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Role Conflict and the Dilemma of Palestinian Teachers in Israel

IBRAHIM MAKKAWI

ABSTRACT *This paper explores the dynamics of conflicting role expectations among Palestinian teachers in Israel while focusing on the ways by which these expectations are generated and shaped by the broader sociopolitical context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its impact on the educational system. Following a brief review of the historical background and the changing role patterns among Palestinian teachers in general, the paper focuses on Palestinian education in Israel and the role of Palestinian teachers within it. The central argument is that the Israeli authorities have been systematically using formal education and the teachers' role in order to repress national identity and awareness among Palestinian students. Data from interviews with Palestinian student activists about the contribution of the formal education to their national identity is used to illustrate the dilemmas and challenges experienced by their teachers.*

Introduction

When social scientists discuss the concept of teachers' role they often limit their scope of analysis to the roles performed by teachers in the classroom or within the school as an organization. This tendency in social research overlooks the relationship between teachers' role and the broader social context, especially its relation to issues of sociopolitical conflict and change (Mazawi, 1994). The school as a social organization plays an instrumental role in the larger sociopolitical dynamics of society. Viewing education within its sociopolitical context provides a broader understanding of teachers' role expectations and role conflict beyond their classroom behaviours and interactions. The discussion of role conflict among Palestinian teachers is inherently rooted in the sociopolitical context within which they operate not only as educators but also, and most importantly, as community members and educated élite (Mari, 1978; Al-Haj, 1995).

This paper explores the dynamics of conflicting role expectations among Palestinian teachers in Israel while focusing on the ways by which these expectations are generated and shaped by the broader sociopolitical context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its impact on the educational system. The specific case of Palestinian teachers in Israel can be understood only if we view it within the broader historical context and the changing patterns of Palestinian education and subsequently changing teachers' role expectations. Following a brief review of the historical background and the changing role patterns among Palestinian teachers in general, I shall focus on Palestinian education in Israel and the role of Palestinian teachers within it.

Because of the political sensitivity of the topic, data were not gathered from Palestinian teachers in Israel. Given the politics of control the Israeli government imposes on Palestinian

Correspondence to: Ibrahim Makkawi, Department of Educational and School Psychology, School of Education, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN 47809, USA. E-mail: epmakkaw@isugw.indstate.edu

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schools, any research involving Palestinian students or teachers would have to be censored and approved by the Ministry of Education. It would have been a fruitless attempt to obtain permission from the Ministry of Education in order to interview Palestinian teachers about their role conflict with regard to Palestinian national identity. However, a larger study conducted with Palestinian student activists in the Israeli universities who graduated from these schools inquired, among other issues, about the students' perceptions of their formal education (Makkawi, 1999a).

An exploratory qualitative component of the study used in-depth interviews in which a sample of 35 Palestinian university student activists were asked about their experiences of activism. In response to an open-ended question students were asked to reflect on their own formal education and describe its contribution to the development of their sense of national identity. All the recorded interviews were simultaneously transcribed and translated into English. The transcripts were analyzed using grounded theory development techniques (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The five dominant themes that emerged form the qualitative data are discussed elsewhere (Makkawi, 1999b). Only the theme that pertains to the students' perceptions of their teachers' role and the impact their formal education has on their national identity will be discussed in order to illustrate the argument made in this paper.

Historical Background

Arab education in Palestine has never been independent from political control and manipulation by external rulers. During the British Mandate period, and more so during the Turkish rule, Palestinian education was controlled by colonizing authorities that represented dominating cultures and worldviews. The situation involving Palestinian education in Israel since 1948 is even more polarized. In the current state of affairs, Palestinian education in Israel is nothing less than political in nature. While the Palestinians try to use their educational process in order to preserve their collective-national identity and instil national pride in their youth, the Israeli authorities retain antithetical goals (Mari, 1987). The Israeli authorities have been systematically using formal education in order to repress national awareness among Palestinian students (Makkawi, 1999a). The importance of the educational system in shaping Palestinian collective consciousness led the Israeli authorities to insist on maintaining tight control over the entire educational process and its content (Graham-Brown, 1984).

During the Ottoman rule (1869–1917) public schools in Palestine were very scarce. The most common form of formal education took place in what was called *Kuttab* where learned men taught the *Quran* and math (Tibawi, 1956). Palestinian teachers at that time were perceived by society as religious leaders who also served to pass tradition from generation to generation (Mazawi, 1994). There were no signs of conflict between the Ottoman authorities and the Moslem majority of the native Palestinian community with regard to education since the two shared the same religious background. During the British Mandate over Palestine (1917–1948) more government schools were established throughout the country. Post secondary education, as a minimal requirement to hold a teaching position during the Mandate period, was mainly available to the children of the well-to-do families. Hence, Palestinian teachers at that time came from the community's leadership and political élite. This dual role allowed them to be involved in both the political and educational spheres (Nashif, 1977). Despite the fact that the Mandate authorities emphasized the 'professional and instrumental in the teacher's role' (Mazawi, 1994, p. 502), Palestinian teachers were highly active in raising Palestinian national awareness as they, along with their students, were deeply involved in political activism during the British Mandate era (Mari, 1978).

