

Research Article

The Dynamics of Citizenship Education in the Context of Political Reform

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Abstract: Algeria's political transitions, marked by constitutional amendments in 2016 and 2020, have sparked efforts to integrate democratic principles and civic values into educational frameworks. This study examines the dynamics of citizenship education in the context of Algeria's political reforms. The research explores citizenship education's role in fostering civic participation and aligning educational content with national democratic aspirations. The methodology employs a mixed-methods approach, conducted throughout 2023, involving 500 respondents, including educators, policymakers, and students from diverse locations such as Algiers, Oran, Constantine, Tlemcen, and Setif. Quantitative surveys assess perceptions and effectiveness, while qualitative interviews and focus groups provide deeper insights into stakeholders' experiences and expectations. Findings reveal that citizenship education in Algeria demonstrates significant potential in promoting civic engagement and aligning with democratic ideals. However, challenges persist, such as balancing traditional cultural values with modern democratic principles, ensuring adequate teacher training, and addressing political constraints that hinder open dialogue. The discussion highlights the need for a comprehensive curriculum, participatory teaching methods, and a political environment conducive to civic learning. Future research could explore sector-specific impacts of citizenship education and the long-term outcomes of integrating democratic principles into curricula. These insights could guide policymakers and educators in designing more effective educational reforms tailored to Algeria's unique socio-political context.

Keywords: Citizenship Education, Civic Engagement, Democratic Reform, Educational Policy, Political Reform.



1. Introduction

The political landscape of Algeria has undergone significant transformations in recent years, marked by a series of reforms aimed at democratization and increased civic participation. Central to this transformative process is the role of citizenship education, which serves as a conduit for instilling democratic values and fostering an informed citizenry capable of engaging in the nation's political discourse. The intersection of educational initiatives and political reform in Algeria presents a compelling area of study, particularly in understanding how educational frameworks adapt to and influence evolving political paradigms [1].

Citizenship education in Algeria has traditionally been integrated into the national curriculum, targeting students from primary to secondary levels [2]. The curriculum encompasses modules designed to inform youth about their rights and duties within society, including aspects such as voting, association membership, and expression of opinions. This educational approach aims to cultivate a sense of national identity and civic responsibility among young Algerians, preparing them to participate actively in the country's socio-political sphere [3].

The recent political reforms in Algeria, particularly the constitutional amendments of 2016 and 2020, have introduced new dynamics into the civic space. These reforms have implications for citizenship education, necessitating a reevaluation of educational content to ensure alignment with the principles of democracy and human rights. The challenge lies in effectively integrating these principles into the educational system to reflect the nation's commitment to democratic governance.

Challenges persist in the implementation of citizenship education in Algeria. Studies have highlighted gaps in the curriculum, particularly concerning the representation of global citizenship ideals and the development of critical thinking skills among students. The need for a more comprehensive approach that encompasses both national and global perspectives is evident, especially in an increasingly interconnected world. The legacy of past conflicts, notably the civil war of the 1990s, continues to influence the educational narrative in Algeria. The educational sector's silence on this period has been critiqued as a missed opportunity for reconciliation and the promotion of a more inclusive national identity. Addressing historical narratives within citizenship education could play a pivotal role in healing societal divisions and fostering a more cohesive national consciousness.

The objectives of this study are threefold: first, to explore the evolution of citizenship education in Algeria amidst recent political reforms; second, to assess the effectiveness of current educational practices in promoting democratic values and civic engagement; and third, to identify challenges and opportunities for enhancing citizenship education to better serve the nation's democratic aspirations.

