

## Review

# The Haves and The Haves Not: Privatization of Education in Arab Countries

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### Abstract

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**This paper aims to shed light on public versus private education in Arab Countries. This paper is one of the very few that brings this topic to the forefront in the Arab countries. It is based on two premises: quality education is a right for poor and rich children alike, and public and private education can provide invaluable services to the society if strategically planned. Analyzing some successful examples of collaboration between the private and the public sectors bring the researcher to believe that Education in the Arab countries, if wisely planned, can serve all children while respecting the rights of both.**

**Keywords:** Equity, Privatization of Education, Private schooling, Public schooling, Quality Education

## INTRODUCTION

Education for all is, no doubt, a human right. It has been realized for many years as a necessity for all people regardless of race, gender or color. Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “everyone has the right to education.” However, when one examines reality, it seems that this human right has not really been granted as such in several countries around the world. There are still shocking examples of nations where the poor are deprived of their basic education rights. Shepherd (2010) claims that 70 million children get no education.

The cases of poor education or no education are numerous in a world that brags to be a world of breaking records in almost all fields of life. Girls, in the 21st. century are still deprived of their basic education rights even more than boys. In Somalia, 95% of girls have never been to school. Similar examples are also cited in several other countries like Pakistan, Niger, Mali etc. (Rose, 2012).

In the Arab World and in countries that have lived in tranquility and peace in particular, the opportunities for education have been expanding fast over the past three decades or so. In Jordan, Lebanon, the Gulf States,

Morocco, Tunisia and others, thousands of schools for both girls and boys have been opened and hundreds of universities have been established. The question in such countries is not the equal opportunities for joining schools as compulsory basic education for both genders is implemented, nor it is the availability of schools since schools of all sorts and types are actually provided; rather it is the inequality of the education quality that is offered to the children. In many Arab countries, due to government economic deficiencies and corruption, education is becoming a Trade and private schooling is gradually proving itself a real competitor to public schooling, (Four, 2012 and Zeitun, 2012, Hamdan, 2012).

It is, therefore, the author’s intent in this paper to unravel the argument over public and private schooling in Arab countries by trying to provide answers for the following questions:

- 1- Is the public education in Arab countries providing quality education to school children?
- 2- Is there a need for private schools in Arab countries?
- 3- What characterizes the relationship between private schooling and public schooling, if there needs to be one altogether?

## Statement of the problem

For the past twenty years and so, many investors, foreign and local, have started private schools in several Arab countries. Many of these schools are driven by a genuine need; in countries with a huge number of expats, like the Gulf Countries, International private schools are needed for the diversified cultural needs. There are Indian schools, Pakistani schools, English schools and many others. The justification for these types of schools is simple: people from these countries dwelling in the Arab Gulf States needed schools that match their home educational standards and reserve the cultural heritage of their children. However, several other schools have emerged as investment projects for entrepreneurs who have found in education a very fruitful business opportunity. Such schools have usually conformed to the countries general education standards and curricula but they have managed to gain approvals for some minor modifications or additions to the standard education practices especially in the areas of foreign language teaching and technology. Such schools have better learning environments and more facilities than that provided in public schools; they also offer – in some cases- better teachers' salaries and benefits. Parents, on the other hand, are the victims; they want high quality education for their children while they suffer from the increasing education costs in private schools. This is, in a nutshell, the source of the dilemma over public and private schooling in Arab countries.

## Literature Review

To begin with, the researcher regretfully admits that not much research has been published in the Arab Countries on the topic of private versus public education. Henceforth, this paper shall have to rely on some international research and very few national publications for discussing the topic in question. International resources provide several examples that will be cited for their value and relatedness to the discussion and analysis presented in this paper.

The Council on American Private Education CAPE site is one important resource to start with. CAPE presents facts about the reality of education excellence of private education in the United States in comparison with Public education. The 2014 report shows that Private schools are outperforming Public schools in almost all areas necessary for students' advancement and future ambitions. The report also shows that even with moral and religious education, private schools are better than public schools.

However, Christopher Lubienski and Sarah Lubienski (2014) state that in schools where the socioeconomic, race and other demographic factors are accounted for, public schools show a much better performance than

private schools especially in Math education. They further give two major explanations to the supremacy of public schools over private schools in Math education:

First, public school teachers are more likely to be certified, meaning they are required to continue to take professional-development courses that expose them to the latest research on teaching math.

