Learning to be Lebanese: socializations of citizenship and subjecthood in Beiruti primary schools

Jade Lansing

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The American University in Cairo
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

Learning to Be Lebanese:
Socializations of Citizenship and Subjecthood in Beiruti Primary Schools

A thesis submitted to
the Middle East Studies Center

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (M.A.) in Middle East Studies

by Jade M. Lansing

under the supervision of Dr. Munira Khayyat

May 2014

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The American University in Cairo

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For my two mothers—on either side of the Atlantic—whose humility and boundless love allowed me to grow and thrive.
“In the end, though, maybe we must all give up trying to pay back the people in this world who sustain our lives. In the end, maybe it’s wiser to surrender before the miraculous scope of human generosity and to just keep saying thank you, forever and sincerely, for as long as we have voices.” –Elizabeth Gilbert

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Abstract

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Jade M. Lansing

The American University in Cairo
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This research project will explore the ways the Lebanese state and individual classroom actors construct and contest citizenship through the curriculum and structure of civics classrooms in contemporary Lebanese primary schools. Using civics classrooms as a lens to understand broader trends in educational environments, this study will analyze the role of education in the narration, diffusion, and aggravation of social and political discord. It argues that schools and classrooms are not passive or neutral mirrors of external dynamics, but rather play an active role in the narration and construction of these realities. This research shows that education is a space dominated by conflicting interests, serving as both a source of control and individual empowerment. It is the great irony of citizenship that, the state apparatus, and the sectarian demarcations it reiterates in Lebanon, are reinforced by the very initiatives that seek to challenge these hegemonic and hierarchical structures by nature of their reliance on the state and sectarian affiliations as sources of change. This project aims to address this contradiction within the practice of civics education in Lebanese primary schools.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Beiruti primary school classrooms as well as review of national legislation and educational administrative documents, this interdisciplinary study explores the relationship between national administrative reforms and everyday classroom practices. This analysis is situated within a broader interrogation of what civics classrooms teach young students about their rights and duties as Lebanese citizens, and how the content and implementation of civics education differs between schools. In addition to interviews and reviewing textbooks and educational administrative documents, I attended civics classes at three Beiruti elementary schools in order to observe grading methodology, group project dynamics, teaching styles, and students’ classroom engagement to understand how students become citizens within the school environment.
Note on Translation and Transliteration

Because language choices are meaningful, I have attempted to provide the reader with a genuine reflection of the languages used by my interlocutors in distinct interactions, while making the analysis accessible to readers who are not multilingual. In this endeavor, when quoting legislation, interviews, and classrooms that were originally in Lebanese or Modern Standard Arabic, I provide the original Arabic followed by an English translation. Quotes from interactions conducted in English are transcribed in English without translation. All translations throughout this thesis, and any errors in translation, are my own. Arabic transliteration of quotes follows the style of the International Journal of Middle East Studies, though diacritical marks have been removed for simplicity. Transliteration of personal and place names follows the conventions of the place or person named; for example, Ahliyah School is transcribed as the school transcribes it in English publicity materials, rather than the more standardized translation of the school’s Arabic name al-Madrassa al-‘Ahaliya.
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“They asked me what is happening in your far away land? / Strewn as it is with fire and guns. / I told them my country is being born again / The Lebanon of dignity and its resilient people / However you are I love you / Even in your madness I love you / And if we are dispersed your love will unite us.” – Fayrouz, Bibtak ya Lubnan

**Introduction**

In classrooms across Lebanon, civics education programs introduce students to civic principles, government structures, and conflict resolution strategies. Students engage with these lessons by raising their hands to answer questions and participating in classroom activities, and teachers and administrators encourage students to think independently and develop as citizens. At the same time, the structure and content of civics education embed students in broader structures of power and knowledge production and validate conflicting visions of Lebanon. At one school, civics classes focused on the value of self-control, empowering students to be active citizens in the school community while simultaneously delineating and constricting appropriate modes of identification and engagement.

This study explores the ways that Lebanese state institutions and individual classroom actors construct and contest citizenship through the curriculum and structure of civics classrooms in contemporary Lebanese primary schools. Using civics classrooms as a lens to understand broader trends in education and society, this study will analyze the role of schools in the narration, diffusion, and sustenance of ongoing social and political discord in Lebanon. As Michael Apple and others argue, schools and classrooms are not passive or neutral mirrors of external dynamics. Rather, they play an active role in the narration and construction of these realities.²

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¹ Civics education is a core subject in Lebanese curriculum. Though civics curriculum varies by school, it generally addresses concepts such as the national political structure, Lebanese identity, and character values such as responsibility, honesty, and kindness.

In order to explore these dynamics, the research provides an intricate portrait of schooling experiences in Lebanon and the myriad power structures that they are situated within, but also attempts to speak to broader themes in the relationship between education and citizenship. Lebanon is an especially compelling place to conduct such a study, because it is a small state with a diverse population and a short and conflicted history as a nation. The modern Lebanese state as a distinct territorial entity has only existed since it was created as such by French Mandate powers in 1920. Historically, the territory encompassing the contemporary Lebanese state has been inhabited at various times by a heterogeneous population of Phoenician, Arab, Syriac, Assyrian, Chaldean, Turkish, and European communities. In contemporary discourse, select aspects of this historical legacy are highlighted or silenced in competing claims about the culture and identity of the country’s current inhabitants. As a result, the contours of Lebanese citizenship have proven particularly challenging to define, and their delineation in the educational context may prove illuminating in understanding the complex processes of constructing and maintaining a cohesive citizenry.

Lebanon is unique, not because of its ethnoreligious heterogeneity, present in many modern states, but because of the way this diversity has been institutionalized in the political structure. Additionally, it has also experienced one of the most prolonged, violent conflicts in the region, and has seen considerable fluctuations in the application of individual freedoms — both for nationals and non-national residents — over the course of its history. This study will attempt to deconstruct the orientalizing narrative that Lebanon is defined exclusively by radical sectarianism, acknowledging the complexity of Lebanese identities and self-articulations, while suggesting the possible implications of the specificity of the Lebanese educational context.
This study will investigate the relationship between Lebanese national educational objectives and everyday classroom practices through ethnographic fieldwork in Beiruti primary school classrooms in the spring of 2014 and a review of national legislation and educational administrative documents. This analysis is situated within a broader interrogation of what civics classrooms seek to teach young students about their rights and duties as Lebanese citizens and how the content and implementation of civics education differs between schools. Following Gregory Starrett, “Rather than asking first and foremost what children know or believe as a clue to some basic cultural knowledge, I have focused largely on what it is that adults want and expect children to know and believe; or, to add another complication, what adults want each other to think that children should know and believe.” The central object of this research, then, is national educational expectations and schools’ diverse engagements with them, using classroom practices as a lens into this relationship. The study suggests that while individuals’ motivations in implementing civics education programs are generally benevolent, the practice of educating students to be good citizens is inextricably bound up in the conflicted environment outside of school walls. As a result, Lebanese civics curricula and implementation end up reiterating differential citizenship and exacerbating tensions between rhetoric and reality that undermine the efficacy of and citizens’ trust in the state and international actors.

Schools are a fundamental site where youth begin to conceptualize and shape their roles outside of their immediate familial networks. As Michel Foucault argues, the everyday mechanics of schools as disciplinary and educational spaces inform the ways that students

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3 This research was been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the American University in Cairo, and all interviews and observation were conduct in accordance with the ethics of research involving human subjects as outlined by the IRB.

understand themselves and relate to their peers and environment. When national school systems first expanded throughout Europe, they functioned primarily as spaces to regulate disorder by preventing “ignorance, idleness, and insubordination” among the populace. The knowledge and discipline disseminated by education systems forms students into “docile” national subjects and embeds them in the hierarchical power structures of state institutions and sub-state networks. Mundane actions in classrooms, such as how time is divided, how students are regulated, and how schools are structured, create routines that students embody throughout their lives. As Roger Deacon notes, through education, “the body… [becomes] something to be trained and corrected, from the gymnastics of handwriting to regimens of personal cleanliness: a new moral orthopedics that [is] intended to fashion the future more than punish the past.” The transfer of knowledge in schools, Deacon elaborates, “cannot be disentangled from those authoritative processes which seek to instill discipline into the moral fibres of [students] and thus differentiate between them, their nature, potentialities, levels, and values.” Foucault’s work alerts us to the reality that all actors experience and exhibit control through diverse mechanisms. Through intricate systems of surveillance, classification, inclusion, regulation, and rewards, “appropriate” knowledge and behaviors are disseminated and cultivated in students as well as teachers and administrators.

7 Deacon, 182.
8 Ibid, 181-182.
At the same time, education is not omnipresent and produces varied responses. Even within existing power structures, the need for self-regulating subjects requires an education system that empowers students to make independent decisions, and Foucault acknowledges that overt regulation can drive students to resistance. For Foucault, freedom is merely the ability to exercise power in new ways.

Paulo Freire agrees with Foucault’s assessment of education as an institution in the service of power, but further argues that schools can be sites where students gain the skills and knowledge necessary to challenge the injustices of the status quo. Through dialogue and independent analysis, students learn to think critically and engage with the world as knowledgeable and empowered actors. Though education as a system in and of itself does not confront the larger environment that it exists within, it provides students with rhetorical and practical tools that can be used to sustain or contest existing power structures.

Educational systems reflect broader social norms, but they can also be important spaces to redefine and challenge these norms. As Linda Herrera argues, “The school, seen as a microcosm of society, can serve as a window into understanding how a range of social relationships take shape and how they are resisted, negotiated, and, potentially transformed.” This project deconstructs the role of Lebanese primary schools in social and political integration,

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national subject formation, and national historiography in order to understand the possibilities of citizenship produced through the Lebanese education system.

This chapter details my research methodology and attends to my role as a researcher, drawing on methodological and theoretical approaches from anthropology, education studies, sociolinguistics, and political science. It provides a brief overview of the Lebanese education system’s development and the actors and events that shaped this development. It addresses the role of civics education curriculum, both nationally and in individual schools, in the Lebanese educational landscape. It concludes with a summary of the chapters that follow, and a discussion of the consequences of the research findings detailed herein.

Research Methodology

Before embarking on an analysis of my experiences in Lebanese classrooms, it is important to outline some fundamental concepts in the sociology of education to build a vocabulary towards understanding some of the possible meanings of classroom behaviors. The sociological idea of interaction describes the root of socialization and the core of social life. Brian Ashley et. al. define interaction as “people mutually and reciprocally influencing each others’ expectations of behavior and actual behavior.”14 Pierre Bourdieu offers a useful metaphor to understand this process. Bourdieu describes social interaction as a game of cards in which actors play different suits and values based on the cards in their hand and the cards they perceive others to be holding — that is, their own position and the perceived position of other contributors.15 Interactions between a pupil and a teacher, a parent and a child, or a principal and a student will each result in distinct behavioral possibilities for each party. Each actor’s chosen

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action is based on these perceived role relations, and where they situate themselves within the hierarchies of power and discipline. An individual’s decision to converge or diverge from others in an interaction can show status or reflect commonalities or solidarity.\(^{16}\) In either situation, behavior may be an assumed part of the social situation, reflecting relationships that were already at play, or it may be performative, in some way altering the social reality that existed previously.

Individuals can use the same behavior to indicate vastly different calculations. Behavioral codes change over time and context and “presentations of self through code [depend] on… age, generation, and network affiliations, [which] work differently for men and women.”\(^{17}\) Thus, we cannot assume that the same behaviors always carry the same message, or that the link between behavior and message are agreed upon by all participants. For example, in her study of citizenship, Margaret Somers notes how the most disadvantaged and downtrodden “have become nationalist patriots,” which serves as “a symbolic garb that compensates for the loss of rights by cultural and symbolic identification with the dominant political culture.”\(^{18}\) In this case, those least served by the state may be the most invested in its sustenance. Likewise, when students exhibit characteristics of nationalism or civic engagement, this does not always mean that they embody these values, so much as that they may want others — their peers, teachers, and employers — to think they embody these values.

Through these ongoing and contested processes, the norms and rules of society, as well as individuals’ roles within them, are created, undermined, and reconfigured. Sociologists call

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what is learned through this process socialization, as people’s expectations about themselves and others in society are formulated through diverse interactions. Norms about what clothing to wear, who to talk to and how, and differential behaviors that are appropriate depending on one’s socioeconomic status, gender, race, and age are discovered over time through infinite and complex social lessons. Family members, teachers, and peers, as well as messages embedded in public discourses, all influence calculations about how one should behave and believe.

Interaction, socialization, norms, and roles are formative to every social experience, but schools have a unique role in their dissemination. In order to tease out these layered meanings of behavior, in my classroom observations I looked at what subjects were covered, how much time was spent on each subject, and how teachers conducted the classroom. I also considered how students responded to different subjects, teaching styles, classroom environments, and peer dynamics. I noted conceptual silences and emphases, while acknowledging that taught concepts do not always correspond to what and how students learn and engage with classroom material. For example, a one-hour session on a topic that students feel relates directly to their lives may be more formative than multiple sessions on content that students feel is irrelevant or presented in an unapproachable way.

As Olive Banks notes, the primary emphasis in past research on the sociology of education “has been on differences in culture and ideology rather than in terms of different types of control.”¹⁹ Schools are accountable to government institutions, donors, and their host communities, among other networks, and these actors are also entangled in complex power structures. For example, though the MEHE is a branch of the national government, the Lebanese state cannot be seen as one cohesive, unified body. In some instances, the goals of the MEHE

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align with the goals of other state governing bodies. In other cases, there are tensions between them that reveal relationships of power. For example, during the recent protests conducted by teachers and civil servants to demand a pay raise, the Minister of Education attended the demonstrations in solidarity with teachers. In this sense, Lebanese schools are neither fully autonomous institutions, nor are they homogeneously influenced by ideological, political, social, and economic power structures. Taking this into account, I also explored how classroom actors transgressed seemingly immutable boundaries, and how these transgressions called the boundaries themselves into question.

Scholarship on civics education in Lebanon typically focuses on quantitative surveys of civic education classrooms and curricula. However, such quantitative research fails to capture the broader social context that produces these environments and the diverse meanings that individuals attach to their behaviors. In order to address these gaps, this study focuses on presenting insights from qualitative observations. While this study provides a contextualized overview of Lebanese educational development, it does not attempt to portray a holistic image of the innumerable notions of citizenship being created and enacted in Lebanese civics education. This qualitative approach allows the analysis to detail specific behaviors and interactions taking places in civics classrooms, and explore the role of individual actors such as teachers, students, and administrators. These interactions provide insight into the myriad experiences and practices of nationalism(s), subject formation, and discourses of power in Lebanese schools.

The focus of this study is on schools and their role in the broader national environment. However, because schools do not exist outside of the context they act within and cannot act but through the individuals that facilitate them, the methodology looks at individual actors and classrooms to provide more detailed examples of how individuals and classroom communities engage with the school ethos. It is not a study of individual students’ behaviors or national institutions, but an analysis of how both inform and are informed by schools and classroom practices.

As a result, this research is interdisciplinary. By combining ethnographic fieldwork with archival research, it seeks to put legislative texts and policy in conversation with classroom dynamics and interviewees’ experiences. The archival aspect of this study focuses on the legislation and annual reviews published by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and the analyses and curriculum developed by the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD). The ethnographic component is based on classroom observations in three elementary schools in Beirut, wherein I observed the dynamics between teachers and students and between student peers to understand how students become citizens within the school environment. This observation included an examination of grading methodology, group project dynamics, teaching styles, and students’ classroom engagement. In addition to sitting in on classes, I conducted interviews with teachers, administrators, education scholars, and educational professionals.

I chose to focus this study on primary schools because past scholarship on civic education in Lebanon largely addresses secondary and higher education.23 While these higher levels of

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schooling offer more explicit discussions of citizenship and more nuanced reactions from students, younger students offer unique insights about citizenship and their understandings of the state. Because elementary school curricula cater to young developing minds, they attempt to present complex material in direct and accessible ways. This relative lack of the abstractions engrained in higher levels of schooling provides rich content for analysis.

In order to explore some of the diversity of primary education environments in Beirut, I conducted research at three schools: Ahliah School, the Mediterranean School24, and the National Protestant College (NPC). I selected these schools for two reasons. First, civics and character education are a core component of their elementary curriculum, as well as their broader stated educational mission. These schools are based on international curriculum standards, and English, Arabic, and French are used as languages of instruction and administration. Because of the international nature of their curriculum, these schools attract students from plural sectarian and geographic backgrounds.

The second reason for the selection of schools included in this study is a result of the challenges I faced in gaining access to schools as a foreign researcher. Other educational ethnographers have described similar difficulties, noting that governments consider schools a part of the national security apparatus and want to protect classroom activities from external scrutiny.25 For example, in their study of Lebanese history classes, Kamal Abouchedid and Ramzi Nasser explain that “[a]ccess to confessional schools in Lebanon involves extensive

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24 This school’s name has been changed to preserve anonymity at the principal’s request.
25 Herrera 2010, 118.
negotiations, particularly when researchers are explicitly concerned with a touchy and emotionally taxing issue such as national integration. Access… was limited by the fact that many educators felt that we were digging up something that many Lebanese would prefer [remain] buried.”

I approached nearly thirty schools with this research project, and was only granted access to the three schools where I conducted research after generous introductions from Lebanese education scholars who supported the project. Though school principals appeared interested in the research, they wanted to know why I was interested in observing their school specifically. They appeared skeptical of my intentions and were hesitant to allow me into classrooms without an introduction from someone they knew personally. At one of the schools where I was eventually granted research clearance, the President’s Office responded to my initial email with a disinterested “Regretfully we cannot accommodate your request at this time.” Two weeks later I approached the same school through a friend of a friend who was a teacher there. When this teacher forwarded my original email with a brief introduction stating that she knew me, the principal replied warmly encouraging me to include the school in my research. After receiving such introductions, all of the school administrators, teachers, and students I interacted with throughout the duration of my classroom observations were exceptionally welcoming and spoke openly with me about the challenges and successes of their experiences at the school.

This is not to suggest that three schools in urban Beirut capture the diversity of possible Lebanese educational experiences. I do not intend for the qualitative analysis details herein to be representative of all schooling experiences in Lebanon. The three schools covered in this study occupy a particular space in the wider Lebanese educational environment that differs

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considerably from other schooling environments, such as those at national public schools and UNRWA schools, as later analysis suggests. However, though these schools share geographic and socioeconomic similarities, they also occupy different historical and religious positions in the Lebanese education landscape. Ahliyah School, for example, emerged during the French Mandate period and has a long history of supporting the Lebanese nationalist movement and sectarian diversity. The NPC was founded after independence as a branch of the National Evangelical Church, while the Mediterranean School began under the Ottoman Empire as a school for the children of foreign faculty at the American University in Beirut. These unique histories inform the particular roles that these schools play in the Lebanese educational landscape and the notions of citizenship that they educate their students to embody. It is my hope that these three case studies will provide qualitative insight into three (of many) primary school environments and the complex ways that individual Lebanese students and teachers experience and engage with educational processes.

One strength of ethnography is that it is open-ended and narrative-oriented. This analysis does not aim to provide a definitive result about the effectiveness of Lebanese civics classrooms. It focuses on the processes of how, why, and among whom knowledge is transmitted. I propose a number of indicators to understand the ethnographic narrative; however, it should be understood that these are not data points on a graph, but portraits in the larger mosaic.

In light of this, I define citizenship in this study as broadly as possible while retaining some meaning to the concept. That is, I see some form of citizenship as being practiced in all schools by all students. The question is not whether a school does or does not effectively facilitate citizenship, but rather what kinds of citizenship are fostered by distinct school environments, and how teachers, students, and administrators participate in this process. I
attempt to avoid normative assessments of whether schools, teachers, or curricula are “successful” or “effective”. Instead, I offer snapshots of what I observed in Lebanese classrooms and analyze what these practices might reflect about understandings of citizenship.

For the MEHE and most of the NGOs surveyed in this study, citizenship refers to a more specific and quantifiable condition related to the facilitation of “active citizenship”,27 democratic values, and civic engagement. For example, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)’s 2009 study of Lebanese civic education focuses on “what young people… should know about a number of topics related to democratic institutions, including elections, individual rights, national identity, political participation, and respect for ethnic and political diversity.”28 In order to evaluate the state of civics education in Lebanon, UNDP conducted an extensive survey in 2009, asking students questions such as:

- Are you proud of the Lebanese flag?
- Should a good citizen be ready to serve in the army to defend the country?
- Do government ministries in Lebanon carry out their duties to citizens?
- Do you trust the justice system?
- Do you trust political parties?
- Do you trust the United Nations?
- Should citizens have the right to be free from the control of confessions?
- Should ministerial and public positions be divided equally amongst communities?
- Are men better suited to be political leaders than women?
- Does the state have an obligation to provide basic healthcare for all?29

Students’ answers to these questions were then disaggregated by gender, sect, region, and household income and compared to international standards30 to determine where civic education failings were concentrated.