Understanding the dynamics of citizenship education in Algeria is significant for several reasons. It provides insights into how educational systems can adapt to political changes and contribute to the democratization process. Moreover, it highlights the role of education in shaping civic identities and promoting active participation in governance. The findings of this study could inform policymakers and educators in Algeria and other nations undergoing similar transitions, offering lessons on the integration of citizenship education within broader political reform agendas.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Evolution of Citizenship Education in Algeria

Citizenship education in Algeria has undergone significant transformations, particularly in response to the nation's complex political history and ongoing reforms [4]. Historically, the colonial era imposed a French-centric educational system that marginalized indigenous identities and civic concepts. Post-independence, Algeria sought to reconstruct its national identity, emphasizing Arabization and Islamic values within its educational framework [5] — this shift aimed to foster a sense of national unity and cultural reclamation. However, the civil conflict of the 1990s, known as the "Black Decade," disrupted educational progress and highlighted the need for curricula that promote peace and reconciliation. In recent years, particularly following the constitutional amendments of 2016 and 2020, there has been a renewed focus on integrating democratic principles and human rights into citizenship education. These reforms aim to align educational content with the nation's aspirations for democratic governance and increased civic participation [6]. Despite these efforts, challenges persist, including balancing traditional values with modern democratic ideals and addressing the remnants of past conflicts within educational narratives. The evolution of citizenship education in Algeria reflects the nation's ongoing journey towards a cohesive and democratic society [7].

Citizenship education plays a pivotal role in political reform by equipping citizens with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for active participation in democratic processes. In Algeria,

educational reforms have been instrumental in promoting civic engagement and fostering a culture of democracy [8]. The integration of citizenship education into the national curriculum aims to develop critical thinking, encourage political participation, and instill a sense of responsibility among citizens. Studies have shown that effective citizenship education can lead to increased voter turnout, greater involvement in community affairs, and a more informed electorate. However, the success of these educational initiatives depends on various factors, including the quality of teacher training, the relevance of the curriculum, and the broader political environment [9]. In Algeria, challenges such as political repression and limited freedom of expression can hinder the effectiveness of citizenship education. Therefore, for citizenship education to contribute meaningfully to political reform, it must be supported by a conducive political climate that encourages open dialogue and respects human rights [10].

2.2. Challenges in Implementing Citizenship Education

Implementing citizenship education in Algeria faces several challenges that impede its effectiveness. One significant obstacle is the lack of adequately trained educators who can effectively deliver citizenship education content. Many teachers may not have received sufficient training in democratic principles or participatory teaching methods, limiting their ability to engage students in meaningful discussions about citizenship [11] [12]. Additionally, the curriculum may not fully address contemporary issues relevant to students' lives, such as digital citizenship or global interconnectedness, making the content less engaging. Political factors also play a role; in environments where political freedoms are restricted, open discussions about governance and rights can be suppressed, limiting the scope of citizenship education. Furthermore, societal factors, including cultural norms and economic disparities, can influence students' perceptions of their role as citizens and their willingness to participate in civic activities. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes teacher training, curriculum development, and the promotion of a political culture that values democratic engagement [13].

Examining citizenship education in Algeria alongside other nations provides valuable insights into best practices and potential pitfalls. In countries like Tunisia and Morocco, citizenship education has been integrated into broader educational reforms aimed at democratization. These nations have emphasized critical thinking, human rights, and participatory governance within their curricula. For instance, Tunisia's post-revolution educational reforms included a focus on civic education to support its democratic transition [14]. Similarly, Morocco has implemented programs to promote civic values and participation among youth [15]. These comparative perspectives highlight the importance of contextualizing citizenship education within each nation's unique political and cultural landscape. They also underscore the need for curricula that are responsive to societal changes and that prepare students to engage with contemporary challenges. Algeria can draw lessons from these experiences to enhance its own citizenship education initiatives, ensuring they are effective and relevant to its citizens.

Citizenship education has a profound impact on youth engagement in political and civic life. In Algeria, where a significant portion of the population is under 30, empowering youth through education is crucial for the nation's democratic development. Effective citizenship education can increase political awareness, foster critical thinking, and encourage active participation in community and national affairs. Studies have shown that when young people are educated about their rights and responsibilities, they are more likely to vote, engage in political discussions, and participate in civic activities. However, the effectiveness of citizenship education in promoting youth engagement depends on factors such as the relevance of the curriculum, the inclusivity of educational practices, and the broader socio-political environment [16]. In Algeria, challenges such as political repression and limited opportunities for youth participation can undermine the impact of citizenship education. Therefore, it is essential to create an enabling environment that supports youth engagement and allows the principles taught in citizenship education to be practiced in real life [17].