Second, perhaps as a result of that professional development, their instructional approaches more closely align with recent studies suggesting that test results improve when students know how to reason and communicate mathematical concepts rather than merely learning to add, subtract, multiply, and divide ([www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/05/14/31publicprivate.h33](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/05/14/31publicprivate.h33)).

A similar study was carried out by a team of ETS specialists for NCES to compare Private school students' achievement in NAEP to Public school students' achievement. The study which was published in July 2006 comes in full support of the previously presented research by Christopher and Sarah Lubienski. It revealed that taking demographic and socioeconomic factors into consideration, public schools students seemed to do "as well as or better" than Private school students in Math and Reading in grades 4 and 12 with the exception of reading in grade 8 (available as a pdf document at ([nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/2006461.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/2006461.pdf))).

Furthermore, an in a study carried out by The Center for Educational Policy CEP in (2007): [www.ed-line.com/uploads/pdf/PrivateSchoolsReport, pdf](http://www.ed-line.com/uploads/pdf/PrivateSchoolsReport.pdf)), the following results were found:

1. Students attending independent private high schools, most types of parochial high schools, and public high schools of choice performed no better on achievement tests in math, reading, science, and history than their counterparts in traditional public high schools.
2. Students who had attended any type of private high school ended up no more likely to attend college than their counterparts at traditional public high schools.
3. Young adults who had attended any type of private high school ended up with no more job satisfaction at age 26 than young adults who had attended traditional public high schools.
4. Young adults who had attended any type of private high school ended up no more engaged in civic activities at age 26 than young adults who had attended traditional public high schools.

That being said about the Private versus Public schools in the US, it is important to mention that only 10% American send their kids to Private schools and 80% percent of them do so for sectarian, religious or special geographical factors. The cost of sending children to private schools ranges between 5000 UDDs a year to 40000 USDs depending on the private school type -profit, non-profit, sectarian, religious etc. (Jyoti (2013) available at: <http://theweek.com/article/index/244142/is-private-schol-worth-it>).

It is awfully sad not to find similar research activities carried by governmental bureaus in Arab country. One has only to depend on some vent-out articles in Newspapers and Blogs to when it comes to investigating the status quo of Private Versus Public Schooling in Arab Countries. Hence, the researcher asks for permission to use his own translations of some material presented in few articles written about the issue in Arabic.

Hamdan (2012), states that there are mainly three types of schooling in Lebanon: State-run schools, Private, non-profit schools and private schools. She adds to them two other types which provide education for less privileged children: the UNRWA schools and Residential Schools. Hamdan makes hints on the fact that although State-Run schools are generally accused of providing low education quality; the fact of the matter is that they do have better basic level qualified teachers. She clearly states, "Teachers in state-run secondary schools have a very good reputation. Indeed, many qualified teachers in these schools, and particularly those teaching Math and sciences, have been contracted to teach in private schools on an hourly basis. Many families who enroll their children in private schools at the basic level move them to state schools at the secondary level because of the high reputation of these schools." Hamdan also gives a vivid comparison of the cost of private schools and state-run schools. She states that whereas the state-run schools cost around 100 USDs per annum, the private schools cost may go up to 15000 USDs (see. [http://www.warchildholland.org/sites/default/files/bijlagen/node\\_14/31-2013/education.pdf](http://www.warchildholland.org/sites/default/files/bijlagen/node_14/31-2013/education.pdf), and for more coverage on WAR Children see [www.warchildholland.org/sites/default/files/bijlagen/node\\_14/22014/salzburg\\_booklet\\_nov2013.pdf](http://www.warchildholland.org/sites/default/files/bijlagen/node_14/22014/salzburg_booklet_nov2013.pdf)).

