THE EDUCATION

as an approach to manage diversity and pluralism in the Middle Eastern Countries

Ghadi Qandil
PhD researcher in political science

- Introduction:

The political, economic and social circumstances require the individual to move constantly, which escalates the pace of human migrations between the countries of the world. While some of them live as minorities in different societies, others integrate and merge into the social, political and economic life of the new societies. However, they often live in isolation, through which they maintain their culture. With the passage of time, it becomes difficult for them to return to their countries of origin, and they develop for themselves characteristics that distinguish them from the larger group. These minorities are usually seen as deprived and oppressed groups of the vast majority, and this view increases the risk of depriving them of social and economic benefits, especially if other minorities enjoy them, which may create a state of anger towards the ruling regimes of those societies.

Needless to say, education is a window for preserving linguistic, religious and ethnic pluralism, and each experience differs from the other in the space left for the sects. Although international human rights law, which is based on the principle of equality, is based on the right to education for all, yet minorities and indigenous people may be deprived of their right of education. This is evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of children deprived of education are minorities and indigenous children around the world, according to the statistics of the International Minority Rights Group. As a result of the systematic deprivation of minorities from obtaining quality education that is related to and meets their specific needs, the crisis is escalating, especially in the countries of the Middle East, which carry authoritarian legacies to manage the ethnic and religious diversity in their countries[1].

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[1] Muhammad Shahat Khatib, "Educating Children of Muslim Communities: Existing Models, Reality, Difficulties, and Ways to Overcome Them: A Critical Analytical Review," Naqd and Tanweer Center for Human Studies, 17/03/2021

Hence, the debate arises as to whether the educational policies of minorities in Middle Eastern countries are attempts to eliminate indigenous people and a kind of cultural genocide instead of assimilating them. Therefore, this study raises a major question: Do political systems in the Middle East guarantee quality education to minorities? Or is it trying to use education to create a collective identity at the expense of the individual identities of minorities?

- First: The minorities' legal right of education:

The minorities' right of education is associated with a number of individual and collective dimensions, including the recognition that minorities and indigenous people require special measures for the realization of their education's right, and for the protection afforded by the international law. Minorities must be able to claim recognition of their status as minorities or as indigenous people, as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the "Rights of the Child" Convention; guarantee the individual right of education for all, but individual rights are not fulfilled; including the education's right, the interests and needs of specific minorities, particularly indigenous people. Although Article 30 of the "Rights of the Child" Convention and Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, guarantee the specific right of persons belonging to minorities and indigenous people, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their religion, or to use their own language, in association with other members of their group; there is no legal guarantee for countries to abide by and apply these articles[2].

From this, education for minorities represents one of the main ways that cultural practices, languages and values are transmitted from one generation to the next. This requires that the indigenous people's right of education be formulated in a way that protects the group as a whole, and therefore the right of education takes on an additional collective dimension, namely the right of control. In other words, minorities should have an opinion in the way they receive education, by choosing its content, teaching methods, values, objectives, and the language of education. In addition, there is another right related to the right to self-determination, which is guaranteed by Article 4 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which states that indigenous people have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs and this grants Indigenous People the right of independent education, including the right to establish and run educational institutions and education systems[3].

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[2] Ben Mhanni Lahcen, "Minorities and the Identity Triangle (Language, Religion, Culture): Guarantees of Protection in Light of the Rules of International Human Rights Law," Journal of Sharia and Economics, Volume 7, p. 13, 6/14/2018, p. 299.

[3] Ashraf Abd al-Ati, The jurisprudence of Muslim minorities between theory and practice, Dar al-Kalima for publication and distribution, 2008, p. 86.

- Second- the minorities' education between legislation and application:

Minority and indigenous students are often subject to discrimination in accessing quality education, due to states' policies seeking to integrate minorities into societies, whether forced or voluntary. To achieve this, states' policies vary in separating schools or classrooms for minority and indigenous students from accessing quality education on an equal basis with the majority of the society. While some countries practice racial discrimination against minorities in textbooks and school curriculum, by continuing to include stereotypes and drawing an unfair or biased image, these practices directly violate the rights of minority and indigenous students of education.

