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Education and Intra-alliance Conflict: contrasting and comparing popular struggles in apartheid South Africa and Palestine

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ABSTRACT Much recent research has been directed at illuminating the role of education in major conflicts between ethnic groups. It is increasingly well understood that education does not necessarily have a positive, peace-supporting influence, but that the wrong kind of education can serve to reinforce divisions. However, in many conflicts there are multiple fault lines. Even if one central antagonism between two broad groupings can be identified, numerous tensions and divergent interests may exist within each of these groupings. This study examines the hypothesis that the notion of the 'two faces of education' extends to such 'conflicts within the conflict'. In other words, with regard to tensions within groups on the 'same side', education and schooling may also serve either as a unifying force or as a cause of violent disagreement – or both at the same time. This article presents the results of extracting both kind of themes – education as divisive or unifying – from a thorough review of the literature on two case studies: South African education during the anti-apartheid struggle, and the development of Palestinian education in exile and under occupation. While significant differences exist, there are also some common patterns, such as the use of educational privileges to co-opt part of the opposition, the continuation of educational class differentials within broad alliances during and after conflict, and the role of ambiguity in educational discourse in opposition. Both cases support the conclusion that education and schooling can play an ambivalent role at *all* levels of complex conflicts, and that research on 'education and conflict' cannot afford to ignore this complexity.

Introduction

It is increasingly recognised that education does not necessarily play a benign or mitigating role in conflict (although it certainly can). Education can cause, inflame or perpetuate tensions. So far this understanding of the 'two faces of education' (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000) is essentially limited in focus to the way education either unites or divides the different parties to a (inter-)national conflict. What is less well understood is the ways education may promote unity or divisions 'within' these different sides; in other words, among allies on the same side with respect to the overall conflict. On the part of the government (if it constitutes one side to the conflict) negotiating internal disagreements over education might be considered a special case of educational policy making, albeit under pressure. The way educational 'policy' shapes dynamics within liberation movements, on the other hand, requires a different approach. This article examines the cases of Palestine and South Africa in order to analyse the ways educational issues have served either as a rallying point or as a bone of contention for the anti-apartheid movement and among Palestinians respectively. In both cases, the absence of control over schooling provided some room for 'constructive ambiguity' regarding educational goals since trade-offs between different goals did not have to be faced pragmatically. This allowed for quite diverse alliances. On the other hand, because when it comes

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to education and schooling, individual and collective interests can easily be at odds, the question of how to engage with a school system controlled by the 'enemy' is potentially divisive. And when control over education is finally achieved, tenuous alliances that previously constituted 'one side' to the conflict are tested – sometimes to the point of their destruction. The fact that during the first Intifada in the occupied Palestinian territories, the Israeli occupying army closed all schools by force and Palestinian students met for clandestine 'neighbourhood schooling', while, by contrast, at the height of township unrest, it was the black [1] students themselves who were boycotting schools and the South African white military forced students to sit their examinations at gunpoint (reported by Finnegan, 1994), highlights just how differently these dynamics can play out.

This article aims to contribute to our understanding of educational 'policy' making among groups that are not in control of the state policy apparatus, and to deepen our insights into the role of education – and especially schooling – in conflict by extending the notion of the 'two faces' to the dynamics 'within' different fronts.

The two case studies are first examined on their own terms. They are then contrasted and compared, providing additional insights.

The Struggle against Apartheid Education

Brief Historical Background

Much as elsewhere on the continent, formal education for non-Whites in South Africa was initially largely limited to missionary schools, especially in rural areas. With the election of the segregationist National Party in 1948, the missionary schools, together with the rest of the education system, were coercively integrated into the policy of 'Christian National Education'. Based on the mythology of the white 'Afrikaaner' settler society, 'Christian National Education' put the Afrikaaner in the natural and God-willed stewardship of the land and its 'uncultured' population.

Segregation and 'separate development' became state doctrine. Both internally and abroad, this was promoted as a way of allowing each group to live and to educate its children according to its own way of life (see *Stepping into the Future* [1975] for an archetypical example of government propaganda). However, in practice, both the identities and the differential educational goals of the two groups were defined by the white minority.

The policy of 'Bantu education' for Blacks was designed to provide only the minimal schooling necessary as a preparation for menial labour in the rural hinterland. Not only was black schooling deliberately basic, in contrast to schooling for Whites, it was also not compulsory. Disastrous as the effect of this policy was,

> [I]t is unproductive to describe Bantu Education itself as a system of education designed to entrench black racial inferiority in the crude way in which it is often portrayed. If we accept [it as] no more than … a blatant plan to promote racism, inhibit black urbanisation, and to thwart black aspirations, we will underestimate the force of the ideas which underpinned Bantu Education and which made it seem logical, reasonable, and even appealing to a range of people of different ideological persuasions. Such a perspective would prevent us from grasping how education was to be pivotal to apartheid, and we will struggle to dislodge the tenacious hold some parts of its ideology still have on many South Africans. (Kros, 2002, p. 55)

In time, higher education was effectively segregated as well, in the case of some of the traditionally more liberal English-speaking universities against the will of the institutions themselves. A number of new black universities were created during the 1960s to fill the gap left by the exclusion of Blacks from existing white universities. Attitudes towards these black universities remained ambivalent (Gwala, 1988): while they were dismissed by some liberal white academics as 'bush colleges' of inferior quality and institutions of apartheid, they also provided one of the few opportunities for black students to at least struggle for autonomy.

