

DIS/INTEGRATED ORDERS AND THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION: CIVIL UPHEAVALS, MILITARISM, AND EDUCATORS' LIVES AND WORK

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Abstract – *Given the Arab region's turbulent political and military histories, the virtual absence of studies that examine educators' lives and work, when the socio-political order disintegrates or collapses, is striking. This paper has two aims: first, it calls for the articulation of new research horizons concerned with the 'modes of being' of educators as actors embedded within dynamic contexts of practice; second, it emphasises the need to articulate an 'epistemology of seeing' through which research on educators' lives and work can recognise educational leadership as constructed within multi-faceted and conflict-ridden contexts.*

Problematic

The burgeoning literature on education in conflict and post-conflict contexts identifies the powerful intersections among schooling, civil upheavals, and militarism as expanding areas of scholarly research and policy making. The literature also underscores the recognition of schooling and education as central to a 'humanitarian response' organised by states, international governmental and non-governmental organisations that undertake post-conflict reconstruction (Retamal & Aedo-Richmond, 1998; Aguilar & Retamal, 2009). This expanding interest has been recently actualised in several special issues in the field of comparative education. A special issue of *Research in Comparative and International Education*, guest edited by Julia Paulson (2007), focuses on the tensions that underpin the provision of education in contexts marked by civil and military upheavals. Contributions highlight the role education plays in constructing people's engagement in violent civil and armed upheavals, such as in the Great Lakes region in Africa (Bird, 2007). More particularly, Chelpi-den Hamer (2007) investigates how the administrative structures that regulate schooling are affected in countries torn apart by civil wars, such as in Côte d'Ivoire. Pushing one step further, a special issue of *Comparative Education Review*, guest edited by Lynn Davies & Christopher Talbot (2008), offers a series of ethnographic field studies that illuminate the role schools play in the social re-integration of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone (Betancourt et al., 2008), the

inclusion of Burmese ethnic refugees in Thailand (Oh & van der Stouwe, 2008), and the enhancement of children's well-being in Afghanistan and Africa (Dicum, 2008; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008).

In a particularly compelling study, Hromadžić (2008) clarifies how civil war and militarised conflict result in the institution of 'new' types of school within multi-ethnic and deeply divided societies. Studying Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hromadžić describes the 'collision' between two groups – international actors intervening in the conflict and the Croat political community – over the integration of 'national minorities'. This clash of principles resulted in the creation of a high 'school [which] now has a unified management, while preserving ethnic segregation and the ethos of segmental autonomy' (p. 542). As Hromadžić explains, the 'materialization of a new form of school that is concurrently 'shared' and 'separated' creates a new type of school geography in [Bosnia and Herzegovina], one based on the ideology of ethnic symmetry and polarization of youth' (p. 542). In striking contrast to this perspective, a special issue of *Comparative Education*, guest edited by Larsen & Mehta (2008), turns the problematic of conflict and geopolitical military upheavals around. It focuses on 'the manifestations, implications and effects of insecurity and desire across the field of education in North America' (p. 256) and how these shape educational discourses and practices in Canada, the US, and Mexico in the post-9/11 period.

Notwithstanding the examples mentioned above, and despite educators' vulnerability when it comes to civil and military upheavals, studies that delve into educators' lives and work remain rare. Curiously, this is particularly so in teacher education and educational leadership journals¹. Kirk & Winthrop (2007) conclude, 'teachers working in emergency and post-conflict contexts have so far received little attention from researchers' (p. 721). Perceived by military apparatuses and insurgent groups alike as bearers of knowledge deemed ideologically threatening, the location of educators within schools emphasises their potentially subversive actions, as was the case, for instance, in Vietnam in the 1970s-1980s (Cassidy, 2006, p. 156). During the decolonisation of Algeria in the 1950s, teachers were located at the juncture of comprehensive social and political transformations (Le Sueur, 2005). Still, for embattled regimes, school teachers and university professors present a readily available group that can be drafted into the army as was the case, for instance, during the Iraq-Iran war of the 1980s (Hiro, 1991, p. 175; 'Allaq, 1997, p. 96). Not least, in post-conflict contexts, educators – particularly history teachers – act as 'critical' witnesses in the 'public construction' of memory. They create spaces of remembrance and 'memory making' that are crucial in the process of reconciliation and reconstruction (Dreyden-Peterson & Siebörger, 2006; see also Baranović, Jokić & Doolan, 2007).

