



State Downsizing and Its Impact on Development of Citizenship Education: Iran's Experience

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 25 June 2020 Revised: 28 August 2020 Accepted: 10 February 2021 Online: 27 February 2021</p>	<p>The realization of citizenship rights is inextricably linked to the functioning of both political and educational systems. The size of State has a direct effect and the function of education system has an indirect effect on realization of citizenship rights. The purpose of this study is to investigate the downsizing of State in education and its impact on development of citizenship education with emphasis on Iran's experience. Methods of research, data collection and data analysis were qualitative (textual analysis), documentary and qualitatively oriented respectively. Findings show that the role of State in the education sector with regard to citizenship rights can be adjusted based on two approaches of maximum and minimum intervention. Research findings also indicated the adoption of conflicting but supportive laws by legislatures for both approaches. Thus, on the one hand, the State does not want to reduce its involvement in education sector and on the other hand, wants to reduce its control in accordance with Article 44 of the Iran's Constitution. The consequence of this situation is the dominance of the maximum presence of the State in the education sector in favor of the "Right to Education" and the failure to minimize to the detriment of citizenship rights and diversity in its methods.</p>
<p>KEYWORDS</p> <p>Citizenship Rights Citizenship Education Downsizing Privatization of Education State</p>	

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1. Introduction

At first it seems difficult to explain the subject of present article. This difficulty is due to our mental gap in the lack of connection between the two subjects of "State downsizing" and "citizenship education", while through considering the role of "citizenship rights", this gap can be filled. Therefore, it is necessary to first briefly mention the position of citizenship rights in this introduction with regard to the "right to education". Regardless of the many lexical and conceptual issues of "citizenship rights" that are widely discussed in the research literature (Ahier, Beck & Moore, 2003; Arnot, 2008, Birz ea, 2000; Brooks & Holford, 2009; Holford & Van der Veen, 2006), one of the most important human rights is the right of everyone to access education. The right to education has various dimensions. In one dimension, it can be divided into the right of basic education and right of higher education (Kundu, 2005). In the present age, without access to basic education, people's lives in all its aspects are very difficult. Deprivation of basic education means a lack of knowledge about subjects such as healthy nutrition, professional skills, job opportunities, wages and low incomes, and the power to fight for other citizenship rights (Wodon, Montenegro, Nguyen, & Onagoruwa, 2018). On one hand, the lack of access to right to basic education leads to deprivation of individuals in economic, social and economic aspects of life (World Economic Forum, 2017). On the other hand, access to higher education leads to achieving desirable standards of life, finding better job, and achieving self-actualization (Razzaqpour, 2011). Thus, it can be said that people's access to both levels of education is important. However, there is a fundamental difference between basic and higher education due to the role of government. The right to basic education is based on maximum commitment of the government to provide it for all citizens, while higher education emphasizes respect for pluralism, the role of the people and the commitment to maintaining diversity in the educational process (Shavali eh, 1999; Hemmati, 2007). It is in this context that the dialogue on the role of citizenship education makes sense. In basic education, governments have a responsibility to provide equal educational opportunities for all children, regardless of their race, religion, language, etc. In other educational grades, the State should give parents the opportunity to intervene in their children's education. Thus, citizenship rights in the field of education are wide-ranging, including the right to choose school, teacher, curriculum content, languages of instruction, and supervise principal and teacher performance (Englund, Quennerstedt & Wahlstrom, 2009). All these rights reflect the active role of the people in process of education and their involvement in citizenship education. The realization of these rights is possible when the role of State in the education system is more supervisory. Therefore, the role of State

should be maximum in the realization of "right to basic education" and minimal in the "right to higher education".

