing some sort of curriculum for the children. They had to train teachers on how to teach this. They wanted them to do it non-traditionally, for example, to have some sort of play or to have some sort of painting as a way to teach the children. We had to do an evaluation of the process. We had focus groups for the teachers to see what are the problems and what are the problems with the curriculum and what tools would they need to use. Apparently, most of the teachers did not want to go through the implementation because it was difficult and required preparation. Our analysis showed that approximately eighty percent of the teachers did not teach in the new non-traditional way; they continued to follow the traditional ways of teaching. Because a lot of them have their own children and families and they have something to go back to, their rationale was why should they spend another hour preparing - they were not interested.'*[28]

From the respondents' point of view, change, in terms of their skill sets and performance, in society as a whole, would not have transpired had they not pursued the particular educational tracks of their respective schools and universities. They believe they would not otherwise have shaped and sharpened their opinions or been as interested in certain issues that came to have significant influence on their lives. It was as a result of their 'comprehensive' academic history, that they felt able and prepared to make an impact on their respective societies. They have been responsible in different ways for enabling changes in their communities, initiating projects and bridging together different communities and countries. It has allowed them to operate successfully in their local societies as well as in the international arena which they have used as a platform for reaching and influencing others through networks

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[28] Interview conducted August 23, 2003 in Jordan.

and causes. Education opened their minds and brought change while their families offered support. One respondent shared that:

> *'Without my education I would not have been able to impact society and make the changes I did such as initiating the 21st Century Kids Club which became a national program and the first Egyptian website for children. Nor could I have brought on board nine African countries with all the challenges, to agree to a simple idea of empowering and helping the African child.'*[29]

In summation, all ten women interviewed felt that formal education fosters changes for women in society on both personal and professional levels. From a personal perspective, it is crucial to the re-configuration of gender coding, and professionally it provides opportunities otherwise unavailable. All ten respondents were also in agreement over the role and purpose of formal education, which is to develop the personality and ability to think. It was clear to see that educational priority also encompassed teaching morality, ethics and public and community awareness. With education comes awareness and social responsibility; it is to improve and give back to society, which will lead to future growth, change and development. The list of opportunities resulting from education is numerous and often unimagined; it is inextricably linked to development, awareness of women's rights and job opportunities. However, it is also there to cultivate cultured and informed women and mothers, which is still viewed as a woman's primary responsibility, especially in the societies in question, and accepted by the interviewees themselves.

Nonetheless, barriers against women to push ahead and make changes in society are still formidable. Although education is a door opener and has helped women move out of stereotypical roles, all the respondents believe they have had to work harder than men for similar opportunities. Many of the opportunities mentioned by the respondents related to their professional careers and financial independence. Interestingly enough, though the respondents put much emphasis and importance on their roles as mothers and family builders, few actually stated that education led to better family foundation.

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[29] Interview conducted August 26, 2003 in Egypt.

Pros and Cons of Two Systems – Personal Perspectives

In answer to what the respondents believe to have been the best and worst aspects of their particular Arab schooling and the current systems, it was interesting to note that the majority answered in very similar ways, highlighting similar characteristics. Whilst three of the ten respondents found nothing admirable or positive about the Arab educational system, seven found some positive attributes. Five of the seven 'positive' respondents endorsed the moral training administered at primary school level. This would include values and ethics as well as a sense of discipline. Value was also ascribed to teaching their rich Arabic and Islamic culture and history, the Arabic language, poetry and literature. This was an important aspect of the curriculum for them as it was felt very important to teach Arab students their cultural roots and heritage as well as to stress their identity and sense of belongingness, especially at a time of globalisation. They all spoke highly of the sense of community and familial environment in their respective schools, and two of the seven respondents illustrated this in terms of the teacher/ student rapport, which they perceived to be a positive reflection of their Arab culture, albeit traditional. Religious studies, teaching spirituality, decency, morality and discipline as well as exposure to different languages were traits that were also mentioned as beneficial. The fact that the most positive traits of the Arab system as a whole, from the point of view of the women interviewed, were in instilling a sense of community, morality and pride for one's heritage, is fundamental in understanding where these women are 'coming from'. It can be ascertained that the interviewees do not share the viewpoint that the coexistence of religious/cultural awareness and the promotion of thought and analysis are mutually exclusive. In fact, what they wish to preserve and encourage is what has given them their fundamental identity and distinctiveness.

Their criticisms of the Arab educational systems drawing from their experiences and knowledge leave little unsaid. All ten women agreed that despite the strengths, these systems failed in delivering the *essence* of education. Seven women believed the worst aspect of their Arab education was curriculum rigidity, the lack of encouragement of self expression by teachers, as well as the lack of any form of public speaking and debating initiatives. One common theme was the feeling that their education had ill prepared them for public speaking, expression and articulation of opinions and ideas, and for presentational and debating skills.

Eight women described the system by using the precise word 'rigid'. They claimed that the system isolates students from the rest of world, provides very little scope for independent thought and, as a result, fails to engender the confidence required. The system fails in properly preparing its graduates for higher education. As a whole, it is insular; not exposing students to the abundant possibilities available globally, nor does it entice students to strive to be ambitious. Skill building does not factor into the curriculum, consequently, it is not preparing its graduates for the real world and the needs of the economy. With too many graduates in the Arab world, but yet not enough vocational training schools to train people in much-needed marketable skills, the potential of Arab societies is going to be unrealised due to lack of expertise in key occupations. In the words of one respondent who accurately captured the situation: *'too many chiefs and not enough Indians.'*[30]

The lack of skill building, opinion and idea formulation and expression was attributed to the obvious lack of democracy in school systems and in the region as a whole. Preset curricula only reinforced the notion that it was not a participatory system. The interviewees criticised the traditional system of teaching on the basis of rote learning and memorization, and the teachers for not fostering self-confidence in young people. This lack of democracy was apparent at the school level where there is 'lack of space' for individuals and student bodies to promote self-expression. The system is not designed to empower the people, male or female. One respondent commented that:

> *'My son was 17 years old and wanted to create a forum in school for expression of thoughts and ideas. He wrote a detailed proposal to the Ministry of Education asking for permission to implement and share his plan. The Minister himself wrote back rejecting the plan, saying that they have their own system for students.'*[31]

Another criticism of the curriculum, on the whole, was that too much of it, depending on the country concerned, was dedicated to teaching religion, not so much in the spiritual sense, but as a form of indoctrination. The system is as authoritarian as its leaders, and the emphasis on memorization only succeeds in creating a parrot- like education.

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[30] Interview conducted August 25, 2003 in Egypt.
[31] Interview conducted September 8, 2003 in Bahrain.

To paraphrase one respondent's view:

'The authoritative system is detrimental and is pulling the Arab nations down.'[32]

No critical thinking or problem - solving abilities are taught. Indeed the curriculum is complicated and laden with information, but it is redundant information. With a curriculum that has been ineffective in imparting that which is needed and with no attention given to teaching critical thinking and problem solving, there is little these women would preserve in it. With regard to the role of technology as a learning device, those women involved in Information Technology (IT) and pedagogy feel that not enough is being done to teach students how to access and most importantly, process the information. Both women felt that all information should be presented via technology to illustrate different ways to present information; not simply texts but graphics, movies, pictures and animation. They encouraged using technology to enhance higher learning, creative thinking and problem solving. Another constraint several of the interviewees mentioned was their inability to write their ideas eloquently.

Although Arabic language is taught, their earlier education did not condition, train or encourage them to write and express themselves in Arabic or in English. One respondent felt that the Arab educational system neither prepared nor encouraged women in top levels of administration. The mere fact that gender roles are reinforced in the administration of the educational system clearly demonstrates the lack of an open society. Although gender stereotyping begins at a very early age within the family unit, it is the educational curriculum, also from an early age that is responsible for defining, reinforcing and further promoting this notion. Government regulations and agendas are a major, key factor influencing women's abilities to break from convention, promote change and develop their leadership skills. The curriculum is in the hands of government who set these agendas that have elicited the aforementioned views of the Arab educational system from the perspectives of the respondents in this study.

The respondents' views regarding the positive elements of the 'Western' educational model reflected the benefits they gained from it. Eight respondents felt that the best aspect of

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[32] Interview conducted August 24, 2003 in Jordan.

their 'Western' education was the personal growth they experienced, the competitive environment that pushed them and the exposure to different cultures and perspectives. The new system brought exposure to ethnocentric values that reinforced the need to find one's own definitions and balance; it was the antithesis of inheriting other people's ideas as one's own. It provided a competitive environment in which teachers identified individual student abilities and went out of their way to develop talent. That system, they feel, played a leading role in character building; it helped sharpen their opinions and promote self-expression, debates and the articulation of thoughts. A tangible and practical sense of democracy was present in classroom discussions, which served as a platform for sharing and challenging ideas. The women were privy to a wealth of information, be it through libraries and references or exposure to different cultures and nationalities. Analysis, conducting research, and developing the notion of time management were all new and challenging skills that exemplified the university experiences they had in the West. Respondents frequently commented on the freedom that the system and environment fostered; freedom to make mistakes, learn about one's self, to think and become independent. Unlike their previous Arab school systems, their 'Western' universities reflected an open system and open society where students were taught to make decisions based on hard evidence. The system fosters independence, yet also responsibility, where students are an integral part of the process and outcome of their degree. What the respondents felt their respective home educational systems lacked, they found fully functioning in their 'Western' educational experiences. That system gave them more skills and tools to reach their goals and they experienced the notion of democratic and liberal learning and thinking, relative to their local communities.

Although the criticisms were not as extensive as those relating to the Arab systems, there were, nevertheless, a number of rather telling observations. However, only four women out of the ten felt there were really negative traits worth mentioning. The lack of moral teaching in primary and secondary schools reflected two women's cultural dispositions. Other observations included the impersonalised and often isolated university environment in terms of the attitudes of 'Western' students. They felt 'Western' students had preconceived ideas of people who were different and harboured prejudices towards 'the other'. There was also a unanimous agreement and dislike regarding the lack of respect for teachers, discipline and

social conduct in general. Though the system provided opportunities, it also fostered too much individuality and selfishness with little regard for wider values and tolerance.

Perspectives on Women's Issues

When the respondents were asked about their perceptions of specifically women's issues there was an overall feeling that stereotyping prevailed both in Arab and in 'Western' societies alike. With respect to the Arab society at large, they were aware of the preconceived notion of what women 'should or should not do' and their challenge has been to prove themselves as equal and qualified partners to men. They personally have each had to challenge this predefined role in order to overcome and break through certain barriers. Because gender coding in the Arab world is still a very prevalent and integral part of people's perceptions, these women have come into conflict at different stages in their lives with certain members of their communities as many of them have entered into 'threatening' careers, spaces and issues that have been deemed 'unfit for women'. This has been most apparent where the women have entered the 'male space' as independent and confident individuals without the use of men as their pacifiers, sponsors, representatives or guardians.

Prejudice even exists in cases where women are veiled or wearing the *hijab*. Preconceived notions that religious women are less knowledgeable and skilled than 'modern' women have also served to create barriers within their local communities. In the case where women are threatening men with their liberalism and independence, they face gender role blockades that they have had to break down with perseverance, diligence and excellent performance. In the cases where women are physically unthreatening and religious, society has erected bias barriers deeming these women to be less educated and 'un-modern'. In either case, stereotyping, gender coding and prejudices are the hurdles put forth by different Arab societies to impede women's advancement. Whether it is 'modern' or 'religious' women in the Arab world who are pushing the boundaries and exerting leadership, they are facing barriers that have been erected out of unsubstantiated bias and ignorance. In the case of one respondent:

> *'I was at a meeting where someone who spoke English was needed at the last minute. One of the men chose the 'modern' looking woman to help yet only after they found out she could not speak English, did they let me step in and lead the conversation in English. The men were shocked to see that I spoke English so well. Another incident was after I had been interviewed for a news programme on TV in English, I was invited to as part of a delegation to speak on Bahraini women's issues at an Arab/USA forum in the USA. I was chosen because I spoke English so well and not on the basis of my credentials.'*[33]

As women, they have had the added challenge and pressure of proving themselves. Their education and qualifications have been their tools for redefining their roles in their respective Arab societies, whilst allowing them to be respected and accepted in the international arena by breaking preconceived gender conventions. In terms of professional challenges, the respondents had to work twice as hard as men to break down existing barriers in their communities. From the male perspective, women were expected to be either old or in inferior positions; men have found it hard to accept the authority of women, especially when it has been in positions of management. However, once the women have proven themselves through their accomplishments, men in most scenarios have actually become very supportive and have been their biggest advocates going forward. Two respondents who work in the business communities have, in most cases, been the only women at meetings and business functions. In one case, one of the two women said that:

> *'As the only woman who is the head of the company, I had to visit factories, companies and move about in purely male environments where I was the only woman and the most senior person too. Over time, though, I was and am still the only woman boss dealing with male businessmen and so I have adapted to the situation and have learnt how to deal with the men. Today, I do not look at myself as 'the woman' or the minority. I am a professional and have other professionals who report to me and work with me. As I have adapted, so have the men.'*[34]

The other respondent similarly stated that:

> *'At the beginning, my male colleagues expected me to be old and ugly. In time they started to see my professionalism and dedication. Though I never stopped dressing and acting like a woman, I acted like a professional and proved myself. Continuously working and interacting with my male colleagues earned me their support and they started respecting me for who I was and treating me accordingly.'*[35]

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[33] Interview conducted September 8, 2003 in Bahrain.
[34] Interview conducted August 18, 2003 in France.
[35] Interview conducted August 23, 2003 in Jordan.

Gender stereotyping has been advantageous for some women in circumstances where women are deemed more trustworthy or to have no hidden agenda. In many cases, men in Arab societies have been receptive and unchallenging towards women who were working in 'unthreatening' environments 'fit for women.' Women in 'uncontroversial' professions were welcomed by the men in their communities and were respected and assisted. One of the respondents who initiated the first school in Saudi Arabia for mentally disabled children that is co-educational and has male and female teachers working together stated that:

> *'Although I was the only woman leading the initiative with twenty men or so, they supported me completely and I never felt that the men impeded my plans or challenged me because I was a woman. I feel that it probably had to do with the fact that I was an educator and working in the educational system where my job focus was to benefit the children. Perhaps, had I been in business or economics, then maybe it would have been different.'*[36]

However, male support most often was curtailed in circumstances where women were working in the 'male' domain; it is here where the women encountered professional obstacles. Two respondents illustrated this point. In the first instance, one woman felt that:

> *'I broke the mould. In the past five years I started to do work that was perceived to be work that a woman 'is not supposed to do.' I started working in politics and with men, both of which I was warned was not appropriate work for me. Prior to the last five years, I had not been deemed as a threat in my society as I had always written on women and Islam and social identity based purely on theoretical material without any graphic descriptions. The challenge came when I started what I am now working on. Reactions from my society were that I was breaking the rule and was not working in the 'correct' area; I was tampering with the taboos of my society.'*[37]

Men in Arab societies who have tried to sabotage projects led and initiated by women have imposed professional obstacles. The ongoing struggle facing women in leadership, who have ventured into male space and threatened the man and the male ego, has conditioned the women to persevere and fight their battles to achieve their goals. Only after doing so and proving their substance have they commanded the respect of men and women in their respective fields.

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[36] Interview conducted September 4, 2003 in London.
[37] Interview conducted August 11, 2003 in London.

One respondent came up against challenges when:

> *'Men I worked with tried to sabotage, destroy and go against projects and initiatives I was trying to implement. The men did not like the idea that the project was being launched by me or by a woman, yet this is something I have had to grow accustomed to in my work.'*[38]

The professional careers of all ten of the interviewees predominantly involved interaction with men where they are the only senior woman – if not the only woman at all. The challenges they have encountered are not internal and have not come from their families; rather, they have been external. The obstacles have come from their societies; what people think and the preconceived ideas of the women's capabilities. This has served to make their successes harder as they have had to work at proving their qualifications in order to break down these gender barriers to gain success. However, these barriers vary from country to country and from one community to another. As professional women, they have gained the respect and recognition from their male colleagues and from society, in their Arab countries and in the West. In two cases, respondents felt that they also had the task of dispelling preconceived views of Arab Muslim women in their interactions with 'Western' societies. The contrived view of Muslim women from a 'Western' perspective was something these women were subjected to. They felt they needed to explain who they were, in order to try and break down the stereotype, since the international audience was shocked and uneasy to see Arab Muslim women moving about freely and at the forefront of their professions. One of the respondents stated that:

> *'At my press conference, the press were so taken aback that I was indeed a Muslim woman wearing shorts and a T-shirt. They were more fascinated about who I was than why I was there and what I had just achieved. I felt compelled to explain my identity and that my beliefs and culture did not prevent me from achieving my success and fame.'*[39]

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[38] Interview conducted September 2, 2003 in Switzerland.
[39] Interview conducted September 4, 2003 in Switzerland.

Another respondent believes that:

> *'At international conferences and seminars I found that the people were quite sceptical of me and had some preconceived stereotypes of Arab and Muslim women. However, once they saw me and listened to me, some of these ideas were dismissed. I feel that I have to make a constant effort to dispel such stereotypes in the international world and believe my educational opportunities have afforded me the ability to do so.'*[40]

All the women interviewed were raised without any gender differentiation with regard to educational attainment and opportunities within their families. They were encouraged to pursue all levels of educational achievement as it was seen to be prestigious. They were only regarded as a 'threat' in certain circumstances when their educational accomplishments led them into territories 'unsuitable' for women. Perhaps it is for this reason that they do not really comprehend the threat or difference of being a woman within a dominant male society. The respondents in this study all appear to have embraced their femininity and have used certain situations to their advantage. They have adapted to working in male environments and have asserted themselves as equals, in order to accomplish their goals. On the whole, they are unwilling to be judged simply in terms of women, but rather, in terms of human beings. Their perceptions of self are as professionals, irrespective of gender. In fact, it has been the professional and societal challenges that have made them aware of their gender, which has impelled them to work even harder in not allowing that to define their work or impede their growth or achieve their goals. Perhaps the leadership roles among these women have been due to the predicament and environment in which these women have had to compete and prove themselves in their Arab contexts. Arab Muslim men do not have such apparent challenges and arguably have not needed to work as hard. The women interviewed for this study have possibly become leaders in their fields and their communities as a result of their dual education and their achievements. Arguably, it was the very reinforcement of gender coding in their society and in the professional world that has fuelled their ambition for recognition and respect.

As part of the first real generation of professional career women in Arab world, the respondents did feel it a challenge for them to a combine the traditional, womanly role with the professional. As a result of women like themselves, there now exist many women's networks

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[40] Interview conducted September 24, 2003 in Jordan.

that have been established to encourage and support working women who divide their responsibilities between their family obligations and those of their work. The women in this study are all women who travel extensively for their work and are committed to many organisations, apart from their basic day to day career. Nine women said that they are constantly juggling between their roles as mothers and wives and career professionals, yet each of them have found their own balance and acknowledge the merit in both.

Women internationally are no longer looking to their mothers as role models. The interviewees are part of an era in which women's roles are changing, internationally as well as within the Arab countries, to varying degrees. In most instances, these women had to find their own balance and did not follow the designated path. However, they never rebelled against who they were, or rejected their culture. Instead they used situations to their advantage.

In some cases, respondents shared similar views that the more educated a woman is, the more of a threat she can appear to be within her local society. They shared the feelings that their need to define themselves has sometimes had an adverse effect as it has caused tensions within their society. Educated women from the Arab world are struggling to find their balance and niche; such that they can evolve and develop as individuals instead of being confined to the designated parameters of gender roles. In some cases, the interviewees felt that their seniority in age now afforded them more recognition and acceptance than in their youth. Eight of the respondents are mothers and expressed a strong sense of duty to their children and to being full time mothers. However, though they juggle their responsibilities, the two are not mutually exclusive; the women all believe they can be full time mothers and be successful professionals. One respondent found it particularly challenging:

> *'When I returned to my country after finishing my education abroad, I was expected to conform. I found myself caught between what society dictated and who I wanted to be and how I wanted to live. After standing firm for what I believed, my society accepted and respected me.'*[41]

Arguably, women in general are struggling to various degrees, depending on their culture and background. With 'liberalism' and the influence of education in the 'Western' world, many Arab women are trying to identify with and excel in that milieu which supports

[41] Interview conducted August 23, 2003 in Jordan.

meritocracy and achievement whilst also maintaining their identity and adhering to their values and their culture. Within the Arab world, women have heard the words 'globalisation' and 'democracy', yet until now they have merely been utterances. Education in the Arab world must begin to reflect these principles in curricula, actual and hidden, in order for the different societies to reach a point where it is no longer a point of contention for women and men in their communities.

In response to the interviewees' observations on the existence of equal opportunities for men and women in the professional world in their countries and in the West, the overall consensus was that there exists no concept of gender equality or equal opportunity in companies in the Arab world. Until it is Law, men take precedence overall. Gender roles and stereotypes still dictate that men are the primary breadwinners, therefore, precedence is given to men in the Arab context. However, the women did not believe the situation was drastically better in the West. The belief was that there still exist barriers and inequality, yet these barriers are unofficial and are not dictated by conventional gender stereotyping. Drawing from personal experiences, all women interviewed said that for a woman to be given a prestigious opportunity over a man, she must prove to be much better and more capable than the man. In the Arab paradigm, equality seems apparent and thriving, but only at junior levels of employment. Senior positions are still generally reserved for men. Four of the interviewees who are in senior positions reflect a certain reality common to some Arab communities where the women in senior positions are in family businesses or own their company. However, the other six respondents are also in senior and high level occupations but merely as individual professionals in their field. The observations of the women interviewed reveal that the "Western" world is still guilty to varying degrees of gender discrimination and the glass ceiling phenomenon. Indeed, one prominent British educator has recently advocated a return to more traditional norms in his book *The Miseducation of Women.*[42] In the Arab context, discrimination is common for senior level positions and decision-making jobs, while the vast majority of women are employed at lower levels, in fields that are deemed fit for their gender and in non managerial/ decision making positions. Is this so different from the predicament of "Western" female professional?

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[42] Tooley, J. The Miseducation of Women, London: Ivan R Dee, Inc., 2003

Historical View of Women

Respondents were asked about their perspectives of the historic view of Arab women and how it had changed over the last century. As mentioned above, there is no one quintessential model of the 'Arab woman'; historical differences and cultural diversities exist among the various Arab countries. In response to the question, six women felt that women's positions, roles, and stature had worsened over the course of the last century. That is to say that their historic view of women was better than today as women in Islam, historically, were a symbol of power. Women had more leverage and status in their homes 50 years ago, as men were working and left women in full charge of domestic, familial and financial affairs. The argument is that in some specific countries like Saudi Arabia, with modernity and abundant wealth creation due to the oil boom in the 1970s, women's status has regressed. Historically, women in Islam were assisting the men in battle; they were merchants and were the foundation of the family. One respondent expanded on this:

> *'In the beginning of the 20th Century, the people of Saudi Arabia were peasants or Bedouins. Although women were not educated they guarded the cattle while their husbands were out working the fields or sheering the sheep. They were fully responsible for controlling the house, the finances of the family and for all the twenty or so people living in the house with them. It was with modern life and luxuries that women have lost their stature and their power. In the last fifty years, many women have become spoilt from wealth and are now nothing more than modern, subservient housewives who render very little authority compared to historical times.'*[43]

From the respondents' perspectives, women's positions in countries such as the Gulf States were better in the past than in the present as men awarded them more respect. Nonetheless, there is no disagreement that Arab Muslim women, throughout various societies, have indeed made great accomplishments in the past 50 years, in other ways. Four respondents felt that because women are now being educated and are working in various fields such as government, business, medicine and technology, their position in many ways has improved over time. Educational achievements have empowered many Arab women through exposure to ideas and, as a result, women have stepped beyond the threshold of the family domain and into public space. Legislation in many countries has supported and permitted such movement and empowerment, but only to a degree and only in certain countries.

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[43] Interview conducted September 4, 2003 in London.

Women's educational and professional opportunities have significantly improved and they are now working in many different fields. However, perception and respect of Arab women has worsened over time depending on the particular society and historical culture. Women were symbols of power and responsible for their domain. Men did not dare infringe on their territory. The widely held view of the interviewees, which resonates in writings on women in the Arab context is that now women are most often seen as subservient to men and many still remain in their husband's shadow. Women were once more prominent in the eyes of society; although, now they are increasingly educated and accomplished, many Arab Muslim societies have yet to award them the status they once had as 'uneducated' women! One respondent felt that:

> *'The perception of the woman has yet to fully change, regardless of their educational and professional achievements. Much must be done to change the mindset of society at large.'*[44]

Regardless of their differences, all ten women interviewees agreed that change is in order and much must be done to rectify the present situation.

Suggestions for Change

The changes suggested by the respondents for women in the Arab context called for the simple freedom of choice. Choice encompasses being able to pursue any profession without the existence of barriers to entry. It also means that a woman should be able to decide for herself if she wishes to wear the *hijab*, work and where to work. She would no longer be seen as simply a 'woman', but rather as an equal partner and contributor to society; the respondents of this study would call for the demise of gender barriers and gender stereotyping and coding. They call for a society that would endorse and encourage women to step out of the traditional roles, thereby widening the margin and scope for professional opportunities. Changing perceptions would come with more working, professional role models encouraging other women by example. One politically oriented respondent expressed her view that:

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[44] Interview conducted August 18, 2003 in France.