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29 UNDP 2009, 247-252.
30 These standards were based on the findings of a study of civics education programs in 38 countries worldwide. This study is available here: Schultz, Wolfram, John Ainley, Julian
Likewise, Tony Breslin defines five characteristics of “citizenship-rich” schools: civics education as a core component of curriculum; a skills-based and student-centered pedagogy; opportunities for co-curricular and extra-curricular engagement; active participation of the school’s various stakeholders; and modeling civic principles in all institutional and communal structures.\textsuperscript{31} By these measures, all three of the schools I attended could be considered “citizenship-rich” institutions at the school-wide level, though individual classrooms facilitated different types of citizenship.

By focusing on civics and character education, I do not intend to suggest that these programs in and of themselves provide a normatively positive contribution to society. Nor do I suggest that integration, national unity, or identification with the state are inherently positive qualities that all students should be taught to embody. On the contrary, I hope that this study will illuminate some of the ways in which these concepts, traditionally portrayed as normative goals, can also be problematic and exclusionary. Perhaps civics education is not the “best” option for all educational contexts, or for developing young peoples’ characters. Not all students and families want the same thing from their education, or share the same societal values. As Saba Mahmood suggests, “very different configurations of personhood can cohabit the same cultural and historical space, with each configuration the product of a specific discursive formation rather


than of the culture at large.” This study acknowledges this diversity by avoiding simplistic evaluations of the “success” or “failure” of civic education programs in Lebanon.

The Lebanese Educational Landscape

Lebanese primary education is divided among three overlapping school systems: private, foreign, and public. In all three systems, there exist both sectarian schools—that is, schools that are explicitly affiliated with a particular religious group and, in some cases, teach theology as part of the required curriculum—and purportedly secular institutions. Some private schools receive subsidies from the state, and all schools operating in Lebanon are legally subject to review by the MEHE. According to section 40 of Decree 2869, drafted on 16 January 1959, the curriculum taught in all public and private schools is subject to the supervision of Lebanon’s six regional education authorities. However, perpetual political disputes between Lebanon’s sectarian political representatives over the content of national curriculum undermine the authority of regional administrations to enact this decree without significant political fallout. Section 13 of Decree 1436 of December 1950 further states that “the curriculum in the private, national, and foreign schools should be the national one,” but “directors of these schools can choose techniques of teaching and add subject matters not included in the national curriculum as they see fit.” Decree 1436 empowers the MEHE to evaluate and approve all textbooks used in Lebanese classrooms, both public and private. However, the MEHE has not enacted this power to ensure a unified or comparable curriculum. According to a CERD representative, the MEHE

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33 Abouchedid and Nasser, 61-62.
does not even have “information about the content of the various… textbooks used by private schools,” resulting in “a lack of uniformity in… teaching among the schools.”

Roughly 445,877 students attend Lebanese elementary schools every year. Of these, 134,630 students (30 percent) are enrolled in public schools, 101,637 students (23 percent) are enrolled in state subsidized private schools, and 208,973 students (47 percent) are enrolled in unsubsidized private schools. As these figures suggest, the vast majority of education in Lebanon is provided by the private sector. Prior to World War I, only one public state-run school existed in Lebanon, leaving the private sector responsible for educating Lebanese children in the early years of the Republic. By Hassan Kobeissi’s assessment, throughout the Mandate period, “Each group was running its own educational affairs, which led to the development of a tradition where every community would take care of teaching its own children the way it wants.”

When the public school system expanded after independence, private schools had already developed expansive networks. Many of these were run by confessional communities, and provided what many Lebanese families deemed “superior” education. Though public schools offer free, comprehensive education, many parents still prefer to send their children to private schools. These families believe that private schools offer a higher quality education, or an education better aligned with their values. Education has recently become more balanced between public and private schools, however, which may reflect increased integration in schools and a more

34 Abouchedid and Nasser, 72
37 Abouchedid and Nasser, 60.
broad-based dissemination of national curricula. Statistics from 2001 reveal that thirty-nine percent of students now attend public schools, more than double those attending public schools in 1930. Differences between the two systems have also been limited by the increase in standardized curricula and stronger state control over private institutions.

Despite this, measurable differences exist between the schooling environments in public and private schools. A 2007 survey conducted by UNDP of 3,111 ninth-grade students in 113 Lebanese schools found that private school students exhibited significantly higher knowledge of “citizenship concepts” than their peers in public schools. Public school students, on the other hand, showed “greater trust in government institutions, in public schools, and more explicit love of country, protectionism toward Lebanon and its industries, as well as proclivity towards gender discrimination.”\(^{39}\) The survey also revealed that private school students were more likely to participate in extra-curricular activities and clubs, while public school students expressed greater interest in politics and support for particular political parties.\(^{40}\) These statistics illustrate the impact of different education environments, and indicate that how and where citizenship is taught matter.

The Lebanese school system includes three tracks: general, vocational, and higher education. Which track students elect to follow depends on their career goals, merit, and socioeconomic background. The general education system, which houses the majority of students, is comprised of four cycles: the optional pre-elementary cycle provides instruction to three to six year old students; the elementary/primary cycle comprises grades one through six (students six to twelve years old); the intermediate cycle comprises grades seven through nine (students thirteen to fifteen years old); and the secondary cycle comprises grades ten and eleven.

\(^{39}\) UNDP 2008, 35-36.
\(^{40}\) Ibid.
(students sixteen to eighteen years old). Beginning in the pre-elementary cycle, students are required to learn a foreign language, usually either French or English or both. Roughly 55.45 percent of schools teach French as the primary foreign language, 21.8 percent teach English as the primary foreign language, and 22.75 percent offer both languages.41

**Education in Conflicted Environments**

Sociopolitical conflict in Lebanon has informed the daily lives of the country’s residents since its formation. In this sense, the 1958 crisis, the fifteen-year civil war, the July 2006 war, and the 2008 “mini-civil war”42 are not sporadic eruptions or brief disconnected incidents, but rather reflections of an ongoing, unresolved domestic dissonance that has routinely been enacted violently. A recent UNDP report characterizes this dissonance as “cycles, each of which begins with a crisis and ends with a [political] settlement, which in turn leads to another crisis.”43 While acknowledging this consistency, I must contextualize the significance of Lebanon’s particular state of crisis while this research was being conducted.

During the spring of 2014, when I conducted my field research, the civil war in neighboring Syria entered its fourth year, and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) had registered more than 300,000 school-age Syrian refugee children in Lebanon. Roughly 63,000 joined the Lebanese schools system, while more than two-thirds remained out of school due to their families’ financial situation or inability to find a school that would accept them. The Syrian students incorporated in the Lebanese school system, or the elaborate United Nations

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41 Lebanese Association for Educational Studies.
42 Beginning in January 2007, a move by the opposition to force the government to resign led to sectarian clashes across Lebanon, particularly in inter-sectarian neighborhoods. After over a year of routine skirmishes in the streets, fighting intensified in Beirut in May 2008 and in Tripoli in August 2008, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries. The violence in Beirut forced the airport and the port to be closed and effectively shut down the city for over a week.
43 UNDP 2009, 91.
Refugee Works Agency (UNRWA) school network, are taught the Lebanese national curriculum.\textsuperscript{44}

The Lebanese elementary school students in this study, most of whom are between seven and eleven years old, have themselves lived through significant on-going political violence. This includes the war with Israel in July 2006 and what became nearly weekly bombings resulting in the deaths of over twenty people in Beirut’s southern suburbs, downtown, and the Biqa‘a Valley over the course of my research.\textsuperscript{45} Between 2006 and 2008, and again in 2013, unresolved disputes between the ruling coalition and the opposition paralyzed the Lebanese government. These disputes left the country without a functioning legislative body for over a year and a half, and without a president for six months. During these periods, “The quality of public discourse also deteriorated significantly as politicians in both [the March 8 and March 14] coalitions accused each other of treason.”\textsuperscript{46}

Furthermore, most current elementary-aged students’ parents had lived through a fifteen-year civil war that left over 150,000 people dead, 200,000 wounded, and over a quarter of the population displaced at the hands of their compatriots. The war created “a generation of children who believe that war and destruction are regular elements of life,”\textsuperscript{47} which, for many Lebanese children, they were. According to a United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) survey conducted during the civil war, 90.3 percent of Lebanese children had witnessed a

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{44} It is UNRWA’s official policy to adopt the national curriculum of the host countries where they operate.
\textsuperscript{46} UNDP 2009, 44.
\textsuperscript{47} Muhanna, Kamel. “No place for children during the war: Lebanon case.” Center for Research and Information and Kudos University, Amman, Jordan, 19-20 Nov. 2008.
\end{footnotesize}
bombing first-hand, 68 percent had been displaced from their homes, 54.5 percent suffered from severe poverty, 50.3 percent had experienced an act of violence, 26 percent had lost one of their siblings, and 21.3 percent had been separated from their parents. Considerable political and social conflicts persist, routinely erupting in violence. The effects of these historical and present realities on children and families are extensive. This environment powerfully shapes the way that Lebanese of all ages interpret and engage with their nation, state institutions, and their co-nationals.

In addition to the social consequences of these conflicts, ongoing political and military quarrels in Lebanon significantly affect institutional capacities, infrastructure, and citizens’ living conditions. The education sector has been among the most adversely affected spheres of life during the civil war and subsequent conflicts. Routine violence and political instability have disrupted the functioning of schools by damaging educational infrastructure, caused delays in funding as a result of parliamentary deadlock, and undermined the consistency and effectiveness of national educational review and reform. These persistent conflicts have also magnified significant regional disparities, both in terms of educational outputs and infrastructure development. Enrolment in the primary cycle, for example, ranges from ninety-seven percent in urban Beirut to only fifty percent in North and South Lebanon and the Biqa’â Valley.

Given these challenges, the education sector found its primary source of resilience in the willingness and capacity of sub-national groups to manage and fund the schooling of their communities. This deferral to sub-national education providers does not come without a cost,

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50 Ibid, 8.
however. As a UNDP National Development Report explains, “Many social ‘rights’ or ‘services’ such as education… are accessed either through local political leaders or through religious organizations [in some cases] funded by the state. Citizens’ rights are re-packaged as ‘favors’ while recipients remain oblivious to the fact that these services are in fact provided for by the state.” As a result, many Lebanese families have come to see the education sector as a reflection of the state’s failure to provide adequate social services, rather than a transformative sphere that empowers students to be active, tolerant, or nationalistic citizens.

The Development of Lebanese Civic Education

Civic education [al-muwatin wa al-tarbiya al-madaniyya] has been a subject in the Lebanese national school systems since the country’s independence in 1946. Civics classes generally consist of about one hour of instruction per week, and include lessons on the Lebanese political system, the electoral process, and civic values. The curriculum intended to delineate (and construct) the rights and values of Lebanese citizenship, foster a sense of national solidarity, and provide an overview of national institutions. The MEHE subsequently mandated that this curriculum be taught in all public schools. Since the 1990s, many Lebanese private schools also introduced civics programs, though these programs diverge from the specific texts and classroom structures prescribed by the MEHE for public school civics classes. However, centralized state exit exams and crossover of faculty between private and public school environments work to limit the range of possible civics narratives.

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51 UNDP 2009, 27.
52 Civic education, a subject taught in many countries around the world, generally focuses on “knowledge and understanding of opportunities for participation and engagement in both civic and civil society. It is concerned with the wider range of ways that citizens use to interact with and shape their communities (including schools) and societies.” For an overview of global civic education programs, see: Schultz, et. al.
Following the conclusion of the civil war in the early 1990s, the MEHE significantly reformed the national civics curriculum. The Ta’if Agreement, which officially ended the war in 1989, suggested that education should be a central platform for the restoration of social relations among the Lebanese. In keeping with this suggestion, the Education Reform Plan of 1994 stated: “The curricula shall be reviewed and developed in a manner that strengthens national belonging, fusion, [and] spiritual and cultural openness.” The Education Reform Plan delineated the goals of national education in Lebanon, specifically noting the importance of instilling in students the values of democracy, respect for human rights, conflict resolution, and political participation. This development is significant in that it framed educational reforms, and specifically civic education, as central to national reconstruction after fifteen years of devastating inter-civilian violence. As former Minister of Education and High Education Khaled Kabbani reiterated in 2008:

> Citizenship education and the instruction of citizens in demanding their rights and living up to their obligations are a basic premise of nation building. While this a general tenet in most countries, in Lebanon it is a basic condition for the sustenance of the nation and the state, for reinforcing national solidarity and for containing the pace of sectarian polarization.

The hope that civic education will empower students to overcome sub-national rivalries is recurrent throughout MEHE reports and scholarship on civic education in Lebanon. For example, a 2009 UNDP report asserts that “citizenship [education] is an essential weapon not only in the struggle against social and economic inequity but also in the attempt to widen the conception of

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53 Though the war “officially” ended with the Ta’if Agreement in 1989, violent episodes continued throughout the early 1990s, and many of the animosities reflected in the war remain a significant part of the Lebanese social fabric to the present day.


55 UNDP 2008, 8.
politics itself.” Implicit in such pronouncements is the belief that education can and should be the driving force behind social integration and national unity and that the country’s future depends on the success of civic education initiatives.

However, this vision of civic education has proven optimistic at best, and misleading and deflecting at worst. As Bassel Akar argues, contemporary curriculum and pedagogical practices in Lebanese national education only haphazardly address the stated aims of civic education, and often national administrative reforms are not carried out in individual classrooms. Considerable gaps persist between the stated goals of civic education and their implementation. Implementation is hindered by curricula divorced from political realities, poorly trained teachers, a focus on rote learning, authoritarian school climates, and limited opportunities to put civic skills into practice.

Facilitating social cohesion and national unity through education has proven particularly challenging given the aforementioned discrepancies between different school environments and curricula. The diversity of civics and history textbooks validates divergent visions of Lebanese history and citizenship, exacerbating tensions between communities. At the same time, the focus on civics education as a key tool for fostering nationalism and productive civic engagement has drawn attention away from other defining features of educational environments.

56 UNDP 2009, 9.
57 Frayha 2003, 81.
58 Akar 2012.
The emphasis on civics curricula neglects extra-curricular activities, student governments, and inclusive admission policies, which also play important roles in facilitating active citizenship.\textsuperscript{61}

While the focus in this study is on civics classes, other classes — from history to math to geography to language, as well as extra-curricular activities and playground practices — also inform students’ understandings of classroom citizenship. These subjects and practices warrant studies’ in their own right. At the schools covered in this study, two of which were subsidized private schools and one of which was an unsubsidized foreign school, the administration called civics lessons “character education”, or integrated them into the social studies curriculum. I address the national civics curriculum at length because it provided the basis for these classes despite differences in lesson structures and titles. I elected to focus on civic education because it most explicitly addresses national identity, civic values, and political engagement.

Chapter Summary and Emerging Themes

This study begins in chapter one with an overview of the theoretical framework. Chapter one provides a review of legal definitions of Lebanese citizenship and social engagements with these definitions, putting Lebanese citizenship legislation and practices in conversation with broader theories of citizenship. It also details the role of schools in national subject formation and the construction of citizenship(s), noting how schools can serve as both spaces of individual liberation and national subject formation.

Chapter two discusses the goals of civics education as they have been delineated by the MEHE and international organizations, and describes the wider environment that Lebanese civics education programs are embedded within. It also explores how individual classrooms engage with national mandates, administrative expectations, and local conflicts.

\textsuperscript{61} Shuayb 2012, 1.
Chapter three is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted at three schools in Beirut. It narrates my observations of the types of citizenship constructed in Lebanese educational environments, and interrogates the ways that these delineations reflect and challenge social and political expectations outside of the school. It addresses the myriad roles of educators in developing and implementing curriculum, facilitating dialogue between students, and responding to changing external circumstances as they permeate classrooms. It also notes how civics classrooms differ between schools, and proposes possible explanations and implications of these distinct classroom experiences.

Chapter four details some of the recent initiatives—both domestic and international—to evaluate and reform the Lebanese education system in order to promote particular civic values such as critical thinking and democratic participation. It integrates interviews with staff at Lebanese and international NGOs with a review of the recent work of prominent NGOs in the education sector. This integrated analysis evaluates how stakeholders inform and construct particular ideas of Lebanese citizenship.

A number of themes emerge in the chapters that follow. The first is the dichotomy between sectarianism and social cohesion, concepts that shape nearly every scholarly and public discourse on Lebanon. Schools play a key role in both of these phenomena, and I attempt to do justice to this complexity by acknowledging the tension between them without reifying the dichotomy.

The second theme is the question of whether societal conflict fuels conflict in schools or schools fuel societal conflict. In other words, can the “right” education overcome the challenges of society at large or are schools themselves a part of the problem? Abouchedid and Nasser suggest that “the success of the government [in moderating] inter-group conflict and instill[ing] a
unified national consciousness among schoolchildren rests upon the role of education as a national unifier.”

On the other hand, one of their interlocutors, a Lebanese educational administrator, responded that schools should not be blamed for the “lack of national consciousness among our students on education… [because] the family plays a greater role in their socialization than schools do.” This is a central question in education scholarship and theory, and, again, I attempt to leave it productively open.

A third theme that emerges throughout this study is the tension between rhetoric and reality in teaching civics education in Lebanon, which many of my interlocutors struggled with. In a country surrounded by war and steeped in domestic political conflicts that undermine the very existence of the state, how do we teach six- to twelve-year-old students, many of whom are not citizens, about citizenship and civic values in a way that is both relevant and empowering?

As this introduction suggests, the questions addressed in this research have deep and long-term implications for the future of Lebanon and the people living within its borders. The students in this study will inherit a country fraught with internal conflict as well as innovation and possibility. The way they approach the task of living together will, in many ways, be defined by the way they were socialized to understand their country and their cohabitants during these formative years of their education.

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62 Aboughedid and Nasser, 57.
63 Ibid, 74.
Chapter One: 
Schools and Subjecthood

I begin in this chapter with an exploration of how the framework of citizenship works to exclude and include particular communities from the national narrative of Lebanon. This will provide important insights into the possibilities and limitations of the notions of citizenship being constructed in Lebanese civics classrooms. Through an overview of relevant theories on citizenship and subject formation, this chapter will outline how the particular realities of contemporary Lebanon engage with and depart from existing theoretical frameworks for understanding citizenship, particularly as it is constructed and performed in Lebanese classrooms. Ultimately, I use the lens of the classroom to understand more about the everyday nature of citizenship formation in Lebanon.

The chapter will be divided into three core sections. The first will focus on the legal definitions of citizenship in Lebanon, providing an overview of the development of citizenship legislation since the formation of Lebanon in 1943. This section will unpack the practical implications of these changing regulations for who is included and excluded from the Lebanese nation, and the fluidity of these legal identities. It will also begin to deconstruct the diverse international, national, and private actors that have played an important role in facilitating legal reforms and their various stakes in the redefinition of Lebanese citizenship, a discussion that will be taken up again in more detail in chapter four.

The second section will look at Lebanese schools as sites of citizenship construction and engage with relevant theories on schools as spaces of both subject formation and the development of critical thinking. This section will also explore the relationships between schools
and state institutions, focusing on how the Lebanese MEHE has employed schools as tools to rhetorically construct a unified nation and how individual schools and classrooms have engaged with this role. This discussion will draw heavily on the arguments of Foucault in describing schools as spaces of national subject formation, and Freire in accessing the potential for schools to be sites of individual liberation. By bringing together these two seemingly contradictory theories, this analysis will explore how schools simultaneously encourage students to think critically and become active citizens as they become bound up in the hierarchical power structures of state institutions and sub-state networks.

The final section will address how state-school relations participate in the process of defining Lebanese national identity. It will detail some of the debates that have arisen about the rights, duties, and values associated with being Lebanese as they are delineated through civics curriculum, classroom dynamics, and educational administrative structures. This section will pay particular attention to the ways in which distinct historical narratives are articulated through educational environments, and the stakes of these articulations.

Legal Citizenship and Lived Citizenship

Dominant national narratives of Lebanon, espoused by citizens and reiterated in the preamble of the constitution, construct Lebanon as a territory defined by its unique landscape and the Lebanese as a people characterized by a history of cohabitation and commitment to democratic values. Membership in the Lebanese nation, like most nations around the world, is articulated through a combination of shared civic and cultural values and patrimonial descent.

The framework of citizenship works to exclude and include particular communities from the

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nation through legal, rhetorical, and social strategies of solidarity and agonism. As Ken Plummer notes, “To be a citizen implies ‘the other’ who is not a citizen… Both citizenship and identity highlight the idea that life is lived within certain boundaries and is guided by some sense of continuities, connections, and sameness.”

However, Engin F. Isin explains that “citizenship and its alterity always emerged simultaneously in a dialogical manner and constituted each other.” In this sense, citizenship is juxtaposed not with distant others, but with what Isin terms “immanent others”—citizens and non-citizens who are variously excluded from or discriminated against within the national body. The narrative of citizenship as a black and white dichotomy between internal citizens and external non-citizens obscures the reality that all subjects are differentially incorporated and disenfranchised in the nation-state project. In Lebanon, the systems of legal and social sectarianism purport to include a diverse population in the nation-state framework, but they also render impossible identities that are internal to the Lebanese nation but external to the sectarian system. Thus, they serve to govern the possibilities of identification with and within the Lebanese state and nation, and externalize those that do not fit within these systems.

