

Educational Objectives and Curriculum: The Case of Arab Education System in Israel

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Abstract

The suppression of Arab identity, culture, and political concerns has incessantly been maintained in the curriculum for Arab schools in Israel. This policy is consistent with the so called "Orientalist" approach, of imposing the "Superior" Western perspective, interpretations and priorities upon the so called "Inferior other" (Arabs). The curriculum for the Arab education system reflects the lowest priority given by the Israeli government to the development needs of Arab students and their broader collective Identification. The paper examines the structure of Arab educational system - at the level of educational objectives and curricula which reveals the marginal status of the Arab minority as part of the social, economic and political hierarchy in Israel.

Introduction

Israeli society is heterogeneous, not only because of the existence of Jewish culture and Arab culture, but also Because of the variety of Jewish communities that immigrated to Israel from different countries. Ideal educational system should adapt itself to such a social-cultural reality by developing a series of cultural and multi-cultural targets, objectives and curriculum. The purpose of multicultural education is to supply people of a particular culture with the necessary knowledge and skills to function within that culture, but also to function in different cultural conditions within the same socio-political frame [1,2]. However, this is not the situation in Israel, as the trend of the educational system was and remained mono-cultural [2,3,4].

Examining the educational hierarchy, curriculum of the Jewish educational system reveals a clear preference for Western culture, European (Ashkenazi) over non-Western Jewish culture (Mizrahi). In the Jewish school's curriculum, there is a widespread tendency to ignore the culture, the history and the contribution of Mizrahi Jews and other non-Western Jewish groups. There is also widespread tendency to ignore the Arabic language, Arab history and culture, or settle for its minimal exposure; And even so, with a negative approach [5,6,7]. Seemingly, there is a recognition and consideration of cultural differences between Jews and Arabs by establishing separate schools for Arabs. However, the Arab educa-

tional system in Israel does not serve as an example. Arab educational system in Israel was and still run by the Jewish majority and is controlled by a set of political criteria, while the Arabs are not partners in any way in its formulation [2,4,7,8].

The paper examines the structure of Arab educational system - at the level of educational objectives and curricula which reveals the marginal status of the Arab minority as part of the social, economic and political hierarchy in Israel.

Aims and Goals

Private Zionist/Jewish schooling was well-developed in Palestine prior to the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, (Swirski, 1999) [8], and after its establishment, it seemingly continued to envision and to develop its educational system as if it were still only educating Jews. Section 2 of Israel's 1953 Law of State Education, with no references to Arabs, specified the following aims for the education system:

To base the education on the values of Jewish culture and the achievements of science; on love of the homeland and loyalty to the state and the Jewish people; on practice in agricultural work and handicraft; on faith and striving for a society built on freedom, equality, tolerance, mutual assistance and love of mankind (Quoted in: Mar'i, 1978, p. 50) [2].

Setting these goals is another metaphor for the manner in which Arabs were "Present" As Students in the educational system, and at the same time "Absent" when it comes to educational vision of the country. More than fifty years have passed since the enactment of this law, but its defined goals still occupy the central place in The State education policy in Israel. Although the law was amended in 2000, but the Educational objectives for its remaining public schools still emphasize the values of Judaism and Jewish history and culture, while ignoring the values, the history and the culture of the Palestinian. Following are the state education objectives According to the amendment of state education, 2000:

1. To educate a person to love humanity, love his people and land, to be a loyal citizen of the state of Israel, who honors his parents and his family, His heritage, his cultural identity and language;
2. To impart the principles of the declaration of the independence of the State of Israel, and the values of the State Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, and to develop an attitude of respect for human rights, basic freedoms, democratic values, upholding the law, and the culture and viewpoints of others, and also to educate towards the aspiration for peace and tolerance in relations between individuals and between nations;
3. To teach the history of the Land of Israel and the State of Israel;
4. To teach the principles of Israel, Jewish history, the heritage of Israel and the Jewish tradition, to impart the awareness of memory of the Holocaust and heroism, and to educate to honor them;
5. To develop child's personality, their various talents and creativity, to extract their full potential as human beings who live a life of quality and significance;
6. To establish children's knowledge in the various fields of knowledge and science, in Human creation, its types and generations, and in the basic skills they will need in their life as mature individuals in a free society, and to encourage physical activity and leisure culture;
7. To reinforce the courage of judgment and criticism, foster intellectual curiosity, independent thinking and initiative, and to develop awareness and alertness to changes and innovations;
8. To provide equal opportunities for all children, allow them to develop in their own way and create an atmosphere that inspires the other and supports him;
9. foster involvement in Israeli society life, the willingness to accept roles and fulfill them out of devotion and responsibility, the desire of mutual assistance, contribution to the community, volunteer work and striving for social justice in Israel;
10. Develop an attitude of respect and responsibility for the natural environment and connection to the land, its landscapes, flora and fauna;
11. To recognize the language, culture, history, heritage and unique traditions of the Arab population and other population groups in Israel, and recognize the equal rights of all citizens of Israel. (Amendment of the State Education 1953, Ministry of Education and Culture Website, www.education.gov.il/zchuyot/chukim4.htm)[9].