> *'More career-oriented women are needed in public affairs and an increased commitment by women to their public work.'*[45]

This would serve to re-educate the man and the family unit in general. However, the interviewees all believe that the woman's role in the family is pivotal; each one of the eight interviewees who are mothers feel she is the anchor in her family, regardless of her professional commitment and that there is no conflict between the two. Even so, women can no longer be viewed solely in terms of their role as mothers. For economic, social and political reasons, women need to be seen as active participants of the socio-cultural system. They advocated giving the woman the choice and the opportunity to decide how she wishes to be perceived. Changing perceptions was seen as the key to enhancing women's status. This would demand re-defining and re-orienting the man. In the cases of the six women who are married, they feel that their husbands have been their staunchest supporters. Two respondents are not married and two are divorced with children.

Surprisingly, just as the respondents advocated and called for freedom of choice in the Arab context, when asked what they would change in the West they also supported more freedom of choice and opportunity for 'Western' women as they feel they too have not yet been fully emancipated; there still remains a certain degree of restriction on their freedom to move in predominantly male dominated professions. Another highlighted point was that "Western" women have tended to abandon their role as the 'woman' in order to compete with their male colleagues. The respondents felt that being a woman and embracing it whilst also being professionally successful are not mutually exclusive. There needs to be a balance between being a woman and being powerful. Whereas in Arab societies women need to be more professionally driven and to subscribe less to the conventional expectation of a 'woman', in the West, the reverse is necessary. Women have become too hardened with having to achieve equality, and the division of roles between women and men has blurred. Respondents felt that women in the "Western" context have lost the essence of being a woman and need to regain their feminine identity.

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[45] Interview conducted August 24, 2003 in Jordan.

The belief is that women and men are equal and should be, irrespective of culture, and yet they are obviously different. Equal rights and dignity should be granted to all women, but women have their role in society and men have theirs; both are needed, yet each is different! "Western" women have gone to great lengths in achieving equality with men, however, this has had an adverse effect in that it has brought with it too much licence which has reflected a general lack of self-respect and respect from within their societies. Contrary to the principles of the respondents, they feel that in the West, women have put their professional careers and personal agendas as a priority over their family and familial responsibilities. The interviewed women believe whilst "Western" women need to learn from the Arab model, Arab women need to learn and move towards the "Western" model in order for a balance to be achieved in both sets of societies.

Is there really such a great difference between the standing of Arab women and that of women in the West? Although women in the West have achieved more and are further in their development they too have not fully achieved their balance. Where they have gained professional success, they have compromised their identities as women, homemakers and their responsibility to their family and society. They too struggle with barriers to entry and are undermined in the predominantly male domain. If that is the case, arguably the Arab women interviewed for this study are a step ahead; they have found their balance. That being said, Arab women and 'Western' women both need further freedom of choice and opportunities. The respondents in this study reinforce their view that professional success and familial duties are not mutually exclusive.

Summary

The data generated from the interviews, and outlined above, indicates that the educational experience gained in 'Western' institutions played a significant and decisive role in shaping the interviewees and their sense of self. It served to encourage them to succeed and it built their self confidence, vital in accomplishing what they did and in struggling for what they believed. Their dual educational experience had a significant influence on who they later became and provided the tools and credentials that were essential to building their stamina and

perseverance in the face of challenges and setbacks. These tools encompassed how to think, express and articulate their opinions, comprehend other people's cultures and mindsets, and exposure to social networks that helped shape who they are and who they want to be. Having experienced schooling in the Arab world, which served as a point of reference and reinforced their cultural affiliation, their continuation in the West allowed them to see different perspectives and broadened their scope. The transition opened their minds and was an opportunity in which they were able to develop and pursue their ambitions. The exposure to different realities through their educational process had a significant influence on where these women are today and how they apply themselves to their chosen paths. It gave them the confidence and skills to overcome certain barriers and develop their personalities. Without their dual educational opportunities these women said they would have been different. They were taught to be goal-oriented. Their education has been their weapon and their sense of power. It has brought them self-awareness, self-confidence, motivation, opportunities, broader vision, self-esteem, independence and responsibility.

In all ten cases, the women had strong encouragement and support from their father, their mother, or both. Many of their mothers did not work but educated themselves and were responsible for the children and the family. The fathers played a pivotal role as mentors to the ten respondents and were responsible for exposing them at an early age to different cultures, including 'Western' media and education. The function of the parents was crucial in the success of these women and in crossing boundaries and obstacles. These women see no ideological conflict between respecting their society and their religion whilst achieving professional success and leadership. Neither are they at odds with being a mother, daughter, wife and a powerful career woman. They feel that they have not needed to reject their culture and certain socio-cultural traditions, nor have they needed to abandon Islam or surrender to the dogmas of gender coding in their respective societies. Instead, these ten women identify closely with their culture, but on their own terms. The last chapter takes a closer look at some of the issues arising from the data analysis and the literature that supports some of the key issues.

PART C

Part C consists of Chapter Five and the Conclusion. Closer attention is given in Part C to certain issues arising out of the empirical data analysis. The key issues ensuing are: a critique of educational systems in the Arab world today; the prevalence of gender stereotyping and barriers to women's employment in the Arab States and in Western societies; the cross-cultural concerns related with researching and the pre-eminence of contextual considerations when analysing other cultures and behaviours. These three topics arose out of the data analysis in Chapter Four, but documentary sources and a literature review further place these issues in a larger context.

CHAPTER FIVE

ISSUES ARISING

A Critique of Arab Education

The Global Context

It must be noted from the outset that the Arab Muslim world comprises a complex matrix of social, political, economic and cultural dynamics, and one must caution against over-generalising the educational realities in the region. Nevertheless, drawing from the observations of the interviewees, and their educational experiences in two markedly different cultural settings, it is clear that there is a mutual agreement on the perils and merits of each genre of education. Yet it is this combination of cultural identity reinforced by their Arab schooling and cognitive skill acquisition in their 'Western' schools that is predominantly responsible for shaping these women's attitudes, values, self-image and ambitions. They call for what UNICEF termed global education; the Global Education Program was initiated as an experimental project in 1992 – 93 in Jordan. The reflections and suggestions of the respondents regarding the style of education they call for, echoes the global education concept that sees the need to respect and value national cultures and identities, while reinforcing the belief that plurality of cultures and identities, in today's global world, is a necessity as well as an enrichment for society at large. The aim is to empower students, and involve them in the transformation of their society at the local, regional and international level, and so widen their visions and realise their creativity. This concept of education shared by the women is what Sirotnik defines as 'an approach to education that embodies constructivistic and critical inquiry orientations.'[1]

The premise for such an educational experience is that it calls for a national system that perceives the central function of education to be reconstructing social order and renewing national culture; this is at odds with current educational systems that aim at the preservation of national and social order as highlighted in the interviews as well as the literature critiques of the Arab education paradigm. The aims of the Global Education Program (GEP), reiterate the beliefs of the respondents and the influences of their 'Western' educational experiences on them. Their definition of education and the ideals of the GEP similarly focus on empowering

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[1] Sirotnik, K. Critical Inquiry: A Paradigm for Praxis. In E. Short (ed), Forms of Curriculum Inquiry, New York: State University of New York, 1991, pp. 243 – 258

students to learn and grow by developing their social and emotional learning skills, cultivating their cognitive skills and strategies, and promoting their awareness of other peoples, cultures and environments.[2]

Although disparate in certain features, curriculum in much of the Arab region focuses on transmitting pre-packaged bodies of knowledge that reinforce discipline but bear little need to relate to either individual students' concerns and interests or national needs. Despite the academic focus, most students are not motivated and do not engage intellectually or emotionally with the learning activities in the curriculum. Furthermore, students' voices are rarely heard except in response to teachers' questions.[3]

The role of the teacher in implementing attempts at educational reform is pivotal. Reflecting the view of one particular respondent, teachers usually interpret and implement curriculum innovations to fit their own conceptions and belief system. Hence the argument that teachers' perceptions need to be changed followed by training them in new skills that are required in order to achieve this notion of global education. Teacher skills that the interviewees and the GEP call for include: cooperative learning, non-verbal interaction, role-playing and problem solving. Enrichment of teachers' professional skills and strategies and the enhancement of their self-efficacy are predicated on changes in their belief system.

Suggestions for reform given by the respondents in this study mirror the agenda of UNICEF's Global Education Program. The program was designed to respect and embrace students' diversity while motivating them to pursue higher levels of learning and development. The effect is to shift the student from a passive learner to an active one, reflecting the respondents' experiences when they transitioned from the Arabic system to the 'Western' system of education. Such a shift demands the generation of knowledge using the student's own experiences, intelligence and communication skills. The pedagogical difference, as illustrated by the ten women interviewed, is that the acquisition of knowledge becomes an active communal process based on the construction and reconstruction of personal experiences; consequently motivating students to learn, building self-confidence and

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[2]El Sheikh Hasan, O. Improving the Quality of Learning: Global Education as a Vehicle for School Reform, Theory into Practice, Vol.39, Issue 2, 2000, p.98
[3] Ibid., p.99

strengthening personal efficacy and well-being. In turn, the teacher's role develops from mere transmitters of information to facilitators of inquiry and knowledge construction. Inevitably this demands fundamental and conceptual changes of power and authority. Where teachers currently see knowledge as a finished product that is pre-packaged and disassociated from human interests and experiences, they must in the future see the educational process as a continual, historical and dynamic process of construction and reconstruction of human understanding if the aforementioned changes are to be honoured.

The respondents' observations converge with the current realities of the Arab school system. Even in the cases where reform of some sort has been attempted, the curricula on the whole have continued to reinforce academic discipline, which is de-motivating to most students and is only weakly connected to their concerns and day-to-day realities. Classroom instruction still remains essentially teacher dominated with telling, showing, drilling and reciting being the most frequent modes of disseminating information. Suffice to say that it differs little from centuries-old rote learning. Attempts at reforming or initiating various teacher-training activities have not succeeded in developing the pedagogical expertise required to improve the quality of learning to the extent of accommodating the role of teacher as facilitator rather than instructor, as stated clearly by one of the interviewees in the previous chapter.[4]

Traditional Constraints

Educational systems in the Arab world have been labelled by liberal theorists as indoctrination, as in many cases they have taken a rigid absolutist stance and have taught students to believe that there is only one possible answer to a problem or one way of doing things – again something echoed in the views of the interviewees. It is this indoctrination process prevalent in many of the systems that has prevented students from questioning beliefs, critically analysing the given, and constraining their ability to formulate and express their own beliefs. There is a stated priority in education for preparing the students for productive employment. However, given the overcrowded school schedule, little time is left to develop the necessary life skills. The overloaded schedule is due to the governments' attempt to incorporate religious education. Although the premise for such education has been highlighted

[4] See footnote 28 in Chapter 4.

as integral to the identity and moral formation of the students, it is not being imparted so as to allow the simultaneous development of the required cognitive skills. The interviewees echoed this point when sharing their views that both types of education are necessary. Instead of teaching religion in an indoctrinating and dogmatic way, the merit of religion should be preserved through teachings about religion as an academic exercise.[5] A World Bank report highlighted that:

> *'Education will need to impart skills enabling workers to be flexible, to analyse problems, and to synthesize information gained in different contexts. This requires focusing students on the process of learning--on learning how to learn--as well as on particular subject content.'*[6]

By all indications, education systems in the Arab Middle East do not reward these skills. Massialas and Jarrar's criticism of the Arab states' educational systems focuses on the dysfunctionality and inefficient outcomes of national educational systems. They ponder the inherent social, cultural and political conflicts that affect educational policies and practices, and illustrate their point by arguing that 'forces of tradition' rather than 'forces of change' are in control, resulting in conflicts within the educational processes themselves.[7] They conclude that:

> *'....the values of the patriarchal family are replicated in the school...the Arab classroom teaches reverence to authority figures and complete submission to their will; it teaches not to question traditional sources of knowledge and wisdom; and it teaches cooperation, not competition.'*[8]

The World Bank and others have warned that such an approach does not prepare students adequately for the modern world of work. A recent World Bank study, as reported by Rugh, states:

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[5] Barrow, R. Plato, Utilitarianism and Education, p.150, 1975, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

[6] Rugh, W. Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform, The Middle East Journal, Vol. 56, Issue 3, 2002, p.404

[7] Massialas, B & Jarrar, S. Conflicts in Education in the Arab World: The Present Challenge, Arab Studies Quarterly 9, 1987, pp.35-53

[8] Massialas, B & Jarrar, S. Arab Education in Transition: A Source Book, pp.144 – 145, 1991, New York: Garland

> *'What is known about the quality of education--defined as learning and achievement--is not encouraging,' adding: 'most importantly, education in the region does not impart the higher-order cognitive skills such as flexibility, problem solving and judgment needed by workers who will face frequently changing tasks and challenges in increasingly competitive export markets. Instead, the systems teach students how to learn and retain `answers to fairly fixed questions in problem situations with little or no meaningful context' and thus reward those who are skilled at being passive knowledge recipients.'*

The conclusion was that the quality of Arab education and learning has suffered due to expanding enrolments and falling teacher compensation levels.[9]

There has been much critique of the quality and content of Arab education which mirror the issues highlighted by the interviewees in this study. There are several areas of concern. A recent UNESCO study declared:

> *'In terms of population sizes, economic sources, and growth potential, the Arab states vary considerably, but in terms of their present possession of tools and skills of knowledge, particularly in aspects related to modern technology, they are still very much behind.'*[10]

Following this, a new UNESCO[11] study claims that the number of research centres at Arab universities is 'not impressive' and their budgets are 'meagre', without which there is 'little renewal of production of knowledge, but merely transmission of what is already known'. It says that 'the early spirit of Arab researchers, flowering during the Abbasid time in the Middle Ages, which has greatly contributed to the advancement of human learning ... has almost disappeared.' UNESCO recommends that this be remedied, and calls for 'a stronger political will to revive research spirit, and provide researchers with proper support and means.' Clearly such observations illustrate the lack of research and knowledge production by the educational system, especially by universities. Numbers of universities and enrolments have increased substantially but most of the increase has been at the bachelor's level and the growth has been on teaching but not on research or knowledge production.

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[9] Rugh, W. Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform, The Middle East Journal, Vol. 56, Issue 3, 2002, p.405
[10] Ibid., pp 405 - 407
[11] Ibid., pp.405 -407

In mitigation, in must be recognised that modern colleges and universities are still at their infantile stage in the Arab world. In many cases, it has been for this reason that those more fortunate have sought higher degrees in 'Western' institutions. Three quarters of the Arab universities were established only in the last twenty-five years of the Twentieth Century and the early years of the new millennium. Nearly sixty percent of these universities are no more than fifteen years old. In addition to being relatively new, higher education institutions in the region suffer from a lack of clear vision, and well-designed educational missions. They also lack autonomy as they are under the direct control of various authoritarian regimes. This leaves minimal room for freedom for curriculum, expression, research, original thought and publications. This lack of autonomy has resulted in a situation where universities are simply platforms for disseminating the governing political dictum.[12]

Another area of concern is quality assurance. There is no accreditation or other external evaluation system for Arab education; even self-evaluation by educational institutions is rare. One reason for this is that most education institutions are government controlled, so the governments make decisions on curriculum and other matters and they have not been interested in independent evaluations. UNESCO has concluded that:

> *'....the present system of centralization has not led to continuous improvement of higher education but may have contributed to its stagnation,' adding: 'healthy competition is constrained.'*[13]

Without an accreditation system in place, the current educational institutions will be unable to contribute effectively.

Curriculum Issues

Despite the substantial quantitative expansion of educational opportunities, questions are being asked throughout the Arab world by thoughtful observers, especially in the private sector but also in government and academia, about the quality of education and the outputs of the system. Employers are increasingly complaining that job applicants have not learned skills

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[12] Arab Human Development Report 2003, United Nations, United Nations, www.undp.org, p.56
[13] Rugh, W. Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform, The Middle East Journal., Vol. 56, Issue 3, 2002, p.408

useful in the private sector, so they must hire foreign labour or also undertake remedial training programs. Unemployed graduates also are disappointed that they are unable to find jobs they want because they lack the skills needed. This phenomenon has become more apparent as governments privatise enterprises and as globalisation affects more businesses. Transmission of knowledge has expanded globally, but problems persist because of reliance on rote learning, and little production of new knowledge in the region. Educators and political leaders have long known that basic education in the Arab countries needs to be overhauled. A legacy of the colonial past, the system is in a torpid condition and both the curriculum and associated educational materials require restructuring and upgrading. Such efforts as have been made to improve teaching and learning have met with partial success, at best. Naturally, the curriculum plays a central role in structuring the learning experiences of students. Curriculum refers to the content of both formal and informal instructional and learning experiences, instructional strategies, materials and facilities. It also includes methods of evaluating the success or otherwise of attaining curriculum goals.

Implied in this definition is an important distinction between the 'intended' and the 'implemented' curriculum. Actual curriculum implementation brings into focus teachers and textbooks, among other things. This definition puts the curriculum:

> *'....at the centre of any efforts to improve the quality of basic education and implies a coordinated effort in all the areas included.'* [14]

However, in all Arab countries, without exception, education ministry officials develop the curriculum centrally. Hence, it is imposed from above, with neither the community nor teachers having much involvement in the process. By contrast, studies carried out in other developing countries, some of them Islamic, emphasize the significant contributions that parents and community leaders can make to curriculum development and reform, yet this privilege is not accessible in the Arab world.[15] In almost all Arab states, all major decisions involving curricula,

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[14]Abu-Laban, B. Primary Education and National Development: The Case of Arab Society, Arab Studies Quarterly, 1992, Vol. 14, Issue 2/3, p.27

[15]Bude, U. 1990, Improving Primary School Teaching: An Evaluation of the Field-Based Teacher: Development Programme in the Northern Areas of Pakistan. Bonn: German Foundation for International Development; Education, Science and Documentation Centre and Bacchus, M.K. Improving the Quality of Basic Education Through Curriculum Development and Reform, 1990, Background paper prepared for the Commonwealth Ministers of Education Conference held in Barbados

course syllabi and textbooks, and other areas such as teacher selection, training and placement, and examinations, are highly centralized in ministries of education. Such systems also exhibit a high degree of centralization at the district (or regional), local and institutional levels. With reference to the institutional level, authority resides solely in the hands of the school principal. While the principal's authority is not absolute, circumscribed as it is by higher levels of administration, he or she tends to be a strict, authoritarian administrator, allowing little decision-making power for the teacher to innovate and be creative. School principals are usually recruited from the ranks of teachers and, therefore, most lack the necessary administrative skills or specialized training for leadership, creative or otherwise.[16]

Although modernisation and economic development have facilitated the application of the 'Western' school model within these countries, the application has been more related to planning and policy than to pedagogy. Curriculum development, content and pedagogy have not been applied so successfully. In some circumstances, as in Egypt, concerns about moral and religious discipline have incited a renewed call for Islamic identity and for indigenous solutions that will serve the needs of the present. The educational systems are in a state of confusion as they have tried to transplant a 'Western' paradigm superficially whilst trying also to straddle traditional religious and cultural learning. Neither is appropriate for the region. The challenges facing the educational systems magnify the tensions that exist between the state, the secular intellectuals and the growing Islamic populace. The state's primary agenda is to achieve its economic and political objectives with the assistance of education. However, it is failing to imbue skills and competencies to achieve this. It is also failing to take into account the collective goals of its societies. Current educational policy in some countries such as Egypt is looking to issues of national identity and character as it attempts unsuccessfully to marry the cultural and technical imperatives.[17]

The past two decades have witnessed a visible resurgence of Islamic activity in many parts of the world, reflecting the increasingly dramatic role that Islam has come to play in many different aspects of the lives of millions. The debate between intellectuals, religious leaders and politicians is struggling to define Islam's place and role in the changing societies of the

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[16] Abu-Laban, B. Primary Education and National Development: The Case of Arab Society, Arab Studies Quarterly, 1992, Vol. 14, Issue 2/3, pp.35-36

[17] Cook, B. Egypt's National Education Debate, Comparative Education, Vol.36, Issue 4, 2000, p.491

Arab, Muslim world. Just how prominent a role Islam plays in the daily lives of such societies is clearly illustrated and apparent within the national education systems of the Arab nations. Islam gives a great deal of importance to education, with over 800 references relating to education in the Quran. The centrality of Islam in the educational process defined the content and premise of education throughout Islamic history.[18] With the failure of 'Western' paradigms to relieve socio-economic pressures in these nations, societies, to varying degrees, have begun demanding a return to Islam for solutions. Religious and moral teachings constitute a large part of curriculum for these educational systems. The aforementioned attempts to combine Islamic and 'Western' education paradigms have proved only a temporary remedy on the part of governments to appease the two different mindsets of their peoples. The challenge to balance religious and cultural homage with 'Western', contemporary living has not been met by the educational systems in the Arab world. Yet, the interviewees for this study did not see the conflict in their own experience. They were able to respect their Islamic heritage from a spiritually and moralistic perspective while adapting to a rapidly 'Western' context with different gender related problems as well as prospects.

Indeed the synthesis between the:

> *'.....development needs of a modern world and the moral imperatives of a religious society is the greatest challenge facing politicians, scholars, educators and planners in the Islamic world today.'*[19]

The women interviewed saw the merit in an education that included moral, religious, spiritual teachings and cultural heritage and history. Nonetheless, in their view, it did not obstruct their appreciation and adoption of the 'Western' educational paradigm that ideally, though not always in practice, provokes thought, analysis, expression and creativity. It was this combination that has made them who they are today, what they have accomplished and what they stand for.

In the case of the modern and current Egyptian educational curriculum – religion is a required component of the national curriculum at the primary and secondary levels, and is under the authority and supervision of the Ministry of Education. Three hours per week are dedicated to religious study at the primary level and two hours at the secondary level, out of a

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[18] Ibid., p.477
[19] Ibid., 478

30 hour school week. The Ministry of Education is having difficulty in providing a curriculum that teaches skills whilst simultaneously preserving culture. They have made efforts to achieve this by focusing more of the curriculum on skills but so far such efforts have been piecemeal. In some cases in Egypt, for example, teachers in public schools have had their own 'hidden curriculum'.

Many of the teachers with Islamic learning use the national curricula to impose their own:

> *'.....thoughts, knowledge, tendencies and values on their students. In doing so, the teachers are perpetuating certain radical thoughts that are in opposition to the more progressive aspects of the curriculum.*[20]

According to Mogheis, there is a heavy reliance on Islamic sources, especially in the Humanities, which he argues is inappropriate for a pluralistic society such as Egypt. He cites one secondary text in religious education:

> *'The acceptable religion to Allah is Islam and there is no other religion with which Allah would be satisfied. The followers of the previous divine religions do not differ from Islam and the prophesies of Muhammad and knew for certain by clear proofs and signs that Islam is the religion of Allah. Their disbelief was not a result of having no clear signs but because of prejudice and stubbornness. As a result, they have been misguided.'*[21]

Clearly there is a misconstrued and biased interpretation of religious teachings that Mogheis argues is destructive for students who have yet to develop their own critical and analytical thinking skills. Though the challenge of integrating two systems into one still exists in the case of Egypt and other Arab countries, there is an overall support for some religious-cultural instruction as Islam is the bedrock of their national character. It is this challenge that continues to impede fundamental changes to the curricula and the system as a whole. The quest is:

> *'....obviously modernisation without Westernisation and Islamisation without extremism'.*[22]

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[20] Mogheis, K. Religious Discourse in Education, Cairo: Al Hadid; 1997, p.22
[21] Ibid., p.27
[22] Cook, B. Islamic Versus Western Conceptions of Education: Reflections in Egypt International Review of Education, 1999, p. 344

Currently, as in the case of Egypt, balancing the two ideals has yet to be achieved. There exists a superficial blend of secularised and religious courses in Egypt's public education system that fails to comply with the essence and value system of either.

Education in the Arabic language is synonymous with three ideals. The first is *ta'lim*, which means to seek knowledge through instruction and teaching. The second is *tarbiya*, relating to spiritual and ethical nurturing and the third, *taadib*, which refers to the student's development of social manners and behaviour. It is clear that education, in the context of Islam, is a process involving the holistic development of the individual; it calls for the development of the spiritual, social, intellectual and rational dimensions of the student. This notion of education, having a responsibility to cultivate the child's personality and disposition, echoes the thoughts of the women interviewed in this study who described one of the purposes of education as just this. Their belief is not alien to the philosophy that education in Islam is seen as a comprehensive and integrated approach to fostering the total personality and creating a sense of inner equilibrium through the development of the spirit, intellect, rational, emotions and the self. The respondents in this study viewed the role and purpose of education in the school years as an infusion of all these elements. They believe that to simply favour reason at the expense of fostering spirituality only creates imbalance in the child. Their views are mirrored in Cook's article that articulates:

> *'Exclusive training of the intellect, for example, is inadequate in developing and refining elements of love, kindness, compassion and selflessness which have an altogether spiritual ambiance and can only be appealed to by processes of spiritual training.*[23]

Islamic educationists, and all ten of the women interviewed, seem to agree on the fact that education is a twofold process that involves the acquisition of cognitive skills and knowledge through reason and logic, and spiritual appreciation. Islam claims to embody absolute truth, with an innate universal truth within each person. In contrast, liberal education, such as these women experienced in higher education in the West, is characterised by 'a predominant stress on individualism and the freedom of individual choice.'

