

PEACE AS A SURPRISE, PEACE AS A DISTURBANCE: THE ISRAELI-ARAB CONFLICT IN OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

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Abstract

The main question that is discussed in this paper is the way in which the Ministry of Education in Israel dealt with the changes in the political reality, and the shift from violent relations towards the possibility of peace agreements between Israel and its neighbours and the Palestinians. Drawing on the analysis of official documents - Director General Directives (DGD) - this paper asks how the possibility for peace was understood by the Ministry of Education and how the role of the education system and educators was defined. It also asks to what extent changes in the political reality have altered the dominant discourses (militarism and peace-loving society) while making room for a more positive form of peace education (Davies, 2005). The analysis reveals that the changes in political reality have led to the articulation of two unique responses, alongside the dominant discourses. They are peace as a surprise and peace as a disturbance. This paper focuses on these two responses and the ways in which they correspond to the militaristic culture and the image of Israel as a peace-loving society, and how they might shape peace education.

Introduction

Conflicts are struggles over resources and power that pervade human life. Argerback (1996: 27, quoted in Davies, 2003:9) observed that “conflict is of course universal [...] any dynamic human system is by nature a conflictive one, encompassing the play of opposing interests.” To a large extent, the character, duration, and outcomes of human conflicts are determined by rivalling parties’ frames of reference and discourses about peace/war. These conceptual discursive framings delineate not only the contested issues but also fundamental assumptions and beliefs about the nature of conflict and the possibilities to address it:

The meaning of the Israeli-Arab and the Israeli-Palestine conflicts¹ - often referred to as ‘THE Conflict’- in Israeli public discourse is dominated by two major images. One portrays Israel as a peace-loving society, while according to the other, Israeli society is facing a constant existential threat. The former accentuates the Jewish tradition and the prophetic End of Days vision, while the latter informs a strong militaristic culture which sees the military and military service as symbols of statehood.

These images are also found in education policies, activities and curricula. However, though schooling plays a pivotal role in enforcing and strengthening a certain notion of conflict, the underlying conceptualisations that provide interpretative frameworks for understanding conflicts are rarely addressed directly by the education system or research (Teichman & Bar-Tal, 2005 p. 262). Schools, as well as educational research, typically focus on how to 'eradicate' or 'minimize' conflicts but hardly ever ask to make sense of the phenomenon of conflict (Zamir,2008, Shor,2008)².

This paper, adopting a critical perspective which problematises the definition of Israel as both democratic and Jewish state, discusses the ways in which the Ministry of Education has confronted and dealt with changes in political reality, and particularly, the shifts from violent conflicts to peaceful relationships, as these are materialised in the advancement of peace agreements and negotiations between Israel and its Arab and Palestinian neighbours. Drawing on the analysis of official Ministry of Education documents - Director General Directives - this paper asks how peace and dialogue were understood by the Ministry and how the role of the education system and educators has been defined. It also asks to what extent changes in the political reality have altered the dominant discourses (militarism and peace-loving society) while making room for a more positive form of peace education (Davies, 2005). Our analysis reveals that the changes in political reality have lead to the articulation of two unique responses alongside the dominant discourses, which we identify as 'peace as a surprise' and 'peace as a disturbance'. This paper focuses on these two responses and the ways in which they correspond to the militaristic culture and the image of Israel as a peace-loving society, and how they might shape peace education.

The study

Director General Directives (hereafter DGD) are published monthly and constitute the regulations, policy priorities and information of publications and activities taking place in the state education system. The regulations and policy statements are binding. These official documents are the main channel through which the Ministry of Education transmits its policies to schools and teachers and they are circulated to all state schools. All DGDs open with a statement by the Minister of Education, or the Director General, which refers to the task ahead of the education system that month. It follows with regulations and information about new programmes and activities and other recommendations. Occasionally, the Ministry of Education publishes special DGD, outlining for example the goals for the next academic year, specific programme or policy, the school year calendar and special events schools are recommended to notice. Our

research focuses on the analysis of regular and special DGDs, especially the opening statements.

