

Book Review

Mona Al-Smadi, "Arab Spring Should Arise at Schools: Not In The Streets". The Two Pillars of Educational Reform: Liberating Minds and Hearts. Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013, 90 pages, \$62.70.

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The Arab Region is struggling with daily threats to peace and security. The mass media situates this struggle in any number of differing paradigms depending upon the particular perspective of the news outlet: geopolitical, religious/secular etc. Yet, there is a further possible concept that can be employed. In a recent study, Mona Al-Smadi, a Jordanian researcher seeks to understand this crisis from an educational perspective. Dr. Al-Smadi argues that the people in the streets, not just ruling elites, can effect economic, financial, political and social change. The main impetus for this change comes from education. A true "*Arab Spring*" can arise through the educational process.

Mona Al-Smadi (with the support and help of Lambert Academic Publishing in Germany) touches a raw nerve (*mettre le doigt sur la plaie*) by speaking to the root of the problem as she sees it. Putting *political* goals aside, she finds the way to address the current strife by expanding methods, skills and qualifications in the Arabic educational system both in general and in her home country of Jordan.

The book analyzes the educational system in a rational way. It speaks on liberating minds and hearts with four chapters expounding her understanding of the educational process and its' adaptation to the Jordanian educational system. This book addresses her educational view, affirming that education has to be transformed to accommodate different periods and generations. Dr. Al-Smadi has been influenced by the work of Paulo Freire and his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) wherein lies a call for a new relationship between, students, teachers and society. Freire refers to a "banking" model where students have knowledge deposited into them as money is deposited into a bank. Students are empty vessels that are to be filled with knowledge. Freire advocates a model that is more formative of the human person; individuals seek education to become more fully human not simply vessels for knowledge.

Al-Smadi focuses on the Arab regions ways of teaching and how the Arab spring has grown from pedagogy of silence and blind obedience. The current Arabic educational system functions more in the banking model rather than the human formation model. New methods need to be developed based on Freire's theories in both relationships and pedagogy. Such methods would effect changes in the mutual relations between teacher/student, teacher/teacher, teacher/community and ways of teaching and learning- speaking/silent, knowing/ignoring. Al-Smadi believes in more progressive, cooperative and effective teaching methods for the regions' pupils. Education is the key that will liberate students' minds and hearts and ultimately unlock the door to a global society of peace and prosperity.

Liberating hearts requires an education that includes values and ethics. Without values, there may be *learning* but there will be no real *education*. The substance of education is personal growth in all aspects of one's life. A major part of the teachers' mission is to help students develop appropriate values. This mission must be nourished by the teachers own example and witness of the truth. Teachers are to be models and builders of truth in their communities and as such should be people of honesty, compassion, sympathy, kindness and courage.

Mona Al-Smadi is a Jordanian national. She studied at and is now an assistant professor at Al-Balqa University. As such she is a product of the Jordanian educational system. All education in Jordan is administered centrally by the

Jordanian Ministry of Education which directs the values and ethical standards for teaching. While Al-Smadi has been formed by the system, she seeks to look beyond it working to achieve better educational outcomes within the context of her own culture and society.

I was very impressed by the last chapter which presents an important point: education is not only about liberating minds and hearts but also must provide the resources (curriculum, environment, areas of study) needed for a good education to occur. This mandates each person be responsible for education and each of us need to be liberated for greater freedom and democracy.

"Arab Spring Should Arise at School" means that revolt can come from a new educational approach. Greater attention to schooling and education can better develop the country and serve the person. "Education in life, for life and to life," as we look towards a better future.