



The impact of Cultural Dimensions on Science Learning among Male Students attending public schools in Kuwait

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Abstract

The social capital gap in education in Kuwait in public vs. private schools, beginning from early stages and continuing to higher education is a serious phenomenon requiring intervention. The investigation about boys; disadvantage and disengagement is needed because Kuwaiti students are not living in poverty where they are forced to drop out for survival issues. A case study was done to explore the rationales behind disadvantaged boys in public. The speculation and assumptions revolved around two main factors cultural background and school context including teacher's efficiency. Nothing can achieve this end, except a good education system enriched with qualified human resources and an insight of the cultural circumstances.

Keywords: *disadvantage, disengagement, teacher's efficiency*

1. Introduction and Background

Education in the Arab countries takes place within a context of societal variables that discourages critical thought and analysis, hinders creativity, and leads to submissiveness. The 2004 Arab Human Development Report observed: *"Communication in education is didactic, supported by set books containing indisputable texts in which knowledge is objectified so as to hold incontestable facts, and by an examination process that only tests memorization and factual recall"* (Bristol, 2015). School context in most Arab Countries is teacher directed, focuses on content, and not on fostering critical thinking skills and creativity. This is coupled with shortages of qualified Science and Math teachers, especially among Kuwaitis and lack of public accountability (Wiseman & Al-Bakr, 2013). In Kuwait, the state of Science Education is characterized by low levels of learning achievement in Science and Mathematics on National as well as on International tests. There is also a severe shortage of science and math teachers at the intermediate and secondary levels, especially among male teachers. The percentages of Kuwaiti male science teachers are 4%, 6%, and 4% at elementary, intermediate and secondary levels respectively. The percentages for female Science teachers are 80%, 32% and 30% respectively. This problem is not much different in Mathematics, where the percentages of Kuwait male Math teachers are 4%, 8%, and 2% respectively. Percentages for Kuwaiti female math teachers are 54%, 22% and 20% respectively (Alhashem & Alkandari, 2015) (Statistical Analysis Group, 2018) (Wiseman & Al-Bakr, 2013).

Teacher quality issues that have been created by national policies of guaranteed access to higher education, guaranteed employment for all college graduates, and guaranteed tenure for all teachers, irrespective of performance. Complicating the picture further is an imbalance in school staffing because 70 percent of all teachers are female, but prefer not to teach in boys' schools, for cultural reasons. Because neither universities nor the Ministry of Education has been able to limit the number of



higher education students who pursue the teaching profession or to steer them towards the MESA disciplines—Math, English, Science and Arabic—where schools have most vacancies, the Kuwait education system is also reliant on expatriate teachers (40% of the total at present) (Al-Haroun & Al-Ajmi, 2018) (Wiseman & Al-Bakr, 2013) (Male & Alhouti, 2015).

Despite advances in educational attainment, and the more recent quantitative and qualitative improvements to the entire educational system, the Kuwaiti education system has been suffering from a phenomenon that can be called “the missing boys.” (Mahboob, Elyas & Bawazeer, 2017). Both in terms of enrollment and attainment, the education gap between men and women is a serious concern with ramifications not only for the labor market, but for broader sectors of society as well. Public schools in the country separate the category of male students from female students at all levels, except for kindergartens (Kindergarten 1 and Kindergarten 2). Some private schools adopt a mixed environment. The case of inequality in education usually spotlights disadvantaged girls or leaving girls behind; however, the case of disadvantaged boys is vivid. Poorly educated boys are more likely to dropout from school, commit crimes, suffer from poor health and have a shorter lifespan which will cause imbalance in society.

The current situation girls continue to perform better than boys across the country in all subjects, in international and national standardized tests. Meanwhile, boys are more likely to repeat a grade, drop out of school and are less likely to continue on to higher education. Examples obtained from Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) shows that girls mean score (359) while boys scored (347) in math. Also, education deficit among Kuwaiti males becomes apparent at the secondary school level. (Alhashem & Alkandari, 2015) (Statistical Analysis Group, 2018).

Furthermore, the annual report prepared by the Assessment and Measurement Center at Kuwait University on the results of academic aptitude tests for students admitted to the university for the 2017-2018 academic year showed that the private education system achieved higher average levels of degrees than government education. The report indicated that graduates of private foreign schools achieved the highest average score on the English language test with a rate of 92.49%, and in the mathematics test they scored 66.91%, and the French language 69.17%. By comparing the performance of the two genders, it was found that females outperformed males with average scores in the five aptitude tests. In the English language test, females scored 63.55% and males 59.45%, and in mathematics females advanced 52.52% and males gained 50.03%, and in chemistry females scored 62.79% and males 55.49%, and in mathematics. The Arabic language scored 62.83% for females and 57.26% for males, and in “French” females won 64.67% and males 45.75% (Statistical Analysis Group, 2018).

