Education in Palestine:
Current Challenges and Emancipatory Alternatives

A report by

HananRamahi
The American School of Palestine and University of Cambridge

October 2015



Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung
Ramallah, Palestine

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Rosa Luxembourg Foundation for providing the opportunity to conduct the study presented in this report.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of those individuals to gave their time to talk to me about their experience and views:

Issam Arouri, political activist & director of Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Centre

Sam Bahour, political activist and businessman

Dahouk Dawoudi, parent and Birzeit University faculty member

Dr. Munir Fasheh, retired university faculty member

Intisar Hamdan, Teacher Creativity Centre programme manager

Dr. Maher Hashweh, Birzeit University faculty member

Mona Jibril, Al-Azhar University faculty member

Edmon Muallim, Ashtar Theatre Director

Kholoud Nasser, Ministry of Education, Director General for General Education

Renad Qubbaj, Tamer Institute for Community Education, Director General

Awwad Sharaf, Al-Quds University lecturer

Dr. Jehad Shweikh, Birzeit University faculty member

Dr. Basil Skaik, Al-Azhar University faculty member

Dr. Rabab Tamish, Bethlehem University faculty member

I am also grateful to my academic supervisor, Dr David Frost for his support, guidance and editing.

Hanan Ramahi
October 2015

Preface

by David Frost

The title of an important book by Michael Apple poses the question: Can Education Change Society? The answer is 'yes' of course, but as Apple's analysis reveals, the relationship between education and society is complex. Those involved in the Education for All campaign (www.unesco.org) argue that education is the key to prosperity and peace, but we know that the scale of the challenge is enormous. Many millions of children across the world are denied access to schooling, but there are millions more who, although enrolled in school, are not actually being educated. This can be explained by the fact that what many children are offered in school is entirely unsuited to their needs and circumstances (UNESCO, 2014).

The circumstances that are the starting point for Hanan Ramahi's study are daunting. In fact the challenges faced by Palestinian society seem, on the face of it at least, to be insurmountable, so it would be naïve to suggest that they can be overcome simply by improving the quality of education. However, this report, while looking harsh reality in the eye, is nevertheless full of hope. It provides a sharp and uncompromising analysis of the problem, but it also presents a wealth of possibility. The case studies presented here show that education has the power to emancipate on many levels, even in the face of massive repression and systemic injustice.

Given what Hanan Ramahi tells us about the political situation in Palestine, it may be expecting too much to hope that coherent policies on education will emerge any time soon. However, one thing we know about educational change is that, although the idea of coherent policies and clear objectives may sound appealing, they can actually do more harm than good when they are mandated from the top. It might actually be more fruitful simply to enable the sort of passionate activists, advocates and educational innovators referred to in this report to continue to innovate and to share their ideas so that education for emancipation can grow organically.

The case for emancipatory education is well made in this report and the examples presented are inspiring. I believe that readers of this report will be persuaded that educational innovation, as it is exemplified here, has an essential role to play in furthering the cause of Palestinian freedom.

David Frost (Dr)
University of Cambridge

Introduction

Education plays a fundamental and crucial role in fostering social and political change. Emancipatory approaches to education are a means to mobilise disenfranchised members and groups of society towards democratic engagement. Central to this view is that teaching and learning should enable critical thinking and facilitate meaningful knowledge building (Giroux, 2011; McLaren, 1995). By raising awareness of the root causes of social marginalisation, economic inequalities and political exclusion, oppressed people are set free from fatalistic, irrational and deterministic mind sets and collectively empowered to transform their living conditions (Freire, 1970). Pedagogical tools include dialogue, reflection, collaboration and action; these serve to enhance individual and collective agency, and communal ties in preparation for strategic collective action. This contrasts with traditional education models that emphasise self-improvement through academic qualifications that promote individual opportunities and rely on transmission modes of teaching (Apple, 1979). The study reported here examined emancipatory approaches to education and the conditions that make these necessary.

This report presents the findings of a study which sought to clarify current challenges in the Palestinian education system with a view to identifying emancipatory alternatives that are relevant to the Palestinian context.

The first section examines the historical and political forces that shaped educational provision in Palestine and later the occupied Palestinian Territories (oPT). The second section explores the views of a group of progressive-minded educators and key figures in the Palestinian community about the present pedagogic and social structures and the need for educational change. Current emancipatory initiatives and programmes in Palestine are mapped in the third section. In the fourth section successful international models are identified for adaptation in the Palestinian setting. The final section clarifies the key challenges puts forward a set of principles to guide reform and innovation focused on emancipatory education in the oPT.

Section 1
Background: History, Politics and Palestinian Education

This section traces the political and social forces that have shaped education in Palestine. Starting from Ottoman rule and reaching up to present Palestinian self-governance, formal education provision is examined in relation to socio-economic and political aims and impact.

Education under foreign rule

Historically, formal education in Palestine has been controlled and administered by foreign rule. Over the years these powers varied their education agendas to maintain the status quo. Under Ottoman rule educational provision first emerged and was delivered in the Turkish language to the overwhelming majority Arabic speaking Palestinian population. Starting in 1917 during British rule, education was expanded to supply a growing need for civil servants for the British Empire (Barakat, 2007; Brown, 2003a). Accordingly, knowledge and learning came to be associated with the power structures and the ruling elite, and alienated the indigenous inhabitants from the means and processes of their own education. Concurrently, it represented a way to advance individual socio-economic and political interests over social welfare.

In 1948 Palestinian aspirations for educational self-rule were destroyed with the creation of the state of Israel and the ethnic cleansing of the majority of the indigenous population. Palestinian refugees in UN-administered camps were subject to the educational policies and curricula of the host countries (Hanafi, Hilal & Takkenberg, 2014). In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Jordan and Egypt respectively disseminated their national curricula. Accordingly, formal education received by Palestinians in the oPT and the diaspora was not concerned with preserving Palestinian historic-cultural distinctiveness or advancing political and social aspirations (Brown, 2003a). Instead, a technicist educational 'culture of positivism' (Giroux, 1984) emerged to ahistoricise educational processes and undermine local and collective means to knowledge production.

These developments reinforced for Palestinians the role of education as a tool for securing socio-economic mobility and redressing the impact of national exclusion (Barakat, 2007). Award-bearing formal education was a means to survival, which may account for why for many years Palestinians have had the highest rate of participation in education in the Arab World (Fronk, Huntington & Chadwick, 1999). The instrumentalist function of education for socio-economic and meritocratic self-

promotion weakened its potential to enhance individual and collective agency in combating hegemonic forces behind social injustice and political exclusion.

During the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, military authorities targeted the education system (Abo Hommos, 2013; Asaad, 2000), despite the increasingly reductive and purely functionalist role of education. Repressive measures reached emergency proportions during the *intifada* civil protest movement starting in 1987, when Israeli military forces closed down schools and universities for periods that ranged from several months to two years and disrupted, through harassment, informal attempts at educational provision (Mahshi and Bush, 1989). The adverse impact on Palestinian education was enormous, leading to a long lasting decline in academic standards at all levels of education (Nicolai, 2007; Sfeir and Bertoni, 2003) reaching emergency proportions by 1993 (Rigby, 1995). Apparently, despite the increasingly alienated apparatus of the school system, Israeli occupation authorities nevertheless identified in traditional modes of education a significant threat to their military rule.

Ruthless Israeli policies did not entirely prevent Palestinians from preserving and asserting their historical and cultural identity. Individual and collective defiance of repressive military measures during the occupation, particularly during the first *intifada,* attests to self-reliance, a collective spirit and the power of community-based action (Mahshi and Bush, 1989). Nevertheless, direct foreign control of Palestinian education coupled with decades of Israeli military rule left the Palestinians unprepared and ill-equipped for educational reconstruction. Such is the background of education in the oPT and the setting for Palestinian education self-governance.

Education under Palestinian self-rule

The 1993 Oslo Peace Accords ushered in a period of limited Palestinian self-rule in the oPT. The first-ever Palestinian Ministry of Education (MoE) was established in 1994 with the remit to prepare an aspirant Palestinian citizenry for institution building, state formation and the global information economy. The MoE serves approximately 75 per cent of students in the oPT, with 15 per cent attended to by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the remaining 10 per cent through private enterprise, mostly ecumenical (www.moehe.gov.ps/*)*. This entailed rebuilding an outdated educational system with severe shortages of qualified teachers and school buildings.

For financial assistance the resource-deficient Palestinian National Authority (PNA) turned mainly to international sponsors. The World Development Indicators

database for 2011 (World Bank, 2014) identified the Palestinians as being among the highest per capita recipients of assistance in the world; the US, EU and World Bank being primary donors. However, reliance on international donors and expertise for wide-scale educational reform exacted a heavy price on Palestinian educational autonomy. The results of this dependence can be seen at the geo-political and policy formation levels, as discussed below.

In developing countries foreign aid at the programmatic level is conditional upon policy borrowing and reform transfer (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010). International sponsors' advocacy of a global agenda on education has advanced donor values and interests over local ones and compromised autonomy in establishing an indigenous education system. This has inhibited emergence of a comprehensive Palestinian educational vision and agenda (Baramki, 2010; Ramahi, 2013). The battleground over the construction of the first Palestinian national curriculum illustrates this connection (Murray, 2008; Velloso de Santisteban, 2002). The ensuing international controversy served to obfuscate a pivotal opportunity to engage Palestinians in an internal debate over more pressing national issues like democracy, women's rights and religious tolerance (Brown, 2003a, 2003b). This and other factors led to questions about the impact of development aid in the oPT (Gerster & Baumgarten, 2011; Shin, 2012) and illustrated the hegemony of a global education agenda fixated on student performativity and school rankings (Ball, 2003).

