

Reflexive Education, Revolution, and Counter-Revolution: Reflections on my experiences in Bahrain

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This reflection arises out of my experience working in education reform in Bahrain during the politically fraught years between 2007 and 2011, and is informed by the concept of ‘reflective practice’ pioneered during the 1970s by MIT educationalist Donald A. Schön, and described in his influential 1983 book *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*.

Since Schön, Education development can be seen as partaking in a new, ‘reflexive’, or ‘second’ modernity, towards which the post-colonial polities of the Arab world are transitioning. Thus, the tensions between the ‘classic institutions’ of the region’s ‘first’ modernity,¹ post-colonial states and the expectations of the younger generations whose subjectivities have in part been shaped by ‘reflexive modernity’ change-drivers, ‘super-modernizing forces’, forms part context of the current political contestations on-going in the Arab world since 2011. Similarly, education partakes in the co-construction and mediation of new identities and new forms of political consciousness in ways that were not predicted by the ruling regimes. This leads to the displacement of the post-colonial state’s ‘determinate rules’ as increasingly autonomous citizens assuming the role of ‘rule-seekers’ exercising ‘reflective judgement.’²

I had worked in higher education in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region since 2002. My first degree had been in Arabic, and prior to my work in the GCC, I had worked in Cairo, and travelled extensively in the region. I worked at the College of Arts, University of Bahrain (UoB), 2007-8, and was involved in the start-up of Bahrain Teachers’ College (BTC). BTC replaced the UoB’s old College of Education, and was promoted as a ‘professional’ college focusing on professional practice – hence the centrality of reflective practice to the college’s work -- rather than the theory-led approach that had hitherto defined Bahraini education. BTC still describes itself as embracing an approach to education that is ‘learner-centred at every level’ and to ‘preparing teachers who are reflective, committed, and learner-centered mentors in their professional practice’ derived from ‘a continuing program of international best practice’³ However, the institution that exists today is a shadow, or perhaps a simulacrum, of the original vision.

BTC was part of the *Bahrain 2030 Vision*, and was launched in October 2008 under the auspices of the Crown Prince of Bahrain, the ‘factionalized’ Al Khalifa regime’s face of ‘reform’⁴ The vision was to focus on ‘shaping ... the government, society and the economy, based around three guiding principles: sustainability, fairness and competitiveness’⁵ *Bahrain 2030* was overseen by a para-state organisation, the

¹ Scott Lash. “Reflexivity as Non-Linearity.” *Culture, Theory, Society*. 20(2), p. 51.

² Ibid.

³ Bahrain Teachers College. “Mission”. Available at <http://www.btc.uob.edu.bh/contents.aspx?id=610a82c5-b34d-e211-a2f6-0022191ecec&gid=1> Accessed 27th September, 2014.

⁴ Christopher M. Davidson. *After the Sheikhs: The Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies*. (London: Hurst, 2012).

⁵ Bahrain Economic Development Board. “Economic Vision 2030” Available from: <http://www.bahrainedb.com/en/about/Pages/economic%20vision%202030.aspx#.U1LYU9I3suc> Accessed 29th September 2014.

Bahrain Economic Development Board (EDB), founded in 2000 on the initiative of the Crown Prince. The college worked closely with the EDB, whose website once highlighted among the EDB's major achievements the establishment of BTC and its sister college, Bahrain Polytechnic. I was Academic Head of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) during BTC's first year and a half of operations, with the responsibility to establish BTC's CPD programme for Bahraini educators. My letter of appointment stated:

You will be called upon to provide leadership in the development and recommendation of policies and procedures, to negotiate with the MoE [Ministry of Education] regarding content requirements, communication of opportunities, and options for delivery. A long-term plan for an integrated approach to professional development must be developed, and a network of providers must be established over the next few years.⁶

My role in professional development involved extensive school visits and teacher observations in all of Bahrain's neighbourhoods, so my work brought me into close contact with teachers and trainee teachers, school leaders, schools, and communities during a time of growing political and social tension.

