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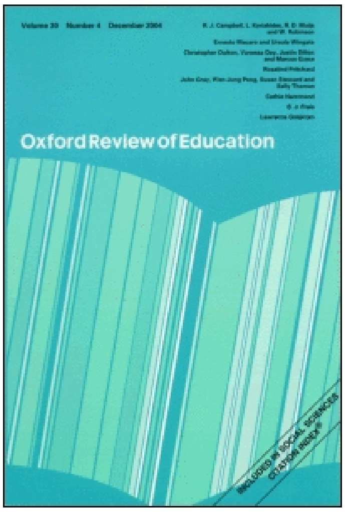

Oxford Review of Education
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713440173

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First Published:July2007

To cite this Article Pinson, Halleli(2007)'At the boundaries of citizenship: Palestinian Israeli citizens and the civic education curriculum',Oxford Review of Education,33:3,331 — 348

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/03054980701366256

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03054980701366256

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Oxford Review of Education
Vol. 33, No. 3, July 2007, pp. 331–348

At the boundaries of citizenship: Palestinian Israeli citizens and the civic education curriculum

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Education in Israel is often described as caught between two ends: state-formation and nation-building. In the last decade civic education in Israel has been undergoing some changes. The civic compulsory curriculum for state high schools was unified across all educational sectors in Israel with the aim of creating a more inclusive, universal civic curriculum that would be used as a platform for creating a common civic culture. The tension between state-formation and nation-building, between universalism and particularism, thus, has become even more prominent where civic education is concerned. To a significant extent, civic education in Israel is one place where contesting messages about the meaning of membership in the Israeli collective are negotiated and debated. This paper explores the tensions between inclusion and exclusion and between universalism and particularism as they emerge from the official civic education curriculum in Israel. It does so by examining the representations and positions of the Palestinian citizens in the official discourse of civic education. The analysis suggests that civic education in Israel at best represents an ambivalent stance that is caught in the tension between inclusion and exclusion. But more often than not, it still reproduces the marginal position of the Palestinian minority in Israeli society. In light of this, this paper concludes by discussing the possible implications these dual messages might have for Palestinian students.

Introduction

> Democracy is not just to write in citizenship textbooks that democracy is the rule of the people and that people should be free to express their feelings […] democracy is [judged] in action. Then the democracy really reveals itself. If the state allows and the law allows the people to express their feelings then it is really a democracy. (Rabiaa, a Palestinian Israeli high school student, April 2001)

Like many other countries (Derricott, 1998), Israel has relatively recently revised its civic curriculum. Against the backdrop of growing conflicts and expressions of

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ISSN 0305-4985 (print)/ISSN 1465-3915 (online)/07/030331–18
© 2007 Taylor & Francis
DOI: 10.1080/03054980701366256

political intolerance in Israeli society and concerns about its democratic character, the Ministry of Education published in 1994 revised curriculum guidance for civic education (Ministry of Education, 1994). This guidance was set to offer a more inclusive citizenship education curriculum that would stress ideas such as pluralistic and democratic citizenship and balance between universalistic and particularistic values (Ichilov, 1999). Six years later the official textbook *To be citizens in Israel: A Jewish and democratic state* (Ministry of Education, 2000b)—henceforth *To Be Citizens*—was published, and the curriculum was implemented first in September 2000 in Jewish schools (Ministry of Education, 2000a) and then in September 2001 in Arab schools (Ministry of Education, 2001).[1] The main innovation of this guidance was the recommendation to create, for the first time, one unified curriculum for all state high schools[2] with the aim of using civic education to promote a common Israeli civil identity.

Schools and education systems in general play a significant role in shaping and reshaping collective identities. In particular the designing and implementation of curriculum guidance and teaching materials is often where processes of constructing and reconstructing collective identities and narratives take place. In this sense, the Israeli citizenship curriculum, and especially the changes it has undergone in recent years, should be seen as an attempt to define the notion of Israeli citizenship and the meanings of 'being Israeli' that should underpin civic education in Israel. Popkewitz and Brennan (1998, p. 13) also argue that 'curriculum changes were a part of visioning/re-visioning of social commitment'. Indeed what we should ask ourselves is: does the unification of the civic curriculum and its new aims, as defined by the 1994 curriculum guidance, present a 're-visioning' of social commitment—does it constitute a re-visioning of the notion of Israeli civic identity?

This paper sets out to explore the extent to which contemporary official discourses of civic education in Israel present a re-envisioning of Israeli citizenship and membership in the collective it denotes. The purpose of this paper is to capture the *politics of citizenship*: 'The issue around membership—who does and who does not belong' (Hall & Held, 1990, p. 175) as it is translated into civic education. In particular, this paper focuses on the tensions between inclusionary and exclusionary practices, between universal and particular definitions of Israeli citizenship as they emerge from the ways in which the official civic education curriculum in Israel construct the belonging to the Israeli collective and the position of the Palestinian minority in relation to it.

