

TEACHERS AND THEIR COLLECTIVE MISSION

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Abstract – *This paper reports on research carried out in 1994, when teachers had to deal with the Ministry-defined theme of 'Israel in an era of peace'. Participants included 83 teachers employed in state schools – 31 men and 46 women; 48 (Jews) in schools where Hebrew is the language of instruction and 35 (Palestinians) from state schools in which Arabic is the language of instruction. In teachers' responses to queries on historical events there are indications of how teachers relate to the reality created outside of school. In all the interviews teachers present themselves as people who avoid confrontation, with a keen awareness that there are right and wrong ways to deflect clashes. In general, interpretations by Jewish teachers do not combine easily with a policy of educating students for peace. For many of them, reality means serving the goals of a state which cannot avoid conflict, and negating this definition threatens the perception of what constitutes adequate professional performance. Teachers in Arabic-speaking schools, on the other hand, while adopting a similar outlook on professional action viewed the changes in state policy as the promise of comprehensive academic achievement and of overall progress for education in the Arabic-speaking sector.*

Introduction

This paper explores teachers' approaches to collective events under conditions of radical change in the biography of the State of Israel. As key figures in the praxis of schooling, teachers are incumbents of a fairly consensual role. They are responsible for a cluster of tasks devised to ensure the maintenance of agreed upon elements in patterned culture (Kalekin-Fishman, 1996). These elements are incorporated in subjects of study. No matter what the field of pedagogy with which they are associated, however, all teachers employed in an educational system are deputised to transmit norms through modeling and discourse. Like their emphases on aspects of knowledge, teachers' choices of terminology and turns of phrase converge to describe their perceptions of the collective, their presentations of self and surroundings, and acceptable social reality. Similarly, they prescribe the configuration of the collective and of the parts individuals play in its formation. Thus, teachers' articulation of professional action is a key to understanding controlling elements in the establishment and transmission of a discursive tradition, which cloaks the hegemonic ideology. When the discourse of hegemony

undergoes a radical change, as was the case in Israel from 1992-1996, there is an opportunity to assess teachers' responsiveness to revised social conditions.

This study was initiated when there was a blatant discontinuity in the recent history of the State of Israel. For most of the 50 years of its existence as a state, the banner of Israel's relations with the world has been one of conflict and hostility. The accompanying ideology was a conceptualisation of the need for Israel to struggle for survival against all odds. Substantiation of this conviction is seen in the widespread idea that the United Nations supported a Jewish state not least because of world-wide remorse at the outcomes of the Holocaust, the systematic murder of six million Jews carried out by Nazi Germany during the Second World War. But UN recognition of Israel's right to exist in November, 1947, led to the first of the Israeli wars in 1948. And Israel has been involved in at least nine wars since then (Morris, 1990). The experience of war and the consciousness of struggle have necessarily had a significant impact on the way Israelis learn to think of themselves, their work, and their social location.

The Madrid Conference in 1991 marked a turning point. The practical significance of the agreements reached during the 90s with Jordan and with the Palestinians signalled an about-face in Israel's relationships with countries in the region and with states in other regions of the world. They signalled new accomplishments in mobilising investments and markets, as well as a different basis for politics (*Ha'Aretz*, 1996). In psychological terms, what was called for was a thorough revision of the collective identity. This is a challenge to education. In view of the far-reaching implications of the issue, the mechanisms bear detailed examination. In the following I will relate the topic at hand to a general view of the task of education. I will then outline historical developments and changes in the educational mission over time, and present results of research done in a setting of teacher education.

Collective consciousness and traditions of discourse

In a democracy, where the citizenry is entitled not only to make its sentiments known but also to disclose those sentiments in partisan action, there is good reason to postulate that a re-formation of foreign policy will only prove viable if it can be translated into a shared consciousness and ideology (Durkheim, 1964). The question of how people view changes and how they project collective affairs in light of their perceptions can be assessed roughly through public opinion surveys. It is important, however, to explore what responses are likely to imply for action. Collective consciousness is disclosed in the shaping of the 'national discursive tradition,' a complex of terminology and phraseology in variable

(re)combinations, which are incorporated in diverse realms of community concerns. In the course of history, social processes impact the discourse and effect changes to accord with evolving situations (Easthope, 1996). At any given time, the 'national discursive tradition' is on display, therefore, in all the media of communication; it is demonstrated through their interplay in all strata of society. Quite simply, daily usage serves as a practical test of affiliation. To belong is to know how to make efficient use of the collective discourse in writing and in face to face contact.