To enhance the effectiveness of citizenship education in Algeria, several policy recommendations can be considered. Firstly, investing in comprehensive teacher training programs is essential to equip educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver citizenship education effectively. Secondly, updating the curriculum to include contemporary issues such as digital citizenship, environmental sustainability, and global interdependence can make the content more relevant and engaging for students. Thirdly, promoting participatory teaching methods that encourage critical thinking and active engagement can enhance students' understanding and commitment to democratic

principles [18] [19]. Additionally, creating opportunities for students to practice civic engagement, such as through school-based community service programs or student councils, can reinforce the lessons learned in the classroom. Finally, fostering a political environment that supports freedom of expression and open dialogue is crucial for the success of citizenship education. Implementing these policy recommendations requires collaboration among educators, policymakers, and civil society to ensure that citizenship education contributes effectively to Algeria's democratic development [20].

3. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to explore the dynamics of citizenship education within the context of political reform in Algeria. Data collection occurs throughout 2023, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the topic over an extended timeframe. The research focuses on both qualitative and quantitative data to provide an in-depth analysis. The study involves 500 respondents, including high school teachers, curriculum developers, policymakers, and students from secondary schools. These participants represent diverse stakeholder groups directly or indirectly involved in citizenship education. Respondents are purposively sampled to ensure a balanced representation of gender, age, and regional perspectives.

Data collection takes place in multiple locations across Algeria, capturing the nuances of regional and cultural variations. The selected sites include Algiers, Oran, Constantine, Tlemcen, and Setif. These cities are chosen for their historical and political significance, as well as their accessibility and representation of urban and semi-urban settings. Quantitative data is gathered through structured surveys administered to teachers, students, and policymakers. These surveys include questions on perceptions of citizenship education, its alignment with political reforms, and its influence on civic participation. The survey responses are analyzed using statistical software to identify trends and correlations.

Qualitative data is obtained through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Policymakers and curriculum developers provide insights into the intentions behind educational reforms, while teachers and students share their experiences and perceptions of citizenship education. These discussions are audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic coding to uncover underlying themes and patterns.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, pilot testing of survey instruments and interview protocols is conducted prior to data collection. Additionally, triangulation of data sources—combining survey results, interview transcripts, and policy documents—enhances the credibility of the findings. Ethical considerations are a priority throughout the study. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, and anonymity and confidentiality are maintained. The research adheres to ethical guidelines established by Algerian and international academic institutions, ensuring the integrity of the research process. The chosen methodology allows the study to address its research questions effectively, capturing the interplay between citizenship education and political reform while accounting for the diverse perspectives of stakeholders in Algeria.

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1. Finding

1) The Integration of Democratic Principles into Citizenship Education

Efforts to integrate democratic principles into Algeria's citizenship education framework reflect a broader strategy to align education with national political reforms. Constitutional amendments in 2016 and 2020 emphasize human rights, civic engagement, and participatory governance, which form the foundation for these educational changes. Schools in urban centers like Algiers and Oran report that curriculum updates now include modules on democratic values and citizen participation, aiming to develop students' critical thinking and civic responsibility. These changes are particularly relevant in urban settings, where political awareness tends to be higher among students.

However, significant gaps persist in rural areas, where curriculum implementation often lags behind due to limited resources and inconsistent teacher training. Educators in Constantine and Setif noted that while urban schools receive updated teaching materials and workshops, rural schools face delays in accessing these resources. This uneven distribution limits the effectiveness of citizenship education, particularly in fostering a uniform understanding of democratic principles across regions. Addressing these disparities is essential to ensuring equitable access to quality education.

Moreover, interviews with policymakers reveal a strong commitment to fostering citizenship education as a means of bridging the gap between Algeria's traditional cultural values and modern

democratic ideals. They argue that citizenship education must strike a balance between instilling universal democratic principles and respecting Algeria's unique socio-political context. By grounding democratic education in local traditions, policymakers aim to ensure the curriculum's relevance and acceptance.

The political environment in Algeria plays a crucial role in shaping the implementation and effectiveness of citizenship education. Findings suggest that schools in regions with greater political openness tend to facilitate more dynamic and participatory learning experiences. Teachers in these areas report fewer restrictions on discussing sensitive political topics, allowing students to explore diverse perspectives and develop critical thinking skills.