The study

This paper draws on the analysis of the Hebrew version of the official textbook, and interviews with 13 officials in the Ministry of Education.[3] The officials interviewed for this study were involved in various aspects of designing and implementing the current civic curriculum and included: the three supervisors for civic education (in the general schools, religious and Arab state schools) who together with the head of the curriculum division for civic education, acting also as chief editor of the textbook, hold the main responsibility for implementing the Ministry of Education's policy of civic education; a member of the civic education curriculum committee; eight consultants—experienced teachers who were chosen to guide teachers in implementing the new curriculum[4] (two of whom were also involved in the process of producing the official textbook). Out of the 13 officials six were secular Jews, four were national-religious and three were Arab-Palestinians. Criterion and snowball (chain) sampling methods (Patton, 2002) were implemented in obtaining the interviews, using the supervisor for the general sector as a key informant. The purpose behind the sample of interviewees was to gain as wide a perspective as possible on the making and implementation of the current curriculum from the different stakeholders involved in the process. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with all 13 officials between April and August 2001 and lasted between 1.5 hours to 2.5 hours. The interviews were set to explore how the officials perceive the meaning of Israeli citizenship as underpinning the current curriculum and the challenges emerging from it. The following themes were addressed: the priorities and aims of the civic curriculum; the challenges emerging from it; the definition of Israeli citizenship; the ways in which universalistic and particularistic values are played out; the difference between the old and the new curriculum; and the pedagogical approach underpinning the curriculum.

In order to capture the 'politics of citizenship' as it emerges from the official civic curriculum, both the interviews and the textbook were discursively analysed taking into account different layers of the text—content, form, language, processes of communication, and context (Gee *et al.*, 1992; Fairclough, 1995). The analysis was conducted in three phases:

1) The textbook and the interviews transcriptions were read ascertaining the central themes that emerged: definitions of Israeli citizenship and Israeli society; links between citizenship and nationality; status and representation of minorities; and universalistic and particularistic values.
2) The texts were re-read marking the themes in the text. At this stage the interviews were analysed using the Atlas.ti computer package for analysing qualitative data. The software was used as a facilitating tool to manage a large amount of data rather than as an analytical tool.
3) Analysis of content, form, usage of language, context and relationship between themes was conducted.

A complementary simple content analysis of the textbook was then carried out. The textbook was systematically read for the occurrence of different types of external sources integrated into the textbook. Excluding sources where the author/speaker was not Israeli or sources drawn from official state documents, the frequency of Jewish and Arab authorship of the external sources was recorded, as well as the number of times the textbook uses Muslim, Christian and Jewish religious sources.

Finally, some of the arguments set out in this paper are also supported using quotations taken from in-depth interviews and focus groups with 11th-grade high school students in an Arab school case study, conducted as part of a wider project into the formation of political identities by young people in Israel that took place during 2001 (Pinson, 2004).[5]

The paper is divided into four parts. The first two sections critically examine the status of the Palestinian citizens in Israel and the Arab education system, respectively. The third section introduces the central argument of this paper by exploring tensions between practices of inclusion and exclusion as they emerge from the analysis of the position of the Palestinian citizens in civic education in Israel. The concluding section of this paper raises some questions and doubts about the project of unifying the civic curriculum and the messages emerging from it.

Israeli citizenship, the Palestinian minority and their identities

Israel is a deeply divided and conflict-ridden society. These characteristics make the task of educating its future citizens a very challenging one (Tatar, 2004; Ichilov, 2005). The definition of Israel as both a Jewish nation-state and a democracy poses yet another challenge to the development of an inclusive democratic citizenship education. This definition means that boundaries of the Israeli collective are determined first and foremost in terms of membership in an ethno-national group rather than according to universal civil criteria. Shafir and Peled (2002) suggest that the political culture in Israel in relation to citizenship is made up of a struggle between three different, and sometimes interrelated, political discourses: liberal-democratic, republican, and ethno-national. This struggle creates a hierarchical structure of membership in the polity. Whereas the liberal-democratic discourse is used to distinguish between citizens and non-citizens, the republican discourse is used to determine the position of different Jewish groups in the hierarchical structure of membership in the Israeli collective, based on their alleged contribution to the Zionist project. Finally, the ethno-national discourse is employed to create a distinction between Jewish citizens who belong to Israeli society as a collective, and Palestinian citizens who are included merely as individuals but excluded as a group.

Adopting a slightly different terminology, Jabareen (2003) argues that the ‘language of rights’, the democratic-liberal discourse of citizenship, perpetuates the supremacy of the Jewish majority. This approach constitutes Palestinian Israelis as a ‘migrant minority’, which is only entitled to equal civil-political rights, whereas they are in fact a ‘homeland minority’ with claims over the land and for self-definition. The Palestinian minority’s aspiration that the land of Israel/Palestine would be recognised as a common homeland is seen by most of the Jewish majority as a threat, as a rejection of the Zionist ideal, and therefore as illegitimate (Peled, 1993; Rouhana, 1993). Yet, the word citizenship, *Mowateneh*, in Arabic derives from the word *watan* which means homeland; hence it denotes a sense of belonging to a specific territory (Rouhana, 1988). Therefore, the dominant political discourse in Israel which sees the Palestinian citizens merely as ‘migrant minority’ while rejecting their claims over the land, not only excludes their national narrative, but also deprives them of one possible meaning of their civic belonging.

