

## **School-based human rights education: Young Bahrainis' knowledge and understanding**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The growing interest in Human Rights Education (HRE) is linked in this paper to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989). The linkage between citizenship education and HRE is also highlighted, along with the necessary critiques of human rights pronouncements regarding the situation of HRE in Bahrain while the challenges ahead in improving and spreading HRE are also discussed.

In an attempt to bring some much needed clarity to this field, this paper presents the theoretical and conceptual background for a field study that intends to examine whether young people graduating from high school in Bahrain are equipped with the civic knowledge and understanding necessary to participate effectively in society. It also presents young peoples' understanding of their rights, responsibilities and their awareness of the need for laws.

In a mixed methods approach, quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed. A questionnaire was administered to 460 final year high school students (53.3% females and 46.7% males) with a mean age of 18. Followed by in-depth interviews with a stratified sample of 22 students.

The findings provide valuable insights into the problems encountered by young Bahrainis as they engage in the process of learning about HRE. This helps the educators, curriculum designers and policy makers to rewrite the objectives, content, approach and methods of school HRE to ensure they match the changing context and the changing needs of the young citizens in Bahrain.

**Keywords:** Human Rights Education, Civic knowledge, Young people, Citizenship Education, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

## INTRODUCTION

Because most societies struggle to better embody human rights principles, education about human rights implies education leading towards advocacy (Tibbitts, 2002). In fact, children's rights movement begins with the twentieth century, preceded academic recognition that children have rights that has emerged only round the time of the adoption of the CRC in 1989. The first period of research was mainly dealing with philosophical arguments for and against children's rights, and on legal issues about the applicability of these rights (Stoeklin and Bonvin, 2014).

Little research has been conducted about young people's views of their rights, how they define and regard them, and how practical or relevant they consider that concepts of rights are in their daily lives (Lawton *et al.*, 2000: 116). Most secondary school students have neither political rights nor a political role (Levin, 2000). Furthermore, 'young people nowadays are often uninvolved and withdrawn, and are becoming increasingly passive in reaction to the society that confronts them' (Que Niart and Jacques, 2004: 178). Young people are increasingly likely to feel alienated from politics in general and are disappointed in a society that excludes them (Parekh, 2000). As a result, 'many of them no longer believe in politics' (Que Niart and Jacques, 2004: 179).

In Bahrain, research studies revealed deficiencies in civic preparedness of young people. Some studies show deficiencies in social studies textbooks at both Primary and Intermediate levels (Abdullatif 1991; Wehbe 1992) which have failed in helping to develop youth into knowledgeable, active and responsible citizens. There is a lack of civic values and skills that young people should have in order to be responsible citizens of a constitutional democracy (Eid, 2004). Almanai *et al.* (2003) highlight the importance of citizenship education in schools in shaping the future lives of young Bahraini citizens. It has been emphasized that the main objective of education in Bahrain is to prepare the individual for the future (Ministry of Education, 2004).

Despite their intention to be democratic in their mission statements, schools failed to transmit the democratic values to young people. In a study, Bahraini young people, females in particular, expressed their needs for healthy and secured school climate where they can build good relationships with their teachers and other school members, and where they are given the chance to express their opinion freely (Eid, 2001). Due to the continuing decline in learning experiences related to citizenship, young people may have difficulty in making the transition to responsible adulthood in the near future (Ebrahim, 2007). They need specially designed opportunities to learn the basic skills and values, to develop the necessary understanding and to take on increasing responsibility as citizens in activities that involve production and service to others (Almanai *et al.* 2003; Eid 2004).

According to the Bahraini literature and my personal observations, gender and place of residence can have a profound influence on Bahraini young people's perceptions of citizenship civic knowledge. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, two crucial variables, i.e. 'Gender' and 'Place of Residence' were focussed on. There were two reasons for investigating students' background characteristics in such a way; first, to limit the research so that it focussed on how the students' background characteristics affected specific civic and political knowledge and understanding; second, to identify possible reasons for the current problems in the citizenship education curriculum and to find possible solutions for these problems.

Although Bahrain has progressed a considerable distance in enabling young people to gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for a responsible and productive life in the society (Ministry of Education, 2004), Bahraini young people have not yet learned these competencies. In the light of this challenge, Bahrain has endeavoured to rewrite the education

objectives and functions to enhance and improve the quality of education, putting forward the necessity of enriching the new curricula with citizenship.

Thus, based on a study on young Bahrainis', this paper aims to accomplish several tasks necessary for the research field to move forward at this time. First and foremost, since there have been no studies which look at what the students themselves know and understand about citizenship and democracy. This paper examines to what extent young Bahrainis understand their rights and responsibilities and their awareness of the need for laws. This is of particular importance since research in this area is almost non-existent. It also comes at a time when the field needs to examine critically broad-based and largely untested assumptions about the status of citizenship education in the schools of Bahrain. It will, therefore, shed light on citizenship education in a democracy by identifying the knowledge and understanding of young people as a central concern, to enable the policy-makers to propose strategies for change.

In fact, education has a complex and demanding role to play in upholding human rights, supporting human development and promoting civil society (Tibbitts, 2002). Thus, this paper reviews the state of human rights education (HRE), as one of the components of citizenship education, with reference to key documents on human rights, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. The growing interest in citizenship education is linked to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989). The linkage between citizenship education and HRE is also highlighted. The CRC is briefly described, followed by a note about connections between democracy, rights, responsibilities and law.

This paper also sheds a light on the role of the educational institutions in the development of human rights education that would help to prepare the Bahraini youth for the future. This study seeks to ensure that the benefits to students, teachers, school principals, curriculum developers, schools, and society, of citizenship teaching in schools are realized. In particular, the benefits of the study include increased clarity for curriculum developers about what they should put into such a curriculum, a better foundation for schools to co-ordinate existing teaching approaches and learning opportunities, and to relate positively to the local community.

Finally yet importantly, this paper offers an invaluable baseline for the future conduct of the study and provides continuity with the existing research literature on human rights education. When considering the value of this research, I believe that in any changing society it is important to gain an insight into human rights education through research. Feedback to the community could then be given to help with the management of such changes.

## **PART I: BACKGROUND**

This part presents a general background for the study. It reviews citizenship rights and its relation to presents the civic knowledge content and its role in developing young peoples' civic learning and understanding of their rights, responsibilities and the role of the law. In addition, it reviews the connections between Human Rights Education (HRE) and Citizenship Education (CE), and highlights the importance of their links.

### **Civic Knowledge: The Foundation of Civic Competency**

Civic knowledge is one of the main civic competences. The literature suggests that knowledge is the necessary foundation of civic participation and that 'knowledge is a valuable civic outcome' (Carnegie Corporation and CIRCLE, 2003: 23). It consists of fundamental ideas and information that learners must know and use to become effective and responsible citizens of a democracy (Alqatam *et al.*, 2002). It includes principles of democratic theory, operations of democratic governance, and behaviours of democratic citizenship (Patrick, 2003). Torney-Purta

*et al.* (2001) maintain that young people involved in education for democracy need to know what citizenship is, how it is acquired or lost in various political systems, what rights, responsibilities, and duties are entailed by it, and how it is connected to the institutions of their nation-state. Alqatam *et al.* (2002) relate civic knowledge with civic participation. They note:

To live in a democratic society, young people need to know their rights, duties and responsibilities as well as the requirements of democracy in terms of effective participation in national issues (p.4).

Researchers have found strong relationships between knowledge of democratic principles, processes, and institutions and the propensity to participate in political life, orientation to political tolerance and political interest, and competence in cognitive and participatory skills of democratic citizenship, such as the capacities to analyse public issues and to cooperate with others in a group project (Galston 2001; Carnegie Corporation and CIRCLE 2003). Accordingly, the young people taking part in a study by Powney *et al.* (2000) highlight the importance of the possession of pre-requisite knowledge of citizenship and democracy to perform efficiently in a democratic society. DeJaeghere (2013) notes that educating for citizenship is most often associated with a discourse of liberalism in which knowledge, skills and values of equality, rights, justice and national identity are taught. In addition, it is evident that learning for citizenship is best achieved if it is based on acquiring knowledge, reflecting on identity, living in a democratic community and developing skills for participation. Young people, therefore, need to have some knowledge of political, social, economic and cultural issues. These issues must interact with the teaching and learning activities, designed to promote knowledge and understanding (Patrick, 2003).