We collected all regular and special DGDs published since 1977 – the year the first step towards peace was taken with the visit to Israel of the Egyptian President Anouar Sa'adat – through to summer 2008. We then systematically surveyed all DGDs and marked all extracts with references made directly or indirectly to the Israeli-Palestinian and/or the Israeli-Arab conflict. Methodologically, we first read all marked extracts holistically, followed by a second reading by different members of our research team, focusing on the ways in which the notion of conflict was constructed³. For this paper we focused our analysis around central historical events in the Israeli-Arab conflict which represent fundamental turning points including: President Sa'adat's visit (1977) and the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement of 1978; the first and second Lebanon Wars (1982 and 2006); the first and second Intifadas (the Palestinian uprising in 1987 and 2000); the US Operation Desert Storm (Iraq 1991) and the Madrid Summit in 1991, the Oslo Accords and the Jordanian-Israeli peace agreement (1993-4). The themes of 'peace as surprise' and 'peace as disturbance' emerged from these readings. In the third and final stage of the analysis all documents were systematically analysed using Atlas.ti searching for these two themes.

Education and Conflict

Educational practices and the school curriculum reflect deeper political and social processes (Apple, 2004). According to Foucault (1981: 64), "any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledge and powers which they carry". Among its other functions, the education system, schools and, in particular the curriculum, are powerful sites in which competing bodies of knowledge, identities and discourses are negotiated (McCarthy and Crichlow, 1993). More specifically, education is a site in which conflicts are being conceptualised and interpreted and thus is in itself a site for conflict. School realities reflect, materially and symbolically, many of the conflicts and power relations that are played out in the larger society, thus preparing the next generation for participation in these relations. The question, then, is how do the education system's conceptions of conflict serve to maintain or challenge the status-quo, and delineate the discursive boundaries of meaningful conflicts in society.

Conflicts are often perceived as an aberration. Consequently practices such as peace education are expected to mitigate and manage conflicts and therefore are necessarily seen as leading to a better, more peaceful world. Schooling is often described as a

mechanism for positive social change, peace-building and economic prosperity. Recent critiques (Davies, 2003; Saltman and Gabbard, 2003) however, have challenged such descriptions. Davies (2003: 203) suggests that schools tend “toward equilibrium rather than radical emergence, hence at best they do not challenge existing social patterns [...] At worst, they act as amplifying mechanisms for conflicts rooted in the current social order”. Indeed, recent conceptualisations, such as Bush and Saltarelli (2000) illustrate the two faces of education and argue that education may be a force for fostering peace as well as a source of conflict.

Davies (2005) further conceptualises the two faces of education. She observes that the tendency to search for a ‘solution’ or for ‘equilibrium’, as prescribed by conflict resolution programmes, may achieve the opposite effect. Such programmes may, in fact, perpetuate conflicts, or at least end up leaving them unchallenged under the false pretence of the ‘status quo’. Based on that, Davies (2005) proposed a comprehensive typology of approaches to teaching about conflict. Her typology posits two dimensions: Positive-Negative and Active-Passive. Negative-Active practices include ‘hate curriculum’, ‘defence curriculum’ or ‘stereotypes and allegiances’, which actively contribute to conflict. Positive-Active practices, on the other hand, promote dialogue and experiential learning about conflict and encourage students to take a stance and to develop empathy and agency. A passive approach is characterised by omission of discussion about conflict. Davies’ typology illustrates the complexity of educational practice and highlights the importance of examining different school practices and discourses in terms of their contribution to positive or negative education on conflict and the extent to which they encourage active or passive responses to it. We find this typology extremely useful in unpacking peace/war education in Israel as it emerges from the discourse of the Ministry of Education. Practices such as ‘defence curriculum’ - which Davies (2005: 22) defines as programmes where ‘conflict is seen as constant threat, and children are taught how to defend themselves’; and stereotypes and allegiances – where ‘war and conflict are taught [...] as the result of stereotypical culture’ (Davies, 2005: 23) - are especially salient in education in Israel and, as we demonstrate below, often appear even in what is referred to as ‘peace education’.

War and Peace in Israeli Society

Israel is commonly described as a conflict-ridden and deeply divided society along the lines of ethnicity, religion, nationality and political ideology. The high level of social conflicts derived from the inherent tension in its definition as both democratic and ethnic-Jewish state. Often these conflicts intersect and aggravate existing tensions (Kimmerling,

2001; Ya'ar and Shavit, 2003; Yonah, 2005). The national conflict – between Jews and Arabs and especially between Israel and the Palestinians - is undoubtedly the most intense and violent conflict among all conflicts, and as such has far reaching repercussions on almost all realms - among them the economy, the legal system and education.