The Palestinian citizens in Israel are therefore caught between the illusion of the inclusionary nature of Israel democratic regime and its exclusionary and discriminative characteristics which are derived from its definition as a Jewish state. Caught in this tension they are expected to accept their inferior status as a 'migrant minority' in their own homeland (Jabareen, 2003), and to adopt a civic identity which rejects them and their collective memory. An example of the possible implications these tensions have on young Palestinian citizens is illustrated through a study into citizenship orientation of young Israelis (Ichilov, 2005) which suggests that young Israeli Palestinian Arabs are more politicised than their Jewish counterparts and express alienation towards the state.

Palestinian citizens in Israel often feel excluded not once but twice (Rabinowitz, 2001; Pinson, 2004). Rabinowitz (2001) uses the term 'trapped minority' to describe their double marginalisation: once by the Jewish majority in Israel and once by the majority of Palestinians who are not Israelis. A study into the formation of political identities amongst Palestinian Israeli young people suggests (Pinson, 2004) that when seeking to make sense of their very unsatisfactory position, some adopted supranational identities such as belonging to the Arab world or to the Muslim world, while others emphasised their belonging to the land. Within this context of double exclusion the question I now turn to is how their identities and narratives are presented in the education system and in particular in the civic curriculum and textbook.

The status of the Arab education[6] system in Israel

The tension between the commitment of the State of Israel both to democratic principles and to the Zionist ethos and the exclusionary mechanism it entails has left its mark on the Israeli education system. The State Education Act (1953) was perhaps the most important landmark in the formation of the Israeli state education system. The act stressed values such as freedom and equality, alongside the commitment to uphold the Jewishness of the state, seeing education as a vehicle for strengthening Jewish collective memory and myths (Kretzmer, 1987; Naveh & Yogev, 2002). Yonah (2005) suggests that state education in Israel has developed as the main bearer of the Zionist historiography.

Although the majority of schoolchildren in Israel are enrolled in the state education system, it is far from providing any form of common education. It is divided into different education sectors which cater for the various social groups in Israeli society,[7] whereas Jewish and Arab schoolchildren, as well as secular and religious Jews, attend different schools. The hierarchical structure of citizenship has a direct bearing on the level of resources and educational autonomy that different groups enjoy. The separation of the Arab education system from its Jewish counterpart could be seen as a response to the demands of the Arab minority and as serving its needs. However, as Mar'i (1978) argues, it is first and foremost a discriminatory segregation, which leaves the Arab education system outside the consensus, suffering from perpetual neglect (Swirski, 1990, p. 61).

Indeed, since its establishment, the Arab education system in Israel has suffered from a disproportionate level of state investments (Geraby & Levy, 2000). Even today there is still inequality[8] in 'remedial' hours,[9] teaching hours and student–teacher ratio (Swirski *et al.*, 1996, 1997). The Arab school system also suffers from a lack of appropriate buildings, classrooms and other school facilities, such as libraries, sports facilities and laboratories (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

Despite being a separate system, the Arab education sector also does not enjoy the same autonomy—especially with regard to its curricula—that other separate education systems, such as the religious Jewish schools, do (Al-Haj, 1994; Abu-Asba, 1997).[10] The question of the degree of autonomy which Arab education in Israel should enjoy can be traced back to the first days of the State of Israel. The proposed solutions regarding the desirable arrangements of the education of the Palestinian minority in the newly established Jewish state ranged from complete assimilation to a complete separation. Yet, based on the belief that the Palestinian minority and their national identity poses a threat to security and to the Zionist historiography, both those who advocated integration/assimilation and those who suggested the separation of Arab schools from the Jewish ones agreed that the state should exercise strict control over the curriculum and the aims of education in Arab schools in order to prevent it from becoming involved in developing national Palestinian identity (Al-Haj, 1995; Levy, 2005).

Al-Haj (1995, p. 121) argues that one of the main ways in which the State of Israel used and is still using the Arab education system as a means of controlling the Palestinian minority in Israel is by emptying it of any national content. Indeed, while the Israeli education system makes significant efforts to instil in its Jewish graduates a sense of belonging to the Jewish national collective and the Jewish State of Israel, there is no equivalent under the law or in education policies for the development of a sense of national belonging amongst Arab students. The 1953 Act, for example, omitted almost any mentioning of educational aims for non-Jewish schoolchildren.[11] Mar'i (1978, p. 51) argues that 'the law has in effect, deprived Arab students of the possibility of obtaining culturally and nationally relevant course content'.

When looking at curricula and textbooks designed for the Arab education system a uniform pattern emerges. The curricula and textbooks designed for Arab schools fail to balance between developing Arab/Palestinian national identity and promoting a sense of belonging to the state. Al-Haj (1994) displays this asymmetry by comparing the objectives of the history curriculum in Jewish and Arab schools. While the aim of the history curriculum in the Arab sector is 'To understand the history of the national Arab movement and the National Zionist movement', the aim of history education in the Jewish sector is 'To deepen the student's feeling and understanding of the just struggle of the Jewish people for a national renewal in their homeland' (quoted in Al-Haj, 1994, p. 13). Even today, despite a growing awareness of the need to give representation to Palestinian national narratives, for example, in the history curriculum, the Israeli state education system still does not provide its students, Jews or Palestinians, with the opportunity to learn about the Palestinian national narrative and culture. By and large the Zionist historiography remains unchallenged (Yonah, 2005).

