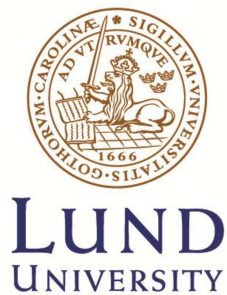# The Role of Education in Democratic Societies

Workshop at the Swedish Institute in Alexandria, Egypt

March 25-26, 2013

REPORT

25-26 March 2013 a joint workshop organised by the Swedish Institute in Alexandria, the network Universities and Institutes in Cooperation for Internationalisation (USI) and Alexandria University gathered researchers from Swedish and Egyptian Universities to discuss the role of education in democratic societies. Drawing on pedagogic experiences from Sweden and Egypt, and research on pedagogy, educational policies and democratization processes in Europe, the Middle East and international communities, the participants discussed the future role of education in Egypt and explored possibilities for collaborations within the fields of research and education.

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Welcome

Ambassador Birgitta Holst Alani wished all participants a warm welcome and described the Swedish institute in Alexandria as a dialogue institute with the commission to facilitate dialogue between Europe, the Middle East and North Africa on issues related to democracy and human rights. The institute has a special focus on the role of the youth, women and media in this respect. The institute has after the Arab Spring been focusing on premises for dialogue, like on how to debate and discuss in a democratic environment. A number of debates with political parties and NGOs have been organised and lately an Egyptian "Almedalen" was realized in Cairo with more than 1000 people in the audience. It is clear that there is a basic need of learning how to debate properly among the Egyptian youth. Once a month the institute brings together young Egyptians to discuss what it means to be a responsible citizen in a democratic environment and how to debate with tolerance for differing views. Ambassador Birgitta Holst Alani highlighted the role of education in these processes and expressed her gratitude and expectations for the upcoming seminar.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Lund University and Chair of the USI-network, Eva Wiberg, thanked the institute for hosting the event and informed the participants of the USI-network, which was established in 2006 with the aim of developing the cooperation between Swedish universities and the Swedish institutes in the Mediterranean area. There are five Swedish institutes around the Mediterranean: The Swedish Institute in Rome, The Swedish institute in Athens and the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul are all under the Ministry of Education. The Swedish Institute in Alexandria is a dialogue institute under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem is owned by the Church of Sweden. All institutes are partners in the USI-network together with the universities of Umeå, Uppsala, Stockholm, Linköping, Linneaus, Gothenburg and Lund. The USI-network offers courses on advanced level in cooperation with universities in the host countries of the institutes. The courses are based on fieldwork and are multidisciplinary within the fields of Humanities, Social Sciences, Law and Economics. The network also organizes research seminars and conferences, and this was the second seminar at the Swedish Institute in Alexandria. The seminar *Creating Confidence in Previous Autocracies. Problems and Possibilities* was successfully realized in November 2011.

Presentations

Dr. Saeed Al Shamy

Education and Democratic Societies: the Egyptian Experience

Dr. Al Shamy defined democratic education in terms of equal education opportunities, equal and need-based education privileges and a pedagogy that gives students freedom and responsibilities at the same time. He posed the questions to what extent there is genuine democratic education in Egypt, whether free access to education leads to equal educational opportunities, and whether there is a relationship between equal educational opportunities and social justice. To answer these questions, Dr. Al Shamy looked back at the time of Taha Hussein (1889-1973) who was Minister of Education in Egypt in the 1950s. Taha Hussein's philosophy of education was based on the motto "Education is like the air we breathe and the water we drink". He propagated for free primary, secondary and higher education for all, with focus on supporting both the gifted and the less fortunate ones without seclusion. He approached education as an ongoing process (lifelong learning), as a citizen's absolute right, and as the fundamental principle for democracy. He claimed that if the people are the source of power, they must be given the opportunity of education, for power should never spring from ignorance – as freedom and ignorance are mutually incompatible. Taha Hussein's answer to the relationship between education and social justice was that education should aim at creating social justice. In order to achieve national unity and social

cohesion, he called for all primary education to become standardized, and to become prioritised alongside with national security.