The national conflict does not only take place along the political borders of the Israeli state. It is also a conflict on the socio-political boundaries that define the contours of Israeli society, and not less significantly its identity and civic belonging. The national conflict is thus both external and internal. It is a conflict between Israel and the neighbouring Arab states, as well as a conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, which separates Israeli citizens from the Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories, who are nonetheless under the Israeli control system (Kimmerling 1989). Furthermore, the conflict is responsible for the rift within the Israeli citizenry between Jews and Palestinians (Arabs), and it is a determinant of the political divide among the Israeli electorate. In fact, since the 1980s the meaning of left and right in the political arena is solely determined by the contention over the future of the Israeli-Arab conflict (Shamir and Arian 1999; Grinberg 2007). The conflict has not lost its centrality and complexity even after Israel became engaged in peace negotiations with Egypt (1979) The Oslo Accords (1993) and with Jordan (1994). To a great extent these developments with regard to the external aspect of the conflict have occasionally worsened its internal manifestations. In this context, the question of how Israel's relationship with its surrounding countries and the Palestinians is being explained and presented to school students, and how the transition from war to peace is depicted in relation to the internal conflicts is becoming highly pertinent.

In Israeli society, one can identify two prominent approaches to the nature of the national conflict and to the role the State of Israel plays in relation to the question of war and peace. The first, most commonly identified with the Israeli hegemonic institutions and narrative, sees the Jewish people as 'peace-loving' and 'peace-aspiring' people. The other, a counter-hegemonic perspective, emphasises the militaristic characteristics of Israel. Thus, the former views the conflict as an external force, whereas the latter emphasises the internal forces within Israel that hinder the quest for peace (Grinberg 2007).

From its early days, the Zionist movement, and later the Israeli state, who is surrounded by potentially hostile neighbours had emphasised its yearning for peace as the 'ultimate desideratum' of (the Jewish) society (see Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005: 120). In the

Declaration of Independence, as well as in political rhetoric and popular culture, and, of course, invariably in any curricular and extra-curricular activities, peace had been portrayed as a dream, as an utopian ideal shared by Israelis of different creeds and from across the political spectrum. This dominant Zionist ethos and narrative portrayed Israelis as forever ‘peace-loving’ or ‘peace-aspiring’ people. Accordingly, peace is conceived as antithetical to the condition of war, whereas the transition from war to peace is perceived as being conditioned solely upon the willingness of the Arab leaders to meet the Israeli people’s aspiration for peace (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005; Yadgar 2004). In so doing, the dominant ethos created a clear division between ‘us’ – the ‘peace-loving’ – and ‘them’, the enemy, who is not only to be blamed for the persistence of war, but described as ‘rejectionist’ to the ideal of peace, and hence often as *a*-moral and less humane. Indeed, the ‘peace-loving’ ethos is also the basis for a common conception that Israel’s readiness for war is not only a prerequisite for a stable, long-lasting peace, but in itself is a method for achieving peace (see Bar-Tal 2007: 183-4). This ethos was also often used to justify violent actions initiated by Israel as acts of ‘no choice’ taken by the peace-loving Israel in an attempt to protect itself from its neighbouring Arab countries.

This view somewhat changed during the 1970s. According to Bar-Tal (2007: 201-2) since the late 1970s, a minority of the Israeli public had become more realistic in its assessment of the role the State of Israel plays in relation to the conflict. This more critical perspective suggests that the Arab states and the Palestinians are not the only ones to be blamed for the continuation of the conflict, but also that the Israeli leadership has failed to pursue several opportunities to reach peaceful agreements with them.

The criticism of the Israeli hegemonic self-conception as a ‘peace-loving’ nation was further expanded during the 1980s, following the First Lebanon War (1982) and especially after the outbreak of the first Intifada (1987). From various perspectives, it has been argued that the prolonging conflict between Israel and the Arab states, and between the Israelis and the Palestinians is not simply a matter of the failure to achieve or promote peace. Rather, the condition of war came to be seen as a constitutive element of the Zionist nation-building process, and as such, an indispensable aspect of state-society relations (Kimmerling 1993; Levy 1997; 2007; Shafir and Peled 2002; Grinberg 2007). More specifically, the argument was made that Israeli society is a characteristically militaristic society, and hence questions of war and peace are predetermined by the inclination to consider the use of military potency as appropriate, indeed indispensable, for achieving policy goals and political power (Kimmerling 1993). According to this perspective, Israeli militarism has been entrenched in political culture and it has become

one of its *meta-codes* (Kimmerling 2001). The militaristic culture and especially the 'existential anxiety', the fear of a hostile surrounding, real or exaggerated, have positioned the military as an institution higher than any other social or political institution and 'security considerations' over and above any other social principle. Thus, from fiction literature and cinema to commercials and advertising campaigns, the military, and particularly the combat soldier, is the main protagonist (Levy and Sasson-Levy 2008). Military service is still considered the 'entrance card' into society and full citizenship, and high ranking officers are still wanted in the business, the political and the educational arenas⁴. In recent years, retired officers were seen also as the most appropriate choice for school leadership (Dahan-Kalev 2005). To a great extent the ethos of the peace-loving and the militaristic culture of Israel are being intimately related; as two sides of the same coin, as we will argue later.