However, schools in politically constrained regions face significant challenges. Educators often hesitate to address controversial issues, fearing potential repercussions. This reluctance limits students' exposure to diverse viewpoints and undermines the objectives of citizenship education. Policymakers acknowledge these constraints but emphasize the need for gradual reforms that create a safe and supportive environment for open dialogue.

Students' experiences also reflect the influence of the political context on their education. In focus groups, urban students describe classroom discussions that encourage debate and critical analysis, while their rural counterparts often experience more traditional, lecture-based approaches. This disparity highlights the impact of political and administrative support on educational practices.

Creating a conducive political environment for citizenship education requires a coordinated effort between government institutions and educational stakeholders. By promoting policies that protect academic freedom and encourage open dialogue, Algeria can enhance the effectiveness of its citizenship education programs, fostering a generation of informed and engaged citizens.

2) Challenges in Balancing Traditional Values and Modern Democratic Ideals

One of the most significant challenges facing citizenship education in Algeria is the reconciliation of traditional values with the principles of modern democracy. Algeria's cultural heritage, deeply rooted in Islamic and Arab traditions, often intersects with contemporary democratic ideals in complex ways. Teachers and curriculum developers frequently encounter resistance when introducing concepts perceived as inconsistent with local values. This tension underscores the need for a nuanced approach that respects Algeria's cultural identity while promoting progressive educational goals.

Policymakers interviewed for this study emphasized the importance of contextualizing democratic principles within the framework of Algerian culture. They argue that the integration of these principles must consider the historical and societal norms that shape the country's identity. For instance, teaching modules often include references to Algerian independence movements to highlight indigenous examples of civic responsibility and collective action. By rooting democratic ideals in familiar narratives, educators aim to make these concepts more relatable to students.

Furthermore, students and parents expressed concerns about the perceived Westernization of the curriculum. Many believe that introducing Western democratic ideals without sufficient adaptation could erode traditional values. This perspective highlights the importance of designing a curriculum that reflects Algeria's unique socio-political context, ensuring that educational reforms resonate with local communities and avoid alienation.

Addressing these challenges requires active collaboration between educators, policymakers, and cultural leaders. By involving stakeholders from diverse backgrounds in curriculum development, Algeria can create an educational framework that harmonizes traditional values with modern democratic principles. This approach not only fosters acceptance but also ensures that citizenship education contributes to national unity.

3) The Role of Teacher Training in Enhancing Citizenship Education

Teacher training emerges as a pivotal factor in the successful implementation of citizenship education in Algeria. Findings reveal that teachers in urban areas like Algiers and Oran often receive regular training on participatory teaching methods and democratic education. These programs equip educators with the tools needed to engage students in critical discussions about citizenship and governance. However, rural teachers in regions like Setif and Constantine report limited access to similar opportunities, creating significant disparities in educational outcomes.

Effective teacher training programs are essential for ensuring that educators can confidently deliver the updated curriculum. Policymakers recognize this need and have initiated workshops and seminars focused on enhancing pedagogical skills. These initiatives include training on interactive

teaching methods, such as role-playing and debates, which are particularly effective in fostering civic engagement among students. However, logistical challenges, such as transportation and resource allocation, often hinder the participation of rural educators.

Interviews with teachers highlight the impact of professional development on classroom dynamics. Educators who have undergone training report higher levels of student engagement and understanding of democratic principles. They note that interactive teaching methods help students connect theoretical concepts to real-world applications, fostering a deeper appreciation for citizenship education. Expanding these programs to underserved areas could significantly enhance their effectiveness.

To address the existing disparities, policymakers must prioritize the equitable distribution of training resources. This includes providing rural teachers with access to online training platforms and mobile workshops. By ensuring that all educators receive the support they need, Algeria can create a more uniform and effective approach to citizenship education.

Students' perceptions of citizenship education vary significantly between urban and rural areas, highlighting disparities in curriculum implementation and resource allocation. In urban schools, students report a higher level of engagement with the curriculum, attributing this to well-trained teachers and access to extracurricular activities. These students frequently participate in debates, student councils, and community service projects, which reinforce their understanding of democratic principles and civic responsibilities.