In short, citizens in today's world seem to require factual and conceptual knowledge from a wide range of domains in order to arrive at thoughtful, informed decisions about important matters for their lives now and in the future. They are generally expected to be reasonably knowledgeable about government, politics, rights, responsibilities, community issues, the diversity of identities, and the need for mutual respect, tolerance and understanding (QCA 1998; Torney-Purta *et al.* 2001; Carnegie Corporation and CIRCLE 2003). This implies that 'education for citizenship which engages with learners' own experiences of society enables them to make direct use of information and knowledge provided' (Osler and Starkey, 1999: 201).

Young people, therefore, need to have opportunities for learning factual and conceptual knowledge across a broad range of subjects and curriculum areas. This understanding, based upon the knowledge of learners, is relevant to living thoughtfully as active and informed citizens (LT Scotland Review Group, 2001) and will then help to provide an appropriate and valuable foundation for developing capability for citizenship.

### **Understanding Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities**

Rights and responsibilities lie at the heart of the language of citizenship. Thus, citizenship does not mean only citizens claim to their rights from the state, but also their obligations to fulfil their duties to their homeland. 'If a citizen does not meet such duties, s/he will no longer be worthy of enjoying the civil rights to which s/he is entitled' (Alqatam *et al.*, 2002: 2).

"The enjoyment of rights is basic to citizenship" but currently "children's citizenship is consistent with core human rights principles" (Howe and Covell, 2005). Citizenship is one of the basic rights of every child, young person and adult. Article 1 of the UN Convention (CRC, 1989) defines a child as a human being below the age of eighteen years. Accordingly, as for the

sample of this study, by age 18, young people are usually considered young adults, fully autonomous and able to take on the responsibilities and duties of citizenship. They have reached the age of consent and the age of criminal responsibility, and they have acquired the right to apply for a driving licence and to work full-time (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2002). They are legally considered old enough to make decisions affecting their life. In some countries, they may be liable or eligible for military service, and they have the right to vote and, with it, the right to formal participation in the political life of the country.

Weller (2003: 153) notes 'young people, in their early teens, inhabit a transitional middle-ground somewhere between childhood and adulthood and are, constitutionally, excluded from many spaces of citizenship'. The CRC (1989) sets forth a comprehensive set of civil, cultural, economic, social, and political rights for children. It contains over fifty articles that can be divided into three general P categories, protection, provisions and participation; firstly, protection, covering specific issues such as abuse, neglect, and exploitation; secondly, provision, addressing a child's particular needs such as education and healthcare; and thirdly, participation, acknowledging a child's growing capacity to make decisions and play a part in society (Verhellen 1997; Flowers 2000). Thus, this convention accords to children a wide range of rights including, most centrally, the right to have their 'best interests' as 'a primary consideration' in all actions concerning them (Article 3), the 'inherent right to life' (Article 6), and the right of a child 'who is capable of forming his or her own views ... to express these views freely in all matters affecting the child' (Article 12).

The articles on participation rights are the most revolutionary part of the CRC, these recognise the right of children to make certain choices themselves and the right to dialogue with others. More importantly, these participation rights, 'the right to express an opinion, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of association and protection of privacy' (Articles 12 to 16), bring children back into society by recognising them as meaning-makers and by recognising their citizenship (Verhellen, 1997). Indeed, the CRC effectively recognizes children as current, as well as future, citizens (Osler and Starky 1996).

Empowering children deconstructs adult-centric views of children as objects needing care and protection, and as property (Howe and Covell, 2005). Indeed, citizenship education needs to address individual rights, as guaranteed in the CRC and the constitutions of ratifying nations. Moreover, Osler (2000a: 33) notes that 'the convention provides us with a set of principles which have far-reaching implications for the theory and practice of citizenship education'. Rowe (2001) argues that:

If children are encouraged to believe they have the right to respect and to be free from discrimination, then their school experiences should underline rather than undermine that message (p.41).

They go on to say that schools which split the theory from the practice of citizenship, alienate young people. 'It is illogical to expect students to understand lessons about rights and democracy yet expect them not to notice denials of their own rights, or discrepancies between what school staff practise and preach' (Lawton *et al.*, 2000: 132). Similarly, Davis (2000) comments that

There is no formal recognition of Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, that children have a right to have their views heard in decisions that affect them. There has been no direct consultation with pupils on the National Curriculum or teaching methods. Pupils are not represented on governing bodies (p.15).

The extent of this resistance is surprising since one strong motif of establishing a school system for all in many countries was to raise children as active citizens (Howe and Cowell, 2005). The authors argue that children's rights education is an outstanding pathway to empower

children as active citizens. They make clear that children's rights education should encompass not only the dissemination of knowledge about rights. It also has to promote children's capacities to defend these rights if they are violated. Thus, democratic schools, in contrast, show the importance of practical citizenship education which honours the CRC rights. If all schools are to adopt these standards, staff and students have to engage in a critical reconsideration of common assumptions about childhood, education and rights. Young people are to be represented not just within the school, but in regional and national committees for education, where they are routinely consulted about educational policy and change (Davis and Krikpatrick, 2000).

Therefore, there is a need to introduce extensive educational legislation on the rights and procedures for pupils in every country, as there is in some European countries such as Scotland and Northern Ireland. These countries specify that schools must have mechanisms by which pupils can have a grievance or concern heard through pupil councils, where pupils are represented on school boards or committees (Davis, 2000). Davis argues that the clear absence of directives about children's rights within educational legislation creates an uncomfortable position for schools and teachers when introducing HRE. Accordingly, bearing in mind the hope of introducing such legislation in Bahraini educational institutes, it is worth noting that Amnesty International (1998) points out that changing the legislation may be an important first step in changing teacher education or making training appropriate.

It seems likely that the role which young people play depends upon how much they are recognized as valuable resources for advancing human development in their community (Breslin and Dufour, 2006). Indeed, recognizing young people as citizens, securing their rights, and giving them role in their society will, in turn, instil in them a sense of responsibility to their community.

Thus, the existence of certain citizenship rights also entails an obligation on the part of other persons or the community and/or provides the holder of the rights the capacity to exercise those rights. Therefore, democratic societies are obliged to promote what might now be seen as essential elements of citizenship education, such as HRE and political education.

### **Human Rights Education**

In the last two decades, there has been a great deal of attention directed towards human rights education all over the world. Based on a study on young Bahrainis', this paper review the state of human rights education (HRE), as one of the components of citizenship education, with reference to key documents on human rights, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948.

The main source of contemporary conceptions of human rights is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948). The UDHR 'guaranteed the rights of all people based on the inherent human dignity of every person', and stresses the central importance of a 'common understanding of human rights' and the importance of the achievement of 'freedom, justice and peace in the world.' It also encourages 'every individual and every organ of society' to 'strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms' (UDHR, 1948). In other words, the Declaration states that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms should be advanced through teaching and education.

As can be seen therefore, the UDHR emphasizes the importance of an understanding of human rights as necessary to the full realization of one's rights and responsibilities. Article 26 and 28 of the UDHR affirm education about one's rights as the first and foremost right that leads to the free and full development of the person within the community.

On the other hand, the above report indicates some deficiencies in Bahrain regarding issues, presented in the CRC, such as the principles of non-discrimination (art.2), best interests

of the child (art.3), survival and development (art.6), and respect for the views of the child (art.12); these are not fully reflected in the State legislation and administrative and judicial decisions, as well as in policies and programmes relevant to children. Traditional attitudes towards children in society may limit the respect for their views especially within the family and schools and, in addition, children are not systematically heard in court and administrative proceedings in matters that affect them in accordance with article 12 of the Convention. Although access to basic education is free and almost universal, education is still not compulsory, and pre-primary education is available only through private institutions. Furthermore, human rights education, including the Convention, is not currently part of the curriculum.