Countries may also discriminate in access to education by failing to establish good schools within walking distance of areas where minorities and indigenous people live. Minority students often live in rural and remote areas, which results in long and unsafe distances to school, which discourages students, especially girls, from attending school. Most countries thus contradict the text of General Comment No. 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which states that effective access to education is an essential feature of the education's right. In this context, some countries pursue a policy of assimilation by teaching students only the dominant language and neglecting teaching other alternative cultures, history, traditions and languages. These policies result in the elimination of minority culture and identity, as well as negatively impact the academic performance of minority students when standardized tests are used, which often assume that students are embedded in a particular culture and have knowledge of the dominant language and ignore their own cultural identity[4].

Minorities and indigenous people often interact with languages that are different from the majority or official language, so when they study with a language other than their mother tongue, they are negatively affected by the educational development. Therefore, their dropout rates from education are higher than their peers because they do not speak the official language of education, and therefore it was not surprising that the rate of illiteracy is higher among minorities and indigenous people than among the majority of the population. It is clear now that the right to learn the mother tongue is not considered an issue that affects individuals, but rather affects the civilization of groups as a whole, because language is the main means through which customs, values, culture and the language itself are transmitted from one generation to the next.

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[4] Abdel–Razek Al–Dawy, "The Problem of Language, Identity, and Cultural Diversity," in Language and Identity in the Arab World: Problems of Education, Translation, and Terminology, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2013, p. 126.

It is not required that the assimilation and education in a language other than the mother tongue and the lack of education appropriate to the needs of the students be a direct result of the states' policies. In some cases, it may even be due to the lack of qualified teachers from minorities who are trained to provide education in the original language, or to the lack of appropriate educational materials, due to the states' inaction and failure to implement measures to ensure quality education for all, given that the state is primarily responsible for providing appropriate and quality education to minorities[5].

- Third - Models of using education as an entry point for managing ethnic and religious pluralism in the Middle East:

A. The Turkish model:

Since 1923, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was able, through the Lausanne Agreement, to draw an ethnic unity for the Turkish nation, and based on the fact that the agreement does not recognize the existence of ethnic minorities, and considers all people present on Turkish lands as Turks, by blood, language, culture and heritage. Thus, the existence of the Kurdish, Arab, Circassian, Kurdish and other smaller ethnic groups in Turkey was obliterated, and based on this denied concept of recognizing the other; Non-Turkish ethnic groups were prevented from expressing their identity, personality, and culture in their national languages, and were prevented from opening schools, universities, publishing houses, and radio and television stations broadcasting in their language.

Since 1923, the Turkish state has sought to control religious, sectarian and ethnic minorities in Turkey and to prevent pluralism as a destructive element of Turkish society. However, the reality of developments throughout the past century clearly shows that the issue of minorities is a fundamental issue for the Turkish people, and the Turkish state, despite its systematic policies, was unable to absorb the cultural, religious and ethnic diversity, since most of the Turkish minorities cling to their distinctive identity.

In this regard, the issue of education in the mother tongue, whether for Muslim minorities (such as Arabs and Kurds) or for non-Muslims in Turkey, remains one of the most controversial issues in Turkish politics. After the Ottoman law allowed non-Muslim citizens to open their own schools, the Turkish Republic was characterized at its inception by nationalist and secular policies, which brought about

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[5] Muhammad Shahat Khatib, "Education of Minorities," King Saud University Journal: Educational Studies, Riyadh, Vol. 2, 1992, p. 17.

major changes in the Ottoman educational curriculum, including that, it abolished the teaching of Sharia and the Arabic and Persian languages, and completely transformed the curriculum into the Turkish language after attempts to empty the Ottoman language of Arabic and Persian vocabulary and replace it with Turkish derivations or words of Latin origin[6].

