

Universal Periodic Review
(27th session, April-May 2017)

Contribution of UNESCO to Compilation of UN information
(to Part I. A. and to Part III - F, J, K, and P)

BAHRAIN

I. BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

Scope of international obligations: Human rights treaties which fall within the competence of UNESCO and international instruments adopted by UNESCO

I.1. Table:

Title	Date of ratification, accession or succession	Declarations /reservations	Recognition of specific competences of treaty bodies	Reference to the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence
Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960	Not ratified	<i>Reservations to this Convention are not permitted</i>		Right to education
Convention on Technical and Vocational Education 1989	Accession 1992/03/26			Right to education
Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972	28/05/1991 Ratification			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003	07/06/2014 Ratification			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the	Not ratified			Right to take part in cultural life

Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005				
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II. Input to Part III. Implementation of international human rights obligations, taking into account applicable international humanitarian law to items F, J, K, and P

Right to education

1. NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

1.1. Constitutional Framework

1. The Constitution (adopted on 14 February 2002)¹ stipulates in its **Article 7** that:

(a) the State [...] guarantees educational and cultural services to its citizens. Education is compulsory and free in the early stages as specified and provided by law. The necessary plan to combat illiteracy is laid down by law.

(b) The Law regulates care for religious and national instruction in the various stages and forms of education [...]

(c) Individuals and bodies may establish private schools and universities under the supervision of the State and in accordance with the law.

(d) The State guarantees the inviolability of the places of learning.

2. Furthermore, **article 4** places knowledge among the pillars of society guaranteed by the State”, and according to **article 18**, “[...] citizens are equal before the law in public rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination among them on the basis of sex, origin, language, religion or creed.

Article 5 (b) also reaffirms that the State guarantees reconciling the duties of women towards the family with their work in society, and their equality with men in political, social, cultural, and economic spheres [...].

1.2. Legislative Framework

3. **Education Law No.27 (2005)**: Education is free through the secondary level and the new **Education Law No.27 (2005)** making basic education (nine years of schooling) compulsory and free of charge for children 6 to 15 years old was approved in 2005. The Law provides that education is a right guaranteed to all citizens.²

4. **Article 6** states that “Basic education is a right of those children who reach the age of six years at the beginning of the academic year. The Kingdom is obliged to provide education for

¹ Accessible at:

<http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/f1ad2bf21810d11d94cab98321602b496db65627.pdf>

² World Data on Education, International Bureau of Education, 7th Edition 2010/11, p. 4, accessible at: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Bahrain.pdf. See also: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=73041

them and their parents or legal guardians are obliged to facilitate this. This shall be for a period of at least nine years of schooling. The Ministry of Education in the Kingdom will issue the necessary decrees to regulate and enforce the compulsory nature of education with regard to parents and legal guardians.” **Article 7** of the Act states: “Basic and secondary education shall be free in schools within the Kingdom.”³

5. “On the basis of **Article 5, Clause 14**, of the Education Act the efforts of the Kingdom of Bahrain were not limited to eradicating illiteracy but also with putting an end to innumeracy.”⁴

6. **Academic Qualifications Evaluations Law No.19 (1995)**: In 1995, Law No. 19, the Academic Qualifications Evaluations Law, was issued on the evaluation of academic qualifications, providing for modification or equivalence of foreign academic qualifications granted by foreign universities, institutions and schools in the absence of corresponding national qualifications by a decision issued by the Minister of Education based on the proposal by a Committee to be named the National Committee for Evaluation of Academic Qualifications.⁵

7. **Private Education and Training Institutions Law No.25 (1998)**: Decree-law No. 25, the Private Education and Training Institutions Law, was issued on 13 December 1998. The law provides definitions and objectives of private education and training establishments, in addition to the definition of the types and divisions of private schools, the conditions relevant to establishment and management, financial system, technical supervision and administrative control to ensure establishment of educational institutions free from financial and administrative problems.⁶

8. **Higher Education Law No.3 (2005)**: The Higher Education Law No. 3 was issued on 20 April 2005. This Law has endorsed for the first time the setting up of a Higher Education Council. The Higher Education Council General Secretariat has drawn up the financial, academic and administrative by-laws which organize the work of private higher education institutions, set conditions for the appointment of staff in academic jobs, introduce a data system for staff, besides a by-law on the organization of the Higher Education Council session meetings and another by-law on the facilities criteria for private higher education institutions. [...] ⁷

