Educational Challenges in a Multicultural Society: The Case of Israel

LE CAS D'ISRAEL: DEFIS EDUCATIFS DANS UNE SOCIETET MULTICULTURELLE

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Abstract

The academic world has not yet determined its attitude to multidisciplinary, which leads to a lack of institutionalization and regulation of multidisciplinary in research and in curricular development. The fashion in the 1990s has become a fact, yet we are stilled faced with the challenge: Academic institutions offer their students multidisciplinary programs, considered to be less prestigious, and at the same time the institutions have a controversial attitude to multidisciplinary research, and specifically scholars working in diverse areas of knowledge. The world outside the academe has already decided that multidisciplinary is the need of the hour; the academe itself is still trying to hold on to both ends of the rope.

Key words: Challenges; Multicultural society; Higher education

Résumé

Le monde universitaire n'a pas encore déterminé son attitude envers multidisciplinaire, ce qui conduit à un manque d'institutionnalisation et la réglementation des pluridisciplinaire dans la recherche et au développement curriculaire. La mode dans les années 1990 est devenue une réalité, pourtant, nous sommes calmés relever le défi: Les établissements d'enseignement offrent à leurs étudiants des programmes multidisciplinaires, considérés comme moins prestigieux, et en même temps les institutions ont une attitude controversée à la recherche multidisciplinaire, et plus particulièrement chercheurs travaillant dans divers domaines de la connaissance. Le monde extérieur du monde universitaire a déjà décidé que multidisciplinaire est la nécessité de l'heure, le milieu universitaire lui-même est encore en essayant de tenir aux deux extrémités de la corde.

Mots clés: Défis; Société multiculturelle; L'enseignement supérieur

"Those who cannot develop a critical attitude towards their culture will be incapable of developing a tolerant attitude towards the culture of others" (Lamm, 2000, p.21).

INTRODUCTION

The term "multiculturalism" is often used, although at times it expressesdifferent intentions, as it may be attributed to demographic, structural, or ideological aspects of society. When used in the demographic context it means that a society is composed of different ethnic and cultural groups (Lamm, 1996). In the structural context, it means that there is a suitable division of powers between different cultural groups (Sarup, 1986). From the ideological respect, it means that society treats the various cultures it encompasses equally and fairly – "with respect and a positive attitude towards the cultural heterogeneity that characterizes it…" and a positive perception of "the legitimate wish of individuals and communities to preserve their diversity" (Yonah, 1998, p.3). In the current setting, use of the term multiculturalism in education refers to the ideological aspect of the concept.

Academic and public discourse on the topic of multiculturalism in all its aspects takes place in a wide range of domains. However, the understanding that **multicultural education** and the ability to create **multicultural societies** are mutually dependent is what

has transformed multicultural education into a separate discipline – constituting the very heart of multicultural activity (Reingold, 2005). The purpose of this discipline is to create and facilitate "an equal educational opportunity *for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social class, and cultural groups*" (Banks & Banks, 1995, p.xi). This approach makes use of contents, concepts, principles, theories, and paradigms from the social and behavioral sciences as well as from gender and ethnic studies – in order to enhance educational equity (ibid.). Such equity is sometimes achieved also through the structural transformation of educational institutions, providinggroups of people with different genders,schooling, and languages, equal opportunity to attain academic achievements (Gollnick & Chin, 2009).

Even before this field became a discipline in its own right in the western world, the young State of Israel struggled with the need to construct an educational system in a multicultural society. The State of Israel, the Jewish state, was established on 15 May, 1948. The establishment of a state for the Jewish people was a historical event that occurred after two thousand years of Jewish exile and persecution in the Diaspora. When the state was declared, the Scroll of Independence was signed, declaring that "the State of Israel will be open to Jewish immigration and the ingathering of exiles" (as quoted in: Horev, 2006). The constitutional foundation turned the Land of Israel into a focus of Jewish immigration. The external waves of immigration created the demographic basis of Jewish life in the Land of Israel (Sever, 2001). When the state was founded, the Jewish population numbered 600 thousand; today, six decades later, the Jewish population has reached 7 million, with three quarters coming from immigration (CBS, 2011; Geva-May, 2000). As an immigrant country which coped with gargantuan rates of immigration from its very beginning, Israel withstood many challenges, including the challenge of educating its children in a changing society occupied with culturally influencing its citizens and being influenced by them (Reichel, 2008). **The purpose of this article is to review and present main points of reference in Israel's educational system from the perspective of the multicultural challenge.** The research literature has no conventional subdivision of the years 1948-2011. Some subdivide the development of the educational system along the development of curricula in the various disciplines (see for example: Bar-Gal, 1993) or by researchers' fundamental outlook (see for example: Yaoz & Iram, 1987). Others prefer the division by large waves of immigration[1](see for example: Leshem & Lissak, 2001). Other divisions are follow the development of teaching approaches in educational institutions[2]