In fact, in Bahrain, education has a major role to play, though a complex and demanding one, in teaching and upholding human rights, supporting human development and promoting civil society (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2002). In order for HRE to make a lasting contribution to human rights culture in the country, educators are really need to understand the distinct models of HRE that are found in practice, and to clarify their links with social change strategies.

In this sense, Osler (2000b) believes that once people grasp human rights concepts, they begin to look for their realization in their own lives, examining their communities, families, and personal experience from a human rights perspective. In many cases people find these values affirmed, but HRE can also lead to 'recognition of unrealized injustices and discriminations'. Ignatieff (2000) note that people need to know how to bring human rights home, responding appropriately and effectively to violations in their own communities. Osler 2000b argues that HRE is an effort made through the combination of content and process, to develop in school students of all ages an understanding of their rights and responsibilities, to sensitise them to the rights of others, and to encourage responsible action to safeguard the rights of everyone at home, in school and in the wider world.

In other words, HRE is meant to teach people and groups what these norms or rights are and how to protect them to help bring about their realization. Therefore, Human Rights Education is fundamental to shaping a preferred national and global future.

### **Citizenship Education and Human Rights Education**

Citizenship education should be based on human rights principles to enable individuals develop a range of secure and confident identities as citizens (Osler, 2000b). Osler argues that young people confident in their identities will be in a strong position to challenge the stereotypical images of minorities that currently help support discriminatory practices. In her view, such a situation has the potential to contribute to a new anti-racist project that will strengthen democratic institutions and practices and enable the full participation of all and will also contribute to the development of a society in which all citizens can claim their citizenship rights and responsibilities on the basis of equality. Thus, citizenship education should include mutual respect amongst citizens of different religions, race, genders, and ethnicity; and help students to develop a reflective commitment to justice and equality throughout the world.

In addition, citizenship education and HRE are related to the CRC in establishing the learner as citizen of the school. In addition, it is important to bear in mind the usefulness of human rights as a foundation for deciding public issues of citizenship and moral value and that the international nature of rights offers a framework for education for global citizenship (Davis, 2000). The convention was ratified by 61 states in 1990. The ratification of the convention by almost all nations except two member states, Somalia and the United States (Flowers, 1999), means that, therefore, it is by far the most widely agreed international human rights treaty. Furthermore, the ratifying governments undertook to implement it in law, policy and practice.

Galston (2001) notes that if the essence of the political process is making public policy, that is the making of public decisions and choices, law is the instrument through which these decisions are expressed, implemented, enforced, and adjudicated. Moreover, Schwartz (2006) notes that law provides the primary means for structuring organizations and establishing relationships in a society. It also provides an essential link between constitutionalism and democracy, in which the decisions and actions of any political system are revealed by translating fundamental principles into rules which the government is obliged to enforce. In this sense, law is very important in the lives of people because their lives are fundamentally structured by law.

The people, in a democracy, are the source of government's authority to make decisions for the public benefit (Arnot and Dillabough, 2000). Law is the means by which these decisions are formulated as rules and implemented as public policy. Governments should therefore accept the obligation to promote children's participation in decision-making in issues that affect them as 'the CRC is an ideal basis for citizenship education' (Lawton *et al.*, 2000: 115).

Furthermore, according to Davis (2000) both HRE and citizenship education are characterised by being part of school life, 'whether or not intended - in the hidden curriculum of rules, obligations and relationships, in the assignation of pupil identities, and in the micro-political society of the school' (p.22). He argues that it is useful to determine where both are positioned in the curriculum, whether they are 'free-floating' or whether they are buried in a history, geography, and religious or moral education syllabus. This gives immense scope to schools and teachers as to what they include and how citizenship education is approached.

The aim of both citizenship education and HRE, in the long-term, relies on the knowledge and attitudinal base that people are equipped with in order to lead 'social change' (Chauhan, 2001: 7). In other words, only people who understand human rights will work to secure and defend them for themselves and others. This implies that 'citizenship education requires formal knowledge of human rights' (Osler and Starkey, 1996: 85).

In spite of the differences between citizenship education and HRE in terms of detailed content and history, they are interrelated. There are a number of key linking concepts in their definitions, such as the preservation of democracy and rights, the notion of responsibility, and hence the teaching of knowledge, skills and understanding, which will enable people to participate and take informed action (Davis, 2000). Certainly, HRE is essential to active citizenship in a democratic and pluralistic civil society. Osler and Starkey (1996) state that "In order to enjoy rights, citizens must know about them ...they become real when exercised in the context of democracy, social justice and civil society" (p.75).

In brief, the emphasis in both citizenship education and HRE is a focus on the development of students' knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, since that citizenship education 'attempts to overcome prejudice and exclusion and encourage support for the values underlying human rights instruments' (Osler and Starkey, 1996: 85). However, the purpose of both citizenship education and HRE is not just to develop an understanding of the definitions and properties of citizenship and to be able to name certain rights. Learners should not only learn the knowledge component of citizenship education and HRE, but the emphasis should be also on building affective civic skills and values necessary for agents of social change (Chauhan, 2001). Therefore, both citizenship education and HRE are 'long-term projects', which are 'forward looking' in their focus on changing ways of acting in public life, 'whether for individuals or for nations' (Davis, 2000: 28).

As mentioned above, in a democracy, the citizens govern. Therefore, democratic citizenship must incorporate the rights that enable the citizens to govern themselves. The literature reveals that citizens should enjoy rights that extend beyond participatory rights. These include the rights of privacy and property, freedom of religion, and expression.

Having considered the rights of citizenship in general and the rights of young people in particular, the following section discusses the methodology of the study.

## **PART II: METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

Two research methods, i.e. the questionnaire administered to four hundred and sixty young people, and the semi-structured interviews conducted with twenty-two young people, which was the second instrument administered for triangulation purposes. These two research instruments, the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview schedule were structured on the main themes that emerged from the conceptual framework of the study.

The analysis looks at the research hypotheses to find out if young people graduating from secondary school in Bahrain were equipped with the civic knowledge and understandings necessary to participate effectively as citizens in a democracy, under the structure and framework of this study. The framework used to help organizing the data was based on the scholarly literature on citizenship education and human rights education.

### **Research Design**

The study presented here was a part of a wider research project, which aimed to examine whether young people graduating from high school in Bahrain are equipped with civic knowledge and understanding necessary to participate effectively as citizens in a democracy. It provides valuable insights that are firmly grounded in the contemporary institutional context of Citizenship Education. This paper focuses on young peoples' civic knowledge and understanding of their rights, responsibilities and the role of the law.

### **Aim and Objectives**

The main aim of the study is to examine whether young people graduating from high school (grade 12) in Bahrain are equipped with the civic knowledge and understandings necessary to participate effectively as citizens in society.

The specific objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To investigate to what extent young people understand their rights.
2. To examine whether young people are aware of their responsibilities.
3. To explore young peoples' awareness of the need for laws.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The above issues were explored with reference to young people's background characteristics, i.e. gender and place of residence based on the following hypothesis:

1. There is a statistically significant relationship at the  $p < 0.05$  level, between young people's background characteristics (i.e. gender and place of residence) and their understanding of their rights.
2. There is a statistically significant relationship at the  $p < 0.05$  level, between young people's background characteristics (i.e. gender and place of residence) and their awareness of their responsibilities.
3. There is a statistically significant relationship at the  $p < 0.05$  level, between young people's background characteristics (i.e. gender and place of residence) and their awareness of the need for the laws.

Each of these sets of relationships was explored further through analysis of qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews.