Conveying knowledge of discursive functions is the task of schools. On the one hand, schools are likely to be rather lumbering bureaucratic organisations which hinder change. On the other, schools accomplish their offices through the kaleidoscope of flexible interaction between teachers and pupils where teachers' communications are a dominant factor. Teachers' representations of salient events are covert elements of the curriculum embedded as they are in a fabric of objectivity – languaging. It is, therefore, through teacher talk that the impact of collective events on education can be assessed.

The general question that we confront is that of how teachers wield discourse and convey factors of the collective consciousness. Specifically, we are interested in examining how, through their understanding of their professional obligations, teachers in the state system of education confront a demand to revise education for citizenship. The focus will be on teachers' responses to questions about historical events and about the extent to which dealing with current events can be attuned to basics of teaching. These responses have to be assessed in light of the educational tradition which serves as a backdrop to what goes on in classrooms. In the next section, I will present a brief sketch of how the Israeli school system has evolved.

Evolution of the school system in Israel¹

Pre-state educational systems

Schools in pre-state Palestine belonged to a multiplicity of systems each with a distinct charge. For a long time, most of the schools were run by religious institutions (Christian, Moslem, Jewish) and provided an education for clerical callings, or minimally, for carrying out the obligations of the devout. Under Ottoman rule, foreign consulates were allowed to establish educational institutions to serve their own nationals, and schools under the auspices of the United States, Germany, or France, prepared students for studies in universities of the 'home' countries. Government schooling (pre-World War I, Turkish;

post-World War I, British) was designed to prepare students for civil service careers. In addition, the World Zionist Movement instituted schools in which Hebrew was the language of instruction as part of its program to educate citizens for the future Jewish state. In these schools, Hebrew, the language of the holy texts, was adopted as the language of instruction. Different educational streams were sponsored by political parties and each stream employed teachers who professed a suitable political orientation.² Since stipends were available, most of the Jewish children did indeed get at least a basic education; while secondary education was readily available only to a select few.

All schooling was a luxury for most of the Arab population in Palestine. Boys in the villages were often recruited for help on the farms. Girls were regularly kept at home to help their mothers, learning how to run a household and how to raise a family. In urban areas, however, boys were sent to school in significant numbers; and among wealthy families, children were assured an education of high standard, with many sent abroad for tertiary education and professional training.

State systematisation of education

After its foundation in 1948, the State of Israel took charge of education for all Israeli children, Jewish and Arab.³ Legislation was enacted in 1949 (Law for Compulsory Education) and in 1953 (Law for State Education) to institute free education for all and to set up a centralised educational system. The network encompasses the secular State-System and the State-Religious System. Apart from the State system there are private schools with explicit religious commitments in both the Hebrew-speaking and the Arabic-speaking sectors. Today, with compulsory education in place from kindergarten until the ninth grade (ages 5- 15), almost 100% of the Jewish children and about 96% of the non-Jewish (Moslem, Christian, and Druse) children attend primary schools; while between 60% and 85% of the pupils go on to institutions of secondary education (Israel, 1996). Success in statewide matriculation examinations is a condition for admittance to institutions of tertiary education, so that examinations formulated for the state system actually impose standards on private schools as well.

Teaching is systematised centrally as well. Throughout the country, teachers are required to have achieved certification at recognised institutions. Courses of study in teachers colleges and in the universities are all structured similarly. Once employed, teachers who work in schools sponsored by the state have considerable job security. But the price is constant contact with the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sport, whose policy is inevitably that of the reigning government. Thus, centralisation is a mechanism which ensures that political developments and

economic ideologies are transmuted into educational directives which require 'administrative adjustments' and/or the 'revision' of pedagogy.

The Ministry of Education funds, organises, and sanctions different forms of in-service teacher training. A monthly newsletter distributed by the Director-General updates teachers on acceptable practice. Teachers are instructed in regard to the curriculum/a of the subjects of study which concern them. They are also provided with information about the techniques of teaching which are currently acceptable as well as about the realm of extra-curricular activities. A subdivision of the Ministry is responsible for writing curricula, providing suitable textbooks, and approving materials prepared by independent authors. The 'Hour of the Educator' or the 'Hour for Social Issues' is a standard space allocated in the school schedule for dealing with focal issues. Every year, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sport, promulgates an educational theme which is inserted into the school programme daily throughout the school year. Materials are furnished to help the school staffs decide on how to present the theme and its variants to the pupils.

It is clear, then, that teaching in Israel is a profession closely allied with the regime. Teachers are messengers of the state and responsible for carrying out a determinate mission. That mission has been redefined at various points of time in the course of the last half century.