9. **Child Law (2012)** : Following the enactment of the Child Law in May 2012, the MoSD formulated a 5-year National Childhood Strategy for the period 2013-2017. [...] The Strategy has four key components: children's rights to health; education and capacity development; protection and participation; and non-discrimination. Programs developed within each component are guided by the following principles: respect of human rights; equal opportunities between the two sexes; and integration of those with disabilities. The programs include:

³ Bahrain Report submitted for the Eighth Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2006-2011), 2012, p.3.

⁴ Bahrain Report submitted for the Eighth Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2006-2011), 2012, p.10.

⁵ World Data on Education, International Bureau of Education, 7th Edition 2010/11, p. 4.

⁶ World Data on Education, International Bureau of Education, 7th Edition 2010/11, p. 4.

⁷ World Data on Education, International Bureau of Education, 7th Edition 2010/11, p. 4.

establishing more child protection centers; organizing conferences and lectures to increase awareness; and including children's rights in national school curricula. Progress is monitored at Cabinet-level.⁸

1.3. Institutional Framework

10. The educational system in the kingdom of Bahrain follows a ladder of nine years of basic education which includes both the primary and intermediate stages and three years of secondary education in its various track. In the kingdom of Bahrain, (the nine-year-long) basic education is compulsory for children whose ages are between 6 & 14. All children must be enrolled either in the government schools or the private ones.⁹

11. Basic education is divided into two stages as follows:

- Primary Stage:

This stage represents the first formal school ladder in Bahrain and accommodates students of age group 6 - 11. It lasts for six years and is divided into two cycles, the first one includes the first three grades of primary education; in which the class-teacher system is applied, whereby in this system a single teacher teaches most of the subjects, except English language, design and technology, music education, and physical education.

The second cycle includes the upper three grades, in which the subject-teacher system is applied, whereby each subject is taught by a teacher who has specialized in a specific discipline, and obtained educational academic qualifications. [...] ¹⁰

- Intermediate Stage:

Intermediate stage is considered to be the third cycle and the last one in basic education, which accommodates students of age group 12 - 14, and lasts for three years. A successful completion of the sixth grade of primary cycle or its equivalent from the literacy education is a prerequisite to join this stage. The subject-teacher is applied in this stage, whereby each subject is taught by a teacher who has specialized in a specific discipline, and obtained educational academic qualifications. The curriculum for this stage includes compulsory common subjects, including: Islamic education, Arabic language, English language, science and technology, Mathematics, social studies, handcrafts and physical education.¹¹

- Secondary Stage:

This stage is considered to be a complementary one to basic education, and a new phase for the student for preparing him/her to enter universities and higher institutions or directly enter the labor market. It accommodates students of age group 15 - 17; the duration of study is three years, which is divided into six semesters (three levels). A successful completion of the intermediate stage or its equivalent is a requirement to join the first semester of secondary education.¹²

⁸ Kingdom of Bahrain, Universal Periodic Review – Interim Report, September 2014, p. 16.

⁹ Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain, available at: <http://www.mofa.gov.bh/Default.aspx?tabid=7741>

¹⁰ Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

¹¹ Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

¹² Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

1.4. Policy Framework

i) General information

12. Education in Bahrain is compulsory, and all school age children attend either public or private schools. Children with disabilities attend special institutions. Bahrain provides free education for all Bahraini and non-Bahraini students through our public school system. Additionally, textbooks in every subject are provided free of charge for all students in public schools at the beginning of each academic year.

13. Public schools are segregated: there are separate schools for boys and girls with teaching and administrative staff of the same sex. However, in some instances there are boys' public primary schools where the teaching and administrative staffs are mixed. A choice of coeducation or segregation is available in private schools, while state universities are all coeducational.