This ambivalence in many ways mirrored attitudes towards the notion of accepting the 'independent' status of black homelands. Based on propaganda needs, the notion of 'independence' was fraudulent since these territories were economically non-viable and entirely dependent on the South African state. Nevertheless, some thought the scope for political expression that the

6

homelands opened up – since 'the homeland leaders alone among Africans had, as a result of their official positions, the prerogatives of free speech, the right to travel within and outside the Republic, and – for practical purposes – immunity from banning and arrest' (Rotberg, 1980, p. 80) – provided an opportunity to subvert the system from within, even without accepting independent statehood.

At the political level, the African National Congress (ANC) and other anti-apartheid parties were banned and driven underground and towards militancy. While the degree of ANC direction is controversial, this militancy came to the fore during the uprisings and school boycotts in suburban black townships. Violent clashes with the police were already making international headlines in the 1970s, but in the 1980s erupted at an unprecedented scale.

Initially, strikes and student boycotts were seen as a medium of political expression by the established popular anti-apartheid organisations, but became highly controversial when youth activists decided to adopt them as a strategy of indefinite duration and to enforce them violently if necessary. Community leaders, educators and parents concerned about the loss of schooling campaigned for a return to school, as working-class youth desperate for job opportunities fought student activists for access (Hyslop, 1988). By 1987, boycotts had ceased as an organised mass phenomenon, but schooling did not return to a state of normalcy. As late as 1990, in one of his first speeches upon his release from prison, Nelson Mandela called upon all black youth to return to school (Lemon, 1995).

With the release of political prisoners by the apartheid government and negotiations over constitutional change on the agenda, it became necessary to start a process of making the expectations with regard to a post-apartheid education system precise and to formulate actual educational policies. While the policy documents prepared or commissioned by the ANC during the negotiations were concerned primarily with establishing principles of non-racism, non-sexism and redress in the education sector (National Education Policy Investigation [NEPI], 1992), subsequent to the elections in 1994 and the ANC's assumption of government responsibility, priorities in educational policy quickly shifted to limit spending.

Rightly or wrongly, it was regarded by the new government as an economic imperative to stabilise government spending (see discussions of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution [GEAR] policy framework in Chisholm et al, 2003). As a result, there was to be very little, if any, (real) increase in absolute educational expenditure. Any investments in formerly disadvantaged schools had to be achieved through redistribution. This risked meaning 'the policy would destroy high-quality schools built up against the odds under apartheid' (Chisholm & Vally, [1996] 2003, p. 272) including formerly 'Coloured' and 'Asian' schools. While under-funded relative to white schools, these had been privileged under apartheid over 'African' schools and were to lose out under an equalisation of funding. These and other complications, notably the issue of provincial autonomy, severely limited the scope to achieve the educational transformation and large-scale integration envisaged during the struggle, even a decade after the transition out of apartheid.

Education and the Anti-apartheid Front

The main interest of this article lies in the two faces that education presents in terms of its meaning for broad alliances on one side of a conflict. On the one hand, education can be a cause of divisions. Some divisions occur over educational 'policy' (to the extent that the term is applicable to non-state actors). Other divisions are caused by education, in the sense that educational stratification within an alliance potentially creates a divergence of interests and or resentment. On the other hand, education can serve to create a united front. Again, this might be either because opposition to educational impositions by the state or opposing forces serves as a rallying point (a kind of 'negative unity') or because self-directed education actively forges a shared identity ('positive unity'). The following sections sketch how some of these facets of education have played out in the case of the anti-apartheid front in South Africa.

Education as a Divisive Factor

Education as co-optation and collaboration. From early on in the history of apartheid, education policy was used very deliberately as a tool for the social control of the non-White population. Such control was of course vitally important in a situation where a minority was to effectively dominate a majority.

This abuse of education policy was evident even before considering the question of content. Both early on in the history of the state and again during the negotiations to end apartheid, the proposal emerged to institute a qualified franchise contingent on schooling, i.e. to grant voting rights only to persons above a certain level of educational attainment (Rotberg, 1980). While this proposal was never implemented as policy, its mere suggestion demonstrates the divisive potential of schooling.