Shifting definitions of the mission of education

In the law which instituted the state system of education, Paragraph 2 presents the overall aim of the system,⁴ with an emphasis on knowledge of science and Jewish [sic!] culture, on the merit of work, and on recognising the importance of universalistic social values such as equality and tolerance. It is asserted as well that schools must cultivate love of country and loyalty to the state.

The strategies for ensuring the accomplishment of the above aims have shifted over time. There have been changes in the contents of courses, the ranking of subjects, and the organisation of schools and classes.

Between 1948 and 1977 the educational mission was formulated by a series of governments committed to socialism and the ideological stand was that of promoting egalitarianism in education. Successive ministers of education defended the centralised system claiming that direction from the center was necessary to ensure equal opportunities for pupils from every milieu to attain high academic achievements. At the same time the project of nation-building was interpreted as obliging the promotion of nationalism grounded in religious traditions, which would provide the 'glue' necessary in a society comprised of groups of diverse geographic and ethnic origins.

There were inevitable tensions which undermined the proclamations. The Law of State Education (1953) which installed the liberal stream of Jewish education as the official system and provided for a State-Religious system, actually eliminated the socialist educational system altogether (Lamm, 1973). With the mass immigration of the early 50s, successive waves of immigrants took their place on the bottom rung of the economic ladder, effectively institutionalising a hierarchy of class (Bernstein and Swirski, 1980). Not surprisingly, despite the insistence on a totally centralised organisation of educational institutions, gaps widened constantly between schools in well-established middle class communities and schools in communities where immigrants were in the majority (Swirski, 1981). These relatively covert processes were translated into increased attention to 'excellence' and 'individualised instruction' - euphemisms for schools differentiated according to the standards of achievement, and, consequently, according to the career openings to which their graduates would have access. Under the right wing governments which have ruled the country since 1977 the institutionalisation of conservative exclusionist pedagogies has been facilitated (Swirski, 1990).

Education for values

What was not open to change until the '90s were the rallying principles, 'love of country,' 'tolerance,' 'love for human beings,' cited in the Law for State Education (see Note 4). Taken for granted as universalistic values, the ideology was not subjected to close examination. In practice, the unquestioned meanings were shaped in an institution which is not under the direct authority of the Ministry of Education, the armed services. By law, military service follows immediately upon secondary education for most students. Compulsory army service organised according to cohorts, for Jewish men and women and for Druse men (although not for Druse women, or for Moslems and Christians, except in special instances), has repeatedly been hailed as a springboard for developing love of one's fellows, and has circumscribed the meaning of tolerance. 'Love of country' has consistently been operationalised as useful service in the armed forces, and thus has often entailed useful participation in combat. Thus, the obligation of army service effectively defines social locations, and legitimates the apportioning of civil rights. In their function as educators, therefore, teachers in state schools have consistently been involved in explicating connections between the educational system and the values conveyed by the armed forces, values based on the perceived threats of war.

Following the Oslo Accord, the strategy for moral education formulated by the Ministry of Education for the school year of 1994-1995 instructed teachers to

underplay connections between schooling and the military. To promote awareness of the possibility of peaceful relations with the neighboring states, the Ministry of Education obliged all the state schools to deal with the general theme of 'Israel in an Era of Peace.' In November, 1994, the publications department of the Ministry distributed a 92 page pamphlet on 'The Peace Process in the Near East [Overview]' (Ofaz, 1994). This pamphlet covered material on the Madrid Conference of October, 1991, and surveyed the meetings that had taken place since then between Israel and the Palestinians, Israel and Jordan, as well as meetings of Israelis with representatives of Syria and Lebanon. Appendixes include the Peace Treaty signed with Jordan and speeches made when the Treaty was signed. To ensure that teachers would use the material, the Ministry sponsored in-service courses on the topic with both lectures and interactive workshops.

The change of policy placed majority/minority (Jewish-Arab) relations in the country on a new footing. It also influenced the general approach to the educational system as a whole. A committee of Jewish and Arab educators was appointed to revise the official goals of state education so as to specify a pluralistic focus. This signalled a shift in 'traditional' school messages, on the one hand, and a call to revise identities, on the other. The extent of that alteration can be assessed from Ministry publications. The significance of the shift in the minds of the teachers, however, is quite another matter.

It is important to emphasise that in this research we are not looking into the teachers' store of information on the history of the State or into the trustworthiness of their interpretations of collective events. Since the messages of the Ministry to pupils have to be filtered through the discourse generated by teachers, we may assume that what teachers understand and how they express their understandings will be conveyed in classrooms. We contend, moreover, that teachers' reflections on their mission are intimately related to the fashioning of change in the national cognizance. By probing perceptions found among teachers, we can gather tokens of how the 'discursive tradition' operates in the national educational system. The focus of our interest is the relevance of these tokens to positions on war and peace in the teachers' consciousness. The research design is a relatively simple one. From analyses of responses to general questions, we abstracted relevant structures of meaning.

