From Subjects to Citizens: On Educational Reforms and the Demarcation of the “Israeli-Arabs”

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ABSTRACT Based on a critical analysis of the Arab educational policy, from Israel’s independence to the 1970s, this article examines the pivotal role of the state in engendering the trends of Palestinianization and Israeliization that arguably characterize the attitude of the Arab minority to the Israeli state. Exploring the educational reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, it shows the contingent relation between ethnicity and the state, and also, the interrelationship between the intra-Jewish and Jewish-Arab divides. Looking at the ethnicization of social relations not as a preordained upshot of primordial realities, the history of the reforms unravels the changing patterns of inclusion and exclusion that result in demarcating the Arab minority as both Israeli and Palestinian, and in constructing the oxymoronic category of “Israeli-Arabs”. Seen from the perspective of the goals for Arab and Jewish education, this category manifests the internalization of the “Arab Question” and the shift in educational policy from preclusion to incorporation, but also the limits of inclusion. These goals thus epitomize the ways in which the new discourse of meritocracy (resulting from the liberalizing of the economy and society) had determined civic equality between Arab and Jewish citizens, but equally important, the exclusion of the Arab minority from both the Jewish (ethnic) society and the Palestinian (national) collective. In this sense, I argue, neither Israelization nor Palestinianization were a matter of choice. Rather, both constitute the inevitable dual path for social and political inclusion, limited as it is.

KEY WORDS: Citizenship, ethnicity, state universalism, educational reform, Palestinian minority in Israel

Introduction

Education in the State of Israel will be determined to a large extent by the education given to the Arabs. The main principle is total equality between citizens, Arabs and Jews. [...] This is the litmus test of our values.1

“Everyone wants to succeed”, said Nawal Abu Amar, principal of an Arab Elementary School in Ramleh, a mixed city of Arabs and Jews in the centre of Israel. Explaining the increase in the number of students in her school she went on: “this is a part of the mounting
Palestinian national pride among Israel’s Arab population, and the concomitant strengthening of their position in the social fabric of Israel” (Ben-Simon, 2003). This attitude and explanation are well documented in the literature on the Arab minority in Israel, which titles these trends, respectively, “Palestinianization” and “Israelization”. This line of analysis presumes, however, that the “Arab identity question” is a matter of choice, and hence it tends to explore these trends from the perspective of the changing attitudes amongst the Palestinian citizens themselves. Here, I wish to take an alternative perspective and to problematize the pivotal role of the state in engendering these identities. Examining the changing educational policy towards the Arab minority from Israel’s independence in the 1970s, this article demonstrates the patterns of inclusion and exclusion that resulted in demarcating this minority as both Israeli and Palestinian, and in constructing the oxymoronic category of “Israeli-Arabs”.

This article focuses on two educational reforms—the 1968 Reform which re-structured the school system and introduced the integration plan, and the 1970s reform in Arab education, which included the re-definition of its goals and several organizational and curricular changes. Yet the article offers more than a history of Arab education per se. Looking at the ethnicization of social relations in Israel and seeing it not as a preordained upshot of primordial realities, the history of the reforms unravels the contingency between ethnicity and the state and, moreover, the interrelationship between the two main cleavages that cut across Israeli society. This interrelationship evolved between two critical moments in the history of education—the 1948 transition to statehood and the 1968 Educational Reform—each moment demonstrating how state action in education contributed to the delineation of ethnic boundaries, between Arabs and Jews, and between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews (respectively representing Jews of European and non-European origin). Commonly referred to separately, these two divides appear here not only as being completely intertwined, but also as fostering each other in ways that ultimately paint Israeli citizenship in clear ethnic colours. In this sense, a more general lesson can be drawn, as the history of educational policy reveals the interplay between nationalism, ethnicity and citizenship in multiethnic societies, which underlies the making of modern states and ethnicized societies.

From “Minorities” to Citizens: Posing the Problem

The Arab minority in Israel has grown, since after the establishment of the state in 1948, from some 11% to 18% of the total population. During this period, its political status has changed as well: Arabs, like Jews, have always enjoyed the franchise, yet until 1966 this right had been circumscribed by the powers of the military administration, which allowed the governing party to practically control the vote of the Arab minority (Lustick, 1980; Ozacki-Lazar, 2002, p. 108). This situation manifested itself in a massive Arab vote for the ruling Jewish Mapai party, and in the lack of Arab-controlled political parties that could speak out for this minority. The abolition of the military administration in 1966 marked a change in the political behaviour and self-perception of the Arabs in Israel. The most salient is the articulation of an Arab interest in the notion of a democratic state, alongside a demand to recognize the right of the Palestinian people for self-determination (Bishara, 1993; Ghanem, 2001, pp. 21–26; Amara & Schnell, 2004, p. 180).

This shift, and moreover, what has been described as its contradictory nature, has become a matter of political and academic debate, whose focus is assessing whether
the Arabs’ inclination to identify with the Palestinian national cause is a barrier, or rather an accessory, to their identification with the Israeli state. The ensuing explanations thus sought to explicate Arab political attitudes, either explicit or implicit, to measure their change over time and, especially, to unravel the Arab political identity. Notwithstanding the importance of these analyses in adequately describing the choices Arab citizens make, that is, adopting either Palestinianization or the path to Israelization (or both, according to some views)—they still cannot fully account for the question of why these are the only paths available to them. These approaches, in other words, have seen these paths as if they were simply there, awaiting the Arabs to step forward either on the road to secession or on that which leads to integration in the state.

One corrective to these views was offered by Shafir and Peled (2002), who pointed out the multiplicity of citizenship discourses that shape and structure social relations. They identified three discourses of citizenship—ethno-national, liberal, and republican—that play part in the Israeli “incorporation regime” and which enable to apply differential methods of incorporation for Arabs and Jews. Accordingly, the Arabs in Israel are excluded from both the republican and ethno-national conceptions of citizenship, yet enjoy liberal citizenship rights. This, they argue, allows the state to maintain its democratic and Jewish posture, while it is concomitantly providing the Arabs with individual citizenship rights that enable their political participation. Within the “multiple citizenship” framework, the shift in Arab political behaviour is not seen simply as a change in either attitudes or identity. Rather, it is a manifestation, and a result, of the dynamics of citizenship. In this view, Arabs opt for a politics of civic equality, alongside a growing sense of Palestinian nationalism, not as a matter of choice, but because liberal citizenship was the only path available to them when the republican and ethno-national discourses were competing for hegemony among Jews, and when Israel progressed on the road to economic liberalization.