To a significant extent, the nationally, ethnically and religiously segregated education system in Israel and its segregated curriculum (Al-Haj, 2005) reproduces the social positions of groups in Israeli society. In this context of deep social divisions which impinge on the education system, offering an inclusive civic education that strives to create a common civic identity is no easy task. Ichilov (2005) claims that the current civic curriculum has the potential of building such bridges between diverse groups in Israel. This paper suggests that while the current curriculum indeed represents a shift from both pre-state Zionist civic education and from the emphasis on political procedures that characterised Israeli civic education until recently (Ichilov, 1999), it still embodies tensions and contradictions, especially in the representations of the Palestinian minority and its narratives, and hence it is still far from offering such a bridge. The aim of the remainder of this article is to explore these tensions through an analysis of the ways in which the Palestinian citizens and their national identity are positioned in the civic curriculum and textbook.

Civic education and the Palestinian citizens of Israel

To a great extent, the 1994 citizenship curriculum and its official textbook, *To Be Citizens*, signalled a shift from a monolithic Jewish-Zionist interpretation of Israeli citizenship that characterised the old generation of textbooks (Pinson, 2004). In terms of its explicated aims and the decision to unify the curriculum across all education sectors, it was designed, as indicated by the following quote, to use civic education for building civic culture, rather than as a nation-building project:

> The new curriculum offers a broad common citizenship notion to all students … Thus there is no justification for maintaining separate curricula for the different school sectors. (Ministry of Education, 1994, pp. 4–5)

Or, as suggested by one of the curriculum committee's members:

> … if there is something that should be common to all of us … [it] is that we share the same citizenship, Israeli citizenship. I would almost say that this was a symbolic aspiration (of the committee) to say something about the Israeli citizenship which is actually the only thing that we all have in common.

However, despite this progressive language and the discourse of inclusivity it implies, the link between citizenship and nationhood and the Jewishness of the state, which entails an exclusive concept of membership in the Israeli state, are still salient ideas in the official discourses of civic education (Pinson, 2005). Alongside the aim quoted above, the curriculum guidance also determines that:

> Students should also acknowledge the existence of the Israeli state as the state of the Jewish people and understand its commitment to the Jewish people in the diasporas. (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 7)

The following comments by Palestinian Israeli high school students provide insights into the ways in which they experience the tensions inherent in this aim:

> Hisham: It is true that this is a Jewish state […]. But I was born here too […] I think it is a big mistake that it doesn't [the textbook] make you understand that there are another people here, the Palestinian people.
>
> Othman: Why just for the Jewish people? So I'm not a citizen now? I can't get an Israeli ID?
>
> Asad: I think that this sentence shouldn't be part of the curriculum. Simply the State of Israel doesn't have only Jewish citizens […] Everyone should be accepted, we belong to this state too.

This civic curriculum is caught between the aspiration to create an inclusive citizenship education that would draw upon democratic-liberal discourses, and the desire of the State of Israel and its education system to maintain its Jewish nature and its commitment to the Jewish people. Thus, it simultaneously creates an inclusive space while reproducing exclusionary practices that reinforce the hierarchal citizenship structure and make, as clearly stated in the quotes above, Palestinian Israeli students feel as if they do not belong.

Civic education and the marginality of Palestinian Israelis

One Arab official who was interviewed for this study suggested that:

> the old curriculum ignored almost completely the national identity, the national belonging of the Arab student in Israel […] the [curriculum] committee for the first time designed a curriculum that referred to the Arab population as a national minority that has its own uniqueness […] In my opinion this textbook is a giant leap, I don't want to use the word revolutionary, but a real significant leap in comparison to what the Jewish student studied before.

Does the textbook really represent a giant leap? Is it a major departure from previous trends in Israeli school curriculum which ignored the national identity and narratives of the Palestinian minority? The analysis presented in this section aims at shedding light on these questions.

The tension between the inclusionary aspiration and the exclusion practices underlying the curriculum can be traced first to the ways in which the textbook was produced. Arab officials were marginalised in the process of designing the teaching materials, in which they acted merely as consultants. Despite the intention to develop an inclusive curriculum which will act as a platform for creating shared civic culture, Arab officials in the Ministry of Education were still not given the opportunity to take an active part in its formation. The following quotes from interviews with Ministry officials illustrate this form of exclusion of the Palestinian narrative. One of the officials that took part in producing the official textbook commented:

> First of all in the team [that wrote the textbook] there were seculars […] and religious officials, I mean even in the team there was representation of different worldviews, each came with their own perspective […]

When explicitly asked about the inclusion of Arab or Druze officials, the official commented:

> There was, I mean I was less involved here. But of course there was. I think that one official even worked and met a couple of times with the team co-ordinator, and read a lot and was involved in the process of translating […] yes this official was also a bit involved in bringing Christian and Muslim sources […] there was also a Druze guy that saw the materials.

Yet even then, this official failed to see the marginal position given to Arab officials in this process, as outsider consultants and commentators, rather than an integral part of the process of putting together the official textbook. An Arab official who commented on the role of Arab officials in preparing the textbook noted:

> I was involved here and there, few remarks that they've included […] they also wanted some reference to human rights in Islam and Christianity, we prepared the material for them. But it was mainly them who wrote the textbook. We are still far from writing curricula. […] It is not like simply an Arab official sits with them in the room. The team sits in one room, works together all the time, writing drafts and from time to time they send us a copy, we make some comments […] Now if you ask me if there is enough representation in the textbook for the views of Arabs, so the answer is no […] After all those who wrote the textbook only read Hebrew, they don't know Arabic, so they kept looking for Hebrew sources.