14. In 2004 His Majesty King Hamad introduced the King Hamad Schools of the Future project, which uses information and communication technology (ICT) to support basic and secondary education in Bahrain. The objective of this project is to link all schools within the kingdom via the Internet and introduce the concept of electronic education.¹³

ii) Education levels

➤ Primary education

15. In 2006 a Department was established in the Ministry of Education to review the implementation of compulsory education. This Department is responsible for ensuring that those who are of school age (6-15 years) are registered in school with the relevant agencies within the Ministry of Education and with external agencies such as the Central Information Agency and the Ministry of Health. It is also responsible for those within the same age group who interrupt their schooling and works to re-admit them into the education system.

16. As a result of these efforts, a number of students have been returned to school after meetings and interviews with their legal guardians and collaboration with the schools so as to provide all students with the opportunity of education. This is an implementation of Articles 6 and 8 of the Education Act.

17. The Department inaugurated an information programme in order to spread the culture of compulsory education. This is put into effect at the beginning of every academic year and is directed at primary and preparatory schools with the aim of informing them of the system, its mechanisms and procedures.¹⁴

➤ Technical and vocational education

¹³ Kingdom of Bahrain, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, available at:

<http://www.mofa.gov.bh/Default.aspx?tabid=132&language=en-US>

¹⁴ Bahrain Report submitted for the Eighth Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2006-2011), 2012, pp. 7-8.

18. The Ministry of Education has put into effect a scheme to improve school time for pupils in the secondary stage after a successful pilot project in one school in the academic year 2010/11. This aims at allowing sufficient time for teachers to implement the new teaching strategies, to prepare innovative curricula, to enable better interaction between teachers and students, to reduce the number of school duties and ensure that most of these are carried out in school and to provide sufficient time for understanding, absorption of knowledge and deep learning. The scheme, basically issuing from the School Improvement Programme, was implemented in all secondary schools beginning with the second grade in 2011/12. Thus, at the present time the school day ends at 2.15 pm rather than 1.30 pm, giving an average of 924 hours. By increasing school time by 43 days Bahrain achieves the same averages of study time as in comparable countries throughout the world, that is, between 122 and 154 school days per annum. This has had the positive affect of increasing the number of study hours so that they correspond with internationally sanctioned benchmarks.¹⁵

➤ **Higher education**

19. A Royal Decree was issued to reduce university fees to a nominal payment and to exempt students unable to pay. This has helped thousands of students to enter academic programmes which answer to their inclinations, qualifications and aspirations for the future. Similarly, opportunities to pursue higher education in the University have been offered to all those achieving an average of 70% and above in the secondary stage of education.¹⁶

➤ **Literacy**

20. The Ministry provided many facilities and programmes to help achieve success in eradicating illiteracy. These include:

- (a) the opening of nursery schools for mothers studying in continuing education centres. This humanitarian and cultural provision offers a solution to one of the problems leading to the absenteeism of female learners since they are not able to leave their children unsupervised during class hours. This scheme greatly contributed to an increase in the number of admissions of women and of women continuing their studies;
- (b) the provision of transport for learners and teachers, especially women;
- (c) the provision of counselling and careers advice in the academic year 2006/7 to help learners to increase their self-confidence and to guide them in the direction that closely corresponds to their needs, abilities and inclinations, and also to motivate them to continue learning;
- (d) piloting the urgent programme to eradicate illiteracy in the form of two intensive training courses in order to reduce the time needed to achieve its aims;

¹⁵ Bahrain Report submitted for the Eighth Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2006-2011), 2012, pp. 19-20.

¹⁶ Bahrain Report submitted for the Eighth Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2006-2011), 2012, p. 23.

- (e) the creation and piloting of a programme (interrelated subjects) based on the idea of integrating the skills of family education with those of literacy (the Arabic language);
- (f) the organization of literacy courses for non-native speakers of Arabic through a programme to eradicate illiteracy among them (foreigners);
- (g) the organization of a programme to put an end to computer illiteracy for male and female learners who are studying in the literacy and continuing education programmes. This has the aim of removing their technological illiteracy, providing them with basic technological skills and enabling them to proceed to the study of various other subjects;
- (h) the trial run of the intensive programme in reading, writing and arithmetic in the literacy centres so as to reduce the amount of study time;
- (i) the implementation of a programme to build reading skills among the semi-literate which relies on the exploitation of their writing skills, and to promote these skills in a functional way employing all reading aids. Training for this began in the academic year 2005/6 with the purpose of creating senior female instructors to work in the programme. Their performance in the following years would be used as a basis for establishing this type of training in literacy centres.¹⁷

iii) Education content and quality

➤ Curriculum

21. The curriculum for the first and the second cycles of basic education, include compulsory common subjects, including: Islamic education, Arabic language, English language, Science and Technology, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Physical Education, Family Education, Art, Music and Songs.¹⁸