With Taha Hussein in office, Egyptians received free primary and secondary education in the 1950-52. In the 1971 constitution, the principle of free education on every level and in every state school, institute and faculty was ensured. In the 1970s, with president Anwar Sadat's "Open Door" policy, a parallel private education sector started to grow. The situation in present Egypt is such that the quality of the education provided by many of these private schools is vastly superior to the education offered in the state system, and its beneficiaries often find themselves better equipped than their state-school counterparts for the labour market. The poor quality of state-provided schooling has led to the emergence of an educational informal sector where private tutoring is used to fill the educational gaps left by the formal schooling system. According to CAPMAS (Egypt's Central Statistics and Mobilisation Agency), over 60 per cent of investments in education are spent on private tutoring. This fact has, according to Dr. Al Shamy, led to social exclusion and inequalities, education based on class and negative attitudes towards vocational education. He concludes that free access to education does not lead to equal educational opportunities because the main criterion for choosing education is where you come from and how much money you can invest in your child's education.

Dr. Magnus Dahlstedt

Educating Democratic Citizens the Swedish Way

According to Dr. Dahlstedt, there is a broad consensus in Sweden about the idea that schooling contributes and should contribute to democracy. The ideas about why and how, however, have changed substantially with time. Sweden has a long tradition of emphasizing the importance of the education system in deepening the democratic governance and fostering democratic citizens. The school's democratic mission was put on the political agenda during the Second World War and after the war this discussion led to a fundamental reformation of the Swedish education system. The role of education was now to promote democracy and prevent the development towards totalitarian governing experienced for instance in Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union. Throughout the post-war period, there has been a broad political consensus in Sweden behind the idea of the importance of education for a vibrant, well-functioning Swedish democracy. In the 1990s, and around the turn of the millennium, there was a renewed interest in the idea of democratic education. Based on his forthcoming book *Education, Democracy Citizenship* (in Swedish), Dr. Dahlstedt presented differing views of fostering citizens in Sweden in the 1940s and the 1990s. These two eras display both similarities and differences. They were both times of crisis when current ideals were threatened and therefore became visible. In the 1940s, it was the time of World War II and authoritarian

regimes and in the 1990s, Sweden experienced economic and democratic crises. At both times, the issue of democratic education was on top of the political agenda.

Departing from a Foucauldian understanding of citizenship as not only a relation between the individual and the state, but also as processes of formation, Dr. Dahlstedt's focus was on how education is about fostering citizens of tomorrow as much as it is about knowledge and competences. He analysed the approaches of the 1940s and 1990s in four dimensions: visions about society, the role of education, citizenship ideals and pedagogical techniques. The visions of a good society found in the 1940s and the 1990s both focused on social change and the establishment of a Swedish social project, albeit in different ways. The 1940s idea of The People's Home had become old fashioned by the 1990s, and the middle road between capitalism and socialism promoted in the 1940s was in the 1990s replaced by the marketization of society. The vision of society was in the 1940s based on the principles of social and economic equality and political freedom, while in the 1990s the principles of freedom of choice, autonomy and decentralization were influential. In both eras, the role of education was to contribute to social change and to contribute to the Swedish model of society. However, the 1940s' collective approach to education had by the 1990s become a competitive individual project. The ideal democratic citizen in 1940s was rational, neutral and part of the collective based on the nation, while in the 1990s this had become a flexible and competitive individual entrepreneur sharing certain values with the rest of the society. The pedagogic techniques where in the 1940s influenced by neutrality, social engineering, the search for truth and a general scepticism towards religious, national and political authorities. In the 1990s, this had changed into slogans of influence and participation, activation, cooperation and motivation.

Dr. Dahlstedt ended his presentation by presenting what he calls "the Millennium Bug"; the sign of the times after the new millennium when we in Sweden live in a permanent crisis because there are no visions for society. Politics has become social administration; education is once again reproducing the social order, and the responsibility lies on the individual to realize and change itself in a therapeutic understanding of individual and society.