Indeed, a simple content analysis of the official textbook (Hebrew version that was later translated to Arabic) reveals systematic under-representation of Palestinian citizens.

Throughout the textbook, external sources drawn from academic articles, newspaper articles, politicians' speeches and prose are combined. Of all the sources, 95% were written by Jewish-Israelis and only 5% by Palestinian citizens.[12] The sub-chapter dedicated to Arab–Jewish relations begins with an account of contemporary Arab society in Israel written by a Palestinian Israeli academic. However, the sub-chapter includes four more external sources, only one of which is written by a Palestinian citizen. The textbook also combines religious sources that are designed to illustrate that democratic ideas are rooted in the thought of Israel's three monotheistic religions. Table 1 presents the representation each of the religions received in the textbook. Moreover, the Muslim and Christian sources were substantially shorter then those drawn from Jewish sources. For example, pages 124–128 are dedicated to the discussion about the principle of the rule of the majority in monotheistic religions. Four and a half pages are dedicated to a discussion of the idea in Judaism while Islam and Christianity are represented in only one paragraph each.

This is not only a case of unbalanced representation, but also a missed opportunity. It is a missed opportunity, first in the sense that the use of sources from the three

Table 1. Representation of religions in the textbook

Source	Number of sources used	Percentage
Jewish religious sources	41	77.5
Islam	8	15
Christianity	4	7.5
Total	53	100

religions to support the importance of basic democratic ideas could be employed as a method for creating a civic common dominator. It could also be used to stress the similarities between the different religions in order to promote a common civic identity. Second, while young Muslim Palestinian-Israelis tend to find it difficult to relate to their civic identity and feel excluded, they often see their religious identity as providing them with a sense of belonging and inclusion (Pinson, 2004). Therefore, a greater representation of Islam in the textbook might have provided them with a possible route to redefining their sense of civic belonging.

While the content analysis above can be seen as exemplifying the ongoing marginality of Palestinian citizens in Israeli textbooks, the following in-depth discursive analysis reveals the tension between practices of inclusion and exclusion in civic education.

Civic education and the Palestinian national identity

As we have seen, educational objectives and curricula in Israel were often emptied of any reference to the Palestinian narrative, which was viewed as a potential threat to Zionist historiography. Indeed, in the old generation of civics textbooks the Palestinian minority was referred to as a mere cultural or religious minority, or simply as the 'non-Jewish' groups (Pinson, 2004), while their national-identity was constituted as non-existing. In contrast, *To Be Citizens* recognises that Palestinian Israelis constitute a national minority. This representation can be seen as a radical departure both from the previous generation of textbooks and also from established trends in education policy and school curriculum in Israel. Yet, a more careful reading of the ways in which *To Be Citizens* refers to the national identity of the Palestinian minority reveals that it is at best ambivalent and at worst reinforces the Zionist narrative.

The majority of references in the textbook to the Palestinian minority as a national minority can be found in the sub-chapter dedicated to the conflict between Jewish and Palestinian citizens. For example, in the following quotation the textbook presents a rather complex picture of the marginalisation of Palestinian-Israelis within Israeli society:

> Another reason for the cleavage between Jews and Arabs in Israel is the definition of the State of Israel as a Jewish nation-state […]. A Jewish nation-state means that the State is the state of the Jewish collective. The Arabs are not part of this collective because they do not belong to the Jewish majority […]. On the one hand, the Jewish Israeli society demands the Arabs to be loyal to the state, identify with it and see themselves as Israelis, all this without allowing them to join the ruling collective. On the other hand the Jewish Israeli society does not permit or accept steps which are taken by the Arabs that are aimed at changing the national identity of the state in a way that will include them too and it forbids any organized activity that is aimed to change the Jewish nature of the state. For this reason, some of the Arab citizens feel that the state is not theirs as it is the state of the Jewish citizens and they feel that they are not equal to the Jewish citizens of the state. (Ministry of Education, 2000b, pp. 290–291)

It is interesting to notice that even though the textbook in this example does not ignore the difficulties faced by the Palestinian minority in Israel, these are presented as challenges faced by Palestinian citizens or as one of the causes for the rift between Palestinian and Jewish Israelis, but not as challenges to Israeli democracy. On the one hand, the textbook recognises that Palestinians constitute a national minority and acknowledges their marginal position within Israeli society. On the other, it does this without challenging the dominant discourses which constitute the State of Israel as first and foremost the state of the Jewish people and not of all its citizens.

