



**ROSA  
LUXEMBURG  
STIFTUNG**  
REGIONAL OFFICE  
PALESTINE

# **What Education do we Want?**

## **A Discussion of Emancipatory Education in Palestine**

**Ramallah 2016**

**Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung  
Regional Office Palestine**

**What Education Do We Want? A Discussion of Emancipatory Education in Palestine.**

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The views represented in this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the **Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung**.

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Ramallah, 2016

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## Preface

Following five years of work at the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Regional Office Palestine (RLS) with progressive individuals and groups from different social sectors, the Emancipatory Education Programme (EEP) was launched in 2014. The Programme aims to support and develop approaches, tools and mechanisms to foster critical and emancipatory thinking in Palestinian institutions in order to contribute to the creation of broader horizons for innovation and creativity as an alternative to rote learning.

It is not possible to achieve national and social liberation without unlocking the brain and opening the door for analysis, criticism and questions. Many individuals and groups here in Palestine have sounded the alarm that entire generations of Palestinians have been deprived of free thinking, which has undermined their ability to question their reality and propose strategies to improve it.

The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Regional Office Palestine (RLS) has contributed to the debate by promoting non-conventional methods and tools for more progressive and effective education and learning. It has established programmes with a number of partners to propose different visions and tools for institutions, social movements, parties and individuals to use in their continuous efforts to unchain the Palestinian homeland.

One key question is the definition of emancipatory education and what it means, particularly in the Palestinian context. Thus, RLS has undertaken an initiative to provide a forum for its partners and other stakeholders to debate the best way to implement education and emancipatory learning in the unique Palestinian context. In order to explore this question, RLS hosted four long workshops and conducted a review of local and international literature. At the end of the process, the participants reached consensus on the definition of emancipatory education and made a number of recommendations for implementing it in Palestine.

The participants whose names and notes are presented here have enthusiastically contributed to the ideas in this booklet. To them, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Regional Office Palestine expresses its deep gratitude.

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### **Salam Hamdan**

Programme Manager

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## Introduction

Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Regional Office Palestine (RLS) initiated the Emancipatory Education Programme (EEP) in Palestine to contribute to the discussion on this concept and its implementation in this unique place. The EEP organized a series of workshops from April to September 2016, which brought together organizations and individuals working in different forms of emancipatory education. The participants were very committed and the workshops had high attendance. To further this process, RLS supervised the publication of a book by Hanan Ramahi, entitled, *Education in Palestine: Current Challenges and Emancipatory Alternatives* in November 2015.

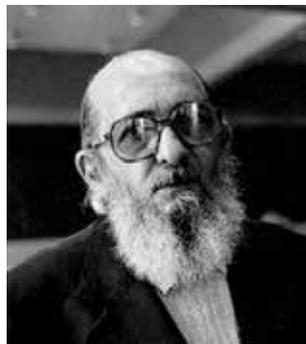
The following booklet summarizes the outcomes of the discussion process.

The booklet begins by answering some of the key questions participants had before the discussions started, such as, how do we know what emancipatory education is?

After some discussion and reviewing the literature, participants realized that some of their experiences are actually types of emancipatory education. They also found out that Palestinians had addressed this concept before Paulo Freire, and had come up with similar or even more comprehensive ideas. An example is Khalil Sakakini, who lived half a century before Paulo Freire.

Sakakini was born 44 years before Paulo Freire was born, and died 44 years before Freire died. However, Sakakini's work was largely neglected and his ideas are not common in Palestinian schools now.

Participants discussed Palestinian experiences with alternative education and free thought in schools, universities, political parties, labour unions and even prisons. They debated what a new definition of emancipatory education based on the Palestinian experience would be. Participants contributed ideas that were "outside the box" and proposed future initiatives and projects that could be used to localise and disseminate the concept of emancipatory education.



Paulo Freire. Photo: Slobodan Dimitrov, CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons



Khalil Sakakini as a young man. Photo: GNU/FDL

Chapter I

**Emancipatory  
Education?**

## **“The important thing is not to stop questioning,” Albert Einstein**

At the beginning of the workshops, participants attempted to define emancipatory education. But, they realized that there were more questions than answers. Questions such as: is emancipatory education teaching, learning, upbringing, education, or self-learning?

Some of the most basic questions included: is education emancipatory in the specific sense of liberation from the Occupation, or “emancipatory” in the sense used by Paulo Freire? Does this concept apply only to schools or does it extend to universities, parties, labour unions, associations and other community-based organizations?

Participants also asked, is emancipatory education attributed to Paulo Freire only and our task is to localize it and have it “wear a Palestinian *keffiyeh*”? Could emancipatory education also refer to other contemporary educators like John Dewey, Mary Montessori, and Bertrand Russell or to the experience of Summerhill School and the democratic schools, among others?

They questioned how we could benefit from the thoughts of Palestinian educators like Khalil Sakakini, Munir Fasheh, Hussein Al Barghouthi, and Ziad Khaddash. And how can we bank on the Palestinian experiences of Tamer Institute, Ashtar Theatre, Masar school and other new Palestinian initiatives in art, music, cinema, theatre, and writing?

As the participants moved more deeply into the subject, they asked whether we should derive a definition based on theory or on practice. And, how can we capitalize on the success of an emancipatory education experience and disseminate it into other parts of the Palestinian community? And similarly, how can we reach out to members of the traditional education institutions and encourage them to change, knowing that “he who does not have, cannot give?” Will it be enough to present a model of emancipatory education as an example to follow? Finally, they asked: if the role of the teacher is critical, how can teachers be transformed from an outcome of the existing education system into agents of change?

This booklet presents the core ideas, discussions and differences that came up during the workshop. It includes the definitions and applications of emancipatory education, as proposed by participants. These terms were unclear in the beginning, and questions were raised even about the use of discussing the definition. But after some debate over the relationship of emancipatory education to power, official education, values and religion, the discussions started focusing on how to promote the concept in Palestine.

**“Find out your own truth;  
do not worship those who  
discovered it”, Buddha**

## The definition of emancipatory education

It is necessary to address first the proposals made by Paulo Freire and other well-known educators. Before working with students, Paulo Freire went into his community to work with marginalized groups. Thus, we speak of a community-based rather than purely school-based process, which encompasses labour unions, political parties, and civil society organizations.

In addition to Freire, it was also important to study Arab pioneers who proposed emancipatory ideas and experiences, including Khalil Sakakini, who advocated in the early years of the twentieth century the idea that students must be respected and should be able to exercise their freedom. He established the *Dustoriah*, or constitutional school, to put his ideas into practice. He linked education to the advancement of society, political liberation and combating superstition. There is also Munir Fasheh, who had radical ideas about education around thirty years ago. Ibrahim Abu Lughod also attempted to carry out a reform of the Palestinian curricula in the first years of the Palestinian National Authority.

We also took inspiration from local practices that do not necessarily use the term 'emancipatory education,' but actually serve its goals. A study by Hanan Ramahi presented a number of organisations using these concepts, including Tamer Institute, Afkar, and Ashtar Theatre. Ziad Khaddash also described his experience with emancipatory education techniques.



So what definitions did we come up with? Emancipatory education is a reaction to the traditional school system, and is an attempt to change an out-dated system. Educators do not deal with blank pages but rather with minds that have been shaped under the oppressive systems of political and religious power. It is necessary to free students from the existing restraints that hinder free thought, such as habits, traditions, religions, politics and beliefs.

In two phrases, emancipatory education is the type of education that unleashes thought and develops acceptance of the “other” as well as a sense of others’ needs. It is a community process and not a school-based process. It concentrates on critical thinking and feedback while demanding that students go out into their community and interact with it so that they can fully exercise their passion and make change in their daily lives.

But beyond this, emancipatory education is a dynamic and continually changing process. It has no set model or definition. It requires students to draw on their own strengths to help them decide for themselves what their education should look like. It is associated with everyday life. In other words, it empowers individuals to think for themselves rather than seeking help from others. Recipients of emancipatory education use the resources available to them in a productive, participatory and continuing process. This means relying on their own personal experiences to arrive at a common experience.

But questions were many. Where do we start with the education process? From our soul? Is even that free? What should our references be? Emancipatory education is built on life experiences. It raises questions that lead to knowledge. It aims to acquire knowledge in order to create change. Learning should be done without any authority in an emancipatory educational system. Emancipatory education means we are all partners in accessing knowledge, provided that we accept others and acknowledge them as our partners.

Building new concepts is based on courageous imagination in search of inner transformation. A learner endeavours to know himself or herself and to understand the world around him or her. In this regard, emancipatory education becomes part of the learner and turns into practice and being. If we live in a free educational environment rather than receiving ready information, we become ourselves rather than having “others” talk through us. When working with youth, we should not provide guidance but rather create an environment that leads to certain results. As Sakakini wondered, “What is the goal of opening gates of thoughts in the heads of students?”

**The path and concepts of education are framed and made into ideologies to produce a non-emancipatory situation. They cannot be discussed outside the political context. –Najeh Shahin**

**“It is not in the interest of the oppressor to have emancipatory education. There is a correlation between dictatorship and “banking education”**

The definition of the concept is not important because it is just the path to reach knowledge. "The road to the house is prettier than reaching it sometimes." We may not agree on a definition because each individual refers to himself or herself to find a definition. An individual is an active part of the community. We must accept difference and preserve individuals' points of view.