The architecture of the modern Lebanese state was constructed under French Mandatory rule following the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916, which created five colonial mandate territories out of the former Ottoman-controlled Levant. As Kamal Salibi points out, “All five of these countries were artificial creations established and given their initial organization by

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68 Most historians credit Nicolas Murads’ 1844 publication, *Notice Historique sur la Nation Maronite*, as the first major call for a “Lebanese” nation in the territory that is now Lebanon, though this imaginary was, as the title suggests, dominated by the Maronite community.
foreign imperial powers.” Since the Republic of Lebanon came to exist within its current territorial borders on 31 August 1920, by decree from the French High Commissioner General Henry Gouraud, Lebanon has always been a religiously diverse state dominated by sub-national sectarian communities that in some cases identify more strongly with their sect than the nation as a whole. As a result, Lebanon’s founding fathers created a system based on communal representation in order to ease sectarian groups’ insecurities and ensure that all groups were allocated a place, albeit unequal, in the political process. This process culminated in the National Pact of 1943, an oral agreement that stipulated that the president of Lebanon should be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the parliament a Shi’a Muslim. This sectarian distribution extended throughout the political system—the minister of defense would be an Orthodox Christian, the minister of the interior would be Druze, and the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces would be a Maronite Christian. The National Pact also stipulated that there should be six Christians for every five Muslims in the parliament and in high-ranking positions in the military and civil service. Notably, as Moaddel et. al. point out, though this consociational system “attempted to resolve political power inequalities by endorsing the principle of shared ownership of the country by all confessions, it also institutionalized a hierarchically organized sectarian democracy, whereby political equality was expected within, but not among, confessions.”

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70 Alternately, some would argue that this system was motivated by a French-Maronite effort to consolidate Maronite political dominance in the future Lebanese state.
Citizenship in Lebanon is premised on sectarian identity; membership in one of Lebanon’s eighteen recognized sectarian communities is required to enjoy the full political, social, and legal rights afforded to citizens. As the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination states, “It is through his or her membership in a community that the Lebanese belongs to the State, regardless of his or her place of residence.” This is what Mehmoona Moosa-Mitha calls a “difference-centred” model of citizenship, acknowledging the multiple subject positions of citizens. In communitarian systems like Lebanon “the primary concern… is the effective and just functioning of society. The good society is built through mutual support and group action, not atomistic choice and individual liberty. Obligations to society… predominate over rights because their goal is to build a stronger community based on common identity, mutuality, participation, [and] integration.” Lebanon’s confessional political structure, then, privileges the protection of the country’s delicate sectarian balance and proportionate sectarian representation for each community over individual rights. Or, perhaps more accurately in the spirit of Lebanese legislators, Lebanese individuals’ rights are best protected when their confessional community feels secure in its status as a fairly represented part of the Lebanese state.

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73 These communities include: Sunni Muslim, Shi’a Muslim, Druze, Maronite Christian, Greek Orthodox, Melkite Greek Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Syriac Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Chaldean Catholic, Assyrian, Coptic, Alawite, Isma’ili, Protestant, and Jewish.
However, as Thomas Janoski and Brian Gran note, “Categorical or group rights… may also abandon citizens with complex ethnic [or religious] heritage.”\textsuperscript{77} They point out four areas where citizenship rights based on community membership may be problematic: the potential for discrimination, the reinforcement of community identities to the disadvantage of those who do not fit neatly into existing community categories, the obscuring of inequalities within communities, and the likelihood of large community groups using the framework of group rights to exclude or dominate over smaller communities.\textsuperscript{78}

Though all citizens are entitled to the same legal rights within this framework, not all communities are equally integrated into and represented by the Lebanese nation-state structure. While citizens are legally allowed to convert or change their sectarian identity, children automatically inherit their father’s sectarian affiliation. This sectarian identity is subsequently printed on all citizens’ individual entry record (‘ikhraaj qaid fardi) and determines the political positions to which they can aspire and the personal status courts that will preside over all matters of their personal lives. While the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination argues that the original spirit of the Lebanese confessional political system was to protect the freedom of Lebanon’s confessional communities rather than to discriminate based on ethnic or religious identities, the Committee also notes that this sectarian structure impedes “the freedoms of those individuals who do not wish to identify themselves with a particular group.”\textsuperscript{79}

It should be added that the sectarian nature of Lebanon’s political system delineates some religious and ethnic groups as part of the Lebanese community, at the expense of other groups.

\textsuperscript{77} Janoski and Gran, 25.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 26.
\textsuperscript{79} Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, 5.
who reside in Lebanon. \(^{80}\) Lebanon has an estimated population of four million and a workforce of just over 1.2 million Lebanese citizens. \(^{81}\) In addition, there are roughly 900,000 Syrian refugees, \(^{82}\) more than 400,000 Palestinian refugees, and 150,000 Sri Lankan migrant workers\(^{83}\) currently living in Lebanon, comprising nearly half of the inhabitants of the country. \(^{84}\) In this sense, the rights delineated to non-nationals and the way that their presence in Lebanon is framed and enacted plays a defining role in the Lebanese social and political landscape and the daily lives of many of Lebanon’s residents. It is therefore vital to critically evaluate how national boundaries have been constructed, the contexts of their construction, and the rhetorical frameworks that are enacted to legitimize them. Given the diversity of the Lebanese citizenry and the many cultural, historical, and religious commonalities between the Lebanese and citizens in neighboring states, defining the in-group and out-group boundaries of the Lebanese nation is particularly challenging. Sectarian and nationalistic discourse becomes a salient identifying feature in this context, because this rhetoric can be used to create an imaginary of shared Lebanese history that obscures internal communities’ diverse understandings of what the Lebanese state represents.

Sectarian and othering discourses in Lebanon are not only about constructing national unity, however; they are also about claiming the right for nationals to control and define the Lebanese...

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\(^{80}\) For example, Palestinian refugees, many of whom have lived in Lebanon since the creation of Israel in 1948 or following the Arab-Israeli war in 1969, have consciously been excluded from Lebanese citizenship.

\(^{81}\) No formal census has been conducted in Lebanon since 1932 due to the sensitivity of sectarian demographic balances. These figures are estimates provided in Ray Jureidini and Nayla Moukarbel. “Female Sri Lankan domestic workers in Lebanon: a case of ‘contract slavery’?” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30:4 (July 2004), 588.

\(^{82}\) UNHCR. “Syria Regional Refugee Response – Lebanon.” *United Nations Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal*. <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>. These figures are approximate as numbers are constantly in flux.

\(^{83}\) Jureidini and Moukarbel, 588.

\(^{84}\) Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, 8.
territory. Through these discourses, the Lebanese express concerns about the maintenance of “a privileged relationship between their race and a territory.”

This is particularly salient in the Lebanese context, because since Lebanon’s creation as a distinct territory, foreign actors have always exercised considerable control within the state through internal alliances, funding, and large populations resident in Lebanon. For example, the most common explanation for the poor treatment of Palestinian refugee populations in Lebanon is the delicate sectarian balance of the Lebanese political system. The vast majority of Palestinian refugees are Sunni Muslims, so integration of Palestinians into Lebanese society and politics would fundamentally alter the existing demographics of Lebanon’s religious communities. Lebanese politicians argue that the carefully balanced confessional system does not have “the absorptive capacity needed to integrate a refugee population of such magnitudes.”

Unsurprisingly given the predominantly Sunni composition of Palestinian refugee populations, Lebanese Christian leadership in particular has played on popular apprehension about the permanent settlement of Palestinians in Lebanon and the threat that such settlement would pose to the Lebanese demographic equilibrium. As a result of such rhetoric, the International Crisis Group notes that “successive governments have enacted measures to foreclose any such possibility [of obtaining citizenship], notably by ensuring that refugees live in extremely precarious conditions.”

Across political lines, many Lebanese feel it is their duty and right to protect the

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sovereignty of their national territory, and controlling and distinguishing internal others is often seen as fundamental to this project.

While many suggest that sectarianism is inherently dividing and contrary to national unity, others argue that the institutionalization of sectarian politics ensures equal representation for Lebanon’s many diverse religious communities. If sectarianism were abolished, they argue, the delicate balance currently maintained in Lebanese politics would be threatened and the rights of minority groups would be vulnerable to the whims of larger factions. Lebanese citizens currently identify with sectarian groups because they are provided few other viable options for pursuing political representation. 88 Even if sectarianism was formally removed from the Lebanese political system, many argue, sectarian cleavages would continue to play an important role in determining political allegiances, but the former institutional safeguard of assured representation for all groups would be absent. In this sense, the sectarian based political structure is merely a reflection of the dominance, albeit contested, of sectarian identity in Lebanese political culture.

Although the Lebanese political and legal systems are based on sub-national, sectarian groups, the diversity and strength of these groups does not inherently threaten national unity. In fact, proponents of the existing sectarian system frame the guaranteed representation of all sects in one, centralized Lebanese government as a unifying force in Lebanon. As Ramazan Hakki Oztan explains, “sectarianism was the elephant in the room that would undo the nation, and the official Lebanese discourse wrapped it in a cloak of nostalgia and reimagined what Lebanon was

88 Hudson, 104.
meant to be." On the other hand, sectarian affiliations may be utilized as a means of obscuring other economic and social hierarchies and co-opting diverse sectarian groups to present a unified national framework to the exclusion of non-nationals. As Sami Ofeish points out, “The strong influence of sectarian logic in public discourse serves to camouflage the class dimensions of several contested issues.” In this sense, it is in the interests of elites from all sects to maintain the salience of sectarian politics in order to undermine challenges to the glaring economic inequalities within and across sectors. Though sectarian labels remain the same, tactics and identities shift with the needs of the political moment.

In this sense, it is significant that despite Lebanon’s long history of sectarian conflicts, these conflicts have rarely been caused by or resulted in efforts to convert other religious communities or subdue their freedom to practice their religion. Generally, though conflicts have been between two or more religious communities, disputes have not been over religious dogma or practice, but rather rooted in political and material concerns. The conflation of religiosity and sectarian politics remains dominant in Lebanese political discourse not because it reflects the reality on the ground, but because the manipulation of religious dogmas is a powerful tool for incumbent elites to maintain power. This is because sectarianism not only creates an easily accessible constituency for elites, but it also “divides classes along sectarian lines, thus encouraging them to compete with one another for access to resources” rather than challenging the national socioeconomic structure. As Stuart Hall’s theory of articulation suggests, sectarian identity is but one of many identity features that may become salient in differing social, legal,

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91 Ibid, 100.
economic, and political contexts. Similarly, this identity may be privileged in one context and subordinated in another; social and economic hierarchies do not extend homogeneously across time and space.  

These internal divisions, however, become less salient when the Lebanese nation is confronted with external or internal threats from non-nationals. In fact, distinguishing those outside of the national community has frequently been a unifying project among Lebanon’s sectarian communities. For example, when the civil war dwindled in 1990, and the country began the process of reconstruction after over a decade and a half of intra-Lebanese fighting, “all Lebanese political parties and politicians agreed that Palestinians could not settle in Lebanon. Some Lebanese called for the redistribution of Palestinian refugees to other Arab and foreign countries.” Given the fragile sectarian balance of Lebanese politics and the long history of internal instability in the country, Asem Khalil suggests that “opposition to the settlement of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is one of the few issues that unites the Lebanese government and most of the sectarian communities… not to mention government and opposition both in Lebanon and abroad.”

Lebanon has faced considerable internal instability throughout its short history at the hands of both sectarian factions within Lebanon and external interference. In response to its tumultuous history, Lebanese politics function as if the state is in a nearly constant state of crisis, leading politicians to prioritize security concerns over the rights of non-native populations living within their borders. As Judith Miller and David Samuels argue, “The fact that the living

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standard of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon has been deemed ‘catastrophic’ by both UNRWA and by the Lebanese government can therefore be understood as a deliberate result of official state policy that is supported by all parties across Lebanon's divided confessional spectrum.”

Forming a cohesive national identity in a state with so many disparate religious communities is challenging enough, and politicians have not found it expedient to include refugee populations in the national framework.

Despite the persistence of territorial border disputes, strong sub-national groups that undermine the sovereignty of the Lebanese state, and contestation surrounding Lebanon’s religious and cultural history, Lebanese identity – codified through citizenship – remains a contextually salient way of articulating internal solidarity and external difference. As Salibi argues, “In all but name, Lebanon today is a non-country. Yet, paradoxically, there has not been a time when the Muslims and Christians of Lebanon have exhibited, on the whole, a keener consciousness of common identity.”

Perhaps the most useful way of understanding citizenship in the Lebanese context is, as Isin defines it, an “agonistic and contested processes of becoming political that generate rights claims and articulate responsibilities for multiple identities, polities, and practices.” Citizenship is a concept that fundamentally shapes how individuals relate to each other, to their government, and to their homeland. Craig Calhoun explains, it “not only shapes practical political identity and ideology, it also shapes the very idea of society.” Modern citizenship is traditionally understood as a package of social, political, and legal rights and duties bestowed on individuals.

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96 Salibi, 2.
97 Isin, Engin F. “Citizenship after Orientalism” in Isin and Turner, 117. [Emphasis added.]
or groups by a nation-state. Citizenship delineates membership in the national community, “establishing ‘personhood’ or who out of the totality of denizens, natives, and subjects of a territory are recognized as being citizens with specific rights.” As Isin suggests, “Citizenship… brings within its orbit three fundamental issues: how the boundaries of membership within a polity and between polities should be defined (extent); how the benefits and burdens of membership should be allocated (content); and how the ‘thickness’ of identities of members should be comprehended and accommodated (depth).”

Citizenship can be seen as composed of two distinct parts: legal citizenship and “lived citizenship”. Thus, it is not only about legislated rights – what Stephen Castles and Alistair Davidson term “passport citizenship” – but also about daily lived experiences that reveal and create notions of who is a citizen, how, and to what degree. Uri Davis differentiates between jinsiyya (passport citizenship) and muwatana (democratic citizenship), which includes the “rights of equal access to the civil, political, social and economic resources of the state.” This distinction enables the creation of what Davis terms “pretend citizens” that may have valid full-term passports, but continue to be denied equal rights or access to state institutions. He explains, “The fact that one human being is classified as ‘citizen’ of a given state and another

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99 Janoski and Gran, 13.
100 Isin and Turner, 4.
104 Ibid, 7-8.
human being is also classified as ‘citizen’ does not (in itself) make them ‘equal’ legal persons.”\textsuperscript{105}

Though the legislated definitions of citizenship do not define differential experiences of citizenship, the laws themselves condone differential citizenship and provide insight into official positions on the rights and obligations of Lebanon’s residents and the legal context educational actors exist within. In legal terms, the principle of Lebanese citizenship originates in Section II of the Treaty of Peace signed in Lausanne, Switzerland on July 24, 1923 upon the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Article 30 of the treaty stipulates: “Turkish subjects habitually resident in Territory which in accordance with the provisions of the present Treaty is detached from Turkey will become \textit{ipso facto}, in the conditions laid down by the local law, nations of the State to which such territory is transferred.”\textsuperscript{106} The first Lebanese legislation delineating citizenship, issued by the French High Commissioner for Syria and Lebanon in Regulation no. 2825 on 30 August 1924, states that “any person who was a Turkish citizen and resident in the territory of Greater Lebanon on 30 August 1924 is thereby confirmed as a Lebanese citizen and shall be regarding hitherto forth to have lost his Turkish citizenship.”\textsuperscript{107} Article 6 of Regulation no. 2825 notes that “in all that pertains to the application of the Regulation the married woman follows the status of her husband, and minor children under the age of eighteen the status of their father.”\textsuperscript{108} Less than six months after this regulation was issued, on 25 January 1925, the French High Commissioner released Regulation no. 15, later amended by Regulation no. 160 of 16 July 1934 and the law regulating Lebanese women married to foreign men of 11 July 1960.

\textsuperscript{105} Davis, 9.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid, 144.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid, 145.
Though the regulation has been periodically amended, “the main features of Lebanese citizenship legislation have been retained since the publication of Regulation no. 15 in 1925.”\(^{109}\)

As the date of this regulation makes clear, Lebanon as a distinct political and territorial entity with the power to grant citizenship to residents is a relatively contemporary reality. Article 1 of the regulation stipulates:

The definition of a Lebanese [literally, ‘shall be counted (yu’add) as Lebanese’] is as follows:

(i) Any person born to a Lebanese father.
(ii) Any person born in the territory of Greater Lebanon [as of the publication of the regulation in 1925] and not proven to have gained a foreign citizenship at the time of his birth by filiation (literally: ‘sonship’).
(iii) Any person born in the territory of Greater Lebanon [as of the publication of the regulation in 1925] to parents unknown or parents of unknown citizenship.\(^{110}\)

Citizenship in Lebanon is thus premised on a combination of the principles of *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli*.\(^{111}\) However, since 1925, amendments to Lebanese citizenship law have shifted toward a more *jus sanguinis* understanding of citizenship in order to exclude large long-term refugee populations from the national framework. Palestinian refugees, and more recently, Syrian refugees, in Lebanon are denied citizenship along with all of the rights associated with citizenship, and are simultaneously denied access to the protections entitled to refugees by regional and international law. Following Order No. 319 of 2 August 1962, Lebanese law treats Palestinian refugees as unwelcome, unprotected foreign migrants.\(^{112}\)

Given their precarious legal status, refugees are prohibited from seeking employment, owning property, attending public schools, or moving freely within Lebanon. With regard to employment, refugees are forbidden

\(^{109}\) Davis, 150.
\(^{110}\) Ibid, 146.
\(^{111}\) *Jus sanguinis* refers to the principle of nationality based on shared blood or common descent. *Jus soli* refers to the principle of nationality based of one’s birth in a national territory.
from obtaining work in Lebanon unless they obtain special permits. Even refugees who are fortunate enough to obtain employment permits, however, face discrimination and are not entitled to basic labor protections. Refugee laborers are forbidden from forming labor unions, generally receive no benefits from their employers, and do not receive equal pay for doing the same jobs performed by Lebanese citizens.\textsuperscript{113} Refugees of Palestinian origin residing in Lebanon are confined to camps, and prohibited from moving between or outside of the twelve official refugee camps without a permit. Many camps were destroyed during the fifteen-year civil war, but the Lebanese government has outlawed reconstruction or replacement of refugees’ homes.\textsuperscript{114} As Jaber Suleiman argues, the “Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon is the most unfortunate and destitute refugee community in any Arab host country… deprived of almost all basic human rights and subject to various forms of marginalization – spatial, economic and institutional – and this is often linked to exclusion, violence, and displacement.”\textsuperscript{115}

Lebanon is both unable and unwilling to accept the permanent resettlement of Palestinian refugees, and in response has consciously marginalized the Palestinian community in order to put pressure on Israel, the international community, and Palestinian refugees themselves to preserve the right of return as the only durable solution to the Palestinian refugee crisis. Ghassan Moukheiber, a member of the Lebanese parliament has stated as much explicitly. He explains: “Our official policy is to maintain Palestinians in a vulnerable, precarious situation to diminish prospects for their naturalisation or permanent settlement.”\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{113} Al-Aza’r, 18.  
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
This resistance to naturalization does not apply equally to all foreign demographics. Article 3 of Regulation no. 15 in 1925 empowers the head of state to grant Lebanese citizenship by decree to foreigners resident in Lebanon for five consecutive years, a foreigner married to a Lebanese woman who has been resident in Lebanon for at least one year after the date of his marriage, or a foreigner who renders significant services to the Lebanese state. However, naturalized citizens are never conferred the full rights of Lebanese citizens. Under the law regarding naturalization, issued on 8 June 1938, “A foreigner who had obtained Lebanese citizenship by naturalization shall not be able to take public office or an appointment the salary of which is paid by the Government or by a public administration or by a company operating under a Government concession (sharikat intiyaz) before ten years have elapsed since the date of his naturalization.”

The retraction of Lebanese citizenship is regulated by the Lebanese citizenship law of 31 January 1946, as amended by Decree No. 10828 of 9 October 1962, which states that loss of Lebanese citizenship can occur if a citizen “takes any job in the employ of a foreign state or an agency of a foreign state in Lebanon without authorization… Such a case could be that of a journalist who is a Lebanese citizen and takes an appointment as a reporter inside Lebanon for the state television of any foreign state without explicit prior authorization from the Lebanese Government.” Loss of Lebanese status can also occur if a citizen acquires another nationality. Dual citizenship is not permitted by Lebanese law, and citizens are required to inform Lebanese authorities if they obtain citizenship elsewhere, whereupon they theoretically lose their Lebanese

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117 This requirement has since been amended to ten years of consecutive residence by the Law of May 27, 1939.
118 Davis, 150.
119 Ibid, 151.
120 Ibid, 154-155. [Emphasis in original]
citizenship. In practice, however, Davis suggests that “the letter of the law is not applied in full. For example, there are approximately 40,000 Lebanese-Canadian dual citizens and some 6,000 Lebanese-French dual citizens who reside in Lebanon.”