(Glaubman & Iram, 1999) as well as thechronological order of the decades (Achimeir & Be'er, 1994). Another course of division, which we have chosen to embrace here, is by educational policy. This division is based on the rationale provided by Reichel (2008) in her book "The Story of the Israeli System of Education", reflecting the association between the evolvement of Israeli society and its educational policies, and it includes the elements present in the other methods of division. In addition, this division reflects the perceptual and paradigmatic process that Israel underwent, from a melting pot policy to one encouraging multiculturalism in education. We will begin by presenting the foundations and orientations of multicultural education around the world, and then review how an educational system is structured in a multicultural society – including its processes and convolutions.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE WORLD

The multicultural approach to education is rooted in early 20th century United States, in attempts by teacher Davis DuBois to construct a curriculum that would be suitable for his diverse student population, which consisted of students from several different ethnic groups. At that time (World War I) due to the strong emphasis on Americanization, teachers tended to ignore the cultural heritage of many ethnic groups and to present American history one-dimensionally. DuBois rejected the hegemonic approach and together with his wife (who was a teacher too) developed a unique curriculum – "The Woodbury Plan" – a multicultural curriculum that covered immigrant cultures as well as information on the history of ethnic and racial communities in the United States (Koppelman, 2011). In 1933 Woodson Carter joined the call for multiculturalism in education in his book "The Mis-Education of the Negro" (Woodson, 1990), claiming that the American curriculum ignores the culture and history of Afro-Americans. In the book he spoke of the failure of the educational system to fully portray American history and heritage. In the 1960s the call for multiculturalism became part of the demands of the Civil Rights Movement, eventually leading to a reform in multicultural education. The purpose of the reform was to correct the distorted circumstances ensuing from the "melting pot" approach – with its attempts to enforce American culture on its minorities (Sobol, 1990). The United States, similar to Israel, is a country of immigrants, and thus it was one of the first to cope with the issue of multiculturalism.

While in the past the issue of multiculturalism in

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[1]According to this proposal, the division is 1948-1951 – immigration from Europe, North Africa, Iraq and Yemen; 1952-1964 – North Africa and the US; 1955-1977 – USSR and Ethiopia.
[2] Division according to the periods of: Asceticism – seeking to sever themselves from reality and strive for the ideal; the dream – educational applications based on an idealist outlook; reform – improving the world on a rational basis.

education mainly involved immigrant countries, today, in the global era, the composition of students in schools worldwide has become more diverse than ever (Gollnick & Chin, 2009). Thus, for example, South Korea has been transformed in recent years from a homogeneous to a multicultural society. Traditionally, the country's curriculum emphasized its monolithic character, a country with a single language, history, and ethnicity. However, due to the demographic changes, the educational system now finds itself in a new situation and is required to redefine its identity (Jungsoon, 2010). In the United States the estimate is that by 2020 non-Caucasian students will constitute some 50% of the population, while the teacher population will remain composed mostly of Caucasian women (Amos, 2010). In Germany as well, formerly perceived as a country with a single culture, attempts are being made to cope with the rising rate of immigrant students (Hoff, 1995). A similar trend is apparent in Australia (Allan & Hill, 1995), Britain (Figueroa, 1995), South Africa, Canada, and many other western countries (Ball, 2006). These global changes have turned the discipline of multicultural education into an urgent need, and educational systems and policy makers seek how to both facilitate equal opportunities in education and preserve their country's unique and national features. The story of the State of Israel, although not yet 70 years old, is a microcosm of perceptual shifts and of coping with the complexity of education in a multicultural society. Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, said as early as the 1950s:

> If we had a time machine… and our populace could be transferred, let's say, to the twenty first century, and they would see how future history books portray current events in Israel 50 years in retrospect… not only the establishment of the state and the War of Independence, but also the incredible initial enterprises that transformed the country and formed the basis for a new nation and country – people would be astounded: How were these outstanding things done before our very eyes?... (Ben Gurion, 1953, p.70).