Support for this line of analysis comes from a recently published attitude survey of identity repertoires among Arabs in Israel (Amara & Schnell, 2004). Moving beyond the dichotomous identity model (Palestinian/Israeli), it shows that most Arabs are strongly attached to at least three identities (in various combinations of Arab, religious, Palestinian and Israeli identities), none dominates the other, and each relates to a different content of meanings and playing a different role in their identity repertoire (p. 189). This analysis thus testifies to the lack of a single Arab identity, but it also important in showing the contingency of each of the components of the various Arab identities, a conclusion that may also be derived from Shafir and Peled’s analysis.

Insightful as it is, the multiple citizenship model calls for further investigation into the actual processes that had made the Arabs “bearers of liberal individual rights”, and yet delimited them to their own (Arab) national existence. Exploring education as a site where processes of civic and ethnic demarcation take place, the following analysis is meant to complement Shafir and Peled’s model, but also to further substantiate it by accounting for the role of the state in constructing social categories and identities that cut across citizenship. Therefore, it draws also on a recent contention with theories of nationalism that focuses on the exclusionary nature of the modern nation-state (Marx, 2003), and which seeks to explain how and why the state “act[s] to encourage or codify certain categories of inclusion and exclusions, along what lines, and with what effects?” (Marx, 2002, p. 103).

Seeking answer to these questions in the Israeli context, this article aims at showing how the state’s effort to monopolize education was implicated in the carving of ethnic and
ethno-national divisions within Israeli society. The analysis focuses on two critical moments in the history of Arab education: its preclusion from the overall educational policy and system with and after the 1948 transition to statehood, and the rising concern with Arab education in the early 1970s, shortly after the 1967 War. Exploring the early days of statehood, the first part of the article is concerned with the (limited) incorporation of Arab education within state education. This, I propose, marked the externalization of the “Arab Question” and an attempt to overcome it by equating Jewish nationalism with Israeli citizenship.

The 1968 Educational Reform marks the second critical moment in my analysis, and the internalization of the “Arab Question”, when an interest in reforming education generated a new concern in Arab education. This interest, which stemmed from the changing political economy (industrialization), led the state to re-define its relationship with its core Jewish constituency, namely, the veteran Ashkenazi middle class, and to the emergence of a liberal discourse of citizenship. However, although the attitude toward the Arab minority has changed, the new approach to Arab education was neither a benevolent state gesture nor a result of changing political attitudes amongst the Arabs. Whereas the “new”, liberal discourse signified the re-conceptualization of the Arabs as citizens, and not “minorities”,5 the story of the Arab education reform reveals the limits of this change and its significance for the delineation of the Israeli ethnoscape (Comaroff, 1998, p. 311). Untangling this paradox and, equally important, the contingency between Jewish and Arab education (something which escapes most studies of educational history) is what this article is all about.

The Nation-State, Ethnic Minorities, and Education

What does it mean being an Israeli-Arab? This is, of course, not a psychological question but rather a socio-political one. It derives from the fact that Zionism was designed to create a modern Jewish nation, while the Israeli state was from the start not exclusively Jewish. Answering this question, therefore, is a matter of explaining the processes of nation-building and state-formation, and the interplay between the allocation of citizenship rights and the construction of ethnic and national identities that resulted in the creation of this social category.6

Arguing against what he views as the liberal orthodoxy of theories of nationalism, Anthony Marx calls for placing greater emphasis on exclusion rather than on practices of inclusion in explaining how modern nation-states are constructed. The problem in this orthodoxy, he argues, is that “[s]tates have not consistently incorporated all potential internal constituents, but instead have often purposefully excluded some, contrary to the presumed imperative for pervasive unity or ethnic homogeneity” (Marx, 2002, p. 107). This is evidenced in the selective allocation of citizenship rights, which draws internal boundaries along race, gender, religion, and class lines, while serving the need for “solidifying core loyalty to the nation” (p. 107). That citizenship rights are not universally allocated is not unique to Marx’s view (for example, Roche, 1987; Turner, 1990), and it also premises Shafir and Peled’s “multiple citizenship” paradigm (Shafir & Peled, 2002, pp. 4–11). In their view, (ethno-)nationalism is one aspect through which the differential allocation of citizenship rights is reflected in the political participation of social groups, which also hold on to a different conception of the nation based on their relative proximity to the state. In Marx’s view, the privilege of the state in making official allocations of rights suggests that national unity is not a spontaneous process (Marx, 2002, p. 106), and
therefore, a full understanding of nation-building must be based on a conceptualization of the process of state-formation, which is embodied in the politics of citizenship. The need to distinguish, if only analytically, between the processes of nation-building and state-formation is pertinent if we wish to avoid confusion regarding what constitutes the external and internal boundaries of the nation-state (see also Pearson, 2001, p. 8).

What makes the distinction between nation-building and state-formation important is that each implies different rationale and practices of inclusion and exclusion. Once adopting a non-essentialist perspective on the development of national and ethnic (Calhoun, 1994; Nederveen Pieterse, 1996), but also civic identities, this distinction becomes crucial to our understanding of the political processes that result in delineating boundaries within and without the polity. There is more than one way to draw these boundaries and to implement practices of exclusion, which range from forced assimilation or expulsion through selective legal exclusion to *de facto* discrimination (Marx, 2002, p. 109). One may say, as a proximity, that whereas the former practices imply delineating a single, overlapping external boundary for the state and the nation, the two latter practices inevitably impose a discrepancy between the boundaries of citizenry and nationality. This variety of exclusionary practices attests, in my view, to the tension between the distinctive imperatives of nation-building and state-formation and, more specifically, to the conflict between the universalistic tendency of the state and the particularistic character of the nation.

Still, states act in the name of nations. Therefore, these processes are interrelated and our capacity to make sense of their outcomes is dependent on specific accounts of the particularities of each historical construction of a nation-state. In this sense, the analysis is premised on the assertion that:

there cannot be a theory of ethnicity or nationality per se, only a theory of history capable of elucidating the empowered production of difference and identity. (Comaroff, 1996, pp. 165–166)

Telling the history of education is one way of elucidating the development of ethnic and national relations in Israel, or of constructing the Israeli *ethnoscape* (Comaroff, 1998, p. 311). Education, in this context, is not merely a means in the construction of ethnic identities, Jewish and Arab, but one important site where the state appears in both its unifying and segregating powers. It is, then, the powers of the state, through its educational practices, in universalizing and particularizing social relations, that most concern us in explaining the dynamics of citizenship and ethnicity that render meaningful the category of Israeli-Arabs.

