

The University and Its Production of Citizenship, Values and Practices: A Case Study of a Sample of University Students

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Abstract:

This study aimed at looking for some of the practices and values that the university instills in students as it is among the institutions which are entrusted with preparing students and equipping them with a variety of values, scientific and cognitive skills. It is also a producer of elites and cadres responsible for advancing society in the future. Furthermore, it is one of the institutions of socialization that work to shape students and provide them with a set of skills and values, such as citizenship, making them socially active both within and outside the university campus. The study concluded that the university produces students who embody certain citizenship values like sense of belonging, while revealing a lack of participation in public affairs and voluntary work.

Keywords: University, University student, Values, Citizenship.

Introduction

The university represents the cornerstone in building nations, homelands, and citizens. It is one of the institutions that work towards achieving public policies and sustainable development for society. It is also a key institution in advancing society or declining it. It cannot be separated from the reality of society as the university's philosophy fundamentally stems from the philosophy of the society. The university bears a type of social responsibility towards the society that established it for serving and meeting its needs. This responsibility is not limited to providing academic knowledge to students but also includes producing a community of citizenship. It is a community in which university students are prepared to become citizens within the university campus, embodying various values of citizenship such as belonging and loyalty. They practice their citizenship as contemporary and active students and socially engaged in and outside the university campus.

The functions of university are not limited to knowledge production alone, but also encompass a fundamental and sensitive role which is the social upbringing of students. It equips them with a variety of skills and values that make them more capable of initiative, social and political change, and more aware of their social environment. This enables students to engage in critical and constructive thinking, participate in public affairs, learn political skills such as strike, voting, candidacy, joining student associations or organizations, collective participation and volunteer work. This is achieved through lectures, scientific seminars, conferences, and discussions led by professors.

The universities also contribute to students' understanding of the social and political situation in their community and teach them how to articulate their citizenship through readings and discussions¹.

Statement of the Problem

Throughout history, the Algerian society has faced various security events and social disturbances, which disrupted its balance and hindered its progress. The most prominent events were the October 5th, 1988, protests of January 5th, 2011, and the events of Ghardaïa. These crises threatened the cohesion of society and hindered the development of a strong civil society, particularly in the absence of the concept of citizenship. This concept is the regulating force for social, political, and religious diversity within one society, and its absence leads to division, conflict, and insecurity within it.

The idea of establishing a new civilized society based on justice and equality, where sectarian and ideological divisions are abolished, stability is promoted, and political and social crises are avoided, can only be achieved through the establishment of a citizenship society. This society requires cooperation among all traditional and civil institutions to foster it.

Based on what has been mentioned, it is necessary to examine the role of the university in producing values of citizenship among university students by posing the following question: Does the university produce students who embody values of citizenship within the university campus?

Research Questions

- What are the most prominent values of citizenship adopted by students within the university campus?
- Are students' practices in the university campus hindering or promoting citizenship?

Hypothesis

The university contributes to the socialization process by equipping students with active citizenship values which reflects on their behaviours and citizenship practices.

Objectives of the Study

The present study aimed to identify the role of the university in providing students with citizenship values. It also aimed to understand the concept of citizenship as practices carried out by students within the university and determine which citizenship values are adopted by university students.

The Study Key Terms

To determine the terms of the study, we provided theoretical and operational definitions to identify their dimensions and indicators in the field.

¹ Anwar Mohamed Morsi, Educational Institutions and Their Role in Socialization, Dar Al-Wafa for Printing and Publishing, p. 145.

-University: It is the educational institution that provides students who have obtained the baccalaureate with theoretical knowledge and vocational training to prepare them for professional life as productive individuals².

We operationally mean by university here the University of Ibn Khaldoun in Tiaret, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

-Values: *The Dictionary of Social Terminology* defines values as everything that is done or given value to something else. Value is sometimes referred to as something precious, desired, or sought after for subjective reasons or psychological, social, and economic considerations³.

We have defined values operationally as the set of social rules and standards that the university student acquires from the university. These values work on developing his or her personality, guiding his or her behaviour, and organizing his or her practices. They determine his or her form of interaction with the social environment and prepare him or her to be socially active and a responsible citizen.

-Citizenship: "Citizenship" is a social and historical concept with multiple dimensions, where the legal aspect intersects with the cultural one. It represents an objective that individuals seek to gradually achieve within the framework of their social development. The nature of citizenship in any society is determined by the extent of political transformations and the level of civilization maturity. This concept is subject to continuous changes over time and evolves from ancient times to the modern era.

The concept of citizenship evolved from ancient times, with its roots tracing back to the era of the Greek state (Athens), where it emerged as the first democratic model for politica

I practice based on achieving equality among individuals. Despite the development of this concept over time, it still centres on effective political participation and collective decision-making. However, "citizenship" has developed to include non-obligatory duties that surpass the rights granted, making it based on commitments to authority and its public functions.