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[23] Ibid., p.346

Contrary to pedagogical philosophy practised in the Arab school paradigm, is the argument posed by liberal theorists who claim that there is no absolute authority in matters pertaining to morality and therefore education 'must avoid authoritarian stances.' One such theorist, Bailey, argues that a liberally educated person:

> *'.....is released from the restrictions placed on him or her by the limited and specific circumstances in which he or she is born. Liberal education allows for intellectual and moral autonomy, the capacity to become a free chooser of beliefs and actions – in a word, a free moral agent, the kind of entity a fully-fledged human being is supposed to be and which all too few are!*[24]

However, it is often argued that Islam is fundamentally at odds with this liberal perspective on education. Islam puts much less importance on individual autonomy and emphasises the importance of community, respect for social contexts and traditions in which the individual originates. It does not condone individualistic development at the expense of society and socio-cultural values. Though this may be the interpreted view and the rationale behind why Islamic, moral teachings and liberal education cannot be fused, the women interviewed for this study were able to see the merit in both and use both to their advantage - to different degrees- to achieve their personal and professional goals. Their own lived experiences dispelled such a notion by proving that the two disciplines are not mutually exclusive.

Dilemmas

In attempting to address the issue of educational opportunities, planners should be clear on whether education is viewed as a goal in itself, that is, a basic human right, or rather as a means to achieving other goals such as socio-economic development and/or national integration. This is important because each view entails a different set of policy options and priorities. Educators and political leaders have long known that education in the Arab countries needs to be overhauled. In part the legacy of a colonial past, the systems are in a stagnant condition and both the curriculum and associated educational materials require restructuring and upgrading. All efforts to improve teaching and learning have met, at best, with partial

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[24] Bailey, C. Beyond the Present and the Particular: A theory of Liberal Education, p.21, 1984, London: Routledge& Kegan Paul

success. Before attempting to solve problems relating to curricula, forms of examination and the evaluation process of students, a well-defined vision of educational needs and goals is needed. However, current approaches lack an integrated vision of the education process itself and its objectives. Contemporary education policies dictate the path and agenda of curricular content and are plagued by piecemeal efforts, inconsistencies and a general lack of direction. Over the last several decades, Arab countries have embarked on attempting to initiate educational reforms for the purpose of modifying the content of the curricula. In so far as subjects are deemed neutral and non- controversial, revision of the syllabi has developed smoothly. However, this revision is selective and piecemeal. Even in the Sciences, where content is less contentious, themes such as the theory of evolution and sex education are somewhat threatening and have not yet been revised. In cases where subject matter, as in the Humanities and Social Sciences has an effect and influence on the ideas and convictions of the students, supervision by the authorities is imposed. Such subjects are:

> *'...protected by authorities in charge of designing curricula and issuing schoolbooks. Consequently, such subjects laud past achievements and generally indulge in both self-praise and blame of others, with the aim of instilling loyalty, obedience and support for the regime in power. It is not unusual to find schoolbooks in many Arab counties with a picture of the ruler on the front page, even in the case of textbooks in neutral subjects such as Science and Mathematics."*[25]

In fact researchers argue that the curricula taught in Arab countries effectively encourage submission, obedience, subordination and compliance, rather than free critical thinking.[26] Curricular contents do not even go so far as to stimulate students to criticise political or social assertions:

> *'The assigned curricula, starting from preliminary school....embody a concept that views education as an industrial production process, where curricula and their content serve as moulds into which fresh minds are supposed to be poured.'* [27]

The varying piecemeal efforts to reform curricula superficially centre around greater or lesser emphasis on religious-humanistic subjects, foreign languages, and vocational and practical training. It is worth noting that differences existing between the Arab countries are attributable

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[25] Arab Human Development Report 2003, United Nations, www.undp.org, p. 53
[26] Education for All in the Arab States, Regional Conference on Education for All for the Arab States, Cairo, 2000
[27] Arab Human Development Report 2003, United Nations, www.undp.org, pp53 - 54

to the movements involving 'Arabisation' and 'nationalization', of the curriculum in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, which began in the 1950s and 1960s

Arab officials who are responsible for education candidly admit that there are quality problems. The Saudi Minister of Higher Education, for example, conceded at a recent conference on education that population pressure which led to rapid expansion in university enrolments created a problem, as it 'was not in line with the labour market', resulting in a rising number of jobless graduates.[28] He reaffirmed the confused purpose of education and the existing dislocation between the school curricula and societal demands; stressing that the onus of responsibility falls on Saudi Arabia to coordinate the needs of the labour market so as not to aggravate the employment structure. Sharing similar views, the Moroccan Minister of Higher Education added that 'the Arab university' has not yet taken into consideration the needs of the private sector, and that university graduates are unfortunately unable to find jobs for that reason also. Moreover, he emphasised that the dropout rate from universities was 60 percent, where students were being trained in areas for which they were not pre-qualified or for which they were not motivated. He blamed the current ailing system on the over-centralisation of decision-making on matters pertaining to curriculum. In his assessment one of the key reforms that were needed was an 'ongoing assessment and evaluation system as seen in Anglo-Saxon universities'.[29] In the light of such observations and taking into account the aforementioned attempts and initiatives to address existing problems of the system, albeit piecemeal, how sincere such educational reforms are worthy of question.

In evaluating the level of education, the assessment of teachers' abilities to interact with, motivate and encourage students to innovate and think critically and creatively is paramount. Teaching in this region is didactic, supported by lectures and preset books that contain indisputable information and knowledge that is objectified so as to support incontestable facts. The examination process is no less authoritarian, where students are only tested on memorisation and factual recall. Textbooks and other teaching aids in the Arab countries are often in short supply, of poor quality and irrelevant content. Arabic textbooks tend to present unrealistic pictures of society and are not up to date on scientific information. In

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[28] AMIDEAST sponsored conference in Marrakech, Morocco on Arab education, March 2002

[29] Rugh W. Arab Education, Tradition, Growth and Reform, The Middle East Journal, Vol.56, Issue 3, 2002, p.405

terms of physical appearance, they are, in general, neither attractive to the learner nor well illustrated. Because of these and other deficiencies, it has been noted that a good number of Arab countries experienced and continue to experience a state of affairs where texts are available but not often read.[30]

While some countries are better off than others, it is nevertheless the case that many Arab teachers are either untrained or under-trained. Furthermore, they often employ teaching methods that alienate students and discourage their participation, independent initiative, and critical thinking. Teachers tend to be strictly disciplinarian and authoritarian rather than educators with a wide range of instructional strategies. All too often, teachers expect their students to copy from the blackboard, memorize, refrain from asking questions and avoid making mistakes. In addition to being teacher-centred, the system is also dominated by examinations. It is a system that advocates and induces more fear and conformity than discovery-oriented attitudes.[31] However, there are some factors in many Arab countries that adversely affect teachers' effectiveness, such as low salaries, which force educators to take up other jobs and hence take time and energy away from their role and effectiveness as teachers. Other constraints are lack of facilities, poorly designed curricula and the indifferent quality of teacher training. Most educators in the Arab world graduate from institutions that follow an approach to teaching based on rote learning which does not lend itself well to inspire critical thinking. The problem of overcrowded classrooms is also very common. This curtails the desire and limits the ability of the teacher to interact creatively and dynamically with the students.[32] The administrative systems of the schools are highly suspect, and are deeply alienated, culturally, organisationally and institutionally from their broader environment. With very little, if any autonomy, school administrators remain isolated from the decision-making process and teachers are simply disseminators of information. Modern social psychology tells us that participation in decision-making enhances better selection as well as commitment to the decisions made.[33] Hence in order to ensure a genuinely holistic approach to educational reforms, teachers' participation and a clear understanding of and commitment to agenda is an imperative prerequisite for change.

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[30] Abu-Laban, B. Primary Education and National Development: The Case of Arab Society, Arab Studies Quarterly, 1992, Vol. 14, Issue 2/3, p.30
[31] Ibid., p. 30
[32] Arab Human Development Report 2003,United Nations, www.undp.org, p.53
[33] Gardner, H. Multiple Intelligence, New York: BasicBooks, 1993

Problems of Science and Technology

One of the overarching trends to plague parts of the Arab world has been the overemphasis and importance given to the rapid and tangible material and infrastructural development in the region whilst ignoring the development of the indigenous human resources. One of the most crucial criticisms applicable to the Arab educational systems on the whole, but varying in degree from country to country, has been the insufficient internal development including educational reform that has occurred, as compared with the material development of the indigenous dimension. Arab schools have not kept pace with the material development of their respective communities. There is still over-reliance on examinations as a measurement of student achievement and potential. They have not been able to take into account the students' goals, such as strengths, capabilities, and desires, by concentrating narrowly on academics. 'Consequently, the most serious mistake Arab education authorities have made is to send 'substandard' pupils into the vocational education channel.'[34] This is significant because it leaves Arab nations reliant on immigrant labour to undertake technical and vocational occupations. This applies at all levels.

Arab educators have highlighted that one of the handicaps of the system has been that the education provided in grades one through twelve tends to place an additional burden on the universities because incoming high school graduates are not always sufficiently prepared. One study reported that in some Arab countries, 'as much as 35 - 40 percent of instructional resources in higher education are spent on remediation of skill deficiencies of college entrants.'[35] The system as a whole represents a certain level of stagnation of knowledge production especially in fields relating to science and technology. One reason for this, in the Arab countries, is a result of weak basic research in fields such as information technology and molecular biology. It is the victim of meagre research and development expenditure, which to date does not exceed 0.2 percent of GNP. But there is also the lack of institutional support at all levels, and a political and social milieu that is detrimental to the development and promotion

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[34] Al Heeti, A. & Brock, C. Vocational Education and Development: Key Issues, with Special Reference to the Arab World, International Journal of Educational Development, Vol. 17, Number 4. Oct 1997, p.379

[35] Rugh, W. Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform, The Middle East Journal, 2002, Vol.56, Issue 3, pp. 406-407

of science. This is illustrated by the number of scientists and engineers working in research and development in the Arab countries, which does not amount to more than 371 per million citizens; substantially lower than the global rate of 979 per million citizens.[36] The UNDP report argues that the mere transfer and adoption of technology have neither achieved the desired technological advancements nor spawned lucrative investments. Neither has the importation of technology resulted in its internalisation by the local countries. The reasons for this have included the absence of effective innovation and knowledge/skill production systems as well as the lack of policies that have encouraged and sponsored institutions in supporting the creation of a knowledge and skill - based society. The philosophical underpinning of this has been the mistaken belief that such a society can indeed be built through the sheer importation of scientific products without necessary investment in the local production of skills and knowledge, and through complete dependency on foreign universities and research centres for training 'Arab scientific cadres without creating the local scientific traditions conducive to knowledge acquisition in the region.'[37]

This brings us back to the basic educational system. Obstacles to development and economic growth in the region are partly due to the failure of such systems in providing suitably skilled labour, and to the rigidity of the educational administration that is governed by its own political agenda and constricted disposition.

Al Heeti and Brock present a detailed critique of the ailing vocational education sector in the region. They argue that the ill-conceived and random separation between academic education and technical/ vocational education, which is a feature of the educational system that begins from the end of secondary level, results in the creation of two separate entities within the educational system itself. As a result of the labour force that grants preferential treatment to employees in higher administrative and professional positions, the favoured and most pursued branch within formal education by the majority of students is the academic stream. The rationale is that the academic path will secure higher paid jobs. The authors point out that no real convergence exists between the job market and educational systems. Because less financial support is given to vocational education and students have a preconceived idea that

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[36] Arab Human Development Report 2003, United Nations, www.undp.org, p.4
[37] Ibid., p .5

the academic track will lead to better jobs, fewer students feel compelled to pursue the vocational angle, which in turn prevents vocational education from:

> *'...responding more effectively to modern technological advances. It is a vicious circle, as the resulting backwardness of vocational education increases the tendency to direct resources towards the more prestigious academic branches.'*[38]

The systems, on the whole, are rigid and there does not exist any flexibility for students to change their course. They are not systems that work with students to accommodate their needs, talents or interests. The rigidity of such systems is also reflected in higher institutions such as universities and colleges which do not even acknowledge the value and merit of technical education, let alone grant admissions to students from vocational and technical institutions. Though liberal education is perceived, in the international arena, as a valuable base for all occupations, it is argued that the separation between general and vocational education is too drastic and is causing the basic needs of the nations of the Arab world to go unmet and unmanned by local technicians. The quest for the 'prestigious' academic path has created a dislocation between the labour demands of the economy and the supply. Consequently, vocational and technical education constitutes a very small part of any of the national systems of education in the Arab world. It is extremely limited in its scope and does not provide a substantial basis that is conducive to progress even into further technical education. Hence, even the technical education is poor and inadequate to service its own genre of training and education. In the period 1975 – 1990, the Arab states dedicated and spent 5.8 percent of their Gross National Product, on education. In spite of this financial dedication to enhancing their educational systems, the amount of growth that vocational education underwent in the same period was a mere 1.7 percent.[39] It seems clear that the Arab states saw neither much value nor merit in developing their vocational education. This was not due to lack of available funds. The problem lies with the under-supply of students in science and engineering and related technical fields from the secondary schools as compared with students in humanities and social sciences. At the post-secondary level, data from 1996 showed that fewer than 29 percent of students in the Arab world were studying sciences and engineering, with 71 percent studying humanities and social sciences, and that the bias in

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[38] Al Heeti, A. & Brock, C. Vocational Education and Development: Key Issues, with Special Reference to the Arab World, International Journal of Educational Development, Vol. 17, Number 4. Oct 1997, p.376

[39] Ibid., p.376

favour of the latter had increased from 65 percent in 1991. The 29 percent included 9 percent each in basic science and engineering, 7 percent in medicine and 3 percent in agriculture. Officials of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development say that the growing Arab awareness of the need to improve the quality of education is especially focused on the area of science and technology.[40]

Several issues pertaining to the efficacy and quality of vocational education must be highlighted. Among them is the lack of selection freedom; vocational and technical educational institutions are not free to choose the students they believe to be the most able and suitable for their programs. The reason for this reflects the reality of the educational system in the Arab world at large. That is to say that the overall educational policies are set and decided upon by the politicians. Their agenda is what dictates how students are trained and in what capacity. The policy regarding vocational education is that those students who have not attained a specific level are the ones who then must enter vocational education. Therefore, policy dictates that only the inferior and poor performing students pursue vocational education. This acts adversely against vocational education and in so doing it denies access to those more able students who may favour practical careers. The inadequacy of curricular content poses another hurdle for this genre of education.

Vocational and technical education is deficient in terms of content and specialisation. It is not free to meet the demands of the training skills, which, in essence, should be its main or only objective. Instead, it has to attempt to do this while at the same time conforming to governmental policies and providing academic and cultural knowledge of Islam. Consequently, vocational education institutions are simply not at liberty to achieve their mission because there exists a larger, over-arching agenda that is not related to the practical, grass root needs of the people:

> *'For all three levels of education....education in the Arab world meant only the absorption of general and cultural knowledge by the majority of the students....due to the cultural functions of formal education in the Arab world. Consequently, the amount of vocational and skills-based technical education provided is negligible, undermining the whole purpose and value of this sector for the majority of systems in the region. The quality of 'graduates' from this area of education is generally*

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[40] Rugh, W. Arab Education: Tradition, Growth and Reform, The Middle East Journal, Vol. 56, Issue 3, 2002, p.408

low, which further erodes the status and credibility of vocational schooling and technical training.'[41]

Education and the World of Work

A final problem that persists is the lack of co-ordination or even contact between the education sector and the world of work, especially industry and commerce. Insufficient coordination and co-operation exists between industries and any form of education at any stage. The industrial/commercial sector neither engages in nor supervises the practical training aspect of education in the Arab region. Therefore, whatever education does exist is potentially vocational in some form and remains unrelated and unavailable to the needs of the industrial and commercial sector and the employers. This means that even those students who do proceed to vocational education are ill prepared to compete and lack the necessary skills required. One reason for this is that vocational education has developed independently and in isolation of university supervision. Hence, universities do not hold any responsibility in the preparation and training of vocational teachers nor in the curricula. Universities do not admit students of vocational education, which further hinders the growth of the vocational and technical education in general, leaving it isolated and without status. There exists no interface between industry and commerce with respect to education, but economic progress will only be achieved when the needs of industry and commerce merge with:

'...the actual output of a general education mediated through the vocational and technical education sector. This problem remains a real obstacle to the development and economic growth of the Arab nations.'[42]

How can the region develop 'home-grown technical cadres' who will be responsible for fostering the indigenous manufacturing base for local technology when ignorance features so strongly in the vocational education debate? It does so as students themselves are ignorant of the concept of vocational education and of its significance and relationship to national development. This is due, in part, to the lack of vocational guidance in the early years of secondary schooling and to its low status and irrelevant curriculum. There also exists a lack of

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[41] Al Heeti, A. & Brock, C. Vocational Education and Development: Key Issues, with Special Reference to the Arab World, International Journal of Educational Development, Vol. 17, Number 4. Oct 1997, p.377

[42] Ibid., p.377

practical training of skills in the early school years and an overall lack of freedom of students to choose their desired educational paths.[43] In light of this, some efforts have been made, yet they have tended to reflect a superficial, piecemeal effort that has failed to foster intellectual skills as well as true vocational and technical expertise.

In one such case, the Lebanese government in 1997 fully elaborated new curricula for public education. Their over zealous agenda to balance academic and vocational education has arguably been counter-productive. The reason for this is that the vocational branch introduced into the curriculum has not had any correspondence to the needs of the labour force. While there is strong emphasis in the curriculum on vocations, it is in the absence of any study of the labour force and the demands of the market. Furthermore, such emphasis is at the expense of promoting rational and linguistic skills. Students are being encouraged to learn such skills as carpentry, cooking and sewing at the expense of acquiring logic, philosophy, critical thinking and analytical skills. In focusing on vocation, the curriculum is failing in teaching intellectual skills. The new agenda reflects a trend to 'deintellectualise' the Lebanese people, stripping them of their erstwhile intellectual and linguistic superiority in the region and turning them into technical labourers.[44] In 'Western' terminology 'the baby has been thrown out with the bathwater.'

As mentioned earlier, the existence of overemphasis on theory rather than practice is present in the Arab educational paradigm. There is a quantitative imbalance between the increased demands of the market and the amount of technical workforce produced. Qualitatively, there is an imbalance between levels of competency, the skills demanded and the abilities to implement and accept these skills in formulating social and economic development plans.[45] Though piecemeal endeavours have been made in different Arab countries, the only way real change and progress will transpire is if there is a fundamental re-evaluation of educational systems and their objectives. This is because formal education is deeply embedded in the culture of any society. In order to build bridges between education, training and other aspects of development, the very structure and aims of education must be

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[43] Ibid., p.381

[44] Inati, S. Transformation of Education: Will it lead to Integration? Arab Studies Quarterly, Vol.2, Issue 1, 1999, pp.68-69

[45] Al Heeti, A. & Brock, C. Vocational Education and Development: Key Issues, with Special Reference to the Arab World, International Journal of Educational Development, Vol. 17, Number 4. Oct 1997, p.378

completely revised. As suggested by Al Heeti and Brock, this would entail adjusting the role and status of general secondary education in the Arab world to be on par with the vocational. Vocational secondary graduates need to be given more opportunities to continue their education in the higher technical institutes and universities. This would draw vocational education into the mainstream along with the academic track. Another undertaking that is crucial for improvement is the need to reinforce co-operation between the countries of the Arab world in establishing more and better vocational and technical institutions and thereby giving greater credibility to the sector. The region as a whole will improve the social prestige of vocational and technical professions through financial incentives and compensation. In doing so, the interests and ideas of various industrial and productive sectors and services must be taken into account so that there is a co-ordinated and participatory effort on the part of industry, education and society to reassess the entire educational agenda for the purpose of development. Al Heeti and Brock's recommendation that the Arab world need to incorporate vocational education into mainstream education and make sure the educational systems are developing skills that meet the needs of the economy and of industries was very much in line with the thoughts of some of the interviewees of this study, regarding education's responsibility to serve the occupational needs of its society.

Summary

Arab culture and the Islamic religion are not responsible *per se* for impeding growth and change at the societal and educational levels. Indeed, it is the socio-political and economic structures that have been ingrained obstacles to redefining educational goals and knowledge acquisition in the Arab world. Reforms at these levels are what are required for such goals to be achieved. It is the political obstacles that pose more of a threat to creating a knowledge/skill-based society in the region since political power plays a pivotal role in education. Currently, it is the politics that dictate an educational agenda that is favourable to serving its goals whilst suppressing opposing forces. A direct result of the unstable political climate is the subjection of scientific institutions to political strategies and power conflicts; political loyalties continue to take precedence over economic efficiency and knowledge distribution.

In conclusion, as cited by the Arab Human Development Report:

> *'Reforming the mind is indeed a significant requirement for Arab culture yet "reforming action" is equally urgent....the pursuit of knowledge is prompted by religion, culture, history and the human will to succeed. Obstructions on the road are the work of mortals: the defective structures of the past and present – social, economic and, above all, political. Arabs must remove or reform these structures in order to take the place they deserve in the world of knowledge at the beginning of the knowledge millennium.'*[46]

Along with socio-political and educational reforms needed for the Arab States to realise their potential, are appropriate changes to issues of gender in education and women's opportunities in general.

Gender Stereotyping and Constraints on Women's Employment and Progression

Introduction

Over the course of the 20th Century, women throughout the developed and developing world have been gaining access to higher educational institutions. Indeed, in many developing countries, females are overtaking males in higher education enrolment and achievement.[47] However, this trend has for some time been experiencing a new phase. Not only do greater numbers of women seek access to higher education and the professions, they now want to ascend the ranks and break the 'glass ceiling'. This struggle for expanded opportunity is what confronts many women in different countries who have already entered higher education, completed their training and begun their careers. The struggle is not simply limited to culturally

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[46] Arab Human Development Report 2003, United Nations, www.undp.org, pp. 10-13
[47] Wilson, M. & Erskine, S. Gender Issues in International Education: Beyond Policy and Practice, London: Garland Science Publishing, 1998

restrictive societies like some of those found in parts of the Arab Islamic world. This predicament gives rise to what has been termed 'sex role conflict.' Sex role conflict occurs when there is an inconsistency between internal values and the external demands imposed by society. 'When societal and personal values clash, individuals must either give up or renegotiate roles that are not satisfying.'[48] Such sex role conflicts are not limited to societies in which there is an obvious gender divide and where the roles of men and women are deeply etched in the pillars and foundations of the culture. Indeed such conflicts exist both in 'Western' 'developed and liberal' societies[49] and in the more obviously patriarchal societies of the Arab world.[50] Throughout the course of the interviews, respondents stated that these conflicts are indeed prevalent, even in the most 'liberal' of societies, yet the difference is simply a matter of varying degree.

The ambiguous role of education in the production and reproduction of any society cannot be divorced from the role of women as an active and integral part of that society. The 1950s - 60s witnessed the birth of the debate on the sciences of education; it was the rise of increasing pre-occupation with the connections between social class origin and education, between education and employment or academic success, social mobility, equality and inequality of opportunity. However, concerted efforts to address such themes evaded the question of women and their role, place and influence in the school system. It was only from the 1970s that the issue of women began surfacing in the continuing debate in the sciences of education. The ongoing scientific discussions adopted a fundamentally new perspective:

> *'The qualitative approach supersedes linear analyses which diminish social reality, the results of experience illuminate the theoretical position, research is extended into action by becoming participant research and by taking into consideration women as active members of society.'* [51]

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[48]Chusmir, L. & Koberg, C. Gender Identity and Sex Role Conflict Among Working Women and Men, The Journal of Psychology, Vol. 122, Issue 6, 2001, p. 567

[49] Sutherland, M. Women who Teach in Universities, UK: Trentham Books Ltd, 1985; Sutherland, M. Sex Bias in Education, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1981; Wilson, M. Girls and Young Women in Education: A European Perspective, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1990

[50] Brock, C. & Cammish, N.K. Factors Affecting Female Participation in Education in Seven Developing Countries, London: DfID, 1997

[51] *Eliou, M. Equality of the Sexes in Education: and now what? Comparative Education, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1987, p.59*

Women's access to schools and the presence of gender coding as a method of simply reinforcing gender stereotypes is not specific to the Arab Muslim world. To believe so would be a grave misconception and detrimental to achieving a better understanding of the realities facing certain women in those societies. Indeed, research confirms that these women's opportunities at school and in employment face similar obstacles and share similar characteristics, regardless of whether they are European, Arab or American.[52] The difference, however, is the different balance of impediments to which such opportunities, and women, are subjected. With respect to secondary education, even if girls are fairly represented in general secondary education, they are consistently under-represented in both technical and vocational education; the exception exists only insofar as those training courses lead to service occupations such as teaching, nursing and librarianship. Hence, it is evident that such a dynamic is influenced by the sex-linked image of training course and affiliated employment. In the case of higher education, similar tendencies are found.

> *'With few exceptions, women much more often than men study arts; but most notably, with no exceptions, women enrol less often than men on courses training engineers. It is significant that these tendencies are found no matter what the level of economic development of the country,... the degree of development of its educational system, ...the enrolment rate of women at the third level of education,...the structure of the education system,...the cultural heritage,. or even the socio-economic and political system.'* [53]

Indeed, the education of girls is laden with contradictions and ambiguities. Such contradictions are illuminated in the proclamation of education's aims of equality and the very implementation and practices of such aims that reflect the differentiation and implicit hierarchical roles of women and men.