*Education, the State and Universalism*

It is hard to overestimate the importance of education for the evolution of nationalism and for the formation of the modern nation-state (Gellner, 1983). From its outset, modern education has been monopolized by states, and today state education is the norm around the globe (Soysal and Strang, 1989; Benavot *et al*., 1991; Meyer *et al*., 1992, p. 128). The universalizing of education, however, was not, and is not, a straightforward task. Its relation to the processes of state-formation and nation-building (Weber, 1976; Green, 1990) had turned education into an arena of contestation between the state and societal forces that sought to retain their autonomy in education (Lloyd & Thomas, 1998), and between competing conceptions of the national identity (Grosvenor, 1997). Consequently,
although being a major tool in universalizing and modernizing the state, education has not spread evenly and, at least from a critical perspective, it came to be seen not as being necessarily liberating, but as a means of social control and political dominance.

Once the universality of the modern state is not taken for granted, so should the scope of state education be understood as a matter of debate and conflict on the “way things are”. In this sense, Gellner’s view on the centrality of education in the construction of modern nationalism has to be taken cautiously. While rightly suggesting that the doctorate d’état is “the main tool and symbol of state power” (Gellner, 1983, p. 34), he failed to notice that it has never been evenly earned, but more significantly, that this unevenness correlates with racial, gender, ethnic and other lines of division that cut through the “modern nation”. In this respect, by not distinguishing the universalizing imperative of state-formation from the tendency of nation-building to draw both external and internal boundaries (Marx, 2003, pp. 106–107), Gellner’s model of nationalism and education fails to account for the interplay between universalism and particularism in the expansion of education. Hence, its inadequacy in accounting for power relations and for their limits on universalizing education that, more often than not, results in entrenching the hegemony of dominant groups (Collins, 1979, Ch. 5 cf.; Gramsci, 1983).

1948: The Externalization of the Arab Minority

Modern education antedates nationalism in Palestine, and its roots lie in the early modern schools back in mid-nineteenth century Ottoman Palestine (Tibawi, 1956; Elboim-Dror, 1986). At that time, public education was primarily Arab, and almost exclusively catering for (a minority of) the Muslim population, while Jews and Christians were enjoying educational autonomy. With the turn of the centuries, and moreover after the British conquest of Palestine, nationalism became the main force behind its expansion, as education became an arena for both Zionists and Palestinians to solidify their constituencies’ national identity (for example, Bowman, 1942). Thus, although the British government retained the basic structure of education, Muslim and Christian Arabs had begun to develop their own national educational policy, while the Zionist movement was acting to consolidate Hebrew (Jewish) education under its rule (Nardi, 1934, 1945; Levy, 2002). This effort was costly, however. The emerging Zionist educational system was divided, primarily between religious and non-religious education, and then along ideological lines, forming a multiple track system, known as the stream system.

This system reflected the quasi-federative structure of the Zionist polity. Autonomous education was the prerogative of the major political parties that could thus secure their ideological-political control over segments of the Jewish population. The largest was the General Stream that was loosely affiliated to the Zionist-liberal party. The other two were the “ideological” streams: the Zionist-Religious Stream, and the Labour Stream of the Histadrut (the General Federation of the Jewish Workers in Palestine). The Haredi Stream remained beyond the boundaries of Zionist control: the ultra-orthodox faction withdrew from the Zionist Congress in 1912 since it objected Zionist intentions to develop nationalistic education, and in 1926, after withdrawing from the established institutions of the yishuv (the Zionist polity), gained recognition from the British government as a separate congregation, which allowed it to maintain its own separate educational system (Elboim-Dror, 1990). These divisions, it should be borne in mind, had a clear ethnic character: while each stream reflected a particular (not to say particularistic) conception
of Zionism (or anti-Zionism in the case of the ultra-orthodox), all were Jewish-European in origin and orientation (Swirski, 1999). Neither the call of the Sephardic Federation to coalesce the educational system in order to address the needs of non-European Jews, nor the demand of the Jewish-Yemenite community to hold on to its own version of education were considered legitimate by the Zionist establishment, thus leaving the particular needs of non-Europeans beyond their scope and interest (Eliachar, 1983; Zurieli, 1990; and for analysis, Levy, 2002).

The differentiated character of Zionist education, like the division between Arab and Jewish education, became significant following the UN resolution of 29 November 1947 on the partition of Palestine. Shortly afterwards, when the Zionist establishment set to prepare for statehood, and to develop its policy on education in the anticipated state, it appeared that the fate of the stream system, and Jewish education at large, was integrally connected to the future of Arab education.

*Between Inclusion and Exclusion: Education and the Arab Question*

The discussions over the future of education were held at several levels, and they were shaped by the cognizance that each national state would also be the home for the “opposite” national minority. The main issue at stake was how would the ethno-national character of the state be preserved, which in education was translated into a dilemma on the future of national education, but beyond that, on whether the state should hold on to the stream system. This latter dilemma was underlying a meeting of the Histadrut’s education board, held on 1 March 1948, that was set to examine the Labour Stream’s position regarding state education, and to articulate its stance *vis-à-vis* the discussions that were held at the national level. In parallel, Mapai—the ruling party in both the yishuv and the Histadrut—formed its own committees to deliberate the future of education. The discussions in these forums revealed the major difficulty in retaining the stream system, which was in both the political and ideological interests of the participants—namely, that it might legitimize an Arab claim for educational autonomy on the grounds of religious faith, similar to that of the Jewish religious sector.

Although the various speakers in these discussions remained favourable towards the idea of an all-Jewish state (Lustick, 1980, pp. 28–29), their positions reflected a wide range of possibilities for incorporating the Palestinian minority within the future state. Most of the discussions focused on the question of autonomy. It was argued that it would be difficult for the state to reject such an Arab claim since Jews had always made this demand wherever they constituted the minority. Yet, some speakers expressed a fear that cultural autonomy would result in irredentist claims. In any event, there was wide agreement that the state should control the curriculum or Arab education would become bedding for the development of nationalistic sentiments amongst Arabs (see also ZA 10046–25: 1.12.1947). Also, in line with this position and consistent with their own interest in keeping the stream system, Mapai’s committee proposed to incorporate Arab education into the organization of the national educational system, and that an Arab-Palestinian would be one of three deputies to the minister of education (Segev, 1984, p. 58).

Still, the most surprising, and intellectually intriguing position was that which suggested having, in due time, a unified civic education. This view, which expressed a modernist vision of nationhood, echoed the idea that education may serve as a means to creating
a unified citizenry, based on individual attachment to the state, and thus suggested the
possibility of separating nationality from citizenship. Yet, I argue, revealing as they were,
both ideas—cultural autonomy and civic education—were not that far apart, and they
reflected the limits of the debate which failed to grasp the meaning of statehood, and the
repercussions of sovereignty in the light of the Zionist interest in ensuring the Jewishness
of the new state.

