The Role of Ministry of Education in Promoting Citizenship Rights

S. Abbas Hashemipour*, Mostafa Namdar and Nader Mirzadeh

Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas Branch, Bandar Abbas, Iran

*Corresponding Author: seyedhashemi81@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** Ministry of Education is one of the institutions responsible for many basic trainings in every society, so that a dynamic Ministry of Education could drive a community towards perfection. The product of such an administration is citizens who, in addition to being aware of their rights, respect for the rights of others. This research is a descriptive-analytical study conducted with the aim of examining the role of Ministry of Education in promoting citizenship rights. Results of this study indicate that it is required for the Ministry of Education to have a coherent and comprehensive planning to achieve this goal. In addition to providing a new approach to the students' curriculum, this planning changes the attitudes of teachers and employees of this organization in order to consider the issue of having a civil society as the cornerstone of their teachings and trainings in the schools. The other point is that this training should be started from the very beginning of students' entry to the school through short-term and long-term planning in order to see its results in the new generation.

**Keywords:** Human Rights, Citizenship Rights, Ministry of Education, Constitution, Education

**INTRODUCTION**

Citizenship is a social contract, the main purpose of which is to promote the welfare and safety of the community. It necessarily deals with how people in a society should behave to achieve this goal.

Citizenship rights requires the right, tool, space, and time and if necessary, support for the taking part in decision makings, influencing decisions and engaging in social activities to help build a better society. In fact, one aspect of citizenship rights is a mixture of duties and responsibilities that citizens have towards each other. Definition of citizenship rights in European Union is as bellow:

Every citizen has a series of rights. These rights can be civil, political and social. Extreme individualism and indifference of citizens to one another, and also more emphasis on legal bases and privileges associated with citizenship were pursued by paying serious attention to education in some of the new social and political thoughts in the West.

In these new trends, the civil, political and moral commitments of citizens
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are more emphasized.

But, in general, the year of 1948, in which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in Paris, should be considered as a turning point in regards to the freedom and rights of nations. The provisions of this Declaration addresses the fundamental rights, such as civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights that should be enjoyed by all human beings in all countries. A covenant on Civil and Political Rights has also been approved based on which the rights of individuals are defended against the violence inflicted on them.

In this way, UNESCO, the most important task of which is to support the world peace and security through international cooperation in the fields of education, science, and culture was established to promote justice, the rule of law and respect for human rights based on the UN Charter. But it is a new creature in the legal literature of Iran which entered into our legal literature almost simultaneously with the passage of the Civil Rights Act and legitimate freedoms by Parliament in 2004.

Since the beginning of formal education, i.e. the primary school, a portion of the classrooms and schools responsibilities can be organized in the education programs of the students and assigned to them. Another area is related to the involvement of families and local communities. Compared with the family and as the most important group composed of students, schools play a complementary role in the socialization of students. In the school, students learn instrumental skills and knowledge necessary for the social life and career. A dynamic and mutually beneficial cooperation between home and school is a prerequisite for the proper achievement of these goals.

On the other hand, one must pay attention to this fact that the formal system of education, as the representative and successor of the parents and families in the school, is responsible for the children's education and justifies the full participation of parents in the school affairs. Accordingly, rights and citizenship education challenges are rooted in two main arguments; first, the relationship that exists between the individuals and the social system; and second, different forms and types of interaction exist between education and social system or they may arise in any society.

Some research has been conducted in this field, several cases of which are mentioned bellow:

In an article entitled "Civil Rights Education", Zekavati\(^1\) introduces the concept of citizenship as the basis for a civil society which should be subject to political and social conditions as well as the historical context and tradition in which it has grown up. In an article entitled "Education and the Civil Society, Human Rights and Citizenship Education", Tajik\(^2\) announces that the social transformation which drives the social system to the formation of civil society is an inevitable process. In his thesis entitled "Factors Affecting the Level of Awareness of citizenship rights among students of Allameh Tabatabai and Azad Universities", Salimi and Davari.\(^3\), indicated that the more the student's knowledge and awareness of citizenship rights increases, the more the variables
such as social participation and respect for the rights of others are manifested in the behavior of students. In an article entitled "The Relationship between Citizenship Rights Education in the Ministry of Education and Social Development", Nard et al.\textsuperscript{4} indicate that with the increasing awareness of citizenship rights, students with higher political consciousness and awareness will enter the social arena and they will help development of community with democratization. In his article entitled "The Importance of citizenship education in American schools, Halk et al.\textsuperscript{5} concluded that merely knowing whether the wealth is better or the science cannot address the future problems of students in the education system?