In all this, the virtual absence of systematic studies that explore the impact of military conflicts and civil upheavals on schooling in the Arab region is striking, and more precisely and particularly so against the backdrop of the region's turbulent military and political histories. At different points in time, schools across the Arab region have operated (and some continue to operate) despite the collapse of the state or disintegration of central political authority. This would apply to societies that experienced (or are experiencing), at different points in time, extended periods of upheaval, such as in Jordan (Sirriyeh, 2000), Lebanon (Frayha, 2003), Algeria (Cheriet, 1996), the Sudan (Graham-Brown, 1991), the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Al-Zaroo & Hunt, 2003), and Iraq (Velloso de Santisteban, 2005), to name but a few. While it is true that schools across the Arab region have become part of highly differentiated national systems of education, there is hardly a contemporary society across the Arab region that has not experienced a radical, and often violent, upheaval of its civil and political orders at least once since the end of World War II. In some societies across the region, social, political, and military upheavals are the norm rather than the exception; entire generations recognise civil and military upheaval as the only order. Yet, the few sources available allow only fragmented insights into what educators who toil under such conditions do, and how they engage a collapsed or collapsing socio-political order, or the militarisation of daily life within schools and communities.

The following question remains therefore largely unexplored with regard to the Arab region: how do educators pursue their understandings of education and schooling when the civil order and political regimes collapse, disintegrate, or are violently reconfigured through military operations? In this paper, I address this particular question and discuss its underpinnings and ramifications, as well as its ontological and epistemic implications for studies of educators' lives and work in the Arab region and beyond.

Conception

The study of educators' lives and work during periods of upheaval faces conceptual, methodological, and logistical challenges. Some of these challenges are associated with access to and availability of archival materials, community-based records, and, not least, witnesses (see, for example, Suleiman & Anderson, 2008). Makkawi (2002) also cautions that interviewing educators about matters that are politically sensitive may expose them 'to undue harm' (p. 51).

One should not belittle conceptual challenges facing such an endeavour. The current dominant themes of studies concerned with educators' work revolve around school effectiveness and student learning within stable national systems.

A heavy emphasis is placed on ‘best practices’, identifying professional standards and accountability mechanisms for educators (see, for example, World Bank, 2008), and international comparative studies of student learning (e.g., TIMSS, PISA) (Stack, 2006). This leaves little space for studies that explore the actions and judgments of educators during periods of social, political, and military upheaval. The latter are perceived as structurally transitory circumstances, devoid of specific and long-term value for our understanding of educators’ work.

Here, it is useful to invoke Goodson’s (1997) observation that ‘at precisely the time the teacher’s voice is being pursued and promoted, the teacher’s work is being technicised and narrowed’ (p. 111). The ‘paradox’ Goodson refers to is well reflected within certain strands of educational research by rigid lines of demarcation drawn between the private and public spheres that separate educators’ lives and work. Articulated in the form of accountability regimes, these lines of demarcation recognise educators’ performance skills exclusively within classrooms and schools, to the exclusion of other forms and spaces of engagement and pedagogical action. These distinctions operate as regimes that ultimately ‘discipline’ educators into pre-inscribed and surveilled roles (Anderson, 2001) while ‘trivialising teacher education’ (Johnson et al., 2005). And yet, when social and political orders collapse in the midst of military and armed conflicts, and state surveillance and regulative power dissipate, educators may become engaged in myriad sites of action, outside the direct regulative power of established accountability regimes. This can occur within and outside communities, schools, and classrooms; as part of social and political movements, and organisations; and as part of newly constituted social groups (refugees, internally displaced persons, volunteers, community leaders, insurgency groups, and so forth). This suggests that under upheaval circumstances the private lives of educators acquire public political overtones, and vice versa, thus offering new configurations within which educators pursue their understandings of themselves and of their work. Several questions thus arise: how do civil and military upheavals reconfigure the distinctions between the private and public dimensions of educators’ roles? How are these shifting distinctions leveraged into emergent ‘modes of being’ and ‘relational identities’ (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 6-8)? How do they shape not only educators’ work, but also the alternative horizons and spaces through which citizenship, affiliation, and professionalism in subsequent periods of reconstruction are articulated?