> *'Neither the expansion in the number of schools and universities during the last decades nor the recent educational innovations seem to have made perceptible modifications in the principal tendencies.'* [54]

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[52] Warrington, M. & Younger, M. The Other Side of the Gender Gap, Gender and Education, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2000, & Jackson, S. Lifelong Earning: Working Class Women and Lifelong Learning, Gender and Education, Vol. 15, No. 4, 2003, & Ahmed, F. Modern Traditions? British Muslim Women and Academic Achievement, Gender and Education, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2001

[53] Ibid., p.60

[54] Ibid., p.62

Employment for women also shares certain characteristics; women receive lower levels of pay than their male co-workers, they are subjected to slower promotion processes and lower promotion ceilings, they are more vulnerable in economic crises and are exposed to discriminatory attitudes at the work-place. These are all, for example, common and contemporary problems in Britain.[55]

The problems facing women are universal and have now become part of the sciences of education. Obstacles to the access of women to education, the stereotyping of sex roles found in school books, the feminization of certain professions and the ideology of sex differences which influences the educational and professional paths of women have all earned credence and prominence in 'Western' research.[56] Such acknowledgment is imperative on behalf of Arab authorities and scholars in order to make headway in the overall development of the region.

Universal Challenges

Gender has been shown to affect sex role conflict with women being significantly more affected than men. Furthermore, it has been documented that sex role conflict:

> *'.....affects a number of dysfunctional work and non work outcomes in the United States....American women experience significantly higher levels of sex role conflict than men'.*[57]

One definition of sex role conflict is:

> *'The degree of conflict expressed between an individual's treatment based on gender versus that person's desired treatment as an individual and private self-concept of the*

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[55] Equal Opportunities Commission: Non –Standard Employment in the Management and Professional Workforce: Training, Consultation and Gender, Work, Employment and Society, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2003, Press Release: 'Solving the Skills Crisis –Women Could be the Key', www.eoc.org.uk, 2004, Gender Pay Gap Narrows, Equal Opportunity Review, No. 125, EOC: www.eoc.org.uk, 2004

[56] Heward, C. & Bunwaree, S., Gender, Education and Development: Beyond Access to Empowerment, London: Zed Books Ltd, 1999

[57] Chusmir, L. & Koberg, C. Gender Identity and Sex Role Conflict Among Working Women and Men, The Journal of Psychology, pp. 567 -568

> *person's sex role versus the self-concept defined by one's society and work organization.*[58]

Among the various observations made by the respondents in this study regarding their views on the challenges facing them as women within their work environment, were two points that echoed the findings from 'Western' psychologists. The first observation made by the respondents was that they felt pressured to perform better than their male counterparts in order to constantly prove themselves capable and command respect. This was in unison with findings based on 'Western' societies that stated women who are a minority in their workplace are likely to face greater performance pressures as well as being constantly under 'observation'. As a result, women may experience stress from feeling they have to perform better than their male colleagues. The second experience some of the respondents mentioned related to feeling isolated from their co-workers as a result of being a woman; some of the women noted that the gender divide was so apparent that it strained and in some cases, impeded their interactions with the men. In one case, a respondent claimed that her exclusion and total lack of support from her Arab male colleagues brought her very close to abandoning her project and quitting. Again there was a correlation between the experiences shared between these select professional Arab women and professional 'Western' women; the findings stated that women who are in the minority in male dominated industries end up:

> *'....isolated from the main (male) group and therefore lack both formal and informal support.....50 percent of women in their sample of middle and senior managers cited exclusion from male networks as a reason for leaving their organization.*[59]

However, it must be noted that although women appear to face similar challenges and obstacles regardless of culture, there appears to be one fundamental difference. 'Western' psychology purports that 'sex stereotypes place women into a double bind situation' whereby if they adopt a stereotypically masculine style of leadership:

> *'...they are considered abrasive or maladjusted' and if women assume stereotypically feminine styles of leadership then they are considered less capable and competent.*[60]

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[58] Ibid., p.569
[59] Gardiner, M.& Tiggermann, M. Gender Differences in Leadership Style, Job Stress and Mental Health in Male and Female Dominated Industries, Journal of Occupational and Organizational Studies, 1999, Vol. 72, Issue 3, British Psychology Society, p.2
[60] Ibid., p.3

Yet, drawing from the personal experiences and observations of the women interviewees in this research, only initially did there exist challenges to prove their capabilities, authority and gain the respect of their male colleagues. This required them to assume a concept of self that was not solely dictated and shaped by gender. Nevertheless, in none of the cases did the women feel compelled to choose between 'masculine' or 'feminine' styles of leadership. They very much embraced their femininity whilst also making concerted efforts to be recognized for their qualifications, expertise and professionalism. In fact, they felt that over time they were recognized and respected for their professionalism without ever having to abandon their self-identities as women, whether in terms of appearance or behaviour. This is starkly in contrast to 'Western' thought that calls for women to abandon the feminine in order to ascertain the masculine. The Arab Muslim women interviewed for this study did not feel the two to be mutually exclusive. Perhaps this first generation of senior management professional women has managed to find a balance that so far has escaped 'Western' women in senior management positions.

Valid arguments have been made supporting the notion of managerial stereotyping whereby inferences about gender - biased characteristics are made for a good manager. Many studies dating from the 1970s through the 1990s in 'Western' institutions, have found that both male managers and university students perceive that successful managers are more likely to be men rather than women.[61] The 'masculine' traits rather than the 'feminine' traits are reckoned to be synonymous with successful managers. Thus, in order for women to assert themselves as successful managers in male-dominated occupations, there is an implicit pressure upon them to adopt a stereotypically masculine leadership style. If that is the case, perhaps one could argue that it is mostly those women that already have a certain degree of masculine leadership style who assume or aspire to assume leadership positions. The interviewees for this study all believe in embracing their roles as women but did feel that they had to cast aside their self-identities as women and assume the role of 'the professional', when at work; the professional but not the masculine. Given the fact that senior female managers are obviously in the minority and work in a male dominated environment in 'Western' institutions, the pressure on such women to adopt a 'masculine' style of leadership seems to

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[61] Gardiner, M.& Tiggermann, M. Gender Differences in Leadership Style, Job Stress and Mental Health in Male and Female Dominated Industries, Journal of Occupational and Organizational Studies, 1999, Vol. 72, Issue 3, British Psychology Society & Moore, K. Women's Access and Opportunity in Higher Education: Toward the Twenty – First Century, Comparative Education, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1987

have played a role in the exclusion of women from upper echelons of corporate management. Thus, it was found that in organizations comprising mostly men, women felt impelled to assume a more masculine style of leadership in order not to lose authority and position.[62] These findings mirrored some of the respondents' thoughts in having to acquire a 'thick-skin' and become more resilient in the face of discrimination and a male dominated workspace.

Gender stereotypes are effectively the gender coding of the gender system, which constitute the cultural rules by which society perceives and endorses gender difference and inequality. Gender issues cannot be extricated from social hierarchy, leadership as status beliefs are at the very core and are the very premise of the gender system. Such status beliefs are formulated on the basis of such issues as gender, education, occupation, and age. Although gender status beliefs lie at the core of gender stereotypes, they are the only aspect of societal practices that are cause for the differentiation of men and women and the existing inequalities between them. Ridgeway puts forth the argument that in fact, it is the status element of gender stereotypes that causes such stereotypes to act as barriers and therefore impedes women's abilities to achieve positions of authority, leadership and power.[63] Evidence indicates that gender stereotypes contain beliefs associating a greater degree of overall competence with men rather than women, and grant each sex distinct skill sets that are specific to their gender, such as men are affiliated with mechanical ability whilst women are defined by their domestic skills. Although the content of gender stereotypes has changed in recent years as the perception of women have improved, it still remains that the essential hierarchical element has remained; 'men are still evaluated more favourably in the socially important area of instrumental competence.' [64] Gender stereotyping involves both the descriptive and prescriptive; that is to say that stereotypes are developed when the dominant group, i.e. men, is dependent on the subordinate group, i.e. women. Thus, there is an interest by the dominant group to maintain the status quo. Such gender reinforcement and reproduction is administered and perpetuated by dominant authoritative institutions which use education, curricular content

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[62] Gardiner, M.& Tiggermann, M. Gender Differences in Leadership Style, Job Stress and Mental Health in Male and Female Dominated Industries, Journal of Occupational and Organizational Studies, 1999, Vol. 72, Issue 3, British Psychology Society, p.1

[63] Ridgeway, C. Gender, Status and Leadership, Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 57, No.4, 2001; The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, pp. 637 -639

[64] Ibid., pp. 637 -639

and the workspace as a means of achieving this, depending on its particular cultural and societal beliefs:

> *'More than a trait of individuals, gender is an institutionalized system of social practices for constituting males and females as different in socially significant ways and organizing inequality in terms of those differences.*[65]

Albeit to varying degrees, there is a parallel between the socialization of boys at early childhood, which is closer to that of management training than that of girls in the USA and in the Arab world. Boys are taught to be competitive and aggressive in both contexts whilst girls are taught to be passive and dependent. Hence, individual career choices are very much a part of gender stereotyping as teachers, peers and parents, who have tremendous impact on directing boys and girls towards gender-traditional professions, influence gender roles. This is very much the case in the Arab world where authoritative structures, education systems and curricular content play a prominent role in reinforcing gender roles. Though this is more pronounced and evident in the Arab paradigm, it is nonetheless prevalent in 'Western' societies and also in the United States.[66] Education in 'Western' societies has affected gender values, which has served to disrupt the values shared by previous generations. These new values appear to be:

> *'.....responding to the challenge of new forms of modernity by transforming traditional class-based femininities and sexual relations and replacing these with more personalized and more reflexive processes of decision-making.*[67]

Nevertheless, in the 'Western' world, the persistent and extensive sex segregation of the labour market casts a question mark over the school system. Male and female curricular and career choices are almost choices based on gender and class. There is a tendency for women in "Western" societies to be:

> *'....downwardly socially mobile, not converting their educational qualifications into the equivalent in terms of job status.*[68]

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[65] Ibid., p.637
[66] Lemons, M. Contextual and Cognitive Determinants of Procedural Justice Perceptions in Promotion Barriers for Women, Sex Roles, Vol.49, Nos. 5/6, 2003, p.252
[67] *Arnot, M. Gender Relations and Schooling in the New Century: Conflicts and Challenges, Compare, Vol.30, No.3, 2000, p.296*
[68] Ibid., p.296

Apparent in both the case of the interviewees and in 'Western' societies is that sex categorization by definition implicates gender in the processes of performance, self-assertion and influences the attainment of leadership and authority. However, the impact of gender on behaviour varies depending on the women's skills, credentials and demanded tasks which tend to powerfully shape their performance expectations in the workplace. Hence, gender is more likely to be associated with background identity in the workplace 'that modifies in varying degrees the performance and evaluation of other roles, like worker and manager, that are more salient in the situation than it is.'[69] Effectively, in the case of the respondents, it was such 'other roles' that have allowed them to make headway in their professional communities. Thus, Ridgeway concurs with the thoughts of the interviewees when she states that 'to be considered highly able in the workplace, a woman must display a higher level of recognized competence than a similar man. The implications of this for the hiring and promotion of women to leadership positions are substantial.'[70] In the cases where women do assert themselves by exercising authority outside traditionally female domains, it creates reactions that serve to impose negative sanctions on them for 'violating the expected status order and reduce their ability to gain compliance with directives.'[71] Ridgeway argues that as a result of such reactions, multiple and invisible barriers are erected that impede and stall women as they pursue positions of leadership and authority. It is these implicit and unacknowledged barriers, constraints and reactions that are principally responsible for the notion of the 'glass ceiling.' Hence, over time, it works to substantially reduce the number of women who successfully attain positions of authority in the workplace. In the Arab world, as in the 'Western' world, women's efforts to achieve leadership and high levels of authority call for a change of the gender system currently in operation.

The notion of the 'glass ceiling' appears to be a distinctly gender-specific phenomenon. Despite allegations that a glass ceiling no longer exists in impeding women's success in the corporate world in the United States, 'Catalyst, an independent research group, issued a report on corporate women that highlighted the persistence of a glass ceiling.'[72] However, it is

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[69] Ridgeway, C. Gender, Status and Leadership, Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 57, No.4, 2001, p.644
[70] Ibid., p.647
[71] Ibid., p.652
[72] *Cotter, D. & Hermsen, J. & Ovadia, S. & Vanneman, R The Glass Ceiling Effect, Vol. 80, Issue 2, The University of North Carolina Press, 2001, p.665*

necessary to define what a glass ceiling and its criteria mean. The first criterion is the presence of barriers reflecting discrimination that 'keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements'; it is an unexplained inequality that is not due to the qualifications of women and minorities.[73]

The second criterion put forth is that glass ceiling inequality is greater at higher status levels than at lower status levels. It assumes that job limits of women in the middle to higher levels of a hierarchy are worse than for job limits at lower levels. One explanation for this is 'a constant lower chance of advancement represents more discrimination at the top of the hierarchy where the pool of available women has become superior to the pool of available men because of past discrimination.'[74] A third criterion specifies that promotions and earning increases are more gender-biased at higher levels, resulting in an accelerated growth of the gender gap as one moves up the hierarchical structure. The fourth and final criterion that is used to assess the existence of the glass ceiling phenomenon is that the gender inequality actually increases over the course of a career. Ridgeway's study demonstrates that a glass ceiling does in fact exist as a form of gender inequality over and above that which is typically termed gender inequality; this distinction of the two concepts is imperative as it assumes an almost institutionalised notion of gender inequality.

Women working in male-dominated industries have reported the highest level of pressure from discrimination. Both gender and gender ratio of an industry influence leadership styles and stress and contribute to the notion of barriers that hampers women working in senior management roles in male –dominated industries. Despite the gradual increase in the number of women in managerial roles, women in senior management positions are still somewhat under-represented in 'Western' societies. For example, women are estimated to fill only 25 percent of managerial positions in Germany, 28 percent in Switzerland and 33 percent in the UK. These numbers are significantly reduced at higher levels where women only represent 10 percent of senior level management positions in the United States and 5 percent in Germany.[75] Evidenced by such statistics, women in 'Western' countries are under-represented as

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[73] Ibid., p.656
[74] Ibid., p.659
[75] Gardiner, M. & Tiggemann, M. Gender Differences in Leadership Style, Job Stress and Mental Health in Male and Female Dominated Industries, Journal of Occupational and Organizational Studies, 1999, Vol. 72, Issue 3, British Psychology Society, p.1

managers and particularly as senior managers. These numbers indicate that many senior women managers work in environments in which men are the majority. Noticeable differences exist even in the relative seniority of male and female expatriates. Women expatriates are generally much younger than their male colleagues and hold more junior management positions. This clearly illustrates that the notion of a 'glass ceiling' is not merely limited to particular communities or companies, but also exists in international careers at present. These women work in a narrower range of professions than the men and have experienced much less upward mobility in their professions.[76] This notion of the 'glass ceiling' was reflected in some of the interviewees' responses regarding the difficulties they had encountered. As mentioned earlier, one respondent had difficulty, initially, when she joined a management consultancy. She had to work twice as hard as the men before her efforts were realised and given due acknowledgment. Another respondent mentioned the great difficulty she had in promoting some of her ideas as they were being sabotaged by her male colleagues.

Research findings confirm that women being denied senior management positions are as qualified and capable as their men associates; hence suggesting that it is glass ceilings, rather than the lack of qualifications, that limit women's advancement into the upper levels of management. Evidence of a glass ceiling for women is abundant. A review of studies published between 1985 – 1990 shows that only 1.2 – 5.1 percent of senior management positions were held by women. More recent information confirms such patterns and indicates that a glass ceiling for women is still prevalent in the overall market.[77] Gender segregation, which has also been an attributing factor in reinforcing glass ceilings, is not merely Arab-centric. In fact, although in the USA occupations have become less segregated than in the early 1990s, men continue to occupy jobs that are mostly done by men and women hold jobs that are mostly done by women:

> *'Only five occupational groups (i.e. household worker, service employee, elementary school teacher, secretarial/clerical worker and nurse) account for approximately three*

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[76] Forster, N. Another 'Glass Ceiling'?: The Experiences of Women Professionals and Managers on International Assignments, Gender, Work and Organization, Vol.6, Number 2, 1999, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, p.82

[77] Lemons, M. Contextual and Cognitive Determinants of Procedural Justice Perceptions in Promotion Barriers for Women, Sex Roles, Vol.49, Nos. 5/6, 2003, p.248

> *quarters of all jobs held by women in the United Sates; thus the labour market still shows signs of job segregation by sex.*[78]

Hence, though the women interviewed for this study have had to work within the constraints of their culture, gender codification of professions and the discrimination of their sex in the context of job opportunities and male and societal perceptions, it seems that women in the United States are no less plagued and are facing similar gender coding where their professions are still dictated by societal perceptions of gender.

Interestingly, the under-representation of women in different fields is a phenomenon shared by many countries throughout the world. The percentage of women in faculties within higher education system is generally much smaller than for student participation. The Philippines reports the highest participation rate in the faculty at 53 percent, while Switzerland has one of the lowest rates of 2 percent. It is virtually a truism that the higher the level of women in higher education worldwide, the fewer the women.[79] Most countries report disproportionately fewer female faculties than male. Although women have made gains as faculty members, their places, too, tend to be relegated to the lower levels as research assistants, instructors and among the junior ranks of non-tenured faculty. In general, although women are no longer prohibited by formal regulations from pursuing education in any particular field, there still exists a variety of barriers to women's free choice of fields of study. Women are making inroads into traditionally male-dominated domains such as sciences and technology, yet often their job options are limited to low-level paying positions or jobs that offer little advancement opportunities. Not only do women suffer from sex discrimination and culturally defined careers as inappropriate to them, they are also being placed into second rate structural positions, making it difficult or impossible for them to produce the outstanding work that is necessary for moving out of such positions. The more lucrative it is, and the more status a particular occupation entails, the less likely it is that there will be a high proportion of women in it; whatever women are found working in such occupations are usually clustered in the lower position and pay categories. Many occupations held by women are staff positions; 'females received more promotions than males but occupied significantly lower positions in the

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[78] Ibid., p.252

[79] *Bown, L. Beyond the Degree: Men and Women at the Decision-Making Levels in British Higher Education, Gender and Education, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1999 & Harley, S. Research Selectivity and Female Academics in UK Universities: From Gentleman's Club and Barrack Yard to Smart Macho?, Gender and Education, Vol. 15, No. 4, 2003*

organizational hierarchy.'[80] The explanation for this is that women are often given a promotion in name, thereby simply giving the impression of increasing opportunity and advancement. This notion of 'pacification by promotion' often is used to explain the prevalence of a glass ceiling as it professes that women are being promoted; yet they continue to occupy the lower to middle management strata of the organization's hierarchical structure.[81] Hence, it seems that similar to the predicament of women in the Arab world, women, overall, continue to enter traditional female-centric fields such as teaching, nursing, social work and other service occupations. However, Moore argues that much of the continuing sex segregation of fields of study is not the sole responsibility of schools and universities. Other predetermined factors such as prior type of educational preparation, parental preferences and personal motivation influence the gendering of professions.[82] Many women still remain ostracized or marginalized from male - dominated spheres. It is not sufficient to simply increase the numbers of women in higher educational institutions; efforts are required to analyse the structure and processes within such male – biased fields in order to explore possible changes. What is needed is a thorough examination of their structures and processes. However, such institutions operate within larger social, political and economic arenas that are also dictated by men.[83] Such changes are equally required in 'Western' societies as they are in the Arab societies.

The women in this study were chosen for several reasons. Among them is that they arguably represent Arab professional female role models. It has been argued that female role models can help break glass ceilings by providing mentors.

These women represent what Lemons calls female role models who:

> *'....may lead to higher career successes through modelling and vicarious learning by raising self-efficacy and the belief that individuals have the capability to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to exercise control over the events in their lives.*[84]

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[80] Lemons, M. Contextual and Cognitive Determinants of Procedural Justice Perceptions in Promotion Barriers for Women, Sex Roles, Vol.49, Nos. 5/6, 2003, p.253
[81] Ibid., p.253
[82] Moore, K. Women's Access and Opportunity in Higher Education: Toward the Twenty-first Century, Comparative Education, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1987, p.25
[83] Warrington, M. & Younger, M. The Other Side of the Gender Gap, Gender and Education, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2000
[84] Lemons, M. Contextual and Cognitive Determinants of Procedural Justice Perceptions in Promotion Barriers for Women, , Sex Roles, Vol.49, Nos. 5/6, 2003, p.251

Their image as female role models for other women in their communities directly affects and encourages self-confidence building. Building self - confidence includes 'trusting in one's own competence, knowing one's strengths and weaknesses, taking risks...and learning to be successful.'[85] Women in positions of leadership are far and few between in the Arab world. The women interviewed for this study are part of the first generation who are representative of such a group. Yet this is not simply the case in the Arab world. In fact, there are not too many women in leadership positions in the USA:

> *'The number of women who serve as presidents of American colleges and universities has increased by 65 percent since 1978, the actual number has only moved from 154 to 253 out of 3200 institutions.'*[86]

Women administrators are largely found in support positions rather than executive positions. Furthermore, they tend to occupy a narrow range of traditionally female positions such as counsellors, aides, teacher administrators, nursing and social workers. 'In the United States, despite affirmative action legislation and procedures of the last decade, men are still selected for proportionately more positions than women.'[87] Clearly, the proportion of women in top leadership positions has not changed significantly, nor have the male-biased atmosphere and the running of the higher education system.[88] This is not surprising when top echelons of governmental bodies, commissions and panels are almost always composed exclusively of men, whereas women who do serve in governmental higher education agencies do so as technicians, aides and executive assistants. How, therefore, can governing policy-making bodies institute the changes necessary when they apparently lack adequate representation and participation? It appears that they remain incapable of rendering and developing policy because of their inadequate information and interpretation from the women of their countries.

The connection between levels of education and the rate of unemployment indicates an inverse relationship for women of many nations.

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[85] Ibid., p.251
[86] Moore, K. Women's Access and Opportunity in Higher Education: Toward the Twenty-first Century, Comparative Education, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1987, p.31
[87] Ibid., p.31
[88] Bown, L. Beyond the Degree: Men and Women at the Decision-Making Levels in British Higher Education, Gender and Education, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1999

> *'Unemployment rates are higher for women at each subsequent level of education. Schools and universities are sometimes used as places for girls to go to find a husband in the belief that women do not need to work and their education is important only to the family, not to their occupational aspirations.'* [89]

Although this is a universally relevant trend of many women, it is specifically applicable to many women from different Arab countries who have achieved high educational achievements. The pressure to chose to pursue a profession or address social and familial expectations become ever more burdensome when women have reached the pinnacle of educational success. Part of this pressure on women at this stage of professional and self-definition is a result of the fact that many of them are confronted with decisions regarding marriage and family. Scholars of socialization describe this stage as the accumulation of disadvantages that often surround professional women. It comes as a consequence to when women confront decisions regarding marriage and yet also have professional aspirations when they do not share their spouses' role and interests. This shift from traditional expectations of women's personal agendas being subordinate to those of their husbands, is challenging the very premise of sex roles, in the Arab world, as evidenced in many other countries.[90] Stromquist highlights the two key points for such changes to transpire:

> *'The attainment of the goals and objectives requires a sharing of this responsibility by men and women and by society as a whole, and requires that women play a central role as intellectuals, policy-makers, decision-makers, planners, and contributors to and beneficiaries of development;'*[91] *and:*

> *'The form of state response to women's needs will vary according to the gendered history and politics embedded in institutional rules and processes. The form of state response to women's needs will also depend on the gender construction of the family and the degree of gender polarization in civil society and the economy. Other factors affecting the state's response to women's gender interests are the nature of state-civil society relations, the nature of women's activism in civil society, the degree of state autonomy and the basis of state legitimacy. These conditions add up to distinctively gendered political and policy opportunity structures.'*[92]

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[89]Moore, K. Women's Access and Opportunity in Higher Education: Toward the Twenty-first Century, Comparative Education, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1987 p.27

[90] Aveling, N. 'Having it all', and the Discourse of Equal Opportunity: Reflections on Choices and Changing Perceptions, Gender and Education, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2002

[91] Stromquist, N.The Institutionalization of Gender and its Impact on Educational Policy, Comparative Education, Vol. 34, No.1, 1998, p.86

[92] Ibid., p.87

Summary

In the 19th and 20th centuries in Western Europe, the concept of separate but complementary gender spheres was used to domesticate both women and colonized people. It was also responsible for shaping the organizational structures and content of a wide variety of national educational systems. The principles of such British domestic and colonial educational policy contradicted the 'validity of liberal democratic designs for modern school systems that emphasized individual autonomy and a broad and balanced curriculum for all.'[93] However, the late 20th Century has witnessed a major transformation in gender relations in the dynamics of male-female interaction in both the public and private spheres in many Western European societies. Indisputable is the fact that women's contribution to the economy has grown significantly which has reshaped the family structure. Nevertheless, it is clear that more assertive interventions into young women's lives are needed for consideration if economic development is to be promoted and the effects of patriarchy eradicated. What will be equally crucial, as suggested by Arnot, will be:

> *'...reflexive individualization, a process in which individuals will no longer locate themselves in traditional communities, with traditional identities of class, gender, ethnicity. Men and women will need to put themselves at the centre of their life plan and actively engage in constructing their own biographies.'*[94]

Such a process is arguably what some of the respondents partook in, as a result of their dual educational experiences. The 20th Century witnessed women gaining access to higher education institutions and programs in unprecedented numbers in many nations. Furthermore, many of the barriers to full participation relating to a woman's age, marital status and financial circumstances have improved significantly. Consequently, they enjoy access to higher education previously denied to their mothers and their contribution to their families and the workplace has been quite substantial in many countries at the end of the 20th Century. Basic institutions of education in any country play a significant role in shaping the opportunities for their graduates. The greater the emphasis on the differentiation of male and female educational and professional needs, the more likely such sex role stereotypes and gender

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[93] Arnot, M. Gender Relations and Schooling in the New Century: Conflicts and Challenges, Compare, Vol.30, No.3, 2000, p.293
[94] Ibid., p.299

coding persist in reinforcing society's traditional expectations of their citizens. Mirroring the views of the women interviewees, women's traditional roles as child bearer and wife must be blended with professionalism and more extensive career commitment; a challenge addressed to women in all nations, spanning from the developed to the developing world.[95]

In engendering change and leadership within one's own community, there is a need to redefine assumed and accepted perceptions by gradually leading by example.