In an interesting article published in Solutions, Sandefur, Watkins and Green (2013) take a very rational approach in discussing the issue of Private versus Public schooling. By bring clear examples from poor countries such as Kenya and Pakistan as well as examples from Sweden and the US in order to examine the actual need for quality education for children. One of the conclusions mad in their article is worthy of notice here and will have a direct influence on the current research conclusion. In arguing for equity of education and the need for every child- poor or rich for quality education, Watkins is cited saying,

"I have no interest in defending the indefensible quality of public education provided in many of the poorest countries. But when public education systems are broken, they need fixing, not bypassing or franchising out to the private sector. And if we care about equity, there is no credible alternative to a public system that offers opportunity for all rather than choice for some". (<http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/24108>)

This is a very inspiring statement that will constitute a major referential in the conclusion of this paper. Zeitun, 2012, Al Azhar University/ Egypt, sums up four important

factors behind the current decline in public education and the boost given to private education. In her book titled "Trading in Education in the Arab World: problems, dangers and future vision), she explains that the four most influential factors for the change of educational policy and planning around the globe are: the rebirth of Neo-liberalism, the changing of education funding policies, the movement towards privatization of education and the GAT approval of free access in educational business. The writer then concludes that the Arab World has been engrossed by such ideas to the point that in almost all Arab states, the governments are loosening their grip on public education gradually while giving access to private investors- domestic or foreign- to establish schools and universities. She also states that in many Arab countries, funding to public schools and university is decreasing dramatically to give more room for private enterprise and profit-making education endeavors.

In Qatar, an Educational Reform Project has been carried out between 2001 and 2007. One of its consequences was the transfer of Ministry schools into Independent schools which are independent in terms of administrative autonomy while still under the supervision of a government body namely the Supreme Education Council (SEC). In a report by The Evaluation Institute at the Supreme Education Council (AISulaiti- Annual Report 2011/2012), it is stated that schools in Qatar come into three main categories: Independent, Private and International. The report also indicates that the parents' satisfaction of schools' performance reached 80% for the Independent and International schools while it was 77% for Private Schools. In almost all aspects, the report indicates that the New Independent schools are gaining much publicity and recognition by clients especially in the ability of these schools to render better graduates for life needs and future work opportunities. This is an indication that when government schools are properly managed and utilized, they can equal or outperform not just the private schools but also the well-known international schools.

Al Asmar (2014), in article for Factjo.com describes the schooling status quo in Jordan. He states that there are basically three different types of schools in Jordan with the overwhelming majority being the Government or public schools catering for 70.6% of students, private schools for 17.8%, and other semi-governmental schools for 0.14% and UNERWA for 9.2%. The writer sums the reasons that lead parents to send their children to private schools as the dissatisfaction with the quality of education at public schools, social status, and the increased income of some families. He also illustrates the tragic circumstances in neighboring Arab countries has led to a migration of millions of people to Jordan. This influx of immigrants has given more prosperity to the private schooling business in Jordan. Many of the rich immigrants are either not allowed to register their children

in public schools or more inclined to have their children in private schools. The article narrates several negative consequences of the sudden increase in establishing private schools, such school fees are soaring high year after year with no control by the government and attracting excellent teachers from the public sector for high wages while, at the same time, forcing them to accept an unpaid leave during the school summer vacation to increase profit and minimize expenditure. Worse still is the adoption of a success rate policy by certain private schools to illuminate withdrawal. A private school teacher is cited saying that his school prevents teachers to have any failure rate above 5% which in a class of twenty students would mean only having one student failure. The teacher painfully says, "We suffer to decide on who that student should be."

## DISCUSSION

Is public education in Arab countries providing quality education to school children? In answering this question, the author finds it necessary to define the term "quality" as this term is rather vague and complicated; it even becomes more so when it is coined with 'education.' Quality in the common sense of the word means: "The standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something," according to the Oxford dictionary.

Such a definition, although may carry certain attribute to the real meaning of the word in normal daily life use, still does not in reality give the reader any bench marks for comparison. It, further, makes it too hard to determine the parameters of the proper degree of excellence that can lend to quality. In the broader sense, one can safely say that quality may mean "good," regardless of the vagueness of the term. When coined with "education", the term quality has a different meaning; quality in education is described in a paper presented by UNICEF at the meeting of The International Working Group on Education Florence, Italy June 2000, as follows:

"What does quality mean in the context of education? Many definitions of quality in education exist, testifying to the complexity and multifaceted nature of the concept. The terms efficiency, effectiveness, equity and quality have often been used synonymously (Adams, 1993). Considerable consensus exists around the basic dimensions of quality education today, however. Quality education includes:

"Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities; Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities; Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in

such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace; Processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities; Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society"(pdf).

