

# The Cohesion Of Saudi Arabia: Evolution Of Political Identity

## Citizenship Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: History and Current Instructional Approaches

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### ABSTRACT

This review article attempts to review current studies related to Citizenship Education (CE) in order to shed light on the provisions of citizenship education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The review examines the significance of CE in the KSA. It also explores the history of CE in the KSA followed by its national identity, as this too, affects the nature of the CE offered in the country. Then the article identifies and explores the implementation of CE in the KSA. In addition, the article discusses the approaches of introducing Citizenship Education in the KSA, its content and implementation. It can be argued that Islam has played a crucial role in shaping Saudi citizens' private and national identities and their national values. The study also found that CE in Saudi Arabia faces multiple challenges. It emphasizes citizens' responsibilities, duties, identity formation, and obedience towards the system and how one can achieve them. It also appears that promoting freedom, equality, fairness, freedom of expression and participation in the decision making process is poorly addressed. Moreover, lack of teaching aids and lack of specialist teachers and training are some major challenges to implement CE in the KSA. The article ends by drawing some conclusions.

**Key words:** Citizenship Education, Pedagogy, Content, Teaching Approaches

### 1. INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing interest in citizenship education (CE) since the early 1990s, as Lee (2004) notes: "developing good citizenship has been a continuing educational concern worldwide" (p.137). This interest in CE in Western countries has been fostered by huge transformations, including the challenges of increasingly multicultural societies, the alleged breakdown of moral fabric, the democratic deficit, the decline of volunteerism in community activities and also the changing role of women (Kellor & Prior 2004; Wilkins 2003). CE is seen as a means by which we can equip young students with the knowledge, skills and understanding to play a decisive role in society. Teaching individual values, knowledge and skills helps in building strong individuals capable of taking an interest in contemporary issues and being involved in discussion and debate (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007).

Unlike the Western context, CE in some Arab countries has only been introduced into the educational arena since the beginning of the current decade (Almaamari, 2009). Many conferences and seminars about CE have been held at national and regional levels. For instance, in the Gulf region, where the KSA is located, there has been a growing interest in CE among policymakers, academics, the media and educational stakeholders (Alharbi, 2010). During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, three major conferences on CE were

organized in three Gulf states: (1) in Bahrain from February 24<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008 (under the title: The culture of citizenship in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council), (2) in the UAE capital, Abu Dhabi, from March 31<sup>st</sup> to April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008 (under the title: Arabian Gulf between conservatism and change) and (3) in Kuwait, from February 21<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> 2010 (under the title: Citizenship in Kuwait - Present and Future).

As far as the KSA is concerned, CE was re-introduced into the education system in 1997 in all stages from primary to secondary to provide students with information about the values, principles and characteristics of good citizens. Before that CE was taught in stage 3 and 4 in primary schools and later in secondary schools. This will be discussed in the section of history of CE in the KSA. CE as a subject also aims at educating students in a humanistic manner so that their behaviour and actions are based on sound ethical principles. As a result, it is hoped that students gain sufficient knowledge to enable them to assume responsibility and serve their religion, country and society (Mokhtar, 2007).

The need for CE in the KSA is indisputable because of the substantial economic and social developments that the country has witnessed since the 1970s and 1980s. Before the discovery of oil in 1938, the KSA consisted of scattered tribes with their own customs and territories. Education was then the family's sole responsibility; however, after discovering oil, the government received sufficient income and

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