Given this distinction, the government's performance with regard to the right to education must be examined. At present, under international law, human rights obligations - much of which are concerned with citizenship rights - are responsibility of governments (Maftai, 2015). International treaties impose three types of obligations on member states: obligation to recognize and respect; obligation to guarantee and obligation to implement (Nash, 2009). The important question that arises is "what is the relationship between human rights - or civil rights - and the role of the state?". Naturally, this question also arises regarding the right to education. Therefore, in the first step, governments must recognize the right to education at both levels, commit to guaranteeing it equally for all its citizens, and fulfill its commitment. In the second step, the way the government works is considered and these questions are asked: How the government should act, to what extent it can interfere in the education process, whether it has the right to permit involvement of parents and social institutions in the education process, and finally, to what extent education system should be centralized or decentralized.

Given what has been said, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of State size on citizenship education with respect to citizenship rights. The basic presupposition of researchers is that when a State is large, its involvement in all aspects of people's lives, including the right to education, is widespread. Conversely, when the State is small, the opportunity for people to participate in all aspects of life and citizenship rights - including the right to raise children - is greater. In fact, there is an inverse relationship between the size of state and role of people in dominating their citizenship rights. The experience of advanced societies shows that the downsizing of state is defensible from both economic and political dimensions. From an economic point of view, the rule of the capitalist system agrees with the minimal presence of the state. Politically, democratic regimes see the downsizing of the state in favor of individual freedoms. Needless to say, this issue has been mainly considered by researchers from economic perspectives (Fretwell, Benus, & O'Leary, 1998; Green, 2002; Martin, 2001). The reason for this goes back to the antiquity of democracy in developed countries. In fact, minimal government intervention in matters such as education - as an inalienable right of parents - has led governments to consider many freedoms for parents (Arum, 1996; Clements, 2002; Hužvár, & Rigová, 2016). With regard to this

brief introduction, the purpose of present study was to investigate the downsizing of state and its impact on citizenship education with emphasis on the situation in Iran.

2. Research Method

This study was a qualitative comparative research using textual analysis. Also, for data collection, documentary method was used to check primary and secondary sources in the form of books, articles and Internet resources. Directional qualitative analysis method was used to analyze the data. This is used by researchers when previous theories or research on a phenomenon are incomplete or need further description and analysis (Elo, & Kyngäs, 2008). In this case, the purpose of directional content analysis is to validate and expand the conceptual framework of the theory or to present alternative theories.

3. Results

Analysis of sources shows that different results can be identified and explained in four sections: the position, role and size of government; position of the government with regard to citizenship rights; government downsizing and citizenship education and identifying the legal foundations of government downsizing in Iran:

- *Identify and Explanation of Position, Role and Size of State*

After World War II, development policies can be divided into three distinct periods. The first period began at the end of World War II and lasted until the late 1970s. During this period, most theorists and policymakers believed in the existence of a "great state" (Bell & Hindmoor, 2009). It was also widely believed that governments should take charge of everything. In practice, however, the large-scale government faced declining of productivity, efficiency, inflexibility and irresponsibility. In the second period, proponents of a free economy and government downsizing (the Chicago School or neoliberals) saw private sector development as a perfectionist and sought to limit the role of government (Weiss, 2010). During this period, most experts believed in the role of market and free economy. The motto of the first period was "Government as engine of development" and the motto of the second period was "Small is beautiful", although both approaches did not lead to sustainable development in practice (Afonso & Jalles, 2011). Nowadays and in the third term, the goal is to establish "good governance" meaning that citizens exercise their legal rights, fulfill their obligations and duties, and resolve their disputes in various social spheres (Maidari & Khairkahan, 2004). In fact, in this period, the nature of the problem has changed. In previous periods, the issue was the

size of government, but now the goal is the quality of government and the extent of its belief in freedom and decentralization (Hall & Pfeiffer, 2009). Good governance is a new approach to sustainable development in which the interaction of government, private sector and civil society is essential for the development of society. Although good governance seems to be a political term, it can be applied to any system, organization, or institution. In fact, those involved in any organization should be transparently accountable for their performances. Therefore, the development of any country depends on the observance of the rules of good governance, the participation of the people in decisions, the accountability of the government, effectiveness of government, observance of the law, and control of corruption (Michalski, Miller & Stevens, 2001). According to this theory, both the government and the market, as social institutions, have shortcomings and defects in their performance. Achieving development requires eliminating of shortcomings. In fact, the key to development is to provide the conditions that enable the government to perform its duties and to direct the development of the market to the public interest. However, according to the new theory, both a weak government and a strong government cause social crises. Table 1 shows the major differences between the three approaches.