The mechanisms of emancipatory education are important. It involves shaking the prevailing absolute ideas children absorb. It thus disrupts the individual's mind and clashes with all inherited stereotypes and persuasions. It then convinces the learner of the necessity to make change in the society and to shift roles from being a recipient to become a producer of change. With this, emancipatory education can launch its ideological revolution.

Some of the most difficult questions we addressed were: does emancipatory education contradict democracy? Does the presence of a democratic regime facilitate the spread of emancipatory education? Is there emancipatory education in advanced democratic states where we witness education with business objectives, focusing mainly on getting a job?

And finally, why do we want emancipatory education to start with? Is it like seeking art for art's sake?

## **Is it possible to challenge power?**

The society is the nucleus and the individual cannot exist without the group. The objective is not only to unleash the individual and his or her potential, but to achieve social change. It is a participatory and mutual process. Shifting from ideas to mechanisms is a struggle.

Emancipatory education is associated with the socio-political situation. It clashes with authority, which adopts the traditional curriculum to co-opt people to accept what exists. "Education," as a term, is problematic. It is associated with the making of matrices to control chaos and program the brains of children.

Can we speak of emancipatory education in a society that is not liberated while we are not free? Education, its paths and concepts, are framed and made into ideologies to produce a non-emancipatory situation. Education cannot be discussed outside the political context. It is not in the interest of the oppressor to have emancipatory education. There is a correlation between dictatorship and the methods of "banking education", or depository, as defined by Paulo Freire. Children are treated like machines. This is a form of on-going oppression of students.

**We tried to work in a different way in prison; we focused on participation and asking questions in the tent or the cell. This mobilized many young prisoners."**

**Sufian Barakat**

We need emancipatory education to face the Israeli military occupation, as a means of liberation, including freeing and humanizing the individual and freeing his or her thought. This means we should not wait for political liberation, for this must be part of the

revolutionary education for change. Emancipatory education is not neutral, but biased toward humans, democratic rights and freedoms, and it is reflected in the behaviour of those who carry these ideas.

There cannot be a national struggle without emancipatory action. Most Palestinian initiatives in teaching and alternative education were created during the Occupation. They were a form of resistance that allowed Palestinians to empower themselves and preserve their steadfastness on the ground. They started their liberation movement a long time ago. However, emancipatory education is new. We should not forget that partisan education is also dependent on memorizing the party's literature, which explains the prevailing party "fanaticism," even among the leftist parties. One exception was the prisons. As Sufian Barakah told us, "We tried to work a different way in prisons. We focused on participation and asking questions in the tent or the cell. This mobilized many young prisoners."

Emancipatory Education means that teachers are also learners, and that they share a neutral space deprived of power, with curiosity, humour and joy. This makes space for everyone to reach a place they love through the things they invent.

Some developed countries have excellent education systems, but not emancipatory education. This was true even in communist systems. We are attempting here to build an extracurricular education, i.e. informal, such as in cinema or theatre programs. Although when extracurricular programs are adopted, they can turn with time into curricular programs, although the attempt to influence the official curriculum remains limited.

## Should change come from within or must it come from outside?

There was a clear difference between those who wanted to change the formal system from within and those who prefer to set up parallel models to challenge it. Some said: we need to stop fixing a rotten system; reforming it is a waste of time. This is evidenced by twenty years of conferences. The prevailing educational system is built on the fact that the person present – the learner – receives information from sources other than himself or herself, through curriculum and texts taught in the school. These texts shape his or her consciousness and teaches the learner to value competition through titles like "First Teacher," "First Novelist," or "the First in his or her class."

**Wisdom of a student:  
Dear Ministry of  
Education, if one teacher  
cannot teach all subjects,  
how do you expect one  
student to learn them all?**

How can we produce the change and liberate thought? The goal is not only to become acquainted with emancipatory education, but also to emancipate the current education system and its policies; this is what matters.

Emancipatory education leads to self-knowledge. In this sense, it cannot be school-based. It is the creation and free practice of new skills and information in a community context.

Emancipatory education asks teachers to act like facilitators and to embody the values and principles of emancipatory education in their lives. It is, first, the belief that learners are partners in the formation of meaning. Second, it implies that people are the producers and not only the consumers of knowledge. Indeed, knowledge does not start with text, but rather with life. We can refer to the thirty principles in Hanan Ramahi's study (Annex 1), which can be expressed in life, in words and in practice.

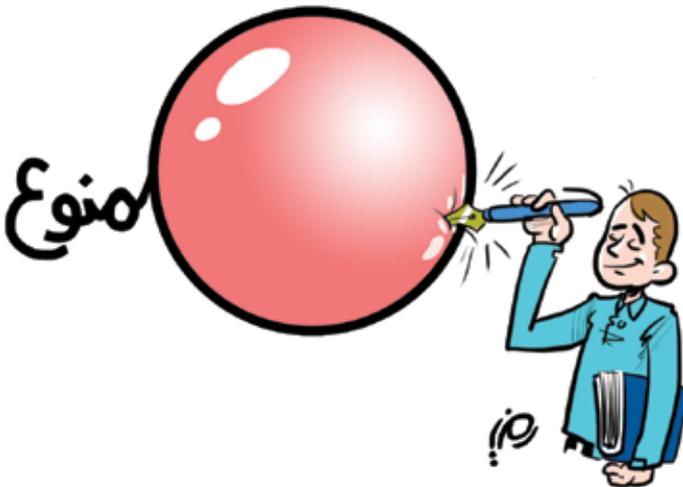
**"Free thinking may lead to losing friends or family relations."**

**- Mohammad Mahseiri**

It is possible to disseminate emancipatory education by locating organizations that are less formal than ministries and present the approach in small groups. This requires a long-term strategy that employs cooperation and sharing rather than training.

It would be difficult to bypass the formal education establishment. Universities may provide a broader forum for the discussion of emancipatory education ideas, an approach that was tried in the 1980s. But we should also reiterate the importance of teaching these ideas to students at a young age. We should attempt to enter into the higher education establishments and cooperate with groups of teachers there.

The goals of education are shared between students and teachers and they depend on re-creating knowledge, not only studying reality. "Banking education" relies unilaterally on a narrator and a recipient. However, emancipatory education goes two ways; it is a dialogue between the students and the authority. Conversational education is a process depending on free will. Nobody teaches anybody. It depends on deconstructing and reconstructing texts and the creation of knowledge in a process where both students and teachers are active players.



We endeavour to change the lived conditions rather than reproducing what exists. We understand the slogan that “things cannot be taken for granted.” The Palestinian society is patriarchal, and to follow the father, the president or the Sheikh is sacred. We must break the surrounding walls and respect innovation to liberate humans from any impediments to their mobility and thinking. It is a path against stereotyping and suppression. It involves a review of the role of religion and habits since we should not be investigating the same crime scene. In our approach and way of handling our situation, we must separate religion from life and confront the taboo subjects of habits and traditions. Otherwise, we are complicit in our own oppression. The civil society has a role to play here.

Emancipatory education aims also to liberate the learner from any forces that may limit his or her choices and control his or her attempts to make social and political change.

Emancipatory education is an individual and group process that aims to liberate the brain from inherited habits and from thinking and behavioural patterns. It is extracurricular, informal and unofficial.

Is education inside classrooms or universities or from within oneself more likely to lead to wisdom and happiness?

Emancipatory education stems from practical experience. Empowerment of students and enhancement of their agency, as well as creating a supportive environment for them raises their awareness of their right to self-determination.

**Finally, after a long “brainstorming” exercise, participants reached this common definition of emancipatory education:**

**Emancipatory education is an individual process of learning and teaching. It targets the community and is based on emancipation of thought, participation and mutual interaction among individuals and groups in the learning and teaching environment. It results in acquiring renewable knowledge and practices that lead to making positive social change.**

**It is an approach that supports unleashing the potential of free thought to widen the individual’s horizons and encourage him or her to pursue individual expertise. It evolves around positive thinking and raising the level of knowledge, curiosity and motivation to advance the society and its members. This process produces a moral, free and internally coherent person. It also leads to a feeling of happiness and belonging with a desire to give and be proactive. It is the approach and methods that enable individuals to think critically and creatively to deal with their reality and explore how they can contribute to liberating and humanizing their communities and breaking the social taboos.**

**- The group**

Chapter II

**Status of Formal  
Education in  
Schools and  
Universities**

**“Men are born ignorant, not stupid; they are made stupid by education.” – Bertrand Russell**

Emancipatory education is broader than school education for it constitutes a position vis-à-vis formal education. Since change starts with criticism, many emancipatory education interventions focus on diagnosis, criticism and analysis of the formal educational system, from schools to universities. But it was difficult to get away from concentrating on criticism of the formal educational system. Indeed, the session facilitator, allowed all interventions as follows, but he had to intervene at times to encourage participants to move to other issues.

Conventional education, according to Paulo Freire, is a banking model where information is deposited in the minds of students for retrieval at exams. This relates ultimately to control, oppression, suppression and abuse. For this purpose, a large part of the discussion focused on the relation between education and political power.