Peace-aspiring Militaristic Education

The self-perception of Israel as a 'peace-loving' and 'peace-aspiring' society and its militaristic culture have left their mark on its education system as clearly articulated in DGDs over the past 30 years.

In 1978, Eliezer Shmueli, then Director General of the Ministry of Education, expressed well the ethos of Israel as a peace-loving society:

The peace process that has reached its peak with the Kamp David agreement, is an expression for our long lasting desires and political aspirations. This was [...] the peak in our continuous pursuit of peace that began with the revival of the Zionist project.

The ethos of Israel as a peace-loving society 'THE conflict' as external - a result of the Arab nations' refusal to accept the existence of the Israeli State. Also, the persistence of the conflict is seen as the failure of the Arab leaders to respond positively to Israel's peace aspirations over the years. Shmueli's text further articulates this narrative:

The leaders of the Zionist movement [...] never spared an effort [...] to engage in negotiation with our Arab neighbours, seeking to reach a dignified agreement that would not compromise the goals of the Zionist movement to build a home for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. [...] In 1952 Israel submitted to the UN a detailed peace plan that was rejected by the Arabs. [...] In these crucial days, we should talk with our students about the value of peace in our heritage, and discuss [...] the efforts of the Israeli delegation to achieve peace and the Zionist

movement's uncompromised aspiration for peace from its beginning. (DGD, 1978; 39/2:2-4)

Shmueli represents here the canonical Zionist approach. Israel, as well as the Zionist movement, is presented as a peace seeking society, and the peace process as a 'peak' of its own pursuit. To a large extent, this emphasis, in both the DGDs and curricula falls into what Davies (2005) refers to as 'Stereotypes and allegiances' education. It is all the more interesting to notice that against the backdrop of a peace process with Egypt, Shmueli defines the educational goal not in terms of creating a positive image of the once enemy, but rather to stress the differences between 'us', a peace-loving nation, and 'them' who finally accede to 'our' pursuit for peace. Interestingly, although it was the visit of President Sa'adat to Israel that triggered the peace process, the agreement is described as the result of an Israeli initiative. In so doing Shmueli reinforces existing narratives and stereotypes that might in fact impede the development of a positive peace education.

Despite the strong ethos of Israel as a peace-loving society over the years the Israeli education system has failed to develop a coherent framework for peace education of any sort. Besides occasional references to Israel as a peace-aspiring society, we found very few direct references to the peace processes over the years. References mainly occur in relation to specific events, however these did not necessarily generate peace education programmes. Considering the salience of the conflict in Israel it is somewhat surprising, not to mention disturbing, that there are no ongoing peace-building, conflict resolution programmes. The major attempt to address some aspects of 'THE conflict' was led by Yitzhak Navon, former President of Israel and Minister of Education during the mid-1980s.

Against the backdrop of growing internal rifts, and particularly with the entrance of Kach, Meir Kahana's Jewish right-wing racist party to the Knesset, Minister Navon established the *Division for Democratic and Co-existence Education* within the Ministry of Education. However, its main focus was on 'solving' the internal conflicts between Arabs and Jews and between 'doves' and 'hawks', that emerged as a result of the Israeli-Arab conflict (DGD 1985 56/1:1). Thus the term 'peace education' addresses the rift between Arab and Jewish Israeli citizens, while portraying it as an external conflict, hence positioning the Palestinian citizens as the 'other'.

It was only in the mid 1990s that 'peace education', focusing on the conflict between Israel and the Arab nations or Israel and the Palestinians, emerged. This was led by Minister of Education Amnon Rubinstein, against the backdrop of the 1993 Oslo

negotiations. Yet as we will show below, despite being inspired by what is seen as the external conflict, it too had shifted its emphasis to the impact of those political changes on the Israeli, mostly Jewish society. But let us turn now to the more prominent discourse emerging from the DGDs - Israel's militaristic culture.