Prof. Ahmed Sakr Ashour

Revolutionizing Education in Egypt. Introducing Democratic Tenants

In his presentation, Prof. Ashour looked back at democratic education as a worldwide trend going back more than three centuries. In the educational philosophies of John Locke (1693) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762), we find principles of learning based on motivation, reasoning and experience, and John Dewey (1916) was one the first to mention that education has a social and political function and is therefore an institution enabling people to function in a democracy. Prof. Ashour also focused on the long legacy

of learning institutions founded on democratic values and structures; from the educational philosophy of Leo Tolstoy in the 19th century to the establishment of schools such as the Summerhill Schools (1921) in Germany, Dartington Hall School (1926 - 1987) in the UK and Sudbury Valley School (1968) in the US. According to Prof. Ashour, the democratic movement in higher education started earlier and has become more comprehensive in its application than in lower education. Among the key principles of democratic education mentioned by Prof. Ashour, we find curricula adaptable to the learners' needs, enjoyable and self-governed learning processes, activity-based learning, sharing of experiences and knowledge, critical thinking, democratic governance of educational institutions, development of democratic citizenry and respect for the learner and his/her human rights, freedom and choice. Prof. Ashour posed the question of democratic education and its relevance to contemporary Egypt. The Arab spring has ignited democratic and freedom-based transformations in society and a new political system and culture will emerge. Most key institutions of the old regime are collapsing and a central sector of society – containing and relating to the youth driving the revolution – is the education sector. For the last two decades, the education system in Egypt has been a total failure; all reform initiatives have been superficial and problems of corruption and oppression in the educational system have not been tackled. Consequences may be seen in students deserting its system and its institutions and a growing black market for education. Higher education in Egypt has for the last two years been subject to institutional unrest due to contradictions between the forces working for freedom and democratic processes in the society at large and the continuous failure to combat authoritarianism and corruption in the education system. Therefore, the education system in Egypt has not been able to provide equal opportunities, opportunities for mind growth, relevant and continuous learning and has not been democratic in any way. According to Prof. Ashour, some of the shortcomings lies in the curriculum, which does not reflect international trends, is not relevant to the needs of the students, is fixed and rigid and provides no choices to the students, is centrally and autocratically designed, supported by low-quality learning materials, and is not relevant for market needs or future careers of the students. Other shortcomings lie in the pedagogy used, which is authoritarian and without participatory learning where content is imposed through oppressive teaching methods relying on punishment, competitiveness and individualism. Learning in the Egyptian educational system is, according to Prof. Ashour, transformed into a negative experience with no respect for human dignity, rights and choices, and with no training in democratic citizenry. Reforms in the educational system are necessary for the development of a sustainable democracy in Egypt.

Dr. Sinikka Neuhaus

Democracy, Justice and Values. An Example of Implementing Change in Swedish Schools.

Dr. Neuhaus presented the project "Equality in Theory and Practice", which is a university course launched in 2011 by the National Agency for Education in Sweden to combat declining interest and knowledge of basic, common societal values such as justice, human rights and democracy. At that time, teachers and researchers involved in school-work were frustrated of previous school reforms focusing on knowledge and tending to ignore the importance of the day-to-day work with basic values. Daily problems in schools such as bullying, harassment and discrimination were understood as a lack of awareness of the schools' task of developing democratic citizens with respect for human rights and other basic values. The schools' responsibility to develop understanding of democracy, human rights and basic values among children, pupils and students, is manifested in the beginning of the Swedish Education Act, the Curricula, and the Syllabuses and even in the Subject Plans. The Swedish National Agency for Education (in Swedish: Skolverket) is the central administrative authority for the public school system, organising pre-schooling, school-age childcare as well as adult education. The agency is under the Ministry of Education and Research and it works for the goals set by the Parliament and the Government. The agency is responsible for support, follow-ups and evaluations of schools in order to improve quality and outcomes and it has a government commission to promote equal rights and combat discrimination, harassment and degrading treatments of children and pupils.