Financial dependence on key international actors led to the Palestinian economy and civil life becoming subject to the vagaries of regional politics. US-led economic blockades have deprived PNA employees of their wages for months, which has affected more than 53,000 teachers. The impact on the lives and work of these teachers cannot be overstated, especially given low teacher wages and a reduced socio-economic status. There can be no doubt that the quality of both teaching and students' learning have been adversely affected. Accordingly, economic dependency on foreign aid for educational reconstruction is tenuous at best and lays the education system hostage to an entire nation's educational aspirations.

The effects of Israeli occupation

Of the many detrimental effects of Israeli military rule on Palestinians is the continuous denial of geographic continuity and of imposed isolation. Travel to and from the discontiguous West Bank and Gaza is restricted severely through a system of military outposts and travel permits. This obstructs attempts to foster collaboration and dialogue among oPT inhabitants. During the second *intifada* starting in 2000, Israel intensified its geographic segregation policy by posting

hundreds of military checkpoints within the West Bank and Gaza, and erecting the Segregation Wall to seal off the oPT from Israel (Ibheis & Ayad, 2012). The effect on Palestinian education has been devastating. The Wall effectively deprived entire villages from access to schools and learning centres. Subsequently, the goals of educators in the oPT were reduced to ensuring access and provision.

The Ministry has since had to resort to emergency planning. Nearly half of the teaching force and thousands of students have had to be reassigned to schools that are more accessible, and pose less risk and harm to individual safety (Kassis, 2004). This compromised the suitability of teacher assigning and disrupted student life. In times of crisis MoE policy-making is forced to respond to Israeli military measures, thus diverting attention away from national strategic planning and long-term educational goals. Consequently, the entire Palestinian education system has been disrupted and student learning severely compromised. Student enrollment has declined (Ibheis & Ayad, 2012), particularly among females whose parents fear the dangers of travel and soldier harassment at military checkpoints (www.stopthewall.org). Pushing an entire nation into survival mode is not conducive to educational or pedagogic innovation. Thus is the current state of the education system in the oPT.

Conclusion

Education in Palestine remains a site of international and regional political struggle. Forms of control have varied in accordance with the needs of the governing powers. In post-Accord Palestine, Israeli military authorities currently enforce severely repressive measures that have led to the deterioration of educational quality and exclusion.

The next section of this report explores Palestinian views of the current state of education in the oPT and provides an opportunity to illuminate the power hierarchies inherent in social relations and cultural norms that operate within the field of education.

Section 2:
Views from Progressive Palestinians

This section explores the views of progressive-minded members of the Palestinian community about the current state of education and emancipatory alternatives. Fifteen participants were interviewed; respondents included university faculty, education NGO heads, political activists, a Ministry of Education official, a theatre director and a parent (see Acknowledgements). There was a broad range of perspectives that converged on the dire need for significant changes to the education system in the oPT. There was less unanimity in the views expressed about the nature and aims of that change. Respondents used this opportunity to voice their critique of oppressive pedagogical practices and the socio-cultural norms that reinforce them. The key themes that emerged are discussed below under the headings *main problems, the focus of change, and emancipatory alternatives*. In the interviews, care was taken to avoid influencing participants' understanding of emancipatory education.

Main problems

Respondents identified several problems with the education scene in Palestine. Two main sub-themes emerged throughout the interviews. They are discussed below under the headings of '*educational outcomes'* and '*pedagogical practice'*.

Educational outcomes

Interviewees disclosed an overwhelming sense of dissatisfaction with educational outcomes. For most this was reflected in deteriorating levels of student performance in both primary and secondary sectors. The following comment reflects a common view.

> *Public schools are failing our youth. The quality of education has been worsening rapidly… Students are promoted to higher grades despite inabilities to read and write… It's intolerable.*
>
> (University faculty member)

Basic formal provision is considered substandard and incapable of providing basic literacy. It was said that inferior educational outcomes are leading to low student performance in the tertiary sector. Several university faculty members reported that their students are not capable of performing the basic analytical and communication

skills necessary for a post-secondary education. Alarmingly, one indicated that up to 90 per cent of her students did not meet basic university level academic standards:

> *The vast majority of my students can't do a research paper. They're so used to memorisation that they can't think for themselves. There is no self-confidence or ability to think critically. How can they advance in life or contribute to society? How did we let things get so bad?*
>
> (University faculty member)

Many decried the emphasis on transmission modes of teaching that lead to what Freire called 'the banking concept of education' (1970) in formal educational settings. Young adults are conceptually challenged when invited to think critically about academic subjects or life conditions. Alternative ways of thinking and knowing are not fostered by current education structures:

> *There is a single correct answer engrained in the minds of people…. It's difficult for them to think of the bigger picture.*
>
> (University faculty member)

An educational culture characterised by docility and silence perpetuates a single, authority-instilled way of thinking and meaning-making. Institutional practices in formal education obstruct the advancement of criticality and socio-political awareness by the practice of standardised assessment within a culture of performativity (Ball, 2003).

Some respondents noted that the kind of education that facilitates critical thinking and independent, self-directive learning is simply not available to the vast majority of the Palestinian population. The very few private schools that offer such approaches are exclusive to a select socio-economic class. Graduates of these schools end up leaving Palestine for better career prospects elsewhere, thereby denuding the country of potential contributions to Palestinian society. This maintains inequalities of educational opportunity within Palestinian society and widens socio-economic disparities.

The majority of respondents criticised the worthlessness of current learning in much of the education system. Students and youth are subjected to information that is more or less removed from their daily realities and needs. What is learned in schools and universities emanates from within these institutions and is rarely relatable to the world outside. The following comment encapsulates this view.

> *There's a gap between what youth are taught and what matters to them. The whole thing sometimes seems useless. It's a waste of time and effort, and a great loss of potential.* (Political activist)

There is an overall sense among respondents that Palestinian youth are being increasingly disenfranchised from their own learning and growth. The critical stage in the intellectual and social formation of children and youth, when education might enable critical thinking and social awareness, is being squandered by a national curriculum ill-suited to the needs of a subjugated people. In its place, top-down, transmission forms of teaching reinforce the development of passive, obedient adults stripped of human agency and the capacity to change the means of their oppressive conditions.

Pedagogical practice

Equally unanimous was respondents' dissatisfaction with the nature and aims of teaching, especially in state-run schools. With the overwhelming majority of students attending such schools, this was repeatedly cited as a fundamental impediment to providing an empowering, critical education to the vast population of Palestinian students and youth. Several reasons were given for this.

Out-dated pedagogic practices are viewed as the main reason behind the deteriorating state of teaching and learning. The majority of respondents emphasised the antiquated, transmission modes of teaching and their incompatibility with the needs of a generation of students and youth that have increasingly wider access to information. This view was clearly expressed by a respondent from an NGO working in the field of education.

> *Teachers are still enforcing authoritarian styles of teaching. This isn't working with the new generation. Kids are more knowledgeable than some teachers these days. This needs addressing.*
>
> (NGO director)

Top-down, non-participatory modes of teaching were identified as reinforcing a passive, submissive approach to learning and life. Criticality and independent thinking cannot be fostered through undemocratic ways of teaching where the teacher adopts an all-knowing role. Rather, teachers should act as facilitators of learning and use pedagogic approaches that enhance student agency, foster critical thinking and enable students to become familiar with alternative and opposing views.

Some respondents cited the Ministry of Education's teacher policies as a factor in the continuation of antiquated styles of teaching. Specifically, teacher recruitment, preparation and development were identified as inadequate for supporting the kind of educational practice appropriate to the context of Palestine.

> *The Ministry did not establish adequate teacher recruitment and education policies. What it has is a collection of foreign programmes that don't relate to the Palestinian context.*
>
> (University faculty member)

Although this and similar views represent a reformist vision for the education system, they nonetheless identify non-indigenous programme importation as a detriment to effective teacher policies. This is an encouraging sign and foregrounds calls for a locally-based agenda for educational change to generate a distinctly Palestinian educational vision.

Members of the education community and Palestinian educational NGOs were generally critical of the Ministry's reliance on foreign aid. Internationally sponsored teacher educational programmes are believed to have disoriented teachers and had little or no impact on teacher development.

> *The Ministry has burdened teachers with training programmes that are ineffective and unsuited for the Palestinian setting. It's not all the teachers' fault.*
>
> (University faculty member)

Despite critical views of MoE policies, some respondents are sympathetic, citing the financial strains under which the Ministry is forced to operate.

> *The Ministry has no funding and so welcomes NGO initiatives to develop teachers. But there are so many agendas out there and teachers are already burdened with high workloads. I'm not sure who is to blame.*
>
> (NGO director)

Issues related to Ministry teacher policies recurred frequently during interviews. Unsuitable, ill-advised policies and reliance on foreign funding were repeatedly mentioned as responsible for the declining state of pedagogical practice and teacher quality. Regardless of where the responsibility lies, the majority specified traditional pedagogic practices as a fundamental obstacle to student learning and social growth.