In the above definition by UNCIF, quality education can mean efficient education which focuses on the basic students' needs that are linked to the national goals of a certain society and it is carried out in a healthy and safe environments. However, the same report indicates that "Definitions of quality must be open to change and evolution based on information, changing contexts, and new understandings of the nature of education's challenges. New research — ranging from multinational research to action research at the classroom level— contributes to this redefinition" (ibid).

The paper further asserts that quality education is nation-specific, "This definition allows for an understanding of education as a complex system embedded in a political, cultural and economic context" (ibid).

The ambiguity and complexity of defining the term quality education is not meant by itself in this paper; it is not even an objective by itself. However, it is meant to give the reader a lead into a better understanding of the degree to what public education is providing to school children in general and to understand some of the reasons that stand behind the noticeable movement into private schooling in the Arab countries.

The general view of public schooling in the Arab World has been characterized by two main qualities: low cost and capacity. Low cost is basically related to the fact that the general income rate for Arab families, with the exception of the Oil states, has been markedly low; a fact that necessitates providing education to the masses with minimal cost. To achieve this goal, most Arab countries have adopted a so-called free basic, compulsory education system, where the governments are responsible for building schools, hiring teachers and buying or developing curricula. With the increased numbers of population in most Arab countries in the recent years due to better health-care projects and high rate of fertility and child-care programs, many such countries started suffering of the cost of education. In countries like Jordan, the government expenditure on education exceeds 6.4% of the general government expenditure in 2003 (Wikipedia).

In many Arab countries, teachers' salaries, even though still relatively lower than those of medical doctors and engineers working in the public sectors, are still costing the governments' budgets considerable amounts every month due to the increasing numbers of teachers hired every year to cater for the increased numbers of children joining schools.

School and class capacity has also witnessed tremendous changes over the past twenty years. With more children joining schools of both sexes, class size has soared up to 35 or 40 students in a room that can barely handle 20 in a healthy classroom teaching environment. Some countries have opted for morning and evening schooling terms while others have chosen to rent apartments or houses and use them as schools regardless of their feasibility to function as schools.

These two issues, namely cost and capacity, have undoubtedly left their impact on the quality of education offered by public education systems in some Arab countries. If one adds to that the relatively insufficient teacher's pay, then definitely the quality of education is at stake.

On the other side, public education has been surprisingly successful since the early days of independence of most Arab countries in graduating generating educated men and women who have attributed to the development of their countries. Public education has also, in a relatively short time of the life span of these countries, succeeded in decreasing the literacy rates to minimal levels and among girls and boys alike (see for a good coverage, Hammoud 2006). Public education has also attributed to the vast development of the social and economic sectors by providing educated and skilled labor force.

The fact remains, however, that families- rich or poor, educated or not educated, in rural or urban societies- have also become more and more keen in providing better education for their children. TV programs, the Internet, Travel, and other forms of communication have brought the masses more aware of the needs and the necessity for better education opportunities. Urban societies, especially capital cities, have witnessed massive movements of migrants from rural areas seeking better education, better health care and better work possibilities. Centralization of most good services in the capital cities has created a gap of citizenship rights in most Arab countries. This fact has increased the situation of social inequality and inequity in terms of educational prospects.

Is there a need for private schools in the Arab countries? Well, the direct answer is yes. Taking into account the reason mentioned earlier in this paper which relates to foreign nationals living in some Oil countries for work and who need private schools to preserve their national educational and cultural standards, private schools, of all sorts, are a necessity in Arab countries to eliminate and alleviate some of the problems facing public education. Private schools, at least in theory, can provide many services to the countries where they exist; they can provide diversity as a major component in quality education which may not be easily achieved in crowded homogeneous classrooms in the public schools; they can provide specialized vocational education needed for the private sector economy which also is not

commonly attained in public schools; they can provide special education for special-need students instead of ill-managed inclusion programs in public schools and they also can provide better school buildings in areas of increased density and poor, rural deprived societies. However, in reality, almost none of that is happening. Private schools are all concentrated in the very rich quarters of the capital cities or the big cities; they are mainly providing the same sort of education offered at the public schools; they are focusing on providing additional attractive packages that may or may not have a direct influence on the learning achievement of children such as, swimming pools, sport yards, air conditioned classrooms, all a mode school buses and specially designed school costumes all at the expense of helpless parents and GPA-g geared competitive education is the most dominant pride factor at many private schools. Private schools are attracting the best teachers out of public schools by offering them better salaries. Yet worse is the fact that they are attracting high public school achievers to join in for lower fees and some exemptions so that they can use their test scores for promotional purposes.