One of the nation's initial enterprises is the educational enterprise, and indeed as Ben Gurion said, as educators we are astounded by how the State of Israel managed to achieve its national task – to motivate the people educationally. The concept of the state as educator was the dominant norm in its first years and it laid the foundations forits educational system (Zameret, 1997). Giving education a high priority is what made it possible to cope with the gargantuan challenge of education in a multicultural society.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN ISRAEL

The State of Israel was indeed established in 1948, but the educational system began to take root even before the official founding of the state. In those years (1882-1948) the country had separate educational systems. The government system, at first under Ottoman and subsequently under British rule, consisted of Arabic language elementary schools for children aged four to seven. In addition, the various faiths sponsored their own educational systems: the Jews operated an educational system that included *heders*, *yeshivas*, and *kolels*. Moslems educated their children in *kutabs* that operated beside the mosques, while Christians provided education in convents and churches with separate systems for boys and girls. In addition, there was also a Modern Hebrew system of education (Reichel, 2009). This system was internally and externally funded mainly by donations from Jewish philanthropists, and its goal was to shape the new Zionist society, keeping its distance from exilic Jews (ibid.).

Once the state was established, the Hebrew educational system became the foundation of the Israeli system of education, and handled assimilation of the two new populations – immigrants and minorities (Arabs, Bedouin, and Druze). These two populations were themselves composed of subgroups: the immigrant population consisted of immigrants from European and Islamic countries, with a wide variety of cultures and traditions. The minority population was composed of students who became citizens of the state upon its establishment. Some had not received any prior formal education, while others had belonged to educational institutions run by the authorities or by religious institutions (ibid.). The evolving state set itself a task – to absorb, educate, and assimilate the new populations by means of the educational system.

THE PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION 1948-1953

Hebrew Students

The State of Israel was declared in 1948. The temporary government maintained the educational arrangements prevalent during the British Mandate and refrained from appointing a Minister of Education. The temporary government was concerned that awarding the Ministry of Education to one political party would foment unrest among the others (Zameret & Yablonka, 1997). At the time, three different ideological groups were active, continuing their operations in pre-state years: the general, civil track; the workers' track; and the Mizrachi track.[3] Each of the groups ran its own autonomous educational system, under its exclusive supervision (Zameret, 2003). The general track was in favor of traditional-national education, combining science and modernity with spiritual Jewish elements. The workers' track espoused "labor-

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[3] Only a small minority, consisting of several hundred students, studied at institutions that did not belong to these tracks.

oriented" education and the shaping of a new Jewish personality, promoting pioneering and independence in realization of the socialist vision. The Mizrachi track sought to impart national-religious education, linking orthodoxy, Zionism, and modernity (ibid.). After the state was established a fourth track was recognized – the ultra-orthodox, espousing anti-Zionist education. In 1949, after the national elections, a Minister of Education was appointed – Zalman Shazar, on behalf of Mapay. The concerns voiced above proved true when this appointment aroused an array of objections and difficulties (Zameret & Yablonka, 1997). Shazar (who was in time appointed President) was a man of letters, but also known for his lack of managerial proficiency. He believed in pluralism and perceived the existing tracks as a suitable framework for the Hebrew educational system, with room for diverse orientations (Reichel, 2008).

Despite the organizational difficulties of the Ministry of Education and under pressure from Ben Gurion, the Ministry of Education designed the Compulsory Education Law ensuring free education for all (Zameret & Yablonka, 1997). The Compulsory Education Law of 1949 stated that every child in Israel must attend an educational setting (kindergarten or elementary school) from age 5 to 14, and required parents to register their children at an educational institution and to make sure that they attend regularly. The law also stated that parents must send their children to one of the recognized tracks. In addition to the primary legislation, Shazar added a regulation whereby immigrant children cannot choose between the different tracks. While most people could choose the track of their preference, so-called "uniform education" was instituted in immigrant transit camps. Uniform education was a concept devised by the Department for "Imparting the Language and Cultural Absorption to Immigrants", headed by Nachum Levin, who decided to establish classrooms for immigrant children at the transit camps. In practice, these classrooms operated outside the recognized tracks and in contravention of the Compulsory Education Law. The curriculum formed for immigrant children was based on the Zionist-socialist-secular conception. The purpose of the uniform schools was to provide immigrant children with basic schooling as well as fundamental concepts in the history of the people and the country, in the designated ideological spirit. In those years (1949-1953) waves of immigration served to multiply the population of schools and kindergartens by 5 – from one hundred thousand to five hundred thousand. Thus, in actual fact, the uniform educational system became the primary dominant track. However no attention was given to the fact that immigrants constituted a diverse population and that many held religious values and a traditional system of values. The Department of Culture was guided mostly by secular Israeli values compatible with the main goal of transforming immigrant children into Israelis (Reichel,