In both legal and practical terms, as Young argues, citizenship is an exclusionary construct – some people are citizens and others are not. Citizenship is premised on membership (or assimilation) in a nation-state community, which carries with it particular identities, histories, and genealogies that define membership. These are not stagnant, pre-determined characteristics, but rather constitutive of a constantly shifting and contested terrain wherein citizenship is both internally and externally heterogeneous. Despite the fluidity of citizenship, however, it is always – at least rhetorically – based on claims to a shared civic or ethnic culture that distinguishes citizens from non-citizens. In multicultural, multilingual, and religiously diverse states such as Lebanon, where communities may feel they have more in common with their co-religionists of other nationalities than their compatriots, distinguishing who is a citizen, both legally and socially, is challenging. In this context, the dynamics of citizenship and national boundaries become important to Lebanese sovereignty. As Davis notes, “The implied view of the Lebanese legislator [is] that the certificate of citizenship is primarily a certificate of loyalty to the State,” attempting to prioritize national allegiances over sub-national and transnational solidarities.

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121 Davis, 158.
125 Davis, 158.
But where do understandings about what it means to be a citizen come from? Following Veronique Benei, this project contends that citizenship is learned through myriad interactions with state institutions and one’s compatriots, which reveal the rights, duties, and values of being a citizen. In Lebanon, as Salibi and Elizabeth Picard among others have suggested, these interactions differ considerably between communities, depending on unique understandings of “the state” and both perceived and real differential treatment based on one’s individual and communal affiliations. Salibi notes that “the concept of a natural and historical Lebanese nationality [is] meaningful to some people in the country, but not to others.” In order to make Lebanese nationality meaningful to citizens, it has been necessary, albeit controversial, to construct a national narrative and framework of citizenship that would serve to unify Lebanon’s diverse groups.

Schools and the Construction of Lebanese Citizens

Scholarship on children’s citizenship often describes children as “citizens in the making” or “apprentice citizens.” In legislative and social delineations of citizenship around the world, children are not full citizens in terms of the traditional rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship, such as the vote and military conscription. However, as Ruth Lister argues, children are significant not only as future adult citizens, but also as important

128 Salibi, 30.
actors in ongoing debates about citizenship and the nation in the present. Though Lebanese children lack access to full political participation – the voting age and age of military conscription are eighteen – they are nonetheless “politically relevant beings” that engage with citizenship in unique and powerful ways.

Debates about children’s citizenship become especially significant when one elucidates the role of schools in the construction of the nation and citizenship. The structure of the Lebanese school system reflects and engages with the aforementioned dynamics of “differential citizenship”. From a young age, when children begin to attend school, they are inundated and implicated in these broader national projects. As Foucault has argued, schools are central sites of subject formation with strong national and communal dimensions. Through mechanisms of discipline and categorization, the structure and content of schooling, albeit hardly homogeneous, teaches students what it means to be a citizen and their relationship to others within the national body, forming them into “docile subjects”. As students become subjects, they are socialized to subconsciously emulate the values and practices of good citizens in the microcosm of the classroom environment.

On the other hand, Freire suggests that schools are often, at least rhetorically, framed as spaces where students develop critical thinking skills and become empowered to challenge existing frameworks of subjecthood. Though the categorizations, sources of knowledge, and disciplinary structures of the education system can limit the possibilities of critical thinking,

132 Lister, 701.
134 Lister, 696.
135 Foucault 1977.
136 Ibid.
137 Freire 1985.
Freire argues that a critical and conscientious education can provide a path to liberation from totalitarian power structures and hegemonic narratives. For Freire, when schools give students the tools to understand their national history and develop active political consciousnesses, education can transform and radically unify society across traditional social and class divisions. The next chapter will look more closely at how these values and practices are articulated, in combination with the seemingly contradictory practices of subject formation detailed above, in Lebanese primary school classrooms.

Following the end of the civil war in the early 1990s, the MEHE developed a national civics curriculum (al-muwatin wa al-tarbiya al-madaniyya), which the state mandated be taught in all public schools. It was intended to delineate (and construct) the rights and values of Lebanese citizenship, foster a sense of national solidarity, and provide an overview of national institutions. Section II of the Ta’if Agreement protects the autonomy of private schools, but strengthens the oversight of the state in matters of textbooks and curricula. It states: “The curricula shall be reviewed and developed in a manner that strengthens national belonging, fusion, spiritual and cultural openness, and that unifies textbooks on the subjects of history and national education.” Article 10 of the Lebanese constitution, the only article that addresses education, further states: “Education is free insofar as it is not contrary to public order and morals and does not interfere with the dignity of any of the religions or creeds. There shall be no

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139 Freire 1985.
violation of the right of religious communities to have their own schools provided they follow
the general rules issued by the state regulating public instruction.”

Past research on the educational reforms developed by the MEHE and the CERD in the
wake of the civil war highlight the success and challenges of these reforms in building social
cohesion. Nemer Frayha and Raghid El-Sohl, however, note that in many cases sectarian
divisions have been reproduced in civics education classrooms and curriculum, because schools
are often composed of homogeneous sectarian communities and curriculum varies to match the
each sects’ divergent visions of Lebanon. Gregor Nazarian has also noted the diversity of
civics and history curricula and the divergent visions of Lebanese history and citizenship that
these curricula narrate. Nadya Salibi argues that education offers a way to rethink and
construct community, which can serve in the process of nation-building, though in the
Lebanese case education may also be constructing or reinforcing multiple nations.

Salibi suggests that “for any people to develop and maintain a sense of political
community, it is necessary that they share a common vision of their past.” Certainly, it is also
necessary to construct a common vision of the present. As the significant wave of education
reforms and the development of a national civics curriculum following the civil war suggests, the
MEHE and the myriad actors that have a stake in Lebanese identity see the content and structure

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141 Davis, 141.
142 Shuayb 2012; El-Amin, Adnan. “Educational Reform: Nine Principles and Five Issues” in
143 El-Sohl, Raghid. “Religious Identity and Citizenship: An Overview of Perspectives,” in
Deirdre Collings (ed.). Peace for Lebanon?: From War to Reconstruction. Boulder and London:
144 Nazarian.
145 Sbaiti, Nadya. “Lessons in History: Education and the Formation of National Society in
146 Salibi, 216.
of education as fundamental to shaping these common visions. However, recent scholarship on the Lebanese post-war education system has argued that these reforms have failed to facilitate active citizenship, and, because of their heterogeneous application, have perpetuated divergent visions of the past and present realities of the Lebanese state.

Contested Citizenship(s) and National Narratives

Given the diversity of the Lebanese citizenry and the many cultural, religious, and historical commonalities between the Lebanese and citizens in neighboring states, constructing a viable Lebanese national narrative that appeals to all citizens is challenging. The histories of these communities in Lebanon as well as both the internal and external boundaries of the modern Lebanese nation are contested terrain. Lebanese history, and the history of the territory that is now Lebanon prior to its creation, is seen by many Lebanese as fundamental to the meaning and practices of the contemporary state. As Salibi suggests, “The past of Lebanon ceases to be a question of political rights and wrongs, of outstanding tribal or quasi-tribal scores to be settled, and acquires more meaning with respect to the present – and even more, with respect to the future.” How Lebanon came to exist, who played a central role in its construction, and where the Lebanese people originated are questions with heavy political implications for modern Lebanese society, domestic politics, and foreign policy.

Schools, and particularly history and civics curriculum, have played an important role in the dissemination of national narratives and attempts to construct a unified understanding of Lebanese citizenship. In Salibi’s words, “Historical self-deception is a luxury which only societies confident of their unity and solidarity can afford… Before the people of Lebanon can hope to develop the degree of social solidarity that can enable them to stand together as a

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147 Akar 2007.
148 Salibi, 234.
coherent and viable political community, they have to know precisely what they are, and how they relate to the world around them.”\textsuperscript{149} This has made schools and school curriculum a battleground for conflicting visions of the Lebanese state and people. Walid Jumblatt, the leader of Lebanon’s Druze community, has argued that “the rewriting of the Lebanese history textbook [is] a necessary precondition for any lasting political settlement in Lebanon, if not the primary one… the issue in his mind was clear: the continuing civil war in Lebanon was, in a fundamental way, a war to determine the correct history of the country.”\textsuperscript{150} Maqasid (Islamic) school teachers Zaki Nakkash and Omar Farrukh, on the other hand, see “the very concept of a historical Lebanon as anathema.”\textsuperscript{151} In their view, Lebanon could claim no distinct historical legacy, because it was historically a part of Greater Syria. These two positions reveal not only the drastically different understandings of Lebanon that exist between citizens, but also the difficulty to teaching Lebanese history and the significance of education to articulating and legitimizing these diverse understandings.

Many scholars have gone so far as to deem Lebanon a “failed state” or a state “captive” to foreign powers.\textsuperscript{152} However, Salibi argues that “[i]n the continuing national quarrel… the central issue is no longer the question of the Lebanese national allegiance, but the terms of the political settlement which all the sides to the conflict, certainly at the popular level, generally desire.”\textsuperscript{153} A 2009 UNDP National Development Report concurs, noting that:

\textsuperscript{149} Salibi, 216.  
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid, 201.  
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid, 202-203.  
\textsuperscript{153} Salibi, 1-3.
Although resistance toward the “Lebanese entity” and its system [has] appeared in various forms, none of the chief opposition groups [are] truly “unionist”, seeking to dissolve Lebanon and merge it with another political entity. In fact, decade after decade, these groups [have become] more strongly attached to the notion of Lebanon, seeking to improve their positions within the political system.  

Given the often-violent intra-national realities on the ground, the (albeit differential) salience of identification with the Lebanese nation-state may appear to be an anomaly. Yet, despite continuing disagreement about Lebanon’s past and present, the state has proven remarkably durable, such that, across the Lebanese political spectrum, all sides seem to agree that the only way forward is to secure a viable Lebanese state, as it is currently territorially constituted.  

This durability should not be misconstrued as stability or popular faith in the utility of Lebanese government institutions, however. At the time of this writing, the Lebanese government has been inactive for nearly a year and a 2013 poll conducted by Gallup found that over seventy-eight percent of the Lebanese polled believed the government to be “socially ineffective”. The Lebanese government is durable in the sense that it is entrenched and has become the body cynically expected to respond to continuing social and political crises. On the other hand, that battles over citizenship rights and political representation take place almost exclusively within the framework of the state further reaffirms a commitment to the future of the Lebanese nation, albeit differently understood. Struggles for representation and recognition through the framework of Lebanese citizenship reveal that citizenship does not in and of itself guarantee universal rights. As Isin notes, “These various claims have strained the boundaries of

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154 UNDP 2009, 90.  
155 Ibid, 220.  
156 The Lebanese government resigned in March 2013 due to an inability to form a majority coalition in parliament and the resulting political deadlock.  
citizenship and pitted group against group in the search for identity and recognition,” resulting in “new valorizations of multiplicity, diversity, heterogeneity, hybridity and syncretism.”  

It is the great irony of citizenship that, as Ghalya Saadawi explains, “we somehow need the state structure and the rule of law to serve us, protect our rights, provide us with free public services… while it is also this very state apparatus, and its complicit religious institutions and politics, that need to be consistently questioned, criticized, sometimes delegitimized and undone.” Paradoxically, the state apparatus, and the sectarian demarcations it reiterates, are reinforced by the very initiatives that seek to challenge these hegemonic and hierarchical structures by nature of their reliance on the state and sectarian affiliations as sources of change. This project seeks to explore the paradoxical roles of the Lebanese education system in maintaining the viability of the state, and, simultaneously, enabling critical dialogue that challenges it.

158 Isin, 123.
Chapter Two:
Civic Education in Context

In order to situate the findings of my ethnographic research detailed in chapter three, this chapter provides an overview of national civics curriculum reforms and previous studies that have been conducted on civic education in Lebanon. It interrogates the ways that the MEHE and non-state actors construct Lebanon and Lebanese citizenship through civics education. The chapter then explores how these communal and national expectations are reflected in the implementation of civics education. It concludes with an analysis of students’, parents’, teachers’, and administrators’ engagements with civics curricula, particularly in schools where the majority of students are not citizens.

Why Civic Education?

Civic education is perhaps the most overt method that governments use to prepare—or seek to prepare—young people to undertake their roles as citizens. While not all national curricula include a specific civics or citizenship subject track, educational systems around the world incorporate the content of civics curricula albeit in different manners. Civics curricula outline citizenship roles, ideally providing students with the knowledge and experience necessary to constructively participate in the national political, social, and economic community. Naturally, the civic knowledge deemed necessary and valuable differs considerably between countries. However, some commonalities do exist. A 2009 study of civics education in thirty-eight countries conducted by the International Association for Evaluation of Educational

“Quand tu veux construire un bateau, ne commence pas par rassembler du bois, couper des planches et distribuer du travail, mais reveille au sein des homes le desir de la mer grande et large.” –Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
Achievement\textsuperscript{160} found that civics generally encompasses the study of national political institutions and concepts, civic duties, human rights, social cohesion, diversity, and global society.\textsuperscript{161} Though other classes and a myriad of interactions outside of the classroom are formative to shaping citizens’ ideas about the state and their role within it, civics education curricula provides a more explicit view of how education ministries understand the state and student-citizens’ roles within it. Daily practices in civics classrooms reveal the diverse ways that citizens — students, teachers, parents, and administrators alike — engage with this idealized vision.

In Lebanon, the national civics education curricula focus on developing productive and peaceful citizens with appropriate reverence for the state. However, civics education is certainly not the only forum for fostering these values. As an alternative, Martha Nussbaum suggests that “cosmopolitan education” may better serve the just functioning of society and individuals’ wellbeing. In a cosmopolitan education, the student:

\begin{quote}
may continue to regard herself as in part defined by her particular loves— for her family, her religious and/or ethnic and/or racial community or communities, even for her country. But she must also, and centrally, learn to recognize humanity wherever she encounters it, undeterred by traits that are strange to her, and be eager to understand humanity in its ‘strange’ guises. She must learn enough about the different to recognize common aims, aspirations, and values, and enough about these common ends to see how variously they are instantiated in the many cultures and many histories.\textsuperscript{162} As a second alternative, Linda Herrera suggests “humanistic education”. Humanistic education “promotes principles of respect, pluralism, rational critical inquiry, compassion, innovation, and excellence” and actively combats nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{160} This is, to date, the largest international study of civics education ever conducted. Lebanon was not among the thirty-eight participating countries.
\textsuperscript{161} Schultz, et. al.
\textsuperscript{162} Nussbaum, Martha. “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism.” \textit{Boston Review}, 1 October 1994. 5.
exclusivism. In contrast to civic education, as the MEHE and many of the NGOs surveyed in chapter four conceptualize it, cosmopolitan education and humanistic education do not focus on national identity or the correctness of particular political systems.

Of course, these three educational ideologies are not entirely distinct. Components of all three may be present in a single schooling environment. All three represent normative values with normative goals. My suggestion here is merely that the framework of civics education is not the only available option. The choice to pursue a civics education program, then, is not neutral or predetermined. Rather, it is the result of the state’s particular understanding of the role of education and the values that it and other educational actors have deemed vital to the future of the state and the security of its citizens.

Divergent Curricula and Practices

Lebanon is a post-colonial state, initially constructed by foreign powers. As a result of this legacy, the government sees education as vital to formulating and disseminating national neocolonial narratives and developing the epistemological structures of nation-building. The national narrative of Lebanon, however, is hotly contested because there is little consensus among the country’s political communities about what Lebanon is and should be. As a result, the civics curriculum developed by the MEHE enabled what Abouchedid and Nasser term “hybrid monism… in which different identities of Lebanese society were welded together in [a] mix or hybrid containing elements of each.”

From early on in the country’s history, the MEHE framed education as tool to turn citizens with diverse loyalties into students united by “a common sense of identity and

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163 Herrera, Linda. “A Song for Humanistic Education: Pedagogy and Politics in the Middle East.” Teachers College Record 110:2 (February 2008), 352.
164 Sbaiti 2014.
165 Abouchedid and Nasser, 67.
The platform of Lebanon’s first independent government clearly articulated this agenda. The 1943 Government Platform read:

From now on, the government will offer the Lebanese youth an appropriate citizenship education and orient them toward freedom, independence and national pride. Therefore, the government will use all necessary means to enhance Arabic, the country’s language, as well as Lebanon’s history and geography in all educational institutions. We do not want our children leaving school and being more educated about other countries… than their own. Our schools should graduate a generation unified in aims and national feelings.\textsuperscript{167}

The next government, formed the following year, reiterated these goals. They explained: “We are going to tackle the problem of sectarianism, not only through legislation, but by education. School is the best soil to cultivate virtues and tolerance. Thus the government is very interested in education and its role.”\textsuperscript{168} In the rationale of the curriculum that the MEHE subsequently developed, the government suggested that the primary goal of the education system was to form:

the Lebanese citizen as a participating and knowledgeable member of his society. The government puts great emphasis on physical, moral, social and citizenship education. The Lebanese student should know his country’s history, making him proud of its past, understanding its present and ready for the future… He would also appreciate his country’s position vis-à-vis the Arab world and the West.\textsuperscript{169}

As these statements suggest, the MEHE understands education, and specifically civic education, as a forum to imbue in Lebanese children a particular sense of national identity. By outlining a unified vision of the state, and validating it through education, civics curriculum is expected to strengthen national belonging among Lebanon’s diverse student population.

The CERD drafted the current rendition of Lebanese civics curriculum following the civil war, in 1994, when the MEHE developed a comprehensive plan to reform the education sector.

\textsuperscript{166} Frayha 2003, 82.
\textsuperscript{167} Lebanese Government Platform, 1943, quoted in \textit{ibid}.
\textsuperscript{168} Lebanese Government Platform, 1944, quoted in \textit{ibid}, 83.
and civic education in particular. This Plan articulates a civics education program based on the following principles:

1. The supremacy of the law over all citizens is the only means of achieving justice and equality among them.
2. The respect of individual and social freedoms, which is guaranteed by the constitution and stated by the Human Rights Charter, is a vital necessity for the continuing existence of Lebanon.
3. The participation in social and political activities within the framework of the Lebanese democratic parliamentary system is a right for every citizen and a responsibility towards the state and country.
4. Education is a national priority. It is a social necessity and a comprehensive social enterprise.
5. The formation of a citizen who:
   a. Feels honored in his country, Lebanon, and is proud of his loyalty and belonging to it;
   b. Is proud of his Arab identity and kinship, and his commitment to them;
   c. Recognizes the long national Lebanese history that, emancipated from extremist beliefs, will attain a unified, open and humanistic society;
   d. Realizes the importance of co-existence among all citizens (since there is no legality for any authority that contradicts the Document of Co-existence, which remains a unique guide in the region and to the whole world);
   e. Respects personal and social freedom and preserves others’ rights and properties.\(^{170}\)

Once complete, the curriculum outlined in the 1994 Education Reform Plan became integrated into a “National and Civic Education” class and was implemented in both public and private schools, compulsory for all grades from one to twelve.

However, the Lebanese civic education curriculum, and its implementation in classrooms, has received considerable criticism. The bulk of this criticism comes from diverse politicians, religious authorities, and analysts, who disagree with the particular visions of Lebanon and Lebanese identity disseminated through the national civics curriculum.

Equally if not more contentious has been the national history curriculum, which is fundamental to many citizens’ understanding of their country and their visions for its present and

future. In a survey of Lebanese history textbooks, Abouchedid and Nasser found that while most covered similar material, differential emphasis was placed on particular periods or regions.

According to their analysis:

The official textbooks omitted reference to the multi-confessional plural context of Lebanon, which gave rise to a political system of a special type... In describing the political differences among Lebanese, all textbooks argued that the inhabitants of the coastal areas preferred ties with the Arab government in Syria, while the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon harboured a desire for the independence of Lebanon with special relationships with France, without explaining the reasons behind these differences... Furthermore, the textbooks analyzed avoided discussions on sensitive topics on which confessional communities might disagree in their interpretation, such as the 1860 war. [For] its part, the [MEHE] denied students the opportunity to learn about the post-[World War II] years by removing chapters encompassing such important events as the formation of political parties, the administrative reforms, and the 1958 civil war. For the remainder of the official textbooks, students learn nothing about the Israeli/Arab conflict and the problems to be addressed.\textsuperscript{171}

They also found that factors other than the promotion of national integration and social cohesion motivated administrators’ attentiveness to the national history curriculum.\textsuperscript{172} While this study does not focus on history classrooms or curriculum, these challenges and debates highlight both the significance of education in the service of nationhood and the fierce conflicts generated over the content of schooling.

For this reason, Mahmoud Natout argues that developing a national civics curriculum may not be the most appropriate way to facilitate social cohesion in the Lebanese context. In his view, it is optimistic and unrealistic to focus on civic education when this framework is unable to address the country’s critical social dynamics directly. Alternatively, he suggests that trying to engage students in "organic, implicit, tacit exchanges” that encourage tolerance and effective

\textsuperscript{171} Abouchedid and Nasser, 70-71.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid, 71.
conflict resolution based on their diverse lived realities, “may be more palpable than actually speaking about citizenship directly in a context such as ours.”