An even more prominent example of this ambivalence can be found below:

> The origin of the national rift can be traced to the beginning of the Jewish-Zionist settlement in *Eretz Yisrael* [land of Israel] at the end of the 19th century. This signifies the beginning of a territorial struggle over the control of *Eretz Yisrael*. A struggle between what was then an Arab majority and a Jewish minority which attempted to **return** to and inhabit *Eretz Yisrael*. (Ministry of Education, 2000b, p. 289, emphasis added)

At first glance, it seems as if the narrative presented here acknowledges the Palestinian as ‘homeland minority’. In so doing it appears to offer a different reading of the Jewish–Arab conflict than that of the Zionist historiography, which primarily imagined the ‘land of Israel’ (Eretz Yisrael) as an empty land waiting for the ‘return’ of the Jewish people (Golan, 1995). The textbook acknowledges, to some extent, the ‘other’ national narrative and challenges one of the constitutive myths of Zionism by defining the Jewish–Arab conflict as rooted in a dispute over land. However, as the emphases above show, the Zionist rhetoric is still being reinforced by the textbook through uses of terms such as the *Eretz Yisrael* and the *return* of the Jewish people. Therefore eventually it constructs this dispute as a conflict that is not over a shared homeland, but about *Eretz Yisrael*—the land which belongs to the Jewish people.

With the exception of the example above, the image of the Palestinian minority as a homeland minority, and their linkage to the land of Israel/Palestine is largely downplayed by the textbook. This should be read also in the context of other parts of the textbook that were designed to strengthen the Zionist narrative and the legitimacy of the Jewish-Zionist settlement in Israel/Palestine. For example, part one of the Hebrew civics textbook focuses on Israel as a Jewish state and includes a discussion about the special relationship between the Jewish people, the State of Israel and the land of Israel. However there is no equivalent reference to the special relationship, or the meaning of the ‘land’ and ‘homeland’ to the Palestinian citizen.

This discourse threatens to exclude the Palestinian-Israeli readers and their understandings of self and place. As noted above, one of the meanings of the word citizenship in Arabic refers to belonging to a homeland, and young Palestinian-Israelis often use their special relationship to the land when making sense of their political identities (Pinson, 2004). Thus, it can be argued that the textbook here has missed yet another opportunity to offer forms of civic inclusion to its Palestinian Israeli readers.

Reproducing the hierarchal structure of Israeli citizenship

The tension between inclusion and exclusion also emerges when the Israeli citizenry is discussed.

> How should we define the term 'people' in the modern democratic state? It does not refer to one homogenous unit, but rather refers to the total of all the citizens who live in the state, who are different in their sex, opinion, beliefs and religion. The concept *people* also includes the various social groups in a certain state which are different with respect to their opinions, cultures and interests. A 'people' includes majority and minority groups. What is common to all of them is that they are the citizens of the same state. (Ministry of Education, 2000b, p. 100)

This inclusive language which draws on liberal-democratic, universal discourses of citizenship characterises the section of the textbook which discusses the democratic regime in Israel.[13] Similarly *To Be Citizens* describes Israeli society as a multicultural society while stressing the importance of including the various groups which comprise it and their differences:

> As a result mainly of the waves of Jewish immigration to Israel, Israeli society became a heterogeneous society. The diverse groups that comprise the society are different from each other in their national, religious, ethnic, political and class origin and belonging. Thus, Israeli society is defined as a multiethnic and multicultural society with a national minority. (Ministry of Education, 2000b, p. 276)

It is important to notice, however, that even though Israeli society is portrayed here as a pluralistic society, the textbook still draws clear boundaries between the Jewish and non-Jewish groups of which it is comprised. First, the diversity that characterises Israeli society is presented, primarily as a result of waves of Jewish immigration. Secondly, the text differentiates between Israel as a multicultural or multiethnic society and the existence of a national minority. This distinction implies that the multicultural character of Israeli society refers to the diversity within the Jewish majority while the Palestinian national minority—which is defined as a separate category—is left outside the boundaries of the multicultural/multiethnic Israeli collective.

This tension, between the existence of inclusionary tendencies and reinforcement of exclusionary principles that derive from the link between Israeli citizenship and belonging to the Jewish collective, is even more prominent in the following examples:

> Certain groups in the Jewish population mistrust the Arab population because of their identification with the Palestinian struggle for a Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel. One expression of this feeling of mistrust is the call made by parts of the Jewish majority to deprive the Arab citizens of their right to participate in some of the crucial political and public decisions, such as the decision regarding the future of Judah and Samaria […] It is important to state that these views contradict the democratic nature of the State of Israel. (Ministry of Education, 2000b, pp. 289–290)

> The ideological-political cleavage in Israel expresses the dispute in Jewish Israeli society about the solution for the Israeli-Arab and the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, since the implementation of such a solution is a resolution with regard to the boundaries of the State of Israel. (Ministry of Education, 2000b, p. 332)

The comparison between these two quotations reveals the ambivalent stance to membership in the Israeli society expressed by *To Be Citizens*. On the one hand the exclusion of the Palestinian citizens from the decision-making in Israel (which is discussed in the section dedicated to the conflict between Jewish and Palestinian citizens) is described as un-democratic. However, when the 'cleavage' between the political right and left wings in Israel[14] is discussed, it is presented as a dispute that exists solely *within* the Jewish Israeli community. According to the textbook, Palestinian citizens remain outside this discussion and therefore again at the margins of Israeli society. This has major implications, especially when considering the current political discourse in Israel. In the years since the Oslo Agreement, many members of the Israeli public and parliament have argued that the peace deal is illegitimate since it did not receive the support of a Jewish majority, relying on the support of Palestinian-Israeli citizens and parties for passage. The idea that any decision about the future of Israel should rely on a Jewish majority, rather than a democratic majority, has gained wider currency in recent years. Here we can see that, despite the language of inclusion expressed in other parts of the textbook, *To Be Citizens* reproduces—through implication—the hierarchical structure of Israeli citizenship and reconfirms the exclusion of the Palestinian citizens from participation in determining the common good.