➤ Human Rights education and learning environment

22. According to Bahrain's Independent Commission of Inquiry's Report, the Government of Bahrain believes that education is the cornerstone of social reforms, and is therefore giving education special and great care. Civil rights education is being enhanced in all stages and at all levels of education.¹⁹

23. On the issue of human rights, tolerance and coexistence, the Ministry, as a first step, continued to work with UNESCO experts to include those principles in academic curricula, as well as to review existing curricula and textbooks related to the promotion and development of citizenship education in accordance with the relevant recommendation. The Ministry

¹⁷ Bahrain Report submitted for the Eighth Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2006-2011), 2012, pp. 10-11.

¹⁸ Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain, see: <http://www.mofa.gov.bh/Default.aspx?tabid=7741>

¹⁹ Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) Follow-up Report, December 2013, p. 43. Accessible at: https://www.google.fr/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKFwjZ996i-ZXNAhUJuhoKHQjEBEoQFggdMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.biciunit.bh%2Freports%2FFinal%2520Report_E_N_Dec_2013.pdf&usq=AFQjCNF_0tbTRIN6EQkDD86yQ4OeX2Q0Lg.

subsequently started implementing the second step with the signing of a cooperation agreement with the International Bureau of Education, Geneva, providing for the following:

- Training of curricula specialists to complete the development of education curricula for citizenship and human rights, and organizing in-depth training workshops.
- Practical training in two schools, to train specialist educators as a first step for implementation in all schools.
- Organizing a forum under the supervision of International Bureau of Education experts on the national framework for development of curricula, with emphasis on integration of human rights in curricula ²⁰

24. The Ministry developed curricula aimed at fostering the values of human rights, tolerance and coexistence, and revisited citizenship and social curricula and issue them in a format that is appropriate for all forms of tolerance and openness to the values of accepting the other in terms of religious and cultural diversity, as well as preparing and enhancing national, regional and international experts to implement the recommendation, and activate the parent-teacher associations.

25. Finally, the Board of Higher Education issued a resolution to standardize the human rights curriculum of the University of Bahrain, as an obligatory requirement in private universities.²¹

26. The NIHR [National Institution for Human Rights] regularly holds lectures and training programs as part of its mandate to promote human rights awareness on a national level. The NIHR has drawn up a strategy and action plan for its activities in 2013-2016.²²

➤ **Quality education**

27. **The project to standardize academic pathways** is considered to be an important constituent of qualitative development due to the direct effect it has on the quality of the graduate who is needed for growth and the employment market. It offers considerable scope for constructing a general basis for learning for secondary school students. It provides a better opportunity for students to be admitted into the various universities and colleges. It supports voluntary work by introducing the subject “community service” and it produces an effective citizen who makes a positive contribution in the service of the community. It strengthens the curricula and non-vocational courses (such as “Injāz Bahrain,” “Global” and “Trade Quest”). The project began to be implemented in the academic year 2004/5 and continued to be ever more widely applied until the academic year 2010/11 when it entered all secondary schools.²³

28. **A centre has been established for evaluation and assessment.** It is an administrative apparatus responsible for assessing the activities programmes and projects of the Ministry in all their administrative and educational forms. It examines the Ministry’s inputs and its practices and assesses its outputs and level of performance. The centre aims to provide the

²⁰ Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) Follow-up Report, December 2013, p. 43-44.

²¹ Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) Follow-up Report, December 2013, p. 44.

²² Kingdom of Bahrain, Universal Periodic Review – Interim Report, September 2014, p. 79.