> *'If everyday life requires men and women to interact constantly in conditions of cooperative interdependence, then the status hierarchies that organize those interactions will significantly shape their experiences of one another and, consequently, the content of their shared gender stereotypes. If the content of gender stereotypes is closely tied to the profiles of behaviour people display in interpersonal hierarchies, then gender will be inherently connected to leadership and authority.'*[96]

In the case of the respondents, this is precisely how they have managed to promote changes and redefine their identities as professional Arab Muslim women whilst working with the constraints of their respective patriarchal societies and using their status as a tool for change. Their successes in being accepted and respected by their society and their male co-workers, whilst working in male dominated industries cannot be undermined or overlooked.

The 21st Century school system calls for related processes of individualization and globalization, which will have major consequences on gender codification and gender relations in terms of economic transformation, personal identities and political activism. The ability of the school system to respond to such changes will be determined, to a great extent in the Arab world, by the role of the state. The Beijing Declaration of 1995 called for female empowerment and personal autonomy by urging greater female agency in economic development and education. These can only be achieved by national educational systems if the governments assist in the dismantling of predetermined gender traditions:

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[95] Dyhouse, C. Graduates, Mothers and Graduate Mothers: Family Investment in Higher Education in Twentieth – Century England, Gender and Education, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2002

[96] Ridgeway, C. Gender, Status and Leadership, Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 57, No.4, 2001; The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, p.641

> *'As individualization and globalization transform nation state politics, the challenge for feminism and indeed for the school system is how to define gender equality in educational and social terms in the new social order.*[97]

Gender equality for all women globally depends to some extent, on the role, which the educational system and particularly the school system play in the 21st Century. The extent of change amongst schoolgirls depends to a large degree on how far customary concepts of femininity have been made a problem and how far traditional forms of male power have been challenged in the family, the economy and the school. The school plays a critical and pivotal role in the process of female liberation and development; it offers women the possibility of casting aside historical and political oppressions and achieving certain levels of autonomy. 'The best reason for believing that more women will be in charge before long is that in a ferociously competitive global economy, no company can afford to waste valuable brainpower simply because it is wearing a skirt.'[98]

Cross-Cultural Issues

Introduction

'Gender differences are historically and culturally constructed and reproduced through complex moralities, idioms, and structures of power.'[99] To understand women's lives in the Middle East, one must be aware of the many layers that work themselves out according to the woman's class position, religion and national origin. In analysing cross-cultural dynamics, certain dichotomies that often figure in feminist analyses of women's lives need to be noted. Such dichotomies prevalent in the lives of women from different Arab societies are: public versus private, universal human rights versus cultural specificity, the authentic or traditional versus 'Western' imports, and East versus West. Many women are striving to define their struggle for women's rights outside the frames of authentic traditions versus 'Western'-

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[97] Arnot, M. Gender Relations and Schooling in the New Century: Conflicts and Challenges, Compare, Vol.30, No.3, 2000 p.300

[98] Fisher, A. When will women get to the top? Fortune, 1992, September, p.46

[99] Joseph, P. & Slymovics, S. Women and Power in the Middle East, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001, P. 14

influenced ideas. In fact, the struggle is neither that one versus the other, nor the supremacy of one system; instead, it is a call for women themselves to define and assert themselves. 'I am struggling so that women define themselves.' [100]

The construction of identity, which the women interviewees experienced as a result of their dual educational exposures, was a negotiation and navigation between the values and expectations of their families and societies and the influence of their school and university milieux. Any discussion involving the Muslim world runs the risk of 'essentialising' people who are as diverse in their practices and beliefs as any other group within their communities. It is critical to point out that the perspectives and experiences of the ten women interviewed for this study are located within broader social structures that govern what Keaton cites as:

> *'.....the twin forces operating in their lives, that is, this desire to be modern and the desire to be traditional. Neither, however, is mutually exclusive.'*[101]

The experiences and perspectives generated from the interviews are intended to be illuminative rather than comprehensive. It functions as a springboard from which one can explore the potential themes of such perspectives. The women respondents differ from one another to varying degrees in terms of their professions, marital status, religious practices and cultural affinities. Nevertheless, they share common values, subscribe to a common culture and religion, however loosely, and have experienced the challenges of cross-cultural integration that have led them to reformulate their sense of self. Exposure to education, both the formal and informal, in the Arab world and in 'Western' societies has forced these women to consciously define who they are and what they subscribe to; this challenge and endeavour has been continuous. 'Multiple dimensions of identity also shape, discipline, and position people and the ways they think and act.'[102] It has not been a question of whether to abandon the old and adopt the new; in fact, it has meant the merging of the two, specifically tailored to fit each woman, her needs, her values and her own identity. They have continually constructed their social worlds through everyday practices, and have endowed their existences with meaning.

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[100] Al – Ali, N. Secularism, Gender and the State in the Middle East: The Egyptian Women's Movement, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.50,

[101] Keaton, T. Muslim Girls and the 'Other France': An Examination of Identity Construction – Tricia Keaton, Social Identities, Vol.5, No.1, 1999, p.49

[102] Mahler, S. & Pessar, P. Gendered Geographies of Power: Analysing Gender Across Transnational Spaces, Identities, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2001, Overseas Publisher Association, Malaysia, p.446

Keaton supports this point by stating that 'there exists a dual reality in that such practices are structured, as are the individual's identity of the self, by the very institutions, i.e. families, schools, and religion, of which they are a product.'[103] Nevertheless, none of the ten women interviewed have wanted to assume another national identity. They are Muslim, Saudi, Moroccan, Egyptian, Jordanian, Bahraini women.

Geographical Perspectives

Townsend argues that in considering gender issues it is imperative to place gender in a regional geographical context. 'A regional geography of gender would show how gender matters to geography and geography matters to gender at all places and scales.'[104] Establishing a regional geography of gender would yield a context and a framework for comparison, which Townsend feels is crucial for further research. Social scientists define gender in terms of the socially constructed differences and relations between men and women, which vary from place to place. The sex factor is universal but the 'rights' of men over their wives and the rights of women are not uniform, they vary from one location to another, as does the notion of 'masculinity and femininity'. There is 'geography of gender', as admirably illustrated by Momsen and Kinnaired.[105] The role of gender in defining where, what and how women and men function in society, and the division of authority, work and leisure are also in flux depending on the milieu. It is evident that there exist great regional variations 'not only in the gender roles and relations, but in the gendered experiences and use of space and nature.'[106] Townsend makes a valid point in differentiating between work in production, specifically in reference to the economy, and the social and biological reproduction of society. She argues that whereas much explanation of gender inequality has been attributed to the function of production or reproduction, in fact:

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[103]Keaton, T. Muslim Girls and the 'Other France': An Examination of Identity Construction – Tricia Keaton, Social Identities, Vol.5, No.1, 1999, p.49

[104] Townsend, J. Towards a Regional Geography of Gender, The Geographical Journal, Vol. 157, No. 1, 1991, p.25

[105] Momsen, J. & Kinnaired, V. Different Places, Different Voices: Gender and Development in Africa, Asia and Latin America, London: Routledge, 1993

[106]Townsend, J. Towards a Regional Geography of Gender, The Geographical Journal, Vol. 157, No. 1, 1991, p.27

> *'...time spent in economic activity does not itself empower women, nor does high fertility necessarily render them powerless.'*[107]

The 'rules' that regulate gender relations in any region are not static; they are contested, renegotiated and revised daily. It is such 'rules' that arguably limit, define and shape the function of production and reproduction for women and men as well as other constraining factors such as age, ethnicity, class and race. Spatial divisions of the labour market are not merely due to patterns of employment, but rather are the outcomes of struggle that is linked to economic, political, national, and international and class based changes. By the same token, gender relations are entities of resistance that are ever being renegotiated as societies transform. Townsend highlights the importance of giving recognition to the geographical diversity of gender roles and the examination of gender as a function of production and social reproduction. By analysing gender in terms of geography, social scientists have been able to discern the existence of geography of patriarchy and of gender relations. The role of geography in discerning the variances in gender roles throughout the world is pivotal in building and developing contexts; the contextualisation of gender is a prerequisite in fully understanding the problems that exist both at the local and international level. Focusing on the local, Lehmannova feels that:

> *'....the Principle of Unity of Socio-Cultural Reality argues that culture itself does not exist – there is always a culture of a specific community and it can only be determined in relation to that community.'*[108]

Lehmannova further refines the notion of culture as being an 'indispensable and functional system of a particular human society'. Every society adheres to a certain set of conceptions for the purpose of its existence, function and development. A stabilised and historically 'matured' cultural system integrated around its core values is the precondition of stabilisation, and a function of the social system. Formation of a culture exists in the context of a paradigm of values. It is a system of basic principles according to which the given society constructs a reality. These principles dictate the adherence to specific values, standards, behaviour and practices of the community.

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[107] Ibid., p.27

[108] Lehmannova, Z. Globalisation and Culture, Journal of International Relations and Development, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2003; Faculty of Social Sciences, Centre of International Relations, p.241

> *'Thus, the paradigm of values creates some kind of "nerve system" of every socio-cultural unit, which binds it together.'*[109]

Such paradigms of values in the Arab Islamic context have been formed and are expressed by religion, namely Islam, history and the Arabic language. It is responsible for integrating the socio-cultural system operating in the region and for the formulation and orientation of national identity. The values of this specific culture, as in any culture, are also manifested, less obviously, in the structure of institutions, emphasis on innovation or tradition, and in the function of the citizen as either an autonomous entity or as part of a larger community.

The formation of culture and the value system that often defines the Arab Muslim world has not been difficult to discern from their educational systems, regardless of the apparent differences in local histories and customs as between nations and within nations. The value system is universal. Though subscription to such values is by no means universal, the region shares fundamental principles that bind peoples together. Their respective societies suffer similar ailing characteristics. For example, a culture that favours tradition rather than innovation and creation, and one where the citizen, as an autonomous individual, creates tensions that seem to threaten the favoured emphasis on community. Both such situations are reflected most clearly in the educational systems. Yet, once again, the question of whether such ideals are in stark contradiction to the very essence of the culture itself is arguable. Observations made by the ten women interviewees in this study show that they have managed to work within the paradigms of their respective cultural values whilst simultaneously becoming free agents of thought, creativity and movement. Though many parts of the Arab Muslim word have yet to remove gender barriers and restrictions of female liberation, it is more due to cultural values than Islam itself. It is not Islam that has relegated women's status and movement in society; in fact, the second and third largest Muslim societies in population (Pakistan and Bangladesh) have had women Prime Ministers, as has Turkey. Clearly, it is not Islam that has impeded female empowerment, as exemplified in these countries. By contrast, the USA, a secular state for over 200 hundred years and the epitome of liberalism and democracy, has yet to appoint a woman as their president. Is the cultural distance between the West and Islam all that it is made out to be? The aim as stated by the interviewees is the need for the Arab Muslim world to pursue the positive aspects of globalisation without adopting the

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[109] Ibid., p.243

ills of 'Westernisation'. A balance between the indigenous and the modern is what is required; and a starting point is in the restructuring of the educational system for the re-education of the people.

Cross-Cultural Research

A lack of cross-cultural research impedes the understanding of complex development issues. There has been a limited vision presented in past accounts by 'Western' feminists in cross cultural research and that the study of women in the developing world should not be left for them to conduct alone. The study of cross cultures and cross gender issues is crucial to better understanding the world; women should not study their own society as this would simply reinforce 'Western' feminist ethnocentrisms; therefore Scheyvens and Leslie call for the learning of other societies through cross-cultural research.

> *'Research in/of 'other' cultures and societies....offers a counter to universalistic and ethnocentric views. It is the enemy of parochialism....and it may pose challenges to frameworks and assumptions developed in the core.'*[110]

It is the multiplicity of perspectives gained from cross-cultural research that is valuable in developing a detailed understanding of complex development issues. Literature shows that more recently, social scientists have begun encouraging participation in the actual research process by women in developing countries. It has been suggested that encouraging participants to reflect on their personal experiences can be an empowering process for the women in these societies. One researcher supported this viewpoint: 'many of the women whom I interviewed told me that they found the exercise quite cathartic and that it enabled them to reflect on and re-evaluate their life experiences.' The act of partaking in the research process by sharing one's own experiences is deemed to be a form of empowerment for many women in developing countries who have not been given a platform from which to share their views and analyse social issues. Such interviews can serve to increase 'women's self-esteem

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[110]Scheyvens, R. & Leslie, H. Gender, Ethics and Empowerment: Dilemmas of Development Fieldwork, Women's Studies International Forum, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2000, p.126

by affirming their self-worth' whereby 'interviews can raise some women's consciousness, leading to their emancipation.' In effect, research projects can have a two-pronged outcome, by eliciting the thoughts of women previously unheard, and by providing information with which participants can dictate the course of their own lives. The empowerment of women can be facilitated. Scheyvens and Leslie conclude that:

> *'...sensitive research can help give the voiceless a voice. Participatory research can sometimes lead to actions which break with tradition and in doing so it may be empowering for groups involved.'*[111]

The writer has found that her own personal experience in conducting in-depth interviews with the ten women in this study was similar to some of the observations shared by Scheyvens and Leslie, in that as one began to conduct the interviews, it became apparent that they had a therapeutic value to some of the women. In very much the same light, the interviews were an opportunity in which the women shared deep personal information and intimate anecdotes that gave them a platform for further reflection on, and redefinition of their gendered experiences and personal insights which, in effect, was a strategy of empowering the women in the writer's research project. However, the authors rightly make a distinction between a woman feeling a sense of empowerment and gaining an actual increase in real power. Nonetheless, the valuable insights gained from the interviewees has much to do with the fact that women are active agents who are both constituted by, and reflective of, their social and cultural contexts.[112] In any case, as Bown has indicated, the enhancement of self-esteem through even the modest gain of functional literacy can be an empowering experience in itself.[113]

The ethical issues of conducting cross-cultural and cross-gendered research can be numerous in cases where 'Westerners' engage in fieldwork in developing societies. One such issue involves the potentially exploitative nature of the relationship that can develop between the researcher and the participants. In order not to criticise the 'other' out of a sheer lack of understanding:

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[111] Ibid., p.127
[112] Deveaux, M. Feminism and Empowerment: A Critical Reading of Foucault, Feminist Studies, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1994, p.227
[113] Bown, L. Preparing the Future, London: ActionAid, 1990

> *'...what is essential is that those studied should not merely be seen as a source of data through which a researcher can further his or her career: the researcher should be accountable, reflexive, and research should be a two-way process of interaction.'*[114]

It was the ability of the researcher, in this study, to be flexible, understand the local customs and traditions of the different women and share her own personal experiences and knowledge with the research participants. In doing so, it made it possible to extract from them previously undocumented information and their personal reflections that Scheyvens and Leslie believe to be critical if 'cross-cultural and cross-gendered understanding is to be enhanced through the research process.'[115]

The Self and the Other

Many of the interviewees described themselves as 'the other' when transferring from their Arab school to "Western" educational institutions. In analysing the role of an 'education contact zone created by the globalisation of the contemporary university' Kenway and Bullen investigate this notion of the 'other' by wondering if 'being an international woman student means being marginalized, reduced to 'other' where being the 'other' of a dominant culture involves living in a bifurcated universe of meaning. On the other hand, one must produce oneself as a self for oneself. That is survival. At the same time the system also requires that you produce yourself as an 'other'.'[116] Clearly, this notion of the 'other' is acknowledged outside the realm of the respondents' experiences where, arguably, it is a construction of identity formed, in part, by the 'others' themselves. This process coined 'trans-culturation' involves a reciprocal exchange of influences, 'of modes of representation and self-representation, and of cultural practices.' [117]

There is corroboration in evidence of this trans-culturation between Kenway and Bullen's findings and the data generated from the interviews for this study. There is a

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[114]Scheyvens, R. & Leslie, H. Gender, Ethics and Empowerment: Dilemmas of Development Fieldwork, Women's Studies International Forum, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2000, p.128-129
[115] Ibid., p.129
[116]Kenway, J & Bullen, E. Self-Representation of International Women Postgraduate Students in the Global University 'Contact Zone', Gender and Education, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2003, p.10
[117] Ibid., p.11

convergence in the ways in which students' perceptions of host culture attitudes toward them as 'the other' are incorporated or resisted in their 'self' representations. Kenway and Bullen emphasise that students are themselves involved in the production of self-representation with one reason being sheer pragmatism. It is the students' acceptance and formulation of self that is seen to be instrumental to their achieving academic and personal goals and fulfilling the expectations not merely of the host culture, but of their own. Resistance in accepting gendered racial representations or stereotyping is another decisive factor in shaping self-identity. Like some of the interviewees who had to work to break stereotypes of 'the quintessential Arab Muslim woman', as seen through 'Western' eyes, many women have encountered sexist assumptions and preconceived images of women in the 'Third World'. This has raised the question regarding 'how representations become naturalised and ultimately coercive in structuring self-representation.'[118] Such images and stereotyping were vehemently rejected by the interviewees as well as by other international students, whereby the female students, in their 'Western' milieus, worked to break the stereotyping of Arab Muslim women and dispel misrepresentations. Kenway and Bullen identify this particular function of representation as not only defining the 'other cultures', but also 'hegemonic culture.'[119]

However, the experience of the cross – cultural interface becomes more difficult and challenging when there is an evident dislocation between the sense of identity as self and as 'the other'. This feeling of displacement in the host culture and on returning to one's original country is responsible for creating and reinforcing a sense of 'otherness', alienation and lack of belonging. The question of belongingness has now come to take centre stage in cross – cultural issues affecting many societies and cultures around the world. Nevertheless, such ambivalence can lead to renegotiating and reinventing one's identity. It is as a direct result of the close contact between two cultures in the form of dual educational exposure that allows for this self-representation and renegotiation to transpire. Echoing the experiences of some of the interviewees, Kenway and Bullen's findings illustrate that it was when students were challenged with the sense of identity through cultural differences experienced in the 'Western' culture and in their indigenous culture, that they felt more aware of their choice of identity: 'students' cross

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[118] Ibid., p.14
[119] Ibid., p.14

– cultural experiences forged many notions of self and many identities.'[120] The affirmation of self identity is also clearly articulated by Van der Veer:

> *'Negative evaluation of the other helps to create social cohesion within; outsiders play a role in the formation of national identity; the discourse which marginalizes and demonises the migrant also breeds nationalism among those who are marginalized.'*[121]

It is as a result of cross – cultural educational exposure that all the women interviewed came to formulate such strong notions of self and remained affiliated and loyal to their respective cultures whilst adopting and applying their acquired skills and 'Western' notions of achievement and personal autonomy. Regardless of their feminist ideals calling for equality, opportunity and freedom of choice, their cultural identities have not been diluted, simply re-adjusted to fit their newly refined self – identities.

> Arguably:
>
> *'There is no such thing as complete belonging or complete non-belonging, but they exist at the same time, and in that sense you move in and out of a culture, move in and out of a certain kind of bounded space.'*[122]

The challenges and complexity of identity construction that face many people who are juxtaposed between differing cultures has become more evident as cultures are no longer contained within their localities. Keaton conveys this notion as follows:

> *'One of the things we need to be very aware of is that the individual is historically produced, and in the process of this historical production and reproduction, the individual has very many identities...If we move across individuals, the general framework of definition of identity differs across individuals. This becomes problematic for us in attempting to come to grips with the notion of identity.'*[123]

Deveaux argues that feminists need to look at the 'inner' processes that condition women's sense of freedom or choice in addition to external manifestations of power, thereby contradicting Foucault's understanding of power which does not account for the subjective

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[120] Ibid., p.15
[121] Van der Veer, P. Nation and Migration: The Politics of Space in the South Asian Diaspora,, Pennsylvania: University of Philadelphia Press, 1995, p.7
[122] Kenway, J. & Bullen, E. Self-Representation of International Women Postgraduate Students in the Global University 'Contact Zone', Gender and Education, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2003, p.16
[123] Keaton, T. Muslim Girls and the 'Other France': An Examination of Identity Construction – Tricia Keaton, Social Identities, Vol.5, No.1, 1999, p.57

aspects. She justifies her stance by explaining that women's 'freedom', contrary to Foucault, does not simply refer to objective possibilities for 'manoeuvring or resisting within a power dynamic, but concerns whether a woman feels empowered in her specific context.'[124] Foucault's theory that power relations are merely examined from the perspective of how they are installed in institutions and not from the point of view of those subject to power is contested by Deveaux and is equally erroneous when applied to the analysis of the ten women interviewed in this study and their concepts of power. Though, indeed, political institutions and social infrastructures operating in the respondents' respective societies may not attest to or reflect common notions of 'liberalism' or 'freedom', it is by no means a realistic and valid reflection of the power dynamics, namely female empowerment, in play.

> *'The self-development of women involves changing the affective tastes, the emotional coloration, with which we experience the world, not only the outer obstacles in that experience.'*[125]

Hence, it is imperative, when addressing women's empowerment, to reflect upon internal obstacles to exercising choice as well as the more tangible barriers that impede its realisation.

> *'This means considering practices and conventions that may have dis-empowering effects not easily discernable to theorists who focus exclusively on political power.'*[126]

Deveaux clearly illustrates that empowerment is not merely to do with actions upon agents in a relationship of power; thereby highlighting that Foucault's theory leaves little room for any account of the processes involved in developing capacities for political involvement. Empowerment wears different masks in different contexts; there is no quintessential notion of empowerment, but rather an amalgamation of many different interpretations.

> *'Changes can also occur in the private, personal space of an individual woman's consciousness. Equally fundamental, this type of change is also empowering. Becoming empowered through self - knowledge, even within conditions that severely limit one's ability to act, is essential.'*[127]

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[124]Deveaux, M. Feminism and Empowerment: A Critical Reading of Foucault, Feminist Studies, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1994, p.234
[125] Ibid., p.235
[126] Ibid., p.235
[127] Ibid., p.243

For this reason, it is important to place the subject's interpretation and meditation of her experiences at the centre of the inquiry when looking at power and acts of empowerment; the insights gained from the ten interviews for this study have directly addressed issues of their empowerment, their capacities for self determination, for freedom, and the conditions and contexts in which these have flourished.

Redefining Feminism

When studying feminist theories and women's rights issues one must take into account the commonalities and diversities that exist within different contexts, both in and out of the 'Western' arena. Due efforts must be given to focus upon the similarities and differences between women in different localities and the notion of 'feminism' within a globalised dynamic. One definition used to illustrate globalisation is:

> *'...a coalescence of varied trans-national processes and domestic structures, allowing the economy, politics, culture and ideology of one country to penetrate another.'*[128]

Caution is given to oversimplifying the issue of women in general by adopting the universalistic vision of women sharing the same challenges and identifying universal explanations for their subordinate positions in society. New light has been cast on the notion of women, not as one entity but as separate entities around the world in different contexts. Much criticism was given to 'Western' feminists who wrote of the 'other' and the issues of women in the developing world as simply a monolithic subject. This notion of 'othering' has also been critiqued by 'Western' feminists themselves, as well as non – 'Western' researchers.

> *'Western feminism has moved on from notions of universal sisterhood; to an acknowledgement of differences; to a deconstruction of the Othering process; and towards a celebration of diversity and multiplicity and a questioning of universal assumptions.'*[129]

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[128] Flew, F. Bagilhole, B. Carabine, J. Kitzinger, C. Lister, R. & Wilkinson, S. Introduction: Local Feminisms, Global Futures, Women's Studies International Forum, Vol.22, No. 4, 1999, p.393
[129] Ibid., p.394

Globalisation has served to bring women's issues throughout the world to the forefront of international debate through international conferences from Mexico City in 1975, to Beijing in 1995, marking a turning point where non – 'Western' women were becoming actively engaged in dictating and deciding their own agendas. One perception of the Beijing conference as significantly changing 'Western' perceptions of non – 'Western' women's involvement is:

> *'....the discovery that these 'victims' were in fact a far more powerful voice for change in the 1990s than the women's movement in the United States has provided an important starting point in changing the nature of the dialogue between women in the United States and women in other parts of the world.'*[130]

Post-modern feminism has started to challenge this notion of universal knowledge by introducing the possibilities of multiple identities existing within a single subject as well as between different subjects. This is very true in the case of the Arab world where there is a tendency to group Arab women within the same dynamic, ascribing to them the same plight and equal conditions. This, as mentioned in earlier chapters, is far from reality. The existence of multiple realities within the same subject is evident in this study where the women chosen are indeed Muslim Arab women, but they occupy positions and status in their respective societies that are not equal to all other Arab women; furthermore, there exist discrepancies from country to country and within societies of each Arab country. Hence, it is important to develop relationships between and within cultures and classes in order to transcend the erroneous conclusions drawn from falsely universalising and exclusivising feminist theory. Women around the world are actively engaged in building 'specific feminism' centred on their local, national and global priorities, taking into consideration those that are appropriate to their own personal contexts.