One main characteristic of Israel that underlies its militaristic culture is the idea that it lives under a constant existential threat (Kimmerling, 2001) and that there is a teleological connection between anti-Semitic threats faced by Jewish communities abroad and the Israeli-Arab conflict. This conviction has remained unchallenged by the education system even today, as articulated by Abuab a recent Director General:

We should teach the children of Israel the moral of Exodus, the Holocaust in Europe, the War of Independence and the establishment of the State. The moral is that liberty eventually triumphs all its suppressors but only in a great cost and collaborative effort (DGD , 2007; 67/7:3-4).

The notion of Israel as a society under siege generates two responses that found their way into official educational documents. The first emphasises the importance the Ministry attributes to 'defence curriculum' (Davies 2005), that schools are asked implement, whether in times of war or relatively peaceful times, by having contingency plans for the event of attack, and by running routine drills of evacuation with the students in such events, as exemplified in the following text:

Each educational institution must prepare an emergency plan that would include [...] conducting routine training. It is advisable that schools will consult the Ministry of Education's published guidelines 'Schools in Time of Crises'.(DGD , 2003, 63/10:5).

Linked to this is a second response that stresses the importance of maintaining a routine in times of mounting violence as a symbol of 'our' strength and resilience. Maintaining the routine is understood in Israeli militaristic culture as part of the civilians' contribution to the war efforts (Kimmerling, 1985). In the words of Director General Ronit Tirosh, the education system plays an important role in this effort:

In days of terror or war our society relies heavily on the willingness and the ability of teachers to maintain the school routine...(DGD, 2003, 63(9):1)

The notion of maintaining the routine as a civil act of resilience, and hence the notion of conflict, receive additional meanings. This is how Minister of Education Zevulun

Hammer saw this in the aftermath of the 1991 Iraqi missile attacks on Israel, when school routine was restored:

There is an added value in manifesting perseverance; even in difficult situations we broaden our intellectual and social horizons. Our ability to grow out of difficult situations is an educational challenge. [...] The very act of gathering together [getting back to normal school routine] and the sense of togetherness is enough to cheer us up (DGD, 1991, 51/7:7).

In Hammer's view, the emergency situation carries with it a potential for personal and social growth, and the education system is ascribed with yet another role: turning a reality of war into a source of positive growth by acting as social unifier and the maker of social solidarity.

However, perhaps the most salient characteristic of militaristic education is the glorification of the military as a national symbol and the culture of heroism attached to it, as exemplified below. In 1978, on the occasion of Israel's 30th anniversary, the Ministry of Education decided to dedicate the 1978 school year 'to celebrate the *Jewish people's war* for national independence and human justice in the Land of Israel' (DGD, 1977; 38/1:4, our emphasis). Thus, war is 'celebrated' and often described in positive terms such 'human justice'. As part of the culture of heroism, the regulations for school activities for National Memorial day (as seen invariably in all the DGDs that were issued over the past 30 years) schools were asked to dedicate one of the periods to: 'remembering those who died in the wars and their heroic acts'.⁵

Finally, during the 1970s and 1980s the Ministry of Education published, yearly, a special DGD with a list of 'Recommended Dates and Events'. Schools were encouraged to select certain dates and events to be discussed and celebrated with their students. The militaristic culture and the glorification of military actions were heavily expressed in these recommended dates. Below are few examples taken from various Special DGDs published during the 1980s:

- 1929 (TARPAT) events: a week of brutal and murderous attacks of Arabs against Jews that spread from Jerusalem throughout the country: 133 Jews were murdered
- 50 years ago: The Irgun took action against murderous acts of the Palestinians.
- 40 years ago: Israel entered the last and most crucial stages of the war of independent
- 20 years ago: Egypt initiated the War of Attrition along the Suez Canal.
- A terrorists attack on a civilian bus on the shore road.
- The IDF initiated the Littani Operation of cleansing South Lebanon of the terrorists bases.

As demonstrated here, the education system has been instrumental in nurturing the ethos of Israel as a 'peace-loving' nation, in as much as it played a significant role in entrenching and instilling in the students militaristic values. This ostensible paradox is encapsulated in the ideal of *mamlakhtiyut*, the Zionist-Hebrew parallel to *etatism*, that became the state post-independence ideology, assuming universality of the state, impartiality vis-à-vis its citizenry and an image of an 'a-political' entity (Levy 2002: 83-84). The two most important state functions of *mamlakhtiyut* were the military and state education. The military and military service had become symbols of statehood and of the unity of the Jewish society, and instrumental in the socialisation of, mainly, new Jewish immigrants. The education system, for its part, glorified the role of the military in the process of nation-building, and helped to turn military service into a civic virtue, including installing (to this day) an army preparation programme as a compulsory extra-curriculum activity in most Jewish high schools (Y. Levy 1997; Gor 2005).