These narrowly-defined educational aims that speak to the identity of three-fourths of the state's students while overlooking the other fourth, have continually been reaffirmed in the official discourse about education in Israel. The Arab educational system in Israel has been, and continues to be, governed by a set of political criteria which Palestinian Arabs have no say in formulating. Palestinian Arabs were basically absent from the Jewish oriented educational aims and goals that were established in the 1953 Law of State Education and from the amendments in 2000, at the same time, no parallel aims were ever set forth for the education of Arabs in Israel. Arabs were "Absent" from the Jewish general objectives that were formulated in The State Education law of 1953 and no specific objectives were formulated for Arab education.

In the 1970s and 1980s [10], and in the reform which was conducted at the National education program from 2005, some attempts were made by several committees to formulate specific objectives for Arab education (All of which were run by Jewish educators and policy makers). However, none of these attempts were implemented and the objectives were not added as an appendix to the State Education Law [4,11]. The Palestinian minority was never given autonomous control over their education system, or allowed to determine its aims, goals and curricula. Though the Arab school system has a separate curriculum, it is designed and supervised by the Ministry of Education, where the main participants are Jews administrators and academics [12]. As Golan-Agnon wrote about it [13], Chairman of the Committee for equality in education in the Pedagogical Secretariat of the Ministry of Education, 1999-2001: Arabs are not partners in Decision-making system, in determining policy and in the planning of Education Ministry. There is no Arab district manager, no proper representation of Arabs in the Ministry administration. The education system that pretends to educate for democracy, human rights and active citizenship, does not implement these values itself.... Questions about Arab representation in the Leadership of Ministry of Education are still unasked questions.in the huge Lev-Ram building and the surrounding buildings in Jerusalem, among the thousands of Jewish employees who run the Ministry of Education, Arab employees can be counted on one hand. Even in the northern region, where the number of Arab students is greater than the Jewish students, supervisors and managers of the education system are mostly Jews. Supervisory jobs are

not distributed equitably, So Arab supervisors are responsible for a much larger number of teachers and schools, and their budgets (for training, guidance and assistance) are much smaller (p. 77-78).

This contrasts sharply with the state's Jewish religious school system. As is known, the State Education Law from 1953 acknowledged the split between the secular Jews and religious Jews, and allowed religious Jews to hold, in the Ministry of Education, a separate department for State's Religious Education. This system is physically and administratively separate from the state's secular Jewish school system, and maintains completely autonomous control over its educational policy, aims and goals [2,8,14,15]. The Follow-up Committee on Arab Education, and Many Arab educators and politicians suggested establishing a separate department, in the Ministry of Education, for independent and autonomous State Education for Arabs, in the format of State Religious Education administration. The role of the Arab Department of Education would be to determine the educational goals, Curricula, educational programs, appointment of personnel at all levels of Arab Education in Israel (Future Vision of Palestinian Arabs in Israel, 2006) [16]. In this spirit, Daphna Golan-Agnon (2004) [13] explained the necessity and the educational importance in establishing a separate department for Arab education:

The establishment of an independent administration has no intention of secession. This is an integrated process, parallel to the establishment of an independent administration such as the state religious education administration, to ensure the inclusion of as many as possible of Arab educators and educational administration in the State educational system and in the staff of Ministry of Education at all levels and positions. To do so, we need to adopt an affirmative action policy, according to which, among the candidates with the same qualifications, preference will be given to Arab candidates until there is a proper representation for Arab education (pp. 78-79).

All proposals submitted so far to establish an Independent and autonomous Education administration for Arabs, in the format of the Jewish State Religious Education administration, were not accepted by the Israeli establishment.