In terms of theories of nationalism, these ideas may be seen as manifesting the
dichotomy between civic and ethnic conceptions of the nation-state. However, in terms of
the debate, this dichotomy is inconsistent with the fact that the proponents of these
seemingly opposing views—cultural autonomy and civic education—remained Jewish
nationalists. Thus, the former were willing to forsake the integrity of citizenship, in return
to Jewish exclusiveness and educational autonomy, whereas the latter were contemplating
the idea of an overriding conception of citizenship, but only after the dominance of Jewish
nationalism was ensured. This tension between the civic and ethnic conceptions of state
education appeared in yet another debate that arose from the echelons of the Zionist-
religious educational stream. The issue at stake was the continuance of religious autonomy
in education and politics, and the dilemma between keeping the Jewish national character
of society and forming a secular-civil state. In light of the prospects for two states, it was
then suggested that the Jewish state would hold on to the institutions of Knesset Yisrael,
which would serve as the prime cultural authority for education amongst Jews, whether
they reside in the Jewish or the Palestinian state. This idea too was rejected as it was seen
as inviting irredentist claims by the Arab citizens of the Jewish state (see Levy, 2002,
pp. 143–145).

These debates attest that the Arab Question was not unanticipated by the Zionist
establishment, and also that the notion of civic education was not strange to Zionist
thinking. Significant as they were in presenting alternative paths for nation-building,
these paths remained hypothetical, however. Yet, these debates were telling because
they were held at a time when the idea of statehood itself was, so to speak, hypothetical.
The thus showed how difficult it was to follow Ben-Gurion’s diktat to “think in terms of a state” (Ben-Gurion, 1949, p. 260), inasmuch as they revealed that
the Arab (educational) Question could not be separated from the determination of the
Jewish one. Therefore, though at the level of educational functionaries, neither the
idea of Arab educational autonomy nor the notion of civic education were considered
negatively, the future of (Arab) education was bound to be determined by the power of
the state. And this power revealed itself in both practices of civic inclusion and ethnic
exclusion.

Already during the 1948 War, the state imposed military administration over the Arab
populated areas, and subjected Arab education to the powers of this administration.
Apparently, neither cultural autonomy nor civic education, nor even the contradiction
between them, had shaped the course of state education. Rather, this course was
determined by the incorporation of Arab education into the state system, but only through
the mechanism of the military administration, which entailed their cultural (and social, and
political, etc) segregation (Lustick, 1980; Al-Haj, 1995). However, some two decades
later, with the abolition of the military administration in 1966 and the occupation of the
West Bank a year later, and when the process of industrialization had begun to reshape
state–society relations, the balance between culturalism and citizenship also changed
somewhat.
Dynamics of Exclusion: Education and the Ethnic Question

The relegation of Arab education to the precincts of military rule implied also the “externalization” of the Arab question. The state thus turned to confront its “internal”, and seemingly more burning, challenges of the absorption of immigrants and of building up a solid economy and a stable political and social order. Under the banner and ideology of mamlakhtiyut, a notion that encapsulated both imperatives of state-formation and nation-building, the state sought to determine its supremacy in the emerging social order and to assimilate the new Jewish immigrants in society. Ironically, this effort indeed brought about the imposition of state power, but it was equally consequential for the ethnicization of Israeli society.

This duality was observed in the 1949 Compulsory Education Act that, beyond appropriating educational authority and extending it over the whole citizenry (Jewish and Arab), still refrained from abolishing the stream system. By leaving intact the educational autonomy of the political parties, this Act triggered a conflict between them and the state leadership and apparatus that, following a fierce struggle, led to the legislation of the 1953 State Education Act (Don-Yehia, 1977; Zameret, 1997; Levy, 2002). This legislation determined state monopoly in education; nevertheless, again monopoly came with a price: although the 1953 Act abolished the stream system, it did not do away with the pre-state divisions that were now reinstitutionalized in the framework of national education.

The price, more precisely, was the ethnicization of state education. The pattern of the struggle over education was critical in this respect, as it determined the resultant state education in several ways. First, although compulsory education was applied universally—which indeed raised the level of schooling amongst Arabs and contributed to the diminishing of educational gaps between Muslims and Christians, rural and urban children and between boys and girls (Mar’i, 1978)—the debates remained exclusively Jewish. This implied the further separation of Arab and Jewish education, but also its determinative role in solidifying national unity within each group. Second, the struggle was seen as a kulturkampf between religious and non-religious (Jews), the latter mainly identified with the Labour movement. Its determination, by the entrenchment of the pre-state religious-based division in the new system (Don-Yehia, 1977; Zameret, 1997), thus jeopardized the fostering of a secular national identity, and increased the role and import of religion in defining both Arab and Jewish conceptions of nationalism. Equally important, the two major rivalries in this struggle (but also allies in the ruling coalition)—Mapai, the Labour movement’s dominant party, and Ha-Poel Ha-Mizrachi, the Zionist-religious party (later, the National Religious Party)—resolved this conflict by a “deal” which determined the latter’s control over the Mizrahi newcomers, who were turned en-mass to its own, practically autonomous, schools (Dagan, 1986; Zameret, 1993; Levy, 2002).12

Finally, though not commonly acknowledged, the struggle had a class dimension, reflected in the emerging class division between the veterans (mostly Ashkenazi), who had become the backbone of the rising middle class, and the Mizrahi newcomers, who were undergoing, alongside the Arabs, a rapid process of proletarianization (Shalev, 1984; Swirski, 1989). This overlapping of ethnic origin and class position was consequential to the development of separate educational tracks, if not schools, for children of different ethnic and class background (Shavit, 1990; Swirski, 1999), and hence for the entrenchment of ethno-class identities.13
This ethnicized class structure was not only shaping the post-1953 structure of education, which contradicted the modern rationale of a unified school system. It all the more affected the ensuing educational policy that, in light of the emerging clash between the “West and the rest”, resulted in interventionist policies that further undermined the universality of education, and reinforced its ethnic particularism. Indeed, when the Ministry of Education sought to reform education, in order to conform to the needs that had arisen from industrialization, the (Jewish) “ethnic question” was one main consideration in its formulation (Smilansky, 1957). As a result, inasmuch as the educational policy reflected the new political economy of industrialization, so did it favour the interests of the Ashkenazi middle class over those of Mizrahi children (who were tracked into vocational education; Saporta and Yonah, 2004), and of Arab children (Al-Haj, 1995). Given the Orientalistic aspect of the kulturkampf, it was then the interplay between class, ethnicity and religiosity that became implicated in the development of an educational policy that placed the burden of re-socialization upon the underprivileged themselves. This paved the way to the developing of ethnic thinking that came to dominate educational policy in the following years.