In 1948, the state of Israel was established as a result of a war leading to a mass exodus of more than two thirds of the Palestinian indigenous population. All of the Palestinian leadership and intellectual élite were expelled, leaving 160,000 leaderless people under the control of the newly established state. The sudden change in the status of the Palestinians who fell under Israel's control was so traumatic that it took them a few years to realize its impact on their collective existence. Mari (1978) describes candidly this collective trauma of becoming a Palestinian minority in Israel.

> The Arabs who remained within the boundaries of the newly created state of Israel can best be characterized as emotionally wounded, socially rural, politically lost, economically poverty-stricken and nationally hurt. They suddenly became a minority ruled by a powerful, sophisticated majority against whom they fought to retain their country and land. It was an agonizing experience, for every family which remained had immediate relatives on the other side of the border. Arabs in Israel were left without political leadership and an educated élite (p. 18).

Almost overnight, these Palestinians were transformed from a majority living in their own country to a minority that was forced to live, work and study in an alien system, which was imposed on them. Under such circumstances, existence and physical survival had become the main concern for the Palestinians in Israel. Despite its traditional and conservative outlook, the Palestinian leadership before 1948 was able to provide some form of direction and hope to the community. Now that this leadership was gone, the Palestinians who remained in Israel were totally disoriented. The community was not only lacking any kind of national leadership, but the potential to develop such a leadership did not even exist during the first decade of the existence of the state of Israel (Ashkenasi, 1992).

Changing Patterns Among Palestinian Teachers

Since the Palestinian *Nakbah* (or catastrophe) of 1948 and the subsequent disposition of the Palestinian society, changes in their various educational systems have ultimately led to changes in the expectations associated with the teachers' role in the new social contexts. Generally speaking, we can identify four different patterns among Palestinian teachers since 1948. The first category includes Palestinian teachers working in the Arab World. Lacking an independent system of their own, exiled educated Palestinians in the Middle East were in high demand for employment especially in the Arab Gulf States. These teachers could be described as professionals who used their educational achievements and credentials as channels for occupational mobility and personal progress (Mazawi, 1994).

Second, Palestinian teachers in the West Bank and Gaza both under the Jordanian control (1948–1967) and the Israeli occupation since 1967 are perceived as agents of cultural nationalism and intellectual leadership of the resistance. Rather than fighting for their own professional benefits, these Palestinian teachers have been active through their writings, organizations, strikes and demonstrations to contribute to the Palestinian national cause (Mari, 1978). Since the outbreak of the Palestinian *Intifada* in the West Bank and Gaza in 1987 education has become one of the major areas for direct confrontation between the Israeli military authorities and the Palestinian community. With prolonged periods of closure of schools and universities by the military authorities, Palestinian education during the *Intifada* went underground. Palestinian teachers in the West Bank and Gaza have played a key role in the popular resistance, as they 'constituted an assisting force in the organization of uninstitutionalised (and militarily declared illegal) educational activities, in conditions of widespread popular resistance' (Mazawi, 1994, p. 507).

Since its establishment in 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) assumed responsibility for the Palestinian population in the refugee camps in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon and provided their communities with a variety of services such as education, health and welfare. A third category of Palestinian teachers working in the PLO-run schools are perceived as militant agents for national liberation. They perceive education as a 'politically empowering factor, axiomatically linked to the pupils' Palestinian Arab identity, the anti-Zionist struggle and the politico-territorial dimension of the Israeli-Arab conflict' (Mazawi, 1994, p. 507).

In all of the situations mentioned above, one can find some degree of consistency between the teacher's national identity as a Palestinian, and his or her role as an educator. Educating Palestinian students with emphasis on their national identity have been perceived as a central role expectation among Palestinian teachers in these various situations. Contrary to this, Palestinian teachers in Israel who teach Palestinian students, and who are employed by the Israeli government face an alienating set of role expectations. This pattern of role conflict among Palestinian teachers in Israel will be explored in more detail.