Although the preparatory and secondary classes in public schools include compulsory lessons to teach religious culture and moral knowledge, there is an absence of lessons related to minority issues, especially non-Muslim groups in those schools. Those lessons that non-Muslim students are exempted from attending provide information about Sunni Islam, and a small amount of information about religions other than Islam, in addition to the fact that the small amount of information is not without religious discrimination, and this matter affects in particular the members of the Alawite sect. Therefore, the members of that minority objected and applied to the judiciary, demanding a change in that situation, but the Turkish judicial authorities rejected the lawsuit and religious discrimination remained against them , especially with regard to the complex procedures related to licensing religious minorities to establish their own schools and educational institutions and to set their own curriculum, in addition to the continued discriminatory nature of dealing with different religions in schools.

In view of the situation of the Armenian minority in Turkey, we find that in 2002, it was subjected to a severe discriminatory trauma, when the Ministry of National Education issued a bulletin in which it demanded that the issue of the alleged false allegations about the Armenian Genocide be included in the curricula of middle and high schools. In 2003, another bulletin was appended to that bulletin, which in turn demanded for training teachers to refute false allegations about the genocides of the Armenians, Syriacs, and Greeks, in an attempt by Turkey to deny the arbitrary policies towards the Armenian minorities in the state[7].

In addition to unfair educational courses for minorities, Turkey has witnessed, since the establishment of the Republic, a significant decrease in the number of minority schools, especially non-Muslims. After the number of these schools reached about 2596 in 1913 and 1914, including 1245 Greek schools, 1084 Armenian schools, and 131 Jewish schools, the number has decreased in recent years to 24 schools across Turkey only. The Armenians share 16 schools, in addition to 6 Greek schools, one Jewish school, and one Syriac primary school, which was established

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(6) Mohamed Nour el Din, "Religious Education in Turkey," Lebanon: Center for Strategic Studies, p. 65, 1997, p. 81.

(7) Nurcan Kaya, Forgotten or assimilated?: Minorities in the education system of Turkey, London: Minority rights group international, 2009, p19.

in 2014 with 48 students, nearly 86 years after the closing of the last Syriac schools in the state.

The Turkish approach to educating minorities did not stop at the small number of schools designated for them and their spread throughout Turkey. Rather, the schools were surrounded by several problems, including: The small number of students who go to it, while the number of students and schools is increasing throughout Turkey, the number of students in minority schools is decreasing over time for many reasons, most notably the large immigration of children of non-Muslim minorities, and the children of minorities avoid sending their children to these schools because of their fear of being exposed to racial discrimination against them, passing through the crisis of obtaining educational curriculum with the mother tongue, leading to the treatment of these schools as private schools, and thus not receiving any financial support from the Turkish government. Although minority schools are not foreign schools, Turkish law does not specify any special status for them to receive support from the state. The Ministry of Education pays only the salaries of the deputy principal it appoints and the teachers of only some subjects that are required to be taught in the Turkish language and according to the government curriculum.

The situation worsened further after the decision issued by the Department of Private Education in the Turkish Ministry of Education in 2015, requiring enrollment in these schools only for Turkish citizens of the sect to which the school belongs. Consequently, Muslims are prevented from registering in these schools, as well as those who are members of minorities who were forced to change their religion for fear of racial discrimination against them. The decision also prohibits non-Turkish members of the sect from registering in these schools except as guests, meaning that they will not receive any certificate upon completing their studies[8].

It's clear that the Turkish state has pursued several strategies aimed at marginalizing the cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of its minorities, starting with school curriculum, which generally do not include information related to the history, cultures and traditions of minorities. Worse than that, some of these curriculums include arbitrary generalizations and discriminatory references to minorities, especially the Greek and Armenian communities, and language books include references that degrade the importance of the Greek language as opposed to the Turkish language.