Civic Education Expectations and Effects

In order to situate the narratives and analysis in this study, it is useful to detail some of the findings of past surveys of Lebanese civics education. Nearly all past scholarship on Lebanese civics education argues that both the content and practice of civics education fail to address the goals of national unity and civic participation outlined by the MEHE. In terms of content, Akar notes that schools promote the minimal definition of effective citizens: students who identify with the Lebanese nation and do not openly fight with their peers. He argues that “there [is] a dichotomy between the way in which schools and textbooks [portray] the society in which the students [live] as functioning harmoniously, and the depth and potential destructiveness of religious and social discord in their daily lives.” The severe disparity between the abstract subjects covered in civics curricula and many students’ lived realities undermines the subject’s applicability.

However, Frayha, the former director of the CERD, argues that it is the implementation of civics education that is lacking, not the curriculum content. According to Frayha, “The formal officially prescribed curricula – that is, the education plan, curriculum framework, syllabi and textbooks – are well designed with a view to promoting social unity and citizenship education in Lebanon. It is also true, however, that what actually counts in the end are the relevant educational practices and learning outcomes.” Past scholarship suggests that these educational practices and learning outcomes do not reflect a commitment to the values detailed in the civics

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174 Akar, Bassel. Interview with the author. 10 March 2014.
175 Frayha 2003, 84.
176 Ibid, 86.
A 2009 UNDP report notes that “while students seem to understand what democracy and citizenship mean, such an understanding is not necessarily reflected in their current behavior or intended future participation.”

A 2008 UNDP survey of civic knowledge among 3111 ninth-grade students in 113 schools found that Lebanese students scored higher than their peers in other countries on questions related to political rights, press freedom, and democratic structures. However, these students scored considerably lower on questions related to the rule of law and gender equality. The study found that while Lebanese students reveal relatively high knowledge of civic concepts, this knowledge did not translate into practical skills. This may be the result of “wanting to say what they believe needs to be said (i.e. applying an academic approach to specific concepts); or due to their limited experience in democratic decision making; or perhaps due to the high sense of polarization in the country.” This polarization limited the civics curriculum’s ability to tackle contentious and pressing national issues head on. Civics classes only indirectly tackle the conflicts that define the daily realities of many students and their families. UNDP explains:

“While the new civics curriculum being taught in Lebanese schools today tries to address a variety of topics that may encourage citizen participation in environmental, community, civic and humanitarian work, it continues to avoid an open discussion of ‘sensitive’ issues. These include topics such as the civil war, the make up and functioning of post civil war political parties, the role and history of Lebanese confessional groups, their relationship to Lebanon, the means through which power relations between the different groups are defined, the centers they create and their historical evolution as well as the meanings of the particular forms of democracy that Lebanon [has] adopted. The curriculum also unevenly addressed the functioning of government branches and other governmental institutions, making it difficult for the student to grasp how decisions are made, and how they can contribute to policy and decision making.”

177 UNDP 2009, 32.
179 Ibid, 15.
These findings reflect the abstract, knowledge-centered approach of Lebanese civics programs and the limited opportunities to put these ideas into practice, at school or in national politics.

The survey found that Lebanese students exhibited strong support for the role of the state in national security, and weak support for the role of the state in providing social services. Lebanese youth expressed limited trust in government institutions and much higher confidence in religious organizations and private schools. Over a quarter of the students surveyed believed that an individuals’ votes should be based on overall family preferences. More than two-thirds thought that each sect should be responsible for the education of its own followers. This reflects:

the current strength of religious leaders as the place of first and not last resort for the provision of services as well as for guidance on political choices across all sects… Responses indicate not only an understanding of the state as an arena where spoils are subdivided amongst the religious sects and their leaders and thus an acceptance of the current status quo. It also points to an alarming reinforcement of this status quo by the youth of today based on criteria that have nothing to do with merit.

Though students exhibited significant interest in national politics, they were hesitant to discuss politics with their teachers or in classrooms, suggesting that students did not generally view schools as places to debate and develop their ideas on issues of public interest. Students claimed to derive the majority of their political opinions from their families and community members. These dynamics will be put in conversation with the findings of my own research in the next chapter.

Civic Education for Non-Citizens

In order to understand the degree of diversity in the implementation and embodiment of civics education principles, it is important to acknowledge the variety of schooling environments

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180 UNDP 2008.
181 Ibid, 18.
182 Ibid, 26-27.
in Lebanon and the way these environments shape students’ understandings of their place in the nation and the world at large. The education provided to refugees provides are especially distinct example of differential citizenship and the use of citizenship as an inclusion/exclusion device, because these students experience the same curricula as their citizen peers who are citizens, but the meaning and implementation of this civic knowledge differs substantially.

One result of the large non-citizen population in Lebanon is that many students who attend Lebanese schools, and subsequently learn the Lebanese curriculum, are not Lebanese citizens. In addition to private international schools, which teach students of many nationalities, UNRWA operates an extensive education program that teaches over 30,000 Palestinian refugee students in Lebanon. In response to the large number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon as a result of the now four-year civil war in Syria, UNHCR has also developed a series of educational initiatives to provide education for Syrian students.

Beginning in January 2014, the MEHE, in partnership with UNHCR, developed an afternoon shift in eighty Lebanese public schools across the country in order to accommodate the large influx of Syrian students. The program provided education to more than 27,000 Syrian students after regular classes ended at 2:00 PM. However, the program has not been without challenges. At one public school in Beirut, the principal was forced to create a “safe place… for afternoon shift students to stand as they swap over with the morning shift kids.”

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183 Though I did not personally conduct research in UNRWA schools, I feel they provide vital insight into the diversity of engagements with Lebanese civics curricula. Accordingly, I have included research from other analysts to highlight the conditions in these schools.


186 Ibid.
found this necessary because of the harassment Syrian students faced from their Lebanese peers, who were “jealous of the special attention being given to the Syrian students.” In addition, multiple years out of school and the shift from Syrian to Lebanese curriculum has forced most students to repeat at least one grade.

UNRWA and UNHCR’s official policies adopt the national curriculum of their host state, so Palestinian and Syrian students in Lebanon follow Lebanese national curriculum. This has lead to a situation where Palestinian refugees in Lebanon “know more about others than they know about themselves.” The absence of a Palestinian curriculum in UNRWA schools has alienated many Palestinian students, leading to high dropout rates and “educational apathy throughout the refugee camps in Lebanon.” Anies Al-Hroub cites one teacher in ‘Ain el Helweh camp who explained:

Students ask me sometimes, “Why do we learn about the Lebanese president, ministers and parliament members?” I respond, “Because we live in Lebanon and we are influenced by them…” We notice that when teaching them about the history and geography of Palestine, they become much more interested,

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187 Anderson, Brooke.
188 The situation for the many children still in Syria is worse. Roughly one out of five schools are no longer functioning; 2,400 have been damaged and 1,500 have been converted into refugee shelters, military bases, and detention centers. Where schools are still functioning, some children are unable to reach them due to daily violence or have been deterred from attending out of fear of interrogation, kidnapping, or attacks. Curricula have become polarized, with schools in government-controlled areas teaching the Syrian national curriculum, schools in opposition-controlled areas teaching an amended Syrian curriculum, schools in the rural areas around Edleb and Aleppo teaching the Libyan curriculum, and schools in Al-Nusra Front-controlled areas teaching only the Qur’an, hadith, fiqh, and Arabic. Many observers have reflected on the tragedy of a “lost generation” of Syrian children, vulnerable to radicalism and violence, who, without an education, will be ill-equipped to rebuild their country when the war is over. For further details on the current status of education in Syria see: UNESCOWA. The Promises of Spring. Beirut: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), 2014. 19.
especially when we ask them to conduct research about their villages in Palestine and to ask their parents and grandparents about them.\textsuperscript{191}

In general, Palestinian teachers and students found the curriculum taught at UNRWA schools irrelevant and unapproachable, “centered on academic needs and interests rather than on social and emotional needs.”\textsuperscript{192} For example, students cited the fact that many subjects are taught in English as one of the primary obstacles to their learning. In addition, Palestinian teachers and parents expressed frustration about the absence of Palestinian history and culture in UNRWA textbooks.\textsuperscript{193} However, according to Al-Hroub, while the official curriculum is Lebanese, the environment in UNRWA schools is decidedly Palestinian. Teachers and administrators are almost exclusively Palestinian, and the “hidden curriculum” of daily classroom discussions addresses issues specific to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{194}

Of course, it is not only Palestinian schools that suffer from lack of resources and inapproachable curricula. Conditions in national public schools in the rural South and Biqa’a Valley are also chronically under-funded and bear the majority of the consequences of conflicts that destroy educational infrastructure and decimate the local economy. Dropout rates in these areas are likewise make higher than those in other areas of the country, and students are obligated to travel to gain access to the same employment and extracurricular activities as their peers in urban Beirut and the North. In this sense, differential citizenship is not only the product of differential citizenship status, but also a result of on-going conflicts and inequitable geographic distributions of national resources.

\textsuperscript{191} Al-Hroub 2013.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{194} Al-Hroub, interview with the author.
As these stories suggest, the idea of a national civic education that details patriotic values and equal rights for all citizens is conflicted at best. Even if all students in Lebanon participate in civic education programs, the meanings students take away from the curricula are formed by distinct educational environments and hidden curricula. The significant disparities in schooling environments produce differential notions of citizenship, empowering some students to be active, engaged citizens and relegating other students to the sidelines of public issues.

Civic and character education programs “provide a fixed set of ‘global citizenship’ [and national citizenship] lessons and principles in an often standardized and decontextualized manner may not be best suited to preparing the young to confront the complexity, interrelatedness, and confusion often associated with contemporary life.”195 While the three schools where I conducted research dedicated significant time and energy to students’ civic and character education, these lessons were not made readily applicable to the conflicts that students face outside the walls of the school. Civics programs are also unevenly applied, as the distinctions between the schooling environments I observed and those in UNRWA schools suggest. Students were encouraged to think independently and develop creative problem solving skills, but classrooms did not confront pressing social and political conflicts in Lebanon directly. As a result, the thoughtfulness and civic engagement promoted in the school environment became separated from the realities of life outside the school.

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195 Herrera 2008, 358.
“I believe that education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living.” – John Dewey

Chapter Three: Inside the Classroom

This chapter explores how individual actors in Lebanese classrooms negotiate national identities, administrative expectations, and local community tensions. It analyzes the ethnographic research I conducted in ten classrooms at three schools in downtown Beirut—Ahliah School, the Mediterranean School, and the National Protestant College (NPC)—noting how my findings diverge from or confirm past assessments and analyzing how my observations reflect the frameworks of education detailed by Freire and Foucault. This analysis includes an evaluation of curricula, teaching methods, classroom dynamics, and intra-school relationships. It discusses how educational environments have contributed to the construction of differential citizenship in Lebanon and how distinct roles become delineated in classroom and educational administrative spaces.

A recent study conducted by UNDP on civic education in Lebanon notes that “one of the most profound changes that is reorienting citizenship education is the recognition that it is valuable for children as children… Citizenship education is no longer considered solely as a content area designed to prepare young people for their adult roles in society, but, rather, as a tool that will help them improve and understand their lives and interactions in society.”196 That is, civic education is meaningful to the way children live and interpret their lives in the present.

In Lebanon in particular, children have become alternately pawns and active participants in ongoing political battles. This situation makes the subject of civics education relevant, albeit not always influential, in students’ daily lives. For example, many Lebanese youth are involved

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in Boy and Girl Scout programs, which are often overtly affiliated with and shaped by political parties and religious groups. Scouts in these troops participate in activities that implicitly reinforce particularistic imaginings of Lebanon, and occasionally explicitly challenge or condone contentious political positions. An American University of Beirut study of youth confirms this, stating: “More often than not in Lebanon’s divisive context… youth activism is through political parties or politically affiliated groups… Youth are flooded with messages of intolerance and the need to be fearful of the other.” As this suggests, Lebanese children are dynamic agents in the larger political and social environment, and from a young age are expected to respond to the challenges embedded in the world around them.

Young children are also—peripherally or directly—exposed to political debates taking place in their homes and in public discourse, and many have experienced first hand the violence of war. In theory, civic and character education seek to provide students with the practical and analytical tools to understand these difficult experiences and enable them to live peacefully and productively with their peers. By teaching students about the Lebanese political system, human rights, and channels for civic participation, educational actors hope to instill in Lebanese youth respect for their government, national laws, and harmonious social relations with people from diverse backgrounds. In the three schools where I conducted research, teachers and administrators collaborated to develop their own civics and character education curriculum. They incorporated the national curriculum and expanded upon it to create content and enact practices

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198 Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs. “Youth Can Become Effective Leaders in Lebanon.” *Youth in the Arab World, Research and Policy Memo #3*, American University of Beirut (September 2009).
that they saw as most effective to facilitating what they understood as productive and empowering civic values.

Numerous actors shape Lebanese school environments, both internal and external to the school itself. Schools can be characterized as “‘organized anarchies’—capable of relatively independent actions and subject to varying environmental constraints.”199 National civil servants, school administrators, teachers, and community members interact together and place restraints on one another that define the educational environment. I examine the roles of each of these actors in turn in order to explore how their actions interpret, reflect, and challenge national and communal expectations of citizenship. Each of these actors plays a unique role in the hierarchy of educational power, both contesting and consolidating the external structures of power that define students’ differential roles as citizens.

School Administration

Because of the relative lack of national oversight in Lebanese schools, the school administration is one of the most significant actors that determines the orientation, curricula, and student body demographics of a school. Unconsciously or consciously, school administrators maintain “tight control on beliefs about what is possible,”200 delineated though administrative decisions about which curricula should be taught, how they should be taught, and to whom. Though school administrators may not be aware that the knowledge constructions they reproduce or independently disseminate are particularistic, the choices they make may be “more important to effectiveness than any specific curriculum or instructional innovation.”201 Sbaiti describes schools as “pedagogical constituencies”, because they create new communities of families.

199 Noblit and Pink, ix.
200 Ibid, x.
201 Noblit and Pink.
committed to educating their children in particular forms of knowledge. Though these “knowledge communities” are heterogeneous in terms of socioeconomic status, sectarian affiliation, and geographic background, they foster a common organizational identity through the shared knowledge base that students develop and engage their families in.

Each of the schools addressed here represents a unique historical and sectarian legacy that shapes the demographics of their present knowledge communities and speaks to the role that they play in Lebanon’s broader educational, political, and social landscape. Ahliyah School, for example, was founded in 1916 under the philanthropic auspices of Mary Kassab in response to the Ottoman administration’s mandate to close all foreign schools in the region. The school situated itself as a non-denominational national school with a “patriotic and humanistic” mission to educate the brightest Lebanese and Arab students in the region. Throughout the French Mandate, Ahliyah strongly supported the nationalist movement, and participated in protests against the French authorities’ attempts to tighten control over the school. Subsequent Ahliyah administrators sought to diversify the school’s role, expanding it into a hub of intellectual, artistic, and cultural activity throughout the early years of Lebanese independence. From its conception, Ahliyah aimed to educate students that where modern and enlightened, but maintained a strong commitment to the school and student body’s Arab heritage.

The NPC emerged following Lebanese independence in 1949 as the educational branch of the National Evangelical Church. It began as a school for Protestant girls, but sought to instill in students the equality and value of people from all religious, racial, and class backgrounds. The Mediterranean School was founded under the Ottoman Empire as the “Faculty School” in 1905

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202 Sbaiti 2014.
as a school for the children of the then few dozen foreign staff at the American University in Beirut. In response to the unique demands of these families, Mediterranean curriculum was based on American educational standards, and textbooks and teachers were imported from the United States. The school community was initially predominantly made up of American Protestants, as the American University in Beirut was then the Syrian Protestant College, and classes began each day with Bible recitation and a hymn. After World War I, when many foreign schools were closed down by violence, famine, and conflicts with Ottoman authorities, the Mediterranean School expanded to provide education to all Anglophone families that remained in Beirut. In 1921, the school was renamed and began to distance itself from the Syrian Protestant College. It became increasingly integrated with the expatriate community across the region, and eventually became a center for families of all nationalities seeking an international education for their children.

Mission Statements

School’s mission statements evoke one clear articulation of schools’ organizational identities. They delineate what administrators understand to be the central purpose of education in general and their school in particular. For example, Ahliyah School’s mission emphasizes global citizenship, respect for diversity, and academic excellence. According to the school’s mission statement, Ahliyah “develops young minds to their best abilities, while nurturing self-confidence, respect, compassion, creativity, a joy for learning and working collaboratively within a diverse environment. Ahliyah graduates are primed to take responsibility for their future and to be active citizens engaged in local, regional, and global issues.”

well-rounded learners through attention to cognitive, social, physical, and aesthetic growth.

Ahliiah’s administration describes the school as:

an educational institution that represented, for more than ninety years, the best in contemporary civic education. Lebanese without fanaticism or seclusion, Arab with transparency and spontaneity, humanist teaching the principles of individual freedom and dignity, while being a leader in artistic activities and a promoter of family values in a context of genuine love and mutual respect. Among the Lebanese private schools, Ahliiah distinguished itself by being independent; not affiliated to any religious community, nationality, or creed, and by embodying a pioneering trend in Lebanese national education.

The Mediterranean School’s mission likewise focuses on developing students who are independent, responsible, creative, and considerate of others. Their mission statement proclaims that the school “empowers students to solve problems with creativity and integrity, to lead well-balanced lives, and to serve Lebanon and the world community with understanding and compassion.”

Mediterranean School administrators believe that students’ learning is best supported by engaging with peers from diverse backgrounds; actively participating in their communities; acknowledging the unique learning styles of each student; and providing students with opportunities to make choices and mistakes in a safe environment. The NPC’s mission statement proclaims that it “is an institution with an educational, humanitarian, and patriotic mission that aims at nurturing open-minded, conscientious, and compassionate citizens who will respect and understand individual differences.”

Beyond its academic role, the school seeks to

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206 Citations for these quotes have been left out to preserve the anonymity of the school.

develop its students into “citizen[s] characterized by a humanitarian touch, conscientiousness, and… personalit[ies] open to all thoughts, principles, and convictions.”

Though all three schools appear to have similar aims, small rhetorical disparities are evident. For example, both Ahliah and the NPC highlight their nationalistic role in developing proud citizens. The Mediterranean School, however, positions itself as an international school serving global citizens. Ahliah also embraces global citizenship, but more explicitly locates where this citizenship is based. Additionally, Ahliah and the Mediterranean School emphasize global and local problem solving skills, while the NPC focuses on the more abstract virtues of equality and open-mindedness. These differences are articulations of the ways that schools position themselves within the Lebanese educational, social, and political environment, and the values that they see as fundamental to a successful community and students’ development.

*School Admissions*

Admissions policies likewise reflect how schools see their roles within the Lebanese educational landscape and articulate their organizational identity. The admission policy at the NPC states simply that the school is “a firm believer in equality among all people regardless of color, religion, social status, or allegiance.” The Mediterranean School likewise “welcomes applicants of all nationalities.” Currently, over forty-nine nationalities are represented in the Mediterranean student body, which “seeks to cultivate a diverse student body with an international composition… draw[ing] students from both the Lebanese and international communities in Lebanon and… embrac[ing] diversity in race, gender, religion, national origin and background.” However, the admissions process at the Mediterranean School is highly

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selective and prohibitively expensive for many families. In addition, the school does not have a special education program, so they are not able to accommodate students with learning disabilities if they are not “ capable of meeting or approaching grade level standards.” At Ahlijah School, “the enrollment of any candidate depends only on his academic performance in his/her previous school and Ahlijah placement test, regardless of his/her race, gender, religious belief[s] and nationality.”\textsuperscript{210} Ahlijah has additional programs for special needs students and students with learning disabilities., as well as programs for foreign students whose first language is not Arabic or Lebanese students who have spent extensive time living abroad. These programs are based on the school’s aim to “leave no child behind” by identifying students with special needs early in their educational careers, developing educational structures that cater to these students’ specific learning abilities. These admission policies form the school demographics that students are immersed within and suggest to students and families the traits that are most fundamental to membership in the school community.

\textit{Outside School Walls: Parents and Other Actors}

Extracurricular activities, student governments, methods of administrative decision-making, the involvement of parents’ councils, and events taking place outside of the school walls also shape the overall educational environment and how citizenship is constructed in these environments. These actors and dynamics outside of the classroom “create a context for young people to develop their own political and social identities.”\textsuperscript{211} Peers, parents, and other family members also play a defining role in shaping school environments and how students engage with them.