Palestinian Education and Teachers' Role in Israel

The functionalist approach maintains that one of the main roles of education is to pass on traditions and cultural values to the younger generation. The irony in this approach is that education has been involved in perpetuating existing structures and distributions of power and privilege in society. As such, educational institutions are enforcing traditions rather than promoting social change (Mari, 1978). Contrary to this, there appears to be a strong relationship between education and social change (Nakhleh, 1979). The conflict perspective of education asserts that the dominant group relies on the formal educational system for purposes of control and domination over the minority groups in society.

The conflict approach provides better insight into the education of the Palestinian national minority in Israel, where a discrepancy between the national goals of the majority and the minority groups prevails. In his critical review of the 'reproduction' theories, Giroux (1983) points out their limitations by overemphasizing the idea of 'domination' and consequently neglecting the importance of the 'human agent' in resisting this domination. The active resistance to the 'Israelization' process by Palestinian students is the core issue in creating the role conflict experienced by their teachers who are expected to serve the interests of their employer, the Israeli government. In addition, the teachers' own nationalistic awareness as Palestinians and their desire to reinforce this sentiment among their students, adds more complications to their psychological turmoil when they are directly instructed by their employer to suppress this national identity among their students altogether. Being caught between the rock and a hard place increases their role tensions and affects their effectiveness as educators.

While Israel declares itself a western democracy, one can find that its policy towards the education of its Palestinian citizens is characterized by systematic discrimination, oppression and cultural impoverishment. Uri Lubrani, the former Advisor to the Prime Minister for Arab Affairs, has vigorously formulated this policy. A statement made by Lubrani more than two decades ago regarding Palestinian education captures the essence of the Israeli policy of hegemony towards them.

> If there were no pupils the situation would be better and more stable. If the Arabs remained hewers of wood it might be easier for us to control them. But there are certain things that are beyond our control. This is unavoidable. All we can do is to

> place our advice on record and suggest how the problems are to be dealt with. (Abed Elrazik *et al.*, 1977, p. 96)

Lubrani's recommendations and the consequential discriminatory policies of his government are reflected in the relative disadvantaged situation of the Palestinian educational system on all levels. Neglect and poor investment in Palestinian education is a well-known practice of the Israeli Ministry of Education. When there is any attempt to improve the situation it is always past, rather than future oriented (Mari, 1985). In this manner, the system will respond only when a severe crisis situation is caused by accumulated negligence rather than develop a strategic plan for improvement and development of the Palestinian educational system.

This state of relative deprivation in the domain of education among the Palestinians in Israel when compared to the Israeli Jewish population can also be understood in light of the magnificent educational achievements of the rest of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Diaspora. Being subjected to a series of political, economic, and social crises stemming from their uprooting and dispersion, the Palestinian people placed a great emphasis on the value of education (Graham-Brown, 1984). If for whatever reason they were forced to move again, education would be the only thing they can easily carry with them to their new destination. For the majority of them, education has been a means of survival, for only through their educational training and skills were they able to obtain jobs in their host countries. In his description of the Palestinians' achievement in the field of education, Anabtawi (1986) writes that:

> Whatever adversary, passions or judgment the subject of the Palestinians may provoke, there seems to be a near universal consensus that their achievement in the area of education has been nothing short of impressive. Indeed, it is perhaps the only tangible Palestinian accomplishment on which friend and foe alike would agree is worthy of recognition and acclaim. (p. 5)

It is evident that the Palestinians' aspiration for education is consequential to their situation as a people who were deprived of their right for independence and self- determination. The Palestinians in Israel were subject to all of these experiences, and their longing for educational achievement is no less than the rest of their brethren. But their low achievement in this area sets them apart from the rest of the Palestinian people. One can only attribute this huge difference to their direct control by the Israeli political system (Al-Haj, 1995).

Time and again, Israel compliments itself for the relatively high level of educational achievement among its Palestinian citizens. This is true when they are compared to people in some of the neighbouring Arab states or to their own situation in Palestine before 1948 (Zureik, 1979). But this comparison is essentially invalid and lacks merit. Instead, two more pertinent comparisons regarding the educational achievements of this group of Palestinians need to be conducted. First, we should compare the educational achievements of the Palestinians in Israel to that of the Israeli Jewish population. It is the Jewish population in Israel who, in terms of occupational and educational attainment, is considered to be a reference point for them. Second, if we carry out the comparison cross-nationally, it should be between the Palestinians in Israel and the Palestinians in Diaspora (Zureik, 1979). Both Israel's Jewish population and the Palestinians in Diaspora have better educational opportunities than the Palestinians in Israel.