When the project was launched there was a massive interest of schools that wanted their staff to participate in the course. The main goal of the course was to implement a process-oriented work with values in schools, and it soon became clear that the participants did not have a common understanding of the concepts of democracy, justice, and values. The participants also had differing pictures of the nature of schools and education, and it became clear that this was closely linked to the question of exercising power in the classroom. Whether this kind of problematizing perspective has been successful in implementing change, is too early to say, but evaluations and contacts with the participating schools show that an understanding of the complexity of the schools as arenas for implementing values is necessary. At least, this problematizing perspective forces schools to formulate strategies of action for implementing values.

Dr. Ahmed Ibrahim

The Role of Private Education in Egypt

Dr. Ibrahim presented the private higher education institution, Pharos University, as one example of the role of private universities in Egypt. Pharos University is one of 18 private universities in Egypt. It was founded in 2006 with seven faculties and expanded with four additional faculties in 2009. The university has a student union with representation in decision-making bodies. Although the student representatives are changed rapidly, it is a way of training students in democratic processes. Political parties may influence and affect the student unions and the unions may therefore also become

the first introduction to party politics for the students. During Dr. Ibrahim's presentation the role of private, profit seeking higher education in the Egyptian society was discussed. Since the students pay expensive fees and the teachers receive higher salaries than teachers in public universities, the private universities consist of and educate a small segment of the higher middle and upper classes in society, and as such produces social reproduction. Social mobility is only possible through academic excellence, and only for a small group of students who may receive scholarships. At the same time they relieve pressure on the public education system.

Prof. Reza Arjmand

Education Reforms in the Muslim Middle East: A move towards Democracy?

Prof. Arjmand presented preliminary findings of a larger comparative study on the recent education reforms in Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The study has been conducted by interviewing stakeholders and analysing education policies on national and cross-national levels. According to Prof. Arjmand's study, educational reforms share a number of common, interlinked features across the region:

1) Religion and tradition have been reinterpreted and appropriated within education both in the official discourse and in the grassroots levels and have been introduced into the reform.

2) The needs for reform have come through domestic actors and endorsed by external actors and in many cases through their mutual interactions.

3) A slow process of democratization within the education is proceeding across the region. A series of top-down democratization initiatives attributed to the global trend of (social and economic) liberalization and bottom-up demands of the local stakeholders have affected the process of education reforms.

4) A new mode of governance is introduced to synthesize the traditional role of state (still in practice in the region in the form of new-tribal, rentier or based on traditional local interpretations of Islam) with the global economic and technological advancements. This in part has been an endeavor to retain ultimate social and political control, to suit interests of traditional power factions, and provide freedom to allow the economic growth, and it is introduced to education through the modification of the objectives of education, organizational and administrative changes as well as new modes of financing.

5) A new concept of civil society is born which has challenged the Islamic *waqf*-based notion of civil society and has introduced a new domain for social activities. The emergence of the new civil society contributed to a socio-economic development which

in turn is reflected in the form of democratization (including recognition of minority rights, assuming greater social role for women) within these countries and escalated the need for the changes.

6) As a result of social changes and economic growth, a new middle class has emerged which has contributed to the changes in the educational landscape across the region. This independent bourgeoisie is a major actor and factor in the social and education reform in the region, where it sees its interests constrained by the existing authoritarian systems, and especially when allies for reform are found within the regimes. This development also contributed to the introduction of entrepreneurship within the education and has influenced the trend of democratization and provided competitiveness and more educational alternatives and opportunities.

7) There is synchronization between domestic actors (both state and civil society) and international actors which inhibit or enhance the chance for and/or process of the education reforms. This has resulted in internationalization of the local reform discourse. The local changes, thus, are accommodated within larger international discursive practices such as the United Nations Millennium development Goals, the Education for All Initiative by UNESCO, and the concept of Lifelong Learning.

