CHAPTER II

KUWAIT: EDUCATION, DEMOCRATISATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Kuwait existed as a political entity since the early eighteenth century. All Kuwaiti Emirs since 1756 came from the al-Sabah family which held strong ties with the most prominent merchant families and tribes. Prior to the coming of oil, the mainstays of the Kuwaiti economy were trading, fishing, boat-building, and pearling. Kuwait stands in the northwestern corner of the Arabian Gulf. It is a country of 16,000 square kilometres with around 1.6 million inhabitants. The country was reportedly founded in the early eighteenth century by tribesmen driven from their homes in inner Arabia by warring kinsmen. Stretching over an area of flat desert devoid of sufficient water for farming, Kuwait offered its early inhabitants few and meagre resources. They turned to the sea, and in time became the Gulf's most prosperous businessmen. In time the Kuwait society encompassed three groups: the ruling Sabah dynasty, an oligarchy of wealthy businessmen, and a working class which was absorbed in fishing, pearl diving and ship-building.

Of these groups, the second has been by far the most powerful and dominant social force. It was the thriving spirit of business oligarchy which provided the ruling dynasty with their meagre income in the shape of customs duties (which was estimated, for example at about $40,000 in 1938) and provided employment for the rest of the community. This triple social structure is still well entrenched in Kuwait today although new circumstances are still altering it. More than half of Kuwait's labour force, estimated by 1800 at some

3 Ibid., p. 101. In 1871 Kuwait was proclaimed officially an Ottoman district attached to the governorate of Besra. Its Sheikh at that time (Abd Allah Al Sabah) was designated District Commissioner. However, despite the incorporation of Kuwait into the Ottoman Empire, Britain succeeded in reaching an agreement with Kuwait under Sheikh Mubarak Al Sabah. This agreement, which was signed in 1899, gave Britain full control of Kuwait's external affairs and obliged it to defend Kuwait from any external aggression. The agreement was terminated in 1961, thus paving the way for Kuwait's independence.
8,000 to 10,000 were engaged in pearling and seafaring. It is revealed that the average earnings in pearling hardly exceeded 100 rupees (just over $35 at the prewar rate) for a season of three to four months. This income was often supplemented by seafaring, which brought in, on average, an additional 150 or 200 rupees per man for an expedition of some six months. An industrious man could, in exceptional circumstances, add to these two sources of income by trading, and so might make a profit of some 100 to 200 rupees more. Thus, at best, average family earnings from different sources rarely exceeded 500 rupees, or rather less than $180 a year. If we assume an average family of five members, then per capita income might reach 100 rupees, roughly $25. The unskilled labourer, on the other hand, lived below subsistence level. His daily wage did not exceed half a rupee, and employment was seldom available through the year. Poverty here had reached an unprecedented scale, unknown even by those in the agrarian communities of Iran or Iraq. In the pre-oil period, the system of governmental organization in Kuwait was predominantly of the traditional type. That is, power was vested in an autocratic ruler, who according to tradition was selected from among members of the Sabah family for his superior personal qualities. The selection of a new ruler was regarded strictly as a family matter; and while clearly Kuwait was no democracy, this medieval political system allowed Kuwaitis much greater freedom and expression. Regard for tradition made public opinion an important political force. Hence it became customary for the ruler to consult the notables of his community on matters of importance.

Much contemporary discussion on Islamic education, Wan Daud (1998) maintains, betrays 'weak theoretical foundations, simplistic interpretation, and intemperate application, which do not do justice to its true ideals and heritage.' This section is concerned to clarify what resources are available for someone wishing to embark on a more systematic explanation and justification of the distinctive features of Islamic education.

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4 Ibid., p.102
6 Ibid.
education. First, there is the Qur'an itself. The Qur'an is full of exhortations to pursue knowledge; it proclaims the superiority in God's eyes of those who have knowledge, but also emphasizes wisdom and guidance rather than the blind acceptance of tradition. The pursuit of knowledge, it seems, is a religious duty. This, of course, raises the question, 'what sort of knowledge?' Muslim scholars have been at pains to emphasize that this does not license the pursuit of any kind of knowledge. Knowledge in Islam is subject to two major constraints. The first relates to its religious origin. The Holy Qur'an makes it clear that knowledge is a characteristic of God Himself and that all knowledge comes from Him. This applies whether the knowledge is revealed (naqliyya) or humanly constructed ('aqliyya) and it means that knowledge must be approached reverently and in humility, for there cannot be any 'true' knowledge that is in conflict with religion and divine revelation, only ignorance. The second relates to its purpose. There is no notion in Islam of the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Seyyed Hossein Nasr points out that in Arabic 'to know' ultimately means 'to be transformed by the very process of knowing'. Ibn Khaldun pours scorn on the man 'who knows about tailoring but does not know tailoring' and al-Ghazali says, Be sure that knowledge alone is no support.... If a man reads a hundred thousand scientific subjects and learns them but does not act upon them, his knowledge is of no use to him, for its benefit lies only in being used. Like money, knowledge is not to be accumulated for its own sake but must be put to use. And the appropriate use for knowledge from a Muslim perspective is to help people to acknowledge God, to live in accordance with Islamic law and to fulfil the purposes of God's creation. Knowledge which does not serve these purposes may be considered useless. All this implies a concept of knowledge that is very different from dominant western concepts. Secondly, the traditions (ahaddith) of the Prophet Muhammad provide further insight into Islamic education. One hadith (in al-Bukhari's collection) reminds believers that 'seeking for knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim man and woman',

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9 For example, Quran, Ayat, 20, p.114.
10 For example, Q. 58:11 and 39:9.
11 Q. 2:170, 17:36 and 6:148
12 Q. 35:28.
another (in the collections of Tirmidhi and Darimi) says that 'he who goes forth in search of knowledge is in the way of Allah till he returns', while others (of less certain authenticity, but quoted, for example, by Bahonar, 2004) say 'Seek knowledge, even as far as China' and 'Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave'. Some of these sayings have far-reaching implications: learning is a lifelong matter, it can be pursued outside the Islamic world and it is an equal obligation for men and women. Thirdly, though little of it could strictly be called 'philosophy of education', there was a substantial amount of writing in the high period of Islamic civilization that discussed educational issues generally. Both Nasir al-Din Tusi's Akhlag-i-Nasri and Ibn Maskuya's Taharat al-`arag contain detailed discussions of moral education and other educational issues. Al-Ghazali's Fatihat al-`Ulfm is perhaps the closest to an early introduction to educational theory. In al-Muqaddimah, the great historian and sociologist Ibn Khaldun outlines the aims of education, the curriculum and the skills of teaching and also provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of Islamic knowledge. He follows the by now standard bifurcation of knowledge into that which is revealed (naqliyya or transmitted sciences, such as theology and jurisprudence) and that which is discovered ('aqliyya or intellectual sciences, such as medicine and mathematics). Other texts, including Siyasat- Namah by Nizam-al-Mulk and Ghulistan and Bustan by Sa'di, examine topics like education, teaching, learning, youth, love and devotion. The Treatises (Rasd'il) of the Ikhwan al-Safa include discussions of psychological and philosophical issues that are of particular interest to educators. This list, though far from complete, indicates something of the breadth of interest among Muslims in educational principles and practice. The tradition of broad scholarship exemplified in these writers has continued up to the present day.

Education, like religion, can never be a purely individual affair; this is because individual development cannot take place without regard for the social environment in which it occurs, but more profoundly because education, in that it serves many individuals, is a means for making society what it is. Education may thus be a vehicle for preserving, extending and transmitting a community's or society's cultural heritage and traditional

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values, but can also be a tool for social change and innovation. The sense of community in Islam extends from the local level of the family to the worldwide community of believers (*ummah*). What binds the community together is the equality of all believers in the eyes of the divine law (*sharfa*). In Islam, social existence has exactly the same goal as individual existence: the realization on earth of divinely ordained moral imperatives. Indeed, the spiritual growth of the individual (*tarfqa*) can take place only within the *shari'a*. Muslims walk together along the broad highway of the divine law, which sets out God's will for people in both their private and their social life and helps them to live harmoniously in this world and prepare themselves for the life to come. The social and moral dimension of education in Islam is therefore eventually a matter of coming to understand and learning to follow the divine law, which contains not only universal moral principles (such as equality among people, justice and charity), but also detailed instructions relating to every aspect of human life. The *sharfa* integrates political, social and economic life as well as individual life into a single religious world view. Today, economic globalization has become the process setting the political scenario and instruments of participation at the global, regional, and national fronts. This context tends to limit the discussion of development as economic growth rather than human development and democracy as formal/procedural democracy rather than substantial democracy, which includes economic empowerment of the majority and the disenfranchised poor.

In Islam, therefore, there is no question of individuals being encouraged through education to work out for themselves their own religious faith or to subject it to detached rational investigation at a fundamental level; the divine revelation expressed in the *sharfa*

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20 Substantive democracy is a form of democracy that functions in the interest of the governed and is manifested by equal participation of all groups in society in the political process. This type of democracy can also be referred to as a functional democracy. Procedural democracy is a state system that has in place the relevant forms of democracy but is not actually managed democratically; accordingly the people or citizens of the state have less influence. This type of democracy assumes that the electoral process is at the core of the authority placed in elected officials and ensures that all procedures of elections are duly complied with (or at least appear so). It could be described as a democracy (i.e., people voting for representatives) wherein only the basic structures and institutions are in place.

provides them with the requisite knowledge of truth and falsehood, right and wrong, and the task of individuals is to come to understand this knowledge and exercise their free will to choose which path to follow. From a liberal perspective, the notion of free will in Islam is thus an unsophisticated one, involving simply the choice to accept or reject the complete package of beliefs, and contrasts sharply with the liberal notion of personal autonomy.