The idea that Palestinians should be included as individual citizens, but excluded from participation in determining the common good, was also expressed by some of the officials:

> They can fight for rights they think they don't get. But this is a state, also by law. And I think they should study and understand that this is a Jewish and democratic state and they are a minority here. A large minority, a minority that should have rights, but a minority. It is not a very pleasant situation, I'm really sympathetic to the fact that this is unpleasant situation [...] It is not the same like being Jewish here.
>
> If he [the Arab] wishes that the State of Israel will become the state of all its citizens, that it will give up its Jewish symbols, change its flag, it anthem, I can understand him. I don't have to accept it, I don't have to change it. On the other side I expect him to understand his status as a minority.

Thus Palestinian citizens are included as long as they accept the framework of the Jewish democratic state and their position within it as a 'migrant minority'. They are asked not to challenge the Zionist narrative by seeking recognition as a 'homeland minority'.

In order to create an inclusive curriculum there is a need not merely to recognise the existence of different groups but also to acknowledge their alternative narratives and discourses of citizenship. Although the official discourses of citizenship education—as represented by *To Be Citizens* and the statements of officials—recognised the diversity of Israeli society, they still marginalised those who do not fall within the boundaries of the Zionist hegemonic discourse and the Israeli collective it constructs. To a significant extent the discourse of inclusivity in the curriculum guidelines was not maintained when the textbook, or the officials, dealt with the desirable definition of Israeli citizenship, the modes of belonging it is supposed to generate and, in particular, the ways in which it constructs the 'Other'.

An example of this ambivalent stance can be found in the way in which some of the Jewish officials discussed the aims of citizenship education. When negotiating the meanings of membership in Israeli society that should be offered to Israeli students, some of the officials seemed to be torn between the notion of citizenship identity as common to all and what belonging to the Israeli collective meant to them:

> I think that *citizenship is the common thing to all* of us and we need to educate people to accept the other, and to understand that he is also a citizen. *The other, I mean, the one that is not part of the Jewish collective*, he is an equal citizen […] Look, what a Jewish state is, is something that also the Arab and Druze sectors should understand, to be familiar with the reality because the state is theirs […] But there isn't any aspiration to educate them according to the Jewish values. *They need to be educated according to universal values* […] On the other hand, the Jewish student, it is obvious that the emphasis is different. It is very important that they will be exposed to, and will know what the disputes are in the public sphere. (Emphases added)

The official argues here that everyone should be educated for common citizenship, but at the same time the official distinguishes between two different aims of citizenship education: one for Jewish students, which is based on developing a sense of belonging to the Jewish collectivity; and the other for non-Jewish students, that would derive from a liberal-democratic approach. By drawing upon these distinctions, the official effectively defines two types of citizenship education. The first is for all students, and is based on a liberal notion of citizenship that emphasises the legal status and the rights a citizen holds. The second objective of citizenship education, which is only applicable to Jewish students, is based on the ethno-national discourse and is aimed at enhancing their sense of national belonging. This distinction, to a great extent, corresponds with the hierarchical structure of Israeli citizenship (Shafir & Peled, 2002).

One curriculum many challenges—some concluding remarks

Despite the stated intention of creating an inclusive curriculum and introducing a unified civic curriculum for all state education high schools, contemporary civic education in Israel at best represents an ambivalent stance caught in the tension between inclusion and exclusion, nation-building and state formation. As the analysis presented here reveals, while civic education now offers a more complex account of the definition of Israeli citizenship and membership in the collective it denotes, it still often marginalises the Palestinian citizens. In so doing, civic education acts to reproduce the hierarchal structure of Israeli citizenship with its concept of differential membership in the collective. This discussion raises serious questions concerning the unification of the civics curriculum, especially in the context of Arab schools in Israel.

In a focus group in an Arab school, which was conducted in 2001, Jamil, a 17-year-old Palestinian Israeli student stated that:

> Sometimes even the civic education classes give you the feeling … opposite to belonging. You study about the rights you have and then the reality comes in, and it is not like they said it will be, you don't get what you were taught you should get, like the textbook said. So why? There is a contradiction.

As Jamil so eloquently puts it, civic education does not operate in a vacuum. His experience of civic education begs the question what is the meaning of developing an inclusive curriculum, which draws on democratic-liberal discourse and ideas such as equality of rights, in the context of the ongoing discrimination against the Palestinian citizens outside schools, and within the education system?[15]

Aside from the conflict between the text and the context, it is the ambivalent messages within the official discourse of civic education which make the task of creating a common civic identity ever so challenging. As the study demonstrates, the tension between the search for a universal language of citizenship, as part of the unification project, and the commitment to the Jewish-Zionist national narrative leads to the articulation of two aims for civic education that echo the hierarchical structure of Israel citizenship. This observation brings me to ask whether the unification of the curriculum and the search for some sort of inclusive definition of civic membership does not, paradoxically, turn inclusive intentions into exclusionary practice. As with the hierarchical structure of Israeli citizenship, the position which civic education offers to the Palestinian student is that which is based on a democratic-liberal discourse. It hence denotes a 'thin' sense of belonging, while excluding them from other forms of participation.