> *'Women's activism takes many forms, derived from 'different temporalities of struggle'.'*[131]

The women interviewees for this study have done just this; they have managed to redefine the concept of feminism by adjusting it to their own personal contexts and by incorporating only the appropriate elements so as to form their own brand of feminism. Furthermore, even in so far

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[130] Ibid., pp.394-395
[131] Ibid., p.395

as some of the respondents may be more visibly religious or working within the constraints of their traditional patriarchal societies:

> *'there is no one meaning of what it is to be a traditional woman, any more than there is a single "modern" woman, or any one version of feminism; and what may be seen as oppressive for women in some contexts may be seen as providing a certain status in other contexts.'*[132]

Drawing from such an analysis, it suffices to say that polarities between tradition and modernity and feminist theories are indeed fluid rather than static, comprising complex diversities between women at the local and global level; while some term feminism a 'Western' ideology, others engage in the promotion of women's status without necessarily subscribing to 'feminist' doctrines. Divisions and differences between women are ever changing and evolving over time and space. Therefore, the understanding of ways in which the ten women chosen for this study negotiate issues at their local levels can help provide a key to negotiations between women within the global arena. The rationale is to draw upon and learn from each woman's diverse experiences in order to better forge an understanding of which things work and which do not, with specific attention given to context.

Feminist discourse relating to women in the Middle East has been problematic and has been expressed accurately in terms of a notion broadly defined as a set of:

> *'...intellectual, aesthetic, scholarly and cultural energies that have historically reflected, and been conducive to, continued Western authority and power over the Orient.'*[133]

As a result, 'Western' feminist theory has tended to reproduce differences through the objectification of women who are depicted in ways that neither account for nor take into consideration their subjectivity. 'Arab/Muslim women continue to be presented as the imagined objects rather than the real subjects.'[134] Jacoby rationalises that it is because women in the Middle East are constructed as objects of 'Western' imagination as a result of cultural bias which, itself is derived from:

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[132] Ibid., p.398
[133] Jacoby, T.A. Feminism, Nationalism, and Difference: Reflections on the Palestinian Women's Movement, Women's Studies International Forum, Vol. 22, No. 5, 1999, p.512
[134] Ibid., p.512

> *'...gazing at the Middle East through Western prisms and by (mis) understanding Middle Eastern cultures and societies as static, immutable and at best, derivative.'* [135]

By objectifying the 'other', in this case Arab/Muslim women, 'Western' ethnocentrisms and hegemonic superiority in non – 'Western' regions tend to be perpetuated. For this reason, conducting research whereby the researcher elicits the personal and subjective perspectives of the individuals themselves is imperative to shedding new light on feminist discourse. This study incites the personal viewpoints of ten Arab Muslim women as an attempt to dispel certain erroneous conclusions drawn up by such 'Western' feminist theory and to investigate the realities of undocumented perspectives and lived experiences. The attempt to reconstruct Middle Eastern women, namely these ten women, as subjects, is centred on the assumption that feminism, in theory and in practice, is not necessarily a 'Western' phenomenon. Feminism, as stated earlier, is context-specific. In this context, Arab feminism, more specifically, the feminism construed by the ten respondents, is a culmination of processes, struggles and self-imaging, that are, themselves, indigenous.

Jacoby illustrates one example where indigenous feminism and women's empowerment has manifested itself differently from the West; that is, that feminisms in the Middle East have tended to 'consolidate through the politicisation of women in anti-colonial and national liberation movements;' in the Palestinian context, 'social changes adopted as part of national struggle are the main legitimating context for women's individual struggles.'[136] Nationalist feminism not only came about in the Palestinian context, but also in Egypt:

> *'State feminism contributed to the political legitimacy of Gamal Adbel Nasser's regime' which adopted policies of economic and political liberalisation and, hence, attempted to redefine women's relationship to the state and their role in society.*[137]

However, the Egyptian government used feminism as a nationalist tool, which it later dispensed with during the 1980s with the social and economic retreat of the state and the consequent demise of state feminism. In this context, economic and political liberalisation efforts did not

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[135] Ibid., p.512
[136] Ibid., p.513
[137] Hatem, M. Economic and Political Liberation in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism, International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1992, p.231

enhance the equality or liberty of Egyptian women that state feminism had delivered in the 1950s and 60s and:

> *'.....women's dependence on the state....was a fatal flaw in state feminism as a strategy for improving the economic and political prospects for women.'*[138]

Feminism is both secular and religious; in many parts of the Arab world, women have turned to 'political' Islam and to wearing the *hijab* as an emancipating force for women attempting to benefit from their traditional roles as a method to 'cope with the contradictions of a transitional society' and as a way to partake in new nationalist connotations.[139] There is a growing number of Arab Muslim feminists who have articulated an indigenous and progressive feminist agenda within a reinterpreted Islam; they have carved a niche for themselves by distancing themselves from the militant Islamist movement and from 'Western' secularism. In doing so, these Muslim feminists have reinforced the notion that the relationship between Islam and women's rights 'is politically contingent' and that 'Islam is not necessarily the source of women's oppression and not necessarily incompatible with democracy and women's liberation.'[140] Even among the Islamic-clad intellectual women are those who are active and vocal about their rights. Many call for 'democratisation of the man-woman relationship inside a family structure', an assertion that one cannot assume that Islamic women are not feminists.[141] There is a large and growing representation and constituency of Middle Eastern women who are struggling to redefine Islam and turn it into a force that will generate a new woman's liberation movement

Herein lies the very message transmitted by all ten women respondents, refuting 'Western' interpretation of Muslim women that deny that women's liberation can transpire without the abolishment and abandonment of their spiritual faith. The respondents along with the Muslim feminists use the Quran and the saying of Prophet Muhammad to justify these beliefs.[142] Despite the existence of patriarchal power structures throughout a variety of cross-

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[138] Ibid., p.248
[139] Jacoby, T.A. Feminism, Nationalism, and Difference: Reflections on the Palestinian Women's Movement, Women's Studies International Forum, Vol. 22, No. 5, 1999, p.518
[140] Ibid., p.519
[141] Joseph, S. & Slyomovics, S. Women and Power in the Middle East, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001, p.99
[142] Information on women in Islam are to be found in Appendix 2A, 2B, 2C

cultural contexts, the content and significance of that power differs according to the ways in which women experience patriarchy:

> *'.....through a myriad of other structures. Neither patriarchy nor gender for that matter, are experienced on a uniform basis throughout time and place.'*[143]

Clearly, one must consider womanhood in terms of variation, plurality, fragmentation and displacement in terms of the actual experiences of women based on such differences of nation, class, age, and religion.

Mazrui optimistically shares his view that, in fact, the cultural distances between the West and Islam has started to diminish as interests converge:

> *'What are regarded as medieval aspects of Islamic culture may have been shared by Western culture in relatively recent times. In other words, the historical distance between Islamic values and Western values may not be as great as many have assumed.'*[144]

The author further argues that the apparent ocean between Muslim women and their 'Western' counterparts is quickly evaporating. He believes that the traditional forms of seclusion of women will not long survive a globalising technology in which women can declare their presence and in time assert their rights. He goes so far as to project that American Muslims will join forces with the new technology of information to precipitate fundamental reforms in gender relations in the Muslim world. Heed must be given to the differences in values concerning dignity and liberty. Echoing the thoughts of the women interviewees, the author purports that a balance is needed so that the West can gain back some of their lost dignity whilst the Muslim world can award its women more liberty and freedom. It may be that in the USA Muslims can restore the balance and generate a new mode of gender relations that enables greater liberty.

Summary

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[143] Jacoby, T.A. Feminism, Nationalism, and Difference: Reflections on the Palestinian Women's Movement, Women's Studies International Forum, Vol. 22, No. 5, 1999, p.521

[144] Mazrui, A. Globalisation and Cross-Cultural Values: The Politics of Identity and Judgement, Studies Quarterly, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1999, p.101

Two organising concepts are used to consider the differences between societies today. The first is cultural relativism – accounting for the differences in values between societies and cultures and historical relativism – accounting for the differences in cultures and values over time, or historical epochs. The other historical relativism occurs when values differ across a period of time. Where Islamic values may appear 'medieval' in the eyes of 'Westerners', it cannot be overlooked that in fact, most Muslim societies are only decades rather than centuries behind the West. Historical relativism is needed to perceive that many of such societies and cultures are only experiencing what 'Western' society experienced relatively recently. Whereas women in Britain did not have the right to own private property until 1870, Islam awarded women this right from the onset. In fact, Islam is the only major religion founded by the Muhammad, who was a businessman and who was in commercial partnership with his wife, Khadija. Perhaps there is merit in pondering the notion that Islam has remained resilient to certain value eroding forces and trends of the 'Western' Twentieth Century?

Constructs such as secularism, democracy, citizenship and individual rights, all of which supposedly make 'Western' women's lives better than those of their Middle Eastern counterparts, are the cultural products of a particular 'Western' historical experience. Perhaps it is time for the Middle East to draft their own interpretations and build upon the ethos of such themes, but from their own cultural perspectives. Simply adopting such notions without cultural specificity and sensitivity cannot render true success. It is the combination of the two value systems that have enriched the lives of the women interviewees. If they have managed to incorporate culture and 'Western' imports successfully, then perhaps, one can argue, the same can be done for a nation.

CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis has attempted to address certain over-arching themes through a small – scale investigation. The research conducted has yielded a number of empirical findings that are not simply relevant at the local level, but, in fact, address widely - held concerns regarding cultural identity, the role and purpose of education and the possible ways of creating a synergy between one's tradition and empowerment. The major finding ensuing from the research is that the women sampled benefited from their cultural identity and their dual educational experiences. Though they certainly encountered challenges, there was no conflict within themselves with regard to their self-identity and their educational and professional success. It was this dual educational experience, in the Arab and 'Western' worlds, that served to give them a balance. Exposure to the two distinctly different educational paradigms had a twofold outcome; it reinforced their self-awareness and identity as 'the other' while providing the forum in which to challenge the status quo; it built their cognitive skills, promoted creativity, self-expression, self-confidence and competitive efficacy. It is their educational exposure that facilitated their personal and professional success by imbuing in them distinguishable qualifications and qualities necessary to succeed as leaders within their respective societies.

The findings also show that feminism and female empowerment have different connotations in different contexts. The case studies are all of women who see themselves as empowered, professional and ambitious; however, there is no one way to manifest such empowerment or feminism. Different contexts call for different behaviour. Within the ten case studies, there was diversity regarding levels of liberalism, religious affiliation, familial responsibilities and societal expectations. Nonetheless, all ten women have managed to integrate their respective cultural identity, tradition and heritage with professional success. They have found the balance between tradition and modernity; indeed, they have achieved 'glo-culturalism'. Their educational achievement, among other salient factors, is what has heralded these women to be amongst the few Arab Muslim women who have successfully and simultaneously positioned themselves within both the local and global arenas. Though, in no way, does this thesis look to draw general conclusions, the findings illustrate that there are cases in which tradition and modernity are not always at odds. They have successfully achieved what Thomas Friedman terms 'glocalisation', defined as:

> *'The ability of a culture when it encounters other strong cultures, to absorb influences that naturally fit into and can enrich that culture, to resist those things that are truly alien and to compartmentalise those things that, while different, can nevertheless be enjoyed and celebrated as different.'*[1]

Today, Arab Muslim women continue to define and redefine their identities and their place within particular communities and within the international community. The key to deal with what lies ahead is in the relationship between tradition and modernity and what role it plays in change. The contemporary Islamic resurgence has raised many issues regarding politics, religion and society, of which gender relations, namely, the different roles and status of women in society, is just one, though of great significance to this study. Despite some advancement and equality, the very definition of equality in gender issues has yet to be resolved and remains 'work in progress.' Esposito succinctly summarises the situation by saying that it is as much a struggle regarding gender, class and political and economic power as it is about religious faith and identity.[2] The young generation of educated women who have joined the Islamist movement have done so because they see religion as the solution for dealing with modernisation without having to jeopardise the cultural and religious legacy of their respective societies. Understanding the cultural context in which these women operate is an essential point and one that has been stressed in Chapter Five of this thesis. Many of these religious women have in fact been educated in the West, two of whom are case studies in this study. Yet, they have merged their educational and professional achievements with their cultural and religious ties. In doing so, they have found their own balance, one that may not apply to everyone, but that allows them to partake as active members of their society without forgoing their traditions and beliefs.

Under the impact of Islamic revivalism, many women have donned Islamic dress and sought to redefine their identity in a manner that they perceive as a more authentic accommodation of modernity to their religion and culture. Like many of their male counterparts, they constitute a newly emerging Islamist movement of young educated elites who are modern and educated, but more formally Islamically oriented than their mothers. It is as a result of such implications that issues of gender relations and roles of women in Muslim societies are

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[1] Friedman, T. The Lexus and the Olive Tree, New York: Anchor Books, 2000, p.295
[2] Esposito, J. & Haddad, Y. Islam, Gender and Social Change, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.27

being redefined and re-negotiated in light of their educational and professional aspirations. Although the *hijab* is an overtly formal interpretation and compliance with tradition, it does not necessarily mean commitment to all Islamic ideology, with many women donning the *hijab* for reasons other than pure religion. For many women, it is a way to give them peace, serenity and belongingness to a group. It is not merely testament to religious values, but is also symbolic; it is seen to be a source of protection from male harassment in the street, in the work place, a source of respectability and social acceptance and a means to carry on social activities and behaviour, that otherwise would be condemned or deemed distasteful.[3]

The insights shared by the women in this study reflected that, very often, analysis pertaining to Arab women suffers from the naiveté of perceiving another culture through the prism of 'Western' consciousness; such that the fact that women in different cultures might have a somewhat different agenda or methods of achieving their objectives is rarely considered. Indeed, it is clear from the data analysis in this study that these women very much subscribe to the philosophy that ancient cultures, like their own, cannot always be judged by the same yardstick employed to judge progress in women's issues in the Western hemisphere. Furthermore, the Arab culture has evolved as a social system in which the extended family 'offered each individual all the amenities that the state currently offers its citizens in the West.'[4] Whilst 'Westerners' view discrimination of women as a product of a male dominating culture, women in the Arab world and in the developing world believe that their struggles cannot be considered outside regional, political and developmental issues. These factors must be taken into consideration in order:

> *'.....not to impose a myopic view of the role and the oppression of women in the Arab world. To use the same yardstick by which we measure the role of Western women on Arab women will produce a myopic view of the latter.'*[5]

'Western' feminism is grounded in 'Western' ideology and values; the plight and struggles of Arab women are equally grounded in the religious, cultural and political norms of the Arab Muslim world. To lose sight of this would result in nothing but false and erroneous conclusions.

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[3] Seikaly, M. Women and Religion in Bahrain, Islam, Gender and Social Change, Esposito, J. & Haddad, Y. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.182
[4] Sabbagh, S. Arab Women, Between Defiance and Restraint, New York: Interlink Publishing Group, Inc., 1996, p.14
[5] Ibid., p.24

ɔnce, although women in the Islamic world are donning the *hijab*, in some cases out of force, ɨeed, many of these women do so as a means to fight to maintain their place in the workforce d to maintain leadership roles in their segregated communities. In the light of this, feminist ɛory can bring about retrogressive results if applied without due consideration to the wide ŋge of conditions specific to the Arab Islamic context. Following from the case studies ported above and literature that further reinforces the need to understand contextual issues, ɛ women sampled drew certain parallels between the existing glass ceiling notion that ɜgues 'Western' female professionals, and the professional opportunities and roadblocks ɪcountered by their Eastern female counterparts. In fact, many professionally ambitious ɔmen in the Arab world and in the West face similar barriers to senior management positions. ŋough the 'Western' world may appear to have a more 'egalitarian' view of men and women, the final analysis, there are still very few women who get beyond the glass ceiling without rfeiting their femininity and the familial duties as wives and mothers. Perhaps the differences ɛtween the equivalently educated elite professional women, be they Saudi, Egyptian, ɔrdanian or American, are not as distinct and profound as so commonly assumed.

Another concern that was highlighted throughout the course of the research was the ɔle and purpose of education, and the ailing educational systems in the Arab world that have ɜen dysfunctional in respect of serving its citizens. The current systems throughout the ifferent countries of the region have superficially adopted the 'Western' edifice of a system, yet ɜve been averse to teaching cognitive skill - building and creativity, and encouraging self-xpression and self – awareness, amongst the young generation. Indeed, it is the educational ystems that have been the apparatus used to reinforce dogmatic beliefs and perpetuate ender stereotyping. The women's personal experiences with such a system were a reason hy their 'Western' schooling was that much more illuminating and challenging. The argument osed by conservatives in the region is that to forgo such indoctrination at the educational level ɔuld result in the loss or dilution of tradition, culture and authentic identity; yet, what this thesis as attempted to show is that neither is mutually exclusive. A working example of this is in ɜrael where education has been vital to the building of a society based on a set of redetermined, distinctive principles.

There, schools have:

> *'.....become the vehicle for teaching and practising democracy...a fundamental principle of Israeli culture. Children are encouraged to participate in decision - making, to exercise freedom of choice, and to take the initiative in building their personalities. The task of the teachers, who should grow to understand the needs of pupils by democratic association with them, is to assist the child in forming a concept of him /herself.'*[6]

The very essence of the Jewish curriculum is its concentration on method as the determining factor in pedagogy; as compared with the more conservative teaching styles of Saudi Arabia, where the great emphasis on teaching Islam has inevitably influenced teaching methods, leading to the institutionalisation of a rigid and authoritative approach to learning.[7] Without a comprehensive re-evaluation of the style and quality of education and pedagogy, only piecemeal changes will transpire, having only short term benefits.

Post modern theory in education is opposed to what many may describe as traits that characterise the educational systems in the different Arab countries. These traits are the doctrinaire, enforced uniformity, inflexible systems, rigid institutional maxims of what is correct, failure to acknowledge 'others', such as women, and the writing of authoritative texts by leaders and bureaucrats. To imply that post-modern thought is opposed to all forms of control would be erroneous; post-modernist theory does support some forms of centralisation, control and structured organisation. It calls for open discourse rather than closed or restricted discussion, pluralistic procedures, coexistence and interpretation of systems, and flexibility of organisational structures.[8] This is very much along the lines of educationalist Howard Gardner's proposal for an educational system that is centralised at the macro level with the onus on the local educators to implement it appropriately at the local level.[9] What is staunchly needed in the Arab school system is the infusion of a post-modern theory that calls for adopting a value system that advocates a socially responsive approach to educational research, serving each community's needs and personal, cultural affinity. It calls for a diversion away from the current educational systems employed which 'tend to function as highly centralised, autocratic

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[6] Kirdar, S. Primary Education in Saudi Arabia: Key Issues, Unpublished MSc Dissertation: University of Oxford, 1998, p.19
[7] Ibid., p. 43
[8] Stringer, E. Socially Responsive Educational Research, Theory and Concept in Qualitative Research, Flinders, D. & Mills, G., New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1993, p. 147
[9] Gardner, H. The Disciplined Mind, New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2000

institutions that provide poor preparation for responsible, democratic citizenry.'[10] What is needed, to some degree, is a similarly applied ethos to education that Israel adopted; this calls for a:

> *'.....social education that encourages a sense of personal responsibility and readiness to engage in voluntary work or communal activities, where gender equality, the upgrading of teacher status, the introduction of broad humanistic curricula and the promotion of scientific and technological studies are seen as essential to the quality of education.'*[11]

Indeed, empowerment is a prerequisite for such fundamental change from the existing reality. It is the underlying principle of empowerment that provides the overarching concept for a socially responsive approach to educational restructuring. As Stringer has it:

> *'Empowerment is derived as much from the way in which people work together on a day to day basis as from the workings of political institutions.'*[12]

Furthermore, the very premise of empowering the citizens of a nation through such educational changes is so that the people, themselves, have control over their lives, and decision-making opportunities that enable them to be the architects of their futures. The famous adage is still true that: 'when one educates a man, one is simply educating a man; yet, when one educates a woman, one is, in fact, educating an entire family!'

People cannot progress and move forward if they have yet to recognise their past and the base from which they come. Educational reconstruction is what is needed in the Arab countries in order to achieve what the Lexus and the olive tree espouse – values that integrate and blend cultural identity and tradition with an education for understanding, cognitive skill building, fostering creativity and competitive efficacy. Building on the empirical findings in this study, it appears that to achieve this balance, the only way forward for the Arab region is to improve its educational quality and relevance; the data generated here show that this does not conflict with instilling moral values and identity in its citizens. This is contrary to many

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[10] Stringer, E. Socially Responsive Educational Research, Theory and Concept in Qualitative Research, Flinders, D. & Mills, G., New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1993, p.150
[11] Kirdar, S. Primary School in Israel and Saudi Arabia: Key Issues, Unpublished MSc Dissertation: University of Oxford, 1998, p.23
[12] Stringer, E. Socially Responsive Educational Research, Theory and Concept in Qualitative Research, Flinders, D. & Mills, G., New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1993, p.152

authoritative bodies that have made less than satisfactory piecemeal efforts to're - adjust' curricular content. Education in each of the Arab countries must be totally reassessed to meet the local demands of the country with curriculum content that is tailored to the individual society, history, culture and traditions of the local people. There is no one best system, and there is no one system that is suitable for all. Each system must be re-evaluated on the basis that it delivers moral values, and cultural identity within a system that calls for disciplined thinkers who are taught self-expression, skills, creativity and analytical thought processing. That said, without such governing bodies to facilitate changes in the Arab world, efforts to amend school curricular content, building more labs and adding more computers will remain superficial attempts that will only continue to perpetuate and exacerbate the existing ailing characteristics of the educational systems of the region. What is suggested is a system built from the grass roots that aims to unite culture and cognitive learning. It is this combination that will ameliorate the economic and political environment and give true freedom and empowerment to the individual, whether they are male or female. What the Arab world needs is change, yet a change that preserves Islamic values and related traditions; it calls for modernisation but without total 'Westernisation'. The onus is on local governments and the private sector to forge an alliance:

> *'To define the appropriate academic background and the practical skills that will bring the curriculum in line with the real demands of the 21st Century workplace.'*[13]

Mirroring the thoughts of Thomas Friedman, the survival of globalisation as a system will depend to a large degree on the efficacy of education to achieve such balance; the role of educational systems to lead the way is now, more than ever, the clinch pin in this endeavour.[14] This doctoral thesis does not attempt to provide the cure for the ailing educational systems that are an apparent hybrid of the West and East. Rather, it has attempted to illustrate that tradition and modernity can co-exist and that education is the way to achieve the necessary change and synergy. The sampled Arab women used their educational experiences to redefine their own identities and engender changes within their own domains; perhaps what they have achieved is not beyond the reach of others in the region.

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[13] Speech given by Lubna Olayan at the Jeddah Economic Forum: www.saudi-us-relations.org January, 2004

[14] Friedman, T. The Lexus and the Olive Tree, New York: Anchor Books, 2000

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 Interview Questions

APPENDIX 2 A Quran and Women

APPENDIX 2 B Women in the Quran and Sunna

APPENDIX 2 C The Holy Quran Women

APPENDIX 1

Interview Questions

SECTION I

1. Personal details

   - From which Arab country does your family belong?
   - Where do you live now?

2. Educational background

   SCHOOL

   - Where did you go to primary school? Was it mixed/single sex?
   - Where did you go to secondary school? Was it mixed/single sex?
   - Were your primary school teachers' male, female or both?

     (a) If both, what proportion of each?
     (b) Which subjects were taught by men and which by women?

   - Were your secondary teachers male, female or both?

     (a) If both, what proportion of each?
     (b) Which subjects were taught by men and which by women?

   - What were the nationalities of the teachers in your school?
     - At primary
     - At secondary

   UNIVERSITY

   - In which country did you go to university?
   - Were your university teachers' male, female or both? If both, what proportion of each?
   - What were the nationalities of your university teachers?

- What did you study at University?
  - BA level
  - Masters level
  - Doctorate level
  - Other: e.g. Diploma, Certificate ...

- What language were you taught in?

Primary
Secondary
Tertiary

- In what way did the nationality and cultural identity of your teachers at university influence your own identity and personal development?

- At which level in your education did you become aware of the interaction between Arab and Western culture?

- When and what was your first significant exposure to Western culture?

- Did this interaction challenge or make you question your identity as an Arab female? If so how?

- How do you reconcile these two cultures and have you been able to achieve a balance between the two?

- Did any particular incident enlighten you to challenge your identity?

CURRICULUM

3. Did the curriculum you covered provide you with both Arab and Western perspectives?

   a) In terms of subject matter
   b) In terms of method of teaching – blackboard learning/discussions etc.

i. Primary < subject/ learning mode
ii. Secondary < subject/ mode
iii. University < subject/ mode

4. Do you think your Arab educational experience was more or less democratic than your Western educational experience, (the choice of school, subject matter)? If so why do you think this was the case?

5. Did your education prepare you to challenge traditional views either Arab or Western? If so can you give examples?

6. Did your experience in academic institutions provide you with as much exposure to both Arab and Western cultures as did your life outside school? I.e. how much influence did your family life have on your cultural identity and development as compared with your school?

7. Did exposure to either Arab or Western education or both influence your future professional aspirations? If so why and in what way?

8. Identify one role model from the Arab world and one from the West from any field or profession and say why you have chosen them.