By the time apartheid came to an end, the jurisdiction for schooling for non-Whites was split among a large number of different government departments and the notionally independent homeland governments. The scope for coordination in education among the different categories of 'Coloureds', 'Asians' and 'Blacks' was accordingly severely curtailed, even within the limited autonomy that the first two and the black homelands possessed.

School curricula for all population groups instilled the official ideology of 'separate development': each group 'deserved' to have its own schools tailored to its own specific requirements (cf. *Stepping into the Future* [1975]). 'South African geography, for instance, was described as if factors like the Group Areas Act and the pass laws were as common as industrialization or glacial scraping' (Finnegan, 1994, p. 26). Education within the state system was thus associated with a certain degree of co-optation.

Because the schooling provided by the Government was so clearly part and parcel of the apartheid design, participation in it was tainted with signifying acquiescence. During the uprisings in black townships in the 1980s, some radical youth movements espoused the motto of 'liberation before education', school boycotts were declared and (at times violently) enforced (Hyslop, 1988). This put radical youths at odds with the established anti-apartheid leadership and most importantly with community leaders and parents. While these groups had initially supported limited student strikes as a form of political expression, indefinite school boycotts were a different matter. These were regarded as threatening to create a 'lost generation' and jeopardise the students' future. Accordingly, a 'back to school' campaign was launched with some success (Lemon, 1995).

Class interests and ideology. The possibility of creating divisions among the black population by encouraging the growth of a well-educated black middle class was clearly recognised by the white establishment (Marcum, 1988). On the one hand, the growth of the middle class was an economic necessity, as the white minority was too small to supply sufficient numbers of technicians, engineers and managers to sustain a modern economy, and was accordingly considered by some Whites to be a 'necessary evil'. On the other hand, the notion of a black middle class with a vested interest in political and economic stability held much intrinsic appeal for the white establishment. It appeared as a strategic gain to encourage a black stratum whose self-interest was assumed to be at odds with the ANC's strategy.

In the event, the unintended consequences of this dynamic of growing black economic power would eventually contribute much to the dilution of 'petty apartheid' (day-to-day segregation) and eventually to the downfall of 'grand apartheid' (i.e. political domination). Nevertheless, the strategy of encouraging the emergence of a black middle class was not a complete failure in terms of protecting white privilege. In the post-apartheid 'unified' school system, as in other public sectors, major discrepancies remained. It was a commonplace observation after the transition that racism had simply been replaced with class divisions. The presence of a certain number of non-Whites on the 'right' side of this divide to some extent insulates this state of affairs from criticism based on principles of anti-racism.

After becoming a governing party, the ANC surprised observers by quickly shedding notions of socialist reform and embracing global neo-liberal trends (Nicolaou, 2002). This prompted some speculation that Mandela's willingness to commit to these principles was key to the white government's agreement to a negotiated transition and to securing a vital World Bank loan (Kraak, 2000).

8

One effect of this compliance with neo-liberal trends of the time was that strict fiscal discipline was put ahead of equity concerns in education as well as in other social sectors. With an effective cap on absolute educational expenditure, redistribution had to be achieved within the existing budget, and in practice this problem was framed by policy makers as one of efficiency rather than of justice or redress (Chisholm et al, 2003). As mentioned previously, these developments gave well-off black families access to formerly white schools and universities, but the material context of black schooling changed very little for the vast majority.

On a historical time scale, this shift in priorities was less of a discontinuity from populism to *realpolitik* than it appears. After all, the ANC had initially begun as a parliamentary organisation and remained an essentially elite institution for much of its early history. Only after being banned did it transform into a popular (in the strict sense of the word) movement, and mass mobilisation as a strategy remained controversial for some time.

Another insight that emerged after the restructuring of post-apartheid South Africa was that the differences in the provision of schooling between mostly rural and more highly urbanised provinces were at least as great as those between the different racial school systems had previously been (Kallaway, 1997b). This reflected a legacy of 'farm schooling', where rural black children attended schools run by the farmer on whose land their families worked. The quality of these remote schools was very variable and generally low. Even though the school experience of black students in urban areas had more in common with that of white students than with that of rural Blacks, the inequity along racial lines had long overshadowed the substantial urban/rural divide.

Education as unifying. As seen above, successive white governments deliberately used the schooling of non-Whites as a tool to divide the opposition to apartheid. This policy was implemented quite successfully, and to the extent that a sense of unity existed in the anti-apartheid struggle, it was emphatically not based in a shared socialisation in school.

However, the barefaced indoctrination and inequality in the school curriculum fostered the emergence of a common opposition among non-Whites in a way that more subtle or ambiguous discrimination would probably not have. By the time apartheid was falling, a consensus on a pedagogical ideal based on non-racialism and non-sexism had been firmly established in the liberation discourse. Mirroring the position taken in the constitutional negotiations, namely that the aim for the anti-apartheid front was not power-sharing or an amelioration of the living conditions of Blacks but a complete transformation of the state, opposition to the apartheid school system was remarkably united in the conviction that it had to be replaced, not reformed.