\textsuperscript{210} “Mission.” \textit{Ahliah School}.
\textsuperscript{211} UNDP 2008, 18.
Parents reflect alternative centers of power and discipline from the school, and their expectations both contradict and reinforce school lessons. Nearly ninety-six percent of Lebanese schools, public and private alike, have a parents’ council that is in regular contact with school administrators. However, there are significant variations in the substantiveness of parent participation. How parents engage with school administrators, curricula content, classroom practices, and their students is formative to how students subsequently interpret these actors and dynamics. When lessons learned at home diverge from lessons learned at school, these conflicted realities are embedded in students’ understandings of the world. Neither of these two settings for lessons about citizenship are universally more formative than the other, though students are more likely to engage with classroom lessons if they correspond to values that are reinforced in their interactions outside of school.

At the NPC, administrators acknowledge that the success of the school’s mission requires the cooperation and support of parents. In a recent statement by the principal, he implores parents to “provide a peaceful and secure family environment for our children so that they can function in a relaxed and studious atmosphere for maximum achievement.” The principal concedes that parents “play a pivotal role in training [their] children to assume responsibility for their actions, to respect the rights of others, to develop self-discipline, to fulfill duties, and to respect appointments and deadlines.” Respecting this pivotal role, he encourages parents to be actively involved in their children’s education by engaging with teachers and administrators at the NPC.

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212 UNDP 2008, 37.
214 Ibid.
Parents are also an integral part of the school environment at the Mediterranean School. Parents are invited every session, roughly every two months, to a “learning celebration”, conducted on separate days for each class. During these celebrations, students showcase the work they have done and teachers share classroom activities with parents. In second grade, parents also volunteer to test each student individually on their weekly spelling words. These volunteer parents come every Friday to assist teachers by administering the spelling test to students. In addition, in a recent initiative to eliminate bullying, the elementary school administration held several coffee sessions to discuss the issue with parents and provide them with tools to help their children address bullying. They also invited all parents, faculty, and students to participate in a survey about their experiences with bullying at the school to help administrators plan for future initiatives. These opportunities for parental participation reflect the administration’s commitment to engaging parents in what their students are learning and Mediterranean parents’ substantive investment in their children’s schooling. Such integration of parents into the schooling environment fosters a closer correlation between values taught at home and values taught at school, and encourages students to apply school lessons in their lives outside of school.

At Ahliiah, parents are likewise an integral part of the school environment, though in a more adversarial way than parents at the Mediterranean School. Ms. M, the principal of the lower school, described both positive engagements and regular altercations with parents. She

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215 I did not conduct interviews with parents, though some of my interlocutors were also parents with students currently in the Lebanese school system. The administrators and teachers I interviewed consistently highlighted the importance of family life and parental involvement in the school to students’ success. However, time and logistical constraints prevented me from including parents’ unique perspectives on their children’s educations.
216 “Lower school” was the term used to refer to the elementary school at Ahliiah, including students from kindergarten to grade six. The school also included a preschool, middle school,
suggested that lessons learned at home often inhibited rather than supported lessons about unity and freedom taught at the school. For example, she detailed a situation between a Lebanese and a Syrian student that had considerable trouble getting along at school, which occasionally dissolved into heated debates and personal attacks in the classroom. Both students were called into the principal’s office to discuss the conflict, and the principal encouraged the students to talk about their disagreements and confront their preconceived notions about each other. It became clear to the principal that these preconceived notions were lessons learned from both students’ families. Ms. M and the students’ teachers subsequently agreed that the two students should be put at the same table and encouraged to work together until they could be civil toward each other at school — the standard procedure for classroom conflicts of this nature. Ms. M notified the students’ parents of the conflict, but the parents did not respond supportively to the school’s efforts to bring the students together. Though the students initially resisted the school’s efforts at resolution, Ms. M noted proudly that they eventually discovered that they had many common interests and grew to be close friends in spite of their families. This story reveals the dissonance that sometimes exists between values learned at home and values learned at school and how students and administrators engage with these conflicting value systems.

Another significant instance where the principal expected dissonance between parents’ wishes and the goals of the school was an upcoming initiative to discuss sexual health and sexual assault in Ahliyah primary school classrooms. Ms. M planned to send a letter home with students explaining that the school would begin discussing these sensitive matters in class, in stages deemed appropriate to each grade level, and encouraging parents to contact the school with any
questions or concerns. The letter explained that students would be learning, among other things, “to differentiate between girls and boys and how they have different private parts” and “that there are appropriate and inappropriate forms of physical contact.” It then asked parents to support these lessons by facilitating an environment at home that enabled students to share with their parents when they felt physically violated or unsafe. Though the program had not yet started while I was at the school, Ms. M expected considerable resistance from parents toward this initiative. She explained that these lessons were particularly problematic to teach in Lebanon because of the prevalence of conservative values that discouraged public discussion of these matters and the absence of laws criminalizing sexual assault. Nonetheless, Ms. M and the school counselor felt it was important to initiate such dialogues at school for the safety and wellbeing of their students. While parents were notified about the curriculum development, they were not asked for permission. Though the subject of sexual health was not covered in national curricula, as a private school, the principal was empowered to add this additional content to lessons. This suggests the power of individual educators, with the support of school administration, to develop and alter curriculum in ways that they believe are necessary to educate safe and well-rounded students that are prepared to thrive outside of school. At the same time, however, it also reveals the challenges students and administrators face when classroom lessons are undermined by an external environment that is inhospitable to the civic values the school deems vital to students’ development.

**Teaching Citizenship**

Educators play myriad roles in developing and implementing curricula, facilitating dialogue between students, and responding to changing external circumstances as they permeate classroom environments. According to George Noblit and William Pink, “The occupation of
teaching has long been portrayed as embattled. In large part this is because schools in general, and teachers in particular, are subject to conflicting expectations. Teachers must respond not only to changing classroom dynamics and individual students’ needs, but also administrators’ and parents’ expectations. These expectations are often inconsistent, and teachers must balance the demands of their superiors with the needs of their students and their individual teaching styles and values.

As a Foucauldian approach would suggest, “those who exercise power in the school are caught up in and subjected by its functions just as much as those over whom power is exercised. In fact, in many everyday educational situations, it is the teacher, performing under the critical gaze of others, over whom power is exercised.” In addition to ensuring that curricula and testing standards are met, teaching requires educators to respond to dynamic circumstances that arise in the classroom for which official methods offer no concrete answers. Noblit and Pink explain: “Much of teaching involves unexpected events, interruptions, and unclear and conflicting expectations, all of which must be accommodated by the teacher in the isolation of her classroom.” Though teachers at the schools I observed conducted classrooms independently, they were routinely subject to administrative and outside observation, and when their teaching practices appeared unsuccessful, the principal and other teachers suggested alternative methodologies.

The basic rules and expectations of the classroom are set by the teacher’s example. How teachers dress, their general disposition, whether they arrive early or late, how they distribute

\[217\] Noblit and Pink, 1.
\[218\] Deacon, 184.
\[219\] Noblit and Pink, 1.
encouragement and critiques, and how they approach subject matter shape students’ ideas about appropriate behavior and responses. As teacher and psychologist Haim G. Ginott suggests:

As a teacher, I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.  

How teachers assess and subsequently treat students is fundamental to the roles that students are allowed to play in the classroom and the ways they understand their roles outside of the classroom. As a result, Frayha suggests that “teachers may be considered… the key element of the success or failure of any educational plan.”

The pedagogical approach used in civics classrooms at all three of the schools I observed focused on student-centered learning and classroom dialogue. Students contributed substantively to class discussions and responded respectfully to differences of opinion among their peers. They participated in ways that reflected critical engagement rather than just rote learning, though they rarely responded in controversial or adversarial ways, and they did not have any control over the topic of discussion. Foucault acknowledges that while such a discourse-oriented approach can minimize practices of domination in the classroom, they do not entirely counteract structures of power, which are “inextricably intertwined with pedagogical effects of guilt, obligation and verification, and assumptions about degrees of ignorance, dependence on others, legitimate compulsion, and achievement.”  

Whereas lecture-style classes that recognize the tentativeness of truth-claims render power structures more visible by exposing themselves to critique, the  

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221 Frayha 2003, 86.
apparent equality of dialogical formats mask the reality that the teacher is the dominant producer and determinant of “true” knowledge in the classroom. As a result, “one-on-one tutorials, group research programmes and group work are at least as likely to manipulate students as a traditional 'chalk and talk’ method… The twentieth-century shift from traditional didactic or teacher-centred to more co-operative or child-centred instructional formats has not dissolved or tamed power relations but merely reformulated them.”223 This became especially clear in the selection of class content and the administration of discipline, over which students had no control. The illusion of freedom and critical thinking does not release classrooms from the hierarchical system of knowledge production and distribution of discipline.

Teachers at all three schools routinely evaluated students’ progress in class, noting areas where students had excelled and suggesting ways that their learning could be improved. In these interactions, it was clear that teachers had an intimate knowledge of their students’ unique personal backgrounds and learning styles. Evaluations of students in the classroom appeared to be based on scales that were personally tailored to students’ academic strengths and weaknesses, encouraging students to learn at their own pace and supporting individual development. Teachers listened intently to students’ contributions and responded by evaluating the value and appropriateness of their comments. They also regularly checked in with the class by asking “Does anyone want to add anything?” or “Did you understand? Did you want me to repeat something?” to ensure that all students understood the content being covered.

Teachers at the NPC, Ahliah, and the Mediterranean School struggled to find a balance between being caring parental figures and administrators of discipline. Teachers expressed significant warmth toward students and sought to encourage student participation, but they also

223 Deacon, 184.
needed to set clear boundaries for appropriate behavior to meet the expectations of parents and administrators. When students crossed boundaries for appropriate behavior in the classroom, teachers were compelled to more clearly establish the differential roles of teachers and students in the classroom. During one class at the NPC, the teacher responded to a student who frequently interrupted the class: “Maybe you can replace me one day that I won’t come; you have many good ideas… But for now, I’m still the teacher and you are not.” Another NPC teacher described trying to be students’ friend outside of class and teacher in the classroom. Students affectionately rushed to hug her in the hallway during breaks and seemed to genuinely enjoy her class. However, she also had more trouble than other teachers subduing students that spoke out of turn and controlling the classroom, perhaps because boundaries and power structures were less blatant in her interactions with students.

At the same time, there was considerable pressure on teachers to ensure that students mastered the content that they would be required to know for national exams. Teachers at all three schools wanted to support students in developing at their own pace, but they were compelled to teach the course content at the rate expected by administrative and national standards. As a result of these conflicting pressures, a UNDP study found that many civics teachers, though none of those that I observed, used a “banking system”\(^\text{224}\) approach to education, whereby teachers merely deposited knowledge prescribed by the official curriculum into students and expected that it would be regurgitated on tests.\(^\text{225}\) One history teacher told Abouchedid and Nasser: “Teaching students about each other’s historical roots is a good thing, but we cannot do that since we have to meet the requirements of the national examination.”\(^\text{226}\)

\(^{224}\) Freire 1970.
\(^{225}\) UNDP 2008, 40-41.
\(^{226}\) Abouchedid and Nasser, 73.
Such comments reflect the conflicting values placed on educational actors, and how officially sanctioned values, such as those delineated in national tests, become prioritized over individual development or lessons grounded in pressing realities.

When teachers and administrators attempted to address conflicts directly, the classroom environment changed. Students became more engaged, but also less contained and considerate of classroom rules. Given the aforementioned violence experienced by many students and their families, it is not surprising that one young teacher at Ahliyah School described feeling “tension”, “danger”, and “anxiety” in the classroom environment when she elected to show an Al-Jazeera documentary about Shi’a imam Musa Sadr to initiate a dialogue about sectarianism in Lebanon. The same teacher suggested that, while she felt it was incredibly important for students to have the opportunity to take part in these kinds of critical dialogues, doing so was challenging and emotionally taxing. Most teachers were both ill-equipped and had little incentive to take on such contentious content because it was perceived as “risky” and would likely draw criticism from students, parents, and administrators alike. Through this narrowing of curriculum contents and classroom discussions, students learn subjects that are open to debate or “safe” to discuss in public spaces as well as subjects that are taboo or not considered appropriate for polite discourse.

At all three of the schools where I conducted research, teachers had received significant training in education and appeared to competently and warmly direct the classroom. The Mediterranean School in particular focused considerable energy and resources on the on-going professional development of their teachers, ensuring that they have up-to-date training and knowledge. However, a UNDP study of 131 Lebanese civics education teachers found that many had not studied education or received training to prepare them to handle the challenges that might arise in civics classrooms. Of the teachers surveyed, only fifty-nine percent had a degree
in education, and the vast majority had never received further training of more than a day or two. While teachers expressed confidence in their professional abilities, they lamented the lack of access to training in teaching civics as well as limited administrative support. Though chapter two revealed the government and individual families’ substantial financial and legislative investment in civics education, the limited training and resources required of civics teachers suggests that this investment is centered on knowledge production rather than implementation and engagement.

As a result of the low pay and substantial workload at public and state-subsidized schools, teachers coordinated weekly strikes throughout the duration of my research. During these strikes, nearly all government and subsidized schools were shut down and hundreds of teachers gathered outside of the Parliament building in downtown Beirut to protest. For four consecutive Wednesdays, the Union Coordination Committee called on teachers and civil servants in public and private schools to refuse to teach as part of an “intifada (uprising) to liberate the state from corruption and thefts” in response to the Parliament’s failure to approve a new wage scale for civil servants.

Teachers at schools that did not support the wage hike, more than fifty percent of private schools, ignored the union’s strike calls. Many parents also opposed the wage increase because they feared it would drive up already high tuition prices at private and subsidized schools. One parent lamented that teachers were using students as “hostages” to put pressure on

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229 The wage scale for Lebanese civil servants was last officially amended eighteen years ago, and the cost of living has since risen considerably.
230 The Daily Star, 2 April 2014.
the government to approve the wage increase. “The teachers’ action does not reflect any respect for their educational ethics to which they are supposed to be committed in their noble career,” she explained; “Under no circumstances should the students fall victim to the ongoing confrontation between the teacher[s’] unions and the government.”

On the other hand, as Faten Elhajj notes, “Every time teachers go on strike, people question their ‘selfish’ actions,” such as “boycotting marking examinations and dicing with the futures of hundreds of thousands of students. Teachers feel that their rights are violated daily. They are constantly battling to overcome political obstacles... The government ignores the teachers, until the ‘students become the scapegoats.’”

According to Fouad Abdul-Sater, the media secretary of the Public Secondary Education Association, the government has never responded to teachers’ demands without teachers having to resort to protests and strikes.

I missed multiple classes at the NPC because school was canceled due to the strikes and protests coordinated by the Union Coordination Committee, the Private School Teachers Union, and the General Labor Confederation. This in itself is meaningful; classes at the two private schools where I conducted research were never canceled, despite these nationwide strikes. For students at these schools, where tuition was higher than tuition at the NPC, school continued without disruption during the strikes of national civic servants and teachers. Though these distinct realities were not addressed explicitly by any of the classrooms I observed or the teachers I spoke with, they impact the way students understand their education within the wider environment and the significance of national labor conflicts to their daily lives.


233 Ibid.
The Classroom Environment

Of all of the variables that structure students’ lives at school, the classroom environment most powerfully affects students’ daily learning experiences. This environment is shaped not only by how classes are structured, but also by how teachers and students engage with this structure and the particularities of the classroom communities that they form. The way classrooms are assembled, both materially and dynamically, informs how students interact with each other and how they understand the use of space. It also structures the way that power is enacted in the classroom and how students understand their role in the classroom environment. In larger classrooms, for example, observation, interaction, and discipline may be more defuse, whereas in smaller classrooms these power dynamics may be more personalized or restrictive.

At Ahliah and the Mediterranean School, classrooms were large. Each classroom had separate spaces for different activities: an open floor space for class-wide discussions, a space for desks organized into groups of four, a space for classroom materials, a teachers desk, and a space for independent reading or other activities. At both schools, there were roughly twenty students in each class. Classes at the NPC were smaller, about nine to fifteen students, and offered less space for individual work or diverse activities. Students sat two-to-a-desk in a square room with the teacher at the front of the class between students and the exit, reinforcing where authority in the classroom was centered. Classes ranged from twenty to forty minutes at Ahliah to fifty minutes at the NPC. At the Mediterranean School, students stayed in the same class with the same teacher for most of the day, but lessons usually lasted about thirty minutes each. Because classes stayed together throughout the day, though the subject matter and teacher occasionally changed, students formed communities with the other students in their class.
At Ahliyah and the Mediterranean School, teachers and administrators celebrated students’ classroom achievements by providing personal recognition. Students’ work was proudly displayed in the halls of the school, reiterating classroom lessons and reflecting the school’s knowledge of and investment in each student. This intimacy allowed students to take pride in their contributions to the school, but it also empowered closer monitoring and categorization of individual students’ outputs and progress. While at the NPC students’ artwork also covered the walls, this art was not labeled with individual students’ names. This small shift reflects different ways of crediting students for their work and acknowledging individuality. Students at all three schools appeared to feel like a part of their school, but tangible spaces labeled with their names highlighted their individual contribution in the school community. Where students’ names and artwork were posted prominently around the school, they could take ownership of the space and their participation in it.

Mediterranean School classes used diverse media to make learning fun and engaging for students. For example, during a weeklong lesson on landforms and cartography, students drew a map of an imaginary island, and made cookies to represent their maps, complete with dyed-green coconut shavings for grass and chocolate chip mountains. Students then shared their cookies with their parents during the quarterly “learning celebration”.

Ahliah classrooms also employed diverse styles to engage students in the learning process and break up lessons. Most classes began with a video or reading, then a class-wide discussion led by the teacher, then the teacher would explain the project related to the subject at hand. Students would then be dismissed to work independently or in groups on the assigned project. After projects were completed, students presented their project, and the class segued into the next lesson. Students were accustomed to and enjoyed these cycles and routines of activity,
which became an assumed part of classroom structures. Students and teachers rarely diverged from these classroom formats, so curriculum content and student participation were configured to fit within the established routines of time and space. In this way, classroom actors became what Foucault refers to as “docile subjects”. Though scheduling routines and habitual uses of space appear innocuous, they constructed regimens of discipline that constrained the behavior of all actors in the educational environment, both in and outside of the classroom.

Group work was an important part of classes at Ahliyah School. During group work, teachers expected students to exchange and collaborate diverse ideas into a single group product with their other three group members. Each student was assigned a distinct role within their group — writer, organizer, reader, and presenter — rotating roles quarterly. For example, in one lesson, the teacher asked students to work in groups to write a song and perform it for the class. In each group, one student was designated as the songwriter, one as the music writer, one as the instrument player, and one as the singer. These assigned roles empowered students to challenge themselves by taking on roles outside of their comfort zones, and allowed them to identify their personal strengths and weaknesses. They also taught students the challenges and benefits of working together and allowed students to build peer relationships with limited teacher oversight within the structure of the classroom environment.

At both Ahliyah and the Mediterranean School, teachers did not strictly regulate classes. Teachers would continue the class even when small chatter persisted within groups. Students moved about the classrooms to sharpen their pencils, go to the bathroom, or do individual tasks without asking permission, entrusting students with limited independence so long as their behavior was not disruptive. Teachers or teachers’ assistants regularly took pictures during classes, and school administrators and other teachers entered and left the class without
interrupting the flow of the lesson. Perhaps as a result of this dynamic, I was able to join and observe classes without significant interruption, and I rarely felt that my presence in classrooms was distracting to students.

However, classroom dynamics changed depending on students’ behavior. During a particularly rowdy and challenging Ahliah class, multiple students received detention for speaking out of turn, and the class environment became more authoritarian. During this class, the teacher strictly reprimanded students for leaving their desks without permission or speaking out of turn, reflecting the consequences of inappropriate behavior. At the NPC, teachers expected students to ask permission to go to the bathroom, and movements in the classroom were more tightly controlled. In these classes, my presence was more distracting, though students were able to participate in the lesson normally once it was addressed that a new person had joined the class. This environment left students less room to make independent decisions about appropriate behavior, and required students to seek the teacher’s approval prior to engaging in the class or undertaking personal tasks.

Each grade level and teacher had their own established system for regulating the classroom. Individual teachers found creative ways to teach students about appropriate behavior. In a fourth grade classroom at Ahliah, the teacher would say “red light” to indicate when students should be silently paying attention to the front of the class and “green light” when students could begin discussing the subject with their group members or working independently. In a second grade classroom at the Mediterranean School, the teacher employed a code word to let students know when the class had gotten out of hand and students should stop talking to regroup. Students seemed to understand these systems, and usually complied with the expected behavior when a code was employed. These codes created an inclusive communal atmosphere
because all students understood and abided by the same code, but they also taught students that community membership required understanding of and compliance with certain social codes.