The research

As noted, we are interested in tracing how policies of the Ministry of Education are connected with teachers' conceptions of what they had to do. In this paper, we will present data from the first stage of an on-going research project. In this stage, semi-structured interviews were carried out with teachers currently employed in the school system who serve as tutors of students in pre-service

training. The specific goals were to gauge what kinds of events in the history of the State of Israel were notable in the eyes of educators, to explore teachers' understandings of how current events should be linked with school learning; and to see what is implied by their responses about approaches to professionalism. The research was carried out in 1994, when the Ministry of Education had defined the theme of moral education for the year as 'Israel in an era of peace.'

Research population

The research population consisted of 96 tutors of student teachers -- all of them teachers employed in non-religious schools of the state system of education in both the Arab and the Jewish sector. For technical reasons, 13 protocols were omitted from the analysis. The protocols analysed include those of 83 teachers employed in state schools -- 31 men and 46 women; 48 (Jews) in schools where Hebrew is the language of instruction constituted 58% of the research population; and 35 (Palestinians) from state schools in which Arabic is the language of instruction, constituting 42% of the population. Among the latter, there were 29 Moslems, 4 Druse, and 2 Christians.

Instrument

A semi-structured interview schedule was related to the theme of the year prescribed by the Ministry of Education: 'Israel in an era of peace.' Questions touched on the teachers' perceptions of the biography of the state, and the perceived effects on teaching of the collective events prompted by the obligatory theme:

FIGURE 1: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

The Ministry of Education and Culture has decided that the theme of the year is 'Israel in an era of peace'.

- How is your school dealing with this theme?
- In general, how do you think this topic fits in with a teacher's tasks?
- How does it fit in with the subject you teach?
- Can you point out some specific experiences in this connection?
- Looking back on the history of Israel since 1948, what events do you think are the most important ones? Why (for each event mentioned)?
- What impact did these events have on what happened in the schools?
- Did these events affect the ways of teaching in your subject area?
- Can you point out some specific experiences in this connection?
- Background: gender, age, subject taught, classes taught, education and professional training, marital status.

Procedures

Data were collected by student teachers who interviewed tutors in the schools where they were doing their practice teaching. Interviews were generally conducted in the teachers' lounge or on the school grounds. Teachers' responses were content analysed to elicit the categories prominent in the data, and classified according to background variables. We classified answers according to the number of historical events teachers cited and according to whether or not they provided details and/or explanations for the events cited (*Particularisation*). Emergent categories for the historical events cited were: *events connected with wars, events connected with the peace process, progress and development in the state*. The distribution of responses among the various topics and the avoidance of particularisation in connection with each of the categories was also tracked. Effects of the events on teaching were traced to see whether the teacher perceived the need for modifying the material taught, or considered that current events had to be isolated from the subject matter. We paid special attention to teachers' observations about what constitutes professionalism.

Findings

Background variables

In the analysis of responses to the interviews, we found that the research sample of master teachers was relatively homogeneous. Except for two teachers who had been working in schools for more than 20 years, the range of experience among all the respondents was eight to fifteen years. All the interviewees had completed a course in tertiary education with certification for teaching. A preliminary survey of the data showed that gender was not associated with variation in the responses. Despite the promise of anonymity, many of the respondents did not agree to being identified by the subjects they teach or by the specific tasks they carry out in school for fear of being identified by people in the system who are acquainted with them. The only background variable that could therefore be used in the analysis was the language of instruction in the tutors' schools and we will center the report on similarities and differences revealed in responses of teachers in the Arab and Jewish sectors of the State school system.

First, we will present the numbers of events teachers cited and the thematic distribution of those events. Then we will present an analysis of comments which reveal respondents' understandings of how teaching is implicated in the perceptions of history in the making.

TABLE 1a: Citations of Events according to Language of Instruction

No of events	Hebrew Instruction		Arabic Instruction		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	8	17	7	19	15	18
2-3	27	57	8	22	35	42
4+	12	26	21	59	33	40
	47	57	36	43	(N=83) 100	

TABLE 1b: Particularization of Events according to Language of Instruction

No of events	Hebrew Instruction		Arabic Instruction		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	2	9	5	22	7	15
2-3	11	48	5	22	16	35
4+	10	43	13	56	23	50
	23	50	23	50	46	100

Perceptions of events in the history of the state

Overall 18% of the interviewees cited a single historical event, 42% cited two or three events and 40% cited four or more events. It is interesting, however, to note the differences in the distributions among teachers from each sector. Among teachers in schools where Hebrew is the language of instruction, more than half (57%) mentioned two or three events, but about a quarter mentioned as many as four. Among teachers in schools where Arabic is the language of instruction, 59% cited four events or more.