Alongside the glorification of the military, schools played an important role in emphasising the quest for peace and the unity of the nation as national ideals. In sum, the development of the education system throughout the process of nation-building attested to the hegemony of the state in determining the contours of the national collective, its portrayal in terms of 'peace-loving' on the one hand, and the glorification of the military as a national symbol on the other.

Peace as a surprise; peace as a disturbance

What occurs when the education system no longer has to address a situation of threat and ongoing conflict, but rather a reality of peace? Have the moments when THE conflict took a turn, and peace negotiations were under way, left their mark on the education system? Did these turns pave the way to a positive image of the Arabs rather than as 'peace rejectionists'? Our analysis of DGDs over the past 30 years, and especially our focus on moments of transition from war to peace, suggests that the image of Israel as a 'peace-loving' society and its militaristic culture did not necessarily disappear. Yet, these images took on different forms.

One common reaction in the DGDs during times of transition from violent conflict to peace negotiations was to construct peace, despite 'our' long lost aspiration, as a surprise. In the fall of 1991 after the first Iraq war, and building on the collaboration between some Arab countries and the US during the war, a peace summit took place in Madrid. The Madrid Summit hosted Israel and its Arab neighbours, including, for the first time, a representative of the Palestinian people. In relation to this occasion, Minister Hammer, said:

When the peace talks with Egypt were launched [...] it came as a *total surprise* and many felt that they were dreaming. [...] For many years we stopped believing [...] but reality came and *struck us in the face*, and the peace process began (DGD, 1991 52/1 6, our emphasis)

Despite the image of Israel as a peace-aspiring society and the narrative it entails, when opportunity for peace presented itself, it is seen as a surprise, as something that comes as a shock. More interesting however is to unpack the negative language which was associated with what is presumably a positive development: 'reality struck us in the face' is a Hebrew phrase usually used to describe a situation where one's hopes and wishes are shattered by reality leaving him/her disappointed. What is common to this image – *peace as a surprise* – and the peace-loving ethos is the underlying distinction between 'us' and 'them'. The surprise and the disbelief are derived from the conviction that 'them' would not want peace and are peace rejectionists. It is important to notice that the portrayal of peace as a surprise does not challenge this stereotypical distinction.

Another example for *peace as a surprise* can be found in the special peace education programme published in 1994 by the Ministry of Education as part of its efforts to address the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians and between Israel and Jordan. The programme, entitled: "The peace process – Israel in the Middle East: General Guidelines" was designed to be the main theme in all pre-schools and schools in that particular school-year and was in fact the first, and only time, that the Ministry of Education has published a comprehensive binding peace education programme. In the introduction it is stated:

[I]t seems that [the peace process] *burst, rose, sprang in its mightiness* only in September 1993 during the *surprising* event of the hand-shake between Rabin and Arafat. [...] Sixteen years have passed since the peace agreement with Egypt and that is the time that it took Israeli society to internalise a sense of hope and the belief that peace [...] is possible, reachable and realistic.(Special DGD, 1994, 14:5, our emphases)

Here again peace is described as a surprise, as attested to by the use of somewhat negative attributes – such as burst, rose, sprang in its mightiness. These indicate what might be an *unpleasant* surprise. However, being to some extent critical, the introduction to the programme also points out the Israeli society's skepticism and its difficulty to adjust to a different mindset – that of peace.

One of the most interesting findings in our research is the presentation in DGDs of peace not only as a surprise but as having possible negative outcomes and posing challenges to the internal fabric of Israeli society; what we referred to as *peace as a disturbance*. To a large extent this was a reoccurring theme, even more salient than referring to peace as a surprise. This was especially prominent during the early 1990s when peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians attracted political disputes within Israeli society. Against the backdrop of the Madrid Summit, Minister Hammer wrote:

Since Israel was established, we have faced the challenges of war and attrition in several frontiers. Today we are facing peace in several frontiers, a challenge we haven't experienced before. DGD, 1991, 42:1:6).

Interestingly, Hammer uses the same terminology to describe war and peace – both are a challenge Israel has to face, and they both take place at several *frontiers*. The choice of words here can be seen as a shift from a discourse of peace as an aspiration, a dream, to peace as a process with possible negative outcomes. Hammer further explains that:

As peace negotiations are moving to a second gear, we might face the worsen of disputes and tensions. Therefore, it would require from you, the teachers, all of your wisdom and sensitivity (ibid:7).