Education in heterogeneous societies is used in order to create a shared collective identity that encompasses the various groups while maintaining their cultural differences (Banks, 1994). This is true when both the majority and minority groups can identify with the national and ideological goals of the state. When we have a state that was explicitly established to serve the collective needs of one ethnic group, and in the process colonized and

fragmented the indigenous people, education becomes a source of conflict rather than a nation-building institution. Neither Israel nor its Palestinian citizens adhere to full integration of the Palestinian community into the state's national goals. Israel, as a Jewish state cannot offer the Palestinians a full and genuine partnership (Rouhana, 1997). Due to the exclusive nature of the state's Zionist ideology, its Palestinian citizens cannot be considered full Israelis. Under these circumstances, the government carefully manipulates their educational system and its goals, aiming to create a quiescent and politically impotent minority group with no history and national roots to identify with (Makkawi, 1999a).

During the early years of the state's existence, Israeli curriculum planners for the Palestinian schools had to deal with a critical dilemma regarding the goals of Palestinian education. Mr Y. L. Benor, one of the planners, posed the critical question of 'how can we encourage loyalty to Israel among Israeli Arabs without demanding a negation of Arab yearning on the one hand, and without permitting the development of hostile Arab nationalism on the other?' (Peres *et al.*, 1970 p. 148). Based on this dilemma the Israeli curriculum planners struggled with the questions, 'to what extent does it help the young Israeli of Arab origin to see his path clearly and mould his own identity in a way which maintains a reasonable balance in his Arab nationalism and loyalty to the state in which he lives?' (Nakhleh, 1977, p. 30).

This particular aspect of Palestinian education resembles the essence of their political status in the state of Israel, especially the conflict over their collective national identity. In a critical assessment of these educational goals, Nakhleh (1977), argues that 'however ambiguous these criteria are, explicitly they are very political in nature. "Arab nationalism," "identity," etc. were to be defined by Jewish Israeli planners, whose existence was in negation of these concepts!' (p. 30). Because of the conflictive nature of Palestinian education in Israel and the difficulty of defining educational goals that will satisfy both the Palestinian community and the state, official policy in this regard seems to have been to suspend making decisions (Landau, 1993).

Failing to define formal goals for Palestinian education did not prevent the Israeli political system from striving to empty it from its cultural and national content. According to Mari (1987), the de facto goals of Palestinian education in Israel set by the government are threefold: 'to instil feelings of self-disparagement and inferiority in Arab youth; to de-nationalize them, and particularly to de-Palestinize them; and to teach them to glorify the history, culture, and achievements of the Jewish majority' (p. 37). Given the choice, the Palestinians would assign the exact opposite goals for their educational system. They would expect the educational system to 'preserve and reinforce Arab national identity — particularly their Palestinian identity — and to instil pride in their own culture, heritage, and nationality; and if it were up to them, the education of their youth would engage in condemning Zionism, rather than praising and glorifying it' (Mari, 1987, p. 37).

A critical study comparing the Palestinian and Jewish school curricula in Israel was conducted by a group of Israeli researchers (Peres *et al.*, 1970). The authors compared the stated educational goals of both groups in four different subject matters: history, literature and language, religious studies, and civic studies. These subjects were selected because they relate to the field of 'instiling values'. The researchers chose secondary school for a comparative study because it is in this level that 'education makes it possible to deal with social, historical, and political problems in a mature and complete way' (p. 149). The results of the study show a strong evidence that the Israeli educational policy for the Palestinians aims at nothing less than stripping them of their Palestinian national identity. The researchers conclude that 'whereas the Arabs are required to take an example from the great men of

TABLE I Educational goals for teaching history in Jewish and Arab schools in Israel

History in Jewish schools	History in Arab schools
1. To regard the culture of mankind as the result of the combined efforts of the Jewish people and the nations of the world:	1. To regard the culture of mankind as the result of the combined effort of the nations of the world:
(a) to evaluate our share in creating it;	(a) to evaluate the part played by the Jewish and Arab nations and by other nations in creating it;
(b) to strengthen the recognition of human cooperation;	(b) same.
(c) to develop aspiration for peace and good will.	(c) same.
2. To implant a Jewish national consciousness, and strengthen the feeling of a common Jewish destiny: (a) to sow in their (the students') hearts a love of the Jewish people—throughout the world; (b) to strengthen their spiritual lives with the nation as a whole.	2. No parallel paragraph.
3. To instil the importance of the State of Israel as the means of ensuring the biological and historical existence of the Jewish people:	3. To instil the importance of the State of Israel for the Jewish people throughout the ages, and to implant a feeling of the common fate of the two peoples:
(a) to develop personal responsibility for the development of the State;	(a) same.
(b) to import the readiness to serve the State in all ways.	(b) same.
4. To mould the character of the pupils after the deeds of the great men of our people and of the peoples of the world.	4. To mould the character of pupils after the deeds of the great men of the world, and in particular the Jews and Arabs.
5. To train and accustom him to deliberate and come to conclusions when dealing with problems of society, and to try to solve them through independent critical thought.	5. Same.