The questions posed above identify educators’ lives and work under upheaval conditions as critical spaces, worthy of sustained exploration. They allow a critical interrogation of educators’ engagement in relation to a broader political theory of action. They also problematise the arbitrary distinctions between educators’ lives (private) and work (public), avoiding their articulation as a Manichean set of

opposites. Furthermore, they highlight the need to understand how educators locate themselves and the meanings of their lives and work outside the exclusive framework of state apparatuses and regulatory regimes. These questions open up new spaces to explore both how educators enact their subjectivities within the context of specific historical, social, and political circumstances, and how these subjectivities are then re/inscribed in the field of power in relation to which the school, as a dispenser of education, acquires its meanings.

With regard to the Arab region, addressing these questions would offer a corrective to the over-emphasis placed on the role of the Arab state (Ayubi, 1995) as the exclusive framework within which educators operate and from which they draw the meanings they attach to their work. Such an exercise would also clarify, in the words of Starrett (1998), 'how scholarship, in creating the objects of its study' – in this paper: educators' lives and work – 'often acts to reproduce the very intellectual categories it argues explicitly against' (p. 59). Equally, it would unsettle the policy spaces that are currently being narrowed as a result of neo-liberal policies implemented in the field of education and social welfare (see, for example, Baylouny, 2008). In these spaces, educators are represented through uniform and essentialised discourses which claim that '[g]roup work, creative thinking, and proactive learning are rare' among educators in the Arab region (World Bank, 2008, p. 88). Not least, exploring these questions repositions educators across the region within their multi-faceted contexts of practice, and clarify the 'political anatomy' (Foucault, 1979, p. 28) through which educators mediate power and its cultural underpinnings.

Contexts

To illustrate the issues and challenges facing educators' lives and work in contexts of upheaval, I draw upon the distinct cases of the Palestinian society and the southern Sudan. The case of the stateless Palestinian society offers insights into educators' lives and work under continued colonisation and military occupation. The contrasting case of the southern Sudan provides an opportunity to reflect on educators' lives and work under conditions of internal colonialism and prolonged civil war within a deeply fragmented multi-cultural and multi-ethnic state.

Palestinian society

The lives and work of educators in Palestinian society continue to be powerfully intertwined with the socio-political and military upheavals experienced by Palestinians since the early 20th century. Tibawi's (1956, pp. 193-212) account of

the British administration of the Arab school system in Palestine (1917-1948) documents the roles many Palestinian educators played in organising community insurrection, as well as devising texts that by-passed government censorship and administrative control as the Palestinian national movement gathered momentum in the late 1930s and 1940s. If these years saw the emergence of educators as a professional group and as a 'leadership class', it is also true that educators represented the ideological backbone of a rising middle and middle-upper class, particularly in the urban centres of mandatory Palestine (Mazawi, 1994).

The 1948 *Nakba*, or Catastrophe, witnessed the territorial dismemberment of mandatory Palestine, the displacement of several hundred thousand Palestinian refugees across the Middle East and beyond, the destruction of over 400 villages, and the depopulation of the major urban Palestinian centres (Khalidi, 2007). As a result, between 1948 and 1967, Israel, Jordan (West Bank), Egypt (Gaza Strip), and the United Nations controlled school systems that served Palestinians². Following the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip by Israel in 1967 and until the signing of the 'Oslo accords' in 1993³, Israel controlled both the schooling of Palestinian citizens of Israel through the Israeli Ministry of Education, and of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip through the apparatuses of the military administration. In both contexts, the textbooks in the fields of history, geography, literature, and civics reflected this political control through the marginalisation, if not exclusion, of references to Palestinians as a nation with rights to their land (see, for example, Al-Haj, 2005; Moughrabi, 2001).

The year 1948 and the period that followed irremediably transformed not only the experiential realities, lives, and work of Palestinian educators – and of Palestinians in general – but also the social class composition of the teaching profession. From that time forward, educators represented the largest professional group in Palestinian society, and a proletarianised one at that. Many teachers originated from refugee and/or lower socio-economic class backgrounds (Brand, 1988, p. 145).