2008). Ben Gurion explained this as follows in a Knesset debate:

> [We must take the immigrant] who is a depleted, neglected, alienated, and estrangedorgan… and we shall quickly teach him the language, if he does not know Hebrew, and impart to him… knowledge of the land, and adapt him to a national setting, in an educating environment, and teach him to till the land… and thus we shall construct a people united in their language, consciousness, strength of spirit, true to their land and their independence" (Ben Gurion, cited in Zameret, 1991, online edition).

This approach, contending that all immigrant children should be educated according to the labor-pioneering ideal, was called the "melting pot". The melting pot approach was the Labor Movement's way of changing the "Jewish exilic" character and creating a "Hebrew-humane generation, alive and vibrant, embodied by Israeli workers and focusing on the conquest of Israel's wilderness through physical work, pioneering tension, social justice" (Nachum Levin, quoted in Zameret, 1991), while preventing the dangerous expansion of religious education: "All the transit camps are awash with Yeshiva students… they represent the black powers in the country. They will not teach these children and this youth pioneering skills and urge them to settle the Negev… this is a battle for the nature of the immigration movement" (ibid.).

According to Levin's approach, which was also the hegemonic approach, the state can be built only by leaving the exilic past and embracing a new system of values in the spirit of the Workers' Movement. The new Israeli character was perceived as one that necessarily leaves the past behind. However, several months later religious groups from among those housed in the transit camps began to express their objections, mainly Yemenites who harbored strong ties with tradition and the Jewish religion. As early as 1948, there were those for whom state-sponsored education was tantamount to indoctrination, perceived as endangering the religious education of immigrant children:

> Thousands arrive every week. They are placed in absorption camps on behalf of the Jewish Agency and their children are given a type of official uniform education on behalf of the Jewish Agency and the State. Several months later the immigrants leave the absorption camps and move on to cities and villages and settlements abandoned by the Arabs. Both parents and children have been properly "processed" and it is very difficult to get anyone to join the religious education system. (Shakdiel, cited in Zameret, 1991)

Towards late 1949 the calls of protest reached the Knesset and the press and became a public outcry. The Prime Minister had no choice but to appoint an official commission of inquiry to examine claims of anti-religious coercion in the transit camps. The commission, called the Frumkin Commission and headed by Judge Gad Frumkin, concluded that although the government had no intention of performing anti-religious coercion, it objects to the

melting pot approach and to attempts to form a "new Israeli image" in such a short length of time. Despite the appreciation expressed by members of the commission for efforts of the Department of Culture, they claimed that these were prejudiced and thus offensive towards religious values – for example cutting off the sidelocks of Yemenite Jews, disturbing holy customs such as Torah study, prayers, and desecrating the Sabbath. The commission expressly stated that there was a lack of compatibility:

> Between the system, both in regard to education and in regard to immigrants' customs and ways of life – superficial treatment of the religious problems of immigrants and children. The system saw its primary responsibility as helping children adjust to sraeli life. The basic mistake was in measuring [Israeli life] by the same measures used for long-time Israelis or for immigrants from European countries. Therefore [the system of uniform education] chose a path that seemed easy and simple.

Thus, the commission's conclusions insinuate that the dominant approach was paternalistic, abusing immigrants' rights and harshly neutralizing their uniqueness. Diversity was dealt with at the time by suppressing cultural and ethical uniqueness – merging – by means of the educational system. As a result of the commission's conclusions, a decision was reached to forego the system of division by tracks and to enact a State Education Law – i.e., non-political, pluralist education, discarding the political element previously operative in educational institutions and subjecting them to government control (Shechter & Iram, 2001).

Arab Students

Arab students were absorbed into the system at the same time as attempts were being made to integrate Arab citizens within the State of Israel. A government committee that began operating in pre-state years was charged with determining how to absorb Arab students. The committee was asked to prepare a practical program for educating Arab children in a Jewish state and was accompanied by another committee established in 1948 by the Ministry of Minorities (Reichel, 2008). When the state was established, far-reaching steps were taken concerning the Arab minority: raising the number of school years at Arab elementary schools to match those at Hebrew schools – 8 years; establishing new schools, mostly municipal (not government schools as in the past), supported by local Arab communities; opening mixed-sex schools; replacing many principals and teachers at Arab schools and introducing married women as teachers (canceling a regulation from the mandate period that forbade their employment); constructing a new curriculum including mandatory Hebrew studies and adding new subjects such as science, physical education, art, and music; moderating disciplinary rules (Zameret, 2003). The absorption of Arab students was reinforced by the Compulsory Education Law, although its enforcement proved complex. Israel recognized Arab students as ethnic or religious minorities, and each of these sub-groups (Moslems, Christians, Druze, Circassians) was integrated differently into Israeli life.