The influence produced by the formal system is deeply rooted, so why don't we prepare a model to be one of the tools in a gradual battle against the formal system?

A weeklong outdoor camp is worth a year of school education.

We have to form islands of emancipatory education and link them together.

Are we calling for emancipatory education or for the enhancement of the quality of education? In Finland and Denmark, they have an advanced education system, which has nothing to do with the oppressed but rather with enhancing the professional sector.

We would be idealistic to expect that our official school education system will become emancipatory.

The debates also addressed the implicit or explicit influence of religion on education, including the religious approach of dictating a text for the purpose of memorizing and repeating by heart, from the time of the *Kuttabs*, or Koran schools, which have existed since before the Ottoman period. The natural sciences books and other school textbooks in most Arab countries still have citations from religious texts.

Kuttab (Koranic) School in Tubas, Palestine, 1904

In the years 2009 and 2010, there were attempts by the Ministry of Education to minimize religious references and replace religious texts with scientific references. In 2015, there was even an agreement not to quote religious verses when discussing scientific topics.

No doubt, we must address the education in the schools, but how? Teachers' pay ranges between NIS 2,000 to 3,000 (about \$400 to \$600) per month; many of them are compelled to do another job in the afternoon to pay their bills. The problems with the system have a major economic component.



Kuttab (Koranic) School in Tubas, Palestine, 1904

## Political power and education

We cannot dream of emancipating people without removing the hegemonic powers. Why do governments spend so much on education? It is the first sword, says Gramsci, to control people. This also includes the theatre, television, Rotana productions, MBC and all other television channels that serve particular agendas. Nothing can be broadcast without prior consent or censorship. How can we achieve a breakthrough in this hegemony, as Rosa and Gramsci were calling for?

How can we aspire to influence the educational system? We are not allowed to work within this system. The official system is linked to the authority, i.e. to the administration of people's affairs. It domesticates them to create generations that are not capable of emancipating to start with. Our curricula are under American audits for search of "incitement". In the official system, there are some voices that do speak, but, it would be illusionary if we think we can infiltrate the official system.

Any holistic change in the national school system depends on political power. Civil society also complements the role of the government because it does not reach all the people and remains elitist. Indeed, we cannot separate authoritarian practices from education. We will be confronted here by two oppressive agencies in our Palestinian situation: the Occupation and the security apparatus.

The declared "objectives" in the books of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) seem progressive, but they conceal a hidden agenda. How can we liberate official institutions using community-based organizations and strategies and experiences into mainstream emancipatory experiences? How can we change the educational system from within? "He who does not have cannot give."

We, the participants sitting around this table, must face these challenges. We cannot rely on what is written in MoEHE objectives. Our relationship with the formal educational system is a relation of appeasement and disregard, but instead it must be conflicting because the traditional system produces slaves. We find this appeasement, manoeuvring and bargaining in the partisan system as well. An alternative could be working with small groups that have genuine practices instead.

For years, the Palestinians have been considered education to be a holy task. We wanted our children to find jobs in Kuwait. We considered education as a means to combat the de-education measures of the occupation by using Jordanian or Egyptian curriculum instead of Israeli. However, the post-Oslo educational curricula resulted from deals with Hamas (or the radicals), which is an obstacle we have to surmount.

**Why do governments spend so much on education? It is the first sword, as Gramsci says, to control people. This also includes theatre, television, Rotana productions, MBC.**  
- Najeh Shahin

Some believe that the current educational system is a failure. This is evidenced by the fact that students do not like school. They wait for a day off because of snow, strikes or holidays, even students in private schools. However, in universities, they study the subject of their choice and have better results.

What do school principals talk to students about in the beginning of the school day? They lecture them on the forbidden things, and on regulations, school uniforms, book covers, cleanliness and discipline. The tone we hear over the microphones of Albeira Girls School, for instance, almost every day is a tone of anger, warning and threats of punishment. Such a beginning to the day has nothing to do with emancipation. The morning broadcast, if well managed, could contribute to making the change.

In all cases, students start their university education with low study skills, such as lack of reading, poor knowledge, absence of critical abilities and ignorance of research methods. They have not practised dialogue. They are not aware of their own values and their interests are limited. Students come to university distorted by rote learning.

How can we change? The opinion expressed by certain university students aged between 18 and 20, is that the whole country is full of thieves and that the Palestinian Authority is corrupt. In other words, if everybody is a thief and corrupt, then when does their turn come? The result is the graduation of 'potential' criminals with blocked horizons.

In spite of many teachers' attempts to deal with students in alternative ways, they still must abide by school and university rules and follow the traditional system when making exams.

Freedom of expression and opinion is minimal. The level of fear and hesitancy is mounting even in the most liberal universities because there is less room to even criticize the methods of teaching.

Change is very difficult in the university and in the curricula. There is laziness, numbness and dependence on a written pattern. Those controlling the educational courses have political agendas and their curriculum is 'deliberate.' Even boards of trustees are no longer academics; they are now businessmen. The university is losing what it used to have in terms of dialogue and rotation of roles.

There is a whole new generation of Jerusalemite university students in particular, who are trained to adulate their teachers and what they say because of grades and assessments. The generation graduating from government universities in particular is a generation of blind obedience and resistance to any deviation from the text. They lack any intellectual platform and any agency for analysis. However, at the same time, this same generation stabs and runs over soldiers and sanctifies martyrdom (running willingly to their deaths).

**"How is it that little children are so intelligent and men so stupid? It must be education that does it."**

**- Alexander Dumas**

Emancipation needs exploration more than education. Building the path to freedom is achieved by subjecting it to exploration of self first and of the other next. The basic upbringing begins before school. When students arrive at university, they are culturally complete. The school is the best place to make the change toward emancipatory education. We must focus on teachers.

Ministers of Education are not all similar. The current minister invited all educational establishments in the society to an open meeting to listen to them. We should deal with facts rather than mere condemnation of everything. Extracurricular activities are an alternative curriculum that we could use to support traditional course. We need to enrich the curriculum with things that serve our message.

**“Arabs still use beating and threats in education; then they wonder where the oppression comes from.”**

**- Nobuaki Notohara—  
Arabs from a Japanese  
Perspective**

## Chapter III

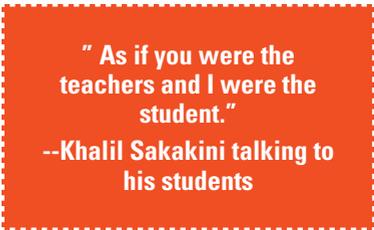
# **What is the Goal of Education?**

To diagnose the problems mentioned in the workshops we might ask a core question: What are the basic goals of education?

We can perhaps summarize the goals of education in three main ones thus.

**The first goal** is to create a “good citizen” who belongs to and is proud of his nation, religion or family, and who is committed to full obedience to them to the extent of killing or dying for them. This is what authoritarian political, religious or patriarchal authorities usually advocate for.

That is tied to the idea of the humiliation of the student, or conscript, or prisoner, or party member, to subdue his/her independent personality and free thinking. This is usually accompanied by several forms of punishment, fear of hell, or exposure to propaganda. We also find here a one-way education with a rote “banking” approach based on memorizing and repeating by heart with a whole system of tests, assessments and grades.



“ As if you were the teachers and I were the student.”  
--Khalil Sakakini talking to his students

**The second goal** is to focus on education to enhance employability; in this sense, it is tailored to fulfil the interests and profitability of employers. This goal is often not applicable to the upper classes and those on top of the authority hierarchy.

In this education focus is on achievement, excellence, creativity and scientific research, as well as the use of technical tools and management or “leadership” skills. It is mainly oriented toward competition, which makes it geared to financial incentives, in order to develop an appetite for consumption.

**The third goal** targets raising children to grow into accomplished and independent men and women who are free thinkers and in harmony with others and with nature. They enjoy beauty, arts and literature and apply philosophy, logic, healthy suspicion and criticism. These people are in good health, care for the food they eat, exercise and exhibit respect for values and ethics and a readiness to help and cooperate.

This goal implies an educational approach that values questioning and experimentation and deviates from the usual curriculum and exams. It also means mutual respect between teacher and student and a rotation of roles, as well as dialogue, free will and audacity. This is emancipatory education. This approach results in the learner being able to improve his or her living conditions, behaviour, knowledge, culture, political status and environment, and to add, as Paulo Freire said, “contemplate to change the world.”

The key real **dilemma** is that these three goals, as described above, are contradictory. Although they overlap in some places, these three educational approaches compete to influence learners.

Is it possible to reconcile these contradictions, and how? This is an open question.

### **Is the situation in parties and institutions better?**

Part of the discussions focused on former members of political parties and civil society organizations and on their experiences in these institutions. Party education focuses on consolidating loyalty to the party and restricts its teaching to the party's own literature. This trend in some parties is intense to the extent of demonizing others as traitors or infidels, and such accusations could reach violent actions against them.

A participant spoke of his long experience in prison. He explained how some tried to use this time to study, read and exchange knowledge. But other prisoners insisted on reading and re-reading the same religious book while attempting to prohibit other books and banning any discussion or exchange of opinions.