Within Israel, the citizenship of Palestinians is still contested terrain, in a state defined by its legislators as 'Jewish and democratic'. This definition leaves unsettled the spaces open to all citizens to participate in shaping the public good, regardless of their ethnicity or cultural affiliation (Jamal, 2007a). It also narrows, according to Jamal (2007b), the scope and breadth of legitimate political action, leaving the citizenship of Palestinians 'hollow' and 'devoid of substantive meaning'. Palestinian educators in Israeli schools that serve Palestinians are thus subject to clearance by the General Security Services (GSS), with the latter being involved in matters of hiring, dismissal, or promotion (Adalah, 2004). Moreover, deeply entrenched policies and practices discriminate against Arab schools in resource allocation and educational opportunities (Human Rights Watch, 2001;

Golan-Agnon, 2006). Notwithstanding such inequities, Makkawi (2002) observes that, despite their structural dependency, ‘Palestinian teachers have developed unique techniques to attend to the cultural and national expectations of their community and students without putting their jobs in jeopardy’ (p. 51). According to Nasser & Nasser (2008),

‘Teachers may use implicit messages to make students doubt the validity of knowledge presented in textbooks but, simultaneously, they have to emphasize that these textbooks are required for passing examinations and for academic success ... The end result of this complex situation is lack of trust in the school curriculum and the textbooks’ cultural, historical, and political messages.’ (p. 643)

In the Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, the lives and work of educators (as that of Palestinians in general) were subject to military administration until the coming into being of the PNA. Educators’ work and classroom behaviour was heavily controlled by the Israeli military. Attempts to unionise teachers were often curtailed (‘Assaf, 2004). Moreover, distinctions between government schools, private (church) schools, and UNRWA schools meant that educators were subject to differential work conditions and incentives, as well as to different regulations concerning their terms of service. These institutional distinctions – which persist in Palestinian society – are also powerfully associated with social class distinctions.

With the eruption of the first *Intifada* (Uprising) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in December 1987, educators and communities in some localities in Palestinian society organised educational provision as part of a widespread and prolonged civil insurrection against Israeli occupation⁴. With schooling banned by the occupying Israeli military, teaching was organised in alternative locations (Mahshi & Bush, 1989). Graham-Brown (1991) notes that, during the *Intifada*, the ‘educational system in the Occupied Territories, from kindergartens to universities, has been shut down for many months at a time over a period of more than three years, effectively punishing the population by withdrawing opportunities for education’ (p. 56). More recently, under the second *Intifada*, following the collapse of the ‘Oslo accords’ in 2000, Sultana (2006) and Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2008) undertook compelling field studies into the multiple ways through which educators, students, and communities organise the schooling experience in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip⁵. These authors document how Palestinians (including educators) resist and attempt to circumvent the militarisation of daily life, and how they confront check points, arrests, killings, bombings, continued colonisation, and widespread settler violence in order to maintain school routine.

Yet, even following the creation of the PNA in 1994, schooling remained affected by continuing Israeli intrusions, the intensive expansion of settlements, the recent construction of a separation wall on the West Bank (which fragments Palestinian communities from within), a deteriorating economy, and vehement intra-Palestinian struggles over the emerging structures of a Palestinian state bureaucracy. Clashes over work conditions between the PNA and teachers' unions led to strikes and to punitive measures against some teachers, including transfers to different schools (Nicolai, 2007, pp. 104-105). Within this larger context, the lives and work of educators have been devastated, making it 'impossible' for educators 'to discuss moral education in the case of Palestine while the conflict is still there' (Affouneh, 2007, p. 354). With children and youth in Palestinian society representing well over half the total population, this means that educators – as family members, income providers, and as professionals – stand at the junction of intense economic, political, organisational, and curricular challenges. These challenges are felt particularly in schools located in rural areas (villages), in which educators often work in rudimentary conditions and inadequate buildings, lacking support and basic resources. Due to a severely overburdened infrastructure, some schools must operate in two shifts, particularly in the Gaza Strip where an already precarious infrastructure was destroyed by Israeli bombardments and air raids in December 2008-January 2009. Educators toil in overused and dilapidated facilities; they are underpaid, and must function with less than minimal physical and professional spaces, despite efforts and projects to the contrary. One young Palestinian teacher, transferred as a counsellor to a rural primary school, poignantly reflected on his working conditions, observing that the school 'actually resembles a tomb' (Al-Khawaja, 2009, p. 9).

For many Palestinians, either in Israel or in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, teaching is a major occupational outlet. This reflects the relative inaccessibility of labour markets to Palestinian workers, whether as a result of occupational discrimination and marginalisation in Israel (see, for example, Sa'di & Lewin-Epstein, 2001), or as a result of the dire state of the Palestinian economy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Perlo-Freeman, 2008). Differences in gender participation in the teaching profession among Palestinians are mediated by class-based, political, economic, and geographic factors. Moreover, intra-organisational factors mediate women's relative visibility and access to power positions within schools⁶.