Ethnic thinking implied relegating social, economic and political problems to the sphere of the cultural, and was evidenced in the deliberations regarding the education of Mizrahi children already in the early 1940s (Levy, 2002, pp. 170–173). In the early 1950s, these deliberations had transformed into policy plans, when the state employed a “melting pot” policy in order to assimilate the newcomers and to forge a homogenized Jewish national identity. We thus saw, between then and the mid-1960s, a shift from a policy of “egalitarianism” through “compensatory education” to “integration” (Smilansky & Nevo, 1979; Amir et al., 1984, p. 4). Each phase implied the application of different pedagogical methods that were targeting the “ethnic gap”. Yet, each of them reinforced the boundary between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews, thus underpinning ethnic thinking. This was complemented by the replacing, in the early 1960s, of the “melting pot” policy with “cultural pluralism” (Yadlin, 1969; Lissak, 1999), a policy that underlay a less rigid approach to the cultural heritage of the non-European segments of society. Ironically, though aiming at resolving the tension amongst Jews, and therefore underscoring the need for desegregation, this policy also marked the (re-)internalization of the “Arab (educational) Question”.

1968: Integration and the Internalization of the Arab Question

The rapid industrialization and economic growth during the first two decades had had tremendous effects on the development of education. Thus, the expansion of the state bureaucracy, and the need to reorganize the workforce in line with the needs of industrialization, generated a thrust to expand and extend secondary education (Smilansky, 1957). Among the Ashkenazi middle class, this thrust stemmed from an interest in making education a means to mobilize into the career opportunities that became available to them, and hence it implied strengthening of academic education. A parallel demand to expand post-elementary education came from Mizrahi parents who sought equal educational opportunities for their children (Ish-Shalom & Schmida, 1993). This pressure materialized in the formation of the comprehensive high school and in the expansion of vocational education (Saporta & Yonah, 2004), which became the exclusive path to post-elementary education in the (mostly Mizrahi populated) peripheral
development towns. Both demands formed the grounds for a state interest in re-structuring the school system.

**The Reform and the Elusive Nature of Integration**

By the early 1960s, the Ministry of Education had become the main proponent of an educational reform. This was expressed in almost every public statement made by the minister, and in the Ministry’s engagement in an extensive effort to study and formulate what ought to be done (Arrane, 1971). Two principles guided the ensuing developments: abandoning the policy of egalitarianism, or formal equality, in favour of a policy of compensatory education, in order to confront the danger of “the overlapping of ethnic affiliation and socio-economic status” (Smilansky, 1957, p. 231); and offering diversified educational opportunities at the post-elementary level, which would be responsive to the growing demands for education in light of the changing economic conditions. These two principles coincided in the idea to set up the junior high school as the loci where children of different ethnic and class background would meet and make a choice on their educational path.

This idea matured during the 1960s, and the Ministry of Education became engaged in a dual effort to reorganize the school system, in other words, moving from a structure of $8 + 4$ to $6 + 3 + 3$, and to universalize post-elementary education. The opportunity came when a group of Mizrahi parents in Jerusalem demanded, in the second half of the 1960s, that their children be enrolled in schools in an adjacent affluent neighbourhood, and thus enjoy better education (Klein & Eshel, 1980). The Ministry of Education could then give its plan to form the junior high school (that is, the structural reform) the ideological rationalization it needed. By merging this plan with a new policy of desegregation, the integration plan, the egalitarian ideals that premised the latter could ease the pain of creating different paths for different children and of the (re-)producing of a hierarchical educational order (see Levi, 1987). In 1968, both the parliament and the government approved the reform that soon came to be identified with the integration plan, which was seen as the most elaborated state effort to overcome the “ethnic gap” by means of educational policy. Nevertheless, the relation between the two plans, which were premised on contradicting principles (diversification and egalitarianism), remained unresolved.

It has already been noticed that when education officials and policy-makers were talking about integration their conception of it remained vague and confusing (Blass & Amir, 1984; Swirski, 1999). This, it was argued, was in sharp contrast to the elaborated effort to prepare for the re-structurings of the school system (Eshel & Klein, 1984, p. 137). Explaining the meaning of integration and, moreover, its relation to the structural reform became a main concern of Israeli historiography of education (Levy, 2002, pp. 200–207). Despite their different points of departure, and even their conclusions, various explanations shared the view that the integration plan had served to promote the structural reform, and thus they agreed on the instrumentalistic relation between the two plans. They also similarly understood the notion of integration as pertaining to the imperatives of nation-building, and hence saw it as an ideological construct, either in its functionalist-liberal meaning (as materializing Zionist ideals and expressing the role of the state as a just agent of modernization; for example, Blass & Amir, 1984), or in its Marxian interpretation, disguising the working of the state in the name of middle class interests (Levi, 1987; Swirski, 1999). In both cases, the Zionist interpretation of the goals
of integration was taken uncritically. The story of the Arab reform challenges this misconception, but moreover, it helps us unravel the elusive meaning of integration.

Contradictory Dynamics: The Reform in Arab Education

At first sight, the reform seemed to bear no relation to the developments in Arab education. Indeed, although the structural reform applied to the Arab schools (Al-Haj, 1995, p. 81; Swirski, 1999, p. 196), they were precluded from the integration plan. Once more it was made clear that educational policy-making, as well as the public debate on education, were an intra-Jewish matter, evaluated solely by its contribution to the nation-building effort. Similarly, the reform in Arab education was comprised of several changes, structural and curricular, none aiming at cross-national integration. In this context, though tempting, suggesting that keeping the notion of integration elusive made it possible to conceal the Jewish exclusivity of this policy is too easy an answer. After all, by that time, educational policy did not make any pretensions to be universal, least of all inclusive. Yet, the proximity of the two reforms, likewise their similarities, suggest otherwise. Before returning to the elusiveness of integration, it is necessary to examine the developments that led to the Arab reform.

In the early 1970s—following the dismantling of the military administration and in the aftermath of the 1967 War—the increasing alienation of Arab pupils from the state led the Ministry of Education to reconsider its policy towards Arab education (Al-Haj, 1995, p. 139). On 11 February 1972, an advisory committee, headed by Deputy Minister of Education Aharon Yadlin, published a short report on “basic trends in Arab education”. In its conclusion, which was approved by the Minister, it drafted guidelines for educational policy that emphasized the need to strengthen the Arab minority’s identification with the state. It also summarized the main recommendations regarding the curricular policy for this sector. “The importance of the Yadlin Document”, writes Al-Haj (1995, p. 140), “lies in the very fact that for the first time wide public attention was given to the uniqueness of Arab education and the need to formulate particular aims for the Arab pupils”. Nonetheless, it was severely criticized by Arab leaders, who claimed that it sought to create a “‘unique Israeli Arab’ divorced from his genuine national and cultural roots” (p. 140; compare Mar'i, 1978, p. 53).