From Table 1b, we learn that in general, the more events cited, the more interviewees tended to provide details about events mentioned. While only 15%

of those who cited a single event provided details, 35% of those who cited two or three events did so, and 50% of those who cited four or more events provided amplification. Here, too, however, there are meaningful differences between Jews and Palestinians.

First of all; despite the difference in the proportions of Jews and Arabs in the population interviewed, the same number of respondents (n=23) from each sector elaborated on their responses.

Secondly, while only two of the Jewish tutors who cited a single event (9%) provided some explanation, 5 of the Palestinians who cited a single event (22%) did so.

Third, of those who did elaborate, more than half of those from schools where Arabic is the language of instruction enlarged on four events or more, while less than half (43%) of those from schools where Hebrew is the language of instruction enlarged on four events or more.

TABLE 2: *Distribution of Topics by Respondents, Number of Mentions and Generalisations, according to Language of Instruction*

	Hebrew Instruction		Arabic Instruction		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
HOSTILITIES						
Respondents	40	64	22	36	62	75 (83)
Mentions	120	71	48	29	168	56 (301)
Generalisations	19	83	4	17	23	61 (38)
PEACE						
Respondents	38	66	21	35	59	71 (83)
Mentions	61	55	50	45	111	37 (301)
Generalisations	12	80	3	20	15	39 (38)
DEVELOPMENT						
Respondents	10	59	7	41	17	20 (83)
Mentions	15	68	7	32	22	7 (301)
Generalisations	—	—	—	—	—	— (38)

Distribution of references to different types of events

In Table 2, we present the distribution of salient themes among the events cited. For each type of topic, the table shows the number of respondents who referred to that type of event, the number of times the type of event was commented on, and the number of citations which had *no* particulars – the generalisations. All told the protocols disclosed three categories: events connected with hostilities, events connected with peace, and events connected with the development of the State since its foundation in 1948. Of the population of 83 teachers, 75% mentioned wars, 71% mentioned events related to peace, and 20% referred to outstanding internal state developments. Of the three hundred and one comments tabulated, 56% were references to hostilities, 37% references to peace, and 7% cited landmarks in the development of the state of Israel since its founding. Among these, 23 of the 38 generalised statements (61%) referred to hostilities, 15 (39%) referred to peace, and none were made in connection with the country's development. Let us see how the distributions vary according to educational sector.

Hostilities: Hostilities of different kinds – wars, terrorist attacks, individual clashes – were mentioned 168 times in the responses of 62 interviewees. Although the Jewish interviewees constituted 58% of the research sample, those referring to hostilities constituted 64% of the respondents who mentioned clashes. Moreover, since many respondents made more than one comment, the Jews turn out to have made 71% of the total number of comments on hostilities by contrast with the Arab interviewees whose references to hostilities combine into only 29% of the relevant responses. There were substantive differences between the sectors as well. Among those who cited one war, there was complete accord among teachers of the each nationality. The Jews mentioned the Six Day War of 1967. The prevailing explanation was that this was the war which marked the beginning of a lengthy period of prosperity. When, on the other hand, Arab interviewees mentioned a single war, they referred to the Yom Kippur War of 1973. They pointed to the surprise attacks of Syria and Jordan on the Israeli army, and claimed that Arab victories in the Yom Kippur War made the drift toward peace possible. While most of the respondents mentioned a war or wars by name, nineteen Jews and four Arabs used a generalised shorthand. Most of these resorted to recognised terminology, such as, for example, 'the Wars of Israel,' a biblical phrase which connotes the never-ending struggle which is the lot of the Jewish people.

Peace: Fifty-nine of the interviewees alluded to peace in one hundred eleven comments. Most of the respondents made specific reference to events that have taken place within the last fifteen years. There are several mentions of Sadat's visit to Israel, the agreements with Egypt and Jordan, and the Oslo agreement with the Palestinian authority. Where there are citations of a single item, Jews (n=14) cited

the 'peace process' in general. The four single-item responses by Arabs referred specifically to the peace accord with Jordan which was termed the most important event in the peace process to date.