### **Mixed Methods Approach**

For the purpose of this study, a triangulation method is conducted. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were triangulated to provide convergent evidence for drawing inferences. The quantitative research typically seeks detail in certain aspects of correlations between variables. By contrast, for qualitative research, 'detail' is found in the precise particulars of such matters as people's understandings and interactions (Silverman, 2005). The quantitative data collected from a survey questionnaire was followed by gathering qualitative data from interviews. This was done in order to explore the issues addressed in the questionnaire in greater detail.

### **Selecting the Sample**

#### ***Survey Sample***

The survey is an extremely flexible research method that helps to examine the characteristics, behaviours, attitudes, and intentions of [the young people in this study] (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). For the purpose of this study, a stratified random sampling approach was adopted because it increases the quality of the sample by reducing the likelihood of strata characteristics distorting the results (Gorard, 2001). The nature of this study required that the sample be 12th grade students at secondary level for three reasons: First, the study was to examine the civic knowledge of students graduating from government schools of Bahrain to investigate the extent to which they had gained the knowledge, skills and values the national curriculum provides for Bahraini students. Second, to meet the aims of the research, it was necessary that the subjects had considerable experience of the Bahraini education system, and be able to complete a survey questionnaire, which contained high-level cognitive questions related to some aspects of citizenship (i.e. rights, responsibilities and the need for the law). Third, the students were young people aged 18 years who had started to get their civic rights as adults and had begun to shape their attitudes and values as well. Therefore, these secondary school students in grade-12 were deemed to be more appropriate for the study than those who were in the lower levels of schooling. In summary, this cohort of students was selected because they represented the outcome of the educational system in Bahrain, particularly in regard to citizenship education.

This study aimed to obtain as representative a range of responses as possible to enable to fulfil the objectives of the study and to provide answers to key questions. The target population consisted of 9191 students, aged 17-18 years, who were registered in grade-12. This included 4888 female students (53.2%) and 4303 male students (46.8%). Based on this number, it was decided to choose five per cent from the total students' population for the study (5% of 9191 = 459.55). This was a manageable sample which would enabled the researcher to generalise from the findings. Hence, 460 students from grade-12 were selected. They were chosen randomly (by using a table of random numbers) from all secondary schools (12 Boys' and 14 Girls'), then determined the number from each stratum to be sampled: Girls' (5% of 4888 = 244.40); Boys' (5% of 4303 = 215.15). Following this, permission to carry out the survey was obtained and the Girls' and Boys' schools were approached to administer the survey.

Thus, the sample of the study was a stratified sample of 460 (215 male and 245 female; 54.5 per cent of them were rural, and 45.4 per cent were urban). The sample was Bahraini students in grade-12 in secondary schools, who had experienced the formal national curriculum implemented by the Bahraini Ministry of Education. The average age of the students was 18

years. All students were at the same level during the entire study year. The students came from socioeconomic backgrounds reflective of the social structure of the country. A sample of 54.5 per cent of students was from rural areas, and 45.4 per cent of students were from urban areas.

**Table 1: Sample needed for the survey drawn from each School**

<p><u>245 Female students</u> = 16 girls from each school 15 schools</p>
<p><u>215 Male students</u> = 16 boys from each school 13 schools</p>

There are five governorates in Bahrain. These are Middle, Capital, Muharraq, Northern, and Southern. In the sample, 38.5 per cent (20.9% male and 17.6% female) were from the Middle governorate; 22.4 per cent (14.6% male and 7.8% female) were from the Capital, Manama. 17.0 per cent (5.2% male and 11.7% female) were from Muharraq and 17 per cent (5.9% male and 11.1% female) were from the Northern governorate while only 5.2 per cent of female students were from the Southern governorate. Each school enrolls students from a given catchment area, which contains families who originate from different areas of Bahrain. This diversity provided a range of students for the study in terms of their views and background knowledge of citizenship and politics.

The students came from families with varied backgrounds. Their parents had received education at different levels (i.e. 9.1 per cent of mothers were postgraduates, 29.1 per cent were graduates, 33.9 per cent had finished secondary education, and 23 per cent had finished elementary education while 4.8 per cent of mothers had no formal qualifications at all). The highest percentage of mothers was those who had received secondary education and who were undergraduates. Considering fathers, 4.6 per cent of fathers were postgraduates, 24.3 per cent were graduates, 33.7 per cent had completed secondary education, and 28 per cent had finished elementary education, while only 9.3 per cent of fathers had no formal qualifications. It can be observed that while students' parents were relatively well qualified overall, a higher percentage of mothers was qualified compared to the fathers.

### ***Sample for In-depth Study***

A semi-structured interview schedule was formulated, where topics and open-ended questions were written but 'the exact sequence and wording did not have to be followed with each respondent' (Cohen *et al.*, 2000: 278). The main purpose of the interview in this study was to gain insights into students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship rights and responsibilities and to concentrate on the concrete details of the young people's present experience of the role of the law.

As noted above, the study sample was a stratified sample of 460 (215 male and 245 female) Bahraini students in grade-12 in secondary level and represented five per cent of the whole study population (9191). To be consistent with the survey study sample, the interview sample comprised 22 students, which was five per cent of the survey sample, twelve girls and ten boys. Moreover, half of these selected were from rural areas and the other half of them were from urban areas to examine a range of different experiences. Four Secondary Schools in Bahrain from the Middle governorate were used to conduct the interviews. Two schools (one boys' and one girls') were in rural areas and two schools (one boys' and one girls') were in urban areas.

## **Data Analysis**

This study analyses the findings of the empirical research. The empirical data has two components: the quantitative survey data and the qualitative interview data. The statistical analyses of the quantitative data were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). An alpha level of 0.05 was chosen as the level of significance. Cross-tabulation with the Chi-squared test was used to examine relationships between variables for nominal data; and the Mann-Whitney U rank-sum test for ordinal data. While performing this analysis, the responses of the young people were studied in relation to the research hypotheses and the conceptual and theoretical background of the study.

## **Triangulation of Survey and Interview Data**

After they were analysed, the interview data was triangulated with the survey data. This was done by comparing interview transcripts with written documentation of the quantitative data from the questionnaire. This process helped to establish connections between data sub-sets. These two sources of data were integrated, discussed and interpreted. The data gathered by questionnaires and interviews was analysed.

## **PART III: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

This part analyses the findings of the empirical research. The empirical data has two components: the quantitative survey data and the qualitative interview data. The statistical analyses of the quantitative data were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). An alpha level of 0.05 was chosen as the level of significance. Cross-tabulation with the Chi-squared test was used to examine relationships between variables for nominal data; and the Mann-Whitney U rank-sum test for ordinal data.

This paper investigates to what extent young people understand their rights and their responsibilities, looking specifically at their rights and responsibilities to society, home, and school. In addition, it explores young people's awareness of the need for laws in their society. Besides the statistical analysis derived from the survey data, a range of quotations, derived from the qualitative interview data, are presented in the analysis below in order to provide an indication of the various ways in which young people conceptualise their rights and responsibilities.

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

### ***In Society***

In interviews, young people were asked if they thought that citizens should have rights and to state the rights young Bahrainis should have. All the young people who were interviewed agreed that 'all citizens should have rights' (Zain, urban female); 'every creature on this earth has rights' (Mustafa, rural male); 'any relationship has rights and obligations' (Raqia, rural female); 'of course each individual has rights and since I belong to this country, it means I have rights and without my rights my life would not be right' (Khatoon, rural female); 'without these rights how can citizens achieve their happiness and stability and fulfil their needs' (Hameed, rural male).

Young people pointed out that citizens should have rights because 'they belong to this land' (Salman, urban male), 'citizens deserve to have rights because they have given all what they can to the country and have served it' (Razan, urban female), and 'that is what democracy

about' (Rehab, rural female). A young male said 'because God created human beings and gave them their rights, and not admitting this truth means not recognizing that human beings are the power of this earth' (Hasan, rural male). Here are some of the rights of citizens that were indicated in young people's responses:

Citizens must have the right to fulfil their basic needs. They should live safely in their country; have opportunities for getting a good job; they need protection, good health and good education. I believe that citizens should live happily in their family, in their country, and amongst their people (Reem, urban female).