STABILIZATION AND ORGANIZATION – 1953-1968

Hebrew Students

The State Education Law was enacted in 1953. This law replaced the previous method of track-oriented education and resolved that the state and state religious educational systems would have a uniform curriculum, in addition to supplementary religious educational contents for the state religious system. The law also permitted supplementation of the uniform state curriculum as desired by parents and with the approval of the Ministry of Education. Political activity at the schools was forbidden and registration followed students' geographical distribution. The law did not encompass ultra-orthodox students, as they remained politically affiliated with Agudat Yisrael. At the time, Ben Gurion posited that due to contemporary processes of modernization this track would eventually disappear (Reshef, 1987) (To date this population has multiplied by 40). The nature of the educational system formed the basis of many struggles – conflicts between left and right, among left-wing factors, between secular and religious, within the religious population, and between immigrants and veterans. The introduction of a state education system is one of the outcomes of these struggles (Zameret, 1997; Hacohen, 2010).

The State Education Law was a significant junction in the history of education in Israeli multicultural society. The declared purpose of the law was to transfer educational institutions from the control of sectorial organizations to the central control of the government. It was an attempt to cope with multiple groups and cultures through both organizational and ideological unity. Originally, the law was supposed to consist of only one track – state education, with no divergence of the religious state system, based on a melting pot approach – an entire society educated according to the same values. However due to the strong objection voiced by religious parties, a compromise was found in the form of separating the secular and religious tracks. The law, born among other things of the hope to solve the disagreements between religious and secular, led in practice to a splitting of religious and secular Zionism. In the years after its enaction, two separate school systems were created, making it difficult for the two groups to become familiar with each other. In addition, the decision to leave the ultra-orthodox track in the form of an independent system prevented it from drawing closer to religious Zionism or choosing religious state education (Reichel, 2008).

In those days, no one imagined that this decision

would have wide ethical and educational implications. In time the state religious system came to be perceived as the exclusive authority on the study of Jewish values and imparting a Jewish consciousness. The topic reached public attention following an event in which an Israeli youth delegation visiting Russia (1956) displayed a lack of knowledge in everything related to Jewish life and customs. This aroused the astonishment of the host community and served as a wake-up call for the Israeli educational system. The state system became secularized (Ben Bassat, 1982; Ben Artzi, 1989; Zameret, 1989; Kerem, 1994; Shaked, 1993; Adler, 1989) and eventually the law lost its raison d'etre and centralism was transformed into decentralism (Hacohen, 2010). This decision to form separate tracks had an impact on the development of Israeli society and on the diminution of Jewish values imparted by the general state system.[4]

Arab Students

In 1948 a military government was declared in Arab towns. Operating beside the army, the Ministry of Education attempted to promote implementation of the Compulsory Education Law among the Arab population. The ministry used persuasion to urge people to send their children to kindergarten, almost unheard of in pre-state years, and to elementary school. Meetings were held between representatives of the Ministry of Education and of the Arab population. Upon establishment of the state, there had been only 45 Arab elementary schools and one Arab high school in Nazareth. In ten years the number of elementary schools multiplied by three, a trend that continued in later years (Al-Haj, 1994).

In 1956 the Compulsory Military Service Law was enforced on the Druze, and their rights and responsibilities were in effect separated from those of the rest of the Arab community in Israel. In 1957 the Department of Arab Education decided to create a separate system for the Druze and to nurture their identity and heritage. The Ministry of Education encouraged the establishment of school buildings and extension of studies for girls (Reichel, 2008). Emphasizing the distinct features of the Bedouin was also discussed, but a separate system was only formed in the late 1970s.