Landmarks of the State's Development were characterised in different ways. It is interesting to note that 22 responses alluded specifically to the state's development and progress in the economic, scientific, technological, social, and political spheres as the most significant events in Israeli history. Two people – both Jewish teachers – defined progress in terms of the democratisation of politics. In this connection, they cited the changes in government (1977 – from the Alignment to the Likud; 1992 – back to the Alignment). In a different key, six respondents specified successive waves of immigration and the absorption of Jewish immigrants as the most significant development. Of these, five Jewish teachers lauded the state's success in nationalist projects ideologised as the *in-gathering of the exiles, national unification, nation-building*. The Arab teacher who mentioned this topic indicated the mass immigration from the former Soviet Union during the 1990's specifically, and complained that the immigrants 'come and take all the jobs.' As a rule, detailed knowledge about political and economic trends was evident in responses of the Arab teachers who tended to elaborate a critique of political, social, and economic reality.

Effects on teaching

In exploring the connections between the theme of peace and different aspects of teaching, we looked at whether or not the theme could find a place in the schedule – and if so, in what context.

Inserting current events into the schedule: Teachers were not of one mind about how to find room in a busy schedule for dealing with current events. Almost universally, the interviewees agreed that it was suitable (albeit not always feasible) to devote the 'Hour of the Educator' (see above) to discussions of current events, and, among them, to the peace accords. When there was a 'drastic' event – such as a terrorist attack, all the Jewish teachers asserted that they had to allow children time to express their feelings and their fears even in lessons assigned to subject matter. Arab teachers, on the other hand, expressed reservations about allowing a free exploration of feelings with excitable adolescents.

Integration of current events with subject matter: Among the interviewees who did permit the interviewers to mention their subject matter, there were teachers of English, Arabic, and Hebrew language and literature, as well as

teachers of history and civics, art and mathematics. From responses of teachers who disclosed the subjects they teach, we found no significant differences in the ways in which the insertion of talk about peace (or war) into lessons on subject matter are viewed. Moreover, in these matters, there was agreement across the two sectors.

Teachers of mathematics were unanimous in asserting that the theme of peace had no effect whatsoever on the 'material'; although they acknowledged that there might be 'some effect' in the future. This 'separatist' approach prevailed as well among teachers of subjects in the humanities. Five teachers of history insisted that the subject matter had to be kept separate from current events. As one put it, 'There is material to be taught and discussions of politics have no place in the history class!' Three teachers of history, on the other hand, agreed that since there might be parallels between past and current events, the teacher 'could' point them out in class. Similar differences of opinion were found among teachers of language and literature. While one teacher of English said that she conducted discussions on current events in class as practice in conversation, another insisted that the syllabus was prescribed, and there was no room for 'improvisations.' Teachers of Hebrew literature responded in a similar way, maintaining that the material to be learned was extensive and the teacher had no leeway for introducing topics outside the syllabus. Only one of the literature teachers said that she regularly pointed out connections between the stories she read with her pupils and events that were at the center of popular interest.

Interpretations of the professional approach

Teacher respondents rationalised their pedagogic decisions by appealing to what they characterised as a 'professional approach'. It is important to underline similarities. The guiding principle in responses of the teachers from both sectors was the aspiration to do what is 'right.' In the disclosures of the interviewees, 'doing the right thing' meant not upsetting the school schedule, following the syllabus, keeping order in class, and not allowing themselves to reveal personal inclinations in the classroom. The professional stance of all of the interviewees was that the Ministry might decide on changes in curricula at any time; but since there was a standard syllabus, teachers were obliged to teach the required material even though the theme of moral education is related to political issues. The teachers all affirmed that this kind of caution is part and parcel of pedagogical professionalism. They justified the orientation in terms of the requirements of education, the needs of the school, and of the pupils.

To ensure that their performance would indeed accord with 'the right thing',

all the teachers proclaimed their commitment to neutrality. The teachers from the schools where Hebrew is the language of instruction expressed faith in their ability to take up a non-partisan position; they had full confidence in their own impartial professional behavior. Without exception, the Jewish teachers emphasised that whenever political events are discussed in class, the teacher must remain neutral, and should never express an opinion of her own. They showed little enthusiasm, however, for exploring the implications of the on-going peace process. Some said openly that they were uncertain about how to conduct discussions so as to avoid hostility among groups of children who would bring the biases of their homes into the classroom.