As a result, despite the fact that the amount of real change 'on the ground' was disappointing to many, the post-apartheid education reforms were seen as vitally important symbols of change in the new South Africa. Segregated schooling and school administration had been among the most prominent features of apartheid, and conversely, a unified school system was one of the most celebrated breaks with the past. Politically, it served the purpose of demonstrating that a common goal of those opposed to apartheid had been achieved, even though its symbolic value outweighed its practical consequence and the details of implementation in many ways accentuated social differences among Blacks.

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As the above account shows, formal education – both the notion and the actual practice – were intimately tied up in the practice of apartheid and the struggle against it, but in ambiguous ways that defy easy judgement. Not just between the dominant minority and the majority of non-White South Africans but also among the latter, education had dividing and unifying effects at different levels, some by design, others unintended. As the following section shows, the same can be said with respect to the Palestinian case.

9

The Struggle for Palestinian Education

Brief Historical Background

The history of Palestinian education is tied up inseparably with the history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (for a more detailed overview of this connection, see Barakat, 2007). During the Israeli–Arab 1948 war, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs fled to the neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan and beyond (Pappe, 2006). After the war, these refugees were unable to return to their homes. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established to provide them with basic services, including education.

UNRWA made possible the near universal enrolment of Palestinians at primary level at a time when the majority of people in the neighbouring Arab countries were illiterate. Palestine under the British Mandate between the First World War and the Israeli–Arab war of 1948 had not offered any Arab higher education (Abu-Lughod, 2000). In exile in the 1950s and 1960s many Palestinian refugees were close to urban centres where they could access host country universities, at least until the political climate turned against them a generation later. By the time the new oil wealth in the Gulf States created booming demand for high-skilled labour, Palestinians could credibly claim to be the most highly educated people in the Arab Middle East.

While for many individuals education paved a way out of the destitution of the refugee camps, for the notion of national Palestinian education the situation was a disaster (Sayigh, 1985). UNRWA schools implemented the respective host country systems. At best, these curricula failed to reflect Palestinian identity and national aspirations; at worst, they deliberately sought to minimise them.

In 1967, the territories known as the West Bank and Gaza Strip came under Israeli military occupation. Existing curricula remained in place, but in all other respects schooling came under effective control of the military administration (Van Dyke & Randall, 2002), after having been governed by Egypt in the Gaza Strip and Jordan in the West Bank between 1948 and 1967. Textbooks were heavily censored of any content connected to Palestinian nationalism and identity (Schiff, 1989). Quality suffered as investments did not keep pace with rapid population growth; outdated textbooks were used and teacher appointments were politicised.

Intelligence considerations provide a possible reason why the emergence of Palestinian universities in the 1970s in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) was initially tolerated by the military administration (Sullivan, 1994), as these universities were seen as places were informers could monitor youth activism. In addition, opportunities for university study were thought to provide an alternative to membership in the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). While Palestinian universities were indeed deemed to be 'rife with informers', this did not cause a rift between students and the general Palestinian population. The universities quickly acquired a reputation as centres of Palestinian national achievement, identity and leadership, despite the fact that they were legally private foundations (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003). Eager to underline their position as national and popular institutions, the universities introduced mandatory social service for their students, for example, in the areas of public health or harvesting (Baramki, 1987).

Despite the questionable quality of primary and secondary schooling in the OPT under Israeli military administration and despite Israeli censorship of the curriculum, no fundamental public debate emerged among Palestinians as to whether formal education was worth having. Partly this may be attributed to a preoccupation with certification and credentials that would open employment opportunities in the neighbouring Arab countries and the Gulf States. One way or another, popular commitment to education remained high and attainment and literacy levels, especially of females, continued to rise (Fronk et al, 1999).

In 1987 a popular uprising – the Intifada – erupted in the OTP. Youth were at the forefront of this uprising that took the established Palestinian political leadership in the diaspora by surprise. As a collective punishment, the Israelis forcefully closed schools and universities for months and years at a time. Palestinian educators and their students devised various measures to circumvent these closures. Clandestine 'community schools' sprang up. Take-home and distance learning materials were designed. Everything was done to enable students to continue with their education as it was recognised that Palestinians could ill afford a 'lost generation' (Mahshi & Bush, 1989). Progressive educators took advantage of the situation to experiment with alternative pedagogies. Instead of a

10

necessarily evil, they saw community schools as an opportunity for a fundamental transformation of the education system (Fasheh, 1990).

Tensions between newly emboldened progressive educators and traditionalist Palestinian educators intensified when, after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, a Palestinian National Authority (PNA) took control of schools in the OPT and initiated the development of a national Palestinian curriculum. The committee charged with developing the curriculum framework produced recommendations that were pedagogically radical by any standard (including the abolition of the final school leaving examinations) (Moughrabi, 2004). Implementation, however, was assigned to Ministry officials (Al-Ramahi & Davies, 2002). As a result, the final textbooks betrayed only a diluted progressive influence.