Top-down teaching practices are seen to reflect a set of authoritarian beliefs and attitudes that are endemic of the larger socio-cultural scene. Some respondents acknowledged the prevalence of norms and values that reinforce patriarchal practices.

> *The challenge is that the teachers themselves are products of the society that needs changing. It's a dilemma and I don't know if there's an answer.*
>
> (Political activist)

Despite respondents' critical stance on teaching methods, there is recognition of the complex socio-economic forces working against teachers and the teaching profession. Teachers are regarded as underpaid, undervalued, and underrepresented. Some questioned the capacity for such individuals to facilitate an emancipatory pedagogy without undergoing a revolution against repressive socio-cultural norms and practices themselves. Several interviewees were painfully aware that, as products of a society in need of fundamental social-cultural transformation, teachers can hardly be expected to act as change agents for social and political transformation without support for their own consciousness raising. In the oPT the reality remains that teaching practices are failing to enhance human agency or promote dialogue, collaboration and praxis, all precursors for awareness and social change.

The focus of change

Respondents were less uniform about the kinds of changes they would like to see taking place in the Palestinian education system. Suggestions include increasing the educational budget, improving teacher salaries, revising the national curriculum, eradicating nepotism and political favouritism in public offices, restructuring teacher education, reformulating teaching methods, and dismantling schooling altogether, replacing it with individualised learning programmes. Respondents focused more on formal provision than informal ones. Key recommendations are outlined below.

A comprehensive and unified Palestinian educational vision and strategy was deemed essential. It was hoped that this would counter the effects of an incoherent and unsuccessful education reform policy. The following comment illustrates this point.

> *We're not coming up with solutions. There isn't much of a [Palestinian] vision. The Ministry doesn't have anyone who could come up with a vision… You need individuals from outside the Ministry. There's no magic solution. We need to sit together and come up with a plan.*
>
> (University faculty member)

The call for a collectivist, inter-Palestinian dialogue for the future of education implies a new, inclusive direction. Several other respondents called for finding common ground between Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza. In the current climate of political division, religious difference and social exclusion, it may be a formidable challenge to adequately represent all facets of Palestinian society. Nevertheless, for several it is foundational and therefore a necessary starting point.

Whether calling for change from within or without the system, most respondents were unequivocal about the need to focus on teachers as mediators of change. Transforming teachers' values and pedagogical beliefs appears to be key to developing a pedagogy of empowerment, which is reflected in many of the respondents' comments.

> *We need groups of teachers with progressive thinking, and someone to lead them and invest in them. Then work from within the curriculum, with different pedagogy and assessment criteria that enable authentic and relevant learning.*
>
> (NGO director)

> *Even if you provide venues for informal ways of learning, unless teachers are committed to change it won't work….. We need to start with the teachers. They need to change.*
>
> (Theatre director)

The focus by nearly all participants on developing teacher capacity reflects the significance of human resources for facilitating educational change. This was true for both formal and informal education provision. A fundamental transformation was said to be required of the nature of teaching. Implicit were calls for changes in teacher attitudes and values.

Some respondents were generally pessimistic about the possibility of realising tangible, wide-scale change, citing 'insurmountable' socio-cultural factors impeding such processes. Those that were more hopeful called for the dismantling of disempowering political structures, and for Palestinians to reclaim ownership of the means and processes of teaching and learning.

> *We need to put Oslo* [Peace Accords] *aside. We need a revolution against the curriculum… We need to insert the arts - music, painting and the theatre to make change. If we don't do that it will be a catastrophe. We saw how this can make change in students and teachers. It creates a soft revolution.*
>
> (Theatre director)

A 'soft revolution' in formal education provision is seen as having the potential to diffuse progressive social values and ways of thinking within society as a whole. Albeit a slow process, it promises to embed the means and processes of raising awareness for social and political change.

However, those who called for a drastic departure from mainstream education institutions did not see the viability of working through formal structures, as expressed in the comment quoted below.

> *Education needs to be inciting, agitating against the current situation through informal not formal education.*
>
> (University faculty member)

Advocates of authentic and problem-based forms of learning that would improve life conditions called for a complete transformation of the means of learning. An alternative indigenous approach is proposed in place of schooling and teaching. One respondent, a leading educator proposed an approach that implies self-direction in learning rather than schooling.

> *What's practical is to create your own learning. The problem is in the medium. We need learning that develops naturally, without control* [schools, teachers]*… Education needs to be purposeful, self-directive and independent of structures.*
>
> (NGO director)

The very notion of a medium is viewed here as antithetical to self-guided, agential and purposeful learning that involves collaboration and action. Central to this approach is learning that fosters empowerment and self-generation, eliminating reliance on outside agents. Although an uncommon perspective, it goes straight to the heart of the idea of emancipatory education.

Emancipatory alternatives

Respondents were less forthcoming with proposals for concrete emancipatory solutions. Most gave general, overarching recommendations that provide no practical alternative to the current educational scenario. This suggests the absence of a unified philosophy and vision of education. It may also indicate the lack of a clear and shared understanding of the concept of emancipatory education.

Those who proposed concrete options identified emancipatory pedagogic practices among them, as illustrated by this comment from a respondent from an educational NGO.

> *We can all as humans be part of the educational process and part of the choices within the education system. It should be diverse and not top-down or judgmental… have open horizons for dialogue and group learning… independence, critical thinking... a person who can express himself, engage with social issues. This is what Freire suggests, that we work with people from what is available. It should enable people to rise to a better place from within their society, which they're familiar with.*
>
> (NGO director)

This is a call for implementing organic pedagogic practices that relate to the immediate social and political issues. It refers to inclusive and authentic learning that emanates from local needs, empowers individuals and communities to improve their living conditions thus freeing them from reliance on outside agents. Another interviewee argued against adopting a purely Freirian pedagogic model, but instead building on it to include an emphasis on local religious and spiritual beliefs that call for resistance to oppressive structures.

Another concrete recommendation was to establish viable emancipatory educational programmes that are documented and disseminated broadly in the Palestinian community.

> *The better solution is to create successful models… groups of people working together… I don't think the solution is through the system; rather through independent initiatives trying to create successful models… Even if we work with the Ministry we should create experimental models and study them and see how they work.*
>
> (University faculty member)

Creating successful models that can be shared by establishing networks of innovators was amongst the more practical recommendations. One educator likened this to planting seeds all over Palestine and watching them grow. Central to sustainability is robust research to investigate the extent to which such models are having emancipatory impact. Enhanced human agency, increased collaboration, action and reflection on outcomes are among the features that can be evaluated.

Given the limitations of the Palestinian context, 'working with what we have,' as one educator put it, may best be operationalised through small-scale, locally sourced initiatives. Some interviewees suggested Palestinian NGOs as being best suited to conduct emancipatory educational projects. The reasons for this include the freedom and flexibility to engage in experimental approaches, and their organic links to the local community through Palestinian actors.

Conclusion

The overall tenor of the interviews indicates considerable dissatisfaction with established methods of teaching and learning outcomes in the oPT. Recommendations for change in the education system are generally at the technical level, being concerned with skills, academic learning and aptitudes for competing in the market. The value of reproducing capitalistic structures tends to be assumed

rather than subject to critique. This falls short of a vision for emancipatory education or a critical pedagogy. Few respondents suggested informal approaches to teaching and learning. While most considered education as a way to improve the condition of Palestinian people, the extent to which it was viewed as a means to transform repressive socio-cultural and political structures and economic disparities was minimal. The following section describes initiatives and programmes in Palestine that feature emancipatory features.

Section 3:
Palestinian Emancipatory Education Initiatives

For over two decades there have been Palestinian initiatives focused on emancipatory approaches to teaching and learning. While some have been more successful and sustainable than others, they all mark advancement in educational provision and opportunities. More recently, new programmes have arisen in Palestine that extend the range of emancipatory models. This section of the report provides a description of programmes that include some that predate Palestinian educational self-governance and some more recently established. The 10 programmes or initiatives listed below are presented in this section.

1. The Colourful Neighbourhood
2. The Salman Halabi Forum
3. The Teacher Creativity Centre
4. Afkar for Educational and Cultural Development
5. Campus in Camps
6. Ziad Khaddash's critical pedagogy
7. Teachers Leading the Way
8. Filastiniyat's Palestinian University Debate League
9. Ashtar Theatre: Theatre of the Oppressed
10. Tamer Institute for Community Education

What follows is a brief overview of each of these 10 programmes.

1. The Colourful Neighbourhood initiative

Deir Al-Latin Neighbourhood, Al-Zaitoun Quarter
Gaza City, oPT

The Colourful Neighbourhood initiative in the Al-Zaitoun Quarter of Gaza City, while not being explicitly an educational programme, is nevertheless an emancipatory activity which has a great to tell us about education. It is a unique example of a community's determination to transform their suffering and destruction into beauty and joy. Residents of the Deir Al-Latin neighborhood recently came together to change their environment from one characterised by gloom to one characterised by optimism. They did this by painting the walls, alleyways and plant pots of the neighborhood in a kaleidoscope of bright and cheerful colors. Since then Deir Al-Latin has become an attraction for residents of adjacent neighborhoods and

curious Gazans, and has been taken up by the Tamer Institute for Community Education.