At the heart of *Bahrain 2030* was the realization on the part of the reformist faction of the Al Khalifa regime that Bahrain urgently needed a coherent vision for a post-oil economy. Bahrain's oil reserves are all but depleted, and in 2011 as much as seventy-seven percent of Bahrain's oil production was supplied from the Abu Safah oilfield, administered by Saudi Aramco, making the state economically dependent on Saudi Arabia.⁷ This undermined the principal factor underpinning the survival of the 'allocative' GCC monarchies, the use of hydrocarbon revenues to fund 'the provision of public sector employment to most citizens, provided they meet the most basic of qualifications' in subsidized, unproductive jobs where 'citizens are not required to work to international standards'.⁸ Thus, one hidden source of tension in my work was that between regime 'reformers' advocating a post-oil economy and an education system to prepare students for work at international standards, and pro-Saudi 'hardliners,' preferring the continuation of the distributive 'oil-age' state, even at the price of Bahrain losing its economic independence to its larger and more powerful neighbour.

BTC's reform agenda was ambitious, encompassing approaches to education that were, in the context of Bahrain, highly innovative. In Bahrain's existing education system, typical in many ways of the 'institutions and processes of the post-colonial state, teachers with no real professional autonomy taught prescribed curricula generated centrally by the Ministry of Education. Education was teacher-focused, with students passively receiving knowledge through didactic lectures, with very little student interaction. Facts would be memorised, then assessed by end-of-course examination. The Ministry imposed on state sector schools a management style that emphasized surveillance, discipline, and control. In contrast, BTC approach emphasized educators' professional autonomy, discovery, and empowerment, developing students' knowledge and skills through active and student-centred learning.

⁶ Bahrain Teachers College. "Letter of appointment to Dr. Mike Diboll". 9th January 2009.

⁷ Jane Kinninmont. "Bahrain: Beyond the Impasse" (London: Chatham House, 2012).

⁸ Davidson. *Sheikhs* (p.54)

For Donald Schön, reflective practice was a way of transcending the limitations of what he called a ‘technical rationality’⁹ rooted anachronistically in early twentieth century positivism, which was responsible for ‘the crisis of confidence’ in the professions in mid-1970s America.¹⁰ For Schön, technical rationality had ‘fallen into disrepute’ and was ‘incomplete in that it fails to take account of practice in ‘divergent situations.’¹¹ Schön advocated ‘knowing-in-action’¹² leading to ‘artistry-in-action’¹³, where professionals become ‘researchers in the practice context ... not dependent on established theory and technique, but construct[ing] a new theory of the unique case.’¹⁴

Among the BTC faculty, it was widely felt that Schön’s critique was highly relevant to education in Bahrain, which was also undergoing a ‘crisis of confidence’. There, state-sector education was predicated upon an authoritarian version of positivistic education practice very similar to that Schön had criticized as ‘a hierarchy of knowledge [and] a ladder of status.’¹⁵ Internationally, reflective practice has since become instrumental in enhancing the empowerment of professional practitioners in education and beyond, and can be seen as part of a generational shift towards a more ‘reflexive’¹⁶ or ‘liquid’ form of modernity,¹⁷ moved forward by active citizens using a high level of personal and professional autonomy mediated through new technologies independently of state structures to maintain the ‘flow’ which characterizes these new forms of modernity.¹⁸

However, the project to help enable such transitions can be highly problematic in the GCC region, even in circumstances where, ostensibly at least, it is supposed to have the support of at least one faction of the ruling elite. As long ago as 1968, Samuel P. Huntington wrote of the ‘king’s dilemma’: absolutist monarchs would face a choice between the suppression of ‘modernizing forces,’ which could lead to rebellion; or permitting a modernization that undermined their rule through the empowerment of the aspirant middle classes.¹⁹ However, oil wealth enabled the Gulf rulers to have it both ways—to accumulate vast personal wealth and develop the surveillance and coercive forces required to immunize their rule against rebellion while meeting citizen’s expectations for a modernized infrastructure, secure ‘international’ level public sector salaries, subsidies and hand-outs, and modern consumption-orientated lifestyles.