²³ Bahrain Report submitted for the Eighth Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2006-2011), 2012, p. 12.

mechanisms and means of evaluation and assessment, to provide continuous assessment both on the ministerial level and in schools, periodically to evaluate the levels of performance of workers in the Ministry, its projects, activities programmes and textbooks, and to monitor the changes which affect education.²⁴

29. The School Improvement Programme introduces a radical change in schools and in the relationship between them and the Ministry and focuses on greatly improving the quality of services which students receive. In 2008, the Ministry began to introduce a pilot programme in 10 chosen schools in different academic stages and regions and with a record of high performance. The Programme was further extended until in the academic year 2011/12 it came to include 100 State schools. In the same year, 105 schools were made ready to enter the Programme in the academic year 2012/13 which also saw the expansion of the Programme to include all State schools.²⁵

iv) Education management

➤ Financing education

30. The unstable economic conditions and the fluctuations of oil prices place limitations on the future financing of education as it is the only source of energy; and is therefore imposed a heavy burden on education, which is trying to ensure adequate financing firstly to improve the quality process of education to meet its expansion; secondly, to spare no means to rationalize the spending; and thirdly, to look for new sources of funding and support.

31. Although the government spending on education has increased from 68.4 million Dinars to 156.4 million Dinars in the year 1991 to 2006 respectively, however the rise in the cost of manpower in education place heavy impact on the development programs, as the latter cost accounts for the largest percentage of the budget of the Ministry of Education, which reaches up to 86%. This is in addition to high cost of education in general to meet the requirements of the qualitative development aimed at building a modern education which is able to serve the development and to meet the challenges of the future, was summoned to find formulas to involve the private sector to contribute to the actual funding for the education process in Bahrain.²⁶

➤ Teachers

32. Enrolment in vocational education has increased annually, as the number of students in 1997 was 458 and in 2008 became 5173. That indicates the need for Bahraini teachers in this field is increasing, whereas teachers turnover ratio has not fulfilled the goals set by the ministry as most of them found better opportunities offered by the private sector.

²⁴ Bahrain Report submitted for the Eighth Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2006-2011), 2012, p. 16.

²⁵ Bahrain Report submitted for the Eighth Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2006-2011), 2012, p. 17.

²⁶ Kingdom of Bahrain, Ministry of education, Strategic Plan 2011-2014, p. 13. Accessible at http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Bahrain/Bahrain_Strategic_Plan_2011-2014.pdf.

33. Another challenge for the Ministry of Education is that the ministry does not attract the qualified and talented university graduates as well as the engineers to join the teaching profession as they get more wages in the private sector. [...] This indicates that the Ministry of Education is in need to have a better cadre system that can easily lure the right people to the right profession with better compensation packages to vie the other sector. The ministry is also in need of a short and long term plan to confront the shortage of teachers in Bahrain.²⁷

33. The following decrees regarding teachers' training and status have been adopted in 2006:

34. Council of Ministers Decree No. 1897-03 on the agreement to establish a college specifically for preparing and training teachers and school directors and which will assume responsibility for the development of training programmes for teachers and school directors;

35. Council of Ministers Decree No. 1897-04 on the agreement to adopt procedures and effective strategies to promote excellence in education, provide support for outstanding teachers within the framework of a new cadre of teachers and examine their working conditions²⁸

➤ **Private education**

36. The Ministry of Education established a procedure for reviewing the performance of private schools so as to ensure that they are adhering to the teaching benchmarks prescribed by the State, are applying the standards of quality stipulated by the Ministry and implementing the schemes for checking performance.

37. Similarly, an investigative committee was formed which visits the private schools and examines their registers, records and files to identify any violations of Law No. 25 of 1998 which deals with private teaching and training institutions, and the Ministerial Decree in implementation of it, with the aim of assuring the quality of the education provided to students in private schools.²⁹

38. The public education system in Bahrain is renowned for its quality level while private schools offer excellent curricula from all over the world. All educational institutions in Bahrain are monitored by the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance for Education and Training for the purpose of maintaining the required levels and standards. Tamkeen³⁰ (The Labor Fund) allocates a substantial part of its annual budget to supporting the private education and training sector.³¹

V) Inclusive education

²⁷ Kingdom of Bahrain, Ministry of education, Strategic Plan 2011-2014, p. 13.

²⁸ Bahrain Report submitted for the Eighth Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2006-2011), 2012, p. 7.