Levy (2005, p. 287), in analysing the processes of inclusion/exclusion in Arab education in major educational reforms, observes that these reforms created a new category of 'Israeli-Arabs' which is an example of how 'the extension of citizenship rights only implied the replacement of one form of exclusion by another. It allowed the Arabs to fight for equal rights, but it has also re-delineated the boundaries of the Israeli ethnospace'. The case of civic education is similar. While in the last decade it moved away from a complete omission of the Palestinian minority, the inclusion it offers often leaves the Palestinian-Israeli students even more frustrated about their position and possibilities—as Jamil pointed out above.

The civics textbook falls into the trap of re-stating the inclusion-exclusion of the Palestinian minority from the Israeli collective through employing a democratic-liberal discourse. However, there are other concerns. Feminists have illustrated how the abstract model of 'the citizen' acts as an exclusionary mechanism for women. Following a similar logic, my concern here, is the extent to which the introduction of a democratic-liberal language of citizenship and inclusion efforts resulted in the exclusion of different meanings of civic belongings articulated by Palestinian students. This denies the Palestinian students, for example, the possibility of developing a local citizenship identity emphasising belonging to the land and locality, or the use of Muslim identity in formulating a trans-national political identity.

We tend to think about the unification of the civic curriculum as a positive change; as progress. What I hope to have succeeded in doing here is to suggest that perhaps before celebrating this symbolic act we need to question it and to examine its underlying messages and its possible implications. Perhaps, at least until Israeli society and its education system will be able to include the Palestinian minority not merely as individuals, but as a 'homeland minority', Palestinian students will benefit more and be empowered by a separate curriculum which will be built on their alternative definition of political belonging.

Acknowledgements

This article is partly based on the author's doctoral dissertation. The author would like to thank the 13 Ministry officials and the 20 young Arab-Palestinian Israeli students who were willing to share their time and thoughts. The author is immensely grateful to Professor Madeleine Arnot, for her supportive guidance and useful criticism. The author would also like to thank the two anonymous readers of this paper for carefully commenting on the article.

Notes

1. This curriculum is designed for state education high schools, academic route only. It is studied for one year and leads to matriculation examination in civic education.
2. Until then, the civic education curriculum, as with other curricula, was studied using different textbooks in the general, religious and Arab state schools.
3. The group of people at the Ministry of Education that are engaged in various aspects of citizenship education is relatively small and easy to identify. Since anonymity was promised to all interviewees, direct quotes are used here omitting any identifying details, including the official's position, and the generic term 'official' is used to refer to all interviewees regardless of their role.
4. At the time the study was conducted there were 13 consultants for the general and state religious systems, out of whom six were chosen, based on their willingness to be interviewed and geographical consideration. The only two consultants employed in the Arab sector were also interviewed.
5. Three case study schools were investigated. In each of them 20 students were selected based on criterion sampling and their willingness to be interviewed. The criteria in the Arab school were: prior experience in civic education and proficiency in Hebrew. Also an equal number of female and male students were interviewed.
6. I use here the term 'Arab education system' as opposed to Palestinian, since this is the official term used by the Ministry of Education. The choice to refer to the population it serves as Palestinians represents a stance which objects reductionist 'mainstream' identifications such as 'Arab-Israelis' or non-Jewish citizens (Rosenhenk, 1998).
7. The Israeli education system is divided into the following sectors: general state education which caters for the Jewish secular population; state religious education that serves the Zionist-religious population; the Arab state education system; and the independent Jewish ultra-Orthodox school system.
8. Since the late 1970s there has been a slow improvement in state investments in the Arab education system, however it still suffers from discrimination in terms of budget and other state investments.
9. Remedial hours are extra teaching hours, i.e., extra financial support, given by the Ministry of Education to strengthen schools in underdeveloped and underprivileged areas.
10. Until 1966 Arab Education was controlled by the military administration which was imposed on the Palestinian citizens of Israel between 1948 and 1966. The Ministry of Education only appointed an Arab official to chair the Department for Arab education in 1987. Yet, even today this department has limited control and responsibilities within the Arab education sector and it still does not have, for example, an independent budget (Al-Haj, 1994).
11. During the 1970s several attempts were made to address the need to define goals for Arab schools in Israel (Yadlin Report in 1972 and Peled Committee in 1973). However these two documents were criticised for still ignoring the national identity of the Palestinian minority while trying to enforce a non-existent category of Israeli-Arabs (Mar'i, 1978; Levy, 2005).

12. Excluding extracts from official documents and sources where the writer/speaker is not Israeli.
13. The textbook is divided into three parts: What is a Jewish State? What is a democratic State? And Regime and Politics in the State of Israel.
14. This conflict refers to the dispute in Israel society between doves and hawks, i.e., the dispute about the peace process and the future borders of the State of Israel.
15. Similarly the difficulty in implementing a civic curriculum, which is based on liberal democratic ideas in a political context that challenges this notion, is also raised by Moughrabi (2004) when addressing the challenges faced by civic education programmes in schools under Palestinian authority.

Notes on contributor

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