The only approach to social education that would appear to be compatible with Islamic principles is to put the religious values at the heart of the educational process for Muslim children. As al-Attas points out, it is more fundamental in Islam to produce a good man than a good citizen; for the good man will also no doubt be a good citizen, but the good citizen will not necessarily also be a good man. Acquisition of knowledge Much work remains to be done on Islamic epistemology, though as we have seen, al-Ghazali, ibn Khaldun and others have made significant contributions. However, three central points are clear enough. First, although knowledge may be derived either from divine revelation or from the activity of the human intellect, it cannot be divided into two classes, one religious and the other secular. All knowledge has religious significance and should ultimately serve to make people aware of God and of their relationship with God. Revealed knowledge provides an essential foundation for all other knowledge and people are free to pursue any branch of knowledge only insofar as they remain loyal to the divine injunctions contained in the Qur'an and the sharia. Indeed, any pursuit of knowledge may be viewed as a form of worship in Islam so long as it is undertaken within the boundaries defined by revelation. The educational consequences of this are clear: religion must be at the heart of all education, acting as the glue which holds together the entire curriculum into an integrated whole. This means that the autonomy of the subject or discipline, at least as understood in liberal thinking, is excluded, for all subjects and all knowledge need the guiding spirit of religion to give them purpose and direction. Thus, food

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technology must take account of Islamic laws on food and sex education and sport must not contravene Islamic rules on modesty and decency. At a deeper level, a considerable amount of theoretical work has already been done on ways to bring other subjects into line with Islamic beliefs and values; these include natural science\(^{24}\), social science,\(^{25}\) history\(^{26}\) and literature.\(^{27}\) What is involved in this process is not merely grafting an Islamic component onto modern western knowledge, but the reconstruction of the entire discipline in accordance with Islamic principles. Secondly, as already noted, knowledge is not seen as valuable in itself or for, say, liberation, but is valuable only insofar as it serves to inculcate goodness in the individual and in the whole community. The pursuit of knowledge should stimulate the moral and spiritual consciousness of the student and lead to faith (\textit{fiman}), virtuous action (\textit{amal salih}) and certainty (\textit{yaqin}), which are constantly emphasized in the Qur'an.\(^{28}\) Certainty may sometimes be achieved through an acceptance of the authority of the teaching of the 'ulama' (the learned) about the Qur'an and the Prophet. Islam therefore encourages an attitude of respectful humility towards such legitimate authority and trust in the truth of the knowledge that it hands down. The implications for education are that the cultivation of faith is an essential part of education and that there is no justification for encouraging children to question their faith. This does not mean that religion should be used to hinder human invention or scientific enquiry,\(^{29}\) but simply that it provides boundaries within which Muslims can pursue their studies with confidence. Thirdly, since teachers have a special responsibility to nurture the young and develop their spiritual and moral awareness, their personal lives, beliefs, character and moral integrity are as important as their academic expertise. Muslims have long recognized that students' education is as likely to occur through imitation of a teacher


\(^{28}\) For example, Q 103:3 and 15:99

and personal contact with him\textsuperscript{30} as through instruction. Although the teacher, as transmitter of (religious) knowledge, is considered an authority figure worthy of respect (and therefore not generally open to challenge by students), there is no reason in principle why interactive learning methods should not be used. Indeed, Badawi (1979) has shown that traditional Muslim education had a number of characteristics that may seem progressive even today. There was a natural integration of the curriculum and a close personal relationship between teacher and taught, elitism was discouraged, undue attention was not paid to examinations and pupil grouping was less rigid. Above all, traditional Muslim education was not an activity separated from other aspects of society; it was rooted in the community it served, responding to its needs and aspirations and preserving its values and beliefs.

Law and order were preserved in a simple and unceremonious way in accordance with Islamic law as modified by tribal tradition and local custom. Internal security was maintained by a small bodyguard, while during the times of external threats the whole population would be mobilized. Education was maintained mainly through private semi-religious institutions and it was only in 1912 that the first secular elementary school was established. As far as medical services are concerned the state did not provide any, until after the pumping of oil in 1946, when hospitals were founded.

The discovery of oil in abundant quantities radically altered the economy of Kuwait.\textsuperscript{31} This was apparent in the appearance of a super affluent urban society which replaced the old primitive one. This new urban setting provided uniquely attractive employment conditions for technical and managerial personnel from other countries. Since 1946, petroleum has been the dominant feature of Kuwait's economy, providing some 93\% of the government's revenue.\textsuperscript{32} Between 1946 and 1988, oil revenue grew from $500,000 to $6000,000,000. Eventually tiny Kuwait found itself sitting 'on top of the largest proved reserves of the cheapest oil in the world, about 70 billion barrels, compared with 40

\textsuperscript{31} Michael C. Hudson, (1977), Arab Politics, the Search for Legitimacy, Yale University Press, p.187.
\textsuperscript{32} A. Al-Marayati, op. cit., p.282.
billion in the United States'.\textsuperscript{33} Today, Kuwait is classified as the fourth largest oil-producing country in the world. The oil bonanza, apart from consolidating the political power of the state - and that of its ruling family - has also given the state considerable economic power, thus undermining the former predominance of the business oligarchy.\textsuperscript{34} The enormous oil revenue has made it possible for the country to acquire technological innovations and to use them productively. Although the oil industry will probably remain the foundation of Kuwait's economic activity for at least another century, the country is now adopting some measures to diversify its economy.\textsuperscript{35} For example revenues are now being pumped into other industrial development and into agriculture. Two long-range developmental plans, those of 1966-71 and 1972-82, were launched in an attempt to create new industries. A large petrochemical complex and several smaller processing plants have already commenced production. But despite this, the country's chances for extensive industrialization are small, owing to the scarcity of natural resources (except oil and natural gas) and to the shortages of skilled labour. This explains the fact that while 15 per cent of the labour force is engaged in the non-oil industry, these workers account only for 3 per cent of gross national product.

Far more important during this stage, are commercial activities connected with expediting the thriving import trade, contracts for private and publicly financed construction projects, and the provision of an array of services.\textsuperscript{36} The state has stimulated private enterprise by participating in the establishment and financing of new business. The country's extraordinary real estate boom was mainly attributed to the government's policy of purchasing privately owned land at highly inflated prices and selling off valuable city real estate at less than prevailing market prices.\textsuperscript{37} It is believed that some 20,000 families have shared some 2.5 billion dollars in the land bonanza, which was managed in such a way that large amounts of the state's oil royalties could eventually reach and benefit most of its citizens. But this did not necessarily mean the even distribution of wealth. The old

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{34} M.C. Hudson, \textit{op. cit.}  
\textsuperscript{35} J.M. Landau, \textit{op. cit.}  
\textsuperscript{36} A. Al-Marayati, \textit{op. cit.}, p.283.  
\textsuperscript{37} Fekhri Shehab, \textit{Modernization of the Arab World: Kuwait; A Super Affluent Society} p.135.
Oligarchical business families emerged as the major beneficiaries of this diffused wealth. Eighteen of the great Kuwaiti families now monopolize 90 per cent of Kuwait’s foreign investment activity. Thus the old oligarchy is now much richer than ever before. The oil revenue completely revolutionized Kuwait’s economy, as per capita income rose from $50 in 1946 to $18,000 in 1983, classified that year as the world's fourth highest. Kuwaiti society was dominated by the ruling al-Sabah family and a few important merchant families. A tribalist ideology established and supported a status hierarchy among Kuwaiti clans. It became a British protectorate in 1899 and gained full independence in 1961. Kuwaiti social and political life remained remarkably stable in the face of repeated external intervention from European and regional powers, and pressures from an economy experiencing decades-long stagnation. As oil income flowed into the state, and particularly after the accession of 'Abdallah al-Salim al-Sabah as amir of Kuwait in 1950, resources were channeled to modernize the local economy and improve the living standards of the population.

Investment laws, requiring majority Kuwaiti ownership of local businesses, awarded wealthy and well-connected Kuwaiti partners direct benefits from foreign investment, while the establishment of the first Kuwaiti-owned bank in 1952 consolidated the economic dominance of five of the most powerful merchant clans.

The oil wealth made it possible for Kuwait to develop a welfare system unprecedented in the Middle East and hardly equalled elsewhere in the world. Today Kuwait has an education system and a health service which are totally free. Education and

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42 Crystal, 'Oil and Politics in the Gulf', Ibid., pp. 89-93.
democratization processes are interrelated and interlinked. As in most countries, educational technology, especially in the teacher-training field, is at a particularly low level. One sometimes wonders if a considerable investment in programmed learning materials and translations of scrambled textbooks might not be a better way of dealing with teacher shortage. Realizing that the issues and problems of Arab education are interconnected and that it is possible to formulate common solutions to them, the Arab leaders in their Khartoum Summit, (18th session, March 2006) issued Resolution 354 in which they charged the Secretary General and Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) to prepare a plan for the development of education in the Arab countries. The ability of societies to fulfill the development tasks they aspire to achieve is connected with a set of policies and programs they set and implement, with the outcome of their awareness of their history and civilizational heritage, the lessons learned from their experiences, their realization of the present and its challenges, their reckoning with the future and its requirements, their conviction that human capital is the basic foundation in the fulfillment of development tasks, and that education is the corner stone in the preparation, training and mobilization of the abilities of human capital, in order to meet national and regional needs.

With the Kuwaiti government’s intention to have all services delivered electronically (e-government), companies need training, particularly in information technology (IT) skills, and undoubtedly e-learning has a role to play. An increasing number of companies are responding to the challenge of e-learning and are moving to adopt it, yet are finding significant barriers to adoption hampering their efforts. Although in Western societies the e-learning experience is relatively older, in Kuwait, there is a very limited number of studies on the implementation of e-learning and nearly no research conducted on the barriers encountered by companies using this new training method. It is worth noting

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that in the Arab world only 1.2 per cent of the population has access to computers and only half of that number use the Internet.⁴⁵

The closeness of education to development is so intimate that it has become impossible to map development without keeping a very big space for its educational component. If development is a process of continuous growth of societal aim and goals towards civility and human fulfillment, then similarly education is also a process of continuous change and enrichment of its goals and methods in order to make such development possible. For that symbiotic relationship between development and education to be meaningful, both have to be societal related, to be a response to pivotal historic call, and, therefore, be fairly specific and particular. We are then speaking of democratization, liberalization and education of Kuwaiti society and people, at this tragic stage of historical march.

The Arabic language does not allow for any of the distinctions between education, schooling, teaching, training, instruction and upbringing that have been made much of by western philosophers of education working in the analytical tradition, for the words for 'education' in Arabic carry all of these meanings. Independence of thought and personal autonomy do not enter into the Muslim thinking about education, which is more concerned with the progressive initiation of pupils into the received truths of the faith. Seyyed Hossein Nasr points out that in Arabic 'to know' ultimately means 'to be transformed by the very process of knowing'.⁴⁶ Ibn Khaldun pours scorn on the man 'who knows about tailoring but does not know tailoring'⁴⁷ and al-Ghazali says, Be sure that knowledge alone is no support.... If a man reads a hundred thousand scientific subjects and learns them but does not act upon them, his knowledge is of no use to him, for its benefit lies only in being used.⁴⁸

Education may thus be a vehicle for preserving, extending and transmitting a community's or society's cultural heritage and traditional values, but can also be a tool for social change and innovation. The Arab countries' interest in reforming education is reflected in the last three Arab summits which made sure to highlight the subject and placed it at the top of their agendas (the Tunis Summit 2004, Comprehensive reform). In the Algiers Summit, (2005) Arab leaders unanimously agreed to provide compulsory quality education. The Khartoum Summit (2006) called for a radical qualitative change in education and education policies, and called upon the Secretary General of the League of Arab States to submit a comprehensive report on education to the next summit. The Plan which was prepared by the General Secretariat and ALECSO and presented to the Riyadh Summit (March 2007) contained a detailed presentation of the current state of education in the Arab countries and proposals for its development.