Dr. Anette Månsson

Friends of Salaam. Practical Examples of Civil Society Education for Peace and Justice and its Challenges

In her presentation, Dr. Månsson described two examples of civil society education. The first was a collaboration project between a well-established Christian NGO called The Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation (SweFOR) and a rather young Muslim NGO called Swedish Muslims for Peace and Justice (SMFR). The project was called Friends of Salaam and was started in 2011 with the aim of emphasizing traditions of non-violence in Christianity and Islam and to inspire each other in their work for peace and non-violence. Although with similar aims, the NGOs differed in their organizational structure and were battling with different challenges. SweFOR may be characterised as an organisation a solid administration, legitimacy in relation to funding institutions and with familiarity with democratic structures and processes. The challenges they faced were related to difficulties of recruiting new members and maintaining the interest of the younger generation. With increased professionalism the local base had been narrowed and its identity had become less clear. SMFR was more of a fast growing youth movement adapting quickly to changes and speaking in the language of the youth. Their challenges were to build structures concerning the practice of decision-making processes, annual meetings and financial reporting. They were also dealing with a transition from youth movement to the inclusion of even older member and they were gradually gaining legitimacy in the eyes of funders.

The second project was The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, which is an international programme run by the World Council of Churches. In Sweden, the project is run by the Swedish Council of Churches with support from a number of other organisations. The program sends Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) to Israel/Palestine to provide protective presence to vulnerable communities, to monitor and report human right abuses and to support Palestinians and Israelis working together for peace. In Sweden, The EAs campaign for a just and peaceful resolution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict through an end to the occupation, respect for international law and implementation of UN resolutions.

During the presentation, the idea of civil society as bearer of democracy was discussed, as well as ways in which the concept of democracy often becomes self-evident but nonetheless implies different meanings for different people in different contexts.

PhD Student Christine Bendixen

"They Killed Education". What are the New Platforms for Education and Lore?

In her presentation, Christine Bendixen described her ongoing PhD project on the topics of women and equality in Egypt. She has interviewed female activists about the changes that Egypt has experienced since the Arab Spring. The statement "They killed education!" was a common view of the participants of the project, referring to the prior regime. A strong opinion was that holding down the level of education was deliberate to control power. In her research, Bendixen addresses education in a wide sense. Her project involves human rights, socialization, space of action, and opportunity cost. Her work is based on Professor Birgitta Qvarsell's definition of education: "*the study of conditions for socialization and knowledge acquiring, in development and change both individually and collectively*" (Qvarsell, 2000). This gives a broad understanding of pedagogy that encompasses formal, as well as non-formal and informal education, but also upbringing as part of equal opportunities. Qvarsell argues that pedagogy should be seen as a cultural scientific discipline, which she terms educology (Qvarsell, 2003).

Change is inevitable in every culture. To be able to grow with development there has to be a change of mind-set. The discussion amongst the people interviewed for her project evolves more around dualism than around pluralism. The division is modernism against traditional values (also seen as the authentic, the real). The "modern" with its point of departure in basic human rights, and the "tradition" has its point of departure in an old patriarchal system. Women's participation in the civil society and the political space is constrained by this cultural dualism. Some informants also mentioned the concept "agreed upon traditions". How can this be part of democracy in a changing society? Only when men and women work together for equality there will be real change. The education system has to be consistent with democratic values, and equally important is that values within the family and society are based on equality and that these values are

compatible with the change in society. Equality is the core of democracy. Only by making people (everyone) stakeholders of their environment, and their own future, concepts like civil society and democratization can be given real meaning. And only when men and women have equal opportunity, on equal terms, can we talk about a democratic society.

PhD student Katinka Svanberg

Is There a Right to Liberal Democracy in Public International Law Today? What is its Content and how should it be Implemented?

According to Katinka Svanberg the world has witnessed an emerging norm of right to democracy. This norm is related to human rights such as the right to internal self-determination, freedom of expression, freedom of opinion and thought, and freedom of assembly. An important part of the right to democracy is the right to take part in free, fair and periodic elections with secret ballots. In her presentation, Svanberg looked at the role of the UN Security Council in maintaining peace and security and she discussed if the council has contributed to the development of the principle of self-determination to encompass the right to democracy for the whole people in a state. She presented an evaluation of where, when and how UN Security Council has acted with the right to democracy as a prime motive. She discussed the following cases:

1) Old cases in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia based on the right for a racial majority to have access to government.