9. What do you believe the role and purpose of formal education to be i.e. in School/ University?

10. Do you believe that formal education fosters changes? If so, in what ways? Can you give any examples of such changes that you have achieved or influenced that can be attributed to the formal education you have had?

11. Do you believe formal education has an influence on providing more opportunities for women in the Arab world? If so, what type of opportunities?

12. How has your particular educational experience affected your opportunities?

13. What cultural challenges have you come up against as an Arab woman living between two cultures in terms of:

- Your role and position in your family and society?

- Sexuality i.e. how you see yourself as a woman/ your feminine power

14. What do you believe to be the most positive and negative traits in your Arab experience and also in your Western experience at school and at university levels?

	Positive	**Negative**
School		
University		

15. In your estimation, which factors do you believe are responsible for shaping women's capacity to step outside the traditional roles and promote change?

- Family members – parents/husbands
- Broader social networks – friends/colleagues etc.
- Education
- Exposure to new ideas and outlooks

16. Which factor/factors has/have had the greatest influence on you? Why?

17. Do you believe educated Arab women today struggle to carve a niche for themselves – juggling traditional stereotypes and liberal influences?

    - Do you have any examples from your personal life? How have you coped with them?

18. What are the best aspects of Arab and Western education? What are the worst aspects?

19. If you could change anything about a woman's role in the Arab world, what would it be?

20. If you could change anything about a woman's role in the Western world, what would it be?

21. What were the different punitive measures taken in your Arab school? In your Western school?

22. What do you think is the historical Arab view of women in society? How has it changed over the last 50 years?

23. How do you think gender is viewed in terms of equal opportunity regarding jobs in both the Arab and Western world?

24. How is it viewed in your family when the women attain higher educational honours than the men?

25. How do you believe your education has influenced the type of person you are today and what you stand for?

26. Follow up question:
In brief, could you give a summary of your own family background and family life? E.g. Father's work, Mother's role and relationship with siblings etc...

APPENDIX 2A

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QURAN AND WOMEN

An attempt will be made in the following passages to sum up the attitude of Islam with regard to woman.

Woman is recognized by Islam as a full and equal partner of man in the procreation of humankind. He is the father; she is the mother, and both are essential for life. Her role is not less vital than his. By this partnership she has an equal share in every aspect; she is entitled to equal rights; she undertakes equal responsibilities, and in her there are as many qualities and as much humanity as there are in her partner. To this equal partnership in the reproduction of humankind God says:

O mankind! Verily We have created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other... (Qur'an, 49:13; cf. 4:1).

She is equal to man in bearing personal and common responsibilities and in receiving rewards for her deeds. She is acknowledged as an independent personality, in possession of human qualities and worthy of spiritual aspirations. Her human nature is neither inferior to nor deviant from that of man. Both are members of one another. God says:

And their Lord has accepted (their prayers) and answered them (saying): 'Never will I cause to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female; you are members, one of another...

She is equal to man in the pursuit of education and knowledge. When Islam enjoins the seeking of knowledge upon Muslims, it makes no distinction between man and woman. Almost fourteen centuries ago, Muhammad declared that the pursuit of knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim male and female. This declaration was very clear and was implemented by Muslims throughout history.

She is entitled to freedom of expression as much as man is. Her sound opinions are taken into consideration and cannot be disregarded just because she happens to belong to the female sex. It is reported in the Qur'an and history that woman not only expressed her opinion freely but also argued and participated in serious discussions with the Prophet himself as well as with other Muslim leaders (Qur'an, 58:1-4; 60:10-12). Besides there were occasions when Muslim women expressed their views on legislative matters of public interest, and stood in opposition to the Caliphs, who then accepted the sound arguments of these women. A specific example took place during the Caliphate of Umar Ibn al-Khattab.

Historical records show that women participated in public life with the early Muslims, especially in times of emergencies. Women used to accompany the Muslim armies engaged in battles to nurse the wounded, prepare supplies, and serve the warriors, and so on. They were not shut behind iron bars or considered worthless creatures and deprived of souls.

Islam grants woman equal rights to contract, to enterprise, to earn and possess independently. Her life, her property, her honour are as sacred as those of man. If she commits any offence, her penalty is no less or more than of man's in a similar case. If she is wronged or harmed, she gets due compensations equal to what a man in her position would get (2:178; 4:45, 92-93).

Islam does not simply state these rights in a statistical form. It has taken all measures to safeguard them and put them into practice as integral articles of Faith. It never tolerates those who are inclined to prejudice against woman or discrimination between man and woman. Time and again, the Qur'an reproaches those who used to believe woman to be inferior to man (16:57-59, 62; 42:47-59; 43:15-19; 53:21-23).

Apart from recognition of woman as an independent human being acknowledged as equally essential for the survival of humanity, Islam has given her a share of inheritance. Before Islam, she was not only deprived of that share but was herself considered as property to be inherited by man. Out of that transferable property Islam made an heir, acknowledging the inherent human qualifies in woman. Whether she is a wife or mother, a sister or daughter, she receives a certain share of the deceased kin's property, a share which depends on her degree of relationship to the deceased and the number of heirs. This share is hers, and no one can take it away or disinherit her. Even if the deceased wishes to deprive her by making a will to other relations or in favour of any other cause, the Law will not allow him to do so. Any proprietor is permitted to make his will within the limit of one-third of his property, so he may not affect the rights of his heirs, men and women. In the case of inheritance, the question of quality and sameness is fully applicable. In principle, both man and woman are equally entitled to inherit the property of the deceased relations but the portions they get may vary. In some instances man receives two shares whereas woman gets one only. This is not a sign of giving preference or supremacy to man over woman. The reasons why man gets more in these particular instances may be classified as follows:

First, man, is the person solely responsible for the complete maintenance of his wife, his family and any other needy relations. It is his duty by Law to assume all financial responsibilities and maintain his dependents adequately. It is also his duty to contribute financially to all good causes in his society. All financial burdens are borne by him alone.

Secondly, in contrast, woman has no financial responsibilities whatsoever except very little of her personal expenses, the high luxurious things that she likes to have. She is financially secure and provided for. If she is a wife, her husband is the provider; if she is a mother, it is the son; if she is a daughter, it is the father; if she is a sister; it is the brother, and so on. If she has no relations on whom she can depend, then there is no question of inheritance because there is nothing to inherit and there is no one to bequeath anything to her. However, she will not be left to starve; maintenance of such a woman is the responsibility of the society as a whole, the state. She may be given aid or a job to earn her living, and whatever money she makes will be hers. She is not responsible for the maintenance of anybody else besides herself. If there is a man in her position, he would still be responsible for his family and possibly any of his relations who need his help. So, in the hardest situation her financial responsibility is limited, while his is unlimited.

Thirdly, when a woman gets less than a man does, she is not actually deprived of anything that she has worked for. The property inherited is not the result of her earning or her endeavours. It

is something coming to them from a neutral source, something addition- al or extra. It is something that neither man nor woman struggled for. It is a sort of aid, and any aid has to be distributed according to the urgent needs and responsibilities especially when the distribution is regulated by the Law of God.

Now, we have a male heir, on one side, burdened with all kinds of financial responsibilities and liabilities. We have, on the other side, a female heir with no financial responsibilities at all or at most with very little of it. In between we have some property and aid to redistribute by way of inheritance. If we deprive the female completely, it would be unjust to her because she is related to the deceased. Likewise, if we always give her a share equal to the man's, it would be unjust to him. So, instead of doing injustice to either side, Islam gives the man a larger portion of the inherited property to help him to meet his family needs and social responsibilities. At the same time, Islam has not forgotten her altogether, but has given her a portion to satisfy her very personal needs. In fact, Islam in this respect is being more kind to her than to him. Here we can say that when taken as a whole the rights of woman are equal to those of man although not necessarily identical (see Qur'an, 4:11-14, 176).

In some instances of bearing witness to certain civil contracts, two men are required or one man and two women. Again, this is no indication of the woman being inferior to man. It is a measure of securing the rights of the contracting parties, because woman as a rule is not as experienced in practical life as man. This lack of experience may cause a loss to any party in a given contract. So the Law requires that at least two women should bear witness with one man. If a woman of the witness forgets something, the other one would remind her. Or if she makes an error, due to lack of experience, the other would help to correct her. This is a precautionary measure to guarantee honest transactions and proper dealings between people. In fact, it gives woman a role to play in civil life and helps to establish justice. At any rate, lack of experience in civil life does not necessarily mean that women are inferior to man in her status. Every human being lacks one thing or another, yet no one questions their human status (2:282).

Woman enjoys certain privileges of which man is deprived. She is exempt from some religious duties, i.e., prayers and fasting, in her regular periods and at times of confinement. She is exempt from all financial liabilities. As a mother, she enjoys more recognition and higher honour in the sight of God (31:14-15; 46:15). The Prophet acknowledged this honour when he declared that Paradise is under the feet of the mothers. She is entitled to three-fourths of the son's love and kindness with one-fourth left for their father. As a wife she is entitled to demand of her prospective husband a suitable dowry that will be her own. She is entitled to complete provision and total maintenance by the husband. She does not have to work or share with her husband the family expenses. She is free to retain, after marriage, whatever she possessed before it, and the husband has no right whatsoever to any of her belongings. As a daughter or sister she is entitled to security and provision by the father and brother respectively. That is her privilege. If she wishes to work or be self-supporting and participate in handling the family responsibilities, she is quite free to do so, provided her integrity and honour are safeguarded.

The standing of woman in prayers behind man does not indicate in any sense that she is inferior to him. Woman, as already mentioned, is exempt from attending congregational prayers which are obligatory on man. But if she does attend she stands in separate lines made up of women exclusively. This is a regulation of discipline in prayers, and not a classification of importance. In men's rows the head of state stands shoulder to shoulder to the pauper. Men of

the highest ranks in society stand in prayer side by side with other men of the lowest ranks. The order of lines in prayers is introduced to help every one to concentrate in his meditation. It is very important because Muslim prayers are not simply chanting or the sing-a-song type. They involve actions, motions, standing, bowing, prostration, etc. So if men mix with women in the same lines, it is possible that something disturbing or distracting may happen. The mind will become occupied by something alien to prayer and derailed from the clear path of mediation. The result will be a loss of the purpose of prayers, besides an offence of adultery committed by the eye, because the eye-by looking at forbidden things - can be guilty of adultery as much as the heart itself. Moreover, no Muslim man or woman is allowed during prayers to touch the body of another person of the opposite sex. If men and women stand side by side in prayer they cannot avoid touching each other. Furthermore, when a woman is praying in front of a man or beside him, it is very likely that any part of her dressed body may become uncovered after a certain motion of bowing or prostrating. The man's eye may happen to be looking at the uncovered part, with the result that she will be embarrassed and he will be exposed to distraction or possibly evil thoughts. So, to avoid any embarrassment and distraction to help concentrate on mediation and pure thoughts, to maintain harmony and order among worshippers, to fulfil the true purposes of prayers, Islam has ordained the organization of rows, whereby men stand in front lines, and women behind the children. Anyone with some knowledge of the nature and purpose of Muslim prayers can readily understand the wisdom of organizing the lines of worshippers in this manner.

The Muslim woman is always associated with an old tradition known as the "veil". It is Islamic that the woman should beautify herself with the veil of honour, dignity, chastity, purity and integrity. She should refrain from all deeds and gestures that might stir the passions of people other than her legitimate husband or cause evil suspicion of her morality. She is warned not to display her charms or expose her physical attractions before strangers. The veil which she must put on is one that can save her soul from weakness, her mind from indulgence, her eyes from lustful looks, and her personality from demoralization. Islam is most concerned with the integrity of woman, with the safeguarding of her morals and morale and with the protection of her character and personality (cf. Qur'an, 24:30-31).

By now it is clear that the status of woman in Islam is high and realistically suitable to her nature. Her rights and duties are equal to those of man but not necessarily or absolutely identical with them. If she is deprived of one thing in some aspect, she is fully compensated for it with more things in many other aspects. The fact that she belongs to the female sex has no bearing on her human status or independent personality, and it is no basis for justification of prejudice against her or injustice to her person. Islam gives her as much as is required of her. Her rights match beautifully with her duties. The balance between rights and duties is maintained, and no side overweighs the other. The whole status of woman is given clearly in the Qur'anic verse which may be translated as follows:

And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but man has a degree (of advantage as in some cases of inheritance) over them (2:228).

This degree is not a title of supremacy or an authorization of dominance over her. It is to correspond with the extra responsibilities of man and give him some compensation for his unlimited liabilities. The above mentioned verse is always interpreted in the light of another (4:34). It is these extra responsibilities that give man a degree over woman in some economic

aspects. It is not a higher degree in humanity or in character. Nor is it a dominance of one over the other or suppression of one by the other. It is a distribution of God's abundance according to the needs of the nature of which God is the Maker. And He knows best what is good for woman and what is good for man. God is absolutely true when He declares:

O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, Who created you from a single person, and created of like nature his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women (4:1).

APPENDIX 2B

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WOMEN IN THE QURAN AND THE SUNNA

The Qur'an says: And for women are rights over men similar to those of men over women. (2:226)

The Qur'an, in addressing the believers, often uses the expression,' *believing men and women'* to emphasize the equality of men and women in regard to their respective duties, rights, virtues and merits. It says:

For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast, for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise, for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward. (33:35)

This clearly contradicts the assertion of the Christian Fathers that ***women do not possess souls and that they will exist as sexless beings in the next life.*** The Qur'an says that women have souls in exactly the same way as men and will enter Paradise if they do good:

Enter into Paradise, you and your wives, with delight. (43:70)

Who so does that which is right, and believes, whether male or female, him or her will We quicken to happy life. (16:97)

The Qur'an admonishes those men who oppress or ill-treat women:

O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should you treat them with harshness, that you may take away part of the dowry you have given them - except when they have become guilty of open lewdness. On the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If you take a dislike to them, it may be that you dislike something and Allah will bring about through it a great deal of good. (4:19)

Considering the fact that before the advent of Islam the pagan Arabs used to bury their female children alive, make women dance naked in the vicinity of the Ka'ba during their annual fairs, and treat women as mere chattels and objects of sexual pleasure possessing no rights or position whatsoever, these teachings of the Noble Qur'an were revolutionary. Unlike other religions, which regarded women as being possessed of inherent sin and wickedness and men as being possessed of inherent virtue and nobility, ***Islam regards men and women as being of the same essence created from a single soul.*** The Qur'an declares:

O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, his mate, and from this pair scattered (like seeds) countless men and women.

Reverence Allah, through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and reverence the wombs (that bore you); for Allah ever watches over you. (4:1)

The Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) said, *"Women are the twin halves of men."* The Qur'an emphasizes the essential unity of men and women in a most beautiful simile:

They (your wives) are your garment and you are a garment for them. (2:187) Just as a garment hides our nakedness, so do husband and wife, by entering into the relationship of marriage, secure each other's chastity. The garment gives comfort to the body; so does the husband find comfort in his wife's company and she in his. "The garment is the grace, the beauty, the embellishment of the body, so too are wives to their husbands as their husbands are to them." Islam does not consider woman "an instrument of the Devil", but rather the Qur'an calls her muhsana - a fortress against Satan because a good woman, by marrying a man, helps him keep to the path of rectitude in his life. It is for this reason that marriage was considered by the Prophet Muhammad as a most virtuous act. He said:

"When a man marries, he has completed one half of his religion." He enjoined matrimony on Muslims by saying: *"Marriage is part of my way and whoever keeps away from my way is not from me (i.e. is not my follower)."* The Qur'an has given the raison d'être of marriage in the following words:

And among His signs is this that He has created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them; and He has put love and mercy between you. Verily in that are signs for those who reflect. (30:21)

The Prophet Muhammad was full of praise for virtuous and chaste women. He said:

"The world and all things in the world are precious but the most precious thing in the world is a virtuous woman. He once told the future khalif, 'Umar: "Shall I not inform you about the best treasure a man can hoard? It is a virtuous wife who pleases him whenever he looks towards her, and who guards herself when he is absent from her."

On other occasions the Prophet said:

"The best property a man can have is a remembering tongue (about Allah), a grateful heart and a believing wife who helps him in his faith." And again: "The world, the whole of it, is a commodity and the best of the commodities of the world is a virtuous wife."

Before the advent of Islam women were often treated worse than animals. The Prophet wanted to put a stop to all cruelties to women. He preached kindness towards them. He told the Muslims:

"Fear Allah in respect of women." And: *"The best of you are they who behave best to their wives."* And: *"A Muslim must not hate his wife, and if he be displeased with one bad quality in her, let him be pleased with one that is good."* And:*" The more civil and kind a Muslim is to his wife, the more perfect in faith he is."*

The Prophet was most emphatic in enjoining upon Muslims to be kind to their women when he delivered his famous khutba on the Mount of Mercy at Arafat in the presence of one hundred and twenty-four thousand of his Companions who had gathered there for the Hajj al-Wada (Farewell Pilgrimage). In it he ordered those present, and through them all those Muslims who were to come later, to be respectful and kind towards women. He said:

"Fear Allah regarding women. Verily you have married them with the trust of Allah, and made their bodies lawful with the word of Allah. You have got (rights) over them, and they have got (rights) over you in respect of their food and clothing according to your means."

In Islam a woman is a completely independent personality. She can make any contract or bequest in her own name. She is entitled to inherit in her position as mother, as wife, as sister and as daughter. She has perfect liberty to choose her husband. The pagan society of pre-Islamic Arabia had an irrational prejudice against their female children whom they used to bury alive. The Messenger of Allah was totally opposed to this practice. He showed them that supporting their female children would act as a screen for them against the fire of Hell:

It is narrated by the Prophet's wife, 'A'isha, that a woman entered her house with two of her daughters. She asked for charity but 'A'isha could not find anything except a date, which was given to her. The woman divided it between her two daughters and did not eat any herself. Then she got up and left. When the Prophet came to the house, 'A'isha told him about what had happened and he declared that when the woman was brought to account (on the Day of Judgment) about her two daughters they would act as a screen for her from the fires of Hell.

The worst calamity for a woman is when her husband passes away and, as a widow, the responsibility of maintaining the children falls upon her. In the Eastern World, where a woman does not always go out to earn her living, the problems of widowhood are indescribable. The Prophet Muhammad upheld the cause of widows. Most of his wives were widows. In an age when widows were rarely permitted to remarry, the Prophet encouraged his followers to marry them. He was always ready to help widows and exhorted his followers to do the same. Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet said: *"One who makes efforts (to help) the widow or a poor person is like a mujahid (warrior) in the path of Allah, or like one who stands up for prayers in the night and fasts in the day."*

Woman as mother commands great respect in Islam. The Noble Qur'an speaks of the rights of the mother in a number of verses. It enjoins Muslims to show respect to their mothers and serve them well even if they are still unbelievers. The Prophet states emphatically that the rights of the mother are paramount. Abu Hurairah reported that a man came to the Messenger of Allah and asked: *"O Messenger of Allah, who is the person who has the greatest right on me with regards to kindness and attention?"* He replied, *"Your mother." "Then who?"* He replied, *"Your mother." "Then who?"* He replied, *"Your mother." "Then who?"* He replied, *"Your father."*

In another tradition, the Prophet advised a believer not to join the war against the Quraish in defense of Islam, but to look after his mother, saying that his service to his mother would be a cause of his salvation. Mu'awiyah, the son of Jahimah, reported that Jahimah came to the Prophet and said, *"Messenger of Allah! I want to join the fighting (in the path of Allah) and I have come to seek your advice."* He said, *"Then remain in your mother's service, because Paradise is under her feet."*

The Prophet's followers accepted his teachings and brought about a revolution in their social attitude towards women. They no longer considered women as mere chattels, but as an integral part of society. For the first time women were given the right to have a share in inheritance. In the new social climate, women rediscovered themselves and became highly active members of society rendering useful service during the wars which the pagan Arabs forced on the emerging Muslim umma. They carried provisions for the soldiers, nursed them, and even fought alongside them if it was necessary. It became a common sight to see women helping their husbands in the fields, carrying on trade and business independently, and going out of their homes to satisfy their needs.

'A'isha reported that Saudah bint Zam'ah went out one night. 'Umar saw her and recognized her and said, *"By God, O Saudah, why do you not hide yourself from us?"* She went back to the Prophet and told him about it while he was having supper in her room, and he said, *"It is permitted by Allah for you to go out for your needs."* The predominant idea in the teachings of Islam with regard to men and women is that a husband and wife should be full-fledged partners in making their home a happy and prosperous place that they should be loyal and faithful to one another, and genuinely interested in each other's welfare and the welfare of their children. A woman is expected to exercise a humanizing influence over her husband and to soften the sternness inherent in his nature. A man is enjoined to educate the women in his care so that they cultivate the qualities in which they, by their very nature, excel.

These aspects were much emphasized by the Prophet. He exhorted men to marry women of piety and women to be faithful to their husbands and kind to their children. He said:

"Among my followers the best of men are those who are best to their wives, and the best of women are those who are best to their husbands. To each of such women is set down a reward equivalent to the reward of a thousand martyrs. Among my followers, again, the best of women are those who assist their husbands in their work, and love them dearly for everything, save what is a transgression of Allah's laws."

Once Mu'awiyah asked the Prophet, *"What are the rights that a wife has over her husband?"* The Prophet replied, *"Feed her when you take your food, give her clothes to wear when you wear clothes, refrain from giving her a slap on the face or abusing her, and do not separate from your wife, except within the house."* Once a woman came to the Prophet with a complaint against her husband. He told her: *"There is no woman who removes something to replace it in its proper place, with a view to tidying her husband's house, but that Allah sets it down as a virtue for her. Nor is there a man who walks with his wife hand-in-hand, but that Allah sets it down as a virtue for him; and if he puts his arm round her shoulder in love, his virtue is increased tenfold."* Once he was heard praising the women of the tribe of Quraish, *"...because they are the kindest to their children while they are infants and because they keep a careful watch over the belongings of their husbands."*

The Shari'ah regards women as the spiritual and intellectual equals of men. The main distinction it makes between them is in the physical realm based on the equitable principle of fair division of labor. It allots the more strenuous work to the man and makes him responsible for the maintenance of the family. It allots the work of managing the home and the upbringing and training of children to the woman, work which has the greatest importance in the task of building a healthy and prosperous society.

It is a fact, however, that sound administration within the domestic field is impossible without a unified policy. For this reason the Shari'ah requires a man, as head of the family, to consult with his family and then to have the final say in decisions concerning it. In doing so he must not abuse his prerogative to cause any injury to his wife. Any transgression of this principle involves for him the risk of losing the favor of Allah, because his wife is not his subordinate but she is, to use the words of the Prophet, *'the queen of her house',* and this is the position a true believer is expected to give his wife.

APPENDIX 2C

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THE HOLY QURAN – WOMEN (An –Nisaa)

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. O mankind! fear your Guardian Lord, Who created you from a single person, created out of it his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;- fear Allah, through Whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (be heedful) the wombs (that bore you): for Allah ever watches over you.

2. To orphans restore their property (when they reach their age), nor substitute (your) worthless things for (their) good ones; and devour not their substance (by mixing it up) with your own. For this is indeed a great sin.

3. If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice.

4. And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a free gift; but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it to you, take it and enjoy it with right good cheer.

5. To those weak of understanding give not your property which Allah has assigned to you to manage, but feed and clothe them therewith, and speak to them words of kindness and justice.

6. Make trial of orphans until they reach the age of marriage; if then ye find sound judgment in them, release their property to them; but consume it not wastefully, nor in haste against their growing up. If the guardian is well-off, let him claim no remuneration, but if he is poor, let him have for himself what is just and reasonable. When ye release their property to them, take witnesses in their presence: But all-sufficient is Allah in taking account.

7. From what is left by parents and those nearest related there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the property be small or large,-a determinate share.

8. But if at the time of division other relatives, or orphans or poor, are present, give them out of the (property), and speak to them words of kindness and justice.

9. Let those (disposing of an estate) have the same fear in their minds as they would have for their own if they had left a helpless family behind: Let them fear Allah, and speak words of appropriate (comfort).

10. Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, eat up a Fire into their own bodies: They will soon be enduring a Blazing Fire!

11. Allah (thus) directs you as regards your children's (inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females: if only daughters, two or more, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one, her share is a half. For parents, a sixth share of the inheritance to each, if the deceased left children; if no children, and the parents are the (only) heirs, the mother has a third; if the deceased left brothers (or sisters) the mother has a sixth. (The distribution in all cases is) after the payment of legacies and debts. Ye know not whether your parents or your children are nearest to you in benefit. These are settled portions ordained by Allah: and Allah is All-Knowing, All-wise.

12. In what your wives leave, your share is a half, if they leave no child; but if they leave a child, ye get a fourth; after payment of legacies and debts. In what ye leave, their share is a fourth, if ye leave no child; but if ye leave a child, they get an eighth; after payment of legacies and debts. If the man or woman whose inheritance is in question, has left neither ascendants nor descendants, but has left a brother or a sister, each one of the two gets a sixth; but if more than two, they share in a third; after payment of legacies and debts; so that no loss is caused (to any one). Thus is it ordained by Allah; and Allah is All- Knowing, Most Forbearing.

13. Those are limits set by Allah. those who obey Allah and His Messenger will be admitted to Gardens with rivers flowing beneath, to abide therein (for ever) and that will be the supreme achievement.

14. But those who disobey Allah and His Messenger and transgress His limits will be admitted to a Fire, to abide therein: And they shall have a humiliating punishment.