During the Roman era, citizenship was different as this concept was limited solely to Romans. It did not extend to all inhabitants, but only to Romans, which later created a clear disparity. The concept then evolved among liberals to reflect equality between rights and duties, focusing on achieving a balance between civil and political rights. In the modern era, citizenship became linked to the nation-state which represents the geographical space where rights and duties are practised. The rights possessed by citizens in their country are not granted outside of it.

Thus, citizenship is defined as the status that a person has as a full member of a specific community, and it includes three elements: civil, political, and social⁴.

² Abdelmalek Boulechfar, "The Functions of the Contemporary University: A Theoretical Analysis of the Main Explanatory Approaches," *Maalem Journal for Legal and Political Studies*, Issue Three, 2018.

³ Atef Gheit, *Sociology Dictionary*, Dar Al-Maarifa Al-Jamiiya, p. 50.

Citizenship has been defined operationally as the actions, practices, and mutual relationships between the student and the university, where the university students can meet their needs, exercise their rights, fulfil their duties, and contribute effectively.

-University student: The university student is a young individual with his/her own characteristics, qualities, and specific needs. He/she is distinguished by a certain level of intelligence and a set of scientific knowledge. He/she has aspirations and goals that society expects from his/her. His/her academic degree has enabled him/her to receive higher education⁵.

In this study, the university student refers to the population around which the study will be conducted based on their academic competencies and knowledge level. These are second-year Master's students at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Sociology, specializing in Communication Sociology and Urban Sociology, their total number is 68 students.

-Research Methodology: The methodology is the set of important and organized steps followed by the researcher in addressing the topics under study. It holds significant importance in sociological studies. In this study, we adopted the descriptive-analytical method to attain an accurate description of citizenship values and the key practices related to them among the students, as well as offering a sociological analysis of these practices.

-Theoretical Approach: The theoretical approach forms a cognitive framework that guides the researcher's thought and serves as a starting point to understand, analyze, and interpret the phenomenon under study. The researcher cannot begin from scratch; he/she must build upon the principle of the accumulation of science and knowledge. To ground our study and approach it theoretically, we used Pierre Bourdieu's theory of production and Jürgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere.

-Research Population: It is defined by Madeleine Gravier as a group of elements that share one or more common characteristics, distinguishing them from other elements in the study⁶.

In our study, the research population is represented by Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Sociology of Communication, which constitutes the setting of the study. As for the population of the study, it is represented by second-year Master's students specializing in Sociology of Communication and Urban Sociology.

The second-year Master's students (68 students) were chosen as the sample for the study because they have the most experience at the university and a better awareness and understanding

⁴ Bekkis Nouredine, Rezgui Nawal. How to Become a Bad Citizen in Algeria? Dar Sarah for Publishing and Distribution, p. 6.

⁵ Mazzrara Naima. "The Reality of the Algerian University Student." Conference on Diagnosing the Reality of the University Student, University of Algiers 2, 2016.

⁶ Maurice Angers, translated by Bouzid Sahraoui. *Methodology of Scientific Research in the Human Sciences*. Dar El-Qasbah, p. 62.

of the concept of citizenship within the university. It is also due to the lectures, seminars, conferences, and skills they have acquired throughout their university journey.

-The Sample and Sampling: A sample is defined as the partial group on which the researcher applies their study, and it should represent the characteristics of the total research population⁷.

The process of selecting a part of the research population is called sampling. In our study, we relied on purposive sampling of second-year Master's students, represented by 68 participants.

Data Gathering Tools

– **Observation:** It is defined as the organized attention or focus on a phenomenon or object through the senses. It involves gathering our experiences based on what we see or hear about⁸.

In our study, we depended on non-participatory observation by attending and following the students in lecture halls, during directed work sessions, in the library, at the university café, and in the public area where students gather. The purpose was to track and monitor various practices and interactions among the students, both with each other and with the internal environment of the faculty, in order to describe and sociologically analyze these practices. We used observation as a tool for research into the students' practices without revealing our identity as researchers or the purpose of our study to achieve a genuine understanding of the students' behaviours.

-Questionnaire: It is defined as one of the data collection techniques in social sciences. It is a tool consists of a set of questions directed, sent, or handed to individuals chosen for the study, so they write their answers about the provided questions, and then returned to the researcher⁹.

In the current study, we used the questionnaire technique. The first section was dedicated to the personal information of the participants, while the second section aimed to identify the most important values of citizenship that the student has acquired from the university. In the third section, we focused on the student's community practices.

Table 1: (Characteristics of the Research Population)

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	12	17.65
	Female	56	82.35
	Total	68	100
Age	20-25 years	45	66.18
	25-30 years	23	33.82
	Total	68	100

⁷ Slatnia Belkacem, Hassan El-Djilali. *Foundations of Scientific Research*. Diwan of University Publications, p. 128.