The Sudan

The Sudan offers quite a different context within which educators and schools operate, a context marked by internal colonialism and secession of some southern provinces as part of a two-decade struggle over the distribution of political power

and national resources. Since its independence in 1956, civil and armed conflicts have not abated, leaving over two million people dead and massive displacement among diverse ethno-cultural, regional, and religious communities. The formation of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) in the early 1980s, and the subsequent emergence of its political wing, the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM), should be understood against this backdrop. The conflict is often perceived as pitting a dominantly Arab Muslim north against an ethnically, religiously, and culturally diverse south. However, military and armed conflicts and struggle over power transcend these broad lines of demarcation and extend within groups and regions (Lesch, 1998; Dean, 2000; Deng, 2005).

In the late 1980s, the Sudan's ruling elite promoted the Arabisation of instruction and the Islamisation of curricula in all educational settings, thus exacerbating existing ethnic and regional tensions (Breidlid, 2005; Lesch, 1998, pp. 143-145). Constitutional legislation in 1998 attempted to mitigate the pervasive effects of continued political instability by introducing a scheme for the devolution of powers. In the field of education, responsibility would be shared between federal and provincial (state) governments. Within this framework, southern communities and their organisations introduced curricular changes to preserve their identity, heritage, and rights to difference and self-determination in relation to the Sudanese state. A peace agreement was subsequently signed between the federal government and the SPLM in 2004, recognising the right of the southern region to self-determination (Deng, 2005).

However, a protracted civil war took its toll on schools and on the work of educators. Public services have collapsed in the Sudan's southern and western regions, including in Darfur. Sommers (2005) refers to 'educational islands, as well as the immensity of educational emptiness that has arisen between them' (p. 24). The material poverty, the displacement and dismemberment of communities, as well as the fragmented intervention of international aid agencies and non-governmental organisations: all these leave little space for educators to provide a meaningful schooling. Described as 'an educational disaster' (Sommers, 2005, p. 251) that left a school system 'in shambles' (Joint Assessment Mission, 2005, p. 7), two decades of civil war 'have robbed a generation of their opportunity for education' (Joint Assessment Mission, 2005, p. 16). Surveys report an overwhelming absence of qualified teachers (only 6% are qualified), dilapidated school facilities, and a widespread lack of school textbooks and any form of organisational support⁷. Moreover, teaching is a provisional placeholder as '[g]ood teachers have left the profession to join NGOs that pay better salaries' (Joint Assessment Mission, 2005, p. 10)⁸. Particular challenges face the education of refugees and persons displaced either within the Sudan or in refugee camps in adjoining countries. Warring factions are also implicated in the forced

mobilisation of both teachers and students (child soldiers) into the armed conflicts (Sommers, 2005), thus further weakening the already limited capacity of relief organisations to sustain school facilities over time. Not least, significant disparities exist between ethno-cultural and religious communities in the southern Sudan in terms of their capacity to pool material resources through local churches and indigenous community institutions and organisations, with the view of maintaining a meaningful educational provision.

Kirk (2004) reports that women represent about 6% of all teachers in the southern Sudan, despite a women to men ratio of 2:1 in the general population, due to war-related mortality (see also Joint Assessment Mission, 2005, p. 16). In some provinces, women represent not more than 2% of all teachers. Within men-dominated schools, women are employed in conditions of cultural and organisational peripherality; they are assigned heavy workloads, and have very few prospects of assuming positions of responsibility or even receiving meaningful payment for their work. Kirk's (2004) paper raises important questions about the impact of wars and armed conflicts on the gendering of teachers' opportunities within schools. It also suggests that teachers are embedded within the larger conflicts in ways that further exacerbate the workings of schools.

Reflections

Four main observations emerge from the discussion so far. First, educators play a significant role in processes of decolonisation and national emancipation. Educators' engagement is part of larger processes of urbanisation and class formation, which underpin the broader struggle of colonised societies. *Qua literati*, they play a significant role as public intellectuals or politically engaged members of their communities, and as bearers of liberation ideologies and constructors of national identity. Yet, the capacity of educators to engage social and political upheavals is significantly challenged under conditions of internal colonialism and prolonged civil wars that occur among unequally organised ethnic/cultural communities living largely in rural areas dependent on agriculture or seasonal pastoralism. In this context, educators' work falls between relief intervention and social-economic development, with all the ensuing competing demands placed on educators and on the operation of schools. On the one hand, educators are perceived as front line actors providing humanitarian assistance, particularly to children and youth (who represent the largest age group in society), and to impoverished and marginalised communities. On the other hand, educators' work is perceived as an important institutional medium through which refugees, displaced persons, and child soldiers can be re-integrated into their communities through the acquisition of skills and knowledge (Kirk & Winthrop, 2007, p. 715).