Table 1. The process of changing the position, role and size of government

Subject	Governmentalism	Neoliberalism	Good governance
Time	1945 - 1970	1980-1990	1990- present
Position of Government	Government as successor to the market	Market as successor to the government	Eliminate shortcomings of market and government
Role of Government	Government as a factor of development	Government as an obstacle to development	Government as a good governor
Size of Government	Enlargement of Government	Government downsizing	Meritocracy, Supervision of civil institutions

• *Explanation of Government Position with Regard to Citizenship Rights*

Analysis of research data shows that some researchers attribute the growth of government activities to responding to the various demands of citizens in a democratic system (Edwards, 2005). In this regard, three different factors are mentioned: First; in a democratic government, citizens determine what goods and services the government should provide, and how to reduce its negative

effects (Mulder, 2004). Accordingly, the public sector reflects the average of citizens' requests (Holcombe, 1989). The impact of this factor is greater in countries with weak private sectors than in other countries because in response to the demand and needs of citizens, the proper supply is not made by the private sector. Second; historically with the expansion of suffrage and its popularization, the poor have been able to play a significant role in the selection of governments. Indeed, instead of clinging to the market economy, the poor seek strong government support (Bakst & Tyrrell, 2017). As a result, the poor class imposes their financial, economic, social, and educational demands on governments in a variety of ways. Of course, to increase the support of the poor, who make up the majority of society in many developing countries, governments are also increasing their involvement in various areas of people's lives (Lindert, 2004). Third, Social groups can increase the size of the government by using influential forces and exerting political pressure. In fact, these groups are looking for benefits that will be borne by the people. Thus, stakeholders emphasize the greatness of government when their interests require maximum government intervention (Richardson, 2000). Of course, the interests of stakeholders can be different in that they can oppose government interference. All three factors can be considered as influenced by demand theory. Against this theory, there is supply theory.

According to supply theory, government growth is not due to citizens' demand but to government inefficiency and motivations of politicians (Manzo, 2013). Supply theory is also divided into three general approaches: First, the budget maximization approach. To increase their budget, bureaucrats are constantly increasing their scope of activities. In fact, increasing the budget provides them with greater benefits, power, and influence (Garrett & Rhine, 2006). Second, the deception approach means that government officials can deceive people about the size of the government. In fact, citizens think that the size of government depends on amount of taxes they pay. Third, the monopoly approach means that governments are inherently monopolistic and seek to increase their dominance (Aghaei Toogh, 2007).

- *Explanation of Relationship between Government Downsizing and Citizenship Education*

Small state is an economic-political concept and has been introduced in the field of political economy since the late 1970s (Rama, 1999). During this period, an ideological attack on the presence of the state in the economy was introduced and the theory of structural adjustment was introduced as a new ideology of "development minus government" idea (Aleksandrovich & Upadhyaya, 2015). Of course, there is no definite agreement among economists on the question of whether government intervention in the economy will accelerate the development process or vice

versa. A group of economists offer suggestions and arguments for downsizing the government to achieve a more prosperous economy (Baz Mohammadi & Cheshmi, 2006). According to them, government intervention and expansion of its activities will increase costs. Also, the loss of capital in the public sector is much higher than in the private sector. Increased taxes and higher government borrowing reduce the financial resources of citizens and the private sector, as well as reduce their incentive to invest, take risks and engage in high-productivity activities. Also, declining returns on government activities lead to inefficient allocation of available resources, slow response to compensation for mistakes, and little adaptation to environmental changes and new technologies. For these reasons, the inefficiency of the state economy is the most important challenge that its proponents have not been able to prove otherwise (Bryan, 2013).