The education system also provided the stage for another battle. For many years, the PLO had dominated the Palestinian political landscape. Palestinian politics had essentially been diaspora politics while, ironically, Palestinians in the Palestinian homeland constituted the 'periphery'. The Intifada, however, had created a local 'street' leadership while the Palestinian universities were also producing local political elites. The PNA, dominated by 'returnee' diaspora politicians, accordingly sought to assert its dominance over these local elites. Higher education was one sector in which this tension was evident. The universities had self-organised a coordinating Higher Committee. While the PNA failed to put the universities under direct government control, it succeeded in incorporating the Higher Committee into the Ministry of Education.

Education and the Palestinian Liberation Struggle

As before, the purpose of this section is to disentangle some of the ways in which education has led to intra-Palestinian tensions (either as a cause or a bone of contention) or conversely contributed to positive and/or negative unity among Palestinians.

Education as a Divisive Factor
Differential class interests. Prior to 1948, Palestinians were a predominantly agrarian society, with a small urban class. Most peasants engaged in subsistence agriculture on communally owned land. By contrast, a few landowners held vast estates. In diaspora, after an almost complete loss of access to land, property ceased to be an effective social stratifier. Education was quick to fill that role. While to some extent the cards were reshuffled and many sons (and to a lesser extent daughters) of modest backgrounds gained access to high-status professions, the middle class was inevitably keen to stay ahead.

> Palestinians with diplomas were able to find jobs easily in the newly developing Arab countries.
> Palestinians without education, capital or modern skills – in other words the mass of the
> peasant/worker/bedouin population – were those who filled the camps. (Sayigh, 1979, p. 6)

While on the whole impressive achievements were made in raising the literacy and education levels of the Palestinian refugees, participation was by no means universal. Sayigh (1979) noted that the absence of fees at UNRWA schools notwithstanding, educational advancement required considerable sacrifices on the part of the refugees, and also that the effect on income levels was modest.

> The gap between the educated and the uneducated that existed in Mandate Palestine [before
> 1948] not only deepened in exile, but also began to create class differences within the masses in
> the camps, discriminating not only in current earning power but, more seriously, in funds
> available for the education of children. ... children who stayed in school longest and got best
> results tended to be from villages that had had schools in Palestine. (p. 119)

Even UNRWA, which focuses largely on primary schooling, has been accused of a bias towards high achievers (Weighill, 1995). In this view, in order not to threaten the status quo, UNRWA has concentrated on assistance to individuals at the higher levels, in the form of scholarships, etc., rather than on attempts to develop an integrated community.

In sum, the argument can be made that the introduction of mass schooling notwithstanding, education among Palestinian refugees has not diminished pre-1948 class divisions. As such, the

11

interests connected to the economic dimensions of a final settlement of the conflict and of a future Palestinian state differ widely between different groups.

National vs. personal liberation. Because Palestinians were dependent on the booming market for highly skilled labour in the oil states, the most 'sellable' skills were determined by conditions in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, rather than by conditions in Palestine or among the Palestinian diaspora. As a result, the drive for professional qualifications did more to serve individuals' personal liberation from poverty than the collective liberation of Palestinians from their state of refugeehood (Nakhleh & Zureik, 1980). Some criticised the Palestinian political and intellectual leadership for celebrating the proportion of university students in the population or other abstract metrics regardless of whether these achievements contributed anything to the liberation struggle (Sayigh, 1985).

Today the dilemma remains. The distribution of students across subjects at Palestinian universities is determined almost exclusively by individual choice rather than by the necessities of nation building.

Education as Unifying

Education and identity. Divisions over educational practice and those caused or maintained by it notwithstanding, the notion of education served as a unifying theme in Palestinian identity. 'Palestinianism' was, of course, closely related to the traumatic experience of dispossession and exile in 1948. This experience in turn was popularly related to education in multiple ways. A recurrent topos in the Palestinian narrative has been that the confrontation with the Zionists had been lost partly because of a lack of education (see below). The homeland had been lost to a more sophisticated enemy who was more highly educated and better trained. Conversely, education would be needed to win the homeland back. This meant closing the technological gap, becoming more politically savvy in the international arena and making sure that a return to Palestine would not mean becoming an economic underclass. Finally, there was the notion that Palestinians had embraced education as their substitute for the lost land.