Another student added political, social and economic rights and related them to good citizenship, he stated:

Citizens should have rights such as political rights, social rights and economical rights. They have the right of freedom, of education, and of health-care. These rights are related to good citizenship. When they get their rights, they will fulfil their responsibilities (Mazin, urban male).

A student who was not sure if he knew the rights of citizens pointed out some important rights, he said:

I don't know those rights. Umm... perhaps as a citizen, I have the right to get my basic needs. I have the right to learn and to get a good education, the right to feel safe and be secure, and the right to have freedom of expression. As a young citizen aged 18, I should have the right to express my opinion, and my voice should be heard. I think it is important to get all my citizenship rights (Jaffer, rural male).

Some young people mentioned other rights citizens in a democratic society should have. For example, they believed that citizens in a democracy should have the right of freedom, to be allowed to express opinions and to live a decent and safe life. Mariam, a rural female said 'citizens should have the right of education and to get a political education'; 'to enable them to live a stable life so as to serve their country in a better way' (Khalid, urban male), 'citizens needs to lead a fair life where there is equality, to be offered their basic rights, suitable housing, and a stable income because it's one of the major needs of citizens' (Raqia, rural female), 'citizens need secure job opportunities and high standards of living' (Zain, urban female). Another student said 'to criticize the head of the country, and have the right to expose their point of views' (Ali, rural male); 'citizens have their rights and if they don't receive them, they will not work for the country's benefit' (Mustafa, rural male).

As can be seen, young people's responses indicated that the majority of them understood their rights as citizens. They mentioned rights such as the civil, social, and political rights that any citizen needs in order to perform his/her responsibilities. Moreover, the majority of young people recognized their responsibilities as citizens as well. For example, a young female stated:

Bahraini citizens have responsibilities; they are citizens in their homeland and should participate to make their country a better place. Without responsibilities we cannot develop our country. Citizens are responsible for making changes in society (Safa, urban female).

Furthermore, other young people mentioned that a Bahraini citizen had responsibilities towards his/her homeland. 'A citizen can work at developing it, protecting its properties, trying to work hard with other citizens to fulfil its needs, and enhance high standards of living' (Mustafa, rural male). Another student mentioned another kind of responsibility, 'citizens can protect their homeland and defend it from danger and from any external threat, they should protect its reputation and values too' (Khatoun, rural female); they should 'be loyal, keep the country safe and not break the law' (Razan, urban female). Another young person mentioned something interesting and said:

In a democracy, it is our responsibility to be active and participate in making decisions, if we are not allowed, we can let our voice be heard by various means; by demonstrations for example (Ali, rural male).

### *At Home*

A large proportion of young people pointed out that they had rights at home as well. They said they have the right to freedom, to be loved and respected, to feel equal with other members of their family, and to enjoy their life. Reem, urban female, said 'my rights at home are to have freedom of expressions, to fulfil my needs' (Mustafa, urban male); 'to be offered with good education and good treatment' (Qassim, rural male), 'also, my opinion has to be respected and taken into consideration' (Ayat, rural female), 'I want a life full of love, passion and respect without interference in my personal life' (Jaffer, rural male).

In addition, young people indicated their right to get their basic needs. They stated they need to live a decent life in which all their basic needs are fulfilled. 'I have the right get my basic needs, to be offered good food and clothing, a place to live with comfort' (Khalid, urban male), 'including getting a good education' (Mooza, urban female).

Furthermore, young people mentioned that they needed a suitable milieu for living, some stated 'at home, I have the right to have a suitable environment to study in my own room, to access the Internet and a telephone' (Salman, urban male); 'to be called by a suitable name and to get a suitable milieu for living' (Ahmed, urban male); and 'to live in a proper and calm atmosphere' (Khatoon, rural female). On the other hand, most of the young people pointed out that they were responsible for showing respect to their parents and helping the family: I have a responsibility to respect my parents, to be obedient to them, to take their advice into consideration, and to appreciate their efforts for what they do for me, to be ready to help them whenever they need me (Mustafa, urban male).

Young people also recognised their responsibilities towards their brothers and sisters and a considerable number of them stated that they were responsible for giving help to all their family members especially their brothers and sisters. Zain, urban female, said 'I am responsible to teach my little brothers and sisters and help them with studies' (Rehab, rural female), 'help my mother in raising my siblings' (Ahmed, urban male).

On the other hand, young people indicated some responsibilities related to their family as a whole. For instance, some young people said 'at home I am responsible for respecting my family' (Nadeen, urban female), and 'to participate in housework' (Salman, urban male).

### *At School*

Almost all the young people indicated that they had rights at school. Their rights at school were classified into two parts: having good education and having a healthy school environment. These were the most important rights, young people mentioned, which are illustrated by the following comments.

All young people agreed that having a good education, with access to qualified teachers, good textbooks with interesting subjects, and having a stimulating curriculum, were important rights of young people:

I have the right to get a proper education, to have good textbooks, to have devoted, qualified and professional teachers whose performance is of a high standard (Hasan, rural male).

Other young people agreed with Hasan and stated the same rights, and others added, 'at school, I have the right to receive comprehensive school textbooks' (Mooza, urban female); and 'to be offered a proper syllabuses' (Khatoon, rural female). One student mentioned the grading system and said 'we have the right to have a grading scheme that distinguishes talented young people from others' (Mustafa, urban male). Safa, an urban female, stated 'at school, I should have the opportunity to develop my personality, to study and to get a good education within a good school curriculum'. Ahmed, an urban male, mentioned the importance of providing school facilities by saying 'schools must offer suitable educational facilities, professional teachers, good classrooms, good tables and chairs, and provide computers in every classroom'. Another student also mentioned that 'schools should teach politics and make time for political activities' (Raqia, rural female).

In addition, a large proportion of young people mentioned the school environment and suggested that it was their right to have a healthy environment, where they have freedom to express their own views, and where their voice is heard and respected. For instance, this student said:

I have the right to express my opinion freely, whether it is negative or positive, and to participate in decision-making and in school activities and programmes; I have the right to vote in school elections, and to be treated fairly in school (Qassim, rural male).

Other young people added 'at school, I have the rights to have a healthy school environment' (Reem, urban female), and 'to enjoy a proper school atmosphere' (Fatma, rural female), 'to be provided with a clean school with healthy food' (Khatoon, rural female), 'to get fair treatment from teachers and all school members' (Rehab, rural female), and 'a suitable atmosphere for studying and freedom to express my opinions' (Jaffer, rural male), 'to be free to choose the subjects I would like to study' (Salman, urban male). They also wanted to be respected and recognised for their achievements in school:

My rights at school are to receive a good education, to express my ideas freely, to be respected by teachers and students, and to be recognized and appreciated for the things I do (Ayat, rural female).

Another student said 'my voice should be heard and considered, I need equality with other students and want to be loved and respected' (Mazin, urban male) while another thought she was entitled 'to be provided with an appropriate environment for study, and to receive encouragement and justice' (Rehab, rural female). Moreover, another student indicated that in a healthy school climate 'the school principal and teachers should always speak the truth and not lie to students' (Ahmed, urban male). Finally, Hameed, a rural male, said 'I need to be allowed to perform my role in a healthy school climate'.

On the other hand, a large number of young people believed that they also had responsibilities towards their school. They thought they were responsible for keeping the school clean and participating in different school activities and in improving school programmes. Nadeen, urban female said 'I have to contribute to schools committees, events and activities and advise students and administration about problems'. Another stated 'I have to show respect towards my teachers and school management, appreciate their efforts and contribute to schools events' (Khalid, urban male). In addition, others stated 'I am responsible for not breaking the school rules and working hard to protect school property' (Razan, urban female), 'I should be committed to the school's rules and regulations' (Mariam, rural female) and 'to do my

homework and to respect my teachers and the school administration and listen to their advice' (Mustafa, urban male). Zain, an urban female, commented on respect in school:

I have a responsibility to respect everyone surrounding me I mean all school members, from the principal, the teachers, and the students to the cleaners and gardeners.