Within this 'double bind', educators struggle with competing social and economic agendas in relation to which schools need to position themselves in order to remain viable in periods of upheaval.

Second, under civil and military upheavals educators' lives and work are radically reconfigured in terms of their geographic locations and the physical and social spaces within which schooling operates. Here, one thinks particularly of conditions of refugeedom, displacement, and spatial relocation. These processes assume transnational dimensions and dynamics, taking place across geopolitical regions and national borders. Moreover, educators are involved in the appropriation and/or construction of new sites of action, within homes, shelters, refugee camps, and new (urban and rural) communities. Educators' engagement also becomes embedded in new institutional and social forms that span organisational lines. These processes remain the least studied and understood, however, despite their critical importance for the ways through which educators negotiate meanings regarding their lives and work outside the framework of state support.

Third, in the illustrations above, educators are far from being exclusively engaged in front-line routinised teaching within the classroom, as is so often depicted in the literature (see, for example, Massialas & Jarrar, 1991, p. 143; Berger, 2002, p. 37; World Bank, 2008, p. 88). Rather, they emerge as engaged both within and outside classrooms and schools, within and in relation to their communities of reference, interacting with particularly complex, challenging, and highly unrewarding socio-political and geographic environments. And yet, depictions of educators in the Arab region have systematically cast aside these larger contexts of engagement in understanding educators' lives and work. Moreover, educators in contexts of upheaval often show resourcefulness and engagement within particularly harsh conditions (see, for example, Al-Khawaja, 2009, and other contributions in the same issue). Notwithstanding, studies of educators' lives and work have remained adamant in fixing their gaze on educators' work exclusively in relation to formally mandated curricular texts within classrooms. Educators' voices in other areas of practice that are part and parcel of their daily lives and work are thus effectively silenced. The argument advanced here should not be interpreted as claiming that processes of resistance/engagement are representative of all teachers within all contexts, not even at the same point in time. Rather, I argue that an examination of the engagement of educators in contexts of social and political upheavals provides evidence of alternative modes of educational leadership that transcend the narrow confines of the classroom and go beyond 'frontal' teaching. It is important to capture these nuanced facets in educators' work across the region. Only thus is it possible to appreciate the positioning of educators in relation to the larger dynamics operating

within the field of power, and the impact this has on the provision of schooling during civil and militarised upheavals.

Fourth, rare are the studies that unpack how the experiential gender and class-based realities of educators impact their lives and work in diverse contexts of practice across the Arab region. All particularly, voices of women educators remain largely excluded and their ‘contrapuntal readings’ of schooling left unheard. This denial of voice is further exacerbated when it comes to understanding how intersections of patriarchal, social class, ethnic, cultural, and spatial-geographic forces *differentially* mediate the impact of conflicts on educators’ practice; how these forces are actualised through the construction of gendered and class-based ‘discursive practices’ within schools; and how these discourses in turn amplify the effects of civil war and military upheavals on the operation of schools and on teachers’ lives and work.

Horizons

Researchers have largely marginalised the experiential realities of educators’ lives and work in the Arab region, as selectively illustrated above. Moreover, a cursory review of Arab scholarly publications and journals, as well as studies published in English by researchers working in the region, reveals that studies of educators’ lives and work are, with some notable exceptions (Nuwayr, 2001; ‘Assaf, 2004; Clarke, 2008), entrenched in the measurement of attitudes, skills, and knowledge of educators in relation to school efficiency or effectiveness (see, for example, Saleh & Kashmeeri, 1987; Al-Jaber, 1996; Halawah, 2005; World Bank, 2008). This state of affairs does not only reify educators’ professional judgment. It also prevents the articulation of a praxis framework through which educators in the Arab region can best understand themselves, the work they perform, and the challenges they face in relation to larger power struggles.