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## Chapter IV

# **What Do We Have in Palestine?**

Palestinian experiences with emancipatory education date back to the early twentieth century, and cover both school and community education. Here are some examples.

## **Sakakini**

Khalil Al-Sakakini (1953-1878), is a Palestinian pioneer in alternative education based on respect for the student and education that is connected to community, national and religious issues. He also advocated for focusing on teaching the Arabic language with 'non-fossilised' methods. He established a school to put his thoughts into practice, and he had confrontations with the British colonial power. He warned against Jewish immigration, and argued against the Orthodox Church teachings. He had extensive dialogues with his contemporaries and wrote letters and chronicles that have recently been published in several volumes. (see discussion of Khalil Al-Sakakini's ideas and practices in Najeh Shahin's paper in Annex 5).

**I call for life at school  
to be fun, happy and  
active. I call for a healthy  
education that refines  
the mind and widens  
perceptions.  
Khalil Sakakini**

## **Tamer Institute**

The Tamer Institute for Community Education was established by Munir Fasheh in 1989 during the first Intifada. It represented a notable educational model that bypassed rote teaching and adopted critical free thinking and awareness to examine prevailing stereotypes. He proposed to do so through reading, discussion, expression, writing, drama, traveling and publication of the achievements of Tamer "graduates".

## **Ashtar**

The Ashtar "Theatre of the Oppressed" was established by Edward Mualem and Iman Aoun in 1991 in Jerusalem. It displays various theatrical productions and trains young people in acting. It applies a progressive approach that involves public engagement in issues that affect people's lives, mainly the oppressed. Its performances have travelled beyond Palestine as well.

## **Ziad Khaddash**

He is an out-of-the box writer and teacher, as evidenced by his publications and articles and in the manner he treats his students while teaching them his favourite subjects, Arabic language and creative writing. He invites the students to stand on the tables and unleash their feelings by crying, or jumping over the school wall and going into nature, as well as to express themselves freely in writing.

## **Masar**

The Masar School in Nazareth is a successful alternative to the traditional schooling system. It was established by Palestinian graduates of some of the best private schools and universities in Israel. It does not teach the official curricula, except in the final years of high school to enable students to sit for the official exams. It gives its students the freedom to play and learn through activities of art, agriculture, drama, with a special focus on expression by mastering their Arabic language. Some parents rejected this system at first, and the school had to confront the Israeli Ministry of Education even in the Israeli Supreme Court. Nonetheless, it pursues its work with success and increased enrolment. This year, its sixth class graduated with better results than other schools.

## **Afkar**

Afkar for Educational and Cultural Development was established in 2009 by Odeh Zahran in a manner that differed from other civil society organizations. It was born in cooperation with the Ministry of Education to enrich school education by organizing summer camps and cultural centres. It focuses on empowering students by holding debates up to the national level, to enhance the confidence of students and their appetite for research, analysis and development of methods of discussion, logic and elocution.

There are other initiatives including Women's Action Society in Hebron, which bypasses what are traditionally women's pursuits like embroidery and cooking. They use carpentry to manufacture children educational toys, and other products. They emphasize community education, in order to obtain the rights of women, with success stories.



© Afkar Institute

# Chapter V

## **What to Do?**

What should we do in the future to disseminate and apply the ideas of emancipatory education?

Below are the ideas, programmes and projects proposed by workshop participants about emancipatory education:

- Participants in the round table discussion should reconsider what they do and whether it is compatible with emancipatory education elements.
- Meetings with stakeholders must continue to include more participants, especially academic staff.
- Successful experiences should be documented to highlight and disseminate them.
- Young students and workers should be encouraged to participate as part of a comprehensive path of emancipatory education concepts.
- The formal educational curriculum should be developed in order to improve the quality of education to include, among other things, gender mainstreaming, rights and equality, promotion of critical and creative thinking and environmental issues.
- Summer camp leaders should be targeted to empower them with a better understanding of creative thinking and emancipatory education.
- A booklet should be prepared to present these experiences and enrich the concept. (The present booklet is the result of this suggestion.)
- Lobbies should be formed to present models about the concept.
- Further research should be conducted.
- Experiences from other countries, and visiting academic institutes and centres should be followed.
- We should promote networking with institutions.
- We should build a Facebook page.
- RLS can sponsor short films, or animated pictures on different aspects of emancipatory education for sharing on social media.

**“I will impose freedom and the rights of women by force of the law. I will not wait for the democracy of the people deceived by the patriarchal culture in the name of religion.” –Habib Bourguiba**



Brainstorming

## **Other individual suggestions**

- Success in this process depends on setting revolutionary, but realistic and implementable goals. Goals must be achieved incrementally step-by-step, rather than reversing the traditional education with a knockout punch. It is also necessary to devise proper mechanisms, tools and activities that facilitate the achievement of these goals.
- Interested institutions and groups should focus their work on intervening in educational policy making in order to improve the quality of education to respond to core issues. These issues include gender and equality in the curriculum and the content of textbooks, as well as motivating analytical skills and critical and creative thinking among students. Furthermore, education budget allocations from the PNA general budget must be increased to upgrade the educational environment, including buildings, classrooms, playgrounds, labs, and teachers' salaries. On another level, the capacities of Palestinian teachers must be built so that they acquire teaching skills, knowledge and methods in accord with our vision of the role of the teacher in the education process. The teachers' role must focus on helping youth acquire awareness of the concept of emancipatory education and critical and creative thinking via their extracurricular activities, i.e. outside the curriculum officially taught at school.
- It is necessary to lobby stakeholders and members of institutions, and unions as well as progressive political activists. The nucleus of the lobby would be the task force that took part in the four workshops on emancipatory education.
- Youth and women and professional groups could work at the grassroots tools to achieve broader impact.
- Encouraging empirical and specialized research on issues related to the education system would help to show its weak points.

## **To increase the pressure**

- Organize media and mass lobbying campaigns with specific themes based on the outcome of these studies.
- Build broad partnerships with civil society organizations, progressive parties and unions.
- Promote the publication of articles by stakeholders and specialists and organize meetings and seminars with coverage from different media outlets.
- Organize training workshops for activists to raise awareness of the concepts of emancipatory education and to encourage them to master the skills of lobbying and public campaigns.
- Use the media and social media.
- Draft a programme for youth summer camps to motivate their critical thinking and

help them acquire knowledge of the concepts of emancipatory education and democratic rights through methods that differ from traditional summer camps. Generalize this practice and provide relevant training to camp supervisors.

- Organize periodic stakeholders' meetings for the purpose of 'mass lobbying' and to assess the impact of the campaigns and renew the media campaign and plan of action. In other words, institutionalise the activity to guarantee an accumulated outcome.

What next? The discussion, debate and deliberations remain open.



# Chapter VI

## **Interviews**



## **Najeh Shahin**

**Interview, July 2016**

**Najeh Shahin is an out-of-the box professor and writer.**

A look at his background might explain his non-traditional approach. He was born in the 1970s. His father is from Zakaria, and his mother, his father's third wife, is from Beit Ummar near Hebron. Although he was raised in a tribal context, he felt like a stranger without a protective clan. He was recruited in the Muslim Brothers' cells during the time of Sheikh Jamal Nofal and Sheikh Abudllah Azzam of Taliban

connection. He read Sayyed Qutub and Hassan Al-Bana, initiators and theorists of the Muslim Brotherhood, and was observing his religion to the fullest.

At the age of 16 or 17, he started reading thinkers from the opposite end of the spectrum: Salamah Mousa, Sadeq Jalal Al-Azem and others. These readings balanced the "aggression" of Al-Bana and Qutub.

He studied English literature and philodophy at Jordan University, before he pursued his studies in political sciences in the U.S. He taught philosofy and logic to teachers and later joined the Department of Cultural Studies at Birzeit University.

Shahin has critical views of the prevailaing educational system because he believes it requires students to surrender to it without any criticism. To him, this type of education silences chidlren who ask embarrassing questions and considers any critic as an exception to the rule, while holding the knowledge of the elderly as true and asolute. He believes this type of education encourages students to succumb to authority, habits, traditions, religion and the sheikhs. When teachers ask students for their opinions, the students must repeat the opinions their teachers gave them. He sees older people ridiculing the youth and terrorizing them. He recalls Hisham Sharabi in his biography, "Amber and Ashes," and how he was too shy to ask where the bathroom was. He feared to mistakenly use his right or left hand, according to Islamist edicts, for the wrong purpose. He would take quick showers so that he wouldn't be embarrassed before Allah.

Palestinians are raised to listen and obey their elders. The students who go against this are threatened in order to produce a malleable citizen who is unable to think. Students are only capable of memorizing rather than understanding or, much less, producing knowledge. Many teachers' attitudes are "I don't care if they don't understand; what matters is that they pass the exam." Even science, as he studied it, was another religion. He had to memorise maths. Students in the scientific section are less burdened with memorizing than their counterparts in the literary section. This also applies to the superstitious ideology broadcast on TV, in colleges and in mosques. This ISIS-like ideology has actually spread more than we are aware of, but it is possible to see it if we pay attention. Those in control of the economy have no interest in having progressive education. Our utmost ambition is to have a small group of independent minded individuals.