Israel, the great figures of the Arab world are not deemed worthy of special attention in the Jewish curriculum, but lumped together with the world's great men' (p. 150).

The same formal goals for teaching history in Arab and Jewish schools in Israel were cited by Al-Haj (1995, pp. 129–130), more than twenty-five years later, in order to point out the consistency in Israel's hegemony over Palestinian education. The peculiar differences between the goals of teaching history for the two groups, which are presented in Table I, speak for themselves.

The dominant theme that runs across these different types of educational goals indicates that Israel, as a Jewish state, is concerned first and foremost with the collective-national identity of its Jewish student population. On the other hand, Palestinian students are not only deprived of this essential national education, but they are taught to respect and glorify the national experience of the Jewish students as the legitimate owners of the state in which they both live. Despite all this, Jewish students in Israel are not required to study Palestinian history and culture. What such a curriculum does to Palestinian teachers is nothing less than frustration and bitterness. The students, however, having to learn and identify with such content become antagonistic to the school, the teachers and the subject matter. Consequently, the students' motivation to study and their overall level of achievement decline.

In a larger study I conducted with Palestinian student activists in the Israeli universities (Makkawi, 1999a), participants responded to a question about the importance of their high school education, family, community organization and the Palestinian Student Movement to the development of their national awareness. The majority said that their high school education was not relevant (59.9%), their family was very important (48.2%), community organizations somewhat important (45.5%), and the Student Movement was somewhat important (43.9%). Obviously, building national character and cultural socialization as one of the main roles of the formal educational system, especially at secondary level, is lacking in the experience of Palestinian students in Israel.

Mari (1987) identifies a 'deep conflict of interests between the state educational system and the cultural, economic, and national needs of the Arab minority as these needs are met by education' (p. 35). The interests of the two groups in the field of education are incompatible with each other. Moreover, the relationship is between one powerful and one powerless group, with the state of Israel having the upper hand. Under this asymmetrical power structure—in which all educational institutions in Israel, from pre-school to university, are run by the government — 'it was evident that the priorities of the Zionist state would determine how Palestinians should be educated' (Graham-Brown, 1984, p. 41). Demands for improvement in the educational system of the Palestinians in Israel and its goals have been repeatedly expressed by the Palestinian leadership organizations. However, these demands have never exceeded the mere political protest within the Israeli political system and according to the rules of protest defined by the system itself.

The conflict between the state of Israel and its Palestinian citizens is a specific type of inter-group conflict, which takes place between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' (Deutsch, 1973). Most pertinent to the case under discussion is Deutsch's analysis of the reasons 'why class conflict did not develop into the intensely competitive process predicted by Marx's theory?' (p. 95). Similarly, the conflict between the Israeli political system and the Palestinian population over education has never developed into direct confrontation and competition. As Deutsch (1973) predicts, the group in power prevents the conflict from intense competition by employing a variety of defence mechanisms. Two of these defence mechanisms are useful to the understanding of Palestinian education in Israel. First, there is *tokenism*, which attempts to appease the frustrated group by providing it with token benefits and gains. It is true that Palestinian education has improved under the Israeli political system in comparison to their conditions before 1948, but the Palestinians are comparing their situation to that of the Israeli Jews as a relevant out-group. In this sense, the state of relative deprivation continues to set the two groups apart especially in the field of education. Second, there is *sublimation*, which is the attempt to find a substitute solution rather than treating the roots of the problem. In this manner, the Israeli government provides more facilities for the Palestinian schools rather than giving them control over their educational system and its goals.

In describing the conflict over Palestinian education in Israel, Nakhleh (1979) argues that, 'like any other system of values, the educational system is a highly manipulatable tool which can be used by those in control to instil the desirable goals' (p. 10). The situation becomes potentially conflictive when these goals are in contradiction with the collective needs and aspirations of the dominated group. As Nakhleh (1979) further maintains, the 'dominated minorities also tend to manipulate the educational system for their own goals. But to have control over it, that is to have it guided by the consciousness of the dominated minority, demands revolutionary action' (p. 11). Put differently, any change in the Palestinian educational system with regard to their national aspirations would have to come from their own initiative not the dominant majority.

Nakhleh (1980) argues that the palastinians in Israil need to creat what he calls 'Liberation-Prone Mentality, [a] consciousness that is created over time, and manifested in daily behavior' (p. 9). This is a call for a cultural revolution in which the conservative aspects of the Palestinian society must be changed from within in order to withstand Zionist oppression and exploitation. In order to create this type of mentality, Nakhleh (1980), further illuminates the essential role of the educational system in such a process: 'we simply need to have full control over our educational processes, from pre-school nurseries to the university. Our educational goals cannot be attained by restricting our demands to an addition of classroom here and a laboratory there' (p. 13).