Education is a collective responsibility that involves government, the family, civil society and the private sector, and is closely connected with development policies. Civil society is political science shorthand for private voluntary groups, including nongovernmental organizations dedicated to issues such as human rights and good governance. Within both the scholarly and policy communities, civil society is often seen these days as a leading force for democratization. As such groups proliferate, the argument runs, individuals become more assertive in demanding their political rights. Once these demands reach a certain pitch, authoritarian leaders are forced to make meaningful changes or risk being swept away. The policy implications of this theory are neat and tidy: to encourage liberalization in repressive states, simply encourage the growth of civil society. It is not the responsibility of educators alone; responsibilities for it go beyond the national frontiers, and involve the relevant specialized regional and international organizations.

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49 A Plan for the Development of Education in the Arab Countries: General and Higher Education and Scientific Research, Tunis 2008, prepared by League of Arab States and Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization.

concerned. Education is also an ongoing lifelong social process, with the school as one of its forms.

TABLE I: ARAB HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX, 2009\textsuperscript{51}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>HDI Rank</th>
<th>Adult Literacy rate (% aged 15 and older) 1995-2005</th>
<th>Combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary education (%) 2005</th>
<th>GDP per capita (PPP US$) 2005</th>
<th>Education Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>26,321</td>
<td>0.871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>25,514</td>
<td>0.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>21,482</td>
<td>0.864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>15,602</td>
<td>0.843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>15,711</td>
<td>0.844</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education is human development; it provides the learner with the self-learning, communication, mastery, innovation, creativeness, participation and interaction abilities.

Education is not subservient to the labor market only; it also generates the latter's domains. Education, in the Arab world, needs comprehensive change of its system, in order to lay the foundations of a modern education based on: Assimilation and appropriation of the foundations of the Arab Islamic civilization, in its authenticity development and mission, its communication with and enrichment of other cultures and civilizations, and its keeping up with the requirements of the age and service to mankind.

Despite the achievements made by the Arab countries and mentioned in national and international studies, reports and statistics on the state of education in the Arab countries, and despite the progress and development achieved, the qualitative and quantitative development compared with aspirations and with existing and expected needs are still insufficient to bring about a qualitative change in education. Bringing about radical changes in education in the Arab countries requires that the philosophy of education be

changed, so that (a) building the student's personality becomes an essential axis in the educational process (formation of the cognitive human capital), (b) the student can interact with educational activities according to his/her inclinations, dispositions and capabilities; (c) he can develop his/her spirit of citizenship and belonging, and (d) be educated in human rights, tolerance, coexistence and dialogue, and acceptance of difference and diversity as a right to himself and to others. On the developmental level, the Arab top priority is to develop the performance, and improve the quality of the Arab educational system in order to make it capable of assisting in the achievement of social progress and of contributing to making the Arab economies possess the goods and services they exchanges between themselves, and able to compete at the regional and international levels (See Table I).

Education is generally considered one of the most important influences in moving individuals in developing countries from traditionalism toward modernity. In fact, Inkeles indicates that the amount of formal schooling a man has had emerges as the single most powerful variable in determining his modernity score. This modernity test is not a test of what is learned in school but, rather, "a test of attitudes and values touching on basic aspects of a man's orientation to nature, to time, to fate, to politics, to women and to God." Education provides individuals with the necessary skills which enable them to influence actively the economic and the political structure of a society. The level and extent of men's and women's education in any society determines-to a great extent-the degree of participation in the country's economy. In developing, nonagricultural countries, education is a most significant variable in providing women with access to a wider variety of role repertoires and the opportunity for active participation in the economy of the country. In her study of women in the work force of Islamic countries, Youssef indicated that one of the factors which accounts for low female participation in the non-agricultural labor force is low educational level.

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The spread of education to the children of subordinate groups, a necessary first step to "Kuwaitize" the workforce, promised to challenge the dominance of the merchant families, just as merchant activism challenged the dominance of the ruling family. Those desiring to maintain the legitimacy of their own right to rule the state, the economy, and their families had to face a crucial problem. To reconcile the inconsistencies arising from simultaneously clinging to a tribalist ideology, while presiding over the modernization of a physical and human infrastructure pervaded by cultural diversity and political assumptions increasingly at variance with Kuwaiti tradition, was very difficult indeed. In *Islam and Democracy*, Fatima Mernissi identifies boundary maintenance as having been a primary concern of Islamic and Mediterranean societies for centuries. Mernissi argues throughout her book that modernization poses continual challenges to the psychological, moral, economic, and political boundaries that maintain a particular style of religious and political leadership in the Arab-Islamic world. The relevance of her observations to Kuwait is supported by analysts of the societies of the Gulf region such as Khaldoun Hasan al-Naqeeb. Naqeeb notes that the primary strategy used by the Kuwaiti regime to maintain control of the state is playing social groups one against another as part of a cultural complex he calls "tribalism." In Kuwait, the process of modernization is also a process of boundary transgression.

The education system is one of the main institutions for the production of knowledge; it usually controls the supply of skills and responds to changes in demand made by labor markets. It has, therefore, acquired a more important role in the orientation towards the knowledge economies and in the new reality being imposed by globalization. Consequently, the educational system has begun to revise its structures, objectives, ends and processes, in order to be able to adapt and so meet the human resources demands made by that change. As a result, one can see today that lifelong education programs and other types of educational packages are gaining new momentum whether in terms of density (interest in night/on the job classes in higher and vocational education), or in

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terms of provision of education using new technologies (distance education). Furthermore, there are many structural responses to the increasing demand on teaching and learning as can be seen in the increasing number of regional colleges and university extensions, the rapid expansion of graduate studies programs, the palpable phenomenon of excellence centers of quality education that responds to the new reality of the knowledge economy. On the other hand, cross-specializations educational programs have began to appear in which the student (particularly the university student) belongs to more than one faculty or studies program, in accordance with agreed upon systems to collect and evaluate credit points and courses, and to transfer them from one educational institution to another.

Despite the increasing number of graduates, the quality level and adequacy of these graduates to the needs of development for high technical labour remain insufficient. In addition, the large majority of these graduates come from the faculties of letters and humanities, and there is not much demand for them in the labour market. This situation has led to a currently large increase in the number of unemployed graduates in most of the Arab countries, which represents a great challenge to higher education. This problem will likely be aggravated during the first quarter of the third millennium following the consolidation of globalisation, the liberalization of trade and the relative liberalization of labour mobility between countries through multinational companies. Arab authoritarianism could no longer be viewed as a source of stability; instead, it was the primary threat to it. To "drain the swamp" that had incubated Islamist radicals such as Osama bin Laden, it became critical to promote political liberalization, even democratization, in the Arab world, and this goal became a central feature of U.S. national security policy.\(^{57}\) As unemployment rates increased and job opportunities became more scarce, the government has been targeting the private sector as a partner for the build-up of the nation. Thus, the private sector has become more active in the economy of Kuwait in the last two decades, with examples of success in the petrochemical industry, banking, investment and insurances services, construction as well as communication. Private schooling is available in Kuwait but the Government subsidy

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on it has been removed. Most of the challenges facing the private sector are similar to those found in other Arab countries with regard to capturing market share and increasing profitability.

The skilled resident foreigner in Kuwait has helped very much in enabling society to mobilize for rapid political modernization. The typical resident alien is associated with the salaried middle class which has played such a dominant role in enhancing the modernization process throughout the Middle East. J.M. Landau describes him as 'the cultural mediator whose role in social change is indispensable and unavoidable'.

In order to analyse these tendencies which result from the influx of foreign skills into the country, it is necessary to examine the defensive measures undertaken by the government on behalf of its citizens. The most important of these was the Naturalization Decree of December 1959, which restricted Kuwaiti citizenship to those residents, and their heirs, who had lived in the state continuously since 1920. The decree was subjected to amendment in 1960 to permit the naturalization of 50 aliens each year, after ten years residence if they were Arab nationals, and after fifteen years if they were non-Arab. The impact of the naturalization act was reinforced by the electoral law of 1962, which denied the non-native-born citizens who had been naturalized since 1952 the right of participating in national elections. The right to vote was restricted to only Kuwaiti citizens. Kuwaiti defensiveness was also exemplified in the regulations that reserve all senior civil service posts, civil service tenure, and exemptions from civil service examinations to citizens. The purchase and exchange of land as well as commercial dealings are officially restricted to Kuwaiti citizens alone.

61 J.M. Landau, op. cit.
62 Al-Marayati, op. cit., p. 287.
The above measures have been effective in achieving their aim. They have created a sharp distinction between the two classes of society: the citizens and the aliens. They have made it possible for the former to reap all the benefits of the oil boom, with the lion's share going to the relatively small highly affluent group within this class. On the other hand, they have antagonized the most efficient and indispensable element in the country: the resident foreigners. Their state of insecurity and hence their frustration is best projected by Landau: . . . Uprooted, often separated from his family, insecure and unsettled. He has now become envious and resentful. With little or no hope of being permanently integrated into the community, he is left without any sense of allegiance to Kuwait. Their lack of participation in political life of the country and their less privileged socio-economic status make them a potential threat to stability; and this fact, in turn, could obstruct political development. Whereas the resident aliens are by and large more acculturated to modern ways, the Kuwaiti nationals are more privileged in terms of political influence. This communal situation is analogous to that of Jordan or Nigeria, where the political elite originates in the more traditional sector . . . Within the framework of this fragmented political culture, the foreign majority are subject to the state but not psychologically members of the nation. As long as this identity crisis persists, legitimacy will be difficult to achieve. On the other hand, the presence of a middle-class foreign elite has been a major catalyst to achieving modernization and liberalization.