Conversely, students in rural areas express frustration with the limited resources and opportunities available to them. Surveys indicate that many rural schools lack basic teaching materials and access to extracurricular programs, which hampers students' ability to engage meaningfully with citizenship education. This disparity underscores the importance of addressing resource gaps to ensure that all students, regardless of location, can benefit from the curriculum.

Focus group discussions reveal that students value practical applications of citizenship education, such as role-playing exercises and project-based learning. These activities help them connect abstract concepts to real-life scenarios, making the curriculum more engaging and relevant. Urban schools often incorporate these methods into their teaching, while rural schools struggle to do so due to resource constraints and limited teacher training.

To bridge this gap, policymakers must invest in rural education infrastructure and develop targeted interventions that address the unique challenges faced by these schools. By providing equal opportunities for all students to engage with citizenship education, Algeria can foster a more inclusive and equitable educational system.

4.2. Discussion

The integration of democratic principles into Algeria's citizenship education reflects an effort to align the education system with national political reforms. The constitutional amendments of 2016 and 2020, which emphasize human rights, civic engagement, and participatory governance, serve as the foundation for these changes. In urban centers like Algiers and Oran, curriculum updates now include modules on democratic values and citizen participation, aiming to foster critical thinking and civic responsibility among students. However, significant gaps persist in rural areas, where the implementation of updated curricula is often delayed due to limited resources and inconsistent teacher training.

In urban areas, curriculum updates are more accessible, with updated teaching materials and workshops for educators. However, schools in rural regions such as Constantine and Setif face challenges in acquiring the latest teaching materials, hindering a uniform understanding of democratic principles across the country. This disparity creates inequality in access to quality education, affecting the objective of citizenship education to develop informed and engaged citizens.

Policymakers in Algeria are also committed to bridging the gap between traditional cultural values and modern democratic ideals through citizenship education. They emphasize the importance of a curriculum that not only teaches universal democratic principles but also respects Algeria's unique socio-political context. By incorporating local traditions into democratic education, policymakers aim to ensure the curriculum is relevant and acceptable to the Algerian society, avoiding the imposition of foreign values that might conflict with local culture.

However, the political environment in Algeria plays a crucial role in shaping the success of citizenship education. Research findings suggest that schools in regions with greater political openness tend to offer more dynamic and participatory learning experiences. In contrast, schools in

politically constrained regions often avoid discussing controversial issues, limiting students' exposure to diverse viewpoints. To create an environment conducive to citizenship education, it is essential for government institutions and educational stakeholders to work together to ensure academic freedom and foster a safe space for open dialogue, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of democratic education.

5. Conclusion

This study examines the integration of democratic principles into Algeria's citizenship education framework, addressing the challenges and opportunities this process presents in the context of national political reforms. The findings indicate that while urban schools have largely benefited from curriculum updates that include democratic values and citizen participation, significant gaps remain in rural areas due to disparities in resources and teacher training. These gaps hinder the effectiveness of citizenship education, which aims to foster informed, engaged citizens capable of critical thinking and active participation in civic life.

Policymakers are committed to balancing universal democratic principles with Algeria's unique socio-political context, ensuring that democratic education is relevant and accepted within local traditions. This approach aims to bridge the gap between modern democratic ideals and the country's cultural values. However, the political environment significantly influences the implementation and success of citizenship education, with schools in regions with greater political openness facilitating more dynamic, participatory learning experiences. Conversely, schools in politically constrained areas face difficulties in addressing controversial issues, limiting students' exposure to diverse perspectives.

The research highlights the importance of creating a supportive political and administrative environment to enhance the effectiveness of citizenship education. This requires coordinated efforts between government institutions, educational stakeholders, and teachers to ensure academic freedom, open dialogue, and equitable access to updated teaching materials. Addressing the disparities between urban and rural regions, both in terms of resources and political openness, is essential for fostering a generation of informed and engaged citizens.

In conclusion, while significant progress has been made in integrating democratic principles into Algeria's citizenship education, continued efforts are needed to address regional inequalities and ensure that the curriculum is both effective and inclusive. Future research could further explore the long-term impact of these educational reforms on students' civic engagement and political participation.

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