2) Cases in Haiti, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Mali when democratically elected regimes were ousted in military coups.

3) Cases in Angola and Liberia where sanctions were used against parties working against democratic elections or their results.

4) Democracy as post-conflict peace-keeping as a means to repair collapsed and/or war-torn states as in Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, and Afghanistan.

5) Democracy as a means to remedy rouge states and sever actions against norms in public international law, such as international terrorism, threat of the use of weapons of mass-destruction, and severe human rights violations such as genocide, war-crimes or crimes against humanity. Examples of such interventions may be found in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone.

6) In cases where the democratically elected presidents start to rule by undemocratic means and loses the people's support the question of whether democracy implies something more than democratic elections; i.e liberal democracy, becomes relevant. Examples of such cases are found in Liberia, Haiti, Albania and Central African Republic.

7) Cases of international territorial administration to achieve democracy in Iraq, Kosovo and East Timor.

One may ask whether it is inherent in the mandate of the Security Council to contribute to norm-creation. Interventions of the UN Security Council illustrate constellations of world power and there is a trend to say the course and attempt to build western styled liberal democracies; that is to transplant western style law systems. The world has witnessed a number of problems with this, like when people elect undemocratic regimes such as the FIS in Algeria, Haider in Austria or Hamas in Palestine. How to evaluate what the people want and should they have the right to decide freely upon forms of governance without intervention of the international community?

Prof. Medhat El-Nemr

What Science Education can Offer in a Democratic Society

In his presentation, Prof. El-Nemr demonstrated the relationship between Science Education and democratic processes. Departing from the assumptions that diversity is the essence of democracy and that dialogue is the democratic activity per se, Prof. El-Nemr suggested that in a democratic society people discuss their problems and suggest realistic solutions based on facts. This is also the case of research in science and technology reflected in Science and Technology Education across all educational levels. According to Prof. El-Nemr, the three disciplines Science, Technology and Science Education share responsibility of developing concepts and thinking processes in all areas of human experience. Science is not a body of facts and theories to be inherited, kept in books, studied by learners, transferred to their brains and to sooner or later be forgotten. Science is a living organism which grows and develops through inquiry and provides society with the power of knowledge. Science Education is therefore important in the processes of creating democratic citizens. Through Science Education, learners recognize science not as a dogma but as a way of thinking where hypothesis are tested, theories are verified. Experiments are designed and executed and arguments are discussed and challenged. These epistemological and pedagogical aspects are the fabric of real democracy. Science Education learners develop and recognize critical thinking skills crucial for democratic processes. Through Science Education learners also develop scientific literacy which enables them to analyse information critically. Learners also experience the aesthetics of science and learn to appreciate the beauty and magnificence of natural phenomena, which may make them more tolerant. Prof. El-Nemr pointed out that despite the importance of Science Education for the development of democratic citizens in a democratic society, there is a disjuncture between the democratic skills we would like the students to acquire and the content and structure of the learning contexts. How can Science Education foster democratic principles when uncritically taught as dogma in schools throughout the country?

Prof. Mina O'Dowd

The Role of Education in Democratic Societies: Issues and Challenges

According to Prof. O'Dowd, the importance of education in promoting democratic values is currently being recognised, although moral education is not a new trend. In both classical and modern theories, democracy requires political values and orientations from its citizens; such as moderation, tolerance, civility, efficacy, knowledge and participation. Democratic processes imply dialogue, open and public debate, discussion and dispute around proposals for development and priorities where those affected are the ones to discuss and to decide. Education may develop whatever capacities are decided upon, but can education as it is practiced today deliver democratic capabilities? In her presentation, Prof. O'Dowd illustrates how democracy is talked about, but not practiced within education systems today. In most forms, the education system is a top-down organisation where decision-making is not the privilege of teachers or students. Teaching contexts is often based on authoritarianism where teachers are unquestionable authorities and where one answer is right and one truth is taught. In a graphic illustration of the Swedish education system, Prof. O'Dowd illustrated how gender equality is talked about, but not practiced in the organisation of Swedish schools. In the Swedish education system, women occupy the lower income, higher responsibility positions, while men occupy positions related to money, power and prestige.