Here, Hammer not only constructs peace as a challenge and no longer an ideal, but also describes it as potentially having a negative aftermath.

In the reminder of this paper, we focus, as an example, on a single document – the special DGD, published in 1994, 'The Peace Process – Israel in the Middle East'. Introducing the special DGD, Minister of Education Amnon Rubinstein stated:

There is a wide consensus that peace is a value and a goal; the dispute within Israeli society is on the ways and conditions for its achievement. When the education system turns to address the peace process it should take into account these two aspects of public opinion (Special DGD, 1994, 14:3).

Rubinstein continued and lay down the task for the education system as a whole:

However, the education system should also address the different perspectives which exist in Israeli society regarding the peace process and give room to legitimate public debate about it. [...] The education system, educators and students alike, takes upon itself the responsibility to cope with the process that Israeli society is currently undergoing and to guide it. In this process there are involved

hopes and fears, chances and risks, faith in different ideologies, stereotypes and existential fears. (ibid, p. 3-5).

The education system has a dual role according to Rubinstein: to educate towards peace as a value, while not ignoring the internal constraints it poses. What drew our attention is that the focus, both ways, is internal. The main aim of the programme is not to create a basis for a dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians, or change the long lasting stereotypes of the 'other', but rather, it was designed to deal with the potential for internal opposition and rifts.

Furthermore, the perspective taken by this special DGD is that:

the extant status quo in Israeli society has been interrupted with the beginning of the peace negotiation with our enemies (ibid, p.10)

This tendency to turn inwards and focus on the internal disputes emerged also from the analysis of the programme's objectives. Following the introduction, the special DGD lists the goals of the programme and divides them into cognitive, affective-emotional, and behavioural. The meta-aim of the programme was defined as:

Developing a tolerant citizen, aware of peace as a value, sensitive, alert, involved, with the required knowledge to form a solid and well reasoned world view, [a citizen] who is able to engage in a civilised debate with people whose opinions are different than his, and to be understanding and empathetic, without the need to reach an agreement with others (ibid, p8)

Already in this meta-aim we can see that little attention is given directly to the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict. The tolerance sought here is mainly internal, revolving around the disputes about the peace process.

When looking at the difference between cognitive and affective aims this trend is even more prominent. The programme lists nine cognitive aims, referring to the knowledge and information that the student needs in order to achieve the meta-aim. Five of these aims refer to knowledge and information that students are now required to gain about the once enemy – the Arab countries, the Palestinians and the Middle East. The four other aims, however, are directed internally:

More interestingly is the affective-emotional aims that couple together the themes of peace as a surprise and as a disturbance:

Teachers and students alike are going through a fundamental process of change whereas the enemy we fought for years has *suddenly* become our counterpart for dialogue. (ibid, 10)

The DGD continues and lists the affective-emotion aims derived from this understanding. For example 'to be aware and alert to the fact that this is emotionally loaded issue [...] to allow emotional venting, especially the expression of feelings such as fear, anxiety and frustration [...] to develop empathy among students to the feelings, opinions and values of other people and their problem [...] .to highlight the common denominator of the different groups within Israeli society as a basis for strengthening the sense of community, solidarity and belonging [...] to educate to co-existence and dialogue out of respect to the other person and tolerance. (ibid, pp.10-11)

According to this programme, there is a direct link between the peace process and internal conflicts. Yet, the internal conflicts can be potentially used by educational means to foster positive group relations and dialogue. To a large extent the programme adopts what might be seen as principles of positive-active peace education (Davies, 2005) which stresses the importance of creating a dialogue between competing parties. However, the dialogue remains within the boundaries of Israeli society. Moreover, by turning inside, this programme once again reinforces the role of the education system as the great unifier, this time using the peace process, rather than the existential threat as the point of departure.

Conclusions

In this article we sought to demonstrate how the official education discourse in Israel constructs the notions of peace and war. While Davies's approach to education and conflict is useful in explicating the conceptions and practices of peace and war in Israeli official discourse, and especially exposing similarities between the Israeli case and other conflict-ridden societies, the analysis of the DGDs also suggests that the official responses to conflict/peace need to be contextualised. The existential anxiety, and the strong militaristic culture that derives from it, left their mark on the education system and shape the ways in which the conflict is conceptualised.