This notwithstanding, in Bahrain in the 2000s the near-exhaustion of hydrocarbon reserves threatened this cosy state of affairs. Further factors intensify the potential of these ‘super-modernizing’ change-drivers in the region—GCC citizens’ unemployment or even unemployability in jobs requiring ‘international’ levels of skill; increasingly confident opposition movements emboldened by political change elsewhere in the Arab world; the squandering of wealth on vanity or prestige projects; poverty, discrimination,

⁹ Schön. *Reflective Practitioner*

¹⁰ Op. Cit. p.3

¹¹ Op. Cit. p. 48-9

¹² Op. Cit. 50

¹³ Op. Cit. 54

¹⁴ Op. Cit. 68

¹⁵ Op. Cit. 37

¹⁶ Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash. *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order.* (Stanford, CA: SUP, 1994).

¹⁷ Zygmunt Bauman. *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge, CUP, 2000).

¹⁸ Scott Lash. “Reflexivity”, pp. 51-55.

¹⁹ Samuel P. Huntington. *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1968)

statelessness, and sectarianism; and shifting geopolitical alliances.²⁰ All of these factors come into play in Bahrain, the least stable of all the Gulf regimes, at a time when the younger generation, through mass higher education and global interconnectedness through the internet were acquiring new perspectives and attitudes, and were developing new identities and cultural, social and political positions that made them less and less inclined to accept the status quo.

In a belated response to these problems, in 2004 the Bahrain Economic Development Board commissioned McKinsey consultants to research ways to develop a post-oil economy so that the Bahrain state did not become financially dependent on Saudi Arabia; the quasi-official *Gulf Daily News* reported a McKinsey representative as saying:

Bahrain must level the labour playing field, and create a skilled national workforce with well-paid jobs that will attract Bahrainis ... the low-wage private sector business structure cannot produce jobs for the one hundred thousand Bahrainis entering the labour market over the next ten years.²¹

BTC was founded in response to the report to facilitate the development of the kind of education needed to facilitate such an economic transformation, one which would encourage the sort of critical and creative thinking, active citizenship, intellectual and practical flexibility, and transferable skills mediated through a high level of ICT and new media literacy it was thought would be necessary to enable young Bahrainis to compete at international levels in a post-oil jobs market in the creative, financial, hi-tec, and service sectors. Reflective practice was at the heart of the college's approach to educator training and professional development.

In education, reflective practice has three²² essential features: a) it is a conscious process; b) it critically questions 'the assumptional structure' of knowing, teaching, and learning; and c) it gives rise to on-the-spot experiment and risk-taking. The aim is to stimulate active learning, open discussion, creativity and involvement, understanding that each learning experience is a unique encounter. This requires some sacrifice: the educator is no longer the central focus of learning (as was the case in Bahrain's existing education system), and must let go of 'comfort zone' teaching methods, the 'safety' of didactic teaching, the 'expert' role and the 'pleasures' of teaching as performance,²³ promoting instead a 'flow' in which both educator and students are co-practitioners in the construction of knowledge and the development of skills.

However, delivering this sort of education in Bahrain proved problematic. State-sector Bahraini educators are direct employees of the Ministry, a rigidly structured institution which is a direct extension of the surveillance and coercive power of the state. Political tensions increased throughout 2010, and the Crown Prince's 'reforming' faction lost out to the hardline faction around Bahrain's unelected Prime Minister

²⁰ Davidson, *Sheikhs* pp. 112-146

²¹ Quoted in "McKinsey on Labour Market Reforms", *Chan'ad Bahraini* September 21st, 2004 <http://chanadbahraini.blogspot.co.uk/2004/09/mckinsey-on-labour-market-reforms.html> (Accessed 24th September 2014)

²² Reva Brown and Sean McCartney. "Multiple Mirrors: reflecting on reflections" in David O'Reilly et al *Developing the Capable Practitioner: professional capability through higher education*, (London: Kogan Page, 1999, p. 21).

²³ Jennifer Butler. "From didactic expert to partner in learning" in David O'Reilly et al *Developing the Capable Practitioner: professional capability through higher education*, (London: Kogan Page, 1999, p. 34-8).

Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, continuously in office since ‘independence’ from Britain in 1971 and the real power behind the Al Khalifa throne. This deeply compromised education reform. Lip-service continued to be paid to reform in public rhetoric, but in reality the very last thing the Ministry wanted was for Bahraini educators to be consciously critical professional educators prepared to question ‘the assumptional structure’ of state-sector education and ‘take risks’ to ensure that all students of all sects and social classes as critical citizens and creative communicators. Rather, the Ministry required teachers to be automatons, and education to be about control, surveillance, and the containment of potential ‘disloyalty’.