The project was spearheaded by Mohammad Al-Sa'eedi, a paint labourer in his 50's who took it upon himself to improve his and his family's living conditions in the way that he could. Drawing on his talents in the art of decor, Mohammad, also known by friends as the 'Doctor of colour selection,' decided to beautify the outside of his home by painting it in 'happy' colors. Using affordable local materials, his work caught the attention of his neighbors who asked to join in. Eventually, the entire neighborhood of Deir Al-Latin came together in a collective endeavor that reaffirmed their individual and collective agency in the face of the continuing Israeli siege. The project brought together all segments, young and old, men and women, with all contributing in kind or in labour. Eventually, the alleyways of more than 50 homes were transformed into an oasis of aesthetic delight, where plastic buckets and tires became decorative pieces, and where dirty walls covered with graffiti and political slogans became neutral grounds for all to enjoy.

The Colourful Neighbourhood attests to the power of community action to enable individuals and entire communities to transform their realities into visions of the possible. Drawing on local strengths and employing available resources, residents of Deir Al-Latin have learned that they are independently capable of changing undesirable conditions for better ones. This liberates them from the need for outside agents, whether political representatives or foreign experts and funders to act on their behalf. Below are comments that illuminate the experiences of some of the Deir Al-Latin residents:

> *We used bright colors to inject some happiness and joy into the lives of the young and old. This is very therapeutic, especially the young who are devastated by wars and destruction. So I call upon all the people of Gaza towards an intellectual revolution, towards the aesthetic.*
>
> *Seeing people coming together was a beautiful thing. I wish all of Gaza could cooperate in this way.*
>
> *A message to the world that Gaza deserves life and beauty*
>
> *Gaza is not a graveyard for the dead. It is creative in the art of life.*
>
> *We broke daily routine. We challenged our reality. We showed the world that we are a life-loving people, despite our miserable conditions. Through these colours and neighbourhood cooperation we proved our love of life.*

This initiative demonstrates very well the power of collective action around an aspect of culture. At the centre of this activity is the exercise of agency within the context of social solidarity. This is an emancipatory initiative unlike any of its kind in Gaza where an act of hope has replaced a landscape of despair.

2. The Salman Halabi Forum

Popular University
Occupied Palestinian Territories
decolonizenow@gmail.com
Facebook page: ttps://ar-ar.facebook.com/decolonizenow

The Salman Halabi Forum (SHF) for Colonial Studies and Knowledge Liberation is part of a Popular University that strives to liberate knowledge dissemination from institutionalised centres of learning. SHF was founded in 2012 by a group of educators and youth who were disaffected and alienated from conventional universities and colleges. Programme activities are founded on the centrality of the Palestine cause and has two aims: the first is concerned with the study and illumination of colonial systems of knowledge in a manner that transcends academic research without negating it; the second is concerned with stimulating the development of emancipatory educational models drawing from international and local experience. The focus on national and indigenous culture is aimed at generating discussions about contact with colonial systems of oppression and subjugation. The Forum takes its name after an early 19th century rebel from the Levant who travelled to Egypt through historic Palestine to stab to death the leader of the colonial French army with a knife that he took from Gaza.

The Forum has two educational objectives. The first is to subject the colonial regime in Palestine to serious study in order to reveal and analyse its tools and instruments. The second is to draw on revolutionary and emancipatory experiences for raising a combative awareness among people that takes the Palestine cause as the focal point for any project.

The Forum rests on the assumption that knowledge is a right for all. Accordingly, attendance is free of charge with the only requirement being regular participation. Provision takes the form of a lecture and seminar series led by knowledgeable individuals. Programmes are announced on its Facebook page and through local, media. The Forum rejects both institutional awards such as diplomas or degrees, and the concept of academic titles.

3. Teacher Creativity Centre
Ramallah, West Bank
www.teachercc.org

The Teacher Creativity Centre (TCC) is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation devoted to promoting access for Palestinian children and youth to quality education in a manner that ensures commitment to, and integration of, the values and standards of human rights and democratic practices. TCC was established in 1995 by a group of teachers who felt that the first intifada had changed teacher-student relations in the oPT to a non-authoritative, cooperative model that should be sustained. Thus TCC owes its origins to a desire to transform pedagogic practices for emancipatory learning.

TCC is founded on the belief that 'democracies need democrats.' This insight forms the core precept of their civic education programme. Programmes are aimed at creating an informed Palestinian citizenry that is actively involved in governance. TCC strives to equip Palestinian children and youth with necessary competencies, locally-sourced knowledge and the skills and tools that enable them to intervene responsibly and effectively in the political and civic aspects of public life in Palestine. TCC works with the Ministry of Education to fortify the national curriculum's civic studies with programmes and interventions that enrich democratic practices and raise social and political awareness. Focus is given to the educational professional community and to enhancing teacher competencies and skills in facilitating human rights.

TCC's civic education programme works by enabling teachers to develop children and young people's civic disposition and confidence, civic knowledge and civic skills. This is done through the following four sub-programmes:

Foundations of democracy: This is concerned with building the capacities of teachers and school students in 'Concepts & Foundations of Democracy'. The sub-programme is focused on the concepts of justice, responsibility, authority and privacy. Case studies and scenarios are employed to generate activities designed for a better understanding of the concepts.

Citizenship: Through problem-solving techniques, students start to identify and list developmental problems and the concerns of their communities. After selecting the most urgent problems, students start gathering information on the public policies, and legislation related to this concern or problem. Then, students are required to suggest solutions for this concern or problem, selecting finally the most applicable one through voting. This is followed by dialogue with various social and

development actors to obtain a social recognition for the selected solution, and advocacy for its adoption.

Democratic debate: This is concerned with building the capacities of school students in debating techniques, public speaking, research and other related topics. Good listening skills and respect for others' opinions are emphasised.

Social audit: Students are empowered and coached to monitor and audit developmental projects implemented by the government in their communities to combat corruption, promoting the values of accountability and transparency in the society and holding the government accountable to the citizens.

TCC's continued operation for 20 years now attests to its contribution to the democratisation of Palestinian society through the development of teacher capacities for facilitating and enriching civic studies. An example of the social audit stands out in the village of Deir Ballout where a group of 9th grade girls conducted a project called 'sarkhit niswa,' Arabic for 'Women's Shout', in which they exposed the exploitation of female farmers, who make up 90% of the village's labor force. The girls invited municipality and ministry officials, confronting them with socio-economic injustices faced by these female farmers. The project created an environment that nurtured social and political awareness within the entire school and in the village.

4. Afkar for Educational and Cultural Development
Ramallah, Palestine
www.afkar.ps

Afkar is an NGO founded in 2009 for the purpose of contributing to the improvement of the educational and cultural systems in Palestine. By enhancing the quality of education in schools, universities, summer camps and other educational and cultural centres, students can become proactive members of society, capable of positively influencing the local and international community. Afkar strives to cooperate with national, regional and international actors for more effective learning development. Successful projects in target schools are envisioned as models in the Palestinian educational landscape. Afkar was founded and is currently run by a team of dedicated teachers and educators set on empowering future generations of Palestinian youth.

Afkar has been primarily working to develop two pillars that are fundamental to its mission. The first is student empowerment and self-esteem necessary for exercising

leadership for human rights, democracy and the promotion of civic values. The second is capacity building for local educational partners to foster safe, creative and engaging learning environments for Palestinian youth. Afkar adopts a participatory approach to education that strongly rests on sound pedagogic principles. The traditional, transmission form of teaching where teachers are the source of knowledge and students are passive recipients is shifted to a more engaging dialogue between the facilitator and the learner. The approach features a process of reflection and action, which, according to their programme manager 'requires the ability to educate by valuing the contributions of the learner.' A central feature of this approach is the development of critical thinking and analytical skills.

Afkar employs debate as a means to foster a culture of dialogue and tolerance of opposing views and ideological positions. Students are taught the techniques of rational debate through the development of analytical and critical skills. In 2009 Afkar initiated a debating programme in four state-run schools. The programme's initial success led the Ministry of Education to expand it the following year into 140 schools. By 2012 the Palestinian National Debate Championship (PNDC) was inaugurated and conducted in all 17 government directorates.

PNDC is a year-long debating programme that coaches 10th and 11th grade students in their participation in national debates. In addition to developing higher order thinking, the programme focuses on the role of values, practices and attitudes in arguments and reason. Topics are generated by students and based on local realities in order to foster engagement and authentic learning. The programme works in the following way: Afkar works with the Heads of Student Activities in each Directorate; they train ten teachers in ten different school. Teachers then select and coach ten students on the techniques of debate. Students participate in intra-directorate debates, from which four are selected and given advanced workshops for national competition between the 17 directorates.

PNDC continues to have wide-reaching impact. Over one hundred schools and more than a thousand students are involved annually. The activity is supported by more than 200 supervisors and co-ordinators within the participating schools. Debating clubs have been established in schools to promote sustainability. The following comment from a supervisor illustrates the positive response from the professionals involved.

> *For the first time ever, I have got fruitful and enjoyable trainings that boosted my spirit and willingness to work hard with my colleagues.*
>
> (A Directorate Supervisor)

This comment from a student shows the enormous educational potential of this initiative.

> *For me, being a debate contestant has given me a great opportunity to discover my abilities in oratory skills which helped me practice my critical thinking skills and encouraged me to read more to be able to logically convince others.*
>
> (A student participant)

There seems to be no doubt that this programme fosters the values of rational dialogue and democratic engagement. The capacity for participatory education is equally enhanced.