In addition to the inefficiency of the government in the economic sector, its advantages and disadvantages can be mentioned in other sectors of society. Here it is important to note two points: First, proving the efficiency or inefficiency of government may be more difficult in other sectors than in the economy. Second, the complexity of non-economic activities can partly justify the role of government. One of the areas in which governments are required to intervene and in which society demands government participation is education. However, as mentioned in the introduction, the type and extent of this intervention is not precisely defined (Ashley, 2014). Of course, there is agreement among all on the government's involvement in education. While those in favor of maximum government presence view education in terms of social security, those in favor of minimum presence view it in terms of citizenship rights. Proponents of the maximum presence of the government in the education sector consider one of the duties of governments to provide all kinds of security - including educational security - (Larani, 2010; Navidnia, 2003). Their main argument is that the threat to educational security is a threat to social security. Therefore, the education of the young generation cannot be left to social groups, private sector or parents. On the contrary, the opposition believes that providing educational facilities for all people is the duty of government, but it is not necessary to interfere it in all aspects of education (Razzaqpour, 2011).

This issue can be better explained by separating the two concepts of citizen and citizenship rights. The word citizen has two social and legal meanings. On the one hand, this term refers to the way human interaction in the social environment and on the other hand, it is related to a set of rights (Rezaeipour, 2006). Therefore, the size of the government is sometimes in favor and sometimes to the detriment of citizens' rights. The size of the state means its widespread involvement in all aspects of people's lives - including education - can benefit poor children whose

families are reluctant to send them to school for a variety of reasons - economic, cultural or religious. Compulsory education is the best form of government intervention to support citizenship rights (UNESCO, 2014). But at the same time, downsizing the government has benefits that cannot be simply ignored. Downsizing government and reducing its involvement in education also has benefits. Some of these benefits are: increasing the competitive environment between teachers and improving their efficiency, reducing school budget deficit, adjusting bureaucracy, increasing competitiveness of schools, improving economic situation of teachers, increasing parental participation in various aspects of education, reforming formal and informal programs and citizenship education according to interests of all stakeholders (Kharisma & Pirmana, 2013).

- *Identification of Legal Foundations of Citizenship Rights and Downsizing of Government in Iran*

According to the theoretical results presented so far, in this section we will examine the current situation in Iran from the perspective of approved laws. The Constitution of Iran, based on Islamic ideology, enumerates rights and freedoms for the individual. Second principle of Article 6 of the Constitution respects for the dignity and high value of human being and its freedom with responsibility before God. Paragraph 7 of the third principle of the Constitution refers to the provision of political and social freedoms within the law. In addition, Articles 19 to 42 refers to the equality of Iran's people of all races and ethnicities, protection of their lives and property, right to housing and employment, and prohibition of inquisition and torture. Also, as examples of civil rights, the right to private property is emphasized in Article 46, the right of human property to one's own destiny in Article 56, and the administration of justice in Article 61 (Razzaqpour, 2011; Ghazi, 2017). Article 44 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran regulates the economic system based on three sectors: Public, cooperative and private, and while explaining each of these sectors, the rules, territory and conditions of each are enacted into law. The general policies of Article 44 of the Constitution also emphasize the expansion of public participation and the private sector. Accordingly, the government did not have the right to engage in new economic activity outside the scope of Article 44 and was obliged to transfer any other activity to the cooperative and private sectors by the end of the fourth five-year plan (2005-2009) (Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, 2007). In this regard, according to Article 13 of the Constitution of Iran and Article 88 of the "Law on Financial Regulation of the Government", which was approved by the Cabinet in 2002, ministries, institutions and companies - all or part of their duties and activities are providing social, cultural, service or welfare services - obliged to hand over these activities to the non-governmental sector (Islamic Parliament Research Center, 2002).