In the 1970s, discussion about schooling and education portrayed schools as institutional props for privilege and instruments for social mobility, but not institutions for true learning, creativity and democracy. At that time, researchers were calling for alternatives in education as well as alternative views of education itself. According to Prof. O'Dowd, today, the crisis is the same and even more acute. Due to the neo-liberal agenda for education, we are facing the same problems as in the 1970s but also a split between active, self-defined elites and increasingly uncertain, social groups deprived of information, resources and power. In societies all over the world we also see a re-definition of education in terms of instrumentality and performativity – a view of education as solely a matter of individual choice and a view that attributes lack of success or accomplishment to individual shortcomings. Therefore, democracy through education is only possible if 1) we ***do*** democracy in education instead of just talking about it, 3) we encourage critical thinking and discourage authoritarianism, 4) we develop the understanding that there are many ways, many right answers, and many truths, 5) we construct education with spaces for deliberative democracy, empowering pupils to influence the form, the structure and the content of education, 6) we make students and teachers aware that their thoughts, concerns and considerations are important, are heard and can influence decision-making, 7) we understand that democracy has to do with citizens' political values and orientations, and that 8) we

acknowledge that education is a political project and that education is the primary arena for the discussion, debate and dispute on political values.

Group Discussions

In the group discussions, the following topics were discussed: How to achieve democratic change? What is the role of education in introducing democratic processes, and is the education system ready to take on a vital role in democracy building?

Democratic change by importing ready-made models in their entirety into a new cultural setting is more or less doomed to fail. Importing ideas and contextualizing them to go along with local values is more successful. New ideas will cause change, to a smaller or larger extent, and adapting to new ideas has always been part of human and cultural behavior. But change almost always generates fear, and this has to be taken seriously and dealt with, not just brushed aside as irrelevant.

It is difficult, however, to have the right kind of discussion when there is not a common platform. If there is a common project requiring common efforts – like building a new nation – things are easier. Once the goal is reached, though, gradually the efforts will probably be more individualized, which leads to new challenges when it comes to keeping the nation, the enterprise, the school system etc. together. One strategy is always to be looking for "best practices" and learn from them, keeping the spirit alive that there are always new things to learn, that things can get even better.

When a change of the concept of education is wished for, a crucial point is teaching the teachers how to teach (cf. democracy in practice, not only in theory). But it is also important to educate the police, the judicial system – judges, lawyers – the medical professionals etc. in human rights and democratic behavior. The best results will probably come if a top-down and a bottom-up model could be used simultaneously, so that they can meet. A dangerous, but sometimes tempting solution would be to enforce democratic behavior autocratically. It is paradoxical and it requires people of great integrity at the top.

Teachers' education is centralized and regulated in both Sweden and Egypt. In the Swedish context, concerns are raised about the actual possibilities for teachers to practice democracy and require first-hand experience of democratic processes in a top-down regulated and non-democratic system. Teachers' education needs to incorporate more practical training and even strategies for how to educate for a global world. In Egypt, the education system is centralized with limited space of maneuvering. There is a non-democratic heritage in schools, especially visible in the teaching of science where even the didactics are focused on static ways of teaching without focus on the contexts and processes of science.

Science education in Egypt is also a question of gender identity, as the majority of women choose to study physics and science while men prefer technical education needed by private industries. In Sweden, it has for a long time been difficult to attract women even to science and science education. One common concern within the education system in Egypt and Sweden is how to encourage students with different genders and other backgrounds and contexts to study science. Together with concerns about how to teach democracy in schools and how to facilitate teachers to require competences in democratic processes, this will be a topic for future cooperation between Swedish and Egyptian universities. The first step will be taken in the fall of 2013 when a workshop on these topics will be organised at Lund University in collaboration between Alexandria University and the USI-network.