Curriculum in Arab Education System

In sharp contrast to the promotion of a Jewish and Zionist identity in the curricular goals and materials in the Jewish schools, the curricular goals that the central Ministry of Education developed for Arab education tend to blur rather than enhance the formation of an Arab identity. Palestinian identity in particular is treated as something at best irrelevant and at worst, incompatible with the overriding goals and aims of the Zionist educational project. the aims of the Arab educational system, as well as specific curricular goals, require students to learn about Jewish values and culture. In the words of Daphna Golan-Agnon (2004) [13]: So far, no directed and significant effort was made to enable teaching of con-

tent that reflects the Arab culture, history and Arabic literature in Arab schools. Emphasizing the Zionist-values without respecting the Palestinian national identity reinforces the sense of alienation between the two nations and the sense of deprivation among Arab minority in Israel. Arab education system in Israel institutionalizes fear: Fear to connect to the past, Fear of refining the sense of cultural and national identity. And teachers fear of talking about the current events. Not only Arab schools are negatively affected by this discriminatory education. Denial of Palestinian history also characterizes the textbooks in Jewish schools, and reflects the denial of the reality that in Israel there are two nations with unresolved relationship (p. 80).

Curriculum for Arab schools was written in order to create a new ethnic identity of Israeli Arabs, and to bring to their de-Palestination. Arab students are required to spend many class hours in the study of Jewish history and culture and the Hebrew language (in total, more than they spend on Arabic literature and history). By the mid-seventies, 20% of compulsory education units in the curriculum in History for Arab schools were dedicated to Jewish history, And only 19% - for Arab history. In the mid-seventies, a new curriculum was developed, in which, equal parts (21%) of compulsory education units in history for Arab were dedicated for Arabic and Islamic history, History of Jews in the modern era, and the history of the twentieth century, and 33.4% were dedicated to the Middle East in the modern era. In Jewish schools, on the other hand, 33.4% of compulsory education units in History were dedicated to study History of Jews in the modern era, 44.4% - the history of the Zionist movement and for the establishment of the state of Israel, and the rest, 22.2% - the Jewish-Arab conflict; Compulsory education units had no place for Arab or Islamic history [4,17]. In the late nineties, another committee was formed to change the curriculum in history for Arab secondary schools. The committee, which had mostly Palestinian Arab professionals, presented its amended curriculum in 1999. But according to Al-Haj (2005) [12], in fact it was nothing but:

An amendment of the 1982 curriculum, which was prepared by a committee, headed by Joshua Braver, with an equal number of Arabs and Jews Members. The majority of the committee members who drafted the new version were Arabs, but most of the academic advisors were Jewish ... In all matters relating to the creation of educational programs the partnership is one-sided, with domination of all aspects of the curricula written for Arab schools (p. 56).

The chapter dealing with the Middle East in the modern era in the new curriculum includes a unit of 15 parts on the history of the Palestinian Arab society, dealing with the controversy surrounding the issue of the name "Palestine", The history of Arab presence in Israel, "War of 1948" and the development of the Palestinian refugee problem and its causes. But, as reported by Barak (2004) [18] "This revolutionary period, which was supposed

to catch a substantial share of class hours, simply has not been learned. Supervisor of history and civics studies in the Arab sector, Dr. Saeed Barghouti claims that there is no textbook which could be used to teach this material "(par. 9).

Researchers from Truman Institute at the Hebrew University, started to prepare a new textbook which can be used to teach the history of Palestinian Arab society, but after an initial feedback, which they have received from Curriculum Division in The Ministry of Education, the textbook did not pass the editing stage [18]. In fact, the importance of the changes introduced to the new curriculum in history, even smaller due to the fact that the chapters dealing with the Palestinian history in the modern era and history of the Arab national movement were optional chapters and not compulsory chapters. All students who did not choose an expanded major in history (i.e., all students who chose sciences, mathematics, technology, literature majors Etc.), have learned nothing about the Arab-Israeli conflict or the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians [19]. As for learning language and literature in the Arab schools, those are still mostly at the top of the big curricula reform in the mid-seventies of the twentieth century. As part of that reform, 732 hours were allocated for Arabic learning, which were equally divided between language study (366 hours) and Literature studies (366 hours). On the other hand, a total of 768 hours were allocated for Hebrew learning, out of which, 29% (224 hours) were dedicated to language learning, And 71% (544 hours) - for Hebrew literature [4,17,19].