Nevertheless, when comparing public schools and private schools in the Arab countries, one cannot but notice that private schools seem to have a win. One does not, however, realize that this is a false comparison. It is a comparison of two types of schools but they are "an apple and an orange." Many important differences are left untouched in such a comparison, such as the underlying socio-economic background of private school students compared to that of public school students, the school capacity of both types of schools and the cost of education in each type.

For these reasons and many others, the author believes that private schools in the Arab countries, in their current form and with their present missions and visions, are not fulfilling the needs they are expected to fulfill. They are more focused on profit and avarice than on the supremacy of educational opportunities and the creation of an education for all foundation. Private schools have in recent years become the talk of the town in Lebanon, Jordan and the Gulf states for their inconsistent and unjustifiable trends to increase schooling fees and learning costs every year. There are escalating feeling of bewilderment among citizens of the same country about the genuine value of private schooling: some know for certain that private schools are not any better than public schools but they find it hard to go back into public schools for social status pressure; some don't really know what goes on in private schools in terms of education quality and educational value and many are continuously presented with glamorous TV ads and door-to-door leaflets promoting school X or Y which make them opt for private schooling under family member pressure. On the other hand, many people who live in deprived rural areas are still affected by daily TV

propaganda for private schools. Such people, for the lack of real factual data and for the shortage of money, painstakingly try their best to convince their children that such promotions are for schools in Europe or the US not in their own country.

How should the relationship between private education and public education be? The answer for this question entails some sort of wisdom rather than computation or statistics. The wisdom hinted at, as far as the author is concerned, has to be built on a clear realization and acknowledgement of the investors' right to make profit without jeopardizing the people's right to equal opportunity in education. Henceforth, governments in Arab countries that are facing financial strains but still eager to provide their citizens with quality education need to develop wise strategic educational plans hand-in-hand with the private sector whereby certain terms and conditions must apply. These terms and conditions should be based on the following pivotal assumptions: Firstly and most importantly, education policy makers must admit that disparity in education is a form of social injustice which at the long run can lead to increasing the social, economic gaps and consequently negatively affect people's feelings of patriotism and loyalty. Secondly, the private investor's right to profit should, in education-based partnership endeavors, be kept to acceptable standards. In other words, entrepreneurs who may invest in private schooling must be made to realize that fees and prices must stay within an agreed upon range that takes into account the average citizen's income. Thirdly, private investment in education does not necessarily have to take the form of establishing private schools only. It can be introduced and achieved within the existing public schooling system by means of rendering authority, providing room for consultation and renovation in public schools' buildings, curricula development projects, playgrounds, libraries, laboratories, cafeterias, etc. And finally, private sector schooling can be geared to cover highly specialized vocational educational needs that supply the market with skillful labor force rather than duplicating the general, basic academic educational targets already taken care of by general public schools. These parameters are probably easier stated than implemented for many readers. The last section of this paper shall attempt to draw the bigger picture of this asserted relationship.

### **Analysis**

In an ideal world, there is no need for argumentation since things are supposedly perfect. However, in our real world, it is always hard to present solutions or ideas without the proper justification. Therefore, the ideas presented in the previous part, which come as direct answers to the questions presented earlier in the introduction of this paper, are meant to be argumentative

and provocative at the same time. They are subject to debate and criticism as they are built on certain considerations which may not be shared by both the advocates and the opponents of private sector schooling. Those who believe that the public education system is deeply corrupt and seriously backward to a point whereby no surgery or remedy can heal the wounds, will definitely find it hard to comply with any term of partnership between the public and the private sectors. Similarly, those investors who are mainly interested in emptying the people's pockets by any means and by all means, will surely find it hard to envision a relationship with the public educational system that may lead to gaining less profit in any joint investment. By the same token, a counter argument is also expected among those who oppose private schooling. They will find it hard to give in to entrepreneurs to mangle with the education people as they are totally convinced that investors in Private schooling are only interested in making profit. Therefore, such people have a solid belief that private schools will continue to raise fees and textbook prices which will cause havoc to millions of people. The opponents also claim that private investors are mainly concerned with the rich sectors of the society and therefore their schools and services will never find their way to less fortunate areas or poor communities. This fact will consequently lead to the old well-known belief among Arab families "what you have is what you get." Finally, antagonists of private schooling may also reject such advocated partnership with the private sector on the assumption that good education is the responsibility of the governments and governments must not bail themselves out of their responsibilities on the expense of people agony.