To stay competitive in today's business environment and face global competition, a continuous stream of new skills, tools and knowledge is needed in Kuwait's economy, particularly when it is recognized that shortages in a skilled workforce is one of the largest barriers to growth. Despite the high standards of living, Kuwait is falling behind other countries because of its relatively poor innovation and productivity capabilities. Thus, it is important that corporations continually work on updating and upgrading their employees' skills and provide continued training not only to their personnel but to their customers and suppliers as well.  

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64 H.A. El Ebraheam, op. cit., p.121.
65 J.M. Landau, op. cit.,
66 Ibid.
In 2003, the Kuwait government implemented the National Manpower Support Law aimed at increasing the number of citizens migrating to the private sector. According to joint statistics provided by the Public Authority for Civil Information and by the Restructuring Manpower Program and State Executive Body in 2005, the labour force in Kuwait reached 1.63 million at end of April 2005, with Kuwaitis representing 18.3 per cent of the total. In the private sector, there are approximately 1,261,490 employees, with Kuwaitis representing nearly 2.4 per cent of the total up to July 2005, with an increase of 132.7 per cent compared to figures for 2000 (Kuwait Ministry of Planning, 2005). Statistics of manpower published in the al Qabas newspaper in February 2005 revealed that 54,241 newly appointed employees have joined the workforce in different corporations during the past six years (Kuwait Ministry of Planning, 2005).67

GRAPH I: PRE-PRIMARY ENROLLMENT IN KUWAIT68

GRAPH II: PRIMARY ATTENDANCE AND ENROLLMENT IN KUWAIT

Within the Arab countries, the percentage of children accessing kindergartens varies greatly (1% in Yemen and 99% in Kuwait (for example). As Graph I and II on pre-pre-primary and primary attendance/enrollment in Kuwait from the year 1980 to 2006 clearly depicts. This is mainly due to the difference in wealth and in the ability to build and finance such institutions. The sex typing of fields of study is a worldwide phenomenon, yet it varies between countries. For example, 51.6% of engineering students are women in Kuwait, compared with 3.3% in Switzerland and Japan (UNESCO 1995).

A Plan for the Development of Education in the Arab Countries: General and Higher Education and Scientific Research, Tunis 2008, prepared by League of Arab States and Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, called upon the Arab countries not to bind themselves by any additional commitments regarding the liberalization of trade in education through the GATT and the International Trade

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Organization, and calling on the Arab governments to abide by the UNESCO accords they have ratified, and to be guided by the provisions of the Declaration of the International Conference on Higher Education, in addition to commissioning ALECSO to open an Arab dialogue on this matter in order to reach a collective negotiation attitude to increase benefits and reduce consequences and risks.

Oil-related wealth has produced marked improvements in the education of girls.\textsuperscript{70} In Kuwait, for example, elementary and secondary education (See Graph-III for secondary attendance and enrollment for both sexes) is universal for both sexes, and women attend college in larger numbers than do men.\textsuperscript{71}

**GRAPH-III: SECONDARY ATTENDANCE AND ENROLLMENT IN KUWAIT**


In Kuwait, where in 1981 a sweeping law made literacy compulsory for everyone aged 14 to 44, rewarded them with job incentives, made it illegal to hire or promote an illiterate and threatened to sue those who refuse to participate or fail to attend classes regularly, the illiteracy rate in 1985 was 25.5% down slightly from 32.5% in 1980. Nevertheless, it should be noted that new campaigns are continually being launched at both the national and Pan-Arabic levels. For survival to last grade, Graph IV clearly depicts the achievement of the government of Kuwait in bringing in inclusive policies of education which helps in the enabling processes of democratization.

GRAPH IV: SURVIVAL TO LAST GRADE IN KUWAIT

Mary Ann Tetreault examines modern Kuwaiti politics from the societal perspective. The result is an extensive exploration of opposition politics in Kuwait and a novel contribution to the study of the modern Gulf countries. "Public finances are one of the

best starting points for an investigation of society, especially though not exclusively of its political life. This classic statement by the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter comprises the starting point for much of the analysis of Kuwaiti politics by political scientists. Tribe, culture and religion all took a back seat to the more important effect oil revenues had on Kuwaiti political life. The decline of the historic opposition role of Kuwait's merchants and the rise of new social groups in the 1970s (Islamists, Shia, bedouin) could all be explained by examining the tremendous capacity oil monies imparted to the Kuwaiti state. Consequently, a great deal of social science research focused on the structure of the Kuwaiti state and how it was integrated into the world oil market. When Kuwaiti was considered, it was as a reflection of the oil-rich state -- what Hazem Beblawi termed "the rentier society." The intent was to make sense of the observation that despite becoming one of the world's richest countries, Kuwait nevertheless failed to modernize in the classic sense; no middle class, no democracy. Tetreault's work departs from this dependent societal view to stress instead "the agency of individuals" and the opposition's ability to push the democratization envelope. Tetreault lays out a sophisticated framework for tracing how battles over power and authority in Kuwait reflect interpretations of the meaning of democracy and its progress. At the core of this framework is the idea of "political space." This is the conceptual arena in which individuals and groups in society make and remake themselves to expand their own freedom of action and capacities. That this democratization and liberalization process should revolve around Kuwait's furtive experiments with elected representation and opposition efforts at expansion is natural.

Though one success of structural theories was to account for the lack of classic modernization in Kuwait, part of Tetreault's analysis is to show how modernity has nevertheless penetrated. Opposition and loyalty to the regime are intertwined, not stagnant. For anyone who has conducted research in Kuwait, the paradoxes are well known. One the one hand, research access and informed individuals for interview are among the best in the region. On the other hand, each discussion only seems to add to the

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complexity of domestic political struggles. The author is honest about the fact that the stories presented (interpretations and perspectives on 1990s Kuwaiti politics) do not represent all of even such a small country as Kuwait. Tetreault highlights "the ability of citizens to carve out spheres of autonomy is extensive." Even the strategy of "desertification" (a regime effort to supplant the liberal opposition with more loyal bedouin and tribal elements in the 1980s) is deemed to have failed. However, despite these apparent advances, Tetreault admits that the government successfully bypassed many opposition efforts and really only delivered on the promise to hold elections after liberation. But are the machinations and powers of the elected parliament of the 1990s really different from their predecessors in the 1960s and early 1970s? Certainly, a key indicator is the composition of the prime minister's Cabinet clearly shows that the opposition has made little headway there. So, did opposition agency fail, or did the regime's divide-and-rule tactics overwhelm the opposition? The focus on agency does bracket any useful discussion of structural change that may provide firmer conclusions. Such change can reveal many of the interests upon which most agency is presumably exercised. Consider one hint, the problematic role of the Kuwaiti business elite. The original liberal opposition leaders of the first parliamentary movement in the region and possessors of significant agency capabilities, business elites, according to Tetreault, were the primary victims of the desertification strategy. Though figures like Abdul Aziz al-Saqr were prominent in opposition efforts to force post-liberation elections, Tetreault argues that "merchant interests work against the coherence of the opposition." Why this change? Oddly, there is little discussion of actual merchant agency, rather it is their growing internal divisions that are to blame for their lack of opposition. However, if we consider the role of structural change and realize that agency need not always entail action against the government, a different picture comes into focus. The position in which Kuwaiti Islamists find themselves; expanding civil society through political opposition yet limiting those gains "by acquiescing to the rulers." Tetreault regards a more pluralistic view of Kuwaiti politics and struggles for greater democratization. Tetreault

74 Ibid., p. 184.
75 Ibid., p. 227.
76 Ibid., p. 130.
77 Ibid., p. 227.
builds intra-comparative conclusions for why Kuwait stands apart from other Arab countries and why, ultimately, the chances for an Arab democracy remain best in this small corner of the Gulf.

PROCESSES OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN KUWAIT: POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

There is no single path to democracy. While the general concepts come from the West, the machinery of implementation must be developed to reflect the tradition, history, and general social environment of each country. No one theory of democracy suits every situation in every country. The English constitution suits England, while Kuwaiti history defines the opportunities and limitations of democracy in Kuwait. Kuwaitis find the expansion of democracy to be a painful, difficult, and slow process. This is so not because those who govern refuse to allow democracy but because a changing of attitudes takes time, plenty of time. Kuwait is one of the very few states in the Middle East with a written constitution, separation of powers, rights of free speech, fair elections, and a parliament with a genuinely popular mandate. Its government is probably the only one in the Middle East not holding political prisoners. If democracy is an active peaceful engagement of debate through channels safeguarded by a constitution accepted and adhered to by all, then Kuwait is a democratic society with a democratic government. That said, it is not a full-fledged democracy, nor, frankly, should it become one. Kuwait is an Arab and Islamic society, not a fully modernized Western society; no apology is needed for that. Though the idea of Western-style democracy is supported by a good number of people and groups in Kuwait, important factors limit the growth of full-fledged Western democracy in Kuwait.

Until the 1950s, Kuwait was a traditional Persian Gulf society with a small population and very limited resources. While the country's oil potential was recognized toward the end of World War II, the influx of oil money did not come until the time of independence from Great Britain in 1961. However small Kuwait's population (around 1.2 million today), the country contains a complex fabric of religious, tribal, family, and ideological interest groups. Democracy emerged in Kuwait not so much because of merchant family
involvement in politics (a widely held view), but due to such factors as the country's geographical location, the enlightenment of its rulers, its oil wealth, and its accepting the ideas of Arab naturalism.

Kuwait's formal experience with democracy began with two primitive assemblies, one convened in 1920, and the other in 1938. Neither of these early experiences with representative government lasted very long but they established a model, and they have in turn become a part of Kuwait's democratic tradition. In particular, they influenced the 1962 constitution, one of the most democratic in spirit to be found in the Middle East. This constitution combines popular and royal authority; it provides for a freely elected National Assembly with broad legislative powers, while giving the emir some legislative authority too. The National Assembly's real authority means that Kuwait is not an absolute monarchy, while the emir's many powers make him more than a constitutional monarch. The 1962 constitution remains in force today, an indication of its suitability to Kuwait. The country's first constitution (1962) accorded the Emir broad executive powers, as well as legislative power, which he shares with a popularly elected National Assembly (parliament).