Noting from the refutation of the Turkish educational policy that providing education for minority languages is still absent from formal education. As for the school curriculum, it's difficult to talk about supporting cooperation and under-

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(8) Basem Dabbagh, "Minority Schools in Turkey," Al-Araby Al-Jadeed newspaper, 10/4/2016, available at the following link:
     https://www.alaraby.co.uk/%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B3-

standing between and within societies, at a time when those curriculums still contain many derogatory expressions against others, especially against members of religious minorities in Turkey.

B. The Iranian Model:

The population of Iran is about 80 million, and they are a mixture of the ancient Aryans, some Caucasian tribes, some Arab tribes that settled in the east and northeast of the country, and some Turkish tribes that migrated to Iran in large numbers from the tenth century AD until the seventeenth century. The method of determining ethnic representation in Iran differs, as there are those who divide it into 51% Persians, 24% Azeris, 7% Kurds, and 18% others, meaning that the Persians represent a simple majority of 51%, in contrast to those who are considered to be only half of the population representing 50% and the other fifty are minorities, as minorities in Iran are mostly those who speak a mother tongue other than Persian, or religious minorities that do not follow the Shiite sect[9].

The essence of Iranian identity is based on a sense of historical, religious and linguistic domination with an informal recognition of pluralism. Modern Iranian history tries to benefit from the experiences of religious fanaticism and draw positive lessons from previous experience to be the beginning of creating new slogans based on love for others and acceptance of the other as ingredients for coexistence and survival. These elements were reflected in the educational materials for minorities. With the multiplicity of minorities in Iran, which amounts to half of the population, and the various languages they speak, and with the control of the central state in Iran and the imposition of Persian as an official language, these minorities had no opportunity to study their heritage and learn their languages except through education. As their literature is taught in schools and their languages are taught in specific courses taught by each minority separately, and then education is like an entry point to inform minorities of their privacy and respect for their heritage; In order to activate Article No. 15 of the Iranian constitution[10].

The Iranian experience in education is a different experience, as a high percentage of the national product is allocated to spending on education, not less than 3.5%, despite Iran's impact on economic sanctions and its involvement in protracted regional conflicts. It is not less than the minimum percentage stipulated by the European Organization for Economic Cooperation. However, education in Iran has become free and compulsory from kindergarten until entering university recently

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(9) Heba Gamal, "Educational policies in Iran and Israel: between pluralism and attempts to build identity," Beni Suef University, Journal of Politics and Economics, p. 12, 2021, p. 16

(10) Talal Saleh Banan, "Iran: The Dilemma of Coexistence between the Theory of the Guardianship of the Faqih and Democracy," International Policy Journal, Issue 155, January 2004, p. 92

since the nineties, when it was not like that after the Iranian revolution, and this free education applies to citizens with regard to public education, but non-citizens are not entitled to enroll in government schools, so they enroll in private education. Although the official language of education in Iran is Persian, different sects are allowed to study a language or literature course that includes lessons on the principles of language, literature and heritage of those sects. Schools are divided according to a number of criteria. According to the type of school, they are divided into public and private schools or according to the gender criterion into schools for males and others for females, given that Iranian society is a conservative society that applies separation between males and females in education at all stages. However, it is worth noting that ethnic classification is not reflected within schools in Iran, so there are no schools for every sect. Iran does not allow sectarianism to be shown except when teaching religion and studying the literature of the sect or race to which the student belongs.

Hence, Iran has succeeded in using education as a weapon to overcome differences and divisions, despite the multiplicity of Iranian society's sects, religious sects, races and languages. The Iranian regime sought to consolidate historical, cultural and geographical common ties and invest them in the form of a national identity, based on common historical, cultural and geographical legacies. Therefore, since the Iranian revolution, Tehran has tried to reformulate the common identity to become of a unified national character[11].

C. The Israeli model:

The situation is different in Israel as a diaspora society, with no common bonds - except for religion for the Jews - so education was the main entry point for creating a new reality by nurturing the identity of a national association. Where education was an obedient tool in the hands of the Israeli decision-maker to draw a new identity for Israel, as it has a population of 6 million people made up of immigrants of more than 80 nationalities from various countries of the world. This led to the diversity of population groups with diverse ethnic and cultural diversity and religious beliefs. Approximately 76% of the population is Jewish and 20% Arab, the majority of whom are Muslims, 4% are Druze, Christians and other religions. This mixing created major problems between the various sects of society[12].