Apparently, the successful mobilisation of the education system during times of war and conflict seems to hinder its capacity to change in peaceful times. Hence, after playing a significant part in the normalisation of war, and specifically, by contributing to the readiness for war alongside the routinisation of THE conflict, the education system was caught unprepared once the political conditions had changed. Thus, two responses characterise the education system's confrontation with the new condition of peace: One, 'peace as a surprise' that refers externally, to the 'other', and to the surprising effect of the Arabs' willingness to engage in peace negotiations. After all, this is in contradiction to the hegemonic narrative of 'us' the 'peace loving' society and 'them', the rejectionists. The other response, which we defined as 'peace as a disturbance' is turned inward, changing the conflict's focus: no longer is it a conflict over the state's external borders but a conflict within, and over the internal boundaries that cut through the (Jewish) society.

What can explain the lack of peace education, and the particular responses of the education system to the changing reality in the last three decades? Our analysis of the DGDs demonstrates how deeply the education system is embedded in the hegemonic Zionist narrative. From this perspective, the Ministry of Education has been primarily concerned with the imprinting in the minds of its students the aspiration for peace alongside, and in fact as part and parcel of, the preparation for conflict. This might have been unavoidable under the circumstances of prolonged conflict. Yet, as we have seen, the changing atmosphere from the late 1970s onwards has not eradicated the problematic approach of the Israeli education system to conflict, and particularly to the Israeli-Arab conflict.

In conclusion, following Lynn Davies's concerns regarding the role of education in generating social approaches to conflict, we find the DGDs logic conforming to the meta-codes and narrative of the hegemonic Zionist ideology. Thus, being entrenched in the confines of the ideology of *mamlakhtiyut*, that seek the identification of the Jewish citizens with the state through both education and the military, this narrative supersedes any attempt, implicit or explicit, to re-adapt the educational narrative to times of peace. The 1994 Programmes demonstrate this clearly when it adopts principles of dialogical education, yet remains confined within the Zionist narrative. It thus fails to offer peace education (see also Salomon 2007), which would be, at once, positive and active. Instead of encouraging the students to abandon their stereotypical approach to the Arab adversaries, and to become engaged in promoting peaceful activities, the Ministry of Education's directives demonstrate a reluctant approach to peace, combined with fears

that by altering the status quo, this might undo the Zionist nation-building. Under these circumstances, the Israeli state can still easily mobilise society and engage in violent conflicts, while maintaining its self-image as a peace-loving society.

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¹ The Israeli-Arab conflict denotes the relationship between the state of Israel and its Arab neighbours; The Israeli-Palestinian conflict refers to the more specific dispute between Israel and the Palestinians over the future of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. While 'the national conflict' commonly stands for the rift between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel. All three are seen, jointly or separately, as 'The Conflict'

² Although the majority of schoolchildren in Israel are enrolled in the state education system, and the GMDs analysed here apply to all state schools, the Israeli education system it is far from providing any form of common education. In fact it is divided into the following sectors: general state education which caters for the Jewish secular population; state religious education that serves the Zionist-religious population; the Arab state education system; and the independent Jewish ultra-Orthodox school system. To a great extent the Israeli state education system is segregated along the lines of nationality, religion and religiosity.

³ Looking for the ways in which the conflict is discursively constructed we focused our initial analysis on the following themes: Responsibility for the conflict; the historical narrative of the conflict (i.e. how it is contextualised and what events are seen as leading and linking to it); who are the 'us' and 'we' in the text and how they are constructed; universality verse uniqueness – is the conflict constructed as universal or unique, is it seen as normative or as deviation; is the conflict presented as a disturbance or part of the social order; is it constructed as static or dynamic (changing); is it constructed as solvable and if so what is seen as a desirable solution; what are the terminology that is used to describe the conflict. We also focused on other set of categories aiming to unpack the educational dimension of the texts. Here we looked for the ways in which the role of the education system and educators is defined in relation to the conflict. What the perceived role of the education system in 'solving' the conflict, what is defined as education practice in relation to the conflict and to what extent the education system is seen as having the ability to generate change and what kind of change. We also used Davies typology and other classification (such as conflict management/resolution) to identify different pedagogies.

⁴ In Israel military service is compulsory for both males and females (three and two years respectively). Upon completion of the obligatory three years service the majority of males also serve at the reserve force until turning 45. As a result the IDF is often refers to as 'the military of the people' and Israel is described as 'a nation in arms'. However several groups are exempt of this compulsory service: the Palestinian citizens whose their national allegiance with Israel's 'enemies' makes them 'unfit' for military service (some other non-Jewish groups such as the Druze and the Bedouins do serve in the army); and religious females and ultra-orthodox males are often exempt too.

⁵ On the culture of heroism in schools see: Lomsky-Feder (2004) Ben-Amos (1999) and Gor (2005)

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