Such arguments are all admissible and logical. However, it has also been noticeable that in countries where better bonds of trust and more transparent understanding exist, such a partnership has flourished and has yielded very successful educational outcomes. Let us have a look at the educational system in China after Mao Zedong. Basic education in China, a country that was for years under rigid communist rules and restrictions, is now mainly well-taken care of by mix resources from the government, private sector and school made income activities (Cheng, 1996, 1997).

The government, by loosening grip on school authorities and giving more freedom to people, provinces and town directors, has reached a situation whereby teachers' salaries are paid by local revenues, schools are built by donations and government shares and other educational expenditure is paid for by school fees, small industrial school projects and activities (Cheng 2010). Cheng also states that the Chinese government has issued a legislation in 2003 that legalized the participation of the private sector in public education through the Minban schools. These schools are run by the private sector while keeping close ties with the ministry of education (2010). People in any country are easily

motivated to take part in projects that reflect positively on their well-being. When one thinks for a second of how many mosques are built every year in each Arab country by the small donations made by people, one has but to think of how many schools and other educational facilities can be established with the same type of people support has there been some sort of education to those people that God Almighty considers both the mosque and the school as charity deeds worthy of His acceptance and Blessing!

Another example of wisdom-based planning for educational and economic success is in Singapore; a country which used to import most of its food and half of its water as well as all of its energy, has been able through wise educational planning and investment to reach a GDP level of 28000 USDs compared to 29000 USDs in America in the year 1997. How did this wonder country achieve this? The answer is through education. From a centralized, pragmatic and state-founded education, Singapore moved creatively, cautiously and wisely into an education system of partnership, autonomy and competition that has a corner stone doctrine in the following main objectives: the importance of every Singaporean, strong families, opportunities for all, passionate feelings about Singapore and active citizenship (Horsky& Phyllis 2010, p.248).

Was it done by a miracle? No. Singapore has developed a policy of sustainability and flexibility which has enabled the country to improvise change and reform whenever need arises. The wisdom of Singaporean leaders has led them to realize right from the early days of their independence that their power is in the mind of their people. They, as a result, have invested most of their assets in education. Whenever their objectives were achieved, they would raise the caliper of their expectations and move forward. This has enabled Singapore in a very short period of time not only to lead the world countries in educational records but to provide its population with all sorts of possibilities for a better life. The Singaporean educational system, which was rules and managed by the government, has gradually moved into a unique private educational enterprise where schools, colleges, and universities all compete for excellence. Did that happen at the expense of people's pockets? The government of Singapore so brilliantly moved the cost away from the consumer's wallet. It provides salaries for almost all primary education children, rewards and prizes for excellent schools and colleges and for any private sector that invests in education excellence. In doing so, the private entrepreneurs as well as the government are partners for the good of the citizen. Furthermore, Singapore has been remarkably successful in shifting the focus of its educational system according to development needs and requirements: when the need was to create manufacturing man power for internal consumption, vocational schools and colleges were brought to the

forefront and when the need was to produce and export, creativity, Math education and Science excellence as well as technology were utilized and incorporated in the educational system. In this small wonder country, one major factor has played a vital role in creating these achievements: national loyalty and citizenship. In a country of heterogonous religious and ethnic backgrounds, the government's major concern was unity that comes as a result of equity and equal rights for education and work opportunities. This became the major concern for Prime Minster Goh Thong, who in 1997, emphasized that "the wealth of a nation lies in its people." In order to transform words into deeds, project "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation" was initiated which has incorporated, as a main component, National Education-citizenship- as well as the focus on creativity, administrative excellence and the use of information technology in schools (ibid p. 249).