## **Benaz Batrawi**

**(Interview on 25 July 2016)**

**University teacher, consultant and trainer in communication and development**

Benaz Batrawi holds a BA in economics from Birzeit University and an MA in mass communication from the University of Leicester in the UK. She also has a degree in professional development from the University of Missouri in the U.S. She worked for Jerusalem Educational TV and Al-Quds University.

She says that comparing the Palestinian educational system with education in foreign countries is difficult when you speak of an underdeveloped state under occupation and without sufficient funds. We, in Palestine, are besieged at many levels: checkpoints, walls, and even cancellation of school trips by the ministry because of one road accident. In other countries, when they talk about nature, they go to see it. The Arab student in foreign countries must work with 150 per cent effort to achieve 75 per cent of the grades of local students.

There are huge variances in achievement among university students here. Birzeit University attracts students from the centre of the West Bank and certain social classes. Abu Dis attracts students from villages around Jerusalem, while Al-Quds Open University attracts older students and students with the lowest achievement. This latter group only delays unemployment or gets a minor promotion or salary increase in their government positions.

The graduates of the second Intifada, after 2000, grew up in an environment of violence with the Wall and fragmentation. Therefore, we witness a loss of hope. Most suicide operations are committed by young people who derive their culture and knowledge from Islamic social media. Jihadists are recruited through such pages. How can we reach these fundamentalist religious people?

“I try to hold the stick in the middle,” Benaz says. Being an unveiled woman in such an environment is not easy. It is, however, the teacher’s responsibility to spread hope and focus on values and respect for other opinions and human rights. Students hesitate to contradict me because they fear losing grades.

People in Gaza are not the same people I knew before the siege, wars and violence. The current leadership is hopeless and Hamas is reactionary. Palestinian people in general are exhausted. Talk about equality, gender and development is beyond them and hard to accept.

We have over-blamed our educational system. But, it is the system that produced us. We keep looking for a few things here and there to change. Much of what is happening seems like aiming to make us hate our Arab identity, heritage, roots and skills. We have noble values like generosity and smiling at your neighbour, while there are ugly things in the West. We must make an effort to avoid losing respect for our legacy and at the same time open new horizons for the youth.



## Jalal Khader

(Interview on 11 August 2016)

**Jalal Khader is a graduate of law from the University of Damascus. He holds an MA in Law and development studies from France. He is an active lawyer and social activist. He established and is managing the “Sawa” hotline for women and children and he takes part in regional and international activities to defend their rights.**

He says that emancipatory education constitutes a threat to every educational system in the Palestinian community. Emancipatory theology in Latin America also threatened the traditional church and even the Pope. The school he attended, L'école des Frères, was a tough and unlikeable school despite the cultural and scientific knowledge it offered. It is an advanced school within the traditional curriculum system. The initial enrollment would be 40 students, but end up with a mere seven or eight taking the Tawjihi (final high school exam), with threats of expulsion, mainly for those enrolled in the free-of-charge section. Studying at the University of Damascus was somewhat untraditional. For instance, they studied the history of civilisations. Some subjects did not have any exams but rather discussions and reading. They tested the students' ability to use the information they have been learning throughout the year, studied the failures of the theories of developmental experts. They were then asked to provide their suggestions to improve development interventions.

After a period in prison, working at a lawyer's firm and earning an MA in France, Jalal adopted the Cartesian mode of thinking. Sawa does not give advice when people ask, 'what should I do?' He instead answers, "Let's think together. You are the one who has been suffering and you alone shall decide how to solve the problem. It is your responsibility." He says his role is to enlighten his callers. He then asks them, "What do you think you should do to solve the problem?" Most people have been taking orders from parents, teachers and sheikhs since they were born. We try to teach them a new way of living, how to think and who can support them to solve their problems. In other words, we teach life. The result is that they take responsibility for themselves. Our role is to support the decisions they make.

Of course, at times we have problems with some official institutions like the Ministry of Women's Affairs, when they place the victim in jail against her will "to protect her." We advocate for the rights of the victim, the mother and the child, to self-determination.

When we train police forces on how to deal with the victim, they quote religion. But to us, we do not work out of religion or politics because we are an NGO, as defined in the law. Religion enchains the thinking about how to solve the problem.

As he follows the situation in Gaza through his callers there, he realizes that the social situation there is disastrous. Oppression is much higher in Gaza. Added to this is the relation to religion and restriction on their mobility. The siege creates harsh economic conditions, water pollution, power cuts and spread of drugs, high unemployment and low educational attainment.



## Ziad Khaddash

(Interview on 3 September 2016)

**Ziad Khaddash is an innovative teacher and writer, born in Jerusalem in 1964. After being displaced from his village of Beit Nabala, his family moved to the refugee camp of Jalazon near Ramallah. He teaches creative writing in schools in Ramallah and Al-Bireh and writes short stories, of which some collections have been published.**

He says that unfortunately, from what he sees, the future of Palestine is extremely gloomy without any sign of light, despite the few exceptional individual attempts to make a change. According to Ziad, the problems include: being too embarrassed to give one's mother's name, throwing trash on the streets, disrespect of the opinion of others, and prioritizing the family, the political party and religion over everything else. He also worries about a lack of health care and environmental awareness. He says Palestinians are not preparing to improve their education system. He says that they still believe that there is no problem and that they are on the right track. They are not aware of their illnesses, that is suppressed thinking and lack of modernity. Nonetheless, he says there are some enlightened traditions in Palestinian history including Sufism and rationalism, and even some enlightened religious scholars like Muhyeddin Ibn Arabi, Afghani and Mohammad Abdo.

He says: my students are 12 to 15 years old. Some of them who graduated later from universities changed their lives. They overcame emotional crises and backward and corrupt views on women. They are not ashamed to express their emotions and feelings or their inner selves, even if they say nonsense or make mistakes. He makes an effort to let them express themselves in a clear way and defend their opinions without fundamentalism or chauvinism, and to revise their opinions if they are convinced by another's way of thinking. Only stones do not change their minds, he says. He does not discuss religion with his students because their fathers could be members of Hamas. However, nobody should speak in the name of Allah or be a judge in his name in class. Nobody monopolizes the idea of Allah. He tries to challenge the religious approach to education and rote teaching. He wants his students to ask more than they answer and to respect others without rudeness.

Teachers are the pillars of emancipatory education. They are the mirror of a community's civilisation and advancement. Teachers will not have a new mentality and thinking without a total societal revolution in terms of its values, habits and norms of thinking. He asks, how can we create a new state of mind in society? As yet, he doesn't know the answer.

How has he applied this concept? Being a writer helps him know the importance of change, beauty and fine taste and secularism in life. He was an avid reader. His readings helped him explore new paths in life, living and thinking. He found that being a teacher allowed him to achieve some successes. He wants to tell those who argue against his methods that they do not know the difficulties, challenges and price he is paying for his initiatives in the school. He is surrounded by other teachers who accuse him of being insane. The neighbours living around the school look at him with suspicion and discomfort. Traditional school supervisors have doubts about his approach. The reason is simply that these new and strange ways do not match their pre-determined methods. They have become accustomed to the traditional ways of teaching because they are more comfortable, and many educators are lazy.



## Odeh Zahran

(Interview on 4 October 2016)

**Odeh Zahran is the director of Afkar for Educational and Cultural development, which he founded in Ramallah in 2009 to improve education and promote critical thinking in Palestine.**

Afkar's philosophy is based on the fact that "you must use your brain." One of the best applications of critical thought is through debates. Participants must acquire reading and research skills and use references. They need to know how to draft an idea, listen to other people and learn articulation and delivery. They need to learn to analyse other viewpoints using empirical reasoning and logic. Trainers and coordinators of Afkar have, so far, prepared hundreds of students in over 150 schools following an official agreement with the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE). They achieved excellent results in national and Arab contests, and it's important to note here that girls performed better than boys in these debates. They were well prepared, did their readings and used logic.

Afkar organises also summer camps for children and provides academic and professional guidance from grade ten up to university level, to help students discover their passions, talents and professional horizons. They are also taught how to write their CVs and prepare for work interviews.

Afkar's work was built on Khalil Sakakini's ideas about emancipation and linking the school to society and vice versa, as well as confronting the influence of tribes, religion, and the prevailing culture. The magic key to change is the educational system. During the first Intifada students did better when the schools were closed. They lived life and learned better. We lived emancipatory education without any theoretical discussion.



## Aref Al-Husseini

(Meeting on 23 October 2016)

**Aref Al-Husseini is an engineer, novelist and founder of Al-Nayzak Organization for Supportive Education and Scientific Innovation in Palestine. He is a member of the national team for assessment and reform of the Palestinian technology curriculum at the Palestinian National Curriculum Department (MoEHE), and a member of the National Educational Reform Committee in Palestine.**

Al-Nayzak focuses on science and technology and on acquiring knowledge and skills to explore, invent and innovate. It fosters an empirical and a critical approach to thinking as a way of living. It has branches in all Palestinian cities and has served over 25,000 students, as well as establishing a science house in the restored Old City of Birzeit.