Teachers in schools where Arabic is the language of instruction had a similar view of teaching as a profession. Defining neutrality and disinterest as the cornerstone of professional values, Arab teachers said they 'had to be especially cautious' in steering class discussions. They pointed out that debates were risky because secondary school students in the Arabic-speaking sector were likely to give free rein to 'extremist' reactions which would be an unfair test of teachers' watch to keep themselves safe from partisanship. This was risky in their opinion because of the surveillance customary in the State Schools where Arabic is the language of instruction. To get jobs, teachers in the Arab sector have generally had to have security clearance in addition to certification by an approved institution of teacher training. Interviewees cited validated stories of university graduates who were not able to obtain employment because they had engaged in political activity while they were students. For teachers distressed by these conditions, the changes in the guidelines of the Ministry, i.e., the emphatic directive to discuss 'Israel in an era of peace,' heralded a welcome relief and actual liberation. This was a theme in all the interviews in Arab schools. To the teachers' minds, there was at long last an opportunity to deal with the issues that were important to pupils and to their parents – issues of collective identity and civil rights as well as the duties of citizenship in a democracy.

Various teachers in the Arab sector viewed this new position as likely to have far-reaching effects on the essentials of education. They forecast that now schools would be calmer, more relaxed places. The reduction of limitations on political expression would provide a basis for better relations among teachers on the school staff, and between teachers and pupils. One teacher went so far as to anticipate that there would be fewer altercations among the pupils themselves now that peace was on the public agenda. Another was convinced that because of the improved atmosphere, student achievements would improve. In an instrumental mode, eight teachers said they expected that 'now' (in an era of peace) more resources of the state would be invested in education, and the Arab schools were indeed sadly in need of such a turn of events.

Discussion and conclusions

The teachers who participated in this stage of the research were sampled by 'convenience.' Clearly, the mode of sampling does not enable us to generalise about the entire population of teachers in Israel in 1994. There was, however, substantive justification for this kind of sampling. The interviewees had been chosen by the university in consultation with their school principals as successful and masterful teachers, capable of tutoring students and inducting them into the profession. In their double role as teachers and tutors, they were having an impact on both pupils in schools and on people new to the profession. Moreover, the interviewees, student teachers, had a practical interest in the research. In the wake of class discussions and reading, they were keen to discover how an educator actually-functions in the state school system. when the moral grounds of education are embodied in themes determined by the Ministry of Education and augmented with the monthly notes in the Newsletter of the Director-General. Thus, the responses are important on several grounds. The respondents were experienced teachers, appointed as tutors by the university, and they were sharing their views about a topic of realistic concern. For the (student) interviewees, these answers were part of their learning in the course of the stint of practice teaching. The responses are also valuable as a basis for guidelines in future research in which variance in teachers' perceptions of the history of the state and of the performance of the profession can be elicited. With a large randomised sample, we will probably be able to distinguish profiles of consciousness not only according to the sector of the educational system, but also according to age, gender, subject specialty, and religious orientation.

From the qualitative data presented above, we can draw some interesting conclusions. It seems that teachers in the state school system (both in the schools where Hebrew is the language of instruction and in those in which Arabic is the language of instruction) perceive hostilities in the history of the state more concretely than they perceive events related to peace. Respondents not only mentioned hostilities more than events that have to do with peace; they also cited them in greater detail. Confirmation of the perception is the special importance assigned to hostilities defined as 'terrorist attacks,' which are unassailably adequate reasons for postponing the teaching of subject matter, and even for allowing an 'Hour of the Educator' to take precedence over 'actual' teaching.

In relating to the effects of current events on teaching, and at the time of the interviews that meant the impact of the peace process, there were interesting parallels as well as distinct differences between the teachers in the Jewish sector and those in the Arab sector. A conspicuous difference between the Jewish-Israeli

teachers and the Palestinian-Israeli teachers is shown in their analysis of what the peace process can contribute to schooling. While for the most part Jewish-Israelis related to the future effects of peace on isolated details of the educational effort, the possibility of peace is translated by Arab teachers into a far-reaching change in atmosphere, in classroom interaction, and even into effects on the instrumental heart of schooling, scholastic achievement.

At this point, we can point out three features which mark the discourse of tutor-teachers in the Arabic-speaking and the Hebrew-speaking sectors. These are the sensitivity to collective events, the conceptualisation of pedagogy, and approaches to professionalism.

Sensitivity to collective events: Responses of the research population of teachers to the query on outstanding events in the history of the state disclosed sensitivity to different kinds of episodes (hostilities, peace accords, internal developments). Responses were differentiated in their manifestations of partisanship or criticism of political action in the context of these events.

Conceptualisation of pedagogy: Teachers demonstrated various levels of flexibility in the interpretation of 'subject matter' and the potential of the syllabus for 'fixating' the tasks of teaching. There are also differences among teachers as to the necessity or the possibility of meshing knowledge and moral education.