Ali, a rural male, added: 'I am responsible for respecting the educational authority, cooperating with other students, and performing my duties in a comprehensive way'. Another added 'I should give my school anything I can to help in its development and to enhance its reputation' (Mooza, urban female).

### Role of Citizens in a Democratic Society

In the survey questionnaire, young people were presented with the option of choosing more than one answer for a set of eight items relating to 'the role of Bahraini citizens in a democratic system of government'. Here the young people indicated that, in a democracy, Bahraini citizens should: enjoy freedom of expression, practise their rights, perform their responsibilities, participate in decision-making, accept others' opinions, and govern themselves. The majority of young people believed that all of these roles were important for Bahraini citizens in a democracy, while only a few young people indicated the opposite. Responses that showed statistically significant differences because of gender and/or place of residence are shown in the table below.

**Table 2: The role of Bahraini citizens in a democracy**

The role of Bahraini citizens in a democracy	Male		Female		Sig. (Gen.)	Sig. (Res.)
	Rural %	Urban %	Rural %	Urban %		
Perform responsibilities	24.2	20.0	32.2	12.7	*	***
Participate in decision-making	24.7	22.3	26.1	12.2	*	*

\*P<0.05

\*\*\*P<0.001/ P<0.000

Data analysis revealed that a statistically significant gender difference ( $U=23897.5$ ,  $p<0.045$ ) and a statistically significant residence difference existed at ( $U=21827.0$ ,  $p<0.000$ ) between young people and 'performing responsibilities' in a democracy. As can be observed in Table 2 above, rural young females were more likely to indicate that citizens should perform their responsibilities in a democracy compared with the other young people.

Furthermore, data analysis showed a statistically significant gender difference ( $U=23897.5$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and a statistically significant residence difference ( $U=23792.0$ ,  $p<0.045$ ) existed between young people and 'participating in decision-making' as an important responsibility of a citizen in a democracy. It was the urban young females who were less likely to see the importance of participation in a democratic society compared with the rural males, the rural females and the urban males, as Table 2 shows. A large number of the rural females believed same as this young rural female:

As a young citizen, I can help my country by doing many things such as performing my duties towards family, school and society, protecting the environment, keeping it clean and participating in its development (Ayat, rural female).

Findings revealed that it was the rural young females who were more likely to endorse the idea that in democracy citizens should be responsible and participate in decision-making. They show better understanding of their role as a Bahraini citizen in a democratic society than the other young people in the study. This implies that the young people in general and the young urbans in particular need to develop their knowledge of their role in a democratic society.

### **Citizens' Rights Protection**

The young people were asked to mention organisations and institutions, formal or informal, national or international, which are responsible for protecting their rights as citizens. A considerable number of young people did not know who was responsible for protecting their rights, thus, they did not answer this question. Some of them were not sure of their answers, but tried to answer. One student said:

I do not know. Perhaps the police, the king, and the government can protect my rights in Bahrain, but I do not know if there are any others (Mooza, urban female).

The majority of young people mentioned that 'the government' should protect their rights 'officially, the ministries should protect my rights such as the Ministry of Interior which should provide security or the Ministry of Housing which should offer houses' (Khalid, urban male). In addition, some young people mentioned some other ministries, such as the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of Education too.

Some other young people indicated that it was the duty of the National Council, Municipal Councils, the Judicial Council and the Supreme Council for Women to protect the rights of a citizen. One young citizen said 'protecting a citizen rights can be done through the Council of Representatives, the parliament, where they discuss the community's problems, convey the citizens' views and problems and working to resolve them (Nadeen, urban female).

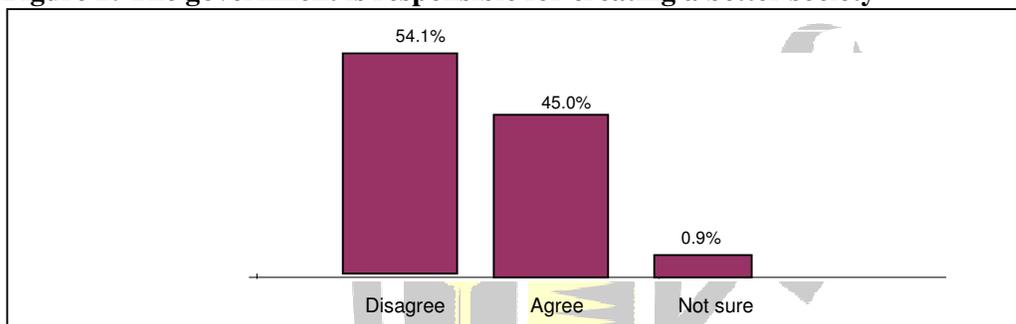
Other young people indicated that some non-government institutions and organisations (NGO's) could protect the rights of a citizen. They said 'some political societies such as Alwifaq, youth associations, and charity associations are calling and fighting for citizens' rights (Jaffer, rural male). Most of young people agreed that the political societies could play a major role in protecting citizens' rights, 'political societies are protecting people's rights, through peaceful demonstrations by citizens' (Raqia, rural female). Other young people pointed out that 'international political organisations and human rights societies are the bodies which can protect the rights of citizens when they violated by their own government' (Ahmed, urban male). A few young people mentioned their parents and others indicated the police as being able to protect their rights.

Other young people were not certain about the institutions that could protect their rights. 'I have no idea, but I think there is a human right committee in the National council of Bahrain, which can discuss the infringements of the rights of the citizens and tries to solve them (Mustafa, urban male); 'I think having a society, organisation or even committee, which defend human rights in any country is an international requirement' (Hameed, rural male). Another student said 'I don't think that there is anybody or any institution which could protect our rights in Bahrain, but by introducing laws in society citizens' rights would be protected' (Mariam, rural female). Safa, an urban female, suggested that 'women's rights could be protected through setting up women's associations to give women confidence and hope that their rights would be protected'.

## Responsibilities and Better Society

In the questionnaire, the young people were asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement 'it was the responsibility of the government not individual citizens to create a better society'. No statistically significant gender or residence differences existed between young people the awareness of their responsibility towards their society. However, it is important to highlight that more than a half of young people disagreed with this statement and thought that it was not only the responsibility of the government to create a better society, but also the responsibility of individual citizens. On the other hand, more than one-third of young people agreed and thought that the government was totally responsible for making Bahrain better. This implies that the majority of young people were aware of their responsibility and the government's as well towards making Bahrain a better society. The findings are presented in the following figure:

**Figure 2: The government is responsible for creating a better society**



## Young People and the Law

### *The Need for Laws*

In the questionnaire, young people were asked to give reasons for 'the need for laws in society'. The majority of young people believed that laws were needed to protect people's rights, organise the relationship between people and society, determine people's responsibilities, and to practise democracy. The following table presents this result more clearly.

**Table 3: The needs of laws in society**

The needs of laws in society	Male		Female		Sig. (Gen.)	Sig. (Res.)
	rural	urban	rural	urban		
Protect people's rights	40.9	40.9	47.3	33.9	-	-
Organise the relationship between people and society	29.8	34.4	40.0	31.8	-	-
Determine people's responsibilities	27.4	23.7	28.2	18.4	-	-
Practise democracy	29.8	21.4	26.9	16.7	-	**

\*\*P<0.01

A statistically significant residence difference existed at ( $U=23563.0$ ,  $p<0.030$ ) between young people and their understanding of the need of laws in society. Data analysis revealed that

it was the rural young people who were more likely to indicate that a democratic society needed laws to 'practise democracy' compared to young urbans.

Young people stated further reasons for the need for laws in a community. These were to 'control and protect the community', 'guarantee getting rights', 'prevent oppression', and 'protect Islamic principles'. Results also showed that young people from rural areas had better understanding of the need for laws in a democratic society as compared with those from urban areas.

In the interview, most of the young people argued that laws were important to organize the relationship between people and the state and to guarantee the rights of the citizens. This is evident in the quotation below:

Laws are the foundation of society. The good citizen is the one who obeys the laws. They are important in giving rights. I feel that the existence of laws defends my rights when I face any problem in my life (Hasan, rural male).