> Palestinians throughout the Arab region strove for and, indeed, attained higher education. They were driven by a combination of motives: indigenous values that emphasized the virtue of learning, which conferred upper-class status on those who acquired the highest level of learning and professionalism; an expanding market in the Arab states, where most of them found refuge (and thus the need for skilled manpower); and, finally, Palestinian recognition that their 1948 defeat (and the defeat of the Arab states) by Israel was in part related to the superior education of their adversary. The recovery of Palestine and the Palestinian quest for independence and sovereignty was directly related to the acquisition of skills and culture, which are implied in the process of a modern higher education. (Abu-Lughod, 2000, p. 81)

In these ways Palestinian collective preoccupation with education differed from the typical educational concerns of other refugee communities, for a pragmatic desire for schooling is of course far from unique. In Palestinian discourse, however, education assumed an almost 'mythical' character (Graham-Brown, 1984). It came to be seen as one of the few sources of Palestinian pride and as a central element to Palestinian identity. While impossible to determine with any certainty after the fact, it seems plausible that even though this mystique has been criticised for obscuring educational divisions and stratification, it had real effects. For example, the assumed consensus that pursuing education was an important part of being Palestinian would have made it difficult for traditionalists to argue against schooling for girls.

Education as defence. Ultimately, education did not directly succeed in achieving the Palestinian national cause any more than the armed struggle did. Education did, however, erect defences against symbolic and cultural annihilation. In addition to physical repression, Israeli action has repeatedly displayed a pattern of symbolic violence against Palestinians. This ranged from denying their very existence to the deliberate destruction of research centres during the Israeli invasions of Lebanon and the re-occupation of the West Bank in 2002. For many years the creation of a fine art degree course at West Bank universities was prohibited by the Israeli military administration (Fasheh, 1990). In effect, Palestinians have been threatened to be reduced to their mere physical

existence, stripped of the opportunity for cultural, scientific or political expression, a practice that has been described as 'ethnocide' (McBride, 1983) and 'politicide' (Kimmerling, 2003).

Both the existence of a sizeable Palestinian intellectual elite and a highly literate populace that understands this elite have been instrumental in fending off this threat. 'From the moral perspective, large numbers of well-educated individuals within Palestinian society provide some immunity against attempts to dissolve the Palestinian national identity and shred the Palestinian socio-cultural fabric' (Development Studies Programme, 2005, p. 46).

Educational non-policy. The utility of education as a rallying point among Palestinians rested partly on the fact that there was no need to define an educational policy. Fatah, the dominant faction within the PLO, has at times been described as having maintained a constructive ambiguity in terms of ideology (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003). By avoiding an unequivocal placement on the political spectrum or in the religious–secular divide, it served as a 'broad church' for different groups who agreed on the need to liberate the homeland, but who would not have been likely to agree on what kind of society should be built following liberation.

In a similar vein, the very absence of effective control over the curriculum and day-to-day management of the schooling that Palestinians were receiving, whether in Palestine, by UNRWA in the Arab host countries, or further abroad, meant that there was no need to let potential disagreements over education policy boil over. In opposition, the notions that Palestinians should seek to become as highly educated as possible and that a Palestinian national education ought to replace indifferent or hostile foreign curricula were easy to agree on as abstract ideals.

There were only two short spells of PLO-run schools in Kuwait (Aruri & Farsoun, 1980) in the late 1960s and into the 1970s and later in Lebanon (Abu-Habib, 1996) during the civil war up until the Israeli invasion in 1982. In both cases, however, the focus was on complementing the existing curricula with political education, not on the formulation of a comprehensive education policy for mass schooling.

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As in the case of South Africa, schooling and education more generally has played an ambiguous role in the Palestinian liberation struggle. While always a source of disagreement between Israel and the Palestinians, the nature of Palestinian education has also been a source of disagreements among the latter alone. At the same time, it was at times seen as the sole guarantor of Palestinian national survival, underlining the need when discussing and researching 'education and conflict' not to ignore the complexity of dynamics *within* the groups party to a broader violent dispute. The following section aims to compare and contrast the two cases of South Africa and Palestine in order to draw out further insights.

A Discussion of Differences and Similarities

This article focuses on the 'opposition', i.e. non-state, parties in the anti-apartheid struggle and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict respectively. However, the internal dynamics within the opposition groups are of course influenced by the actions of the respective state actors. In discussing differences in the way education and schooling have interacted with the anti-apartheid struggle and with Palestinian nationalism, it is therefore important to take into account differences between the situation and actions of the South African apartheid state and Israel.

In apartheid South Africa, school curricula actively touted racial separation as legitimate and in everyone's interest. While the curricula for Palestinian citizens of Israel similarly actively sought to legitimise the Zionist state ideology, schools in the occupied Palestinian territories evaded such attempts. Expressions of Palestinian and Arab nationalism and aspirations were purged from the Jordanian and Egyptian curricula in use, but Zionist ideology was not actively promoted. The legitimacy of state schools was therefore perceived and presented very differently in the two cases.