Approaches to professionalism: Teachers differed only slightly in their understanding of the degree to which orderliness, efficiency, and neutrality define teaching as a professional position. This relative unanimity is evidence of how firmly their approach to the profession is aligned with the hegemonic ideological discourse.

By bracketing a set of attitudes and defining them as professional qualifications, teachers manage to meet the demands of the regime for legitimating political moves and at the same time, performing their mission in terms that mark a continuation of the accepted discursive tradition. Adaptation is signaled by verbal formulations, but also by non-verbal, positional and discursive maneuvers which are the mainsprings of institutionalised power (Bernstein, 1971-1975; Bourdieu, 1993; Lyotard, 1991). Self-legitimation for this line is a working theory of what constitutes good pedagogy, on the one hand, and felt personal convictions about what constitutes a satisfactory performance of the job of teaching, on the other. Thus, for example, teachers all exercise self-censorship willingly in order to ensure the operation of what they define as a central pedagogical value, 'neutrality.' Interviewees presented themselves, furthermore, as people who avoid confrontation, with a keen awareness that there are right and wrong ways to deflect clashes.

In sum, interpretations of the state's biography (and of their own insertion into that biography) by Jewish teachers confirm the difficulty of effecting a political about-face through mechanisms of centralisation. For many of the teachers, reality means serving the goals of a state sunk in conflict. A negation of this definition is not a mere shift in vocabulary; it endangers the teachers' perception that they have been carrying out their professional mission in the 'right' way – the cornerstone of pedagogical performance. Even teachers in the Arab sector of the state educational system, who revel in the promised change, resort to an articulation of traditional organisational values – orderliness, collegiality, and achievement – in order to justify it.

There is good reason to hypothesise that the massive mooring of war in the discourse inserted into the school system via the teachers' interpretations of how good pedagogy must govern their performances, is a force for undermining the acceptability of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The political demand for a discourse of peace channeled by the Ministry of Education in 1994-1995 was an attempt at discontinuity and at imposing a fluidity which had to overcome the coherent form of life teachers had constructed as agents in the schools.

The psychological mechanisms are well-known. The national discursive tradition embedded in the operation of the educational system contributes to the formation and re-formation of a consciousness in which the construal of risks and the construction of talk and action to ensure their coming into being are perpetuated. The election of a right-wing government in May, 1996, would seem to have constituted a decisive 'no' to the summons to change. Although the consecration of hostilities is not celebrated, hostilities are accepted as inevitable by many of the interviewees. In the words of Bateson (1990), 'We hold on to the continuity we have, however profoundly it is flawed. If change were less frightening, if the risks did not seem so great, far more could be lived.'

There is a painful irony in this perception when we note how difficult it is for a post-socialist and increasingly capitalist society such as Israel, to confront peace, optimistically and productively.

Notes

¹ The material presented in the following section relies on historical accounts in Bentwich, 1965; Israel, 1996; Kleinberger, 1969; Nardi, 1945; Tibawi, 1956; and Zucker, 1985.

² These included the schools of the liberal General Zionist Party (founded in 1913), schools of the religious-nationalist Mizrahi Party (founded in 1920), and schools affiliated with the General Union of Workers – the socialist stream (founded in the years, 1923-1925).

³ Setting up a state system of education in the Arabic-speaking sector was an especially difficult undertaking because during the war of 1948, Arab intellectuals and teachers had left the country or been banished.

⁴ *Law for State Education*, Paragraph 2: 'The goal of State Education is to base education in the State of Israel on the values of Jewish culture and the achievements of science, on love of the homeland and loyalty to the state and to the people of Israel, on training in agricultural work and in crafts, on training for pioneering, and on the aspiration toward a society built on freedom, equality, tolerance, mutual aid, and love for one's fellows' (Book of Laws, 23/6/53, p. 242 -- my translation, D. K.-F.). In the speech of the then Minister of Education and historian (B.Z. Dinur) who brought the 1953 law to the floor of the Knesseth (Parliament), there was a great emphasis on the 'gathering in of the (Jewish) exiles,' and on the need to turn a collection of people from different corners of the globe into a single consolidated nation, the means to cultivate solidarity and stability in the new State. He insisted that education is the means for raising the general level of 'civilization,' a euphemism for Europeanising immigrants from the various Arab states (Zucker, 1985).

⁵ In researches, Arab teachers have consistently defined themselves as Arab (in culture), Palestinian (by nationality), citizens of Israel (see Bar and Bargal, 1995; Kalekin-Fishman, 1992; Swirski, 1990).

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