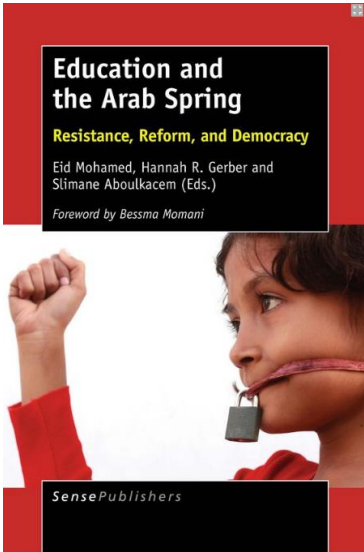


Reading

**Education and the Arab Spring: Resistance, reform, and
democracy**

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قرأت لك



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التعليم والربيع العربي: المقاومة، والاصلاح، والديموقراطية

محمد عبد اللطيف الحربي

باحث دكتوراه بكلية التربية، جامعة أندروز، بيرين سبرينغز، ميشيغان، الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية

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الملخص

تهدف الورقة الحالية عرض ملخص لكتاب التعليم والربيع العربي: المقاومة، والاصلاح، والديموقراطية، الصادر عن دار سينس للنشر عام ٢٠١٦، وتتضمن الورقة عرض لكيفية توظيف أفكار هذا الكتاب والاستفادة منها.

الكلمات الدلالية: التعليم، الربيع العربي، المقاومة، الاصلاح، الديموقراطية.

Education and the Arab Spring: Resistance, Reform, and Democracy

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Abstract

This paper aims to summary of the new bock (*Education and the Arab Spring: Resistance, Reform, and Democracy*) which published by Sense Publishers in 2016. The paper includes how can researchers to use benefit from the ideas that presented in this bock.

Key words: Education, Arab Spring, Resistance, Reform, and Democracy.

Introduction:

In the book, *Education and the Arab Spring: Resistance, Reform, and Democracy*, (2016) a group of authors explore the status of education in the Arab region before and after the Arab Spring. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region witnessed several simultaneous revolutions that began in Tunisia when a young man by the name of Mohammed El-Bouazizi burned himself alive to protest his poor economic situation (Henry, Ji-Hyang, & Parks, 2012). The Tunisian revolution moved in a wave to many neighboring countries—initially the African countries Libya and Egypt, and then on to Yemen and Syria in the Middle East. This unrest led many governments in the region to undertake economic and political reforms to avoid having such revolutions spread to their countries. The cause of this revolution—or series of revolutions, known the Arab Spring—was “the consequence of decades of oppressive and authoritarian political systems, failed economic policies, and socially alienated and disaffected populations, mainly youths” (Aissa, 2012, p. 2). The demands of these youth differed from one region to another, but there were common threads, including demands for democracy along with political and economic reforms. Education was also a frequent focus of concern by the youth. Many demonstrators wanted reform in education and made it compatible with the labor market. The authors of *Education and the Arab Spring* seek to establish the principle that education is the only way to help people stand together against tyranny.

In the introductory chapter, the editors begin with a brief account of the events that led to the outbreak of the Arab Spring in Tunisia and how it moved to the neighboring countries. They explain the role played by technology and social media, in particular, in the continuation of these revolutions and the achievement of some of the youths’ goals. Moreover, the editors expound the relationship between democracy and education and how education in the Middle East and North Africa should be. Only by education and freedom of thought can all groups stand together to face their challenges. The subsequent chapters contribute to the support and clarification of this view and constitute a serious step toward searching for solutions to the problems and challenges that are facing education in the Middle East and

North Africa after the Arab Spring such as the equal access to education and the effect of religion curriculum on non-Muslim students' friendships.

Three sections are divided into eight chapters discuss the state of education in the Arab region before the Arab Spring and the changes that took place after this spring. The first section, which consists of two chapters, highlights some issues that were confronting the classroom before the Arab Spring, such as teaching for democracy and teacher professional development programs. The second section comes in three chapters to discuss some of the important issues related to youth education, and it aims to identify the extent to which the desired educational goals have been achieved after the Arab Spring revolutions. The last section, which contains three chapters, explores the education of non-Muslim minorities, the change in ideology and identity, and the role of some educational and religious institutions after the Arab Spring.

A group of scholars from different parts of the world have collaborated on studying the state of education in different countries in the Middle East and North Africa to explore democracy in education in the Arab region. Despite the wide range of Arab countries, the emphasis in this book is on education in Egypt. Four chapters—fully half of the book—discuss educational issues in Egypt, while other countries such as Syria and Libya were not addressed at all. That may be due to the unstable political situation and frequent conflicts in both Syria and Libya. Syria, for instance, is one of the countries that has been directly affected by the Arab Spring and continues to suffer to this day. Many Syrians citizen live in refugee camps, supervised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. According to UNHCR, at the end of July 2017 there were around 930,000 Syrian school-age children enrolled in formal education and over 117,200 enrolled in informal education in camps and host communities. In spite of the increasing number of displaced Syrians and the deterioration of educational conditions, the book did not address Syrian education in any of its chapters. Moreover, only one chapter was devoted to the study of democracy in education in all the Arab countries before the Arab Spring. Therefore, diversity in selecting the target countries for the studies did

not include the largest possible segment of the Arab world which suggests that the book is lopsided in its approach.

The topics presented in the book vary between a historical narrative, identifying problems, and recommending appropriate solutions. The Arab region is full of many educational institutions with a long history. Al-Azhar, which was founded in 969 CE (Gesink, 2010), for example, is one of the most important religious education organizations in the Muslim world. The last chapter contains a brief history of Al-Azhar and its role in the region since its inception, and the change that took place after the Arab Spring.

Presenting practical solutions was a prominent feature of the book. The book not only shows challenges that face education after the Arab Spring, but also proposed recommendations that could contribute significantly to solve the difficulty. For example, chapter six aims to study the role that western universities play in the Arab region. The American University of Kuwait, for instance, faces a challenge in preserving the advantages of the Western education system without showing Western hegemony, culture, and philosophy. Therefore, the university should reconsider its vision, mission, and philosophical orientation if it wishes to mitigate the consequences that may result from the manifestation of Western hegemony in an Arab society. The diversity of the topics that the book discusses gives it another dimension through shaping a bright future vision based on an Islamic identity.

In summary, *Education and the Arab Spring: Resistance, Reform, and Democracy* plays a significant role in filling a gap in the research literature by shedding light on the status of education in the Arab region, which is one of the largest areas in the world, both before and after the Arab Spring. It provides a valuable guide for decision makers, educators, and the general public from inside and outside the Arab world. At the same time, the book criticizes the states of democracy in education in the Arab world and provides a guide for educators on how to teach democracy in the classroom. The book raises essential questions that might shape the future of education in the Arab region: What is the impact of hegemonic power on education globally, and how did it contribute to education in the Middle East and North Africa? What are the issues that face non-Muslim minorities in education? The book,

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moreover, disregards some important aspects of education that were introduced after the Arab Spring revolutions. For example, the book did not address any chapter that explores education in Syrians' refugee camps in or out of Syria. These outstanding questions can be seen as a limitation and summons for readers to think deeply and critically about the status of education in the Middle East and North Africa after the Arab Spring. It can also be seen as recommendations for future studies for those interested in education in the Arab world.

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