Soon afterwards, this document formed the basis for the work of another committee that was set up on 1 July 1973, as a part of a team whose task was to problematize the educational needs and policy for the 1980s (Peled, 1976). This committee was headed by Dr Matityahu (Matti) Peled, a retired army general and a professor of Arabic literature who later became renowned for his political activism for Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation.

At the core of many of the Peled Committee’s discussions and reports stood the question of the identity of the Arab minority. Particularly, the committee was critical of the Yadlin report precisely for ignoring the tension between nationality and citizenship. It thus stated that “in defining the goals of education, there appears in the document the will to avoid offering a solution to [this] problem”. And it continued: “the limitations of the [Yadlin’s] guidelines are in that they do not respond to the question of the confrontation in the life of the Israeli Arab citizen between his identification with the Arab people and his interest in living in peace in the state of Israel”. Thus, the Peled Committee saw as the major dilemma that must underscore the planning of education the need to acknowledge the Arabs’ national and cultural roots, against their problematic status as
Israeli citizens. Therefore, it took upon itself to draw specific goals for Arab education, and to allow for a greater emphasis on the Arab culture as its foundation. It also found it necessary, again contrary to the Yadlin’s guidelines, to stress that this education is ought to be based “on love of the country shared by all citizens” (Peled, 1975, p. 13; italics added).

Nonetheless, awareness of the political predicament of the Arab minority and of the obstacles that stood in the way to raising the level of education amongst Arab children could not suffice. The Peled Committee thus called upon policy-makers to confront the above dilemma and proposed several amendments to the curricula in history, civics, Arabic, Hebrew, and religion (Al-Haj, 1995, pp. 142–152). Still, this committee too was criticized for stopping short of recognizing the Arabs in Israel as a Palestinian national minority (p. 143), and hence for failing to transcend the basic contradiction between the need to reinforce the civic character of the state and the interest in keeping the state Jewish. This was most salient in the final report of the ministry’s task force (Peled, 1976, pp. 36–38), which separately defined the goals for Jewish and Arab education. Accordingly, Arab education was to be based on “the foundations of Arab culture”, and on “encouraging the uniqueness of Israeli Arabs”, while it equally demanded the Arab pupils’ loyalty as citizens of the state.18 In contrast, Jewish children were to substantiate their sense of belonging on the national heritage of the Jewish people (Al-Haj, 1995, p. 143). While reaffirming the exclusion of the Arab minority from the “projects” of assimilation and integration, this distinction signified a change in their conception as citizens.

Under this new conception, no longer were the Arabs in Israel considered as “minorities”, a term that had left them devoid of both civic and national identities. Instead they were seen as Israeli citizens and Arab nationals, a duality that was substantiated by the different goals for Arab and Jewish education. These goals conformed to the tendency to strengthen both the Jewish national character of the state and a liberal conception of citizenship (Peled, 1992), and in this sense, the educational reforms were equally inscribed in the imperatives of nation-building and state-formation. To explain this, and to show how did the educational policy reassert the separateness between nationality and citizenship in Israel, I wish to re-examine the reforms, and particularly the notion of integration, which, I propose, accounts for the new practices of exclusion and inclusion that were thus revealed.

*Unravelling Integration: The Construction of Israeli-Arabs*

Educational reforms were primarily about labour and industrial relations (Bowles & Gintis, 1977), and not national homogeneity. This was true for Israel as for the USA, though in Israel, the notion of integration was rendered even more powerful by the language of *mamlakhtiyut*, which derived its own power from a strong sense of a common Jewish destiny. It was not surprising, then, that once this policy was imported, the (American) concept of *desegregation* has been translated into *integration* and that the Arabs had remained beyond its scope. Nor that its aim was defined as bridging the cultural and mental gap between “Western” and “Oriental” Jews (Peled, 1984), a definition that showed how deeply *ethnic thinking* has become embedded in the Israeli political-educational discourse. Keeping the notion of integration elusive was in part tied to this thinking, and it was meant to conceal the political and the class-based reasons for
the “ethnic gap”. The reform in Arab education, and its proximity to the 1968 Reform, suggests that there is more to this notion, however. It reveals, to be more precise, the change in state–society relationship, and the power of the state to re-define it by reinforcing the concept of citizenship, while still reproducing the differential standing of each social group vis-à-vis the state.

Seeking explanation to the salience of the integration plan, in spite of its shaky theoretical grounds, Eshel and Klein (1984) reject the idea that this plan was “an educational treatment”, and that it is possible to bring down social barriers and diminish the educational gap between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews simply by “moving children from one school to another”. They thus went on explicating the term inclusion, which underlay the purpose of this plan:

Including people into society is important, but not just any kind of inclusion. Not only must it take the form of an orderly presentation of carrying out a social ideal, but it must also provide for and encourage more personal transformations. One should not just be made a member, but a certain kind of member that seems summed up in the word “achievement”. (Eshel & Klein, 1984, p. 135)

This claim was insightful. It suggested that the integration plan rested on the principle of “individual achievement” (pp. 141–142), and hence pointed out the real change that it would engender. While others were commending, or criticizing, this plan in terms of its contribution to achieving national cohesion, amongst Jews of course, in this view, it was its role in creating “a certain kind of member” in society that mattered. In this sense, the notion of integration was far more encompassing, and it was to include all social strata—the “outsiders” (Mizrahim) and the “insiders” (Ashkenazim) alike (Levy, 2002, p. 205), but this time also the Arabs—in a new meritocratic order. Premised on the (liberal) ideal of “equal opportunities”, the new discourse of meritocracy formed a new basis of legitimation for the state that was making its first steps on the road to liberalization (Shalev, 1998; Shafir & Peled, 2000, p. 5). The transformation to a market-oriented society did not ripen until the 1980s, when the liberal discourse of citizenship was thriving to a new hegemony in the politics of the Jewish middle class (Shafir & Peled, 2002). Still, its carving in the Israeli social fabric was evidenced already then, when the state initiated both educational reforms.