Not least, the uncritical extension to the Arab region of educational leadership models developed in Western societies dismisses vital cultural dimensions of local contexts of conflict and their political and geopolitical underpinnings. This effectively detracts attention from the core social and political issues that impact schooling in the Arab region. It also constructs educational leadership in ways that operate an ontological and epistemic disjuncture between the experiential realities of educators and the formal ways through which their professional judgments and performance are assessed. For instance, in one reform initiative carried out by American consultants in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), not less than the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards were adopted in order to ‘provide a profile of a person intended to lead the reforms to

school management' (Macpherson, Kachelhoffer & El Nemr, 2007, p. 67). While the authors do state that they have adopted the standards 'not uncritically' (p. 65), and that they were "'indigenized' by the authors in consultation with Arab and Islamic colleagues' (p. 67), the 'intended learning outcomes' do not provide a clear idea how this was done⁹. The authors remain particularly silent on how the ISLLC standards were 'indigenised' at the light of the social, political, cultural and economic transformations brought about by a UAE transient workforce composed overwhelmingly of expatriates, and in a context in which citizenship is the preserve of the very few. In making sense of Macpherson et al. (2007), one may find some consolation in Thomas (2007) who reminds us that the 'lack of appropriate contextualization' in studies of educational leadership in Gulf Arab societies 'may lead researchers to incorporate ethnocentric attitudes and perspectives into their studies ..., inadvertently reinforcing the bias they claim to counter and leading to further false conclusions and consequent inappropriate policy implementation' (p. 212). He further explicitly warns that failure to conceptualise properly the extension of educational leadership models from one cultural context to another 'has led to claims that many findings are confused because they use cultural terms arbitrarily, ignore appropriate levels of analysis and fail to deal with conceptual and methodological problems arising from how cultures are measured and leadership assessed' (p. 214)¹⁰.

Opening up new spaces for research on the civil and military upheavals that affect educators' lives and work in the Arab region requires therefore the articulation of contextualised conceptual approaches that build, epistemologically and ontologically, on local, national, and community histories and on educators' experiential realities and voices in relation to which their work could be meaningfully engaged. This approach would require, if one draws on Goodson (1997), that educators' voices, and the stories they give rise to, 'should not only be *narrated* but *located*' (p. 113) within their contexts of practice, in ways which ultimately enable educators to 're-write domination' (p. 114). 'Locating' stories means, if one extends Brighenti's (2007) conceptualisation, that researchers must strive to articulate an 'epistemology of seeing' through which the ethnographic and temporal (historical) richness of community, national, and regional circumstances are 'made visible' in their contribution to a grounded understanding of educators' lives and work.

It is worth signalling here the wealth of data that has only rarely been used in studies of educators' lives and work in the Arab region, and which offers new opportunities for research. It includes autobiographies, biographies, novels, personal diaries of activists, politicians, and community leaders, as well as photographs and other records kept in archival collections, international organisations, newspapers, and local communities (see, for example, Endersen

& Øvensen, 1994). These repositories contain primary documents and visual materials regarding how educators in public and private schools, in war torn societies and in refugee camps organised themselves and their students in ways that transcend the immediate circumstances of political and civil upheaval¹¹.

More importantly, however, opening up new spaces hinges on a critical interrogation of dominant conceptual and methodological paradigms through which educators in the Arab region are constructed, and all too easily dismissed, as an inefficient, incompetent and agent-less public, denied a dissenting voice (see, for example, the observation by Berger, 2002, p. 37). Embarking on such an undertaking highlights therefore the challenge for researchers to incorporate in their work communicative and participative methodologies that engage educators and locate their standpoints, voices, and discourses within their multi-faceted contexts of practice, and the conflicts and upheavals within which they act and work (see, for example, Herrera & Torres, 2006; Thomas, 2008). This entails, as Goodson (1997) suggests, ‘develop[ing] stories of action within theories of context ... which act against the kinds of divorce of the discourses which are all too readily imaginable’ (p. 117). Hence, developing a multiplicity of emic¹² languages that capture the contradictory articulations of educators’ lives and work throughout the Arab region emerges as a crucial – and yet to be undertaken – project.

If one wants to attune research on educators’ lives and work with their ‘modes of being’, as an agentic public engaged in a diversity of contradictory locations and fields of power across time and space, then it is crucial to unpack critically the contextual articulations of their practice. This would allow researchers and educators to transcend ‘the forms of apartheid’ (Goodson, 1997, p. 117) that are erected between educators’ stories and the ‘vernaculars of power’ (p. 117) that are used to control educators’ work and subjugate them as a public.

Notes

1. The positional distinctions between ‘school teachers’ and ‘school administrators’ (principals, vice principals, department heads, etc.) are acknowledged. In the present paper they are referred to as ‘educators’.
2. The United Nations is still in charge of the schooling of Palestinian refugees through UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East). This agency operates schools and welfare programmes in Palestinian refugee camps across the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.
3. The ‘Oslo accords’ are known formally as the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Signed in September 1993 by the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). They institute the basis upon which the Palestinian Authority – commonly known as the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) – came into being during the following year.