My work took me to schools throughout Bahrain, and I was struck by the culture of fear the Ministry of Education instilled in its educators; by the way boy’s secondary schools especially looked, even smelled, like prisons, and were policed like prisons, especially in the poorer, majority-Shia villages that would later become the heartlands of the uprising: surveillance, control, and containment. I was reminded of the concept of the ‘hidden curriculum’, defined as ‘the (re)production of social stratification²⁴ in educational settings, the sense of ‘strong control wherein education ... and the curriculum in particular [are] seen as essential to the preservation of existing social privilege, and knowledge of one element of the population at the expense of less powerful groups.’²⁵

Having witnessed the reality of Bahraini state-sector schools – the elite are educated in the private sector and the kingdom’s institutionalised sectarianism ensured that the majority population generally have little choice other than the state sector -- I started to see how the education reform movement about which I had been so passionate was becoming mere *manzar* (surface appearance). Very expensive *manzar* at that, given the vast sums thrown at international consultants whose work I increasingly saw as pointless, a simulacrum of education reform constructed primarily for outside consumption while didactic, authoritarian instruction and student passivity continued as business-as-usual in the schools.

The Ministry was reasserting its control of the curricula, notably through its direct control of subjects deemed to be “culturally sensitive,” and therefore protected from the influence of education reformers. Thus, subjects like *The History of Bahrain* and *Islamic Studies* functioned as Trojan horses. BTC developed most of the curricula in consultation with a range of consultants, but these two subject areas were closely controlled by the Ministry placemen. The resulting curricula were so biased along sectarian, class, or tribal lines that many Shia students and educators felt the need to seek permission from religious authorities to make *taqiyya* – religious dissimulation to avoid persecution – before studying or teaching them. In this way, the ‘hidden curriculum’ of intellectual dishonesty, self-censorship, and humiliation re-entered education, bypassing any attempts at reform.

Increasingly, my involvement in reforming such a system seemed hopeless. While many teachers, especially the younger ones, sympathised with that aims of reform, they were often afraid of the consequences of doing what reform seemed to ask of them. Many had no trust in the Crown Prince’s credentials as a genuine reformer, or knew that even if he was sincere the fragmented nature of the Al Khalifa regime meant that reform would only be allowed to go so far before it was rolled back, leaving anyone who had advocated or implemented reform vulnerable. Bahrain’s sectarian glass ceiling meant

²⁴ Carrie Yang Costello. “The (Re)production of Social Stratification in Professional School Settings”, in Eric Margolis (ed.) *The Hidden Curriculum in Higher Education*. (London: Routledge, 2001).

²⁵ Michael Apple and Nancy King. “What do Schools Teach?” in R.H. Weller (ed.) *Humanistic Education* (Berkeley, CA: 1977).

that employment as a state-sector teacher was as good as it could get for many Shia university graduates from the poorer villages, who were all too aware of the surveillance capacity of the Ministry, and the relative vulnerability of foreign ‘reform’ consultants on short-term contracts. Against such a background, how was I to ask them to question the ‘assumptive structure’ of their practice?

Nonetheless, lacking any meaningful form of popular legitimacy, the Al Khalifa regime set great store on what might be called ‘reforming’ or ‘modernizing’ legitimacy: it was thought to be important for the survival of the sheikhs that they be seen as progressive technocrats, facilitating progress and the material wellbeing of the people they ruled. Thus, even as real reform was being suffocated, a simulacrum of reform was being puffed up. PR agencies organised what were ostensibly international academic education conferences in which local educators played no part; Ministry people supplied teachers with harmless ‘templates’ for reflective practice which they were expected to ‘personalise’ in fulfilment of their teaching qualifications; foreign managers brought in to make real reform happen were let go, to be replaced by new, more mercenary ones with backgrounds in PR and marketing.