The content of the curriculum in Arabic literature has been updated in 1981 by a committee composed mainly of Arab professionals, and not the Jewish experts on Arab affairs who served in previous committees. However, the only Jewish member in the 1981 committee, who was head of Education Division for Arabs at The Ministry of Education, supervised the publication of the anthology and instructed the publisher to remove some of the texts that have been selected by the committee because they seemed to him "Provoking hostility" (Barak, 2004, part. 2) [18]. Thus, as Barak puts it (2004) [18], some innovative reforms on which the Committee recommended "Disappeared somewhere along the way from the school curriculum to literary anthologies used in Arab schools" (Par. 2), including poems of prominent Palestinian poets like Mahmoud Darwish, Rashid Hussein and Samih al-Qasim.

But Barak (2004) [18] also notes that in the Arab education system, Arab literature curriculum from 1981 looks is remarkably modern compared to Hebrew literature curriculum. This curriculum was written in 1977 and has remained almost unchanged since then. In addition to studying Jewish history and Hebrew language, Arab students are required to develop identification with Jewish values and further Zionist aspirations at the expense of the development of their own national awareness and sense of belonging to their own people. The Arab national identity is much less emphasized [2,4,12,19,20]. Furthermore, the basic goal of Jewish studies

in Arab education is not the development of cultural competence as a bridge to Jewish Israeli society, but is rather to make Arabs understand and sympathize with Jewish and Zionist causes and blur their own national identity in Israel [2,4,8,12,19,20,21,22]. Rashid Hussein, a Palestinian Arab intellectual, went out at the end of the fifties of the last century with a warning in response to this unbalanced curriculum:

It is a well-known fact, that a person, who has no self-respect, will not respect others, and those who has no national feelings, cannot respect other nationalities. If an Arab student is prevented from learning about his people, his nationality and his homeland at school, He would compensate himself for the shortage at his home and on the street. He will welcome everything he hears from people or reads in the newspaper, which could lead to a distorted and incorrect understanding of nationalism. The school, which deprived him of something everyone is proud of, will be considered as an enemy to him. Instead of learning at school the meaning of nationalism full of humanism, He will only catch a distorted version. What will the school achieve then? What generation of Arab youth will come out of it? Instead of educating its students to believe in brotherhood and peace and sincerity of its teachers, the school will produce a confused and perplexed generation, who observes the facts in a distorted way and treats other nations as enemies, a generation full of inferiority complexes, feelings of humiliation, who cannot be proud of its youth, homeland and nationality [23]. But Hussein's warnings fell on deaf ears. Israeli authorities' concerns for Arab citizens' education carried a completely different nature than the concerns expressed by Hussein. Decades later, Israeli sociologist Daphna Golan-Agnon (2004) [13] expressed a similar view: To this day, despite dozens of researches and committees which have been established, Palestinian children in Israel are dealing with the gap between the story that is being told at home and the story that they hear at school. The contents being studied by Palestinian students in Israel reinforce this identity of no internal consistency. A significant part of the history curriculum deals with Jewish history, while Arab history in general and Palestinian history in particular is marginalized, as optional and not compulsory topics. As for the Nakba, the dispossession of Palestinians from their lands, and deportation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes, there is no mention in the history books in Arabic (and not in those of the Hebrew education system). The role of education is to enable Palestinian children in Israel to grow up in schools that respect their identity and help them in forming a clear and coherent Palestinian cultural national identity Along with education as Israeli citizens (p 81).

Perhaps the frank words of Uri Lubrani, advisor on Arab affairs in the Prime Minister's Office in 1960-1963, gave the most accurate expression of the issue: Maybe it would have been better if there were no Arab students. it would have been easier to supervise them, if they had remained woodcutters. But some things do

not depend on our will. It is impossible to avoid that, and therefore we have to be careful and understand the nature of the Inherent problems in here and take the appropriate methods [24].

In the 1970s, a group of Jewish Israeli researchers, Peres, Ehrlich and Yuval-Davis (1970) addressed the same issues. They criticized the curriculum imposed upon Arab schools by the Ministry of Education and Culture for attempting to instill patriotic sentiments in Arab students through the study of Jewish history, and pointed out the absurdity of the orientalist expectation that the “Arab student …serve the state not because the latter is important to him and fulfills his needs, but because it is important to the Jewish people” [25]. but It is only natural that lack of relevant contents, cultural and national experiences at schools, forced Arab students to look for other sources to satisfy their needs, Such as the mass media (radio, TV, Internet, etc.).

Despite the criticism, the curriculum for Arab schools continues to ignore Arab culture in general and Palestinian culture in particular. The curriculum also does not address the special social, educational and cultural needs of Arab-Palestinian population. Misrecognition of the cultural, social and political issues of Arab population in Israel weakens the relevance of educational experience for Arab students, so much so that it threatens to alienate them from school. This negligence reflects the low priority that Israeli government gives to Arab students. Arab education system as a whole appears in public declarations of senior officials in the Education Ministry as a kind of footnote.