2. Rationale of The Study

The investigation about boys; disadvantage and disengagement is needed because Kuwaiti students are not living in poverty where they are forced to drop out for survival issues. It would be interesting to explore the case in centralized system that provides the same services for both girls and boys. Same schools, curriculum, assessment, activities and support. The speculation and assumptions may revolve around two main factors cultural background and school context including teacher's efficiency.

The goals of the (Case Study) are to provide in-depth and insight about the context of public schools in Kuwait compared to private one. of the current situation; to

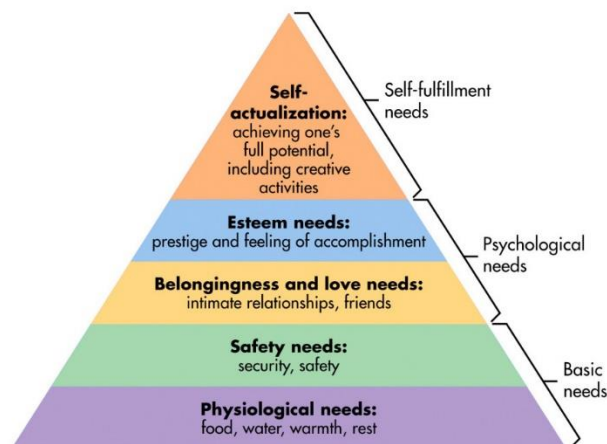


highlight the major trends and changes unfolding related to the various issues and thematic areas of dropouts and disadvantages among boys in Kuwaiti society; and, based on this assessment, to identify policy relevant conclusions and key gaps for this matter. In this current study the team will:

- **Explore the current situation** is the current situation of boys' access to, performance in and completion of education, with an emphasis on Kuwaiti contexts, which boys are most affected
- **Identify factors** for boys' disengagement and disadvantage in education, focusing on individual, family and peer, school, and societal-level factors.
- **Review** the policy and programmatic interventions at national level
- **List and provide** policy and programmatic approaches that are identified as promising in different contexts, and would be needed for further adaptation, replication and scale-up within and across countries.

3. Conceptual Framework

In order to investigate the current situation in the case study of Kuwait, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was the base of the conceptual framework for the proposed case study. Maslow (1954) viewed human need operations accrue at different levels from the most basic needs to those at higher level.



It is relevantly important that the case study discover the level boys' needs, contextual background, the role model of boys, their physiological needs, and their self-fulfillment needs in school context. The conceptual framework was therefore explain the background theories related to this case study.

The focus was on the following:

- The value of an in-depth analysis of the boys' disengagement and disadvantage in education issues associated with the theme.
- The main assumptions and key considerations that form the logical framework of the proposed analysis of the theme and issues
- The critical dimensions of an exploration of the theme and issues.

4. Method

In order for the case study to be robust and valid, a mixed method approach was employed in this case study. The need for the collection of new evidence and other information on the theme; thus, this current case committed in plumbing national data sources, including qualitative sources such as in field visits, and interviews, to gather meaningful data on the theme and help in analyzing the local situation.



Focus groups was used as a qualitative needs assessment strategy and it allowed small groups of teachers, students, parents and school officials to convene for structured and informal discussion. The method was employed for addressing major issues related to school closure, online learning, training, and decisions during the Covid-19 period. Key informants at the policy level who have valuable opinions and insights into the educational needs was invited virtually to participate in the discussions to ensure in-depth insight into perspectives and allow clarification of information.

5. Data Analysis

For the qualitative part of the study, establishing rapport with the schools and ensuring trustworthiness and transparency was the major cornerstones guiding data analysis and reporting. Additionally, we employed data triangulation techniques by using multiple sources including observations, interviews, focus group discussions, and collection of documents. This technique facilitated the extraction of patterns and themes related to the quality of education outcomes in Kuwait schools. We also validated data results through member checking by sharing the findings with the teachers and principals for reflection and feedback.

Presented the results of an initial review of the existing literature and other evidence on the selected theme and major related issues. This review highlighted the following:

- Definitions of the main concepts relevant to the theme and the issues and descriptions of policy implications
- Relevant gender analyses that are associated with the theme
- Discussions of the theme and issues in monitoring documents on the Development Goals
- Analytical approaches that have been applied to the theme and issues

6.

Conclusion

The gender gap in education in Kuwait in public schools, beginning from early stages in school level and continuing to higher education is a serious phenomenon requiring intervention. This gender gap is not as obvious as in mixed gender private schools. The future development of Kuwaiti society is at stake, and the resources are there to address this issue. The trends discussed here are not unique to Kuwait and are shared by other GCC countries as well. Cooperation is needed in exchanging reforms and policies in terms of supporting both genders and reconsider separation and different aspects related to boys performs in schools.

7. References

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