In addition to the National Assembly, the constitution provides other freedoms and rights essential to a democracy, including freedom of practicing religion and freedom of the press. Kuwait today has one of the most free presses in the Arab world; political issues are discussed openly and frankly, and wide-ranging debates are conducted in the press by advocates of varying political positions. Kuwait has five daily newspapers published in Arabic and two in English, in addition to several weekly or monthly publications covering political events. While liberal in spirit, the constitution has also legitimated laws limiting political activity and given the executive branch very broad powers, so much so that tension between the government and National Assembly dominates the political culture of Kuwait. The Sabah family points out that it has modernized and liberalized the political system far beyond what any other traditional ruling family in the Gulf Cooperation Council has done, giving the people a wide space to govern themselves while itself participating much more in politics. But the family also feels entitled to extensive powers and privileges. This has led a portion of the opposition, ever-shifting in
its composition, to try to undermine the legitimacy of the Al Sabah (the ruling family). They approach politics with a zero-sum mentality: anything that enhances the family's position is bad. This has caused many political crises in Kuwait; with luck, the opposition will outgrow this attitude and cooperate where possible, for in the end Kuwaiti democracy can survive only if the executive and legislative branches work together.

Indeed, the Emir's suspensions of the National Assembly in 1976 and 1986 responded mainly to outside events. However unfortunate the two suspensions, they do not appear to have had a long-term impact. Rather, the method of curing the ills of democracy with more democracy is working. Through three decades, Kuwait has been an oasis of liberalism in a desert of dictatorship and autocracy.

The Kuwaiti Parliament acts as a partial check on the powers of the ruler but its influence is undermined by a series of restrictions imposed by the executive on political and civil liberties. The broad powers wielded by the Emir enabled him to suspend parliament from 1976 to 1981; then again from 1986 up until 1992, when it was restored after the invading Iraqis were driven out in 1991.

To restore democracy after the Iraqi invasion, in an effort to leave behind the old winner-take-all outlook and become more pluralistic, individuals with opposing political viewpoints have begun taking steps to demonstrate that their differences do not stand in the way of their shared commitment to democracy. Despite disagreements in outlook and ideology, an alliance of seven opposition groups, hoping to learn from past mistakes, agreed in 1992 on a common pre-election program to protect the integrity of the campaign and thus assure a democratic process. Opposition in this campaign meant being against some of the government's current policies, not the structure of the government itself. In fact, the 1992 elections showed a new spirit of comity in Kuwaiti politics; Islamic groups and liberal groups acted far more maturely than in the past.

The 1992 election results showed strong support for three Islamic groups, two Sunni and one Shi’ā, which together won twenty-two out of fifty seats. Tribal representatives, both
pro-government and in the Islamic opposition, did well, and a good number of independents in the moderate opposition won seats. Liberals and non-tribal pro-government candidates, however, did poorly. Although the assembly has a majority of opposition members, they are very much divided in their goals. To represent these many viewpoints, the prime minister selected six elected members, including liberals, fundamentalists, Shi‘a, and tribal leaders, to serve in the cabinet.

The Kuwaiti public has a number of political priorities in mind: balance the budget, reform and restructure the economy, modernize education, expand the law on citizenship and freedom of the press, cut back on government bureaucracy, implement privatization, and (above all) assure the country's external security. These problems, and especially the issue of balancing the budget and restructuring the economy, demand some action on the part of the government and the assembly. Yet these and a score of other issues are still pending. For this, the public blames both the government and the National Assembly. Instead of tackling Kuwait's real problems, the parliamentarians have devoted a great deal of energy to the issue of women wearing the veil and to changing an article of the constitution to make the Shari‘a (the sacred law of Islam) not just a principal source of legislation but the only source of legislation. A good number of people feel that these are marginal issues and that the groups promoting these issues are seeking ideological gains at the expense of Kuwait's welfare. Democratization will not benefit the majority unless the opposition parties and opinion leaders abandon their old style of radical confrontation with the government and adopt a policy of coexistence.

Since 1991, Kuwait remains the only Gulf country with a legislature that serves as a strong check on executive power. It is also the only Arab parliament that forced cabinet ministers to resign, and succeeded in passing legislation over strong objections from the Royal Family and the reigning ruler, such as the law that required segregation of universities by gender. The Assembly is strong enough to force executive concessions by withholding approval of bills, which are submitted by the government until it yields on other key issues. The drawback of this legislative strength is that it frequently creates a deadlock between the government and the legislature that slows the pace of economic and other reforms. A striking example of this is that in 2004 Parliament, led by the
Islamists and conservative tribal members, defeated for the third time the government sponsored bill that would have given women, along with the Bedouin the right to vote and run in parliamentary and municipal elections. However, in May 2005 the National Assembly finally granted women the right to vote and run for office, and later the government appointed several women to serve on the municipal council. Islamist MPs amended the law granting women the vote to mandate that women behave according to Shari'a law while participating in politics.

Political parties are banned; however, several political blocks—with well known affiliations—exist and are active in the National Assembly. But even if parties in the West Asia do not manifest the same features as parties in the West, and even if most of them operate under political and military stresses, they still warrant study as examples of political behaviour, either by the regimes or by the public.78 The Kuwaiti government does permit civic groups to be politically active, but in January 2005 when a group of Salafi Islamists attempted to establish an opposition party (Hizb al-Umma), they were charged with planning to overthrow the regime as well as violating laws of association and the press. They were later interrogated, released on bail, and their case was never tried. The last national elections took place on 26/7/2003 and were free and fair. Some 246 candidates competed for the 50 parliamentary seats, and voter turnout was 81%. The results showed a solid representation of the traditional tribal groups. The Islamists maintained their same representation of 15 seats while the liberal block suffered a considerable defeat when most of its leaders lost their seats. This vibrant contestation for the legislature is all the more remarkable considering that political parties are banned. Universal suffrage does not exist since women continue to be denied the vote in national elections (but permitted in municipal ones).

On January 15, 2006, Sheikh Jabir al-Ahmad al-Jabir died and was succeeded by the infirm crown prince, Sheikh Saad al-Abdallah al-Salim. After internal negotiations, Sheikh Saad was in turn succeeded by Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Jabir.

The Kuwaiti parliament is largely seen as responsible for forcing this second succession, an unusual display of power by a legislative body in a Gulf monarchy. The new cabinet contains one woman, who had been appointed in 2005.

Due to widespread vote rigging, a movement began in May 2006 to consolidate Kuwait’s 25 electoral districts into 5 larger constituencies, in order to make vote buying and election fraud more difficult, but more importantly, to make elections more nationally oriented and less based on sectarian or tribal considerations. Additionally, larger constituencies would make the districts more broadly representative and less influenced by tribal or sectarian factors. Early elections were held under the old system, but women were able to participate for the first time, though none of the 28 female candidates that ran were elected, although women comprise 57% of Kuwait’s 345,000 eligible voters. Voter turnout was 65%, though only 35% among female voters. Opposition candidates, part of an uneasy coalition of Islamists, liberals and populists, won 33 out of 50 seats.

The Judiciary system is not entirely independent, as the judges are appointed by the Emir for limited terms and renewal of their tenure is subject to governmental approval. However, frequently the courts rule against the government, as happened, for example, when the Court of Appeal overturned in December 2004 a primary Court prison sentence against a religious leader accused of insulting the Emir. Trials are open and relatively fair, and defendants can appeal verdicts and are entitled to legal counsel. Arbitrary arrests and detention are rare; and suspects can only be detained for 4 days in police custody before being brought before an investigating official. Prisons, according to U.S. State Department reports “meet or exceed international standards.” Misdemeanors and felonies are tried in secular courts, while Islamic courts deal with personal status cases and family issues, with Sunni and Shi‘a Muslims having separate Shari‘a courts.

FUNCTIONING OF KUWAITI PARLIAMENT
Kuwait has twenty-five election districts, each of which elects two members. Thus, the National Assembly has fifty elected members. In addition, it has between eleven and sixteen other members, that is, cabinet ministers who serve ex-officio in the National Assembly. The constitution does not allude to the creation of political parties, neither approving of nor prohibiting them. In theory, the government does not allow them to exist, though political "groups" (tajammu‘at) with overt political views do exist and
fulfill the role of parties elsewhere. They cannot, however, form a government; that is the right of the prime minister, who is appointed by the Emir.

Kuwait's first parliamentary election took place in 1963, and its most recent occurred in October 1992. All of the seven general elections have been ruled free and fair, with the possible exception of one election in 1967. Not only does the emir not determine election results in advance, but government-endorsed candidates very frequently lose. Kuwait's National Assembly thus is considered to represent the will of the Kuwaiti people—in contrast to so many Parliaments in the Arab world.

The Emir traditionally chooses the Crown Prince as prime minister, making the prime minister always a leading member of the ruling Sabah family (today, he is Shaikh Sa'd, a cousin of Emir Jabir al-Ahmad as-Sabah). Members of the ruling family do not run for office, so the prime minister is never an elected member of the assembly. The prime minister has so far always made up his cabinet mostly from the ruling family and other figures not in the National Assembly, though the constitution requires that at least one member of the cabinet be an elected member of the assembly. In years past, the cabinet in fact contained only one or two elected members of the assembly; today it includes five of them. The emir can dissolve the assembly, which he did for two long periods, 1976-80 and 1986-92.

Kuwait's constitution makes all cabinet officers also members of the assembly with full voting rights; today, then, the Assembly has sixty-one members, fifty elected and eleven appointed. Appointed members bias voting somewhat in the government's favor, but it is by no means rare for the assembly to vote against the government. More commonly, the government designs its legislative bills to accommodate the members' wishes so they will pass. The constitution also permits the assembly to cast a vote of no confidence in a minister; initiate a policy of no-cooperation with the prime minister; question ministers and investigate government conduct; establish investigative committees; and discuss any issue that it finds appropriate.

By authority of a law passed after liberation, the assembly's Accounting Office provides independent supervision of expenditures of public funds. Today, committees are actively investigating various financial scandals, especially difficulties experienced by the
Kuwaiti office in charge of investments abroad. In all, Kuwaitis know far more about their government’s expenditures than the citizens of most other countries in the region. The expenditure on education has gone up above 4.5 per cent which was below 3 per cent in 1980 (for clear picture see Graph V). The political impact of this lavish welfare system, combined with the state’s policy of guaranteeing employment for all citizens, has been to blunt the potential appeal of revolutionary ideologies, at least among the native-born. The dazzling speed with which Kuwait underwent change from a community of tradesmen and pearl divers to a booming oil centre posed major socio-cultural problems which accompanied the spectacular economic change. While Kuwait has risen to political prominence, it faces a major challenge which, in the view of some, is seriously detrimental to its long-term development, namely, the absence of a well-trained cadre of skilled workers. This problem has been dealt with by importing skilled labour from abroad, with preference being given to Arab nationals.