Until the late 1970s celebrations of Israel's Independence Day were ironically observed in all Palestinian schools in Israel where students and their teachers reluctantly spent days preparing for the event. Needless to say that Palestinian teachers, 'felt humiliated by these ceremonies, not because they had them imposed on them, but because they hardly reflected their feelings' (Al-Haj, 1995, p. 180). Palestinians generally refer to the day in which Israel was established as *Al-Nakbah*, simply because it is the day on which they lost their homeland and freedom.

Palestinian teachers in Israel are caught between these two inherently conflicting expectations from the educational system. While Palestinian teachers in the West Bank and Gaza still sustain their roles as community leaders, their counterparts in Israel became politically ineffective. Because of the high level of their 'job dependency', especially as government employees, Palestinian teachers in Israel refrain from political activism. In describing this quiescent Palestinian intellectual group, Mari (1978) writes: 'Although they are politically aware and sensitive, especially to matters related to education and politics, teachers have lost much of their traditional role as community leaders and are not involved in political activism, at least not as a group' (p. 27). This is indeed one of the major compromises made by the Palestinian teachers in exchange for accepting teaching as a career. In this sense, the formal educational system for the Palestinians in Israel is used as a means for political manipulation Israeli, control and co-optation of the Palestinian educated élite (Nakhleh, 1979; Lustick, 1980).

Leaders of the Israeli educational system, as a government institution are well aware of the political impact that Palestinian teachers may have on their students. Given the choice, they will educate for Palestinian nationalism and nurture the Palestinian national identity of their students rather than blur it. Therefore, as far as Palestinian teachers are concerned, 'in most cases, political rather than pedagogic criteria are considered paramount in hiring and firing' (Nakhleh, 1977, p. 33). This entire process becomes evident in the sense that 'Arab collaborators and "yes men" are shown preference by the educational authorities' (Mari, 1987, p. 37). Consequently, the students, their parents and the community at large became distrustful towards the teachers and perceived them as government agents, at least as far as the nationalistic component of their role is concerned. According to Mari (1978), this attitude is influenced by a number of factors: 'the teachers are employees of an official state institution [they] are among the principal agents of modernization [and] many teachers are politically active in the various parties, particularly the majority Israeli parties' (p. 33). Ironically, while the involvement of Palestinian teachers in the Israeli Zionist parties is acceptable and even encouraged by the government, their mere association with the Palestinian nationalist parties may damage their career.

The two types of institutions open to Palestinian students seeking higher education in Israel are the universities, where integration between Palestinians and Jews prevails; and separate Arab Teachers' Training Institutions. While Palestinian students at the universities take advantage of the political freedom on campus in order to explore and express their

political views and nationalistic consciousness, the Teacher's Training Institutions are lacking such a political atmosphere (Mari, 1979). Apparently, since the main goal of the latter institutions is to train Palestinian teachers, the authorities find this situation more conducive to maintain hegemony over them and prepare the future Palestinian teachers for a system-serving role. In the university, on the other hand, it is more difficult to apply double standards of democracy for the Jewish and the Palestinian students.

In high school, where the students are ready for identity development and more receptive to the political and nationalistic content of the subject matter, the majority of the Palestinian teachers are university graduates. These teachers presumably were mostly active or exposed to varying degrees of political activism during their higher education. On average, they are more politically aware than their counterparts graduating from the Teachers' Training Institutions. In fact, university students are assumed to be more politically aware and nationally conscious than the rest of the population (Makkawi, 1999a). Since the teacher's role is clearly defined by the status quo, we have a situation in which the most nationally aware members of the Palestinian population are expected to educate their students for loyalty to the state of Israel and the denial of their own national identity.

The role of the Palestinian teacher in Israel is ambiguous and embodies conflicting expectations. The major role-conflict for them is political in nature. They constantly struggle with conflicting expectations from their own community on one hand, and their employer, the government on the other. There are only two roles in the classroom; one is the teacher's role and the other is the students'. The interaction between the students and the teacher is essential in order for the educational process to be productive. Johnson (1970), states that 'in order for the students to function effectively in their roles, the teacher's expectations must be clearly communicated, the students must be motivated to accept the expectations as legitimate and as something they wish to conform to' (p. 49). The teachers need to be clear about their role expectations before they can communicate these expectations to their students. Inconsistency in the teacher's role expectations has a negative impact on the students' motivation and behaviour. But how can Palestinian teachers be clear in their communication with their students when they themselves are not convinced about what cultural and social identifications are allowed?