⁸ Djoudet, Azoui Atoui. *Research Methods in Scientific Research*. Dar Al-Thaqafa for Publishing and Distribution, p. 201.

⁹ Ahmed Badr. *Research Methods in Information Science and Libraries*. Dar Al-Mareekh for Publishing and Distribution, p. 17.

Major	Sociology of Communication	34	50
	Urban Sociology	34	50
	Total	68	100

Source: Prepared by the researcher.

The Sociological Comment on the Table:

After the statistical processing of the distributed questionnaire data, we observe a high percentage of females in the gender variable (82.35%) compared to (17.65%) for males. This is attributed to the prevailing culture in society, which places importance and social status to the educated and employed woman. The lower percentage of males at the university is due to the social responsibility placed on young men, who are socially tasked with earning a livelihood, which leads them to enter the labour market at an earlier age.

The University and Its Production of Citizenship Values

Different institutions in society have a certain social responsibility toward the society which is represented by preserving its identity and providing it with various social values. The university, in turn, is continuously obligated to produce knowledge and improve the social, political, cultural, and economic conditions of society. It contributes to the production and dissemination of knowledge and the creation of elites and cadres needed by society. University education supports sustainable development and contributes to the advancement of societies. A sound higher education system necessarily leads to the improvement of society as a whole. The university is inevitably influenced by the culture of the society in which it exists; therefore, it is impossible to study the university sociologically without understanding the various social contexts in which it has developed.

The university's social responsibility is not limited to knowledge production; it also provides society with culture and various social values like citizenship through the socialization process of students. This process is shared with other institutions as the family, school, and others. Among the values the university seeks to produce is citizenship values; it works to strengthen the spirit of citizenship among students, and prepares them to be responsible citizens who actively participate in the development and transformation of society.

Higher education plays a significant role in developing students' awareness and equipping them with citizenship values, as confirmed by the fieldwork of our study. The students indicated that they acquired from the university loyalty and national belonging (48.53%), followed by freedom of expression (33.82%). This was supported by university teachers who encouraged students to express their opinions through scientific discussions during lectures or directed work sessions. Meanwhile, (17.65%) of the students stated that they acquired the value of cooperation and collective participation through the assigned group works.

Through the observation of students' social interactions within the university, we found that there is a difference between the values they received from the university and their behaviours and

practices within it. At the university, they were taught teamwork and volunteerism, yet the students' practices deny this. We observed a sense of individualism, a lack of group spirit, and a tendency for students to focus on themselves by not sharing information or participating in volunteer activities for the benefit of the group, especially if the work does not benefit them. These practices hinder citizenship because individualism, tribalism, and sectarianism create imbalance and violence, particularly when the public civic sense of individuals is absent and individual interests outweigh the common good. This threatens to divide and fragment the society.

We also found that students comply with citizenship behaviours due to the law. For instance, respecting others' opinions, refraining from offensive language, and avoiding cheating occur only in the presence of the teacher, who represents a coercive authority compelling students to comply out of fear of exclusion or disciplinary actions. Citizenship fades in the absence of the law.

Additionally, there is a lack of environmental citizenship among students which is evident in their neglect of cleanliness and their vandalism of educational resources like writing on walls and desks, especially during exam periods.

Moreover, we noticed the absence of community participation among students, as they refrain from voting, participating in elections, or joining civil associations. The percentage of students not involved in civil associations was (91.18%), while only (9.92%) of them reported being members of such associations.

Conclusion

Universities can play a pivotal role in promoting citizenship values among students by adopting various strategies, including teaching modules in curricula enhancing awareness of national rights and duties, and organizing student activities like events and workshops that open a space for dialogue and discussion on national issues. Additionally, training teachers on methods for instilling citizenship values in students is a necessary step, and encouraging students to participate in community service projects greatly contributes to fostering a sense of belonging. Through these efforts, universities can contribute to building a more aware and engaged civic society.

In this study, we attempted to explore the role of the university in instilling citizenship values in students. Based on our fieldwork and observations, we can say that the university, as a social institution, influences and is influenced by the culture of society, and contributes to providing students with citizenship values. However, these values remain more theoretical and philosophical in nature.

The university is not solely responsible for establishing the material and institutional foundations of citizenship and for creating a citizenship society, one that transforms an individual from biological to civil being, where equality and social justice are realized, civil and political rights are enjoyed, the right to expression and political and union affiliation is exercised, and full legal equality is achieved. The creation of a citizenship society is a comprehensive process involving all societal institutions, and the work among them is complementary and solidarity-based,

starting with the family where an individual acquires his /her first social values, up to school and university.

Based on the findings of our field study, the following recommendations can be made:

- Activating the role of the university in nurturing a spirit of citizenship among university students by incorporating lectures, guided works, seminars, meetings, and discussions on citizenship values.
- Encouraging students to engage in public affairs and volunteer and associative work both inside and outside the university campus.

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