But they should come to the conclusion that how they can respect each other 's rights according to the teachings such as citizenship rights; and after learning this, they can decide correctly whether or not it is possible to achieve a good science with a legitimate wealth? The author also states that with inclusive education and careful planning in the field of civil rights, it is possible even to provide global civil rights for the society\textsuperscript{6}. Therefore, considering the above, and the importance of civil rights in dynamism and progress of a society, the question that arises is whether Ministry of Education will be capable of transferring and teaching the concepts of citizenship rights without the help of other institutions and civil organizations? Is the structure of the Ministry of Education and the overall policy of this organization able to teach concepts such as communication, negotiation, review and evaluation, understanding each other, adherence to regulations, understanding and respect for the rights of others, participation and cooperation?

Unfortunately, some members of the society cause some anomalies in the community through disregarding certain laws and social norms about respecting the rights of others. Therefore, it is essential that a comprehensive research about the role of education in transforming concepts such as civil rights, respect the rights of others, the legal right of others and the like to be conducted. Researcher is aimed to discuss about these issues with regard to the above matters.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was a descriptive – analytical research, therefore, contents and issues were collected using desk studies and references to authoritative articles and web sites. For this reason, this research reports the current situation without any manipulation and inference of subjective reports; and describes the current situation regularly and systematically. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the most appropriate method to study is descriptive; therefore desk study method was used to implement it. Then components of the research variables (the role of education and citizenship) were carefully studied through studying the books and scientific documents. They were collected by taking notes (electronic) of each of the resources and at the end the contents were summarized and presented after being studied and approved by the professors.
RESULTS

The main objective of this study was to investigate the role of Ministry of Education in the development of civil rights. Research hypothesis suggests that as an official body entrusted with the task of training and education at the community level, Ministry of Education can introduce and train the civil rights to the individuals from the beginning to the end of the education course as a planned and written training in order to have a dynamic society free from violation of rights. After the Islamic Revolution in Iran and immediate war between Iran and Iraq, the main priority was to maintain the integrity of all Iranian lands.

During the eight-year war, teachers had few opportunities to think about the education issues. It must be acknowledged that one of the first tangible results of the war was to prevent the formation of civil institutions. Lack of job security was the main cause of failure in approaching towards forming and participating in civil institutions. Accordingly, public education system is one of the obstacles to the formation of civil institutions in the field of education. It is believed that one reason for the lack of civil institutions in Iran is that the state's economy relies heavily on oil. The state-relied and heavily oil-relied economy causes the government to know itself independent from people and civil society which leads to excessive independence of the government from society. Here, the government does not have to answer to anyone, so it does not feel any necessity to have a relationship with the civil society and its institutions. Iranian households' economy is heavily dependent on government. Teachers whose only income is the salary received from government which in most cases, does not afford the required minimum life expenditures, have priorities in their social behavior; but forming and participating in civil society are not certainly their first priorities. The high level of education of teachers raises the hope that their knowledge to the civil and trade matters is more than that of other social strata.

The first sub-hypothesis: Ministry of Education is effective in the increased level of awareness of people of their rights in social relations.

Unfortunately, what is seen suggests that teachers are unaware of or skeptical to their role and the role of civil institutions in the qualitative and quantitative development of education system. Some teachers' lack of approach to civil institutions is due to their ignorance, skepticism and their pessimistic about their civil institutions. Some of reasons of this skepticism to civil institutions are dishonesty in the actions of some of these institutions and lack of real links with teachers in these institutions and their demands or these institutions have not been formed among teachers from the bottom up. Another reason for the lack of civil institutions in the field of education is the successive impediments of the opponents of civil institutions. It is also the feeling that civil society cannot be effectively and efficiently respond to the needs and demands of teachers and act as a professional organization that causes the civil institutions involved in the Ministry of Education fail to represent effectively the demands and wishes of
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teachers. On the other hand, there is no mechanism in the highly concentrated structure of the Ministry of Education, whereby civil institutions can play an active role in decision making and taking decisions. It seems that for the formation of the modern state, there is no way but outsourcing a lot of works that could be done by civil institutions and the private sector.