This brings me back to the unresolved relationship between the structural reform and the integration plan. The shift from “compensatory education” to “integration”, as well as the abandoning of the “melting pot” policy (see above), occurred in relation to the 1959 Wadi-Salib revolt, which had made salient the class-based conflict between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews. In this context, the new policy of desegregation, combined with the reorganizing of the school system, was designed to offer the former an opportunity for inclusion, albeit as individuals and not on a collective basis. Paradoxically, by opening for those individuals who would succeed in the new integrated schools a path for social mobility, the state needed to establish “who is a Mizrahi?”, in order to identify, collectively, the culturally disadvantaged and to present the (Ashkenazi) middle class school as a “better educational environment” (Levy & Barkay, 1998). In this sense, this policy was a part of, and a reinforcement to, the same ethnic thinking that relegated Mizrahi Jews to their marginal position at the first place.
A similar logic was revealed in the Arab educational reform. While it might be argued that until the late 1960s, and probably later, the state sought to impose Israeliness upon the Arabs—through the curriculum or, for example, by forcing them to celebrate Israel’s Independence Day—this effort can hardly be seen as a means to integration. Again, the military administration, and the close surveillance and control over Arab education, proves the opposite. In this context, the rising concern in Arab education in the 1970s marked a change. The essence of it was epitomized in the ambiguous new social category of “Israeli-Arabs”, as was reflected in the new goals for education. For the Jews, this conception was radically new: being accustomed to conflating Israeliness with Jewishness, the very recognition of the “minorities” as both Israeli and Arab was a real concession. In the eyes of the Arabs, who remained critical of the committees’ reports, this was seen as a trivial gesture and as an expression of the state’s reluctance to recognize them as Palestinians. Yet, this term was revealing. Denoting the pre-eminence of Israeliness over their Arabness, this term signified the incorporation of (individual) Palestinians into the Israeli citizenry, and thus paved the way for an Arab claim for equal citizenship rights. By the same token, this term re-emphasized their seclusion from the Jewish national body. But also from the Palestinian people.

That these reforms thus re-drew social (ethnic) boundaries amongst Jews and between them and the Arabs may not come as a surprise. However, it was the new role of citizenship in re-drawing these boundaries that singled out the reforms as expressing a more substantial change in the Israeli social order. Stimulating this change was the rapid process of industrialization that enhanced the formation of the Israeli ethno-class structure (Swirski, 1989), which in turn engendered the re-defining of state–society relations on the basis of a new conception of an Israeli citizenship. In this sense, the notion of integration was a derivative of the logic of state-formation rather than simply manifesting the imperative of nation-building, thus changing the terms of inclusion in society. This notion thus manifested the “rolling back” of the state, and mainly, the de-identification of its leadership and apparatus with the veteran segment of the Ashkenazi “nation-builders” (Levy, 2002). In this sense, Eshel and Klein (1984) were wrong to assume that only the “outsiders” had to change, as the new order demanded also that the “insiders” adapt to the imperatives of meritocracy. Thus, all citizens were placed on an equal footing vis-à-vis the state, which in turn manifested itself in greater political participation and affect of both Mizrahi Jews and Palestinian citizens in Israeli politics. Ethnicity, nonetheless, had not faded away.

Rather the contrary. Following Wadi-Salib, it was the fear that the deepening rift amongst Jews would undermine state legitimacy that had made the 1968 Reform critical. It had offered the Mizrahi working class an opportunity to mobilize into skilled labour (through the expansion of vocational education), making use of the fact that the Arab workers remained confined to unskilled jobs. Combined with a growing commitment to cultural pluralism—expressed in the inclusion (though marginalized) of the heritage of Mizrahi Jews as part of the curriculum—this helped draw Mizrahi Jews closer to their co-nationals, the Ashkenazi middle class. If there was a fear of an Arab-Mizrahi alliance against the Ashkenazi middle class and the state, given the increasing interaction between them in the labour market, this move also served to forestall such danger. Notably, however, the integration plan was also responsible for delineating a Jewish-Mizrahi identity, distinguished from the dominant Ashkenazi identity.
The Arab reform, in tandem, re-isolated the Palestinian minority within a new (Arab) ethnic boundary. The growing incorporation of the Arabs in the labour market (since 1959), the end of military administration (1966), and the re-union of the Palestinians following 1967 were all significant factors in the new practices of inclusion-exclusion. Reinforcing their Arab consciousness served to distinguish them from the Jewish co-citizens, and maybe primarily from their Mizrahi counterparts in the labour market. However, strengthening their sense of civic identity did not only help them become better acquainted with Israeli (Jewish) society, but all the more important, it distinguished them, in their own minds, from the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. This re-union, which agitated the Arab minority by raising doubts regarding the level of education amongst them, compared to the higher level of education of their co-nationals (Mar’i, 1978), was all the more concerning from the state’s point of view, since it increased nationalistic sentiments amongst them. In this respect, both ethnicity (Arabness) and citizenship had shaped the boundary that cut through the Palestinian collective, and within the Israeli citizenry.

Conclusion

This exploration of the history of educational reforms, and particularly the story of Arab education, was offered as an endeavour into the construction of ethnic (and ethno-national) relations and the dynamics of citizenship in Israel. Majority–minority relations in Israel are to a large extent shaped by the Israeli–Palestinian conflict; however, as I hoped to show here, they are also moulded by the particular dynamics of state–society relations. In this respect, Arab education is not separated from intra-Jewish conflicts over education, nor both from the changing dynamics of state–society relations. Here, a comprehensive approach to the history of education is deemed important. Written against the conventional tendency to separately analyse Arab and Jewish education, this article offered a perspective on the educational arena as a whole. Instead of seeing them as if they were predestined to develop in a segregated manner, thus leaving the reasons for the disintegration of this field unexplained, I sought to problematize the development of separate educational paths based on ethnicity and nationality. One striking result of this lacuna is that both sides, those studying Jewish education and those focusing on Arab education, have seemed to forsake the option of a unified, civic educational system. Though it deserves a separate study, however, this claim seems to echo in my argument on the demarcation of the “Israeli-Arab” and in its implications for the further substantiating of this minority’s citizenship rights.

Arab education has come a long way since the days of the military rule to date, when Arab leaders develop their own conceptions of the needs and interests of this minority. So has the political presence of the Arab minority, which attests to its politicization, but no less important, to its becoming integral to the Israeli political and social landscape. This progress notwithstanding, the social boundaries between Arabs and Jews have not fallen down, nor have the gaps in education, occupation, income, politics, and so forth between them been erased. Moreover, although the struggle for civic equality has become a main route for the Palestinian citizens’ political participation, it appears that still “they did not mention citizenship and individuals rights at all in their identity repertoire, emphasising instead their collective identity as Palestinians” (Amara & Schnell, 2004, p. 189). The reason for
this, I propose, lies in the way the dual path for Israelization and Palestinianization has been put forth as their (only) way for political incorporation.

Stepping on these paths thus became not a matter of choice. Rather, it was the re-drawing of social boundaries that had made them available, if not inevitable. The new goals for Arab education were indicative: premised on the conception of a modernized, meritocratic society, the Arab citizens were required to be loyal to the state, and thus were designated a distinct group of the Palestinian people; yet, emphasizing their Arab national roots, rather than their Palestinian nationality, re-accentuated their separateness from the Jewish majority. The new social category of “Israeli-Arabs” epitomized these boundaries.