5. Campus in Camps
Palestinian Refugee Camps
Southern West Bank
www.campusincamps.ps

Camps for Campus (CfC) is an informal university set in Palestinian camps in the Southern West Bank. The English term for university in Arabic translates into 'Al-Jami'ah,' which literally denotes a public place for assembly. Accordingly, CfC is a public space that seeks to use the adverse political and social conditions of life in refugee camps as transformative learning opportunities for communal-driven interventions. The origins of this programme date back to 2007 when an ongoing dialogue between the UNRWA Camp Improvement Programme, directed by Sandi Hilal and the Refugee Camp Communities of the Southern West Bank matured into CfC. Formally inaugurated in 2011, CfC is a not-for-profit organisation initially funded by the German government and subsequently through international and European agencies.

CfC aims to join theory and action to foster an approach to learning in which the environment of the camp becomes a vehicle for learning and involves project-based interventions. Young, motivated Palestinian refugees who are interested in engaging their communities are provided with the intellectual space and necessary infrastructure to facilitate debates and translate them into practical community-driven projects. Activities respond to the communities' urgent desire to explore and produce new forms of representation transcend the static and traditional symbols of passivity and poverty to achieve enhanced agency and social renewal. The CfC structure is constantly reshaped to accommodate the interests and subjects born from

the interactions between the participants and the social context at large.

The initiative engages young participants in a two-year programme. In the first year, they focus mostly on establishing a common language and a common approach through a process of unlearning layers of alienating knowledge. This is achieved through education circles, seminars, lectures and the publication of the Collective Dictionary - a series of publications containing definitions of concepts considered fundamental for the understanding of the contemporary condition of Palestinian refugee camps. Academics and guests not from universities give lectures and seminars on citizenship, refugee studies, humanitarianism, gender, research methodologies and public art. The first year culminates in a two-day open public presentation wherein participants develop publications that represent a new form of collective learning and knowledge production.

The second year situates learning as a product of experiential activities and social engagements. Knowledge is created through gatherings, walks, events and urban actions involving direct interaction with camp conditions and camp communities. The camp is transformed from a purely humanitarian space to an active political arena in which a variety of 'common spaces' are created. New spatial and social formations emerge that transcend the idea of the camp as a site of dispossession, poverty and political subjugation. Among these spaces are the 'Garden for socialising', the 'Square as a common learning area', and the 'Pathways: a venue for reframing narratives'.

Although CfC remains in its infancy, the first two-year programme represents a unique and successful experiment in relocating university learning from the elite and exclusive confines of the institution to open spaces where daily experiences are lived. Knowledge building is reclaimed by common people and is shifted to places of daily activities. The following statements reflect the experience of participants:

> *Campus in Camps is a place where everything around us has new meanings and dimensions that are connected to the reality of our lives.*
>
> (Ahmad Lahham)

> *It is the only place where the doors of creativity are open.*
>
> (Needa Hamouz)

> *A place where we meet to learn to unlearn and become co-authors of what we say and define.*
>
> (Isshaq Al Barbary)

> *It is a trip into reality, where we can work on ourselves without outside*

influences. It is where I found the spirit I had been searching for.

(Ayat Al Turshan)

It is evident that, through this radical reworking of the idea of the university that refugees in camps are empowered to create the kind of knowledge that serves their needs and enables change in their political and social conditions.

6. Ziad Khaddash's critical pedagogy

Short story author, Arabic language and creative writing teacher
Amin Al-Huseini Boys' School
Al-Bireh/Ramallah, West Bank, oPT

Ziad Khaddash is a published short story writer who for 19 years has been teaching Arabic language and creative writing to middle grade students in a state-run boy's school in Al-Bireh, West Bank. Ziad is an example of an individual attempting single handedly to foster emancipatory teaching and learning inside a public school classroom situated within a conservative Muslim community. He employs critical pedagogy to engage his adolescent students in transformative learning.

For Ziad one of the fundamental aims of education is to enable individuals to exercise their creative potential in order to enjoy life. This he believes is being obstructed by the current Palestinian education systems through top-down forms of instruction and authoritarian-styled classroom and school environments. The repetitive, routine nature of the academic year and monotonous professional interaction is equally stifling to teacher creativity. For him schools are prisons for teachers and learners alike; he considers that they are equally victimised by restrictive educational mandates and repressive socio-cultural structures.

Ziad's teaching methods are highly unusual in formal education settings. He challenges orthodoxy by creating learning opportunities that deviate from the routine teaching and learning practices and facilitate 'seeing the unusual in the usual.' Some of his methods are outlined in brief below:

- Planning with students a joint escape from school by jumping over the fence as an act of protest against the authoritarian schooling system.

- Going with students on an excursion to the historic Palestinian city Jaffa, in modern-day Israel, to witness the ocean in order to broaden imaginary horizons.

- Conducting a lesson while having students stand on chairs to question the normal.

- Having students scream at the top of their voices to express rage and to experience the aftermath.

Ziad's methods are highly purposeful, whereby he explains thoroughly to students the aims behind such activities. Far from merely cathartic exercises, he incorporates reflection and critical thinking to enable students to 'comprehend something new' and shift traditional modes of thinking. After exercises representing an act of protest, students are guided to express their position, defend it and fight for it. This is done through narrative writing.

To advance students' literary creativity, Ziad has established the Lovers of Mahmoud Darwish Club, named after a prominent Palestinian poet, which aims to enhance students' self-confidence, cultivate creativity and release individuality, aspects that Ziad believes are being neglected by both the school and home.

Before employing unconventional teaching approaches Ziad confers with the school principal for approval. Hence, activities are thoroughly considered for potential risks or threats. The principal's support is instrumental for facilitating such activities. On his part, the principal consults with Ministry officials. Ziad indicates that the latter's response is usually neutral, preferring to maintain equivocal about his initiatives.

Ziad's work has had a profound influence on students and colleagues. Videos of his pedagogic approach and of student accounts, posted on Youtube, show self-assured, agential and critically-minded students expressing themselves confidently and with purpose. A former student of his, currently at university, says that because of Ziad's teaching his 'thinking has no boundaries.'

Ziad's critical pedagogy has also changed the school principal's perceptions of student capacities for creativity and innovation, especially in relation to those whose level of academic performance has been perceived to by mediocre. Less engaged adolescents have been transformed into active, productive students in school. The Ministry, however, has remained uninvolved in Ziad initiatives at Amin Al-Huseini Boy's School, showing neither signs of support or disapproval.

7. Teachers Leading the Way

International Teacher Leadership initiative
The American School of Palestine
Al-Bireh/Ramallah, West Bank, oPT
www.teacherleadership.org.uk

Teachers Leading the Way (TLW) is a programme designed to enable teachers to lead educational change and build locally-relevant professional knowledge. Based on the 'teacher-led development work' methodology (Frost, 2013), the programme enables teachers to collaborate within and between schools in order to transform the conditions of teaching and learning. It uses strategies, tools and techniques developed within the UK-based HertsCam Network (www.hertscam.org.uk) but adapted for the Palestinian context. TLW is a recent extension of the International Teacher Leadership initiative supported by activists and researchers in 17 countries (see Section 4).

The programme is predicated on the key values of moral purpose and human agency, where teachers are supported to exercise leadership in the drive for purposeful, community-driven learning. Leadership is conceived as a non-hierarchical, participatory practice of influence that invites all teachers, regardless of role, status and authority, to take action for change and innovation.

TLW is a year-long school-based intervention guided by a framework that offers strategies, procedures and tools to guide teachers through their leadership of development projects initiated and designed by themselves. Participation is voluntary with support groups including between eight and 15 teachers. An experienced member of staff at the school guides programme activities, which include group sessions, individual supervisions, network events, an annual conference, a portfolio of evidence and certification. The programme is very cost-effective which encourages school adoption and the convenience of being school-based facilitates teacher participation.

Interim findings from the first year of development in Palestine, indicate the extent to which TLW has been successful in empowering teachers to lead educational change and transform their views of learning. Evidently, in one school in Ramallah, teachers are responding positively to the opportunity to exercise leadership.

8. Filastiniyat's Palestinian University Debate League
Ramallah, West Bank, oPT
www.filastiniyat.org

Filastiniyat was founded in 2005 as a not-for-profit media organisation committed to ensuring and supporting the equitable participation of Palestinian women and youth at all levels of public discourse. With branches in both Ramallah and Gaza, Filastiniyat has a wide range of programmes that promote gender awareness, gender-empowerment and voice. These include the Female Journalist Club, the Feminist News Agency and the Filistinyat Online Radio which provides airtime opportunities for emergent female journalists. They also support youth related activities such as the Youth Economic and Social Empowerment and Youth Community Empowerment programmes. They also engage in media monitoring, research, networking and advocacy.

An important branch of the Youth Community Empowerment programme is the University Debate League (UDL), established in 2013 to promote democratic practice and a culture of dialogue. UDL involved ten universities from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Within each university, UDL team members trained 86 students between the ages of 18 and 25 in debating skills that include critical analysis, argumentation, reason, logic, rationality, proof, acceptance of opposing views and openness to disagreement. Universities proposed participants on the bases of character, achievements, acumen and knowledge. Debates were held within each university from which a 3-student group was selected and given additional training and preparation. A national competition generated finalists from the West Bank and Gaza strip, who then competed for first place.

Filastinyat relaunched UDL in 2014 in an effort to sustain democratic practices and cultures of dialogue amongst youth in university settings. Participants from 2013 were included in the new cohort as a way to embed debating skills among the previous members, foster continuity among students and enhance capacity building. Filastiniyat is currently negotiating conducting UDL in 2015.