4. What is commonly referred to as the first Palestinian *Intifada* erupted in the Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip in December 1987 and abated toward the signing of the 'Oslo accords' in 1993. According to Al-Zarou (1988), before the *Intifada*, between 30 October 1968 and 7 April 1988, 30 teachers (of whom five were women) were exiled by the Israeli occupation (p. 306). Between July 1970 and 5 July 1987 (the eve of the first *Intifada*), 17 teachers (of whom five were women and one a university professor) were placed under house arrest (p. 305). During the first six months of the *Intifada* alone (between 27 October 1987 and 6 July 1988), 77 teachers were arrested, of whom three were women (pp. 98-100). Nicolai (2007) further reports that 'as many as 1,600 teachers were removed during the period of the first *intifada*' (p. 97).
5. What is commonly referred to as the second Palestinian *Intifada* erupted in the Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip following the collapse of the negotiations on a final status agreement between the PLO and the State of Israel in 2000. Nicolai (2007, p. 111) reports that in the period 2000-2005 alone, 27 teachers were killed, 167 detained, and 53 injured.
6. While women in Palestinian schools in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza Strip represent slightly over half of all teachers, their representation is significantly lower in post-primary education (junior high and high schools). In 2007-2008, women represented about 75%, 56%, and 44% of all teachers in primary, junior high, and secondary Arab schools in Israel, respectively (State of Israel, 2008, p. 410). In the PNA's jurisdiction, the percentage of women among all teachers stood at 55.4%, with a significantly lower percentage for the Gaza Strip compared to the West Bank. In private (mainly church) schools, the percentage of women reached almost 73% (Palestinian National Authority, 2008, p. 304).
7. Deng (2006), a senior SPLM education official, writes that according to UNESCO, '[m]ost schools opened during the current civil war in southern Sudan are 'bush schools' with outdoor classrooms and only 12 per cent of the classrooms are permanent buildings made of bricks or concrete ... [T]he number of schools with concrete buildings was only less than 200 schools compared with 800 primary schools that were permanent buildings during pre-war periods. This clearly shows the considerable destruction inflicted on schools facilities and structure during the current civil war' (p. 11). ... 'While about 70 and 46 per cent of the primary schools in southern Sudan do not respectively have latrines and [a] source of safe drinking water such [as] a borehole or well, about 57 per cent of schools do not have health facilities nearby' (p. 12). A Joint Assessment Mission (2005) report states that in 'South Sudan 38% of classes are taught outdoors and 51% in local materials structures in variable states of repair' (p. 9).
8. A Joint Assessment Mission (2005) report in the field of education notes that most teachers are paid 'at rates averaging \$2-90 per annum. Teacher commitment is variable and this is reflected in absenteeism and shortening of the academic year' (p. 9). NGO stands for 'non-governmental organisation'.
9. Moreover, the authors' discussion of the critique of the ISLLC is perfunctory. It disregards sustained critiques that have been raised about the standards in the US (see, for example, Anderson, 2001).
10. Refer, for example, to the arguments debated by Richardson (2004) and Clarke & Otaky (2006) regarding the cultural underpinnings of reflectivity in relation to the education of teachers in the Gulf Arab societies.
11. For instance, a study undertaken by Bashkin (2007), and which focuses on Iraqi schools during the interwar period, aptly illustrates the multiple ways through which these primary and secondary sources can be used to explore teachers' engagement during political upheaval. By using a wide array of 'newspaper articles, novels, and short stories' (p. 41), Bashkin shows how the competing claims to jurisdiction, legitimacy, and authority played out between senior state officials and the vehement opposition levelled by Iraqi intellectuals and educators during the formative stages of the formation of the Iraqi state. The study also shows how in many instances educators and school administrators introduced into their classrooms alternative (though short-lived) textual materials

to those mandated by the state. Bashkin also shows that while ‘the state suffered from tribal revolts and ethnic tensions’ (p. 42) during the formative period of its consolidation, educators played a central role in mediating competing political agendas, curtailing the impact of state policies and promoting alternative political and ideological platforms.

12. Thomas (2007) points out that ‘[e]mic approaches examine behaviours within one culture that cannot be transferred to others as concepts are defined differently and, therefore, cannot be commonly measured or claimed to be universal’ (p. 220).

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