PERIOD OF REFORM PLANNING 1968-2000

1968-1980

Towards the 1960s, the Ministry of Education began

to understand that it must relinquish Ben Gurion's "melting pot" vision, however reluctantly (Kashti, 2000). Until that time Hebrew schools had operated as "trustworthy efficient agents of a recruiting and unifying national movement, and of a nation state fearlessly and decidedly engaged in shaping its identity" (ibid, p.3). The integrative approach of the first two decades, seeking to create a homogeneous identity among the immigrants while refuting their inner identity, and constructing national values that illuminated the figure of the pioneer, paratrooper, or military commander – had succeeded. The intention was to use the educational system to form a "center", but in practice "margins" were generated (ibid.) – social gaps between different social groups.

In 1963 Minister of Education Zalman Aran – whom some call "the minister of the decade" (Zameret, 2000, p.62) – decided that there is need for change within the educational system. The feeling was that the educational system in its current form promoted inequality and created disparity between different social groups (Reichel, 2008). Indeed, this feeling was supported by data showing that the proportion of "problem students" in the elementary system was 60%, leading to a high dropout rate in the transition to high school (Dror, 2006).

This was the purpose of the Prawer Commission, called by some the "integration reform" (Dror, 2006). The commission recommended the establishment of six-year elementary schools (grades 1-6), junior high schools (7-9), and high schools (10-11), and combining junior high schools with comprehensive high schools as a separate administrative and academic unit. In addition, the Compulsory Education Law was expanded to cover nine years of schooling (Zameret, 2000). At first the Teachers' Association protested, claiming among other things that this would not lead to integration. Following the protest another commission was established – the Rimalt Commission – to promote implementation of the Prawer Commission recommendations. Teacher representatives were included in the commission and it recommended academic training for junior high school teachers and giving preference to the attachment of junior highs to high schools – without setting a date for conclusion of the reform process (Reichel, 2009). In 1978 a committee was established to examine the achievements of the reform. It stated that despite the achievements, desired integration had not been attained (Zameret, 2001) – although the schools were ethnically diverse. The conclusion was that physical proximity of students from different backgrounds is not enough to create actual closeness. The conclusions led to the decision that on one hand enforcement of the

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[4] See conclusions of the Shenhar Commission (1994), which recommended liberal-pluralist Jewish studies in general state schools: "Pluralism in the general educational system must become a stimulus for cultural expansion and enrichment and for significant educational experiences, while complying with the challenges of the times. State schools must become a focus for developing options of Jewish-Israeli cultural existence not dependent on Jewish legal authority and maintain an association with Jewish history and its works from a variety of aspects, while applying criticism and innovation…" (Am Ve'Olam, p. 6).

reform process should be continued, and on the other it is necessary to design unique study programs that would help facilitate integration[5] (ibid.). In practice, the reform has been slowly and gradually evolving for 35 years due to the lack of a restricting time limit.

The years 1980-2000 were characterized by a process of interpreting the "state-sponsored status" of education (Reichel, 2008). Officially, the centralist status of the educational system was not changed, but in practice a process of decentralization and expansion of pluralism in education was put into effect. During this period the recommendations of the Committee for Encouraging Teacher Initiatives (1971) and the Committee for Encouraging Initiatives and Innovations in Secondary Education (1972) were implemented, recommending that schools be given the autonomy to encourage educational initiatives. The committees' recommendations were joined by a Director General Circular (1976) calling for democratization of the schools and a report of the Director General of the Ministry of Education titled "Education in the '80s" (Peled, 1976), which recommended expanding teachers' autonomy. In addition, the community school experiment began – schools operating as communal social units and combining formal and informal education for the surrounding community.

In the 1980s, the reform became more firmly established with the help of the Higher Council for Pedagogical Autonomy (1984) and through cooperation with the Autonomy Project of the Tel Aviv University School of Education (1987-1992) and by enhancing the involvement of local authorities. The autonomy reform continued to develop and became more varied in the 1990s. A committee was appointed, headed by Ami Volansky, Deputy Director General at the Ministry of Education, and it recommended improving school functioningthrough maximal separation of the schools and the centralist educational system and establishing "self managing schools". These recommendations were embraced and implemented (Reichel, 2009). From the 1980s until the beginning of the 21st century, dozens of committees were appointed, charged with enhancing educational autonomy, but they mainly emphasized parents' right of choice in their children's education – increasing parentinvolvement in the community as well as in the contents and budgetary management of the schools. Although the idea of integration was not neglected, in practice authority was decentralized, and as a result Ministry of Education impact and treatment of schools and projects became decentralized as well (Reichel, 2008). While annulment of the integration reform by the decentralization process was never declared, ways of circumventing integration were created and the educational system underwent a de facto structural transformation. This transformation was manifested in the evolvement of educational subsystems in the different sectors (ibid.). In this manner, each community could delineate the content and management of its schools as a result of the differences between communities, creating differentiation between schools in different parts of the country.