This plight is specific to the role of the Palestinian teacher employed by the Israeli government. In fact all teachers in Israel, both Jewish and Palestinians, are government employees and, therefore, are expected to legitimize and maintain the status quo. In the case of the Jewish teachers, the expectations of their employer and their community are compatible with one another. They are expected to educate their students for loyalty to the state of Israel and foster Jewish identity. In contrast, Palestinian teachers, who are employed by the same government, and who teach Palestinian students, are exposed to conflicting expectations. Mari (1978) argues that the Palestinian teachers continuously deal with role-conflict in their job, especially with the political-national aspects of the teacher's role, as a 'nationalist force attracts them and assumes that they will emphasize the nationalist aspects in teaching the young generation, and a second force emphasizes good and loyal citizenship towards the state in which they live as citizens' (p. 37). At first glance it seems as if these two tendencies are mutually attractive, hence the teacher is in conflict when having to choose between them. However, we must keep in mind that Palestinians in Israel belong to the state only in the instrumental sense whereas sentimentally and emotionally they are attached to the Palestinian people (Rouhana, 1997). A young Palestinian teacher was quoted by Grossman (1992), illustrating the heart of the conflicting role expectations in particularly in relation to the Palestinian flag as a national symbol.

> I belong to the state of Israel only in the geographical sense. According to an agreement they imposed on me. I am an employee of the Ministry of Education. Receive a salary. Live here. But in the spirit, in the soul, I belong to the Palestinian people. So you tell me how I can educate children in these circumstances. A simple example — I've run into a lot of students here who draw, let's say, a Palestinian flag. Now I've got to tell the student that this is forbidden. But the student will consider me a traitor. And maybe I'll also feel that I'm a traitor. But if I show any approval of his drawing maybe they'll fire me, or summon me for an investigation. So what do I do? I don't tell him anything. I pretend that I don't notice. (Grossman, 1992, p. 50)

To pretend that they did not notice their students' work does not release Palestinian teachers from their role responsibilities and role conflict. Their frustration continues to determine the ambiguous messages they convey to their students. Consequently, the students lose trust in their teachers as social models with whom they can identify. The Palestinian flag by itself in this scenario means nothing, unless we consider its sociopolitical context. National identity, political experience, and context then come into play, which give the flag meaning beyond itself—it becomes a symbolic sign. The flag is considered an icon of something more than itself—it stands to represent a nation and a homeland (Palestine), or a sense of national identity and pride. According to the principle of relativity, the Israeli authorities view the Palestinian flag as something to be feared, as a threatening icon, while the Palestinians see the opposite side. The teachers, having to display an outward act of 'disapproval' toward their students, who are aligning themselves with the flag, are caught in an act of cognitive dissonance.

Palestinian Students Reflect on their Formal Education and Teachers

Findings about the students' perceptions of the formal educational system illustrate the dilemma of role conflict inherent in the role of Palestinian teachers in Israel. As citizens of the state of Israel, Palestinian students perceived that their collective group, the Arab-Palestinians in Israel, when compared to the Jewish majority group was experiencing institutionalized discrimination, inequality and an overall state of relative deprivation (Walker & Pettigrew, 1984). This cognitive perception of relative deprivation was associated with feelings of injustice, anger and frustration, which in turn led to their involvement in political action on behalf of the interests of their group.

The most pressing domain of group relative deprivation for these Palestinian students was the repression of their national identity and culture through their formal education. Student activists who graduated from public schools (the majority) were very critical of their formal educational system for alienating them from their national and cultural identity. Being controlled by the Israeli government, the Palestinian formal educational system was perceived as an instrument of domination and control. Palestinian teachers as role models who represent the school and its social, educational and political goals to the students, were perceived as 'system servants'.

A female student activist attending Ben-Gurion University had this to say about 'testing' the political limitations of her high school English teacher:

> I realized that our teachers were politically limited but I was not willing to accept that. I used to challenge them and point out their fears about their jobs. We had a new English teacher when I was in tenth grade. I wanted to test his limitations so I asked him what the acronym PLO means. He told me to 'get out of the class.' I

> told him 'if you don't know what it means I can write it for you on the board.' He forced me out of the class. I went back and told my classmates 'why are you still sitting in his class if he does not know what PLO means?' They all came out with me. Then I was dismissed from school for that.