Although Aref works with the Ministry of Education, unlike many of the workshop participants, he provided an in-depth analysis of the problems of education in Palestine in its different phases. His analysis is based on his strong participation in educational curricula, policies and development.

“We cannot make change without changing the system,” he said. Isolated interventions only make changes at the individual level. He suggests being humbler and working with the system. It is not that the people inside the system do not know what is happening, but they actually do not bother to make the change.

The challenges imposed by technology and access to information should persuade teachers to listen to their students. This way, teachers learn that they are mere facilitators and that the textbook is only a guide. The same applies to parents. The issue of teachers is essential. Most of the existing teachers are hopeless cases and 80 per cent of them will retire within the next few years. We have to shut down the colleges of education in our universities from which 18,000 students graduate every year. We have 40,000 graduates competing for 500 teaching positions every year. The only hope is the creation of a specialized college for teachers.

Palestinian Universities are more like NGOs whose main concern is to ‘sell seats,’ and this has nothing to do with community needs. We have a surplus of unprepared doctors, engineers and lawyers. In the meetings of the Higher Educational Council, which includes ministers and presidents of universities, they usually discuss two topics only: adopting new curricula and getting more government funds. Instead, they should be discussing the paper, “Palestine 2030 to 2050,” which outlines future policies.

Al-Quds Open University, which has grown into a closed-circuit university, must be shut down. It accepts the students with lowest achievements and only postpones their unemployment once they go out to compete in the labour market. Some students use it as a ‘bridge’ to enrol in another university.



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# Annexes

# **Annex (1)**

## **Ramahi, Hanan, The Thirty Principles of Emancipatory Education<sup>1</sup>**

### **Thirty key principles for emancipatory education**

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

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

#### **Principle 1:**

Emancipatory education empowers individuals and enhances human agency.

#### **Principle 2:**

Emancipatory education features collective action.

#### **Principle 3:**

Emancipatory education involves the promotion of joy and optimism.

#### **Principle 4:**

Emancipatory education fosters cross-generational interaction and collaboration.

#### **Principle 5:**

Emancipatory education enables tangible improvements in social conditions.

#### **Principle 6:**

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

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<sup>1</sup> Ramahi, Hanan, Education in Palestine, Current Challenges and Emancipatory Alternatives, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, November 2015

**Principle 7:**

Emancipatory education helps to build democratic and civic values, such as individual freedoms, and develops democratic skills and practices.

**Principle 8:**

Emancipatory education enables dialogue and debate.

**Principle 9:**

Emancipatory education provides opportunities for expression.

**Principle 10:**

Emancipatory education enables and welcomes knowledge creation through action, in addition to study and research.

**Principle 11:**

Emancipatory education identifies new spaces and environments for learning and discourse.

**Principle 12:**

Emancipatory education fosters creativity in both informal and formal settings.

**Principle 13:**

Emancipatory education engages young people in meaningful activity that enhances their personal growth and raises their social and political awareness.

**Principle 14:**

Emancipatory education builds leadership capacity.

**Principle 15:**

Emancipatory education features participation and collaboration.

**Principle 16:**

Emancipatory education invites and enables teachers to become agents of change for teaching and learning and empowers youth to improve their life chances and living conditions.

**Principle 17:**

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

**Principle 18:**

Emancipatory education nurtures tolerance and respect for different viewpoints.

**Principle 19:**

Emancipatory education enables international connection and networking.

**Principle 20:**

Emancipatory education facilitates the dissemination of inspirational narratives.

**Principle 21:**

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

**Principle 22:**

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

**Principle 23:**

Emancipatory education promotes partnerships between students and teachers.

**Principle 24:**

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

**Principle 25:**

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

**Principle 26:**

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

**Principle 27:**

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

**Principle 28:**

Emancipatory education makes full use of modern, digital technology including the Internet.

**Principle 29:**

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

**Principle 30:**

Emancipatory education seeks local, culturally appropriate solutions to conservative issues and topics.

The principles offered above can be used to inform discussions about emancipatory education. They can also be used as a tool to review current practice and programmes, and as a checklist against which to assess the contribution of future proposals. This list is neither exhaustive nor should initiatives be expected to fulfil all its criteria. Rather, it is to be viewed and used as a guiding tool for discussion and evaluation.

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## **Annex (2)**

# **Odeh Zahran, Emancipatory Education**

### **Definition**

Emancipatory education is theoretically an innovative approach to education that incorporates the works of Paulo Freire, Ira Shore, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, and others. They all aim to show the humanity and critical awareness of learners and to provide an educational system based on problem solving. Therefore, this approach is an invitation to all teachers and students to critically analyse socio-political issues and the ramifications of social inequality.

Emancipatory education also seeks to liberate teachers from any forces that may limit their choices, and control their lives and mobility so that they can endeavour to improve their social and political situation.

### **Current Situation of Education**

- Banking education is predominant and does not leave any room at all for students to practice life skills and apply their own values, principles and attitudes.
- The teacher is the spinal cord of the educational process and the source of information.
- Students are passive recipients who do not contribute to the learning process.
- There isn't any room for interactive learning.
- The educational environment is unattractive and does not encourage creativity.

### **The alternative**

A revolutionary educational system that is learner-based and which seeks a balanced teacher-student role. In this system, dialogue prevails and teachers and students exchange experiences, while benefiting from technology. This requires a curriculum that is based on genuine dialogue and which values social interaction, cooperation, real democracy and self-fulfilment.

Tools needed to shift the current system to one that encourages emancipatory education:

- Modern curriculum to reshape the sociocultural environment as regards the classroom relations between teachers and students. In this sense, the student becomes a critical thinker and not a mere passive recipient.
- A decrease in the number of hidden agendas, which are imposed on students by teachers, the school environment and the administration.
- A rich curriculum with programmes that foster life skills, most importantly critical and analytical thinking.
- A dialogue-based classroom environment, which serves not only as a method of learning but also as a tool to assess students' performances.

## **Annex (3)**

### **Khaddash, Abdelsalam (Abu George): “Working with youth and not against them.”**

### **Emancipatory Community Education Approach: Combining Thought and Practice**

#### **Introduction**

My experience with youth started with mass volunteer activities meant to educate the youth. I was then a student myself working on engaging with students to be what I wanted them to be, militants and volunteers. I wanted to produce a copy of myself. During my university studies and after graduation, I started working as a researcher and training coordinator for women’s and youth programs. The words, concepts and terms I used changed and became ‘women and youth empowerment, women and youth training, youth development and youth growth.’ The objective was to make them the way I wanted or others wanted. I was the tool of change and they were marginalized. I was their saviour from marginalization.

The paradox in these two phases is that when I was young, my words had a meaning in my life. They stemmed from my nationalistic feeling and my search for group work, giving, volunteerism and belonging. My words were associated to the context of my life and with my national project. The new words I used in work and training were not linked to my life context. I used them as terms and expressions within the context of my professional work.

Darwish says, ‘travelling is more beautiful than arriving and the road to home is more beautiful than the home.’ In 1996, I accompanied Dr. Munir Fasheh, who was then the Director of Tamer Institute, and Ms. Abla Nasser, who was Tamer’s chair of the board, on the road from Ramallah to Nablus. I learned something different in this trip. I learned ideas that raised many questions about what I was doing and why I was doing it, the value of my work, and the values I claim and live. In 1998, I started working for Tamer Institute immediately after Munir Fasheh left. Abla Nasser was then the Institute’s director. Knowledge is not a value on its own; it leads to values but it is passion and the incessant thirst for reading, research and effort to understand oneself and understand one’s relation to the world.

I started exploring and shaking up my own established concepts as I began a path of questioning, research, and contemplation in every area of my life: knowledge, experiences, vision, philosophy, mission, values and convictions. I began a process of redefinition of the words I was using, as I assessed how linked they were to my life. In this, I started learning about the educational environment we strive to provide. I started to re-explore new things in a practice-based approach and through real interaction with people. I began to realize the importance of experimentation to gain knowledge and that trial is the best school.

All people are engaged in an on-going journey of self-discovery. When complete educational environments are available they create a real opportunity for learners to get to know themselves better and discover the surrounding world. This is the basis of community-based education.

I learned about the experience of educator Khalil Sakakini and his ideas and work philosophy. Education that does not respect human dignity is not effective. This was the rationale behind Sakakini's educational approach. He focused on "empowering rather than humiliating students." He criticized education based on exams, grades, punishment and awards. Sakakini was a man of action. In teaching his students, he depended on trial and exploration to enhance their self-reliance and motivate their sense of initiative and dignity. "Explain to your students that they are part of the social body and they have a value and a status. Teachers, respect your students; call them Mr. or Ms. and never let them stand before you in the position of a person who is weak and humiliated. Make your students feel that you are fair. Do not over-monitor your students. Make them feel that you trust them and their honour."

I also learned about the experience of Paulo Freire, who said, "No one becomes fully-formed at the age of twenty-five; it is through self-experience in the world that we become what we are." Independence is a process of maturity, i.e. of forming oneself. It does not happen at a certain point in time. It depends on the experiences that motivate decision-making and responsibility. In this sense, we must focus on teaching independence, dialogue and talking with the other. This applies to freedom. Learning is a lifelong process. A learner cannot become free in the future after years of studying or after a certain number of trainings, as many claim. Learners will be free today and this freedom will become more secure the more they exercise it in their life.