> The struggle for political freedom in South Africa has always been closely linked to struggles for
> and around formal education. This has been a complex and ambiguous relationship: education
> has been the prize of democratic victory and the badge of privilege; the educated have been the
> leaders of African liberation movements and the sometimes grateful, sometimes resentful

13

recipients of an education seen, for good or ill, as embodying a Western culture that could offer
knowledge and power but which also gnawed at the roots of African identity. (Morrow et al,
2004, p. 5; see also Soudien & Nekhwevha, 2002)

None of these ambiguous sentiments about education applies in the Palestinian case. The Palestinians' struggle for political rights has never been primarily a struggle over formal education, nor is formal education seen as being at odds with the Palestinians' Arab identity. Accordingly, the feeling of ambivalence towards formal education expressed above was largely absent among Palestinians.

Equally absent was the categorical condemnation of the educational status quo identified by Muller (2000) in the anti-apartheid movement:

all the 'from–to' manifestos of People's Education [displayed] the characteristic chiliastic
certainty that everything in the first column [the status quo of schooling under apartheid] was
politically and educationally bankrupt while everything in the second column [the vision of
People's Education] represented the inauguration of redressive social justice. (p. 61)

By contrast, when the Palestinian National Authority took control of schooling in the OPT, no changes were introduced in the first school year, besides stopping the censorship of textbooks. The attitude towards the existing curriculum was one of dissatisfaction, not outright resentment, and while the Palestinian national curriculum had great symbolic value, its introduction was not accelerated at all cost but allowed five years' development (Moughrabi, 2001).

Maintaining the focus on government actions, the two regimes also had different propaganda needs. Even though the effect of international isolation might have been overstated, apartheid South Africa nevertheless faced a situation where it was perceived by many abroad as fundamentally illegitimate. Visible dissatisfaction of the black majority with state schooling undermined the Government's claim that different education systems for different racial groups reflected different needs, as well as the claim that opposition was limited to a small 'communist' minority. By contrast, even though the violent repression of the first Intifada and school closures in particular led to an all-time low in international support for Israel, it was safe in the knowledge that Western public opinion did not regard it as intrinsically illegitimate and on the contrary that its security concerns continued to be regarded by many as unique.

Any comparison between the two cases must be sensitive to other differences in context. One major difference is that while the ANC in South Africa sought equality within a common system, Palestinians outside of Israel sought autonomy. This has many implications for educational opposition policy. Unequal spending between Jewish schools in Israel and Palestinian schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was never a Palestinian political issue, nor was anti-Arab racism in the Israeli curriculum. The Israeli school system did not serve as a reference point for Palestinian educational debates in the way that the contrasts between black and white education did in South Africa.

In terms of the international relations of the South African and Palestinian opposition groups, there are some similarities in that both initially found the neighbouring countries supportive, but that these relationships became increasingly uneasy or even hostile as South Africa and Israel threatened or implemented punitive measures against these host countries and the revolutionary guests became – or were perceived as – a threat to their sovereignty.

A difference in this context is that in the Palestinian case, the neighbouring countries were not only host to revolutionary Palestinian factions, but also to a sizeable civilian Palestinian population. As a result, experiments in revolutionary schooling took place in the isolation of remote exile in case of the ANC, but in the midst of Palestinian population clusters in the diaspora. The Palestinian experience consisted of short-lived episodes in Kuwait and Lebanon (see above) where the Palestinian refugee camps were run as a 'state within the state'. In both cases, existing host country curricula were not replaced *in toto* (there was no comprehensive Palestinian curriculum to replace them with), but complemented with Palestinian nationalist and political content. Ultimately these episodes had very little historical impact, even though they affected a larger number of students than the ANC's educational experiments in exile did. An example of the latter was the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO) that operated in Tanzania between 1978 and 1992

14

(Morrow et al, 2004). Despite its small size, it was intended to serve as a test-bed for the transformation of mass schooling in South Africa in a post-apartheid future.

In both case studies, the opposition movements employed ambiguity over policy aims to prevent differences of opinion undermining unity behind 'the Cause'. In the South African context, Greenstein (1997) points out how terms such as 'nation-building' and 'non-racialism' functioned

> as an umbrella term that may convey different and even contradictory meanings to various constituencies who can all retain ostensible loyalty to the new orthodoxy even as they come to it from divergent directions. As such it frequently serves to obscure problems rather than clarify disagreements and allow open debate. (p. 137)

The same could be said about the notion of 'democratic education'. As the Palestinian case shows, these disagreements do not necessarily finally surface as soon as some form of schooling is run by the movement. Only if control of this schooling is sufficiently democratic to actually allow for open debate do underlying disagreements surface and does dialogue around objectives emerge. In contrast to the PLO schools that were part of the struggle rather than an anticipation of its end,

> whatever the ANC might do had to be in line with the movement's policies towards education in a future liberated South Africa. Developing the facilities for exiles needed to go hand-in-hand with developing a blueprint for an educational system for a free South Africa. The school, it was argued, would act as a laboratory where theories as to how a dynamic education system, accessible to everybody, could be put to the test. (Morrow et al, 2004, p. 14)

Therefore, 'its foundation meant that the educational ideas of the movement suddenly became not speculative issues for the indefinite future, but matters requiring immediate and urgent attention' (p. 9).