Private schools, being the exception rather than the rule, provide more nationalistic education for their Palestinian students. There are only three of these schools, which are not controlled by the Ministry of Education, serving the Palestinian community in the whole country. These schools have somewhat more freedom to address the nationalist needs of their Palestinian students. Consider a male student activist from Tel-Aviv University who is a graduate of one of these schools:

> What usually prevailed in my school was that we were allowed to think and debate issues. As part of the discussions we were exposed to lots of information that was not part of the formal curriculum. We used to study this information as part of the social awareness period. For example, there was an activity in which we had to read about the history of Palestine, which was not in the history books. Our school believed in this role in order to bridge the gap that existed in the formal curriculum; a gap from which we have been suffering for so long.

In contrast, there was a strong feeling of resentment toward the biased curriculum taught in Palestinian public schools. Participants who graduated from public schools in Israel compared their own educational system and its relevance to their national identity, to that of the Jewish students. Not only that, but they were frustrated with the fact that they have to study Jewish history instead of their own. A female student activist attending Haifa University says:

> Everything we study is about the Jews. Everything is Jewish culture. We study Bialik and Rachel. Why do I have to study them? Why don't they teach me Mahmud Darwish? Why don't they teach me Nizar Qabbani? Why don't they teach me Edward Said? Why don't they teach me about Arab philosophers and Palestinian poets? I know that my Arabic language is not very strong, because I know if I don't speak fluent Hebrew I can't function in this country. Without Hebrew I can't get on the bus and go to the grocery store, especially because I live in a mixed city like Haifa. I know that Arabic language in Palestine is endangered. Schools, not individually, but the educational system as a whole has a very negative impact on our identity. The whole world now recognizes the existence of Palestine and that there is something called Palestinian people. So why are they still teaching me about Bialik and Rachel? What is the problem in teaching us Palestinian history? The problem is that they are afraid. They don't want us, Arab-Palestinians, to develop an awareness of our national identity.

Another male student activist attending the Hebrew University reflects on his experience working with younger Palestinian students. He points out the political contamination of the curriculum even in the lower grades.

> Our schools today are in a very bad shape. They are infusing the curriculum of the lower grades with material that intends to enhance the Israelization of the Palestinian students in this country. They try to turn things upside down. The students hear one thing about their political reality in their families and when they come to school they study it in a different way. This puts the students in conflict. They don't know what their real identity is; is it what they study in the school or what they see at home?

What does that mean to Palestinian students today? Growing up in a family or a community that fosters the development of their Palestinian national identity and attending schools that work against such an identity is a frustrating experience. Unless the formal educational system for the Palestinians in Israel adjusts itself so that the students experience some consistency between their 'home culture' and 'school culture' it will continue to alienate them and their teachers. Obviously, the gap between the 'home culture' and the 'school culture' with reference to the Palestinian students' national identity is increasing rather than decreasing.

This gap does not only affect negatively the students' identification with the school and their teachers, but also increases the lack of trust and cooperation between the school and the community. Being caught between these two conflicting social systems, the students lose trust in their schools and teachers altogether. Consequently, their motivation for achievement and opportunities for success drop sharply. Unless the school system begins to respond to the collective-national needs of its Palestinian students—not only improve the conditions of the buildings and facilities—this vicious cycle of chronic failure of the educational system will continue.

Conclusion

Role conflict among Palestinian teachers in Israel is political and cannot be understood out of the sociopolitical context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Only when a comprehensive and just settlement to the conflict, which will also take into account the national and political needs of the Palestinian national minority in Israel, can be reached can we begin understanding the enigma of Palestinian teachers caught between the rock and hard place.

However, there is an indication that 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. The students, more so than their teachers, bring Palestinian nationalistic context to the classroom. Since their role prevents them from openly dealing with such a content, 'via hints, smiles, gestures, intonations, and other means, teachers make clear their real attitude toward the imposed content of the courses they teach' (Mari, 1987, p. 38).

True changes in the goals of Palestinian education in a way that restores to them their national identity are not feasible under the current state of political affairs. There is no sign of possible solution to the conflict over these goals within the formal educational system. Since the Palestinians in Israel realized their lack of ability to impact on their formal educational system, they turned to their own non-formal education organizations to foster national identity and cultural pride in their youth. As the non-formal educational organizations make progress in their contribution to Palestinian national awareness, the pressure on the formal educational system and teachers to meet these new standards has increased. In continuing to ignore these political developments in the community, the formal educational system is doomed to an ultimate failure.

It is an ironic contradiction in social research that the target population of this paper, Palestinian teachers in Israel, could not participate unless the study has been censored and modified by the Israeli authorities. Future research must find alternative ways to interview Palestinian teachers without exposing them to undue harm while insisting on exploring the difficult questions regarding their role conflict. It is imperative to explore Palestinian teachers' own views and perceptions of the ways by which they make sense of their conflicting role expectations, and keep balance between the formal demands of their job and their own nationalistic consciousness as Palestinians.

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