Ghandi once said, "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any." Honest talk and work are the most important emancipatory education approach.

## What have I discovered in my educational trajectory?

Educational, religious and political organisations are built on:

1. Negation and marginalisation of humans and their role; they humiliate the learner and do not acknowledge him or her other than as a consumer of everything even knowledge. They view learners as passive recipients of knowledge. In this regard, the human being becomes a tool that moves according to the will of the organization or as deemed fit by professionals and experts who think they are superior to others. In this context, there is no room for the mind and thinking, and no possibility to ask questions so long as there are ready answers. How can the intellect develop without room for search and exploration?
2. Text comes before action. I found out that we follow texts and the ready-made curriculum with specified definitions. If we fail in this, we become losers. The power of the text supersedes that of trial and action. Knowledge is trapped in books and curriculum; excellence is measured in terms of progress and success, i.e. those who can also be trapped within the system. We have to use this knowledge and accept its outcome. We are not allowed to deviate from it so long as there are predetermined books and standards that pretend to be objective. Since we start with ready-made concepts and theories, the human will remain, in essence, a consumer of knowledge.
3. There is a lack of recognition of personal experience in comparison to the sanctity of diplomas issued by the formal establishments in exchange for passing specific exams and scales of assessment. This system does not acknowledge that every individual has his or her own genius and that if we judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live the rest of its life thinking it is stupid.
4. Training, empowerment, development, and training programmes with measurable objectives produce one-way minds, even though these words give an impression of control. There is always a superior who conducts the training to develop and empower the others. He or she claims that upon completion of this training, the learner will become developed and strong. Palestine has plenty of training programs in all sectors. A donor described it this way, "Judging by the budgets spent on training of trainers, all the Palestinian people must have become managers by now."
5. Work and action are not important; these are values we claim but do not live. There is no link between these words and what we actually do.
6. We working with youth as if they are tools in the context of ready-made curricula. We say we aim to "raise a Palestinian individual who prides him or herself on religion, nationality, homeland and Arab and Islamic culture and who contributes to the development of his or her society. This person thrives on knowledge and creativity, interacts positively with the requirements of scientific and modern progress, and is capable of competing in scientific and professional arenas."

We provide learners with ready-made knowledge that devalues the experiential knowledge they already have. This knowledge has nothing to do with their life context. Instead, they need to live what they learn. They need their dignity to be respected. They should not be humiliated. They need that their minds be challenged.

This education does not lead to any freedom or emancipation or even thinking. All the tools used lead to the opposite of this. The knowledge created by educational, religious and partisan institutions produces a submissive person who accepts everything and does not refuse. This person surrenders to all the events around him or her. He or she is a subordinate who transmits the knowledge of others, a mere consumer who does not analyse, criticize or doubt. He or she learns according to the amount of ready-made knowledge available. He or she lives waiting for ready answers. There is no place to wonder. This learner is a mere passive recipient of information but not a partner in creating knowledge. He or she is an empty container that we fill in with what we believe shall build his or her awareness. The knowledge we claim to be giving to our learners is not a value on its own, but instead it leads to values.

## **Context and life experience**

The key convictions I developed during my journey of exploration, experimentation, and reflection stemmed from a profound understanding of myself and of my relation to the world around me. I developed a relationship to the concepts, words and phrases I discovered during my observations, which had not been articulated before that. These new phrases had been overshadowed by the terms that have been promoted during trainings and interventions. "The audience who claps for the fireworks does not clap for the sunrise," as Christian Happel said.

A woman from the village of Bardallah in the Jordan Valley said, "students of the school in Bardallah are distinguished in arithmetic." When I asked why, she replied that most of them work in the farms and sell the produce they sell, and so therefore have strong calculation skills.

This is confirmed by researchers Wael Kishk and Layana Jaber in their book, "The Culture of Mathematics," published by the Al-Qattan Foundation in 2007. "An individual's numeracy does not develop unless he or she uses numbers in cultural contexts and life events. Employment of life contexts like shopping in the grocery store, managing personal pocket money, or planning a trip help develop mathematical/numerical skills. In other words, mathematical operations must be linked to lived contexts so that calculation becomes part of the children's life."

By this time, I was dealing with my students like I dealt with myself. We would sit and discuss, agree and disagree. I lived in a beautiful and enjoyable world with them. I was not a guide or monitor or responsible for giving them knowledge. I was passionately listening to them without providing solutions. We shared the task of finding solutions to their challenges. We formed a joint understanding of things. We developed a friendship that grew and evolved in our hearts inside and outside the institution. I never felt that my purpose was to pour any ready-made knowledge into them. I did not endeavour to do so. I developed the capacity to create different spaces and ambiances that help them

explore what they already knew and what I knew so that we could be partners in shaping meaning. None of us wanted to leave the group, even though I knew that they could benefit other students in new learning spaces. We need to move onto new spaces to deepen our experiences. But our relationship did not stop here. We remained friends and shared the new meanings we were developing with each other. Since 1998, I have kept the relationships with this first group of students strong. Today, some of them are in their thirties and others in their twenties. They forged creative paths in their lives. We still learn together and share dreams and projects.

The basic convictions that govern my words and action in working with my students is an approach that grows more profound inside me. It is not a fixed or specific index outside my life context. It is part of my being and on-going work. It confirms to me day after day that it is the key to universal explorations; it is the key to exploring other worlds and giving meaning to my experience. This approach is based on trial and exploration where right and wrong are relative. Education through this approach is based on the hypothesis that young people are partners in shaping meaning and knowledge is not linked to ready-made texts, concepts and theories. This enhances the student's role to acquire the necessary habits, values, practices and capacities to grow and promote the values and practices that respect humans and nature.

It also contributes to a safe learning environment inside the team to help the students live their experiences and activities and gain from them the means to build their intellectual, social and cognitive abilities. Learning is not memorizing facts by heart, but rather knowing what to do with them.

Final Word:

- View learners as a source of meaning, understanding and knowledge and not as human resources; they are partners in shaping meaning.
- Acknowledge their knowledge, experiences and build on what they already have
- Knowledge does not depend on texts, curricula and books only, but also on the life experience and knowledge of the learners.
- Acknowledge cognitive plurality and link words to practices.
- It is not possible for a learner to develop an emancipatory education process without the teacher applying the emancipatory learning styles in his or her own life.
- Create an emancipatory learning environment that enables learners to live their experiences and practices and express them in freedom and security.

## **Annex (4)**

# **Sarah Zahran: Education as pedagogic authority: A call for emancipation in a colonial context**

In the dismantling of socio-educational structures, mainly education – in all forms – we are attempting to come up with a joint understanding of the policies that should be adopted in a colonial context. To do so, we need to engage with our own personal experience and ability to change. Education can help people shape meaning, but this is done in the institutional experience of forcibly creating collective perceptions. This paper attempts to investigate the term of “emancipatory education” as a challenge to the colonial system. Emancipatory education has the ability to create a revolutionary state of knowledge that places both learners and teachers on the same level in this search for knowledge. “Education is a better safeguard of liberty than any standing army<sup>2</sup>”.

Historical research on colonial theory and its different forms and dimensions tells us that pedagogic institutions have been the first and primary feeder of domination. They were the first box restricting critical thinking, and subsequently defined the way learners approached their futures and the way they handle their realities.

Emancipatory education movements around the world were an attempt to challenge and bring down the oppressive power of colonialism. For this reason, emancipation from the power of the church and religious authority required a major shaking up, for example, the French Revolution led to a humanitarian struggle that paved the road to enlightenment in Europe, and created a radically transformed mode of thinking.

These transformations came despite the school, house, street and church, i.e. the social institutions that had been established for educational/ pedagogic purposes. In this context, emancipatory education raised awareness of “oppression” and attempted to subvert it. In this paper, we define emancipatory education as a mutual act between two parties.

I recall here the quote of a French military officer who said, ‘To establish political authority over a population there are two modes, one of suppression and one of tutoring. The latter is long-term and works upon the mind, the former works upon the body and must come first...We must capture their minds after we have captured their bodies.’<sup>3</sup> This quote drove the mechanisms of colonialism as they “captured” individuals’ bodies and then extended this control to their minds.

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2 Quote by Edward Everett

3 Mitchel, Timothy, *Colonising Egypt*, (translation in Arabic)

Colonialism transformed its subjects into voluntary disciples, making oppression seem like a normal aspect of people's life and disguising any real awareness of its ramifications and impacts. In other words, it became a key component of the community architecture. For instance, it is normal for a policeman carries a large stick and chase civilians without raising the eyebrows of the surrounding community. It is also normal that a husband reprimands his wife in the street or that a teacher punishes a student. In the same context, knowledge is the property of teacher and learners become its recipients in a "normal" context.