- *Analysis of Iran Situation*

Despite the fact that Article 44 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran has divided the economic system into three parts, in practice the public sector has a major share. A study conducted by the Institute for Trade Studies and Research (2017) shows that in the last hundred years, in terms of government intervention, the Iran's economy has gone through three different stages: The first stage in which the government by creating various monopolies prevents private sector to enter the market and act as a serious competitor. This phase was from beginning of the last century and continued until the end of the 1980s. The second stage, which began in 1988, can be called the "failure of state." At this stage, marketing, adjustment policies, price liberalization, and licensing to the private sector brought the country's economic growth into a new phase (Torbat, 2020). In the third phase, known as a "government revival" phase, problems with the implementation of adjustment policies, including rising inflation and a slump in productive activity, caused the government's economic role to increase again.

In other words, in this period, the goal of policymakers was not to maintain or eliminate government domination, but to provide interaction between the government and the private sector (Salehi-Isfahani, 2019). What we are facing now, largely influenced by the role of political actors - such as Iran's relation with the West and the US sanctions against Iran - indicates a further decline in private sector role and an unintended increase in the government's share of the economy (Mir Ahmadi & Rashidi, 2014). Of course, this maximum presence of the government is not limited to the economic system and is very colorful in other social systems - for example, the educational system. However, the analysis of the current situation of Iran shows that despite the stipulation of various articles of the constitution on the role of the non-governmental sector in the process of citizenship education, there is not much citable report on the implementation of these laws in formal and official sources. Nevertheless, the report of Islamic Parliament Research Center on the implementation of Article 88 in the field of education is significant. According to the report, the Ministry of Education formed a committee consisting of five deputy ministers and an advisor to the minister. The committee defined its policy for the implementation of Article 88 in three stages: purchasing services from the non-governmental sector, participation of the non-governmental sector in education, and transfer of schools management to the non-governmental sector (Abdoollahi, & Bozorgi, 2011). The project was accompanied by the transfer of school management to the private sector, while school ownership remained with the government. However, according

to the report, the implementation of Article 88 in the field of education have faced challenges such as not convincing public opinion, lack of teachers' collaboration and cooperation, unclear method of assigning schools, failure to determine the exact duties of investor, and a lack of attention to staff reductions and reorganization.

5. Conclusion

Numerous principles of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran impose various duties on the government, the fulfillment of which is clearly in conflict with the policies of state downsizing. Therefore, it is very difficult to justify the government's downsizing policy for the education sector in the light of the current Iran's constitution. The constitution was approved in a revolutionary atmosphere in the early 1980s. In that political climate, members of the Islamic Parliament approved that education be free for all until the age of 18, and declared it the duty of the government to provide educational facilities. Thus, over the past four decades, the government has tried to provide educational opportunities for all incurred heavy costs for the construction and equipping of schools and teachers' salaries. At the same time, the government has tried to transfer the administration of schools to the private sector in order to fulfill Article 44. What has happened in practice is creating dissatisfaction for both those who support and those who oppose the government's role in education. Proponents of government intervention are dissatisfied with the transfer of schools to the private sector, calling it unconstitutional. Opponents of the government's role also argue that the Ministry of Education has not taken its role seriously in downsizing, restricting the transfer of school affairs to the current administration, while the investor has no right to receive registration fees from parents, hiring a teacher or determine content of educational programs and activities. These findings show that the Iran government's performance to reduce its role has not been very successful. Thus, in practice, the government is the main player in the administration of education system and has not provided much opportunity for the realization of citizenship rights and provision of various methods of citizenship education. In fact, the government, on the one hand, is affected by the expansion of the bad economic situation and wants to reduce its spending on education, and on the other hand, due to inflationary conditions of economy and social pressure cannot delegate the education system to the private sector.

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