This category, which has recently been identified as marking the Arab-Israeli “double marginality” (Suleiman, 2002), signified the internalization of the “Arab Question”, but also its cost. Again, it was the story of education, and the way it re-drew cultural boundaries within the Israeli citizenry, which had shown how the extension of citizenship rights only implied the replacement of one form of exclusion by another (Marx, 2002, p. 109). It allowed the Arabs to fight for equal citizenship rights, but it has also re-delineated the boundaries of the Israeli ethnoscape, where being an Arab, Israeli or not, is still a disadvantaged position for making civic claims. In education, this led to a demand for national autonomy rather than strengthening its civic character. Whether this may bridge the deepening rift between Israeli-Arabs and Jews is still open for debate.

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Notes

2 Throughout this article I use the terms Arabs and Palestinians interchangeably. This usage is a matter of a considerable political debate, to which this discussion refers (Rabinowitz, 1993; Rekhess, 1998).
3 The only “legitimate” exception was the Communist Party of Israel, an Arab-Jewish party that channeled the vote of those Palestinians who refused to adhere to the rule of “traditional” elites (for example, Kaufman, 1997). On the legal status of the Arab minority, see Kretzmer (1987) and Sultany (2003).
4 For initial formulations of these trends and their meaning, see Rekhess (1976) and Smooha (1983). These scholars, and many others, became engaged in a debate over the direction in which these identities had developed—either radicalization, that is growing of their Palestinian identification, or integration within the Israeli democratic structure (for example, Neuberger, 1995; Smooha, 1997; Rekhess, 1998; Ghanem, 2001). Recently this debate has taken a new turn, when various scholars are seeking explanations that offer less dichotomous a perception on these identities (for example, Rouhana, 1997; Amara & Schnell, 2004). However, this debate is not the main subject matter of the following analysis, and therefore I shall not delve into the specific versions of these positions.
5 The term “minorities” was a euphemism that replaced, in official and unofficial language, the term Arabs.
6 Being myself an Israeli-Jew, it is not my intention to present here an “Arab standpoint”. Hence, my concern is with the social category of “Israeli-Arabs” and its relation to other social categories, and not with the experience of being a Palestinian citizen of Israel.
I prefer the term “non-essentialist” over “constructivist” for the latter remains somewhat misleading, as it suggests an intentional effort to manipulate ethnic identities. Employing a historical and structural perspective, I refer to these identities as being “constructed”, a term that similarly opposes an essentialist conception of ethnic identities, and yet refrains from suggesting that either their boundaries or content are the outcome of deliberate actions by social agents.

Education was based on three principles: (a) the self-definition principle which allowed for Zionist, but also non-Zionist, Jewish parents to choose the appropriate educational stream for their children; (b) the proportional principle, a derivative of the peculiar features of the Zionist political organization which determined the principle of power sharing in case of dispute (Don-Yehia, 1977, p. 481). A derivative third principle was educational autonomy. These principles served the dual basis for legitimization and political inclusion in the Zionist polity.


The interest in Arab education was not theoretical so to speak, as indicated in a letter, dated 1 December 1947 (ZA S10046–25), which was sent out to Dr Hendel, who was a member in a working team on Arab education. This letter specified the rate of school attendance amongst Arabs, and pointed out the need to expand Arab education and to train more teachers, etc. It also raised the issue of teaching Hebrew in Arab schools and Arabic in Jewish schools. One interesting proposition concerning the shortage of qualified Arab teachers was to employ Jewish teachers, which has eventually happened. This, I propose, refutes the argument that the Zionist establishment was unprepared to face the “Arab Question” after statehood (for example, Rekhess, 1990, p. 291; see also Lustick, 1980).

This term, which literally translated to kingdomship, is best understood as étatisme. It was at the time the main ideological vehicle of Ben-Gurion’s quest for determining state supremacy over the sectorial character of the pre-state Zionist polity.

This deal was designed when most of the Mizrahi newcomers were still residing in immigrant and transitory camps. Thus, those camps where the majority of the residents were Mizrahi were placed under the educational authority of the Zionist-Religious Stream (recall that this deal was reached before the stream system was abolished). In following years, it became “customary” to relegate children of non-European origin (for example, Moroccan Jews in the 1970s and Ethiopian Jews in the 1980s) to boarding schools under the control of the state religious educational system. In general, this policy only strengthened the identification of this populace as being essentially religious.

The newly founded state schools, after the 1953 State Educational Act, were thus divided between religious and non-religious tracks. The former was a de facto extension of the pre-state Zionist-Religious Stream, while the latter, which addressed primarily the urban bourgeoisie, were comprised of the formerly General Stream schools and the urban segments of the Labour Stream. The more ideological segment of the Labour Stream, the kibbutz movement, had kept its autonomy in education, and so had the Haredi Stream (Levy, 2002).

This term is a paraphrase on the term “racial thinking” and it is borrowed from Grosvenor (1997, p. 185), who uses it in the British context, where similar developments were evidenced in approximately the same time.

These changes ranged from organizational (the forming of the Department of Education and Culture for Arabs as a coordinating body within the Ministry), through political changes (the inclusion of Arabs in policy-making), to curricular. Being concerned with the conditions that brought about the state interest in these changes, I shall not elaborate on their particularities (see Al-Haj, 1995). These feelings were substantiated in a survey that depicted the changing attitudes of the Arabs in Israel regarding their identity before and after the 1967 War (Peres & Yuval-Davis, 1969).

All quotes are taken from the Peled Committee’s intermediate report (1975, p. 13). For an English translation of the goals of education, see Al-Haj (1995, p. 142). I wish to thank Prof. Yoav Peled for allowing me access to the personal files of his late father, Prof. Matti Peled.

Eventually, even the committee’s modest demands to strengthen the aspect of the Arab cultural heritage in the curriculum were not fully implemented. Immanuel Kupelevitch, who headed in the 1980s the Arab education department and was the only Jewish member in a committee on the Arab literature curriculum, recently admitted that after this committee published its conclusions, he remained doubtful
and, acting as chief inspector, ordered to remove from the anthology on Arab literature those pieces that were “on the margin of creating a bad atmosphere” (Barak, 2004).

19 One exception is the work of Shlomo Swirski (1999) who offers a critical sociological history of education of both Arabs and Jews.

20 It is beyond the scope of this article to examine this change. Suffice it to say that alongside Arab academics who offer critical assessments of the state of Arab education, the Follow-up Committee of the Arab Councils is active in issuing its own reports and policy papers on these issues.

21 Consider in this regard the recent report of the commission of inquiry into the killing of 12 Israeli-Palestinians in October 2000, and the response of the Israeli PM who claimed that “The Arab citizens of Israel are entitled to equality as a matter of right, and not mercy—and we are still far from achieving this” (“The Government Principally Approved the Or Committee’s Recommendations”, Ynet, 14 September 2003, available at http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/1,7340,L-2754956,00.html).

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From Subjects to Citizens 291


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