Participating universities from the West Bank include: Arab American University, An-Najah University, Al-Quds University, Politechnique University, Hebron University, Bethlehem University, Al-Ahliyeh University and Birzeit University. From the Gaza Strip: Al-Azhar University, Al-Aqsa University, Islamic University and Palestine Polititechnique University. UDL incorporates a single debating team made up of Palestinian students from Israeli universities.

The impact of UDL is best relayed from the point of view of participating students. In Gaza the programme is the first of its kind to promote a culture of dialogue through debate among youth and university students. Some students commented on

the power of dialogue and its connection to their personal development more broadly as illustrated below:

> *Dialogue in front of an audience means a stronger character.*
>
> *I have a calmer approach to dialogue. I no longer feel entrenched in my thoughts without having a background about it.*

Some students talked about the impact of participation on their personal and inter-personal skills.

> *I have more information and am more capable of analysis.*
>
> *It made a difference in my life on the personal and knowledge levels.*
>
> *It made a difference in my relations with people and within society.*
>
> *It taught me how to convince the other, developed within me a merry personality and the ability to mix with people.*

Involvement in this debating activity clearly helps to foster tolerance for the viewpoints of others as indicated by the following comments.

> *It has influenced my life by helping me to see things in more than one way and from different perspectives.*

The fact that this activity involves networking across a number of universities was noted as a particular benefit.

> *An activity that we rarely get a chance to experience from within our universities.*
>
> *Despite the competitive atmosphere and the desire to win, participants had a desire to develop good relations with students from other universities.*

Evidently, the University Debate League is making a significant contribution to civic life in Palestine.

9. Ashtar Theatre: Theatre of the Oppressed
Ramallah, West Bank
www.ashtar-theatre.org

Ashtar is a theatre production and training organisation with a progressive international vision. The aim is to promote creativity and commitment for change through a unique combination of specific training and acting programmes, services and theatre performances. The theatre targets Palestinian youth and international participants and travels to remote areas in the oPT to reach marginalised people who are unable to access its programmes and services. Ashtar is the vision of Edward Muallem and Iman Aoun, two prominent Palestinian actors who established the theatre in Jerusalem in 1991. Ashtar is the first theatrical training organisation for youth of its kind in Palestine.

Through theatre education and performances, Ashtar equips young Palestinians with essential skills that go beyond acting. In addition to an increased level of self-awareness and confidence, Ashtar's training methodology helps develop social skills such as leadership, communication and teamwork skills. Through inclusion of an international dimension, Palestinian youth engage in a global space that fosters cultural exchange and promotes awareness of local and international social and political issues, where a commonly passive audience is transformed into proactive and involved participants. Theatre at Ashtar is a means to unleash the creative potential of youth for individual empowerment and social transformation, a vital and engaging democracy-building tool.

One of the most exciting of Ashtar's programmes is their Theatre of the Oppressed. This draws on the international movement started in Brazil in 1970s, which aimed through drama to create a platform for social and political awareness. Theatre of the Oppressed promotes an interactive dialogue and commitment for change within Palestinian society by fostering democratic practices among young Palestinians. This is done through its integrated methods approach where audience members are invited to join in performances by contributing their own interpretations and making changes to the storyline.

Ashtar's team annually produces a Forum Theatre play that covers an essential critical topic and is performed widely to Palestinian audiences. Several training programmes are conducted annually in Palestine, the Arab world and internationally, to promote Ashtar's emancipatory vision. Every other year Ashtar celebrates the enhanced creativity of its participants' by holding an International Theatre of the Oppressed Festival throughout the West Bank and Gaza. Participating actors and organisers came from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sweden, South Africa, Germany, Portugal, Brazil and Norway. Their experiences have been captured on video material and serve to illustrate how the process works. For example, an actor from South Africa commented on the way audience members are invited to join in.

> *People stepped in really fast, which was interesting because it's also the context of Palestine. Where in other places people will take a longer time to step in; but I think people stepped in really fast… In contexts where you have intensified oppression people respond faster. Where you have a sense of neutrality, like in Canada and other places people take a longer time to respond.*
>
> (Rozena Maart, international participating actor, South Africa)

An organiser from Brazil highlighted the important role that theatre has in illuminating the reality of oppression.

> *To stimulate people to believe, not from people from the outside, but through yourselves. Like this (apartheid) Wall in Palestine that you pass every day, after a year you cannot see it anymore. The theatre lets you see again what you are not able to see… It makes you conscious, aware of the daily reality… We stimulate people to represent their problems and to see their problems because in daily life many women are oppressed but they don't see their problem… We help people to understand the problem and what they could do in the future the next time it happens.*
>
> (Barbara Santos, General Coordinator, Theatre of the Oppressed, Brazil)

The example of this programme tells us a great deal about the emancipatory power of creative fields such as theatre.

10. Tamer Institute for Community Education
Ramallah, West Bank and Gaza Strip, oPT
www.tamerinst.org

The Tamer Institute for Community Education is a not-for-profit organisation founded on the belief that the absence of environments that foster learning and critical thinking are at the root cause of the deterioration of quality performance and the lack of development in modern Palestinian society. Tamer was founded in 1989 by Dr. Munir Fasheh to promote community education. This coincided with the rise of grassroots movements in response to Israeli repression and the severe restriction of provision within the education system following the first *intifada*. Neighbourhood Committees oversaw the continuation of education through popular means. However, Tamer remained critical of the nature and methods of teaching and learning that were being promulgated. Despite statistics indicating Palestinians in the oPT and the diaspora to be among the most educated in the Arab world, Tamer was critical of the transmission mode of teaching that does not promote critical thinking and transformational learning. The Institute saw a need for an approach that facilitated individual and community empowerment to change the social and political conditions of Palestinian society in the oPT. While Tamer did not underestimate the

oppressive and destructive impact of the Israeli occupation, it sought to foster change to counter oppressive structures, both political and hegemonic.

Tamer works with children and young adults to promote reading and the expressive arts including art, drama and theatre, in order to create opportunities for reflection and self-expression. By focusing on youth as the hope for the future, the Institute seeks to provide spaces and opportunities for young Palestinians to narrate their personal stories in order to promote self-efficacy and agential practices. Explorations of personal experiences through creative writing and reading are Tamer's approach to self-empowerment and personal change. Youth group programmes are similarly employed as a vehicle to cement community and social capital among youth groups that feel marginalised.

Tamer implements its vision through a variety of programmes that include:

- The 'National Reading Campaign in the Palestinian Society' is represented by the slogan: 'Something Awaits you in this World, Stand for it!'. It is a campaign that aims to: 'irritate silence and stillness, and to shake the feelings of weakness and marginalisation [calling] out for community members to read despite our difficult living situation'. A 20 year old volunteer said this:

When I started participating in Tamer's the National Week for Reading at Tamer I had no idea that I would feel such internal change. Things have changed in a significant way for me.

- The bi-monthly supplement in Al-Ayyam, a major Palestinian newspaper, is led by young people. Its executive and editing committees are made up of young people between the ages of 14 and 21.

- The Kharabesh Gallery is a cultural space for young artists to express their creativity.

- 'Serb' is a programme that supports a group of young people who use drama and photography to examine what is happening in Palestine. They travel around the country documenting what they see.

- The Tamer Institute also has a publishing unit that produces books containing stories for children and young adults. These books engage young people and stimulate their imaginations and have won several awards.

The comment quoted below illustrates the transformative power of publishing for young people.

I was merely a student living in Jerusalem, with hopes, dreams and personal identity. I always doubted that one day I'd be able to express it. When I wrote for the first time, I felt embarrassed and feared showing what I'd written to anyone. Yet when I sent it to Yara'at they published it. Since then, I've been writing and writing, and publishing without embarrassment or fear. At that time I joined as a member of the Yara'at editorial board, and have since been editing material and writings sent by youth from all over Palestine.

(Shireen Yasin, 20 years, Jerusalem)

Conclusion

It has been argued in the first section of this report that the education system in Palestine suffers from a history of external interference and unhelpful 'policy borrowing'. However the brief descriptions of these 10 examples of inspirational home-grown programmes clearly shows that there is a wealth of outstanding practice from which we can derive principles that can guide the development of education policy and innovations in pedagogical practice.

Section 4:
International Emancipatory Education Initiatives

This section describes a sample of international approaches to emancipatory education that have potential for adaptation in the Palestinian setting. Programmes were selected according to the extent to which they include elements of emancipatory pedagogy and have implications for the principles on which the development of policy and innovation might be based.

Some of the programmes presented here are targeted at students. Schools around the world, mostly in developed and industrialised nations, are adapting to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world. Increasingly, initiatives aim to expand the sources, processes and tools of learning beyond the school. Programmes focus on developing students' agency through inclusive, purposeful, relevant and action-based forms of learning. They were selected for their success rates and potential adaptability for different educational and socio-cultural contexts.

As indicated in earlier sections of this report, emancipatory education has to involve consciousness raising for teachers. Increasing access to information through technological advancement renders traditional transmission modes of pedagogy obsolete. Consequently, teaching, in both formal and informal educational settings, has to become facilitative to enable learning and growth. In developed countries there are signs that teacher education and professional development are adapting to meet these changes. For teachers to become agents of emancipatory education they need to embrace a pedagogy focused on empowerment, enhanced agency, collaboration and action. One of the programmes presented below is an international one that employs emancipatory methods to empower teachers to become agents of change in their profession, school community and educational system.