Students at all three schools actively participated in class as leaders and group members. Students raised their hands to ask questions and respond to the teacher, occasionally speaking out of turn when they were not called on. At the NPC, classes were primarily conducted through class-wide discussions, which were led and regulated by the teacher. Students were regularly asked for their input, and encouraged to participate, but the teacher would correct answers if they were too far from the expected response. Students raised their hands to provide an answer, the teacher responded, and then the next student was called on. Students were not permitted to respond to their peers’ answers, and the teacher spoke much more than the students. When students spoke without raising their hands, the teacher highlighted their behavior as inappropriate. When students in one NPC class started to talk over one another, the teacher asked: “Did we forget how we behave with each other? Is R [the student speaking] your friend? So why aren’t you paying attention when she is talking?” In another NPC classroom, the teacher asked two students that dominated the class discussion to allow other students to participate. When one of the students continued to speak out of turn, the teacher paused the class to address him: “S, you are doing it again. Don’t take it personally, but you made a promise [not to interrupt the class].” In the same class, one student who appeared to be less comfortable speaking English did not participate at all, and the teacher did not ask for his input. When it was his turn to read aloud, other students were impatient when he read slowly and giggled at his thick accent. The teacher did not respond to this behavior. In this way, teachers delineated appropriate classroom participation, implicitly reflecting differential expectations of students. At the Mediterranean School, participation in class-wide discussions was more even because students’ names were
drawn at random rather than through voluntarily raised hands. Though all students participated in both cases, the structure of their participation framed students’ roles in the classroom differently.

At Ahlijah, all students also participated relatively equally in class discussions, because they received points for their participation. As a result of this system, some student’s participation seemed to focus on listing keywords rather than really reflecting on the questions posed. For example, in a second grade class on forgiveness at Ahlijah, students were given a hypothetical situation where they were mistreated and asked how they would forgive the perpetrator. In a situation where a peer hypothetically pushed them to the ground, students responded that they would “forgive him and try to be his friend.” Students expressed some creativity in their responses, but it was clear that they highlighted the answers that they thought the teacher wanted to hear and steered clear of responses that they thought might be deemed inappropriate or controversial.

Curricula and classroom practices at Ahlijah, the NPC, and the Mediterranean School encouraged students to be responsible for themselves and others, substantively engage in class discussions, and appreciate the contributions of their peers. This formal curriculum was complimented by informal classroom dialogues that encouraged critical thinking by acknowledging students’ ideas, though students’ responses almost always complied with established parameters for appropriate participation. Both administrators and teachers seemed invested in students’ safety, wellbeing, and development, however, this investment did not abolish hierarchies of discipline and regulation. Teachers joked comfortably with students in class and in school hallways, and students appeared to feel safe in the school environment, but clear parameters for appropriate behavior and consequences for acting outside of these parameters were nonetheless significant components of the environment.
Foreign Languages and International Examples

All three of the schools where I conducted research implemented curricula that were attentive to both Lebanese and international education standards. The NPC applied a modified version of the Lebanese national curriculum. These modifications reflected the school’s mission, emphasizing character education and foreign language learning, but otherwise stuck to the official curriculum. Ahliyah School likewise followed the national Lebanese Baccalaureate Program at all levels, with variations to highlight the school’s stated mission to promote global citizenship. Students routinely participated in national and international academic competitions, and curricula merged Lebanese national standards with global education standards. The Mediterranean School offered three academic programs: the International Baccalaureate Diploma, the Lebanese Baccalaureate Diploma, and the College Preparatory Diploma. To the degree possible, all three tracks were integrated into a single curriculum “to ensure [that] students feel they are members of one school community.” As a foreign school, the Mediterranean curriculum was designed to parallel American national standards — the “American Common Core” curricula — in English, language arts, and mathematics.

Formal curricula at all three schools covered a range of disciplines
that addressed both local and global references as well as international educational standards. Each school employed these standards in ways that aligned with their organizational identity and student demographic. For example, in a lesson on landforms covered at both Ahlijah and the Mediterranean School, examples in the Ahlijah classroom were all from the Arab world. The Mediterranean School covered the same lesson points, but provided global references. At the Mediterranean School, the point on mountains showed Mt. Everest, while at Ahlijah it showed Mt. Sinai. Likewise, to describe a peninsula, the Ahlijah curriculum depicted the Arabian Peninsula, while the class at the Mediterranean School cited Florida. Other lessons at Ahlijah made global references, but the textbook used for social studies and geography focused almost exclusively on the Arab world. During an NPC class discussion on the majesty of nature created by “our God”, the instructor referenced Raouche, the Grand Canyon, and the Rocky Mountains. These subtle shifts in reference points reflects the distinct ways these schools position themselves geographically and how their students subsequently locate themselves as citizens in the world.

According to the MEHE, “National language is a means of social communication and interaction, and it also plays a role in ensuring co-existence and social cohesion.” The 1994 Educational Plan states that “the government considers the Arabic mother-tongue as an element of national unity and citizenship,” though students are also urged to “master at least one foreign language as an effective means of interaction with… international cultures, to enrich these cultures and be enriched by them.” At Ahlijah, Lebanese Arabic was the primary language of administration and engagement with parents. Classes were divided between English and Modern Standard Arabic; and French was offered as a foreign language beginning at the first grade level.

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234 Frayha 2003, 85.
At the Mediterranean School, English was the primary language of instruction, administration, and community engagement. Students also attended classes in Modern Standard Arabic and French daily, but Lebanese Arabic was rare in the school environment. At the NPC, English was used as the language of instruction for all subjects except Arabic, history, geography, and civics. Students were also taught French as a second foreign language for two to three classes per week at all grade levels. Administration and parental involvement at the NPC was primarily in Lebanese Arabic, as most students were Lebanese nationals. These linguistic dynamics reflect schools’ student body demographics and organizational identities, as well as the value assigned to particular languages. At the NPC and Ahliiah, for example, the ability to speak Arabic fluently was necessary for students and parents to participate fully in the school community, whereas at the Mediterranean School English proficiency was the most important linguistic asset.

At Ahliiah and the NPC, students had different teachers for different languages, and students remained in the same classroom while teachers rotated. Everyday, after a forty-minute lesson in Modern Standard Arabic, the English teacher would walk in the classroom and students stood to say “Good morning, Miss.” Following the English lesson, the French teacher joined the class, and students stood to greet her in French. The Mediterranean School also had different teachers for foreign language instruction, but most lessons were taught in English. Students went to a different classroom for French and Arabic classes, which were a less prominent part of the curriculum.

Teachers sometimes struggled to ensure that students stuck to the designated language of the class, particularly at the NPC and Ahliiah. During English classes at both schools, teachers would frequently say, “Okay, that’s wonderful. Now can you say it in English?” Regardless of the language of instruction, group conversations at Ahliiah and the NPC often took place in
Lebanese Arabic, interspersed with occasional English words for vocabulary relevant to the lesson. At the Mediterranean School, however, students and teachers almost never spoke Arabic outside of the classroom designated for Modern Standard Arabic lessons, meaning that differences in linguistic background played a less important role in classroom and playground interactions. These linguistic differences inform schools’ orientations toward the outside world, preparing students for membership in particular language communities and the values that correspond with them.

Classroom Citizenship

At all three of the schools where I conducted research, civics and character education were central components of the curricula. Each school applied a modified version of the national civics curriculum, integrating character and civics lessons into other core classroom content at the elementary level. Through these lessons, teachers and administrators sought to equip students with the knowledge and skills they would need to be kind, confident, and effective citizens at school and in the world.

At Ahliyah and the Mediterranean School, civics education took the form of lessons focusing on character traits deemed useful and important by the school’s administrators. These traits rotated quarterly, and became focal points reiterated throughout the school day on the playground, in all lessons, in interactions between school staff and students, and during school assemblies. At Ahliyah, each classroom focused on a different character trait, while at the Mediterranean School all elementary classrooms covered the same trait at the same time, culminating in a quarterly school-wide assembly. At the NPC, teachers integrated civics and character traits that reflected the school’s values throughout all subjects, but specific traits were not used as focal points.
At the Mediterranean School character traits covered at the elementary level included honesty, self-control, responsibility, empathy, and [not] bullying. The character education program asked students to consider whether their behavior throughout the day was kind, true, necessary, and safe. The traits covered at Ahlia included caring, sharing, cooperation, responsibility, happiness, respect, unity, peace, love, honesty, forgiveness, tolerance, fairness, belonging, integrity, citizenship, and freedom. Some concepts were addressed every year throughout the Ahlia lower school cycle, such as caring and cooperation. Other concepts, such as integrity and citizenship, were reserved for third through sixth grade, because the administration believed they required a higher level of emotional development for students to understand them. Concepts that were repeated annually were developed further each year, such that in fourth grade, peace was defined as the absence of war; in fifth grade, students explored peace within relationships; and in sixth grade, students learned about finding peace within themselves.

During one character education lesson at Ahlia, the teacher began the class with a video about World War II that depicted scenes of bombing, warplanes, and shellfire. After the video, the teacher asked the class what they had just seen. After taking a number of responses from students and jotting their ideas down on the board, she broadened the question, asking about the general outcomes of war [“Ma nata’j al-harb?”]. Nearly all students were eager to participate and provide contributions to the class discussion. They bounced in their seats as they raised their hands and shouted out “miss” if the teacher did not call on them or they felt their contribution had not been given due acknowledgement. The teacher called on less enthusiastic students in the back of the class to offer contributions, even when other students were chomping at the bit to answer, highlighting the importance of inclusive classroom participation.
Though the video was about World War II and the discussion was about war in general, students were encouraged to share personal experiences through questions such as “Who knows about life in war? What’s it like?” [“Man ya’rif ‘an al-‘aiish fi al-harb? Kifha?”]. Their answers indicated an intimate knowledge of wartime realities. One student from Syria was asked about the challenges he faced at home as a result of the war in his country. Another described her family’s struggles during the Lebanese civil war. It was clear throughout the discussion that the teacher and other classmates knew each other’s personal backgrounds, and that many students felt comfortable sharing personal stories with the class. Students did not make personal attacks or reflect on contentious political issues. However, they acknowledged challenges at home that others appeared to relate to. Though the lesson was applicable to students’ lived experiences of conflict, the teacher chose to begin the discussion with a video about World War II rather than a confrontation that the students had experienced directly. In this way, students learned that war was a feature of life in many countries, and the discussion was generalized to focus on principles rather than particular historical realities. Following the discussion of life during war, the class ended with a lesson about the value of peace. “Everyone wants to live without fear,” the teacher explained as she directed each group to work together on a drawing comparing life in war to life in peace.

In a lesson about freedom in a sixth grade classroom at Ahliyah, the teacher handed out note cards to each of the four group clusters in the room detailing a hypothetical or real situation in which various freedoms had been infringed on by individuals or the state. The teacher then prompted student groups to discuss and respond in writing to how the absence of freedom made them feel. A card on national freedom told a story about a vampire nation and a werewolf nation, where the werewolves rampantly stole from the vampires and thus violated their national
freedom. A card on freedom of religion described a historic situation between the Romans and the Gauls, wherein the Gauls forced their Roman captives to practice their religion. A card on the freedom of expression provided an abstract scenario of a police state that monitored and regulated all aspects of life. A card on freedom of choice described a girl in modern Afghanistan whose parents forced her to marry a man she did not know at the age of twelve. Though all four freedoms covered in the lesson faced challenges in the Lebanese context, the teacher chose to focus on more abstract situations. The leader of the group given the latter card on forced marriage in Afghanistan, the only card explicitly addressing a contemporary reality, told the teacher “Miss, we don’t want this one; it’s too hard.” The teacher responded, “It’s a good one. It’s a real life situation here in Lebanon.” To this, the student exclaimed, “Yeah, that’s why it’s hard… We can’t do it.” A boy in the group explained in frustration, “But, miss, ana mish bint [I am not a girl]; I don’t know about these things.” Here again, the students expressed differential notions of citizenship and difficulty engaging with contexts that they had not experienced but understood to be vastly different from their own experiences. The teacher encouraged the students to try to engage with the situation despite their reservations, but students seemed uncomfortable addressing issues that were close to home but that they had not experienced directly.

In this way, Ahliiah students learned to embrace difference, and empathize with common struggles. As Aida Hurtada and Janelle Silva note, such multicultural education offers critical perspectives on the differential experiences of stigmatized social identities, which broadens the spectrum of identities that students can relate to and encourages an appreciation of difference.236

At the same time, highlighting national, geographic, political, and religious differences also reinforces these differences and imposes an appropriate categorization and response to them. For example, in Ahlia’s second grade classroom, identity cards on the wall depicted all students’ names, parents’ names, nationalities, birthdays, and a picture of their national flag.

In a first grade class, one student came up to me to say: “Miss, we have an American in the class. She’s over there. She only speaks English,” highlighting how her classmate was different from her. On the other hand, at the NPC and the Mediterranean School, national and linguistic differences between students were not emphasized. For example, at the Mediterranean School, I attended what the school principal termed “morning meetings”, during which students sat in a circle for a class-wide discussion. On Monday mornings, students shared what they had
done with their families over the weekend. During these discussions, differences between students, such as their nationality, socioeconomic background, and religion, were neither highlighted nor subdued. Students spoke openly about their family life, providing details about their background without further comment from the teacher or their peers. Perhaps this situation is due to the significant diversity at the Mediterranean School, which made religious, national, and linguistic differences less particularistic. At all three schools, the classroom environment played a crucial role in defining how students located themselves in the world and understood their relationship to others.

The observations throughout this chapter suggest that, in rhetoric and in practice, administrators and teachers seek to create a schooling environment that empowers students to contribute to their community and develop as thoughtful, respectful individuals. Classroom practices establish boundaries for appropriate behavior that help students to interact constructively with others and determine their place in the world. At the same time, the notions of citizenship fostered by civics education lessons are a product of diverse and conflicting hierarchies and value systems. Differences in school environments facilitate differential citizenship and perpetuate distinctive understandings of Lebanon and the Lebanese.

In this chapter, I have tried to show that, while schooling environments may be benevolent and welcoming, they also construct students into national (or global) subjects by delineating appropriate modes of behavior and situating students within structures of power both internal and external to the school. Though I provide detailed experiences from the NPC, Ahliyah, and the Mediterranean School, I have also tried to suggest the particularities of these schooling environments and acknowledge the considerable differences in the citizenship lessons disseminated even between these three schools in urban Beirut. The chapter highlights the
conflicting dynamics at play at the school level and in individual classrooms, as well as the myriad challenges educational actors face in educating students to be empowered and equal citizens amidst an external environment that often undermines these values.
Chapter Four: Non-State Initiatives and International Actors in Lebanese Education

This chapter will explore recent non-state initiatives to evaluate and reform the Lebanese education system to promote particular civic values such as critical thinking and democratic participation. Through interviews with Lebanese and international non-governmental organization (NGO) staff and analysis of educational NGO programs, it will evaluate the stakes that diverse non-state actors have in Lebanese education and the construction of specific ideas of Lebanese citizenship. It will also note how these actors interact with schools, state institutions, and other non-state groups, highlighting the power dynamics revealed through these interactions.

This chapter is significant in the broader research argument that civics education programs in Lebanon reinforce and construct differential citizenship, validating particular identifications with Lebanon and ways of being Lebanese. Because of the prevalence of non-state actors in Lebanese education provision, they are powerful players in the country’s educational landscape, and have the potential to reinscribe unjust power structures or empower individuals to challenge them. As the previous chapters have argued, both dynamics are at play in Lebanese civics programs, but the failure of these programs to directly address or confront embedded systems of injustice situates students within these systems rather than encouraging them to challenge them.

NGOs have long played an important role in Lebanon, with the oldest still-active organization dating back to 1710 during Ottoman rule. According to a recent survey conducted by the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs, 6,032 NGOs are currently registered in the

237 UNDP 2009, 83.
Roughly one-quarter of officially registered NGOs have a self-declared sectarian affiliation. Many of these are explicitly affiliated with a political party, and the geographic distribution of NGOs reflects this dynamic. For example, the majority of self-declared Shi’ite NGOs are concentrated in the South and the Biqa’a Valley, the regions with the largest Shi’a populations. While self-declared sectarian-affiliated groups do not make up the majority of active NGOs, sectarian groups are substantial actors in Lebanese political and civil society. In areas where the state is unwilling or unable to provide social services, local and international organizations have stepped in to respond to the needs of underserved citizen and non-citizen populations. Non-state organizations play a defining role in diverse sectors, from human and infrastructural development to education and knowledge production to healthcare provision and civic engagement.

Though NGOs work primarily outside the explicit framework of the state, they end up sustaining current social and political structures by collaborating with state institutions and filling gaps in state services. As former Minister of Education and Higher Education Bahiya al-Hariri acknowledges, “the partnership between the State and international organizations” is vital to the daily functioning of the country. As a result, despite the efforts of some groups to challenge the status quo, these non-state groups are inseparable from the larger power structures of the state and sectarian communities. A 2009 UNDP report explains:

Civil society is not an autonomous agent separate from existing social constructs and networks in Lebanon. Rather it remains just as embedded as the latter in the social and political power structures that make up the country… the embeddedness of social actors and members of civil society organizations in the

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very societal structures that many of them are seeking to change… has reduced the power of these groups.²⁴¹

This is not to suggest that NGOs in Lebanon are ineffective, but rather that their very effectiveness does not in itself challenge the status quo of inequitable citizenship, regardless of whether it is their mission to do so.

As has been outlined in the preceding chapters, and Muhammad Faour of the Carnegie Middle East Center reiterates, “schools are key change agents in developing skills and values… By developing responsible, active citizens, critical thinkers, and knowledge seekers and producers [students] can contribute to nation-building.”²⁴² As a result, both domestic and international actors have invested considerable time and resources into the Lebanese education sector by offering teachers’ trainings, developing extracurricular activities, evaluating curricula and practices, and establishing schools to meet the country’s diverse education needs.

However, little attention has been paid to the particular types of curricula, teaching practices, and extracurricular activities being developed by non-state actors and the divergent notions of Lebanese citizenship and productive civic engagement that they validate. They receive little government oversight or constructive critique from public discourse or other NGOs. Ironically, though these programs focus on empowering citizens, they often are created and coordinated without the participation of the communities they serve. Program objectives and activities are generally determined through a top-down needs assessment, and participants have little control over program content or implementation. Such approaches relegate students to recipients of knowledge rather than active and empowered knowledge producers.

²⁴¹ UNDP 2009, 29.
The focus on ensuring that all children are educated through programs like UNESCO’s "Education For All" campaign, and UNICEF’s “Child-Friendly School Initiative” and the “Let’s All Go to School” programs, shifts the focus away from what is being taught through education, and whether this knowledge is relevant to diverse children’s lives. Likewise, the proliferation of non-state initiatives to foster civic values have not been critically evaluated to analyze what types of citizenship are being promoted and the possible consequences of imbuing students with such values. It is not my intention here to undermine efforts to make education more accessible. Rather, this chapter will explore the baggage that comes with educational access and development directed or funded by international and communal organizations, just as the preceding chapters have detailed the baggage that comes with state-led education programs.

International Actors and Particularistic Visions of Citizenship

While both international and domestic NGOs operate in Lebanon, and some collaborate with the government while others work independently, these categories are hardly distinct. Many international organizations are largely staffed by Lebanese nationals or have a local branch that is not subject to international oversight. For example, a Carnegie Center representative explained: “We’re a think-tank coming from outside… but we know the situation on the ground.”\(^{243}\) Likewise, domestic organizations often receive funding from foreign groups or collaborate with the government or international institutions to implement projects. In this sense, international organizations should not be seen as external actors, but rather organizations with particular value systems that some Lebanese identify with while others do not.

Since the Ottoman era, foreign non-state organizations have played an especially prominent role in the Lebanese education sector. Many students in Lebanon, particularly non-

\(^{243}\) Faour 2013.
citizens, who would not otherwise have received an education have benefited from the provision of education by foreign actors such as the UN and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). In addition, some educational institutions that were originally foreign projects now offer quality education that fuses national and international standards for both Lebanese and foreign students.

However, the prevalence of foreign educational institutions is also conflicted. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many foreign actors first came to Lebanon under the pretense of protecting and educating particular confessional communities. For some, this has tainted the reputation of foreign schools and international organizations as neutral or benevolent actors. According to Abouchedid and Nasser, “The persistence of obstreperous inter-religious conflict was nourished by external powers meddling in social and political domestic affairs. These powers, mostly Western European, found it convenient to consolidate their political and economic interests in Lebanon through the establishment of educational institutions.” Though international actors in Lebanon today generally ally less explicitly with particular Lebanese communities, their goals for education remain particularistic and do not always align with students’ and families’ values. It is unsurprising, then, that students whose backgrounds and expectations of education align more closely with those of foreign institutions are more likely to trust these institutions and see them as valuable actors in Lebanese education. For example, a 2008 UNDP survey found that Christian students and students from wealthier socioeconomic backgrounds expressed significantly higher trust in the UN. The study also found that the higher students’ socioeconomic class, “the greater the number of correct responses to questions about civic knowledge [and] the better the understanding of citizenship concepts.” That is,

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244 Abouchedid and Nasser, 59.
245 UNDP 2008, 34.
wealthier Christian students’ responses more closely aligned with the civic values endorsed by this UN analysis. However, the rhetoric framework of this study suggested that these students were objectively more knowledgeable citizens, without acknowledging the particularistic assumptions of the study itself.