²⁹ Bahrain Report submitted for the Eighth Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2006-2011), 2012, p. 11.

³⁰ "Tamkeen was established in August 2006 as part of Bahrain's national reform initiatives and Bahrain's Economic Vision, and is tasked with supporting Bahrain's private sector and positioning it as the key driver of economic development.", Labour Fund website, <http://www.lf.bh/en/>.

³¹ Bahrain government's official website, eGovernment, "Investing in Bahrain", see following [link](#).

➤ **Gender equality**

39. Since women represent half of society they have the same opportunities in the higher education system. These opportunities are:

- (a) to receive the same scholarships and study places as men according to ability and academic attainment and based on competition rather than gender;
- (b) to enter all institutions of higher education including the Royal Police Academy such that women have the same opportunities as men to enrol on academic programmes in all institutions of higher education in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Women also have the same opportunities to pursue higher education to the most advanced levels. Indeed, in the academic year 2010/11 the percentage of female students vis-à-vis males was approximately 54.4%.³²

40. Since its establishment the Bahrain Training Institute for Women has been intent on working according to the principle of equal opportunities. Thus, women trainees in the Institute represent approximately 45% of the total number. This is a consequence of the Institute's planning and design of specialized training programmes for women according to the needs of the employment market. These programmes include "dressmaking and design," organized in collaboration with the "Tamkeen" labour fund and the Supreme Council for Women, and they are all aimed at training Bahraini women jobseekers in dressmaking, design and embroidery.³³

41. The Committee commends the State party for the advances made in the education of girls and women and the importance given to their enrolment in non-traditional vocational training. Nevertheless, the Committee notes the persistence of traditional attitudes and stereotypes that affect the educational paths followed by women, in particular in the scientific and technical disciplines.³⁴

➤ **Students with special needs**

42. Following enactment of Law No. 22 of 2011³⁵ incorporating the UN Convention into national law, the Cabinet formed the Supreme Committee for the Affairs of the Disabled by Resolution I of 2012. In September 2013, the Cabinet endorsed the National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities. The MoSD [Ministry of Social Development] in cooperation with UN DP formulated this Strategy Document. To ensure non-discrimination and equal participation of persons with disabilities, it sets out action plans in the following areas: legislation; education; healthcare; social integration; economic empowerment; awareness; and accessibility. In regards to children with disabilities, Chapter 5 of the Child Law, contains

³² Bahrain Report submitted for the Eighth Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2006-2011), 2012, p. 31.

³³ Bahrain Report submitted for the Eighth Consultation on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (2006-2011), 2012, p. 24.

³⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding Observations on the third periodic report of Bahrain, 57th session, February 2014, §35.

³⁵ Law No.22 of 2011 ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, available (in Arabic) at: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=89822&p_classification=08.01.

specific provisions in this regard which relate to the rights of children with disabilities and their families to access all state services such as education, health and social support.³⁶

2. COOPERATION

43. Bahrain is **not party** to the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education.

44. On the measures taken for the implementation of the 1960 UNESCO Recommendation against Discrimination in Education:

- Bahrain **did not report** to UNESCO within the framework of the **Sixth Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 1994-1999).

45. However, Bahrain **reported** to UNESCO within the framework of the:

- **Seventh Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 2000-2005)
- **Eighth Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 2006-2011)

46. On the measures taken for the implementation of the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms:

- Bahrain **did not report** to UNESCO within the framework of the **Fourth Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 2005-2008).
- Bahrain **reported** within the framework of the **Fifth Consultation** of Member States (covering the period 2009-2012).

47. Bahrain reported to UNESCO on the measures taken for the implementation of the 1976 UNESCO Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education within the framework of the:

- **First Consultation** of Member States (1993)
- **Second Consultation** of Member States (2011)

48. Bahrain is **party** to the 1989 UNESCO Convention on Technical and Vocational Education since 26/03/1992.

Freedom of opinion and expression

1. Constitutional and Legislative Framework:

49. Freedom of speech is guaranteed under the Constitution of Bahrain³⁷, in Article 23, which states that “everyone has the right to express his opinion and publish it by word of mouth in writing or otherwise under the rules and conditions laid down by law, provided that the fundamental beliefs of Islamic doctrine are not infringed, the unity of the people is not prejudicated, and discord or sectarianism is not aroused” (Article 32).