Conclusion

The suppression of Arab identity, culture, and political concerns has incessantly been maintained in the curriculum for Arab schools. This policy is consistent with the so called “Orientalist” approach, of imposing the “Superior” Western perspective, interpretations and priorities upon the so called “Inferior other” (Arabs). The curriculum for the Arab education system reflects the lowest priority given by the Israeli government to the development needs of Arab students and their broader collective Identification. This is reflected in the personal story of Samia Sherkaui “The sun cannot be covered with a sieve”:

My father was sitting with his glasses, with his notebook which was wrapped in black cover and with the fountain pen, into the night writing. He was always sitting with glasses, a fountain pen, and the notebooks with Black Covers. It was winter - very cold outside, some lazy embers in the fireplace. I snuck and went under the blanket that covered his shoulders as he was sitting. He gave me a hug, whenever I need it; I recover its warmth as if it was last night.

I learned to read before I got to school, through my father's notebook. I did not always understand what I read, but I loved the most to read Poems that he wrote. I had two worlds - home and

school. My love for my home was infinite- My mother, my father, my two sisters and two brothers, and our land, what was and what is left. As for the school I was torn, and could not understand then the huge gap between the story that is being told at home and the one that I hear at school. My parents said that I have to study and be a good student. I loved to study - but I felt alienation, confusion and disorder. Who am I? Who are we? Why is it that things don't sit right with me? Why was Arabic teacher becoming pale and even shaking when I would take to the class, with pride, one of the poems that were written by my father?

In one of the poems, my father described a plot of my family's land, which is today within the territory of Kibbutz Metsir. He described the daffodils that grew there; he also described his longing for the soft breezes under the olive trees there. When I wanted to recite the poem in class, the teacher grabbed the paper out of my hand, and in the evening he came to our house. "Please," He begged my father, "I want to raise my children." In those days I did not understand what the connection is. Later I began to realize that instead of my father's poem I had to recite, with my peers, poems about the bird at the window [Haim Nahman Bialik], about the swamps that were settled and the woods in Hadera. I was drawn to the roots by my house, while the school, consistently and intensely, ripped me off. Over the years I look with a smile at how eventually the house won. Education - This is the magic word and the keyword. That's where light and heavy work tools must be taken, and continue working. An old saying engraved in my mind, which is my mother's responsibility, “The sun cannot be covered with a sieve”: Over fifty years the establishment tries, mainly through the Ministry of Education, to do so, still does not understand that it is impossible (cited in Golan-Agnon, 2004, p 176) [13].

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10. Peled committee, which was appointed in 1975, was the first body ever established in Israel with Arab representatives. In the report issued by the committee, several significant changes were proposed, including clear targets for Arab education, declaring that the state education for them should be based "on the foundations of Arab culture, science achievements, the aspiration for peace between Israel and its neighbors; And love of the country which is Shared by all of its citizens and loyalty to the state of Israel" (Ministry of Education and Culture, p. 14). But in the document which was published eventually, the Ministry of Education changed the formulation of Arab education objectives by deleting the words "Shared by all of its citizens" "from the objective related to love of the country; Jewish education objectives were accepted unchanged (Ministry of Education, 1977). As Al-Haj wrote in (2002); "Even after the correction of the objectives proposed by Peled Commission, Jewish students can love Israel as their homeland and as a Jewish state, while Arab students should internalize the message that they are not full citizens, but junior partners in Israeli society and must abide by the rules determined by the Jewish majority that are consistent with the basic ideology of the state" (p. 176).
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21. For example, formal targets set for teaching Arabic language Were mainly technical and did not talk at all about the development of a more general understanding of Arab culture and its values or questions of identity, While formal targets for teaching Hebrew language included "The acquisition of familiarity with Jewish culture and its values both in the past and present" and strengthening the "understanding of cultural and social life of the Jewish population in Israel" among Arab pupils (Quoted in: Mar'i, 1978, pp. 77-78). At the end of the seventies another primary target was attached to Hebrew language teaching in Arab schools: View the Hebrew language as a bridge for Arab and Jewish coexistence and strengthening the integration of Arabs into Israeli society (Al-Haj, 1998). Responsibility for the development of tools for coexistence and integration has become a very unilaterally move, because Jewish students are not required to learn Arabic, Arabs are not presented as a national minority which actually constitutes part of Israeli society, but rather an alienated factor, who needs integration.
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