**GRAPH V: EDUCATION EXPENDITURE IN KUWAIT**

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79 Ibid.
DEMOCRATIZATION, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The concept of democratization and liberalization has dominated political literature and has stimulated vivid discussion among contemporary scholars. Preoccupation with questions of modernization, however, is not new. It began in Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century after the consequences of industrialization had become apparent. So altered was the character of Western society that it became a model (or at least a standard) for comparison with societies elsewhere. Today's emphasis is mainly on the democratization of nations and thus on development of their own forms of national polity, the main object of which is to increase the social product and to provide an increasingly fair share of that product for all citizens. From this viewpoint, the political systems that have attracted the most attention have been the traditional monarchies. The experience of these traditional monarchies highlights many of the dilemmas of political modernization and the processes of democratization which in less dramatic form confront other types of states as well. Most of these monarchies exist today in countries which are beginning to undergo rapid liberalization and cultural change. Democracy in Kuwait is seen by its participants, both government and to some extent the political groupings, as limited to the electoral process.\(^1\)

The Constitution provides for freedom of association and assembly. But these freedoms in practice are limited. All NGOs must obtain a license and register in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MOSAL), which maintains a close control on all organizations and is empowered to dissolve any association if it deems its activity inappropriate or if it has misused its financial resources. Public gatherings require prior governmental approval, but in practice, however, associations organize informally, and informal social gatherings, called diwainyas, provide a forum for political debate and discussion. There are 52 licensed NGOs, but since 1985 MOSAL has granted only a very limited number of new licenses. Registration requests of about 95 NGO are pending. However, hundreds of unlicensed associations operate without hindrance. Licensed NGOs receive government funding that cover operating expenses. In October 2004 the government licensed the first human rights association. In addition, it

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created a committee composed of intellectuals, professionals, and religious leaders, to devise strategies to combat extremist Islamic ideologies. Sachedina distinguishes between exclusive versus inclusive interpretations of Islam. He writes that the 'fundamental problem, as reflected in the classical formulation of Muslim political identity, is religious authoritarianism founded on an exclusive salvific claim, which runs contrary to the global spirit of democratization emerging through the acknowledgment of religious pluralism.'

Though demonstrations are discouraged, there were a few peaceful public demonstrations, which the government allowed without interference. In 2005, women’s organizations and their supporters held numerous demonstrations in front of parliament demanding the right to vote. The “Orange Movement” protests, which occurred in May 2006 in favor of redistricting, were largely peaceful with only one injury reported. Trade unions and professional syndicates are permitted provided only one exists per industry or profession. Private sector workers have a limited right to strike, but foreign domestic laborers, who comprise one-third of the non citizen workforce, may not associate or organize. Since government subsidizes 90% of the expenses of labor unions the latter are deeply influenced by the state.

On May 1, Kuwait's Constitutional Court revoked as unconstitutional 15 clauses of the Public Gatherings Law No. 65 of 1979, which restricted public gatherings without prior permission from the authorities. Observers believe this ruling sets a precedent in Kuwait by challenging the emergency powers of the Emir; historically the Constitutional Court has shied away from ruling on the constitutionality of laws issued in the absence of parliament.

The broadcast media is government owned, but the press is privately owned and is permitted a wide margin of freedom of expression. Several laws allow the government to indict journalists on a variety of offenses. The law permits the government to shut down any publication and arrest its writers on such vague charges as “distortion of public moral

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principles,” “denial of God and his prophets,” “harming the national interest” or “seeking the fragmentation of society.” But this law has rarely been applied and none were ever convicted under its terms. On May 15, journalist, Hamid Buyabis was imprisoned for criticizing the Emir, and on November 20, Khalid Obaysan al-Mutairi was imprisoned for writing an article that seemed to support Saddam Hussein as the legitimate leader of Iraq. Both journalists were released after only a day in jail. The press regularly criticizes the government and its domestic and foreign policies. But direct criticism of the Emir is avoided through self-censorship. The government has proposed a legislation that would set a limit to the number of newspapers that are licensed each year, but strong protest from journalists has so far held up passage of the bill.

The Kuwaiti parliament approved a new press law on March 6, which replaces the 1961 press and publications law. The new law prohibits the arrest and detention of journalists until a final court verdict is delivered by the Supreme Court. It allows citizens whose applications for newspaper licenses are rejected to sue the government in court (the 1961 law gave applicants the right to appeal only to the government itself). While the new law prohibits the closure of publications without a final court verdict, publications may be suspended for up to two weeks for investigation. It also bans jailing journalists for all but religious offenses, criticisms of the Emir, and calls to overthrow the government, stipulating up to one year in jail for these offenses and fines ranging between US$17,000 and US$70,000. The Ministry of the Interior (MOI) censors all books, films, periodicals, videotapes, and other imported publications deemed morally offensive as well as the media for political content. The MOI controlled the publication and distribution of all informational materials and did not grant licenses to political magazines. Internet service and foreign satellite TV access is unhindered.

Islam in Kuwait is the State religion. Sunni and Shia Muslims worship freely, as do the 150,000 Christians. Members of religions not sanctioned in the Qu’ran such as Sikhs, Hindus, Baha’is and Buddhists may practice their religion freely in private but are not allowed to build public places of worship. Despite the fact that 30% of the population is Shi’a, the government licenses few Shi’a mosques; as a consequence the Shi’a have only
36 mosques compared to 1300 Sunni mosques. The teaching of non-Muslim faiths is not permitted in schools or public places, and is limited only to the confines of certain officially recognized churches and private homes. Quotas exist on the amount of staff that churches are allowed to bring from abroad, and it is now near impossible to build new churches to serve the ever-growing community of expatriate Christians in the country who number over 300,000. The Greek Catholic (Melkite) Church went through a protracted struggle with the municipal Council to secure a piece of land on which to build a new church. The request was eventually denied on July 8, 2006. The issue caused a number of prominent parliamentarians and religious figures to vociferously condemn the idea of building more churches in the country. Proselytizing to Muslims is banned.

DEMOCRATIZATION, WOMEN AND THE MARGINALIZED

Researchers agree that Arab society has traditionally assigned and continues to assign a subordinate political, economic and social status to women. However, there is disagreement on the origins of this situation. Arab writers are divided over whether or not women's statuses are tied in with Islam or with misinterpretations of Islam. Additionally, Barakat (1993) points out that the subordination of women is probably associated more with the prevailing social order, its division of labor, ownership patterns, and production processes than with cultural and psychological tendencies. If influential, culture and psychology would have intervening or interaction effects. The various points of disagreement among scholars studying Islam and women's social place point out the need for systematic, empirical research specifying relationships which include the social structure, such as status variables, organizational and personal network ties, and historical experience. These variables are used routinely as controls in analyses of the impact of religion on attitudes about including or excluding various groups. Various reasons, both

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political and empirical, make systematic study of Islamic nations difficult. Some are not amenable to social scientific research, especially surveys, while others, such as Kuwait, are more receptive. Also, much existing research focuses on the ruling elite of Islamic nations or employs student populations. Large surveys of randomly sampled populations are less common. Thus, theoretical insights and hypotheses about links between Islam, women's rights and democracy are not broadly or comprehensively tested with Arab Muslim populations. In this section, we attend to structural complexities within Islam, the impact of Islamic beliefs and practices, and women's rights. Both Kuwaiti voters writing to their local newspapers and outsiders, such as the U.S. State Department in its human rights report on Kuwait, see this lack of complete enfranchisement for women as a 'significant problem.' In this section, the impact of Islamic beliefs and practices is examined alongside social status and social network variables, which are important in predicting religious outcomes and whose importance in predicting political attitudes is apparent in research on political participation.

State-sanctioned and -supported voluntary associations are among the primary venues of civil society in modern Kuwait. Voluntary associations also are important because they provide alternatives to the family as bases for mobilizing citizens according to their interests and affinities. Voluntary associations are vital components of Kuwaiti political and social life. They are theoretically and, to varying extents in practice, more or at least differently – democratic than diwaniyyas, meetings usually held in private homes,

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whose chief political advantage lies in the status of their venues as protected spaces relatively free from government intrusion. Women are subject to discrimination legally, politically and socially. They are disadvantaged in matters of divorce and inheritance, which are based on Shari'a and must have the permission of a close male relative to obtain a passport. Muslim women may not marry non-Muslim men. Also, if married to a non-Kuwaiti, they cannot confer citizenship to their children. However, the family foundation of diwaniyyas, along with the limits imposed by their physical location, diminish their democratic character and bias their actions toward those supporting the social status quo. Yet as Haya al-Mughni shows, women's voluntary organizations, though nominally in the public sphere, also display pro-status-quo attributes, particularly with regard to their suppression of the development of political skills and access by non-elite women. Women remain underrepresented in the public and private workplace, but their numbers are growing. Women's associations, which enjoy strong government support, are numerous and have considerable influence.

In accordance with the adopted UNDP methodology the annual rate of progress for the gender equality indicators in education could have been based on the “shortfall reduction” formula in view of the fact that “the most desirable value is 100 per cent”, noting that two of them are supposed to be achieved by 2005 rather than by 2015. However, since the targets have already been achieved by 2004, the calculations involved are no longer applicable as table (I) shows. What remains is the indicator on the relative literacy rate for the age category 15-24 for which the “shortfall reduction” method will be applied.

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Detailed information on the ratio of girls to boys in the three conventional levels of education for the two years 1993 and 2004 confirms that Kuwait was able to achieve the goal of gender equality in education as required by the MDGs. As a result of these achievements, it is perhaps not surprising to find that the target ratio of literate females to males of 15-24 years old has been achieved by the year 2005 as required. The ratio in

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question increased from 97.6% in 1993 to 99.2% in 2004, recording an annual rate of progress of 6.1 per cent far in excess of the required rate of 4.6 per cent per annum. Thus, judging gender equality by the relevant ratios in education and literacy. Kuwait was able to achieve the MDG on gender equality by the year 2004 as required. Women represent 70% of university graduates, and a few hold relatively senior non-political posts in the state bureaucracy. Shi'a are also severely underrepresented in the government. Despite their newly enfranchised status, women faired badly in the parliamentary elections. Out of 249 candidates, 28 where women, and they were all defeated, even though, even though more than 60% of voter turnout were women. In June, 2005 the prime minister appointed Masouma al-Mubarak Minister of Planning and Administrative Development. She is the first female cabinet minister in the nation’s history.