Inevitably, disagreements arose over what exactly these educational ideas were. Even where consensus existed in principle – such as around the prohibition of corporal punishment – these could not be maintained in day-to-day practice. The particular question of corporal punishment emerged again in the new South Africa, where many teachers and parents have been found to be in disagreement with the ban that was uncontroversial at the policy level.

As we have seen, class divisions were, in both case studies, at the same time an important outcome of schooling and a factor undermining unity in educational questions. An important difference is that whereas in the Palestinian case it was an incidental result of the circumstances of exile, in the case of South Africa, this division was partly by design. It is ironic that although the growing economic leverage of the black middle class arguably contributed more to the inevitability of the fall of apartheid than international sanctions did, personal advancement through successful participation in the apartheid school system carried an element of collusion. In the Palestinian case, the matter was reversed: while the impressive educational attainment of the refugees – as a sum of individual success stories – objectively did little to bring them closer to their political aspirations, becoming an engineer, physician or lawyer has been regarded as an indispensable contribution to the Palestinian cause.

Such differences aside, both case studies support the conclusion that it would be naive to think social differences would disappear without a trace in the face of a common enemy. Not only do they survive even radical upheaval and exile; they inevitably shape attitudes towards schooling as the prime site of social reproduction. For the highly skilled, the opportunity costs of putting collective liberation ahead of personal escape from destitution are much higher. Whether the highly or low skilled are set to gain more from either 'winning' the conflict or abandoning it depends very much on context and the post-conflict scenario. In the Palestinian case, destitute and marginalised camp residents in Lebanon might hope to be able to participate more successfully in the economy in a Palestinian state where they would be fully-fledged citizens, while the gains of the entrepreneurial or professional middle class of refugees would be largely political and symbolic rather than material. From a different point of view and under a different set of assumptions, however, the highly educated would be better prepared to exploit the emerging opportunities in a Palestinian state and the low-skilled would remain economically marginalised even in their own state. Arguably, the latter scenario occurred in South Africa. This complexity opens the way for the other party to the conflict to attempt to deepen division by co-opting part of the opposition.

15

The educational dimension of violent conflict should not be over-stated. Not every conflict is connected to education and the same is true regarding intra-alliance divisions. The most important political split within the black South African opposition to apartheid was without doubt the at times violent tensions between the ANC and the 'Inkatha Freedom Party' rooted in Zulu nationalism, tensions that were not primarily about educational questions. On the other hand, even purely political and/or ideological divisions within a camp can have an educational dimension even if they have no explicit educational content. For example, student elections and student politics at Palestinian universities in the OPT have a reputation as being barometers of broader political trends, since different student organisations have implicit or explicit ties with different political parties and factions (Schoch, 1999). In effect, higher education sometimes provides a parallel political arena in which 'external' (i.e. not specifically university-based) political conflicts – both between broad alliances and within them – can be monitored.

Summary

In many modern conflicts there are multiple fault lines. Even if one central antagonism between two broad groupings can be identified, numerous tensions and divergent interests may exist within each of these groupings. These do not necessarily dissect the fronts into easily identifiable factions, but may result in shifting, cross-cutting and overlapping divisions. Education and schooling are a factor to consider both at the level of inter- and intra-group conflict. Much recent research has been directed at illuminating the role of education in major conflicts between ethnic groups. It is increasingly well understood that education does not necessarily have a positive, peace-supporting influence, but that the wrong kind of education can serve to reinforce divisions. These 'two faces of education' also exist at the level of the tensions within alliances. Such tensions may not be defining for 'the Conflict' in question (the anti-apartheid struggle was not generally considered to be about tensions between radicals and the black middle class, nor is the Israeli–Palestinian conflict considered to be about disagreements between Palestinian pedagogical progressives and traditionalists), but can nevertheless have an important impact on the course of events. The discussion above attempts to demonstrate that for these 'conflicts within the conflict' too, education and schooling may serve either as a unifying force or as a cause of violent disagreement. The anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and the Palestinian national liberation movement provide examples for both unifying and divisive effects. While significant differences exist, there are also some common patterns, which might serve to inform a more subtle analysis of the role of education in conflicts elsewhere. These common patterns include the use of educational privileges to co-opt part of the opposition, the continuation of educational class differentials within broad alliances during and after conflict, and the role of ambiguity in educational discourse in opposition.

Notes

[1] While the 'racial' categories of apartheid were social and legal constructs, they nevertheless were part of social reality. As such, it is impossible to discuss this reality without reference to this classification, even if its validity is denied. In the interest of legibility, not every occurrence of the terms 'black', 'white', etc. has been apostrophised. The term 'black' in this context encompasses all 'non-white' groups ('African', 'Asian'/'Indian', 'Coloured'), not 'African' alone.

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18