Another student confirmed that laws make the country a better place to live in. They were seen to be important for the stability of society and solve conflicts between people:

Laws are important for the stability of the state. Laws can provide security and comfort to its people. If there were no laws in society, there would be conflicts between people, and society would be a mess (Safa, urban female).

#### *Young People's Perceptions of Bahraini Laws*

When the young people were asked about their opinions about Bahraini laws and if they disagreed with any of them, the data shows that the majority of young people disagreed with some Bahraini laws. A considerable number of young people were not sure, and had no idea about the laws or whether they agreed or disagreed with them. On the other hand, there were only a few young people who agreed with all the laws in their country. The following table shows their responses in details.

**Table 4: Laws in Bahrain and young people**

'In Bahrain, are there any laws that you disagree with?'	Male		Female		Sig. (Gen.)	Sig. (Res.)
	rural %	urban %	rural %	urban %		
Yes	29.3	20.9	27.3	11.0	**	***
No	5.1	10.7	8.2	5.7		
Not sure	14.9	19.1	23.7	24.1		
Sub-Total	49.3	50.7	59.2	40.8		
Total	100		100			

\*\*P<0.01

\*\*\*P<0.001/ P<0.000

A statistically significant gender difference ( $\chi^2=10.166$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.006$ ), and a statistically significant residence difference ( $\chi^2=13.991$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) was found between young people and their awareness of laws of their society. Data revealed that young females were less likely to disagree with laws in the society, and the majority of young people who were less to disagree were from the urban areas. Hence, it was the urban young females who were less likely to disagree with laws in the society. In contrast, more young males disagreed with certain laws and they were mostly from rural areas.

Young people disagreed with some of the laws in their country, for example, family law, nationality law, property law, gathering law and the driving license law. Young rurals listed most of the laws which are debated by most Bahraini people, and which are causing problems in Bahrain society. This suggested that young rurals had more awareness of laws and issues in Bahraini society and, therefore, they were more involved in their community compared to young urbans.

### ***Law and Human Rights***

No statistically significant difference was found between young people and their opinion of this statement 'people should obey a law that violates human rights'. However, it seems important to mention that 83.7 per cent of young people believed that people should not obey a law that violates human rights. On the other hand, only 8.0 per cent of young people 'agreed' with this statement, and 8.3 per cent did not know or were 'not sure'.

Furthermore, when young people were asked about their views on whether 'people should protest peacefully against a law that they believed to be unjust', most young people 'agreed' with this statement; they were mostly young females from rural areas (See Table 5 below). While most young males 'disagreed' and young females were 'not sure' about this.

**Table 5: Young people and protesting against law**

People should protest peacefully against a law that they believe to be unjust	Male		Female		Sig. (Gen.)	Sig. (Res.)
	rural %	urban %	rural %	urban %		
Agree	84	67	80.7	68	**	**
Disagree	9.4	22	7.6	10		
Not Sure	6.6	11	11.7	22		
Total	100	100	100	100		

\*\*P<0.01

A statistically significant gender difference ( $\chi^2=8.621$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.013$ ) and a statistically significant residence difference ( $\chi^2=8.511$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.014$ ) were found between young people on protesting peacefully against a law that they believed to be unjust. As observed, more young males 'agreed' with this statement, the majority of whom were rurals, while more urban young males 'disagreed' with it. Thus, the urban young males were more likely to disagree with protesting peacefully against any unjust law in the society when compared to rural males, rural females and urban young females.

To sum up, the findings of this section revealed that there is a statistical significant relationship at the level of  $p<0.05$  between young citizens' background characteristics (i.e. gender and place of residence) and their understanding of their rights, responsibilities and the need of laws. All young people agreed that they should have rights in society, at home and at school as well and mentioned some civil, social, and political rights that they needed in order to fulfil their responsibilities. However, a considerable number of them did not know who was responsible for protecting their rights in their country. The majority of young people believed that it was not only the responsibility of the government to create a better society, but also it was the responsibility of individual citizens.

A large number of young people believed that laws were needed to organise the relationship between people and society, protect people's rights and determine people's responsibilities. More rural males disagreed with some of the laws in their society, and thought

that people should express their opinions and protest peacefully against any law that they believed to be unjust in their society.

#### **PART IV: CONCLUSIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

This part presents the conclusions and the interpretations of the findings of this study. It reports my reflections on this research and summarizes the lessons learned about young Bahraini citizens. In order to make sense of the findings, the discussion of the research hypotheses is compared and contrasted with the findings, the views, theories, issues and research that are presented in the literature review in Part I. It then discusses the possible implications of such lessons for the development of citizenship education in Bahrain.

##### **Rights of Citizens**

The basic premise of human rights is that they are entitlements that protect human dignity (Osler and Starkey, 1996), which encompass the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural domains of people's lives (UDHR, 1948). Since all the young people in this research are Muslim, it is important to mention that the human rights of privacy, freedom, dignity, and equality are guaranteed in Islam and 'there is no compulsion in religion' (The Holy Quran, 2: 256).

With respect to the rights of a citizen, the young people, in this study, gave a clear explanation during the interviews of their rights at home, in school and in society at large. They are 'learning about being a citizen and about what rights they have on a daily basis' (Davis, 2000: 12). At home, most of them had the right to freedom of expression, being loved and respected, being treated equally with other members of the family, getting their basic needs and having a suitable milieu for living. At school, they all agree that they have the right to good education and a healthy school environment. In society, the young people believe that citizens have civic and political rights and relate them to good citizenship. For them, citizens need to satisfy their basic needs such as having a good job, good health and good education along with being safe in their country. As citizens in a democracy, they call for their political rights, for example, the right to freedom in general and freedom of expression, in particular. They believe that citizens in a democracy have the right to criticize, to get a fair life where there is equality with and respect for others. The majority of them, therefore, understand their rights as citizens and show a readiness to perform their responsibilities.

The young people stress the rights of the citizen, and rank the qualities of a good citizen to be related to these rights. For example, from a total of twenty-four qualities listed in the questionnaire, they rank defending their own rights as the most significant for a good Bahraini citizen, and the struggle for human rights as the seventh most important quality. Moreover, a statistically significant difference was found between young people's gender and place of residence and their understanding of human rights at the  $p < 0.05$  level. Young rural male people were more likely to believe that criminals should have the right to be treated as humans, be given access to a lawyer, a just jury and to be allowed to communicate with the outside world if imprisoned. This implies that young rural males show more understanding of human rights and have a greater desire to work to secure and defend these rights for themselves and others.

A considerable number of young people in this study do not know who is responsible for protecting their rights as citizens. More than one-third of young rural male people blame their school for 'never' encouraging them to find out about and discuss topics related to human rights.

Despite the continued reality of the massive violation of human rights around the world, it has been argued that today people are living in the age of rights and going through a rights

revolution (Ignatieff, 2000). All over the world, people are talking about human rights, linking them to democracy, economic development, and to various political and social processes, including social and cultural institutions such as schooling. In Bahrain, the constitution provides for equality, equal opportunity and the right to medical care, welfare, education, property, and work for all citizens. However, these rights are unevenly provided, depending on the individual's social status, sect, or gender (BDHRL, 2006: Sec.5).

The young people in my research believe that there are restrictions placed on them by the state and are dissatisfied with this situation. For instance, they believe that they should have the right to vote in elections at the age of 18, as opposed to the current voting age of 21. Young people of 18 who are members of 'Alshabeeba Youth Society' protested on 24th November 2006 asking for the right to vote in elections (Abdulla, 2006). Bahrain has recently made an effort to create a youth parliament, but the government had placed a restriction on activating it, which has made young people feel that the government was not serious regarding this matter (Almarzooq, 2007). In an article a young person who is a member of a citizenship project funded by the British Council in Bahrain states:

Our government have signed a commitment to the UN convention on the rights of the child. They should abide by article 42, which states that children should be informed about their rights. As part of the commitment young people should have local, national and international youth representative and discussion board such as a youth parliament ... to bring the views of young people to the lawmakers and [to enable them to] make positive contributions [to society] (Abdulla, 2006: 8).