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The review of the related literature and its analysis can safely set the flour for the following Conclusions: Arab Countries educational policies must be developed on wisdom, transparency and partnership. Governments alone can no longer provide all educational opportunities for the ever increasing demands and needs and educational reform efforts must be genuine and flexible. In Arab countries where cost is not an issue (the Gulf States), the need for genuine educational reform project is more demanded. Such reform ventures must respond not only to the market needs but to the development of the human capacity as well. However, in other Arab countries where financial assets are scarce, the need for wisdom, transparency and partnership are the most important. In such countries, the governments and the private sector can work together for achieving better educational goals that can serve the people and the entrepreneurs alike. A partnership should be planned where both school administrations and private investors can join their efforts freely and creatively for developing excellent educational environments. Moreover, a wisdom that leads all partnership actions must be adopted so that both schools and investors may create projects that provide for better educational circumstances and help investors to gain profit.

The Chinese example can provide a model for many Arab countries where more autonomy is given to schools while more responsibility is demanded from people and the private sector to help create better schooling for the nation's children. Donation, charity funds, Zakat, Waqf revenues should not only be spent on building Mosques and redecorating Churches; it is the well-being of the human that religions call for in the first place. One should not also less emphasize the need for more citizenship obligation and national awareness of the importance of

partnership and collaboration for the successful execution of any reform agenda.

These conclusions can best be translated into actions if the following facts are taken into account: First, it is about time that school education in Arab countries move into quality rather than quantity. There are thousands of schools in the Arab world and may be thousands more are still needed, however, education in these schools is still focusing on memorization and test-based consumption. It has become obvious that such educational practices can only cater for marginal abilities and competencies that fall within what is referred to as hard skills needed for finding a job. However, soft skills or the human micro-abilities of survival, excellence, negotiation and invention, to name a few, are not yet fully developed in any Arab educational system. It is easy probably to the learn the basics of management to get a job in a bank but it is extremely hard to flourish and progress in that job if one lacks the micro-skills of handling work pressure and customers' demands. Second, vocational education and professional training are a must. In most Arab countries, schooling is academic; Students end up passing the high school in order to join universities. This has resulted in an unprecedented increase in the numbers of universities- public and private- that offer similar specialization opportunities and render graduates with almost the same qualifications. This fact has resulted in have thousands of university graduates on the long waiting lists for work vacancies. Therefore, proportional streaming of school education prior to the secondary level can provide better opportunities for students who have more professional or skill-oriented preferences. Such students will most definitely be more efficient for the market needs. Private sector can play an important role in providing private schools, colleges and universities that graduate trained manpower to fuel the private and public projects and enterprises. Small projects and investments can also be shared by public schools and the private sector to develop schooling and to increase teachers' salaries and income. Schools in every small city, town or village may form an executive board that negotiates partnership with the private sector for a certain project to help both the school income and the investor's. And finally, although most Arab citizens share the belief that governments must do everything, recent national movements in many Arab states have shown that corruption, ineffective resource management, lack of patriotism and individual greed and selfishness have resulted in destructive consequences the victims to which were mainly the citizens. This final conclusion should, by itself, form the base for a more vigilant understanding among governments and people alike that in today's' world cooperation, partnership and responsibility can make a difference.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Privatization is the transfer of activities, assets and responsibilities from government and public institutions and organizations to private individuals and agencies (Belfield & Levin 2002, 19). In educational terms privatization can be implemented in three different models or in a combination of them. These models are: transfer of ownership from the government to the private sector, shared cost of education between parents, governments and the private sector and the parents' free choice of education. In each of these models, what is needed is partnership. If more access is given to private investors to open schools then the government has to play the role of guaranteeing equity, quality and national interest. Besides, if parents are to cater for the cost of educating their children in whole or in part, the government should minimize or release taxes and find other means for school building and teachers' wages. Finally, if the parents are given the choice to choose the type of education suitable for their children and to pay for it, then the governments must make available different types of educational opportunities either alone or in partnership with the private sector.

Within this perception of the models and trends in privatization of education, the researcher recommends that Arab governments are urgently invited to reevaluate their educational systems in the light of a clear and transparent strategic plan in order to adopt one model or the other. This is doomed necessary in a time where private investment in education has been expanding rapidly outside and beyond the governments' control to an extent that educating children is becoming a nightmare to almost all Arab citizens. The governments and the private investors should have as their first priority high quality educational standards on the one hand and the right of people, all people, for such level of education.

This paper ends up with the following thought-provocative quotation by Ravitch "“Going to school is not the same as going shopping. Parents should not be burdened with locating a suitable school for their child. They should be able to take their child to the neighborhood public school as a matter of course and expect that it has well-educated teachers and a sound educational program.”"

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