Arab Education

Many committees were appointed from 1980-2002 with the aim of evaluating and furthering Israeli education (see for example: Followup committee for Arab affairs, 1989; 1994; 2002). The recommendations included, among other things, decentralization of the Division of Arab Education and its separation into different districts as well as establishing a unit for special issues related to culture, tradition, and religion, establishing a separate pedagogical office for Arabs, a five-year plan for increasing the number of educators in the Arab sector, expanding vocational education, and helping towns with particularly low student achievements (Reichel, 2008). Most of the recommendations and conclusions were not implemented, despite the call and wish of Arab educators for autonomy, as seen in the Hebrew educational system (Abu Asbah, 2007). However, the Arab sector is aware of the issues involved: "The majority establishment will probably perceive increased and improved autonomy as excessive separation possibly endangering minima*l* civil cohesion required for continued existence of the state" (ibid., p.144). The Arab minority in Israel does not have a right of autonomy similar to that awarded to the religious and ultra-Orthodox minority in regard to their educational systems (Saban & Amara, 2005). Regarding the curriculum, textbooks have been updated and adapted to the Arab culture and nation, although under supervision of the Ministry of Education, with limitation of their contents.

From Government Sponsored Status to the Development of Core Curricula – The 21st Century

By the 21st century decentralization had become paramount. In Israel, as in other western societies, emphasis shifted from collective to individual needs. Israeli society drew away from values of unity and integration in education and each group strove to realize its unique needs (Katz, 2006). Despite the State Education Law, which stated that 75% of all study time at formal educational institutions should be devoted to the basic curriculum, schools led by the principle of

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[5] In addition, the Free Education Law was expanded in 1978 to cover the years from kindergarten to the end of high school. This legislation created a further burden on the educational system, as students who formerly did not have the means to continue their schooling now remained in high school and increased student diversity.

autonomy began educating students according to sectorial values. Educators were greatly concerned that activities initiated at separate educational settings for the different communities would lead to disintegration of the "social adhesive" and submersion in the "postmodern whirlpool" (ibid., p.168).

In 1999 Member of Knesset Paritzky and others appealed to the Supreme Court against the Minister of Education on the matter of the basic curriculum, claiming that the law should be implemented to the letter. The court ruled that it is necessary to determine a basic curriculum for unofficial schools (Supreme Court 2751/99). In order to create a joint ethical infrastructure, a National Task Force for the Advancement of Education in Israel (below: the Dovrat Commission) was convened in 2003. In the existing sectorial social reality, characterized by inequality and rising individualism in the field of education, the commission sought to recommend a pedagogical, structural, and organizational change. In its report, the commission referred in particular to the multiple cultures that exist in Israel and the educational challenges that this poses: "The multiplicity of sectors and trends in education is, in our opinion, another major problem in the education system, as it is a factor in the disintegration of the sociocultural fabric, a cause of the loss of a sense of partnership in Israeli society, and a major source of waste of resources" (Dovrat Commission Report, p.50). In order to handle the multiple cultures, a decision was made to promote and enforce a common core curriculum – composed of a limited number of basic values shared by most citizens (Rotenberg, 2006) and defining some mandatory study contents aimed at contributing to learners' skills. The implications of autonomy in education in practice, not anchored in legislation, were stated in the commission's report:

> In the absence of a clear national policy on the subject backed by appropriate legislation, and in the absence of enforcement of a mapping and licensing policy, public education is deteriorating. Subsystems of schools, some of them private and elitist, are developing and continue to be funded fully from the State budget, even though their schools neglect the mandatory curriculum units and the "core curriculum". Large gaps are developing between the different sectors in the allocation of resources, school size, and class size, with the Arab sector suffering considerable discrimination. (Dovrat Committee, 2003, p.48)

The committee recommended that public education in Israel, through the core curricula, would act to reinforce cohesion within Israeli society, as well as the Jewish identity and personal and group identity of all parts of the population. Since Israeli society is a multicultural society coarsely divided into Arabs - and secular, religious, and ultra-Orthodox Jews, the curriculum should bring the sectors closer to each other and lead their individuals towards joint goals. Schools that refuse the directives of the core curricula are not eligible for state funding. Core curricula are an attempt to unite the divergent

multicultural society based on a joint ethical-content basis. However, the commission stated that "in Israel, with its large variety of national ethnic, religious, and cultural identities and cultures, it is necessary to both preserve and develop the cultural sources of all components of society separately and to reinforce shared components of identity and culture" (ibid., p.37).