But still we tried our best. In 2010, as part of our professional development, I and several of my Bahraini and overseas colleagues at BTC took a postgraduate award in Academic Practice, delivered on-campus in Bahrain by a British university. This award was referenced to the UK Higher Education Academy’s professional standards framework.²⁶ Working closely with colleagues, I mentored Bahraini candidates taking this course, establishing ‘critical friendship’ groups as low-risk fora to facilitate reflection and action research. In a co-authored 2011 paper, I argued that critical friendship provided:

... a parallel forum in which ideas and practices could be discussed and negotiated in a more creative, dynamic, and experimental manner than is possible with more traditional structures. This is especially important in intensive, change-rich educational situations where the pace, scale, and scope of change can often overwhelm educators.²⁷

If I had been completely honest I would have written ‘where the intrusions of state surveillance and authoritarian bureaucracy invariably intimidate educators,’ since this was the reality. Critical friendship notwithstanding, the trend towards reform as *manzar* continued, and we were intimidated into a kind of professional *taqiyya*: a psychological victory for the authoritarian regime and a defeat for reform. Reviewing the reflective journal based on my professional practice at BTC, completed for my postgraduate award, I realised that by 2010 I too was dissimulating, self-censoring, self-policing, giving in to a Ministry of Education of the mind. If I, who always had the option of returning to my native UK felt like this, I could only wonder how my Bahraini colleagues must have felt, who had no such option and for whom the Ministry’s surveillance could have the most dire consequences: so much for the possibility of “reform” under conditions of dictatorship. I began to see the Crown Prince as Bahrain’s

²⁶ Higher Education Academy, “UK PSF” (2010-13) Available at: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/professional/ProfessionalStandardsFramework.pdf> Accessed 2nd October 2014.

²⁷ John McKeown and Mike Diboll, “Critical friendship in international education reform: a journey to educational cultural convergence” *Mevlana International Journal of Education* (MIJE) Vol. 1(2), pp.15-26, 30 December, 2011. Available at <http://mije.mevlana.edu.tr/> Accessed 2nd October, 2014.

equivalent to Libya's Saif al-Islam Al Gaddafi, a 'business-friendly'²⁸, media-friendly technocrat affecting the veneer of reform, yet beneath that as autocratic and authoritarian as the rest of the regime.

After the Tunisian revolution of December 2010 it was obvious, considering the mounting tensions of the previous two years, that Bahrain would soon explode. Bahrain's revolution began on 14 February 2013, and in the absence of any significant public social space the Pearl Roundabout, a huge traffic junction in the middle of Manama's prestige financial and diplomatic districts, was occupied by thousands of protesters. This very rapidly became Bahrain's equivalent to the Tahrir Square of the Egyptian revolution, and the distinctive GCC monument at its centre became the most significant symbol of the uprising. At 3.00 a.m. on "Bloody Thursday", 17 February the security forces cleared the roundabout with great violence, leading to the deaths of several demonstrators including an elderly man who had his brains blown out by a shotgun held to his face. I was awoken before dawn by anguished calls from students, and the horrific images of the dead and dying began to circulate on the social media. I did my best to calm distraught students, comparing what was happening to the uprisings that had toppled the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin wall, little did I know that my internet use was already subject to surveillance.

Later that morning was the presentation ceremony for the postgraduate certificates in Academic Practice, attended by various dignitaries, including the Vice-Chancellor of the UK university that was running the programme. The drive down to the University of Bahrain, in the opposite direction to Pearl Square, was eerie: the road was deserted except for convoys of military vehicles, the university was all but deserted. University of Bahrain president Ibrahim Janahi was in business-as-usual mode, making small-talk and conducting the ceremony as if nothing had happened. I heard Janahi invite the VC to his suite for coffee, the VC declined in no uncertain terms, demanding to catch the first available flight home. It was a fitting epitaph for education reform in Bahrain. On 13 March, I witnessed the violent suppression of a peaceful pro-democracy demonstration on campus by regime forces and armed *baltajiyya* (loyalist vigilantes).²⁹ I fled Bahrain shortly afterwards and resigned my position from the UK. The university pre-empted this by terminating my contract immediately, alleging in a five-page letter that I had taken part in 'political and sectarian activities', citing surveillance of my Internet activity as evidence.³⁰