15. If any of your women are guilty of lewdness, take the evidence of four (reliable) witnesses from amongst you against them; and if they testify, confine them to houses until death do claim them, or Allah ordain for them some (other) way.

16. If two men among you are guilty of lewdness, punish them both. If they repent and amend, leave them alone; for Allah is Oft-returning, Most Merciful.

17. Allah accept the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and repent soon afterwards; to them will Allah turn in mercy: For Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

18. Of no effect is the repentance of those who continue to do evil, until death faces one of them, and he says, "Now have I repented indeed;" nor of those who die rejecting Faith: for them have We prepared a punishment most grievous.

19. O ye who believe! Ye are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should ye treat them with harshness, that ye may take away part of the dower ye have given them,-except where they have been guilty of open lewdness; on the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good.

20. But if ye decide to take one wife in place of another, even if ye had given the latter a whole treasure for dower, take not the least bit of it back: Would ye take it by slander and manifest wrong?

21. And how could ye take it when ye have gone in unto each other, and they have Taken from you a solemn covenant?

22. And marry not women whom your fathers married,- except what is past: It was shameful and odious,- an abominable custom indeed.

23. Prohibited to you (for marriage) are:- your mothers, daughters, sisters; father's sisters, mother's sisters; brother's daughters, sister's daughters; foster-mothers who gave you suck, foster-sisters; your wives' mothers; your step-daughters under your guardianship, born of your wives to whom ye have gone in,- no prohibition if ye have not gone in;- (those who have been) wives of your sons proceeding from your loins; and two sisters in wedlock at one and the same time, except for what is past; for Allah is Oft- forgiving, Most Merciful;-

24. Also (prohibited are) women already married, except those whom your right hands possess: Thus hath Allah ordained (prohibitions) against you: Except for these, all others are lawful, provided ye seek (them in marriage) with gifts from your property,- desiring chastity, not fornication from them. Give them their dowers (at least) as prescribed; but if, after a dower is prescribed, agree Mutually (to vary it), there is no blame on you, and Allah is All-Knowing, All-wise.

25. If any of you have not the means wherewith to wed free believing women, they may wed believing girls from among those whom your right hands possess: And Allah hath full knowledge about your faith. Ye are one from another: Wed them with the leave of their owners, and give them their dowers, according to what is reasonable: They should be chaste, not lustful, nor taking paramours: when they are taken in wedlock, if they fall into shame, their punishment is half that for free women. This (permission) is for those among you who fear sin; but it is better for you that ye practice self-restraint. And Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

26. Allah doth wish to make clear to you and to show you the ordinances of those before you; and (He doth wish to) turn to you (In Mercy): And Allah is All-Knowing, All-wise.

27. Allah doth wish to turn to you, but the wish of those who follow their lusts is that ye should turn away (from Him),- far, far away.

28. Allah doth wish to lighten your (difficulties): For man was created weak (in resolution).

29. O ye who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities: But let there be amongst you traffic and trade by mutual good-will: Nor kill (or destroy) yourselves: for verily Allah hath been to you Most Merciful!

30. If any do that in rancor and injustice,- soon shall We cast them into the Fire: And easy it is for Allah.

31. If ye (but) eschew the most heinous of the things which ye are forbidden to do, We shall remit your evil deeds, and admit you to a Gate of great honor.

32. And in no wise covet those things in which Allah Hath bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others: to men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn: But ask Allah of His bounty. For Allah hath full knowledge of all things.

33. To (benefit) every one, We have appointed shares and heirs to property left by parents and relatives. To those, also, to whom your right hand was pledged, give their due portion. For truly Allah is witness to all things.

34. Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance): For Allah is Most High, Great (above you all).

35. If ye fear a breach between them twain, appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers; if they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation: For Allah hath full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things.

36. Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good- to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are of kin, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess: For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious;-

37. (Nor) those who are niggardly or enjoin niggardliness on others, or hide the bounties which Allah hath bestowed on them; for We have prepared, for those who resist Faith, a punishment that steeps them in contempt;-

38. Not those who spend of their substance, to be seen of men, but have no faith in Allah and the Last Day: If any take the Satan for their intimate, what a dreadful intimate he is!

39. And what burden were it on them if they had faith in Allah and in the Last Day, and they spent out of what Allah hath given them for sustenance? For Allah hath full knowledge of them.

40. Allah is never unjust in the least degree: If there is any good (done), He doubleth it, and giveth from His own self a great reward.

41. How then if We brought from each people a witness, and We brought thee as a witness against these people!

42. On that day those who reject Faith and disobey the messenger will wish that the earth were made one with them: But never will they hide a single fact from Allah.

43. O ye who believe! Approach not prayers with a mind befogged, until ye can understand all that ye say,- nor in a state of ceremonial impurity except when you are passing by (through the mosque), until after washing your whole body. If ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women, and ye find no water,

then take for yourselves clean sand (or earth), and rub therewith your faces and hands. For Allah doth blot out sins and forgive again and again.

44. Hast thou not turned thy thought to those who were given a portion of the Book? they traffic in error, and wish that ye should lose the right path.

45. But Allah hath full knowledge of your enemies: Allah is enough for a protector, and Allah is enough for a Helper.

46. Of the Jews there are those who displace words from their (right) places, and say: "We hear and we disobey"; and "Hear, may you not hear"; and "*Ráìná*"; with a twist of their tongues and a slander to Faith. If only they had said: "We hear and we obey"; and "Do hear"; and "Do look at us"; it would have been better for them, and more proper; but Allah hath cursed them for their Unbelief; and but few of them will believe.

47. O ye People of the Book! believe in what We have (now) revealed, confirming what was (already) with you, before We change the face and fame of some (of you) beyond all recognition, and turn them hindwards, or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath-breakers, for the decision of Allah must be carried out.

48. Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin most heinous indeed.

49. Hast thou not turned thy though to those who claim sanctity for themselves? Nay-but Allah doth sanctify whom He pleaseth. But never will they fail to receive justice in the least little thing.

50. Behold! how they invent a lie against Allah. but that by itself is a manifest sin!

51. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who were given a portion of the Book? they believe in sorcery and Tagut (Evil), and say to the Unbelievers that they are better guided in the (right) way than the believers!

52. They are (men) whom Allah hath cursed: And those whom Allah hath cursed, thou wilt find, have no one to help.

53. Have they a share in dominion or power? Behold, they give not a farthing to their fellow-men?

54. Or do they envy mankind for what Allah hath given them of his bounty? but We had already given the people of Abraham the Book and Wisdom, and conferred upon them a great kingdom.

55. Some of them believed, and some of them averted their faces from him: And enough is Hell for a burning fire.

56. Those who reject our Signs, We shall soon cast into the Fire: As often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the penalty: for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

57. But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, We shall soon admit to Gardens, with rivers flowing beneath,- their eternal home: Therein shall they have spouses purified: We shall admit them to shades, cool and ever deepening.

58. Allah doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; And when ye judge between people, that ye judge with justice: Verily how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you! For Allah is He Who heareth and seeth all things.

59. O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable for final determination.

60. Hast thou not turned thy though to those who declare that they believe in the revelations that have come to thee and to those before thee? Their (real) wish is to resort together for judgment (in their disputes) to the Tagut (Evil), though they were ordered to reject him. But Satan's wish is to lead them astray far away (from the right).

61. When it is said to them: "Come to what Allah hath revealed, and to the Messenger.": Thou seest the hypocrites avert their faces from thee in disgust.

62. How then, when they are seized by misfortune, because of the deeds which there hands have sent forth? Then they come to thee, swearing by Allah. "We meant no more than good-will and conciliation!"

63. Those men,-Allah knows what is in their hearts; so keep clear of them, but admonish them, and speak to them a word to reach their very souls.

64. We sent not a messenger, but to be obeyed, in accordance with the leave of Allah. If they had only, when they were unjust to themselves, come unto thee and asked Allah's forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah indeed Oft-returning, Most Merciful.

65. But no, by thy Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction.

66. If We had ordered them to sacrifice their lives or to leave their homes, very few of them would have done it: But if they had done what they were (actually) told, it would have been best for them, and would have gone farthest to strengthen their (faith);

67. And We should then have given them from Ourselves a great reward;

68. And We should have shown them the Straight Way.

69. All who obey Allah and the messenger are in the company of those on whom is the Grace of Allah,- of the prophets (who teach), the Sincere (lovers of Truth), the martyrs, and the Righteous (who do good): Ah! How beautiful is there fellowship!

70. Such is the bounty from Allah. And sufficient is it that Allah knoweth all.

71. O ye who believe! Take your precautions, and either go forth in parties or go forth all together.

72. There are certainly among you men who would tarry behind: If a misfortune befalls you, they say: "Allah did favor us in that we were not present among them."

73. But if good fortune comes to you from Allah, they would be sure to say - as if there had never been ties of affection between you and them - "Oh! I wish I had been with them; a fine thing should I then have made of it!"

74. Let those fight in the Cause of Allah who sell the life of this world for the hereafter. To him who fighteth in the cause of Allah,- whether he is slain or gets victory - soon shall We give him a reward of great (value).

75. And why should ye not fight in the cause of Allah and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)?- Men, women, and children, whose cry is: "Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from Thee one who will protect; and raise for us from Thee one who will help!"

76. Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who reject faith fight in the cause of Tagut (Evil): So fight ye against the friends of Satan: feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan.

77. Hast thou not turned thy though to those who were told to hold back their hands (from fight) but establish regular prayers and spend in Zakat (regular charity)? When (at length) the order for fighting was issued to them, behold! a section of them feared men as - or even more than - they should have feared Allah. They said: "Our Lord! Why hast Thou ordered us to fight? Wouldst Thou not grant us respite to our (natural) term, near (enough)?" Say: "Short is the enjoyment of this world: the Hereafter is the best for those who do right: Never will ye be dealt with unjustly in the very least!

78. "Wherever ye are, death will find you out, even if ye are in towers built up strong and high!" If some good befalls them, they say, "This is from Allah".; but if evil, they say, "This is from thee" (O Prophet). Say: "All things are from Allah." But what hath come to these people, that they fail to understand a single fact?

79. Whatever good, (O man!) happens to thee, is from Allah. but whatever evil happens to thee, is from thy (own) soul. and We have sent thee as a messenger to (instruct) mankind. And enough is Allah for a witness.

80. He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah. But if any turn away, We have not sent thee to watch over them.

81. They have "Obedience" on their lips; but when they leave thee, a section of them meditate all night on things very different from what thou tellest them. But Allah records their nightly (plots): So keep clear of them, and put thy trust in Allah, and enough is Allah as a disposer of affairs.

82. Do they not consider the Qurán (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy.

83. When there comes to them some matter touching (public) safety or fear, they divulge it. If they had only referred it to the Messenger, or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have known it from them (direct). Were it not for the Grace and Mercy of Allah unto you, all but a few of you would have followed Satan.

84. Then fight in Allah's Cause - Thou art held responsible only for thyself - and rouse the believers. It may be that Allah will restrain the fury of the Unbelievers; for Allah is the strongest in might and in punishment.

85. Whoever interceded in a good cause becomes a partner therein: And whoever recommends and helps an evil cause, shares in its burden: And Allah hath power over all things.

86. When a (courteous) greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or (at least) of equal courtesy. Allah takes careful account of all things.

87. Allah. There is no god but He: of a surety He will gather you together against the Day of Judgment, about which there is no doubt. And whose word can be truer than Allah's?

88. Why should ye be divided into two parties about the Hypocrites? Allah hath cost them of their (evil) deeds. Would ye guide those whom Allah hath thrown out of the Way? For those whom Allah hath thrown out of the Way, never shalt thou find the Way.

89. They but wish that ye should reject Faith, as they do, and thus be on the same footing (as they): So take not friends from their ranks until they flee in the way of Allah (from what is forbidden). But if they turn renegades, seize them and slay them wherever ye find them; and (in any case) take no friends or helpers from their ranks;-

90. Except those who join a group between whom and you there is a treaty (of peace), or those who approach you with hearts restraining them from fighting you or fighting their own people. If Allah had pleased, He could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you: Therefore if they withdraw from you but fight you not, and (instead) send you (guarantees of) peace, then Allah Hath opened no way for you (to war against them).

91. Others you will find that wish to gain your confidence as well as that of their people: Every time they are sent back to temptation, they succumb thereto: if they withdraw not from you nor give you (guarantees) of peace besides restraining their hands, seize them and slay them wherever ye get them: In their case We have provided you with a clear argument against them.

92. Never should a believer kill a believer, except by mistake. And whoever kills a believer by mistake, it is ordained that he should free a believing slave, and pay compensation to the deceased's family, unless they remit it freely. If the deceased belonged to a people at war with you, and he was a believer, the freeing of a believing slave (is enough). If he belonged to a people with whom ye have treaty of mutual alliance, compensation should be paid to his family, and a believing slave be freed. For those who find this beyond their means, (is prescribed) a

fast for two months running: by way of repentance to Allah. for Allah hath All knowledge and All wisdom.

93. If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein (for ever): And the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him, and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him.

94. O ye who believe! When ye go abroad in the cause of Allah, investigate carefully, arid say not to any one who offers you a salutation: "Thou art none of a believer!" Coveting the perishable goods of this life: with Allah are profits and spoils abundant. Even thus were ye yourselves before, till Allah conferred on you His favors: Therefore carefully investigate. For Allah is well aware of all that ye do.

95. Not equal are those believers who sit, except those who are disabled, and those who strive and fight in the cause of Allah with their goods and their persons. Allah hath granted a grade higher to those who strive and fight with their goods and persons than to those who sit (at home). Unto all (in faith) Hath Allah promised good: But those who strive and fight Hath He distinguished above those who sit (at home) by a great reward,-

96. Ranks specially bestowed by Him, and Forgiveness and Mercy. For Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

97. When angels take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls, they say: "In what (plight) were ye?" They reply: "Weak and oppressed were we in the earth." They say: "Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to move yourselves away (from evil)?" Such men will find their abode in Hell,- What an evil refuge! -

98. Except those who are (really) weak and oppressed - men, women, and children - who have no means in their power, nor can they find a way (to escape).

99. For these, there is hope that Allah will forgive: For Allah doth blot out (sins) and forgive again and again.

100. He who forsakes his home in the cause of Allah, finds in the earth many a refuge, wide and spacious: Should he die as a refugee from home for Allah and His Messenger, his reward becomes due and sure with Allah. And Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

101. When ye travel through the earth, there is no blame on you if ye shorten your prayers, for fear the unbelievers may attack you: For the unbelievers are unto you open enemies.

102. When thou (O Messenger) art with them, and standest to lead them in prayer, let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with thee, taking their arms with them: When they finish their prostrations, let them take their position in the rear, and let the other party come up which hath not yet prayed - and let them pray with thee, taking all precaution, and bearing arms: the unbelievers wish, if ye were negligent of your arms and your baggage, to assault you in a single rush. But there is no blame on you if ye put away your arms because of the inconvenience of rain or because ye are ill; but take (every) precaution for yourselves. For the unbelievers Allah hath prepared a humiliating punishment.

103. When ye have performed the prayers, celebrate Allah's praises, standing, sitting down, or lying down on your sides; but when ye are free from danger, set up regular prayers: For such prayers are enjoined on believers at stated times.

104. And slacken not in following up the enemy: If ye are suffering hardships, they are suffering similar hardships; but you have hope from Allah, while they have not. And Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

105. We have sent down to thee the Book in truth, that thou mightest judge between people by that which Allah has shown thee; so be not an advocate by those who betray their trust;

106. But seek the forgiveness of Allah. for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

107. Contend not on behalf of such as betray their own souls; for Allah loveth not one given to perfidy and sin:

108. They seek to hide them selves from people, but they cannot hide from Allah, while He is with them when they plot by night, in words that He cannot approve: And Allah Doth compass round all that they do.

109. Ah! These are the sort of men on whose behalf ye may contend in this world; but who will contend with Allah on their behalf on the Day of Judgment, or who will carry their affairs through?

110. If any one does evil or wrongs his own soul but afterwards seeks Allah's forgiveness, he will find Allah Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

111. And if anyone earns sin. he earns it against his own soul: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

112. But if any one earns a fault or a sin and throws it on to one that is innocent, he carries (on himself) (both) a falsehood and a flagrant sin.

113. But for the Grace of Allah to thee and his Mercy, a party of them would certainly have plotted to lead thee astray. But (in fact) they will only lead their own souls astray, and to thee they can do no harm in the least. For Allah hath sent down to thee the Book and wisdom and taught thee what thou knewest not (before): And great is the Grace of Allah unto thee.

114. In most of their secret talks there is no good: But if one exhorts to a deed of charity or goodness or conciliation between people, (secrecy is permissible): To him who does this, seeking the good pleasure of Allah, We shall soon give a reward of the highest (value).

115. If anyone contends with the Messenger even after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, and follows a path other than that becoming to men of Faith, We shall leave him in the path he has chosen, and land him in Hell,- what an evil refuge!

116. Allah forgiveth not (the sin of) joining other gods with Him; but He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this: one who joins other gods with Allah, hath strayed far, far away (from the right).

117. (The Pagans), leaving Him, call but upon female deities: They call but upon Satan the persistent rebel!

118. Allah did curse him, but he said: "I will take of Thy servants a portion marked off;

119. "I will mislead them, and I will create in them false desires; I will order them to slit the ears of cattle, and to deface the (fair) nature created by Allah." Whoever, forsaking Allah, takes Satan for a friend, hath of a surety suffered a loss that is manifest.

120. Satan makes them promises, and creates in them false hopes; but Satan's promises are nothing but deception.

121. They (his dupes) will have their dwelling in Hell, and from it they will find no way of escape.

122. But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness,- We shall soon admit them to Gardens, with rivers flowing beneath,-to dwell therein for ever. Allah's promise is the truth, and whose word can be truer than Allah's?

123. Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book (can prevail): whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly. Nor will he find, besides Allah, any protector or helper.

124. If any do deeds of righteousness,- be they male or female - and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them.

125. Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in Faith? For Allah did take Abraham for a friend.

126. But to Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth: And He it is that Encompasseth all things.

127. They ask thy instruction concerning the women: Say: Allah doth instruct you about them: And (remember) what hath been rehearsed unto you in the Book, concerning the orphans of women to whom ye give not the portions prescribed, and yet whom ye desire to marry, as also concerning the children who are weak and oppressed: that ye stand firm for justice to orphans. There is not a good deed which ye do, but Allah is well-acquainted therewith.

128. If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband's part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves; and such settlement is best; even though men's souls are swayed by greed. But if ye do good and practice self-restraint, Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

129. Ye are never able to be fair and just as between women, even if it is your ardent desire: But turn not away (from a woman) altogether, so as to leave her (as it were) hanging (in the

air). If ye come to a friendly understanding, and practice self- restraint, Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

130. But if they disagree (and must part), Allah will provide abundance for each of them from His all-reaching bounty: for Allah is He that careth for all and is Wise.

131. To Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth. Verily We have directed the People of the Book before you, and you (O Muslims) to fear Allah. But if ye deny Him, lo! unto Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth, and Allah is free of all wants, worthy of all praise.

132. Yea, unto Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth, and enough is Allah to carry through all affairs.

133. If it were His will, He could destroy you, O mankind, and create another race; for He hath power this to do.

134. If anyone desires a reward in this life, in Allah's (gift) is the reward (both) of this life and of the hereafter: for Allah is He that heareth and seeth (all things).

135. O ye who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well- acquainted with all that ye do.

136. O ye who believe! Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and the scripture which He hath sent to His Messenger and the scripture which He sent to those before (him). Any who denieth Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messenger, and the Day of Judgment, hath gone far, far astray.

137. Those who believe, then reject faith, then believe (again) and (again) reject faith, and go on increasing in unbelief,- Allah will not forgive them nor guide them on the Way.

138. To the hypocrites give the glad tidings that there is for them a grievous penalty;-

139. Those who take for friends unbelievers rather than believers: is it honor they seek among them? Nay,- All honor is with Allah.

140. Already has He sent you in the Book, that when ye hear the message of Allah held in defiance and ridicule, ye are not to sit with them unless they turn to a different theme: if ye did, ye would be like them. For Allah will collect the hypocrites and those who defy faith - all in Hell:-

141. (These are) the ones who wait and watch about you: if ye do gain a victory from Allah, they say: "Were we not with you?"- but if the unbelievers gain a success, they say (to them): "Did we not gain an advantage over you, and did we not guard you from the believers?" But Allah will judge betwixt you on the Day of Judgment. And never will Allah grant to the unbelievers a way (to triumph) over the believers.

142. The Hypocrites - they think they are over-reaching Allah, but He will over- reach them: When they stand up to prayer, they stand without earnestness, to be seen of men, but little do they hold Allah in remembrance;

143. (They are) distracted in mind even in the midst of it,- being (sincerely) for neither one group nor for another whom Allah leaves straying,- never wilt thou find for him the way.

144. O ye who believe! Take not for friends unbelievers rather than believers: Do ye wish to offer Allah an open proof against yourselves?

145. The hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire: no helper wilt thou find for them;-

146. Except for those who repent, mend (their lives) hold fast to Allah, and make their religious devotion sincere to Allah: if so they will be (numbered) with the believers. And soon will Allah grant to the believers a reward of immense value.

147. What can Allah gain by your punishment, if ye are grateful and ye believe? Nay, it is Allah that recogniseth (all good), and knoweth all things.

148. Allah loveth not that evil should be noised abroad in public speech, except from one who had being treated unjustly; for Allah is He who heareth and knoweth all things.

149. Whether ye publish a good deed or conceal it or cover evil with pardon, verily Allah doth blot out (sins) and hath power (in the judgment of values).

150. Those who deny Allah and His messengers, and (those who) wish to separate between Allah and His messengers, saying: "We believe in some but reject others": And (those who) wish to take a course midway,-

151. They are in truth unbelievers; and We have prepared for unbelievers a humiliating punishment.

152. To those who believe in Allah and His messengers and make no distinction between any of the messengers, we shall soon give their (due) rewards: for Allah is Oft- forgiving, Most Merciful.

153. The people of the Book ask thee to cause a book to descend to them from heaven: Indeed they asked Moses for an even greater (miracle), for they said: "Show us Allah in public!," But they were seized for their presumption, by thunder and lightning. Yet they worshipped the calf even after clear signs had come to them; even so We forgave them; and gave Moses manifest proofs of authority.

154. And for their covenant We raised over them the Mount (Sinai); and (on another occasion) we said: "Enter the gate with humility"; and (once again) we commanded them: "Transgress not in the matter of the Sabbath." And We took from them a solemn covenant.

155. (They have incurred divine displeasure): In that they broke their covenant; that they rejected the Signs of Allah; that they slew the Messengers in defiance of right; that they said,

"Our hearts are the Wrappings (which preserve Allah's Word; We need no more)";- Nay, Allah hath set the seal on their hearts for their blasphemy, and little is it they believe;-

156. That they rejected Faith; that they uttered against Mary a grave false charge;

157. That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah.";- But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not:-

158. Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise;-

159. And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness against them;-

160. For the iniquity of the Jews We made unlawful for them certain (foods) good and wholesome which had been lawful for them;- in that they hindered many from Allah's Way;-

161. That they took usury, though they were forbidden; and that they devoured men's substance wrongfully;- We have prepared for those among them who reject faith a grievous punishment.

162. But those among them who are well-grounded in knowledge, and the believers, believe in what hath been revealed to thee and what was revealed before thee: And (especially) those who establish regular prayer and pay Zakat (regular charity) and believe in Allah and in the Last Day: To them shall We soon give a great reward.

163. We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him: we sent inspiration to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms.

164. Of some messengers We have already told thee the story; of others We have not;- and to Moses Allah spoke direct;-

165. Messengers who gave good news as well as warning, that mankind, after (the coming) of the messengers, should have no plea against Allah. For Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

166. But Allah beareth witness that what He hath sent unto thee He hath sent from His (own) knowledge, and the angels bear witness: But enough is Allah for a witness.

167. Those who reject Faith and keep off (men) from the way of Allah, have verily strayed far, far away from the Path.

168. Those who reject Faith and do wrong,- Allah will not forgive them nor guide them to any way-

169. Except the way of Hell, to dwell therein for ever. And this to Allah is easy.

170. O Mankind! The Messenger hath come to you in truth from Allah. believe in him: It is best for you. But if ye reject Faith, to Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth: And Allah is All-Knowing, All-wise.

171. O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His messengers. Say not "Three (Trinity)" : desist: it will be better for you: for Allah is One God. Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs.

172. Christ disdaineth not to serve and worship Allah, nor do the angels, those nearest (to Allah): those who disdain His worship and are arrogant,-He will gather them all together unto Himself to (answer).

173. But to those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, He will give their (due) rewards,- and more, out of His bounty: But those who are disdainful and arrogant, He will punish with a grievous chastisement; Nor will they find, besides Allah, any to protect or help them.

174. O mankind! Verily there hath come to you a convincing proof from your Lord: For We have sent unto you a light (that is) manifest.

175. Then those who believe in Allah, and hold fast to Him,- soon will He admit them to Mercy and Grace from Himself, and guide them to Himself by a straight way.

176. They ask thee for a legal decision. Say: Allah directs (thus) about those who leave no descendants or ascendants as heirs. If it is a man that dies, leaving a sister but no child, she shall have half the inheritance: If (such a deceased was) a woman, who left no child, her brother takes her inheritance: If there are two sisters, they shall have two-thirds of the inheritance (between them): if there are brothers and sisters, (they share), the male having twice the share of the female. Thus doth Allah make clear to you (His law), lest ye err. And Allah hath knowledge of all things.