Emancipatory learning is strongly linked to adult and community education. One of the reasons for this is the potential to generate knowledge that is useful and relevant. For adults this is indispensable given life commitments, responsibilities, and time constraints. Unless learning aims to improve present conditions it is unlikely to attract adult interest. Similarly, communities rarely come together unless there is something to be gained, a common good. Through local empowerment initiatives, communities and adults are enabled to gain control over the factors and decisions that influence their lives. This goes beyond involvement and participation, and implies ownership and action that explicitly aims at social and political change. Two of the programmes presented here aim to empower adults and communities through health improvement and agricultural development.

Seven programmes are presented in outline below in the form of a brief description with reference to further readings.

1. Alternating Pedagogy
2. Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together
3. Learn to Lead
4. Excuse-me, I'm gonna fight for it! (Com licença, vou à luta!)
5. The International Teacher Leadership initiative
6. Alternative Learning Systems: Health Literacy
7. The Freire Institute

1. Alternating Pedagogy (Pedagogia da alternância)
http://revistaescola.abril.com.br

Schools in Brazil serving rural communities in remote regions have always faced the challenge of student attrition. This is due partly to difficulties in reaching schools and partly to the inconsequential nature of the education received by students. What was needed was a way of enabling students to gain knowledge that is relevant to their daily and contextual realities. In 1969 the Jesuit mission in one Brazilian state started an educational programme aimed at providing students with useful learning opportunities to equip them with the skills needed to manage their rural environments and to reduce challenges to geographic access to schools.

Alternating Pedagogy is designed to alternate the place of learning between school and home. Students attend school for three weeks and spend the fourth in their home environments. School hours are from 7:30 am to noon and from 13:00 to 15:00, between which students apply their learning in the field. Students are taught subjects in the fields of agronomy and ecology in order for them to attend to their family's farms and live stock, and home economics to prepare them to manage domestic life. Lessons given in school are developed into projects that students conduct during their week at home, where they apply the techniques learnt in the classroom. During this time teachers prepare their lesson plans and make field excursions to visit students in their homes. These visits are used to assess the resources available to students and the nature of the projects most practical for students to conduct.

The programme has now been successful in 20 of the 26 Brazilian states. Nearly 260 schools employ the Alternating Pedagogy model, with over 20,000 students participants. Students are reportedly more engaged in their learning and empowered as members of their families and communities. Fewer students are dropping out of school and all of them are spending less time commuting to and from school. In 1999 the Brazilian Ministry of Education regulated Alternating Pedagogy and is

currently considering adopting as a national policy in public rural schools. This has led the community to view work in agriculture as a reason for studying, in contrast to working in agriculture as an alternative to not having academic qualifications. This is prompting students to further their university education in fields of agricultural and other related fields such as agronomy and forestry.

2. Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together

Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together (YATST) is a secondary level school-based programme in the US that enables students to take responsibility for their own learning by collaborating with adults in the educational system. YATST is underpinned by the belief that:

> increased student engagement and adult-youth partnerships ensure that each and every student has the skills, self-confidence, and opportunities to assume meaningful roles in shaping their learning and their lives.
>
> (http://www.upforlearning.com)

The programme provides schools with training and ongoing support to help students redesign their learning and contribute to the growth of learning communities based on democratic practices.

YATST focuses on youth-adult partnership and the idea of students-as-researchers as vehicles for school improvement and enhanced student learning. Students collaborate with adults and various members of the community to conduct action research in deliberate and purposeful ways to understand and address issues that are relevant to all parties involved. They gather data about issues of importance to them, their schools and communities. They engage in collective analysis and reflection in which student teams lead discussions with both students and teachers to generate dialogue as a basis for improving school learning. This dialogue creates a shared vision that leads to action. YATST enhances learning by increasing the four Rs: *rigor, relevance, relationships* and *responsibility*.

The programme comprises a network of youth and adult teams committed to building school communities in which learning is engaging for everyone and students are fully involved. Students and schools gather insights that serve to strengthen social ties and ultimately advance the collective good. Both students and teachers shift their thinking to include student viewpoints. Outcomes for both adults and young people include feelings of empowerment and agency, a sense of belonging, new skills and competencies and enhanced ability to communicate with others (Mitra and Biddle, 2012).

3. Learn to Lead

'Learn to Lead' (LtoL) is a UK-based programme that breaks new ground in the field of student participation and engagement. LtoL focuses on students' ability to lead and influence their school community towards school improvement and individual growth. All students are provided with meaningful opportunities to learn and exercise collective agency, making a difference to individual students, schools and the wider community. This creates a greater sense of ownership amongst students, enabling them to learn through taking responsibility, building their confidence and contributing to the individual and collective good. School senior leaders note LtoL's potential to transform the school culture, change attitudes, improve relationships and redefine the nature of learning and teaching (Frost and MacBeath, 2010).

LtoL normally begins in schools with an online, whole-school survey to elicit the views of students and staff about their school and community. The results are then discussed by all students and staff in smaller planning sessions. These are subsequently publicised in the school, after which students throughout the school self-elect to join project teams that focus on the priorities identified. Once formed, the teams are provided with training that aims to prepare them to become self-managing groups in which leadership is shared and reliance on the adult facilitator diminishes over time (http://www.learntolead.org.uk).

The LtoL model moves engagement to a higher level of activity from individuals to team members, while it builds individual leadership capacity. Students are enabled to think for themselves, and act for and with others. The programme: 'offers a coherent and comprehensive approach which allows for flexibility and continues to evolve by being receptive to the experience of the school where it is adapted.' There are two models, one for the primary and another for the secondary levels. Additional information and material can be accessed from their website at www.learntolead.org.uk

4. Excuse-me, I'm gonna fight for it! (Com licença, vou à luta!)

The National Service For Rural Learning
www.senar.org.br

This is one of many distance-learning programmes provided by SENAR – the National Service for Rural Learning - which is a government agency in Brazil with the remit to promote education among the rural population. SENAR's mission is:

> …the development of rural occupational training and social promotion activities for men and women who work in rural areas, as a contribution to upgrade their occupational performance, social integration, improvement of life quality and full awareness of citizenship.
>
> (Gomes & Câmara, 2004)

'Excuse-me, I'm gonna fight for it!' is an online course designed to empower women working in agriculture to become decisive participants in rural enterprise. Through this course, women are provided with guidance about ways to improve their capacity to manage and administer their property, whether as heads of family or as assistants to their husbands.

The course is taught online and is comprised of five modules of 40 hours each. These cover entrepreneurship, financial management, strategic planning, legislation and leadership. The course is free of charge and open to female participants. Individual modules have age and educational background requirements.

5. The International Teacher Leadership initiative

The International Teacher Leadership (ITL) initiative is a programme aimed at enabling teachers to lead educational reform and build locally-relevant and meaningful professional knowledge. ITL draws on the work of the UK-based HertsCam Network where teachers within and between schools collaborate to transform the conditions of teaching and learning. Predicated on the centrality of moral purpose and human agency, the programme enables teachers to exercise leadership in the drive for purposeful, community-driven learning. Leadership is conceived as a non-hierarchical, participatory practice of influence that invites all teachers regardless of role, status or authority, to take action for change and innovation (Frost, 2011).

ITL was launched in 2008 as a response to practitioner and researcher interest in the non-positional approach to teacher leadership and has since been conducted in Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Turkey and UK (www.teacherleadership.org.uk). Recently, the programme was introduced in Egypt and Palestine by local educators who recognised in ITL an internationally adaptive, context-friendly and locally-sourced framework for emancipating teachers in resource-limited, disempowered social and political settings (Ramahi and El-Temamy, 2014).

Teacher-led development work is the methodology used throughout the ITL

initiative. The framework offers strategies, procedures and tools to guide teachers through work on individually selected projects over a time-frame that mirrors the school year. Participation is voluntary with membership of teacher groups ranging between five and 20. An experienced member of the school staff guides programme activities, which include group sessions, individual supervisions, network events, an annual conference, a portfolio of evidence, and certification (Hill, 2014). The programme is cost-effective because it requires minimal support from sources external to the school and, because it is school-based, it is convenient for teachers to participate.

Interim findings in a study in Palestine, indicate the extent to which ITL has been successful in empowering teachers to lead educational change and transform their views of learning. Evidently, in one school in Ramallah teachers are responding positively to ITL (forthcoming Ramahi, 2015). For further information visit the Teacher Leadership website (www.teacherleadership.org.uk).

6. Alternative Learning Systems: Health Literacy

Traditional approaches to adult health education have little or no connection with the learner's real life circumstances or experiences. Questions arise about the value of health literacy programmes: whether they are meeting the needs of service users or whether they are being implemented to reduce health care system costs. Critics argue that much of the advice about the link between health and literacy is Eurocentric and does not take into account the culture, language, or conditions of disadvantaged peoples. Alternative approaches are emerging in which critical health literacy supports the development of social and community competencies by situating health promotion within its social, economic, and political context.

Alternative learning systems (ALS) is a project that was conducted in a small indigenous community in the Philippines to promote community-based health literacy. The intervention is predicated on the recognition that language and worldview form an integral part of indigenous people's lives. ALS uses sustainable health education to strengthen individual and community capabilities, and preserve and celebrate indigenous knowledge, culture and tradition.