As this suggests, knowledge production on education by foreign organizations is slanted toward particular visions of education. As Talal Asad argues, power invents and endorses knowledge in order to manipulate a population; “statistics has been not merely a mode of representing a new kind of social life but also of constructing it.” The UN study cited above thus produces knowledge, backed by the legitimizing power of a multilateral international organization, that constructs some Lebanese sects and classes as “better” citizens than others. Education undeniably plays diverse roles and students pursue education for diverse reasons, though it is rarely constructed as such in studies commissioned by international organizations in Lebanon. Herrera explains that:

much of the research commissioned… by UNICEF, UNDP, or the World Bank, takes a normative approach to schooling and development that supports the prevailing human capital and economic development models; they offer little scope to question, reject, or offer alternative visions, demands and arrangements for societal, economic and political justice.

For example, one UNDP report states explicitly: “The basic premise of this report is that citizenship is the foundation of democracy, that democratic practices cannot be limited to the procedural dimension, despite its importance, and that effective citizenship concerns not only voting without coercion, but also the formation of relations between citizens and the state and


248 Herrera 2010.
among citizens themselves.” In a similar vein, beginning in 2008, the National Democratic Institute, an American organization, initiated “Citizen Lebanon”, a nationwide educational program intended to encourage students and young adults to get involved in their communities, which was taught as an extra-curricular activity in local community centers throughout Lebanon. The “Citizen Lebanon” curriculum included lessons on democratic rights, citizenship, constitutions, rule of law, political parties, lobby groups, elections, media, and municipalities. The Association Libanaise pour L’Educat

education and multi-lateral governmental organizations’ studies of Lebanese education are also primarily outcome-oriented and generalized. They focus on whether a core set of learning outcomes have been achieved, rather than how they were achieved or whether the goals themselves are appropriate for the educational context. In studies of civics education, these outcomes generally refer to instilling in students a respect for peace, sustainability, and UN treaties such as the Declaration of Human Rights. As UNRWA states:

One of our main aims… is to help children and youth gain appropriate knowledge and skills… High-quality basic education provides [students] with an understanding of their place in the world and a common set of key values, including dignity, tolerance, cultural identity, gender equality and human rights, and helps them develop the skills to thrive as adults in an evolving, challenging landscape.

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249 UNDP 2009, 9.
252 UNRWA. “What We Do – Knowledge and Skills.” [emphasis added]
According to Faour, the concept of civic education was developed in the West, but its value is universal. This is because it “consolidates democracy, which thrives only in cultures that accept diversity and different viewpoints, tolerates dissent, [and] includes values central to human development” such as freedom, women’s empowerment, and democratic governance. Civics education, in Faour’s assessment, also promotes the ostensibly modern skills of “problem solving, critical thinking, consensus building, collaboration, creativity, [and] communication.”

A 2012 study by the Carnegie Middle East Center surveyed the civic education programs in public schools in eleven states across the Arab region. The survey found that impressive gains had been made in student enrolment, literacy levels, and expenditure on education over the last decade. However, it identified a number of significant shortcomings in the quality, efficiency, and governance of civics programs. The study noted that students performed poorly on international standardized tests such as TIMSS, PISA, and PIRLS, and that there was a wide gap between the stated goals of reform and their implementation. Carnegie also found that classrooms generally emphasized teacher-directed methods, and that there was a lack of administrative commitment to “raise free democratic, and creative citizens rather than obedient, docile subjects” across the region. While international testing standards and the values of independence and democracy have significant social capital in the rhetoric of international NGOs and Western governments, they fail to capture the diversity of educational outputs or constructively respond to the challenges faced in individual classrooms. By using these standards as a benchmark for the success of education, this survey contributes to a body of knowledge production on the region that endorses particularistic educational value systems as universal.

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253 Faour 2013.
254 Ibid.
According to the survey’s “Overall Index of School Climate”, based on school safety, teachers’ development and working conditions, teaching practices, availability of resources, and parent involvement, Algeria ranked as a negative four, Bahrain a negative three, Egypt a negative one, Jordan a negative four, Kuwait a negative four, Morocco a negative four, Oman a negative six, Palestine a negative six, Dubai a zero, and Lebanon a two. By this calculus, Lebanon has a substantially “better” overall school climate than all other countries in the Arab region. But what do these numbers really explain about the state of education in the region? Can national educational effectiveness be quantified in this way?

Arguably, these numbers mask more than they reveal about education systems in Arab states. They suggest that, universally, some teaching methods and curricula content are normatively more valuable than others. A similar value system informed a UNDP study of Lebanese civic education, which concluded that “the connections between national identity and other concepts such as cultural openness and pluralism are inadequate, while concepts such as democracy, freedom, the obligations of citizenship such as political participation, as well as related notions such as equity, the power of the law, justice etc. are rarely addressed.” Here again, the study highlights some educational characteristics as particularistic, while constructing others as uncritically positive attributes that all education systems should strive for. In doing so, non-governmental and international organizations perpetuate hierarchical value systems and embed participants in structures of differential citizenship.

**Educating Lebanon’s Refugee Populations**

One of the sectors where international organizations are most active is in the provision of education to Lebanon’s large refugee populations. Lebanon’s twelve Palestinian refugee camps

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255 Faour 2013.
256 UNDP 2008, 15.
are home to 425,000 Palestinians, and the country now hosts roughly one million Syrian refugees, whose education falls outside of the mandate of the Lebanese government. Unlike in neighboring Syria and Palestine, Palestinian students resident in Lebanon are not allowed to attend Lebanese public schools. As a result, the education of a sizeable part of the population in Lebanon, and many of the most vulnerable demographics, is left to international and non-governmental organizations. Thus, the majority of refugees in Lebanon are completely dependent on private NGOs and inter-governmental organizations such as UNRWA for basic service provisions, undermining the state’s role and meaning to these sectors of the population.

Though I did not personally conduct research in UNRWA schools, it is necessary to detail the distinct realities of non-governmental education for refugees in order to bring to light the diversity of conceptions of citizenship constructed and enacted in the Lebanese education environment. The distinct educational environments provided to citizens and refugees reveal the differential notions of citizenship that students in Lebanon are raised within, and highlight the challenges actors face when they attempt to facilitate equitable civic participation and dialogue between students from different backgrounds. In addition, the significant role of international organizations in refugee students’ education suggests the powerful role these actors play in educating Lebanon’s residents and subsequently constructing the ways that they understand their roles as citizens.

More than ninety percent of Palestinian children that are enrolled in school attend the elementary and preparatory cycles at UNRWA schools. UNRWA alone provides education to 491,641 students at forty-one elementary schools, thirty-five preparatory schools, nine secondary

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257 UNHCR. “Syria Regional Refugee Response.”
258 Al-Hroub 2013.
259 Ibid, 6-7.
schools, nine vocational colleges, and two educational science faculties in Lebanon. Lebanon hosts UNRWA’s only secondary school system in any host country because of the demand for higher education and the inaccessibly of public and private Lebanese secondary schools for most Palestinian students. As a result of these unique challenges, “although [UNRWA is] unable to meet demand, the nine schools help make up for the absence of available educational opportunities.”

As discussed in chapter two, students in UNRWA schools follow the national curricula of their host countries, supplemented with UN curricula on human rights. Whenever possible, students take the national exams of the hosting government, and receive equivalent degrees to their peers in national public schools. However, chronic under-funding, limited post-graduate opportunities, and infrastructural constraints pose significant challenges to UNRWA’s education programs. The large youth population among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon “puts huge pressure on UNRWA schools. Almost three quarters run on a double-shift system, which reduces teaching time as two consecutive school streams run in one school building on the same day.”

The overall enrollment ratios of Palestinian students in Lebanon are strikingly low compared to the registered Palestinian population of school age. According to UNRWA statistics, only forty-four percent of school-aged Palestinian children in Lebanon are enrolled in UNRWA or private schools, meaning that “one of every two Palestinians of school age is out of school.” School dropout rates among Palestinian students in Lebanon are double that of other

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260 UNRWA. “What We Do – In Action.”
261 Sirhan, 12.
262 UNRWA. “What We Do – In Action.”
263 Ibid. [emphasis added]
264 UNICEF 2011, 73.
265 UNRWA. “What We Do – Knowledge and Skills.”
266 Sirhan, 6-7.
Lebanese communities. Those Palestinian students who do stay in school “[lag] way behind Palestinians in UNRWA schools in all Arab countries. Only 48.8% of the pupils who sat for the exams passed. This low success rate is compared to an overall success rate of 90.8% for all Palestinians.” Bassem Sirhan suggests that these high dropout rates and poor performance standards are likely the result of the inaccessibility of school curricula, the lack of post-graduate opportunities for students, and the instability of the environment outside of school. He explains, “Frustration and demoralization are the dominant traits of the Palestinian psyche in Lebanon nowadays. The low morale boils down to a single bitter question ‘What is the use of education?’” Instability has caused confusion among Palestinian parents, who often cannot see the benefits of educating their children when the future is uncertain and job opportunities for educated students are so limited. One Palestinian father told Sirhan, “Education leads the Palestinian in Lebanon nowhere,” and another “counted tens of engineers, medical doctors, lawyers, accountants etc. in his camp who could not find any kind of job since they graduated.” When younger students see this, they become disillusioned with the school system, and, in response to this widespread demoralization, teachers likewise lose motivation to invest in students’ education and development.

This environment suggests that refugee students in Lebanon experience education much differently than the Lebanese and foreign students at the schools where I conducted research. Though Lebanese national curricula are implemented and international actors manage and fund these schools, the environment they provide is shaped by unique constraints and sources of control. Students embody these implicit lessons as they conduct themselves in the world, and

267 Sirhan, 19.
268 Ibid, 24-25.
269 Ibid.
construct the way they understand their role in their communities and within the Lebanese state. Non-state organizations attempt to empower these students through education, but their impact is limited because they do not address the systematic structural constraints that shape the worldviews and possibilities of non-citizens.

**Recent Citizenship Education Initiatives**

Though this chapter does not attempt to comprehensively map the network of NGO, inter-governmental, and private initiatives that address citizenship in education, some explication is required to show the expansiveness of this network and the significant role that these actors play in the Lebanese educational landscape. As the three examples that follow reveal, recent civic education initiatives in civil society and the public and private sector focus primarily on fostering active, democratic citizenship in Lebanon. However, the design of most programs remains hierarchical and authoritarian, and positive outcomes are hindered by an national context that is inhospitable to equitable citizenship and democratic change. The majority of these projects were coordinated by international organizations, with the support of the MEHE, and occasionally in cooperation with domestic civil society groups.

Non-state civic education initiatives address a broad spectrum of educational niches, ranging from informational toolkits to capacity-building teacher training programs and collaborative workshops with students. The former participate in the construction and dissemination of knowledge about education in Lebanon, while the latter engage directly with schools to advance their development agendas. In some cases, non-state programs do both simultaneously. For example, from 2010-2012, UNICEF, in collaboration with the MEHE, initiated a civics program review in North Lebanon following the tragic attacks on the Nahr el-
Bared refugee camp in the area. The project was conducted in ten public schools and eight UNRWA schools around Nahr el-Bared, aiming to strengthen conflict resolution strategies by reforming civics curriculum and training teachers to better address gender issues and conflict prevention concepts. The findings of this initiative became the basis of a national civics curriculum reform carried out by CERD and the Centre for Lebanese Studies, revealing the power of international research to inform shifts in domestic education. Leading up to and in conjunction with this program, UNICEF also launched initiatives to identity at-risk children, increase parents’ involvement in schools, train teachers to better handle conflict in classrooms, implement hygiene education, and improve access to clean water and sanitation in affected areas.

Similarly, between October 2008 and October 2010, the Lebanese Centre for Civic Education (LCCE) began a project called “Project Citizen” to enhance active citizenship by increasing civic participation in Lebanese public schools. The project trained forty-eight initial teachers, five of whom went on to train a second round of eighty-eight teachers in the “Project Citizen” methodology. The LCCE, in collaboration with the Czech NGO People in Need, produced and distributed films, video documentaries, and short stories on social cohesion and civic values to engage students in controversial issues under a project entitled “One World in Schools.” The LCCE has also initiated curricular programs on “Media and Citizenship”, “Debate in Schools”, and the “Foundations of Democracy”, endorsing the democratic value systems of NGOs addressed earlier in this chapter. A CERD representative deemed these projects “very successful” in that they facilitated cooperation between teachers, students, and administrators on

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270 In May 2007, three months of clashes between Sunni militants affiliated with Fatah al-Islam and the Lebanese Armed Forces in and around the Nahr El Bared Palestinian refugee camp resulted in the deaths of 179 soldiers, 50 civilians, and 226 militants. The clashes included severe aerial and artillery bombings that left nearly 27,000 civilians displaced and destroyed roughly 85 percent of the public and private infrastructure in the camp.
civic education development. However, participating teachers did not continue to implement the “Project Citizen” methodology after the training, suggesting that the lessons of the program were generated by the implementers rather than through dialogue with participating students and teachers making the content difficult to breach outside the framework of the LCCE.

*Nahwa al Muwatiniyya* [Towards Citizenship, Na-aM], a Lebanese youth-led organization, has organized numerous initiatives in recent years to make public policy and local municipalities accessible to students. In 2011, Na-aM implemented a program entitled “Baddi Koun Mas’oul” [I Want to Be Responsible], facilitating workshops promoting voting, civic engagement, and critical thinking, and supporting active student government programs in public and private secondary schools across Lebanon. Also in 2011, Na-aM directed the “Economic Citizenship” project, which sought to empower students’ to evaluate economic policies and participate in decision-making and lobbying. The group has also led programs such as “Na-aM lil Hiwar” [Yes to Dialogue], “Yalla” (Youth Activist Leaders in Lebanon), and an initiative to facilitate conflict resolution between Lebanese and Syrian students.

These diverse programs reflect the expansive role that non-state organizations play in the Lebanese education sector, and in the dissemination of civic principles in particular. While some groups facilitate dialogue that empowers students to engage with national policy choices or social movements and encourages inclusive debate, they are also predominantly top-down initiatives that perpetuate the status quo of Lebanese political and social structures.

**Shaping the Lebanese Education Environment**

The sheer expansiveness of NGOs, international organizations, and civil society programs focused on citizenship and education suggests the importance of both to children’s education.

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271 Shuayb, Maha, et. al.
development and the future of the country. In addition, the substantial role of non-state organizations, that act with little or no government oversight, in the provision of education highlights the weakness of the state, and the diverse actors that are empowered to educate Lebanese residents and citizens. However, quantity outreaches depth in many these educational programs; many continued for only a year or two, after which teachers and students stopped implementing the initiatives. Participants also express frustration with the programs’ short-term or abstract natures. Though the initiatives address pressing conflicts in many students’ daily lives, in many cases they address these ideas only in the abstract. Though they discuss concepts such as citizenship and coexistence, they generally do not acknowledge the harsh conditions for the many non-citizen populations living in the country or attempt to constructively challenge the underlying causes of societal conflicts.

In addition, much of the focus has been on ensuring that civic education reaches Lebanese classrooms, shifting attention away from what type of citizenship is being taught in these lessons and whether the content is relevant to participating schools and students. Issues such as conflict mediation and civic participation affect all students and schooling environments, but they also mean very different things for students in different subject positions. With this in mind, a study by the American University in Beirut recommended that citizenship programs directed at youth must take into consideration “how, when, and where current political parties, as well as non-party power groups, constrict youth choices.”272 The knowledge that NGOs and international organizations produce as well as the educational programs that they coordinate are steeped in power relations that empower some individuals at the expense of others and give cadence to some visions of the world while invalidating others, reinforcing differential

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272 Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs 2009.
citizenship. Though non-governmental programs often focus on underserved demographics, they do not directly challenge the structures that produce these inequalities.

On the other hand, without the provision of educational services and civic education programs by non-state and international actors, many students in Lebanon would go without an education. In addition, many non-state initiatives have found considerable support among the local communities where they work, and their proliferation in itself reflects substantive civic engagement on the part of participants, staff, and funding organizations.
"We all live in different rooms, with different fixtures, different things that make our room our room. Yet together, we all live in the same house and we must learn how to live in that house as one.” —John Brown Childs\textsuperscript{273}

**Conclusion:**

**Schools and Society**

As this analysis shows, education is through and through a political enterprise. Schools are embedded in both national and international discourses of power. Decisions made by educators and students about how to behave in the classroom and conceptions of how these behaviors translate into life outside of the classroom are built by intricate processes of interaction, condemnation, and approval. These processes are generated not only by state institutions and representatives, but also by sub-national communities, corporations, media discourses, families, and peers. In discussions of state control over national education systems, studies have primarily focused on cultural and ideological differences, rather than different sources of control and power.\textsuperscript{274} However, when, in a 2009 study of Lebanese civics education, UNDP asked students and teachers about the role of the state in their lives and educational experiences, participants responded, “What state? ... We cannot agree on who we want to represent us, let alone what role the state should play.”\textsuperscript{275} Though Lebanon as a state is the primary subject of civics curricula and citizenship initiatives, this in itself is a constructed reality, when in fact control and subjectivity are much more diffuse practices.

Considerable past research on education, in Lebanon and worldwide, formulates education as a tool for the development of national unity and integration. In these formulations, when education is unable to relieve social discord, it is blamed on limited funding, poorly


\textsuperscript{274} Banks.

\textsuperscript{275} UNDP 2009, 11.
implemented reform programs, or conflicts outside of school. However, this study suggests that education systems are inseparable from their wider social and political environment. Conflicts “outside of school” — in the parliament, on the streets, and in family kitchens — shape the school environment, and the school environment likewise reflects and morphs the world around it, in what Ashley et. al. refer to as “reciprocal interaction.” In this sense, it is fitting that Foucault never wrote an analysis specifically on education. While he is widely cited in educational literature, and his work undoubtedly speaks to the practice of education, his best-known discussion of education is in *Discipline and Punish*, where the analysis is interwoven with parallels between the military, penal, economic, medical, and juridical manifestations of discipline and power. The dichotomy between schools and the world of politics obscures the reality that the both exist within the same interconnected system.

In this analysis, I have tried to show that the Lebanese schools, and particularly the three schools included in this study, reflect conflicting societal expectations that undermine the stated goals of civics education. Though civics education programs and educational actors often have benevolent intentions, the structure and content of Lebanese classrooms reinscribes notions of differential citizenship that contradict the principles of human rights, equitable civic engagement, and commitment to Lebanon as a unified nation.

As chapter two and four detailed, the MEHE and the myriad actors that have a stake in Lebanese identity and politics see the content and structure of education as fundamental to shaping a common vision of Lebanon. For example, Former Minister of Education and Higher Education Khaled Kabbani suggests:

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276 Ashley et. al., 10.
277 Foucault 1977.
Our collective efforts [in education] should focus on the idea of national belonging deemed to be a fundamental premise of citizenship and which includes the idea that loyalty to the nation should supersede all other forms of loyalties. Education in citizenship values begins by instilling in our youth this concept of national belonging. It entails safeguarding social solidarity and a commitment to respecting the laws and regulations that guarantee our rights and obligations as citizens based on the principle of equity acknowledged by all the legal and constitutional principles on which democratic systems are built.\footnote{278 UNDP 2008, 9.}

Even when goals differ, scholars and politicians generally agree that education is a powerful tool in shaping the global and national landscape. Herrera, who argues that the nationalistic nature of civics education is problematic, concedes that “notwithstanding the continued salience of direct political action to redress social and political ills, an education grounded in principles of openness and humanism may be among the greatest means for confronting and overcoming the irrationalities, inequities, and injustices of our times.”\footnote{279 Herrera 2008, 372.} However, this study reveals that the Lebanese civic education programs face numerous structural and individual challenges in the facilitation of active citizenship,\footnote{280 Akar 2007.} and, because of their heterogeneous application, have perpetuated divergent visions of the past and present realities of the Lebanese state.

Lebanese policies and curricula that focus on abstract goals such as “development” and “social cohesion” fail to respond to the dynamic realities experienced by teachers and students both in and out of the classroom. Speaking abstractly about the goals of education and the standards that students should meet does not in itself alter the reality of educational experiences and outcomes. As Frayha argues, “If the [Lebanese] government does not follow up properly on its educational policy, and if schools remain concerned more about standards of academic
achievement and ignore the very important social role in promoting a sense of responsible citizenship, then social cleavages may go unchecked and even broaden.”

As this research makes clear, the power of education can be used both to challenge and legitimize injustices and inequalities. When civics education is merely an abstract ideal meant to foster nationalism and tolerance, divorced from the reality of inequalities within the classroom and outside, it works to obscure these inequalities and validate some subjectivities at the expense of others. It also offers the illusion that educational actors are free to think critically and that power structures are either malleable or non-existent. Curricula are never neutral, and, as Friere argues, “washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.” While Freire notes that “problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming;” it also, simultaneously, constructs and delineates what they can become. On the other hand, though civics education and citizenship initiatives are steeped in the conflicted environment that surrounds them, starting conversations about citizenship can be an initial step toward constructive engagement with the challenges that face the residents of Lebanon.

\[281\] Frayha 2003, 88.
\[282\] Freire 1970.
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