

سياسات التعليم وبناء الوعي الاجتماعي

لمواجهة التطرف في العراق (مقالة علمية)

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المستخلص

يتناول المقال دور سياسات التعليم في بناء الوعي الاجتماعي وتعزيز ثقافة السلام بوصفهما مدخلين أساسيين لمواجهة التطرف في العراق (UNESCO, 2017). ويؤكد أن ضعف الرسالة التعليمية، وتراجع مناهج الحوار وقبول الآخر، وتداخل القيم الاجتماعية التقليدية مع ضعف السياسات العامة، أسهمت في خلق بيئة تسمح بانتشار الأفكار المتطرفة. كما يوضح المقال أهمية تعاون المؤسسات التعليمية والبحثية مع الوزارات والمنظمات الدولية مثل اليونسكو والأمم المتحدة والاتحاد الأوروبي في تطوير برامج تعليمية ومجتمعية تدعم الحوار، وحقوق الإنسان، والتنمية، وبناء القدرات الفكرية وثقافية ومؤسسية متكاملة تعزز المواطنة والاعتدال وتحد من قدرة الجماعات الإرهابية على التجنيد والتأثير (UNDP, 2017).

الكلمات المفتاحية: سياسات التعليم، الوعي الاجتماعي، بناء السلام، مكافحة التطرف، العراق.

Education Policies and the Construction of Social Awareness

to Counter Extremism in Iraq: A Scientific Article

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Abstract

This article examines the role of education policies in developing social awareness and promoting a culture of peace as essential approaches to countering extremism in Iraq. It argues that weak educational messaging, limited curricular attention to dialogue and acceptance of others, and the persistence of traditional social values have contributed to an environment in which extremist ideas may spread. The article also emphasizes the importance of cooperation among educational institutions, research centers, government ministries, and international organizations, including UNESCO, the United Nations, and the European Union, in designing educational and community-based programs that support dialogue, human rights, development, and capacity building. It concludes that countering extremism cannot rely solely on security measures; rather, it requires an integrated intellectual, cultural, and institutional approach that strengthens citizenship, moderation, and social resilience against terrorist recruitment and influence.

Keywords: Education policies, social awareness, peacebuilding, countering extremism, Iraq.

Introduction

Education and peacebuilding policies in any society are closely connected to the level of awareness and knowledge possessed by individuals. They also depend on the extent to which dialogue is adopted as a means of resolving

differences and establishing values of tolerance within society. Such policies require mature legal and institutional frameworks capable of persuading citizens that consent, acceptance, and mutual recognition are essential components of a culture of peace. Accordingly, confronting extremism requires a form of social awareness that can prevent, contain, and weaken extremist ideas (UNESCO, 2017).

Since 2003, Iraq has faced successive waves of social threats linked to declining public satisfaction with state policies. Some of these challenges also have roots in the political conditions that preceded 2003, which contributed to the emergence of social risks that deeply affected education policies and other processes of socialization. Over time, these conditions began to undermine social security and weaken the foundations of peace. Terrorist organizations expanded across different regions of Iraq by exploiting weak public policies, limited social justice, rising unemployment, and the inability of many citizens to meet basic needs.

The continued reliance of education policies on traditional methods, particularly in social and civic fields, has had a negative impact on the formation of civic culture. This is especially significant when community-based socialization practices become more influential than formal state education. In Iraq, education remains heavily dependent on government support rather than private provision, both in curricula and in the broader educational message. This dependence affects social awareness and limits knowledge of peace-oriented policies, dialogue, and nonviolent alternatives to conflict.

Education is one of the principal instruments through which the state can build social awareness and address negative values produced by harmful social practices. In the Iraqi context, several factors related to the educational process are particularly important.

Weak Responsiveness to the Educational Message

One of the most significant problems facing education in Iraq is the weak response to an educational message intended to build awareness and guide individual behavior. The educational approach often lacks a clear social mission that is consistent with institutional performance and societal needs. This situation is partly related to the methods of education themselves: explanatory and participatory approaches have declined, and curricula dealing with dialogue, society, and other cultures remain limited. Such curricula are necessary for expanding a culture of acceptance and coexistence within society (UNESCO, 2016).

Diverse traditions and social values can sometimes function as substitutes for formal educational values, particularly when they become more influential than education policies that begin in schools and may continue into universities. Therefore, weak institutional efforts to build educational values and communicate a coherent educational message, whether inside or outside formal institutions, can significantly affect the growth of extremism. This occurs when certain social values become linked to violence, inequality, or the rejection of others. Examples can be seen in cases where professionals, such as physicians or civil society workers, are compelled to rely on local social norms to protect themselves or to operate within particular communities.

The lack of integration between the mission of educational institutions and prevailing social values, or the absence of criteria for reconciling them, weakens cooperation and negatively affects the relationship between formal education and society.

Education and Peace Strategies in Iraq

National plans for peacebuilding in Iraq place considerable emphasis on education. Both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher

Education and Scientific Research have important roles in this strategy, which focuses on culture and social awareness as means of preventing violence. These efforts require programs implemented in cooperation with academic institutions, universities, and international organizations such as UNESCO. In this context, UNESCO has worked with the University of Mosul to discuss new approaches to education and peacebuilding in response to the crises that followed ISIS control of Mosul. Similar cooperation has involved the United Nations Mission, the European Union Mission, and Iraqi experts at Al-Nahrain Center for Strategic Studies to develop capacities in different regions of Iraq in support of peacebuilding through education policies.