Some of the already achieved MDGs include achievement of universal primary education, the target on elimination of gender disparity in all educational levels among other goals in Kuwait. According to Moez Dorand, Resident Coordinator, UN, Kuwait has achieved impressive progress since independence in areas covered by the MDGs ranging from the eradication of absolute poverty to advances in health and education. Kuwaiti women’s recent acquisition of political rights is the latest accomplishment to celebrate. The dual significance of the MDGs to the state of Kuwait emanates from the country’s unique status as a developing, and a ‘developer’, country. The latter role is evident in Kuwait’s remarkable record as a donor.

The Bush administration has, in fact, already embraced a more honey-than-vinegar approach to democracy promotion through the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA). This initiative, announced in 2003, promises to reward poor countries with increased aid if they meet 16 different standards on issues ranging from good governance, the rule of law, and public education to health care and economic transparency. The MCA has the potential to become a powerful new tool for promoting democracy in the Middle East and

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beyond. But Washington has yet to emphasize the program or to apply it systematically to countries in the Arab world.

"No matter how educated you are, it is experience that is the key to efficiency," he said. Tarek Sultan Al-Essa, Co-Chair of the Arab World Competitiveness Roundtable and Chairman and Managing Director, Agility, Kuwait, reckoned that the education system would be fundamentally undermined if hiring practices were not based on merit. In addition, formal education must be bolstered by the right R&D policies necessary to promote innovation and diversification of economies. Indeed, Sultan Al-Essa stressed that the competitiveness of Arab countries and their capacity to mitigate the many risks they face depend on to a large extent on how the role of government and the public sector evolves. The surpluses of recent years, Sultan Al-Essa said, "are being used to create bigger and bigger government. That is not sustainable." Government, he added, must focus on creating the right environment for the private sector to take the lead and for companies and businesses to become more productive. A major problem in Kuwait is that of the 80,000 Bidoon, or stateless people, who are considered illegal residents and denied full citizenship rights unless they can prove that their forebears were residents in Kuwait since 1965.

While discrimination based on religion reportedly occurred on a personal level, most observers agreed that it was not widespread. Sunni-Shi’a relations are good overall and while tensions from regional conflicts led to increased attention to the issue, few if any tangible problems resulted. However, there was institutionalized discrimination against Shi’a. Some Shi’a reported that they had been passed over for promotions and suspected their religious affiliation was the reason. Shi’as were underrepresented in certain branches of the military and security apparatuses.

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97 Tarek Sultan Al-Essa, Co-Chair of the Arab World Competitiveness Roundtable and Chairman and Managing Director, Agility, Kuwait was speaking at the Arab World Competitiveness Roundtable: Report. Doha, 9-10 April 2007, p.11.
DEMOCRATIZATION AND PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

Although Kuwait has the oldest and most advanced democratic experience in the Gulf region, it is yet to establish modern democratic institutions. It remains captive to inherited traditional tribal practices and culture. Despite the absence of political parties, it succeeded in organizing tribal groups into effective political forces. Nevertheless, the system largely follows basic democratic norms and values which are grounded in the equality of rights for all citizens regardless of gender or religion, the separation of powers within the state, and the establishment of competing political parties, which would allow change of government through free and fair contested elections.

The rising power of the Islamists in Kuwait, despite strenuous resistance by the relatively small liberal forces, believed to be an additional impediment to the establishment of a liberal democratic system in the foreseeable future. Although the influence of the Islamists in Kuwaiti society is considerable, this is largely counteracted by the seeming determination of the government to expand the margin of liberal practices, particularly with regard to women and minorities. All political forces have agreed on a list of major issues that require reform, including the electoral and judicial systems as well as the publications law. The major disagreement within the ranks of the competing political trends is between the liberal and the traditional movements concerning the implementation of Shari'a and personal freedoms.

Kuwait's democracy has experienced ups and downs, and more are probably in the offing as the country takes up such problems as extending suffrage to women and naturalized citizens (along with their descendants), as well as allowing political parties to organize. Intellectuals and opinion leaders in Kuwait commonly object not to democracy but to the way that it is practiced in their country. Khalifa al-Luqayan, a leading Kuwaiti poet and writer, recently expressed this sentiment: Democracy, as we understand it, is a way of citizen participation in the affairs of society. But unfortunately it brings us inexcusable behavior by awakening tribal and sectarian fanaticism. What we saw in the 1992 elections for the Assembly, municipal council, and cooperatives--voting for tribal and
sectarian reasons—will fragment our society rather than unite it. Conditions in Kuwait have reached near maturity, yet it should always be remembered that such a process is by nature slow, and that maturation depends, internally, on the development of social and economic factors, and externally, on a more peaceful coexistence in the region, with progressive economic and political development. If Kuwait can take these steps forward, it may have an immense impact not just on Kuwait itself but also on developments in the entire region.

Liberal groups in the Middle East are at this point fragmented and weak. At the same time, pressures to regroup and speed up reform among the more urban and liberal-oriented sectors of society are gaining momentum. Public debate and long-term experience with the democratic process should eventually create the conditions for a more reasoned, forward-looking view among the population. This means a decrease in the number of fundamentalists, especially those who oppose any sort of political pluralism. Today, the U.S. and other governments are promoting democracy as they know it, without a prudent consideration of what the results might be. While it is advisable that Washington push for more democratization, liberalization policy in Kuwait, it must also acknowledge the danger of tampering with an established political and social fabric by imposing what Americans consider to be the ideal mechanism of democracy. As recent developments in the West Asia have shown (for example, in Lebanon and Yemen), a form of democracy that is incompatible with a society can cause real harm, even leading to civil war. In 2003, President Bush lamented, “Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe,” transforming democracy promotion into a national security priority. According to this logic, America must promote democracy as an antidote to terrorism; democracy promotion could no longer be relegated to obscure bureaus of the U.S. government. After 9/11 revealed the threats posed by extremism emanating from the Middle East, the Bush administration, and indeed many across the political spectrum, no longer considered democracy in the Arab world a luxury.

To be sure, the destabilizing events that have unfolded in Iraq and the broader region since 2003 have led to a backlash against democracy promotion in the Middle East, and to some extent, against the United States as well. Moreover, democracy promotion never secured a very high level of support or resources from the U.S. administration even at the height of its popularity. Kuwait continues to be regarded by Bahraini reformists as an exemplar of Gulf democracy. The 1973 Bahraini constitution was reportedly based on the Kuwaiti one, and the Kuwaiti restoration of parliament in 1992–1993 after the eviction of Iraqi troops inspired several Bahraini petition initiatives in the mid-1990s. A comparative study of reform priorities in Gulf States is found in the work of the prominent Bahraini scholar. Crystal (2005) has also noted, “Pressure for political reform also comes from other Gulf States. The Gulf States have significant influence on each other. This is, after all, one cultural lake with many tribes and families stretching across borders and with many GCC nationals (more than the governments would like to acknowledge) discreetly possessing multiple GCC passports.” In addition to that will these must exist a broad, radical and ingenious contribution of education in terms of democratization and liberalization. But the present Arab educational system, from Kindergarten to university, is plagued by defects and inefficiency and rigidity, which will make it incapable of responding to that historical challenge. Many, many fundamental changes and reforms will be needed. Among them the following essential aspects and components must be addressed:

1. Equity and accessibility to a comprehensive broad education for every individual Arab is part of the fundamental human rights principle. To have approximately eighty million illiterates out of three hundred million Arabs is disgraceful and unacceptable. This huge block in the way of development can and should be removed within a short time. To speak of all other components of educational reforms without mobilizing a serious parallel formal and societal effort to address this shameful issue will be unjust and indeed repulsive.

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2. No matter what aims and goals of education we hope to achieve, the educational scene will not change unless the chronic problem of the preparation of the teacher is resolved. The preparation needs to be revolutionized in order to achieve professionalization of teaching. The period of learning and of practical preparation must be at least 7 years, one or two years of which must be allotted to internship under the guidance of a senior teacher to assess the suitability of the future teacher to teach in professional manner. Beside the specialized courses the future teacher must have a broad general (liberal) education in social sciences, humanities, philosophy, physical sciences, literature and arts. Future teachers must become committed intellectuals for change and not mere agents of transfer of information.

3. Only such teachers can be the agents of stirring positive and liberating attitudes in the minds and hearts of their students, of building in their students the abilities of analysis, rational criticism, regrouping and restructuring of facts. Such students will be flexible in thinking, adaptable to the constant changes of our globalized world, adventurous in their seeking of the new and the better, committed to justice in their societies and freedom in their cultures. Individually they have positive attitude towards work, time, discipline, order, law and achievement. Such students refuse to relieve and reproduce the same culture of the past and seek change and renewal, do not tolerate mythical thinking and can live with science.

4. It will be impossible for such teachers to work in oppressive school and it will be impossible for undemocratic school or university to rear such qualities in their students. Students learn by example and not by empty words.

5. Schools and universities must aim at not only producing suitable workers for the globalized markets and a changing economy. They must also aim at producing committed responsible citizens, spiritual ethical human beings and intellectual revels and by doing that fulfill mankind's dreams over the centuries of human ascendance.

Recruits to teacher education are also affected by the general economy of the country and by teacher status. In Kuwait, where oil has been found, it is not easy to recruit indigenous teachers. In 1960, only 3 out of 97 secondary teachers in Kuwait were Kuwaitis.\footnote{D. K. Wheeler, (1966), 'Educational Problems of Arab Countries', \textit{International Review of Education}, Vol. 12, No. 3, Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of UNESCO, p.309.}

In this
context is also important to analyse the Pupil/teacher ratio (See Graph VI which clearly shows the curve upward in 1980 to going down in 2006).