In the Ministry of Education, many educational and welfare services can be assigned to the civil institutions specializing in these matters to reduce the cost of government and provide a situation in which teachers becomes aware of the effectiveness and efficiency of civil institutions and gain more motivation to engage in these institutions over the past. Another point is that civil institutions are limited in the field of education. Compared with a population of approximately one million education employees and about 15 million students, civil institutions do not have much depth and breadth in the education system.

The second sub-hypothesis: Ministry of Education is effective in the education of young people to access citizenship rights in the field of public law. There are very limited inclusive civil institutions active in the field of education. It seems that in the mentioned areas, it is needed to have civil institutions (academic) with the presence of the vocational teachers. In addition, it is necessary to reconsider the role of political institutions in the education, because these institutions suffer from defects and limitations in playing their role in politics. Teachers associations are the most active civil institutions in the field of education which can be a model for other civil institutions in the Ministry of Education with all their disabilities and shortcomings.

Civil institutions active in the fields of science, trade, culture and education are limited in the scope of students and education. Most institutions active in this field are public. To achieve a knowledge-based and civil society, what is needed more than ever is to support and activate civil institutions in the field of students and education, because they can teach the civil life to the future children of Iran; and provide the opportunity for the children to practice civil behaviors. Unbalanced and uneven development of civil institutions in the Ministry of Education is one of the reasons of inability of civil society in the sector of Education. Civil institutions have been distributed sporadically and unevenly in terms of subject, sex and geography. As already noted, we are now witnessing the gap of civil institutions in the field of students and education. About half of the teachers are women. The teachers have special problems that civil institutions can deal with and pursue them. The gap of civil institutions is felt in the field of women teachers more than other areas. What appears to be dealt with and pursued by civil institutions in the education system are as follows:

A- Theory explanation: To explain the theory upon which while introducing themselves, they can clarify the boundary of their activities with others and remove a part of clutter in boundaries of the civil domain.

B- Organization: Most Iranian civil institutions are not organized due to a number of reasons. Lack of a coherent theory, shortage of hardware resources and lack of financial resources is a part of these reasons. Civil institutions active
in the field of education are not separate from this rule. Selection of the specific strategies and tactics based on a declared theory could be led to a better organization.

C- Management: What should be noted in the civil institutions is participatory management (democratic) which is formed from the bottom up. This provides the opportunity for the civil institutions to stay safe from the scourge of individualism and dependence on individuals and achieve the collective leadership, which is a feature of civil institutions. Civil institutions are isolated in the education system. Isolationism is seen both at national and international levels because of a variety of reasons. Civil institutions active in the field of education requires dialogue and exchange of experience with other civil institutions at national and international levels. These institutions must have a greater presence in the local, national, regional and international area. Although this article is not aimed to state the reasons or causes for the isolationism of civil institutions, they can be divided into two categories of external and internal causes.

Pressure of irresponsible institutions on civil institutions and intimidating them from regional and international civil institutions are of external causes of isolationism. Lack of hardware and software capabilities of civil institutions are of indigenous reasons or external causes of their isolationism. One example of a relatively successful exit from isolationism of civil institutions in the field of education is to form a coordination council for the teachers associations around the nation. More than 40 teachers associations have been formed, despite enormous pressures. It is hoped that this civil institution to move in the direction of establishing more interaction between civil institutions and teachers associations and be a suitable model for other organizations.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed that the Ministry of Education requires a coherent and comprehensive planning to achieve the goal of citizenship rights development. This plan should establish a new approach on the school curriculum to change the attitudes of the teachers and the employees of this organization. Like any other knowledge and attitude, knowledge and attitudes toward citizenship rights should be trained and transferred from an early age and low levels of education.

Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that teachers seriously work on teaching citizenship rights to the students and make them aware of the social and civil practices of life that strengthens community spirit in the next generation to enable the mass ideas and behavior of Iranians to be trimmed. Also, in line with the implementation of Article 44 of the constitution, it is suggested that many educational works are privatized to reduce the burden on government and to enable the government to perform its main duty which is to provide security, prosperity, health and food. The reason is that, as the government cannot be a good trader, it cannot be a good teacher and
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responsible for the education as well. Paying attention to the demands of women, especially female teachers can pave the way for more participation of women in shaping civil institutions. It is suggested that along with establishing other civil institutions responsible for the citizenship rights, civil institutions defending women's rights to be established in the field of education.

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