³⁶ Kingdom of Bahrain, Universal Periodic Review – Interim Report, September 2014, p.20.

³⁷ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Bahrain_2012?lang=en

50. Freedom of information and access to information are not guaranteed in the Constitution, however the 2002 Press and Publications Law³⁸ provides for “any restraints on flow of information or that might cause unequal access to information for newspapers or disrupt citizens’ right to knowledge are prohibited if they do not violate public security and the nation’s supreme interests”, and the right to access to information is further mentioned in the Articles 31, 32 and 33.

51. Bahrain’s Penal Code³⁹ considers defamation a criminal offense in Article 364. In 2014, the Government amended the Penal Code, and included imprisonment for defamation up to seven years and a fine for anyone who “publicly insults Bahrain’s king, flag or national emblem⁴⁰.”

52. The 2002 Press and Publications Law⁴¹ requires all journalists working with international media to obtain a license from the Information Affairs Authority, which must be renewed annually. Otherwise, they can receive a fine, as stated in Article 22.

53. The Information Affairs Authority is the executive body that oversees both traditional and online media outlets in Bahrain and also implements policies issued by the Ministry. The President of the Information Affairs Authority is appointed by the King of Bahrain, as well as the Minister of Information Affairs. The Ministry is the official entity that sets policies and legislation concerning the media sector.

54. In addition to the Press Law, the Information Affairs Ministry issued Edict 68/2016⁴² in 2016 to regulate online activities of the newspapers, requiring them to acquire a supplementary license to publish online. These licences need annual renewal and are issued by the Mass Media Directorate at the Information Affairs Authority. Article 19 retains the Ministry of Information Affairs’ authority to license publications and a mandate to ban those that “harmed the regime, the official state religion, morality or different confessions in a way likely to cause a breach of the peace”.

55. In July 2013, the High Authority for Media and Communication was established as per royal decree 47⁴³, as a body that is concerned with supervising media and communication outlets, providing feedback on draft laws, a media charter and licensing applications. The senior management of the Higher Authority is appointed by the Government of Bahrain.

56. The legal protection for confidentiality of journalists’ sources is not specifically guaranteed by media legislation in Bahrain.

2. Media Self-Regulation:

57. There is no press council in Bahrain.

³⁸ http://www.bahrainijournalists.org/References_and_documents/Law

³⁹ https://www.unodc.org/res/cld/document/bhr/1976/bahrain_penal_code_html/Bahrain_Penal_Code_1976.pdf

⁴⁰ <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/236806.pdf>

⁴¹ http://www.bahrainijournalists.org/References_and_documents/Law

⁴² <http://bna.bh/portal/en/news/736106>;

Decree available in Arabic page 13 of Official Gazette: <http://www.mia.gov.bh/ar/official-gazette/Documents/3270.pdf>

⁴³ <http://bna.bh/portal/en/news/568067>;

Full text available in Arabic on <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/789173.html>

58. The Charter of Press Ethics⁴⁴ is signed by six editor-in-chiefs of the daily newspapers and the Minister of Information Affairs. It places responsibility for any violation of the charter on the editors-in-chief and calls on media not to publish content that could “prejudice the interests of Islamic, Arab, and friendly States”.

59. The Bahrain Journalists Association adopted in 2012 the Press Code of Ethics⁴⁵.

3. Safety of journalists:

60. UNESCO has reported the killing of three journalists in Bahrain since 2008⁴⁶. Government responded to requests of the UNESCO’s Director General regarding the killings.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

61. Recommendations made within the framework of the second cycle of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, considered in July 2012⁴⁷.