**GRAPH VI: PUPIL/TEACHER RATIO IN KUWAIT**

![Graph VI: Pupil/Teacher Ratio in Kuwait](image)

Structured and phased core of liberal education must be taught from Kindergarten level to the postgraduate phases. Noting low literacy rates in the 400-page report, "The Road Not Traveled: Education Reform in the Middle East and Africa," the bank said the relationship between education and economic growth in the region has remained weak, the divide between education and employment has not been bridged and the quality of education continues to be disappointing. There is room for improvement with respect to primary education. The MDGs target requires that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Three

indicators for the achievement of achieving universal primary education goal been identified. These are the net enrolment ratio in primary education; the proportion of pupils starting grade I who reach grade 5; and the literacy rate of those aged 15-24 years. Table II presents the relevant information and results with respect to the achievement of the goal in question. Note that as per the adopted methodology the required rate of annual progress for the first two indicators is 4.8 per cent while that for the literacy rate is 4.6 per cent. The actual annual rate of progress is calculated as "shortfall reduction" in view of the fact that the desirable value for each one of these indicators is 100 per cent.\textsuperscript{104}

\textbf{TABLE III: INDICATORS FOR THE PRIMARY EDUCATION MDGs GOAL IN KUWAIT\textsuperscript{105}}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|}
\hline
 DETAILS & NET ENROLMENT RATIO IN PRIMARY EDUCATION & PROPORTION OF PUPILS STARTING GRADE I WHO REACH GRADE 5 & LITERACY RATE OF 15-24 YEARS OF AGE \\
\hline
Value at the Base Year (1993, except where specified) & 87.4 (base year, 1994) & 94.8 (base year 1994) & 98.4 \\
\hline
Value at the Terminal Year (2004) & 89.1 & 97.5 & 99.9 \\
\hline
Required Annual Rate of Change (%) & 4.8 & 4.8 & 4.6 \\
\hline
Observed Annual Rate of Change (%) & 1.4 & 4.7 & 9.4 \\
\hline
Status of Achievement & Represents a challenge & Can be achieved & Achieved \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{104} The required annual rates of increase use a horizon of 21 years for the first two indicators and 23 years for the third indicator.

As the Table II shows net enrolment ratio in primary education was 87.4% in 1994 and increased to 89.1% in 2004. The actual rate of progress towards achieving the target, in the sense of "shortfall reduction", is only 1.4 per cent per annum compared to the required rate of annual progress of 4.8 per cent. As a result, the achievement of this target represents a challenge to Kuwait as per the conclusion of the MOP-UNDP (2003). The proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 was 94.8% in 1994 and increased to 97.5% in 2004. The actual rate of progress towards achieving this target, in the sense of "shortfall reduction", is 4.7 per cent per annum compared to the required rate of annual progress of 4.8 per cent. As a result, the achievement of this target is feasible in the light of progress made since the early 1990s, albeit with additional marginal efforts to be exerted. The literacy rate of those aged 15-24 years was 98.4% in 1993 and increased in a systematic fashion to 99.9% in 2004. The actual rate of progress towards achieving this target, in the sense of "shortfall reduction", is 9.4 per cent per annum compared to the required rate of annual progress of 4.6 per cent. Looking at the record, the MDGs goal of achieving universal primary education has, for all intents and purposes, been achieved, nearly ten years ahead of time.

Similarly, improvements in the quality of higher education would benefit the Kuwait’s business sector, enabling it to improve the sophistication of business operations and to enhance the innovation capacity of domestic businesses. One particular aspect highlighted by the Survey is the prevalence of pervasive red tape that negatively affects business operations and makes the entry of new companies difficult. At the same time, businesses find government regulations difficult to comply with, and the country occupies a low 73rd position on the indicator that assesses this category. However, the country boasts very good financial infrastructure with easy access to a wide range of financial services, including loans, equity markets, and risk capital. More than other economies that fall into this group, Kuwait remains sheltered from the international economy and thus foregoes the benefits of competition. Although formal trade barriers

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are not identified as obstacles, foreign ownership is considered the most restricted of the
countries covered (rank 128 out of 128 countries). Both the low level of imports and
restrictions on entry by foreign firms further reduce competition in the already very small
internal market. At tertiary education the issue of general or liberal education is one of
major importance. Not facing this issue will produce specialists with tremendous capacity
to misdirect and mislead and superficialize the process of development that we outlined.

The liberal education will teach, and convince students, some fundamental habits of mind
and mature approaches to life. An education that will show them that knowledge can at
times be blind and illusive, that one has to beware of fragmented knowledge and
dispersed unarranged information, that the human condition is complex and comprises
biological, social, cultural, historical and psychological components, that man is not only
an individual but also part of society and part of mankind, that all disciplines of
knowledge and all aspects of life are full of uncertainties that need to be faced and
affronted, that ethic and moral values must guide all disciplines, that behind technology
hides a rigorous science and that we live in a World where the local has become part of
the international and the universal part of the national. In Kuwait, the ability of nationals
to secure access to educational credentials, and especially higher education degrees, is an
important resource for their entry into state positions.\footnote{Ghabra, S.H. (1997). ‘Kuwait and the
changes have been introduced in most Arab countries. State-sponsored councils and
committees have been sprouting at a rapid rate in many countries, including in the Gulf
region where identification with Shari’ah was all that the regimes were willing to submit
to. Regular elections in Kuwait, Jordan and Lebanon have resulted in a changed political
structure. It can be maintained that the influence of Islamic fundamentalism has been
weakened in countries where relatively free elections have taken place. Only in Kuwait
have the fundamentalists been able to bolster their support; any explanation of this
phenomenon has to take into consideration the peculiar electoral laws in the country,
where women are still denied voting rights. Women have not formed the backbone of
Islamic fundamentalist organizations in any Arab country and they constitute the bulk of
secular forces in Algeria, Jordan and Lebanon. In 1981, Kuwait passed a law to eradicate illiteracy and allow illiterate adults to enroll in literacy programs. Kuwait had relatively better-performing education systems until the 1990 Gulf War. Since then, it has slowly tried to recapture its position and currently has a primary NER of 86 percent. Success in meeting education objectives does not always correlate with per capita income. Surely, countries with relatively high per capita income such as Kuwait perform relatively better than poor countries like Djibouti or Yemen. However, it is also true that countries like Algeria and Saudi Arabia, with relatively high per capita incomes, perform less well than countries with lower per capita income like Jordan or Tunisia. Thus, financial resources may be necessary for improving education, but the availability of resources is by no means a sufficient condition.

There is an imminent need for the process of liberalization that gives a special consideration and a top priority to the building of knowledge capacity in Arab societies: capacity of production, dissemination, regulation of its excesses and abuses by ethical values and by a genuine concern for the environment and for human dignity. The effort to achieve the above will include generous use of science, research and technology and the contribution of art, literature and religion.

Striking a balance between contemporary interests and traditional values is an issue that is moving to the fore in the education sector, as increased privatisation and a growing population reshape schools in Kuwait. While Kuwaitis expect an education that will prepare them to go to universities abroad, there is a growing fear that Westernisation is eroding Kuwaiti identity in the classroom. Presiding over this debate is Nouria Al Sbeih, Kuwait’s first female minister of education, tasked with re-energising the country’s educational system in the face of increased regional competition and shifting societal demands. The Ministry of Education (MoE) is well aware of the need for reform in both private and public schools, and its efforts were acknowledged by the World Bank in 2008, when it ranked Jordan and Kuwait as the top education reformers in the Arab

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world. Moving into 2009, the MoE will have to build on its gains to give the Kuwaiti public the caliber of education as well as options that it desires.

To meet these challenges particularly the job creation imperative, the region must first assess its competitiveness – the productivity of its economies benchmarked against the rest of the world – to determine how well prepared each is to sustain recent growth momentum. In Doha, the World Economic Forum released The Arab World Competitiveness Report 2007. The results identified the most competitive economies in the region in three groups as they performed against international peers. Ranking among those at the most advanced stage of development are the United Arab Emirates (#29), Qatar (32), Kuwait (36) and Bahrain (39).

In context of liberalization, to spur a private sector surge, the role of government should be limited, said Tarek Sultan Al-Essa, Chairman and Managing Director, Agility, Kuwait. “We need to set targets for downsizing the government impact on the business sector.” He observed: “The role of government and public sectors seems to be shifting from provider/investor to regulator/facilitator. This is key across all sectors and will unleash growth across the region.”

Education is the primary prerequisite for the process of democratization based on liberalized policies of the state. Accordingly, the more education expands and progresses in all areas the more thought reaches higher standards, recovers its normal condition, and plays its role in such a way as to have a considerable impact on civilizational edification, economic development and social progress. The state of education in the Arab world in general does not depart from this rule. The main distinguishing features of this state can be summarized as follows:

110 The Arab World Competitiveness Roundtable was under the direct responsibility of Peter Torreele, the Managing Director of the World Economic Forum. The World Economic Forum is an independent international organization committed to improving the state of the world by engaging leaders in partnerships to shape global, regional and industry agendas. Incorporated as a foundation in 1971, and based in Geneva, Switzerland, the World Economic Forum is impartial and not-for-profit; it is tied to no political, partisan or national interests. (www.weforum.org)
112 Ibid., p.11.
a) The adoption of different educational policies and the multiplicity of systems and methods in the Arab countries, which almost totally isolates Arab countries from each other. Such a state of affairs weakens cultural and intellectual ties among these countries and reduces the opportunities of exchanging expertise and capabilities with a view to expanding and improving education within the frame of shared intellectual and civilizational backgrounds.

b) The failure of a number of educational curricula to keep up with contemporary developments and techniques, as well as to keep abreast of and closely monitor current international mutations in the educational field. The result is the worsening of the divide between education in the Arab world and its counterpart in the contemporary world.

c) The large number of less qualified instructors. It should be noted that it is those who earn their high school diplomas with low grades who are oriented towards faculties of education and teacher training colleges. They are also the product of the prevailing education system based on memorization rather than an education directed towards critical thinking and creativity. They, therefore, apply the same system upon their graduation, once serving within various educational institutions.

d) The absence of an adequate school environment in a number of Arab countries, whether in terms of buildings, classroom and laboratory equipment, or opportunities of free opinion expression, besides highly centralized administration. All these factors have a negative effect on the education process and restrict freedom of initiative, action and thinking in addressing the problems facing educational administrations and the teaching profession whether in schools, institutes and faculties.

e) Rampant illiteracy in a number of Arab countries and the inability of these countries to fight it in an effective and comprehensive manner in spite of the efforts made and money spent in this regard.

The social structure of Kuwaiti society has been rapidly became comparable to most Western States today: the education and health services, social security provisions, utilities and public employment which were introduced in Kuwait compare with the most
modern systems in the world. Each State provided its citizens with these services as guaranteed rights; for instance, the State is pledged constitutionally to provide every individual with a job appropriate to his qualifications. The guaranteed job concept is an Islamic social concept. Education and processes of democratization are intertwined and interrelated. It is safe, therefore, to conclude from the foregoing that Kuwait as well as the other Arab Gulf States is witnessing a rapid return to the traditional Islamic Shari'a, as a result of many important factors internally and externally. Kuwait is to be considered the leader among the Gulf States in returning to Islamic law of which education is a cardinal principle through the adoption of some Islamic Laws and their implementation and application since the beginning of the 1980s. It was the aim of this chapter to oversee and investigate the steps followed by Kuwait -as a model in adopting education as a process of democratization and liberalization under the rubrics of established Islamic ethos.