Saudi forces invaded Bahrain shortly before I left under the umbrella of the GCC's 'Peninsular Shield' mutual defence agreement. The counter-revolution had begun, martial law was declared, more blood and brains were spilled in the streets. The regime declared, military tribunals sentenced student demonstrators were sentenced to up to 15 years in prison,³¹ education leaders who had been prominent in the movement

²⁸ The EDB's slogan is "Business Friendly Bahrain", see Andrew Brück <http://cargocollective.com/andrewbruck/BRANDING-A-COUNTRY-BUSINESS-FRIENDLY-BAHRAIN> Accessed 2nd October 2014

²⁹ Bahrain Centre for Human Rights "Former University Professor's Testimony of the 13 March Incident, University of Bahrain" (2011) Available at <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/4862> Accessed 2nd October 2014.

³⁰ University of Bahrain, "Letter to Dr Mike Diboll" (22nd June 2011) Available on <http://mikediboll.wordpress.com/2012/02/22/letter-to-dr-mike-diboll-from-the-university-of-bahrain/> Accessed 1st December 2014.

³¹ Bahrain Centre for Human Rights "University Students Sentenced to 15 Years Imprisonment, and Ongoing Sham Trials" (2012) Available at <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/5113> Accessed 2nd October 2014.

for change were tortured and indefinitely detained.³² The state education system rapidly revealed the extent to which it was an extension of the coercive state power was apparent to all who had eyes to see. Writing to Education Minister Al Naimi, the *Middle East Studies Association* expressed their ‘deep concern over the widespread, on-going intimidation of the education sector in Bahrain,’ which involved ‘an unprecedented number of assaults, arrests, dismissals, and punishments affecting faculty, students, and staff’; these abuses were ‘an affront to the principles you profess’, and ‘severely undermine Bahrain’s international standing.’³³ The University of Edinburgh withdrew from a research agreement with the Bahrain Ministry of Education early in 2012,³⁴ but still the abuse continues.

My experiences in Bahrain indicate how reforms in superstructural areas like education are probably impossible unless or until more fundamental political reforms are enacted beforehand.³⁵ Despite a 2013 UK Parliamentary Committee report³⁶ (to which I contributed evidence³⁷) that found it ‘inexplicable’ that the Bahrain regime had not implemented meaningful reforms, the UK Government’s Foreign Office continues to insist that it ‘will continue to support and assist’ the regime’s supposed ‘reform’ efforts in the name of ‘stability.’ Such commitment, is doubtless led by the UK’s ‘export-led foreign policy’³⁸, of which “edubusiness”³⁹ the commercially-led, seller-buyer, exporter-importer, centre-periphery based concept to higher education internationalization, is part. Yet the UK’s acceptance at face value of the regime’s *manzar* reform facilitates the on-going abuses, and inhibits real reform in the country. With friends like the current UK government, the Al Khalifa regime can continue with impunity to make enemies of the majority of its citizens who demand popular sovereignty, and the current impasse of repression and resistance is likely to continue, and the future for education is bleak.

However, in understanding the generational dynamics of the Bahrain uprising (indeed much of this applies to the understanding of other Arab uprisings), it is crucial to consider that the subjectivities of the youth movements that have been driving change in Bahrain have been formed, are being formed, at least

³² Amnesty International. “Bahrain Teachers Face Further Time in Jail After ‘Nightmare’ Verdicts” (2012) Available at <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/bahraini-teachers-face-further-jail-time-after-nightmare-verdict> Accessed 2nd October 2014.

³³ Middle East Studies Association, Committee for Academic Freedom “Letters on Bahrain” (2012) Available at <http://www.mesa.arizona.edu/committees/academic-freedom/intervention/letters-bahrain.html> Accessed 1st October 2014.

³⁴ Chronicle of Higher Education “U. of Edinburgh Scraps Research Deal with Bahrain” (26th January 2012) Available at: <http://chronicle.com/blogs/global/u-of-edinburgh-scraps-research-deal-with-bahrain/31994> Accessed 2nd October 2014.

³⁵ Mike Diboll “Hard Lessons in Bahrain” *Higher Education Chronicle Review* 8th April, 2012. Available from: <http://chronicle.com/article/Hard-Lessons-in-Bahrain/131429/> Accessed: 2nd October 2014.