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(11) Heba Gamal, reference previously mentioned, p. 21

(12) Majed Al–Hajj, the Education of the Palestinian in Israel between Discipline and the Culture of Silence, Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Stud–ies, 2006, p. 237.

Common Interest Solutions

Therefore, Israel has invested in the educational system to produce a new citizen and a society with a collective identity that sets aside differences; as Israel sought, through the educational system, to represent the melting pot of all different cultures and multiple nationalities, to form one identity, which is the Israeli identity. There are many formulations seeking to achieve this, such as the experience of collective education, but this does not mean Israel's tolerance towards all minorities, especially in light of the falsification of historical facts such as dealing with the Arab sector and Arab schools[13].

From this, the Jewish religion emerges as the governing criterion for granting Israeli citizenship, which gives the child the right to enroll in schools and the educational system organized by the state. Israel is trying to implant a national identity based on only one element, which is the element of religion, as an engine to create a common identity among the various ethnic and racial groups within the structure of society, through pluralistic education that presents different forms of education that differ from one group to another. Although Hebrew is the official language, each class is also entitled to study in its own language, such as Arabic, Russian and English, but with the condition of proficiency in Hebrew, as Israel took this as an approach to proficiency in the Hebrew language and Zionist teachings, as pluralism was a tool for creating a collective identity in Israel[14].

- Conclusion and Recommendations:

We can say that there are several specific components of the educational policy towards minorities in the countries of the Middle East, foremost of which is the role of political ideology in building the educational system, as it appears in Turkey, Israel and Iran, as both the Iranian and Israeli experiences in the field of educational policies are distinguished in their view of education as a means to create a common national identity that transcends any internal divisions. While the Turkish political leadership denied the existence of distinct identities for its minorities from the identity of the state, everyone - according to perfectionism - is Turkish in terms of language, culture and heritage, while the second determinant is the contribution of the societal context in drawing the dimensions of educational policies and the system as a whole that took into account the privacy of society, as in Iran, in contrast to the Turkish and Israeli cases, despite their interest in the centrality of education for the renaissance of the country, and their belief in the conviction that education is

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(13) Khaled Abu Osbeh, "The Arab Education System in Israel: Its Evolution and the Image of the Current Situation," Palestinian Center for Studies: Israeli Issues Periodical, p. 43, 2009, p. 36.

(14) Khaled Arar, Israeli educational policies and the state of Arab education in Israel, Institute for Palestine Studies, Volume 29, p. 115, 2018, p. 135, available at the following link:

: https://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/mdf-articles/133-158.pdf

the future. Finally, the most important determinant relates to the role of the military character and its control over the policies of the educational system, which seeks to fuse different identities into a collective identity, as in Iran and Israel.

Therefore, formulating educational policies that reflect the nature of the social, political and economic context is the best strategy to assimilate minorities into society and build a common identity based on recognizing the special identity of each group so that pluralism constitutes a human force that has a true national identity expressing the interests of its members, and embodying the diversity of cultures by allowing minorities to learn their own language or to have their own schools under state supervision. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to adopt a policy of compulsory and free education, starting from kindergarten, in order to avoid the failure of this type of education in the future.

In addition, it is important to share the administration of education affairs between the state and minorities. The countries of the Middle East require the participation of minorities in preparing the religious, literary and linguistic educational curriculum, and designing a curriculum commensurate with the intellectual system of each population sect according to its cultural heritage, with the aim of accelerating the process of integration and building the identity of a national association by bringing together those differences in a crucible that takes into account the differences and represents everyone. Therefore, the real challenge for the Middle Eastern countries is to absorb sects and minorities with their different individual identities, while preserving the unity of the collective identity.