The Ayta community was engaged in a year-long project that included several planned activities to encourage community engagement, reflection, and deliberation on health related issues that mattered to the Aytas. Seven community workshops, eight organisational meetings and 13 story telling sessions were held, activities conceived within a participatory action research framework. Culturally sensitive and

appropriate methods were employed to establish rapport and generate knowledge to inform, implement and evaluate collective action.

7. The Freire Institute

Based at the University of Central Lancashire, UK
www.Freire.org

The Freire Institute is a training and research provider that draws its inspiration from the critical pedagogy of Paulo Friere. The Institute builds on the earlier work of the Ecumenical Institute for the Development of People, whose founder and first president was Freire. The organisation seeks to enable grassroots groups around the world to transform their personal and collective realities. Through courses and workshops the institute supports educational programmes intended to raise awareness of the social and political conditions that perpetuate inequalities and guide meaningful change.

One of the Freire Institute's programmes is 'Inspire' which aims to link faith and action. Inspire draws on the spiritual culture of a community to engage its members in a dialogue of values and commitments in the context of their wider social environment. Faith and values are renegotiated as a means to informing vision-building and action for a more socially just world. Workshops are designed to provide participants with a framework to explore the relationship between spirituality, religion and action for justice. Groups are encouraged to share experiences, gain a better understanding of their social environment, develop a clear and meaningful vision and engage in the practical planning that is needed for successful movements. Equally important is that the programme provides hope and inspiration, vital ingredients in enabling people to lead change. Inspire can be tailored for a range of different faith groups.

The Freire Institute is just one of a number of groups inspired by Freirean philosophy. For example, the Centre for Research in the Theories and Practices that Overcome Inequalities (CREA) based at the University of Barcelona has conducted research that directly supports radical action to address social inequalities. Their projects are all based on commitment to dialogic learning and social transformation in community contexts (e.g. García-Carrión & Díez-Palomar, 2015).

Conclusion

The examples presented above have their origins outside Palestine and the point has already been made in this report that there is good reason to be sceptical of externally sourced initiatives. However, there is no doubt that there are valuable lessons to learned from an examination of suitable cases from across the world. It is important to draw from these examples by identifying the principles embodied in the practices at the core of such programmes.

One of the main problems with the policy-borrowing referred to in Section 1 is that it often leads to a centrally dictated change for the whole system. Policy makers too often reach for the levers of implementation when they should be enabling activists and practitioners on the ground to develop practice according to sound principles. In the next section of this report there is a specification of the principles that might be offered as the basis for review and development of practice.

Section 5:
Conclusions and Recommendations

It is argued in Sections 1 and 2 of this report that the situation in Palestine calls for the aims of emancipatory education to be realised in both formal and informal settings. It is recognised that education does not happen solely within schools but also within a wide range of social settings. Some of the obstacles to emancipatory education are also discussed in the early part of this report. Therefore it is important to identify key challenges to the development of emancipatory education. This final section of the report also offers a set of principles which could underpin the development of emancipatory education initiatives.

Ten key challenges for education policy

In developing emancipatory education programmes policy makers and activists of all kinds need to have strategies for addressing the key challenges set out below.

Challenge 1: Debunking the transmission mode of teaching

As discussed in Sections 1 and 2 of this report, a major obstacle to innovation is the widespread belief in the value of the transmission mode of teaching whereby teachers attempt to pass on information to their students who are rendered impassive and incapable of critical thinking and self-directed learning.

Challenge 2: Generating an extended mode of professionality

The evidence presented in Section 2 of this report clearly indicates the need for a body of teachers who see themselves as change agents and advocates capable of taking responsibility for reform and innovation.

Challenge 3: Tackling the fragmentation of policy

In order for emancipatory education to flourish, there is a need to overcome the harmful effects of factionalism in order to be able to work towards a coherent, national policy framework which serves all Palestinians.

Challenge 4: Questioning the value credentials without capacities

In order for emancipatory education to flourish, there is a need to question the widespread assumption that the pursuit of credentials and qualifications alone is the key to personal growth and achievement. While recognising the importance of such cultural capital it is also vital to recognise that capacities and dispositions are even more important.

Challenge 5: Developing a critical perspective

In order for emancipatory education to flourish, there is a need to foster a critical perspective on the social, economic and political realties of life in occupied Palestine. Fatalism, defeatism and acceptance of the status quo stands in the way of what Freire called *conscientization* (1970). Assumptions need to be questioned and alternative perspectives acknowledged.

Challenge 6: Questioning the respect shown to teachers as role incumbents

In order for emancipatory education to flourish, there is a need to question the assumption that teachers should be respected because of their social standing as teachers rather than for the quality of their teaching and their relationships with the communities they serve. The extent to which they enable students to learn in ways that enhance the conditions of life is the key to teacher effectiveness.

Challenge 7: Countering the negative aspects of community pressure

In order for emancipatory education to flourish, there is a need to counter the sometimes negative effect on education of tightly knit communities in which values and expectations can put limits on the participation and achievement of some, especially women.

Challenge 8: Questioning the appropriateness of externally sourced initiatives

In order for emancipatory education to flourish, there is a need to question the assumption that the source of innovation is inevitably external and linked to the priorities and goals of international sponsors. This involves the promotion of local alternatives and initiatives that are sensitive to local conditions.

Challenge 9: Advocacy for initiatives that fit the Palestinian context

In order for emancipatory education to flourish, there is a need to articulate and advocate for a pedagogy that is responsive to the social and political reality of occupied Palestine. This is closely linked to Challenges 5 and 8 above.

Challenge 10: Disseminating accounts of breakthrough practice

As is indicated by the small number of brief outlines presented in this report, there is a need to show the way forward by capturing detailed accounts of breakthrough practice and innovatory programmes which can then be disseminated and studied by teachers and activists throughout the country.

Thirty key principles for emancipatory education

If Palestine is to develop coherent policies designed to support and encourage innovation, it is proposed that the principles listed below could be a useful tool with which to judge the extent to which a particular programme would contribute to the goals of emancipatory education.

To contribute to the realisation of the aims of emancipatory education, a programme, initiative or practice would be guided the following principles.

Principle 1:
Emancipatory education empowers individuals and enhances human agency.

Principle 2:
Emancipatory education features collective action.

Principle 3:
Emancipatory education involves the promotion of joy and optimism.

Principle 4:
Emancipatory education fosters cross-generational interaction and collaboration.

Principle 5:
Emancipatory education enables tangible improvements in social conditions.

Principle 6:
Emancipatory education contributes to consciousness-raising and the development of a critical perspective on social, economic and political realities.

Principle 7:
Emancipatory education helps to build democratic and civic values and develop democratic skills and practices.

Principle 8:
Emancipatory education enables dialogue and debate.

Principle 9:
Emancipatory education provides opportunities for voice.

Principle 10:
Emancipatory education enables and welcomes knowledge creation through action, as well as study and research.

Principle 11:
Emancipatory education identifies new spaces and environments for learning and discourse.

Principle 12:
Emancipatory education fosters creativity in both informal and formal settings.

Principle 13:
Emancipatory education engages young people in meaningful activity.

Principle 14:
Emancipatory education builds leadership capacity.

Principle 15:
Emancipatory education features participation and collaboration.

Principle 16:
Emancipatory education invites and enables teachers to become agents of change.

Principle 17:
Emancipatory education features networked initiatives that connect people across the country.

Principle 18:
Emancipatory education nurtures tolerance and respect for different viewpoints.

Principle 19:
Emancipatory education enables international connection and networking.

Principle 20:
Emancipatory education facilitates the publication of inspirational narratives.

Principle 21:
Emancipatory education encourages participants to extend the scope and intensity of their reading.

Principle 22:
Emancipatory education recognises and responds to local economic, social and political realities.

Principle 23:
Emancipatory education promotes partnerships between students and teachers.

Principle 24:
Emancipatory education enables learners to take responsibility for the learning process.

Principle 25:
Emancipatory education enables everyone to exercise leadership regardless of position or status.

Principle 26:
Emancipatory education fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for learning and the conditions of learning.

Principle 27:
Emancipatory education addresses gender imbalance and contributes to the amelioration of the negative impacts of traditional patriarchal social relations.

Principle 28:
Emancipatory education makes full use of modern, digital technology including the internet.

Principle 29:
Emancipatory education enables teachers to create their own knowledge to free themselves from dependence on 'experts'.

Principle 30:
Emancipatory education seeks local, culturally appropriate solutions.

The principles offered above can be used to inform discussion about the nature of emancipatory education. They could be used as a tool to review current practice and programmes and as a checklist against which to assess the contribution of future proposals.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the specification offered above will be helpful in the search for models of education that can contribute to the personal development of Palestinians and to the development of society in Palestine. Perhaps reform on the basis of these recommendations will create an approach to education that gives Palestinians 'permission to narrate' (Said, 1984), that is to say, to become the authors of their own educational destiny.

It is essential that a clear view of what emancipatory education might look like is accompanied by appropriate conceptions of innovation and change. It is implicit in the examples given in Sections 3 and 4 of this report that the approach to the development of emancipatory education practice should also be guided by the same principles and be focused on the same challenges.

For Palestine, the over-arching challenge is how to legitimise emancipatory models of education, enable the facilitation of such approaches and obtain commitment from all stakeholders including teachers, students, adult learners and community members.

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