The educational mission is intended to serve society and address social issues that affect citizens' behavior and daily lives. Educational programs should therefore contribute to building a culture of peace and preventing extremism. Iraqi universities are expected to strengthen community service through educational programs and research projects. In the natural and applied sciences, this may involve solutions to health or engineering problems, including inventions registered through the Ministry of Planning. In the social sciences, academics can contribute by developing new educational methods based on field studies and digital data to identify ways of strengthening dialogue and peacebuilding, as demonstrated by development programs in Anbar Governorate that have supported governmental peacebuilding efforts.

The Culture of Peacebuilding and Education Policies

Awareness of justice in society requires critical thinking about the human role as a citizen rather than merely as an individual. Educational and cultural institutions contribute to building values of peace and tolerance as alternatives to extremist culture. This requires practical applications in

the field of human rights. Government programs can support a culture of peace through initiatives related to work, sport, and the application of scientific research. A suitable approach to combating extremism therefore involves development and capacity building. Moreover, a culture of peacebuilding requires foundations and methods for developing awareness and rationalizing behavior within society (UNDP, 2016; UNESCO, 2017).

In the literature of political thought, just policies are central to transforming perceptions of belonging. Injustice often produces rights violations, grievances, and political and social alienation, which may turn into resentment and hostility. For this reason, rights and duties should serve as a framework for rational social and political choices. When individuals feel alienated, they may withdraw from broader national affiliations and turn toward narrower identities. Education and cultural development can therefore provide a constructive path through cooperation among institutions, research centers, and universities that have specialized programs in this field.

The University of Mosul and Al-Nahrain Center for Strategic Studies, with support from UNESCO, the United Nations, and the European Union, have begun developing programs that include schools, the Ministry of Interior, and civil society institutions. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research also works through academics, research projects, and graduate studies to advance this field. National plans can support peacebuilding by expanding knowledge and culture and by developing education-based projects that contribute to stability.

Academic institutions are attempting to apply techniques related to peacebuilding and to address environmental and cultural problems in ways that can create new sources of social satisfaction. These efforts are

linked to national initiatives supported by international institutions and development agencies, such as the German development agencies, which seek to provide platforms for dialogue and participation between local communities and the government. The aim is to build peace as an alternative to confrontation and violence.

Acting in accordance with the educational mission of academic institutions and promoting modern methods of explanation, communication, and learning can strengthen dialogue and participation in peacebuilding. Such platforms are more effective when supported by specialized agencies such as UNESCO, because indoctrination and other traditional methods are insufficient for achieving sustainable peace (UNESCO, 2016; UNESCO, 2017).

Reshaping Modes of Thinking

The Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service has adopted a combat doctrine as both a cognitive and operational framework for addressing challenges at the levels of operations, combat readiness, prevention, and protection. The Iraqi counter-terrorism strategy is based on the assumption that armed groups cannot easily expand without first influencing the perceptions and emotions of certain individuals. This criterion is closely linked to extremist ideology, which seeks to control individual orientations, expand recruitment, enable infiltration, and spread fear among citizens.

Confronting violent extremism through a strategic logic based on intellectual engagement can help the state overcome the challenge of terrorist expansion and weaken extremist actors. Developing a sense of citizenship and civic responsibility strengthens moderation in opposition to extremism and helps decision-makers reduce the influence of unstable or radical groups (UNDP, 2017).

One of the pillars of the counter-terrorism strategy is its deliberate reliance on systematic methods, including the use of experts and academics and the integration of academic content into the formulation of strategic approaches. This creates a shared intellectual and practical foundation for implementation and strengthens the monitoring of terrorism-related developments in Iraq.

The importance of this approach is connected to the strategies adopted by ISIS and other terrorist armed groups. The concept of “savagery,” associated with Abu Bakr Naji, refers to a condition of chaos that may emerge when state authority weakens in a particular area. According to this view, such chaos would become “savage,” and local populations would suffer from it. Terrorist organizations therefore seek to exploit disorder and present themselves as alternative authorities capable of managing instability.

The text known as Management of Savagery indicates that the selection of regions for entry into major zones of instability was based on studies and research related to current events. This reflects the importance of adopting a scientific and analytical methodology in dealing with terrorist groups. Such an approach can positively affect the state’s effectiveness in confronting these groups and explains why systematic analysis has become one of the foundations of the Iraqi strategy for combating terrorism.

The pillars of the counter-terrorism strategy were designed to enhance institutional performance and raise the preparedness of state institutions in addressing terrorist challenges after the victory over ISIS. This gave the strategy distinctive criteria related to diagnosis, planning, and performance in this field.

Countering extremism and building social awareness through education policies require institutional integration and a range of complementary procedures. The integration that Iraq seeks to establish at the level of strategic planning represents one of the most important lessons gained from the Iraqi experience after 2017 (World Bank, 2017).

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