In my study, more young female people complain of practices that involve gender discrimination. For example, regardless of the high grades female students achieve (91.9% female students as compared with 78.7% male students) in 2005/2006 (Ministry of Education, 2006), more government scholarships are given to male students. The Directorate of scholarships in the Ministry of Education announced that more scholarships were allocated for male students (Ministry of Education, 2006). Moreover, the BDHRL (2006) reports that domestic violence against women and discrimination based on gender, religion, and ethnicity remains a problem in Bahrain. The UDHR (1948) states that rights should be equally applicable to all people, at all times, with no right being more important than another, and that rights are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

According to the BDHRL report on human rights practices (2005), 'the Bahraini government continues to infringe citizens' privacy rights, and it restricts the freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of associations, and imposes limits on the freedom of religion and freedom of movement' (Sec.3). For example, on February 2007, the head of the Bahrain Youth Society was prevented from attending a seminar for youth about developing democracy and human rights in Cairo (Editor, 2007). Moreover, one young female recently stated in an article 'Give us our rights' (Alorayedh 2006: 8) that 'young people have many rights and one of the most important right is respect... This lack of respect is due to the difference of beliefs between those in power, i.e. the government, and the people'. Widespread mistrust of the government might have reinforced young people's tendency to stress on the rights of the citizens; i.e. freedom in particular.

In addition, Bahraini young people have witnessed the Bahraini government's continuous infringements of human rights until very recently. 'Torture appears to have been most prevalent between 1994 and 1999 when civilians sought the return of a liberal Constitution and their Parliament' (REDRESS, 2001: 4). This may be one of the reasons, which led young rural male people, in particular, to participate in demonstrations calling for their rights. Therefore, there is concern among young rural people in particular about the lack of some citizens' civic and political rights and the need to make improvements in this area. These views are the result of their experiences of unsatisfactory citizenship conditions in their country. These

concerns lead to a desire to see reforms by the government in which the rights of the citizens are better realised.

### **Responsibilities of Citizens**

Patrick (1999) argues that 'the status of citizenship entails very important responsibilities and duties that must be fulfilled because if they are not, democracy is disabled' (p.2). Also, if citizens of a democracy are to exercise their rights and fulfil their responsibilities, they must understand their rights and take responsibility for them. No statistically significant relationship was found at the level of  $p < 0.05$  between young people's gender or place of residence and their awareness of their responsibilities as citizens. The young people in this study recognise that rights are often matched by responsibilities with the majority of them indicating that the term citizenship implies not only getting rights but also performing responsibilities. Young people think that it is not only the responsibility of the government to create a better society, but also the responsibility of individual citizens.

Article 29 of UDHR (1948) categorically declares that free and full development of the human personality entails fulfilment of duties to the community. Young Bahraini people believe that membership of their community carries an obligation to contribute to the development of their country. They view a good citizen as someone who is an active member of the community and they consider community participation to be a right and a responsibility at the same time.

A considerable number of the young people rank being responsible towards the family and the community as the second most important quality for a good citizen. Other important qualities that the young people suggest are important attributes in developing their country include; protecting public property; developing public democratic awareness and preventing discrimination. Young people seem to believe that protection of the interests of the group is equivalent to the protection of the individual interest. They think that different community or ethnic groups can unite to fulfil the goals of the whole nation. In their opinion, Bahraini people can unite by loving their country, generating equality and sharing and accepting differences. Most young people highlight the importance of caring for and respecting others and focus on the role that citizens can play in maintaining the welfare of their country.

Bahraini young people, who appear to be optimistic about their own future, are committed to the future responsibilities of adult life. They are concerned about environmental destruction, growing crime and violence, and social inequality. They feel responsible as citizens for the wellbeing of future generations. This understanding is an important prerequisite for participation in democratic life. Nevertheless, the future of Bahraini democracy depends largely on how well the citizens of our nation gain competence in citizenship, in the skills of participation, to carry out their civic responsibilities, both in Bahrain and in the wider world.

### **Understanding of the Law**

A statistically significant relationship was found at the level of  $p < 0.05$  between young people's gender and place of residence and their understanding of the need for laws. The findings show that young people do not want to break the law. In general, they accept it is necessary to 'obey the laws' in consideration of the interests of the group. Moreover, this quality is viewed as one of the most important qualities of a good citizen and was ranked fourth in the survey by more than three-quarters of them, the majority of whom were female. In the survey questionnaire, the young people gave reasons for the needs of laws in society. Most of the young people believe that laws are needed to safeguard people's rights, to formalise the relationship between people and society, determine people's responsibilities, and to safeguard the practice of democracy.

About three-quarters of young people, the majority of whom are rural males, endorsed the idea that society needs laws to safeguard the practice of democracy. In addition, they supported the idea of peaceful (lawful) demonstrations by endorsing the idea that 'people should protest peacefully against a law that they believe to be unjust'. It seems that young rural people are more aware of the laws in their country. While these young people understand the need for laws, they are also aware of the need for 'just' laws. For example, they disagree with some of the laws that cause problems in their community, and a large proportion of them believe that 'people should not obey a law if it violates human rights'. This illustrates young rural people's degree of understanding of infringements of citizens' rights. This is supported by the report of the BCHR (2006), which notes that most Bahraini people are against the laws that affect their lives in a negative way and make the lives of decent law-abiding citizens difficult. They, therefore, want these laws to be changed. The young people in my study thought that this is their responsibility as citizens 'to recognize and overcome contradictions of ideals concerning equality of rights for all citizens, such as unjust denial to certain persons or groups of their rights to participate in government or to fair treatment in the courts of law' (Galston, 1995: 48).

The literature stresses that understanding the law enables people to make sense of and deal with everyday law-related problems, and also helps them to understand their legal rights and obligations (Breslin and Dufour, 2006). Almost all of the young people believe they have very little knowledge of the Bahraini civil and criminal laws, which they should understand if they are to participate as citizens in a democracy.

In this study, young people noted that the school curriculum does not encourage them to understand and discuss topics related to laws. This implies that law-related issues have not been covered in the curriculum and young people need to know more about their country's laws and thus have a voice in evaluating government policies that affect their lives.

In conclusion, the findings of this study demonstrate the need for policy and curriculum developers to include the opinions of young people when formulating policies that affect them. According to DeJaeghere (2013), values of self-improvement, responsibility and entrepreneurialism is now quite pervasive in educational policies and practices, shifting goals and processes of education for citizenship. Thus, education policies should always be adaptable since they are addressed to societies and the people of those societies are not static but involved in processes of change. There should be a rethinking of the objectives, content, approach and methods of school citizenship education to ensure they match the changing context and the changing needs of the young citizens in Bahrain. In addition, the approaches and methods used should provide space for discussion and debate on the curriculum in light of the argument put forward by the QCA (1998) that discussion and debate are the bases for developing social responsibility. In this way, young people can be enabled to take an active part in, and express their personal opinions, ideals and attitudes towards, citizenship.

The lack of a balance in emphasis over the citizens' rights versus their responsibilities, discussed above, is a concern for young people. This concern needs to be considered because, as Chauhan (2001) argues, teaching about citizens' responsibilities should ultimately lead to a climate in which infringements of fundamental rights are minimised and in which such rights are vigorously defended and protected when infringements occur. Therefore, reforming schools and enhancing teacher education are essential to the creation of a new culture of respect towards children as Howe and Covell (2005) recommended.

Indeed, young people need to see the connections between their knowledge of different aspects of citizenship and to move beyond conceptual understanding to have learning experiences that develop active participation. In addition, they need to make use of what they learn in school and their experiences in the wider world, which can be useful in developing

young people's sense of belonging, and lay a firm foundation for their growing understanding of rights and responsibilities and their ability to participate effectively in society.

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