The core curricula policy enables sectorial and school curricular autonomy. It is manifested in special programs for minority sectors and by operating special programs in the central track of the state educational system. However, while recognition of special schools is particularly conspicuous (for example: schools for the arts, for sciences, etc.) it is absent in the Arab sector and in poor and weak sectors (Matiash, 2010). Sectorial history and civic studies curricula illustrate limited recognition of ethnic diversity. For example, the history curriculum for high schools in the Arab sector portrays a history of parallel narratives – the Zionist narrative side by side with the Palestinian narrative – both presented from the internal point of view of the nationally dominant group. This policy aroused much objection among the state educational system and was not implemented in the Arab sector. Thus, the general state system recognizes ethnic, cultural, and national diversity and the value of dialogue between narratives, but designates them in advance for curricula of minority sectors (ibid.). In regard to cultural diversity in Israel and the rifts dividing society, the various needs tend to clash – joint identity components and enhancement of diverse components. The basic model of the core curricula is communal-ethnic, forming "a common center while employing mechanisms of de-Arabization and Jewish-cultural homogenization" (Yonah, 2006, p.212). This model indeed expresses the value of cultural pluralism; however it leavesno room for the value of multiculturalism (ibid.).

Some understood the difficulties involved in the core curricula model, for example Aviram (2010) contends that the educational system should offer several models, as a society that strives to perceive itself as pluralist must implement its declarations in practice. However, Aviram states that the models and their aims "should be subjected to limits stemming from the vision of the state and of society". These limits, which shall supposedly block the emergence of "educational environments that operate according to different aims", are the complex stage which Israel has reached in its multicultural instruction. Core curricula are exclusive, as they do not make room for the Palestinian public, and thus they are not democratic as they are a product of contents dictated in advance in accordance with the definition of the State of Israel as a Jewish state (Yonah, 2006).

Core curricula, the highlight of multicultural education in 21st century Israel, on the one hand portray Ministry of Education aspirations to enable pluralism, but enforcement of these curricula in all educational tracks in

the current format also necessarily leads to the methodical suppression of marginal groups.

SUMMARY

Education in Israel's multicultural society began with state supported curricula, created as a "branch of Zionist politics". The State Education Law sought to neutralize the existing politically orientedtracks and create uniform curricula. These curricula reflected the spirit of the times – the wish for cultural homogenization and to create a cohesive cultural platform based on Judaism and Zionism. The schools were perceived as the strongest means of creating anational Israeli ethos and of structuring a collectivist conception and Jewish-national solidarity. No attention was given to ethnic differences and to the Arab minority.

Towards the end of the 1960s, a new generation of state sponsored curricula appeared, more liberal by nature and with a less authoritative approach to knowledge and its formation. Thus the new history and civic studies curricula from the 1970s and 1980s emphasized the pluralist nature of knowledge and the importance of inquiry skills and critical thinking. However this pluralism as well served a national conception and an official national ethos similar to those of the previous generation, leading to limited recognition of ethnic and cultural diversity and of the needs of ethnic and national minorities. Beginning from the 1980s, Israel and its national education were visited by an array of changes that affected education in multicultural society – the political rift between the state and state religious educational systems widened, with the former seeking to impart individualist, liberal, and hedonist messages, while the latter, its path outlined by the High School Yeshivas, assimilated nationalist, religious, collectivist, and elitist messages. A minority's revolution resulted from the significant increase in multiple ethnic cultures, including the Arab-Palestinian national minority. Together, the various minorities constitute nearly one half of the entire population, and therefore their power is growing both in the political and in the educational sphere. Thus, captains of education were forced to relinquish the melting pot idea and the concept of uniform curricula. Cultural changes have become strongly rooted in the Israeli cultural and academic community since the 1990s and motivated a lively critical public debate on the nature of the Israeli national project, its costs, and its attitude towards ethnic minorities and the Arab national minority. At the same time, post-modern conceptions undermined the authoritative image of academia and the objective image of knowledge formed therein. These concepts also aroused a critical discussion of study planning models based on the authority of academic experts and scholars. These have been replaced by critical and post-modern models of study planning that recognize the central roleof designers' biographical and subjective dimensions, as well as the cultural and geographical context of the programs and of the schools for which they are intended. These models sought to weaken the authority of academic institutions in favor of the schools, the teachers, and the community.

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