115. The following recommendations will be examined by Bahrain, which will respond in due course, but no later than the twenty-first session of the Human Rights Council in September 2012:

115.52. Pursuing policies and programs in the education of citizenship and human rights as best practices;

115.166. Step up efforts to strengthen public education, awareness programme and skill training, particularly aimed at increasing awareness on human rights in Bahrain;

115.167. Strengthen education and awareness of human rights at the national level;

115.170. Continue strengthening efforts to guarantee access to adequate education for persons with disabilities.

62. Analysis:

The Kingdom of Bahrain has, according to available information, taken several steps towards ensuring the right to education. Following the previous recommendations, measures have been implemented in order to enhance human rights education by integrating its principles to the curricula. Moreover, the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the endorsement of the National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities has helped facilitate access to education for students with disabilities. Nevertheless, as far as we

⁴⁴ <http://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Bahrain-Charter-of-Press-Ethics.pdf>

⁴⁵ http://www.bahrainjournalists.org/References_and_documents/Meethaq

⁴⁶ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/freedom-of-expression/press-freedom/unesco-condemns-killing-of-journalists/countries/bahrain/>

⁴⁷ http://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/document/bahrain/session_13_-_may_2012/ahrc216bahraine.pdf

know, Bahrain has not taken additional measures to strengthen public education and therefore secure quality teaching. Furthermore, it is difficult to access updated information on the implementation of certain aspects of the right to education.

63. Specific Recommendations:

1. Bahrain should be strongly encouraged to ratify the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education.
2. Bahrain should be encouraged to further include human rights principles in the academic curricula.
3. Bahrain could further strengthen public education.
4. Bahrain could make legislation and policies more accessible for monitoring by public institutions.

Cultural Rights

64. As a State Party to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)⁴⁸ and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)⁴⁹, Bahrain is encouraged to fully implement the relevant provisions that promote access to and participation in cultural heritage and, as such, are conducive to implementing the right to take part in cultural life as defined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In doing so, Bahrain is encouraged to give due consideration to the participation of communities, practitioners, cultural actors and NGOs from the civil society as well as vulnerable groups (minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, young peoples and peoples with disabilities), and to ensure that equal opportunities are given to women and girls to address gender disparities.

65. Bahrain is also encouraged to ratify the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) as a means to promote access to and participation in creative expressions and as such contribute to implementing the right to take part in cultural life.

Freedom of opinion and expression

66. Bahrain is recommended to decriminalize defamation and place it within a civil code that is in accordance with international standards.⁵⁰

67. Bahrain is further encouraged to introduce a freedom of information law that is in accordance with international standards.

68. Bahrain is recommended align with international standards its current practices, requiring newspapers to acquire a supplementary license to publish online.

⁴⁸ Periodic Report available at: <http://w hc.unesco.org/archive/2010/w hc10-34com-10Ae.pdf>

⁴⁹ Periodic Report available at: <http://w ww.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/state/bahrain-BH?info=periodic-reporting>

⁵⁰ See for example, General Comments No 34. of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 2006 Recommendation of the 87th Session Human Rights Committee, the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, and Resolution 1577 (2007) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

69. Bahrain is recommended to further facilitate the introduction of self-regulatory mechanisms.

70. The Government is urged to continue to investigate the cases of killed journalists, and to voluntarily report on the status of judicial follow-up to UNESCO. The Government may wish to consider taking advantage of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity as a means to strengthen protection of journalists and freedom of expression.

**Freedom of scientific research and
the right to benefit from scientific progress and its applications**

71. Bahrain, in the framework of the 2015-2017 consultations related to the revision of the Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers, as well as to its 2013-2016 monitoring exercise (November 2016 - April 2017), is encouraged to report to UNESCO on any legislative or other steps undertaken by it to implement this international standard-setting instrument, adopted by UNESCO in 1974. Bahrain is kindly invited to pay particular attention to the legal provisions and regulatory frameworks which ensure that scientific researchers have the responsibility and the right to work in the spirit of the principles enshrined in the 1974 Recommendation. Bahrain is invited to complete the online questionnaire which has been prepared by UNESCO to guide and assist Member States with their reporting. It aims to collect, in a simplified manner, information on the extent to which Member States have mainstreamed the principles of the 1974 Recommendation in their STI and other relevant systems, focusing on the promotion of respect for autonomy and independence of scientific researchers and respect for their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Responses to this questionnaire will be considered as the official national report for each Member State. The questionnaire can be completed and submitted online through the link which will be indicated in due course on the web page: <http://en.unesco.org/themes/ethics-science-and-technology>.