³⁶ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee *The UK’s Relationship with Saudi Arabia and Bahrain* (2013) Available from: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmfaff/88/88.pdf> Accessed 2nd October 2014.

³⁷ Mike Diboll. ‘Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee’ (22nd November 2013) Available from: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmfaff/88/88vw25.htm> Accessed 2nd October 2014.

³⁸ Foreign and Commonwealth Office “Second Anniversary of the Bahrain Independent Committee of Inquiry” (23rd November, 2013) Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/second-anniversary-of-bahraini-independent-commission-of-inquiry-report> Accessed 2nd October 2014.

³⁹ Allan Luke, “Educating the Other: Standpoint and Theory in the ‘Internationalization’ of Higher Education.” in Unterhalter and Carpentier *Global Inequalities and Higher Education: Whose interests are we serving?* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

in part in interaction with certain ‘super-modernising’ forces. Perhaps the most important of these are the internet and the global-local interconnectedness associated with the ‘2.0’ social media, and the massification of higher education, notably the huge participation of female students in undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Education, Health, the Humanities, and the Human and Social Sciences, which is rapidly opening up new areas of economic, social and political participation for Bahraini women in a manner in which the old, dependent, post-colonial modernity of the Al Khalifa client state finds hard to control.

The state’s response was to try to control these through its apparatus of surveillance and coercion. This has proved challenging in the case of the internet, ICT and social media, where at a crucial juncture the revolutionary youth clearly had the upper hand. The state’s response prior to the uprising was to try to funnel the internet through state-controlled proxy servers, but in this the state was almost always behind the technological and generational curve. Since the uprising, the state has been better able to control the internet, indeed to turn it aggressively against the opposition, through the buying-in of surveillance expertise from the North/West, with the UK playing a significant role.⁴⁰ However, both the revolutionary youth and the reformist opposition have proved resilient and inventive in circumventing this, and the prospect state control of the internet in any effective manner remains elusive.

The Al Khalifa state’s control of education has been much more effective since the state’s infrastructure of surveillance and coercion has been in place in the higher and compulsory education sectors since Bahrain achieved its partial independence in 1971. Nevertheless, while the state might try as much as it likes to control education, the macro-economic factors that push Bahrain towards economic diversification will not go away. Against such a background, reform of higher and compulsory education will have to resume if Bahrain is to educate young people in a way that will enable them to participate effectively in a post-oil world.

As the Bahrain state discovered in the years leading up to 2011, it is foolish to imagine that young people educated to be active, critical and creative learners will corral their activity, critical abilities and creativity in discreet boxes marked ‘education’ ‘employability’ and ‘the economy’, and not seek to become fully active, critical and creative citizens. This is especially the case when in the 2010s and beyond technological developments in education, and educational developments in technology push education and the new media ever closer together, and the younger generations can gain knowledge and skills more effectively through the new media, sidestepping state-sector education.

Political theory often holds ‘civil society’ responsible for holding the state to account, and if necessary reforming or even overthrowing it. One commentator argues, for example, that the Cold War uprisings against Stalinism ‘spoke the language of civil society’.⁴¹ Yet in Bahrain what are supposed to pass as civil society institutions are fronts for the sectarian kleptocracy or deeply penetrated by it. Against ‘civil society’ the Indian scholar-activist Partha Chatterjee posits ‘political society’, whose actors transgress

⁴⁰ The Guardian. “UK Company’s Spyware ‘Used Against Bahrain Activist’ Court Papers Claim” (12th May 2013) Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/12/uk-company-spyware-bahrain-claim> Accessed: 2nd October 2014.

⁴¹ John Keane *Civil Society: Old Images, New Visions*. Cambridge: Polity (1998, p. 5)

‘the strict lines of legality’ in struggles deemed ‘illegal’ and transgressive of ‘good civic behaviour’ -- transgressions necessary when ‘making a claim to habitation and livelihood as a matter of right.’⁴²

As counter-revolution and resistance are locked in an impasse, both education is emerging as crucial sites of political contestation in Bahrain, the prospect of an educative new media and education-through-new-media offer new horizons for political society action.

⁴² Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*. New York, NY: Columbia UP (2004, 40).