Colonial studies have extensively analysed the formation of perceptions about the other. Colonisation depended on education as a key institution to create perceptions of the other, as explained in Edward Said's book *Culture and Imperialism*. Said criticised literature and its colonial dimensions, as well as the different ways colonizers used to control peoples. Stereotypes about this "other" were invented, and then taught to students as if they were true. For instance, the educational system designed for India did not aim to teach English literature only, but also to reiterate the differences between the Indians and the British. In this regard, the Brits were viewed as superior and the Indians as inferior. As such, the differences between them were reinforced to the extent that the colonial act was ignored when criticizing literary texts. Moreover, it led to worrying stereotypes such as the "inherently good progressive policeman."<sup>4</sup>

In his book *Colonising Egypt*, Timothy Mitchel, elaborates on how the British regime used school curriculum to create a structural reality that developed into a framework to organise, control and monitor the activities of Egyptians.<sup>5</sup> Mitchel also describes the connection between the street, the school, the army, and the shaping of law-abiding individuals. He illustrates the spatial frames that coordinated how people moved in the public sphere and how they were controlled. This was largely done by convincing people that the text was the best and optimal solution to become advanced and civilised and this idea was transmitted from one generation to another.

In the process, logical justifications were devised to maintain these disciplinary practices. The army was to keep order. The school was for education. The health care system was meant to keep people healthy. However, the goal behind the establishment of these institutions had an implicit purpose, which was to control individuals so that they did not grow hostile toward the regime. This system was diffused into the households, down to the role of mothers in bringing up their children. Immediately upon birth, the child was taught to abide by the rules. Mothers shouldered this 'noble' role. As Mitchel phrases it, "any political change requires change at the household level."<sup>6</sup> To shake off this level of control requires an emancipatory act at the micro and macro levels of the society, starting with the family up to the political regime of the state.

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4 Said, Edward. (2004) *Culture and Imperialism*, translation by Kamal Abu Dieb, Beirut, Dar Al-Adab

5 Mitchel, Timothy, *Ibid*

6 *idem*

## School curricula and democracy: Tying the individual to the state system

Speaking about democracy as a political system starts by interpreting the founding political relationships that govern the system, which is a relationship of citizenship. The people are meant to be free individuals, equal before the law in their political rights because they are equal in their duties before the state (tax payment, military service and sacrifice when necessary). Moreover, the contract established between the government and the people means that citizens delegate to the state the responsibility over their affairs, provision of public services and social protection. These are the terms of the contract they have with the state, which stipulates the balanced distribution of rights and duties. It is thus not possible to think of a modern democracy from within a neoliberal political ideology without taking for granted the centrality of individual in the state.<sup>7</sup>

Considering the democratic system as a regime that promotes individual agency to shape individuals' conscious and ability to lead brings us back to the concept we are trying to analyse in a broader context, emancipatory education. The existing regime plays a key role in empowering individuals with the space to experiment, innovate and create, and to confront repression and control.

A democratic system means a free regime that treats all citizens equally and which attempts to create a participatory approach to governance and management of all political and social affairs without any exclusion. So, when speaking of school, we must commence by addressing the curriculum, being as it is the first written text directed toward the student. This far-reaching materials pose a number of questions about the context in which the curricula is prepared and the ability of such curricula to create curious students who use inquiry to shape their own knowledge.

In this regard, it is not possible to speak of the Palestinian curricula in isolation from the colonial contest in which they were produced. Indeed, any new curricula "follow an educational reform and major political transformation in the history of a nation. In this regard, the Oslo Accords between the PLO and Israel and subsequent formation of the Palestinian Authority on part of the occupied Palestinian soil is a historical shift that triggered major educational transformation when the first Palestinian curricula were drafted by Palestinian hands."<sup>8</sup>This political transformation needed a national base to create a collective awareness of liberation issues. The role of the curriculum then becomes critical as it raises awareness among the Palestinian people of their oppression and their relation to the coloniser.

However, even when a Palestinian curriculum was created, the problem was not settled. "The drafting of the Palestinian curriculum was not regarded as a purely Palestinian affair, but rather as a public forum open for the intervention of the Israeli Occupation, donor countries and their taxpayers, members of parliaments, politicians and decision makers.

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7 Balqis, Abdel-illah (2008, *state and the society*, Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Publication

8 Al-Sheikh, Abd El-raheem (2008), *Palestinian Curricula: Dilemma of Identity and Citizenship*, Ramallah, Muwatint, Palestine Institute for Democracy Studies

As a result, all these parties ferociously attacked the curriculum.”<sup>9</sup>

Internally, the preparation of the curriculum lacked any clear conceptual framework in terms of a general policy and outline. It was not preceded by any studies to assess the needs of students and society. Furthermore, the drafters lacked the necessary expertise and were not working full time on this process.”<sup>10</sup> In such a context, the curriculum grew into another Palestinian problem, which remained subject to the colonial terms. The question is, How can the Palestinians exit this bottleneck and initiate emancipatory education, which would be a more comprehensive for achieving national goals? What horse can we bet on? The focus then turns to the “teacher” being the mediator between the curriculum and the individual. This means that an educator’s tools and ideology can shape emancipated citizens or reproduce repressed individuals.

## Participatory education as a tool for emancipatory education

A key concept that enables us give a functional definition of emancipatory education is the concept of ‘participatory education’. This entails the equal participation of both the learner and teacher in accessing knowledge. and means that education is not used as a technical procedure that dehumanizes the learner and his or her life but instead as an experience that shapes his or her understanding of the world.

The current attempts at emancipatory education claim the ability to bypass the concept of banking education imposed by the educational establishments under extreme bureaucracy that controls the mobility of both teacher and learner in a sustained system of domination. This domination is exhibited in numerous ways, including the imposition of a certain curriculum and the obligation of exams and supervisors’ assessments, which throws the teacher and learner back into a set of dynamics specified by the educational/pedagogic field. Pierre Bourdieu, in his book *Reproduction*, calls this the symbolic violence, which he defines as a transparent form of domination that “strips the students of any form of self-confidence and places them in continual depreciation.” Symbolic violence is thus a tactic of dispossession that students are often unaware of. As such, students are neutralized and perceive that they don’t even have the right to act otherwise. The learner does not have the right to disengage, for example sleeping through class or leaving the classroom, but must listen carefully and pretend to be active participant to promote the pedagogic activity in class<sup>11</sup>.

The model presented by Pierre Bourdieu on the concept of the educational establishment, is fed by symbolic capitals pertinent to the status each one of these agencies/selves has in the decision-making process and their participation to the creation of an educational system that respects differences and does not impose restrictions on learners via assessment tools, including grades and the curriculum, to evaluate their abilities and define their future. As such, the emancipatory school, as it was called by Paulo Freire, was created. In this kind of school, education becomes a daily life process and participatory

9 Al-Sheikh, Abd El-raheem, ibid

10 idem

11 Bourdieu Pierre and Passeron, Jean-Claude. (2007) *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Translation into Arabic by Maher Trimish, Beirut, Arab Translation Association.

education creates free souls capable of confronting authority and building knowledge. In Freire's opinion, this emancipatory generates independence. He firmly calls for enhancing the independent spirit of learners and respecting their knowledge. This means that education is based on dialogue that fosters learners' curiosity and seeking of knowledge by welcoming questioning and genuine interaction between teachers and learners. It is also based on practicing critical thinking to understand the lived reality and independent decision-making. Such abilities do not grow on their own; they are encouraged by multiple factors that either lead to sound maturity or distorted capacities.

Khalil Sakakini proposes a similar model to define learning. He believed in an inherent philosophy that matures through individuals' human experiences. A student's surrounding community makes for rich material for learning. Authenticity can combat the different forms of colonisation. As such, no people [as a collective body] can imitate another in regards educational practices.

True learning can defend students from the capitalist policies that endeavour to create a fake collective consciousness. Authenticity safeguards the collective identity of individuals. Sakakini's method of teaching, which he applied at the Dustoriah School, which he established during World War I, was revolutionary compared to all his counterparts of the time. He abolished physical punishment entirely and called it a "barbarian practice from the Middle Ages." He replaced exams with self-assessments for both students and teachers. He asked teachers not to write down the names of students who missed their classes. Students were free to leave the school should they feel bored. He felt that such a procedure forced teachers to be innovative and interesting to keep their students' focus. Through his innovative method to teaching Arabic, in his "*Al jadeed*" series, his methods spread widely. His press articles produced a new style of writing that was accurate, modern and svelte. It was fit for the new generation of Palestinians."<sup>12</sup>

Munir Fasheh also proposed a model of participatory education, namely "adjacency." This type of education is based on group learning where students share ideas with each other. Adjacency offers individuals equal opportunities to speak about their experience and learn from the experiences of others, either by building on their ideas or by pointing out their flaws.

Participatory education is a complex, interwoven style of teaching that forges a clear path toward an emancipatory educational system that supports the abilities of students and engages them in cognitive growth. In this context, every party involved in the education process is fully aware of the rights of the other participants and recognizes their humanity.

## **Paulo Freire and Joseph Jacotot: Models of Emancipation and Emancipatory Education**

It is not possible to address the concept of emancipatory education without referring to the key theories that form the foundation of the movement. We also need to refer to the theorists whose social awareness opened a window for researchers to take a deep

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12 Tamari, Salim, *Mountain Against the Sea*, Ramallah: Muwatin – Palestinian Institute for Democracy Studies

look into the concept. Emancipatory education is an authentic system that endeavours to preserve individuals' collective identity and help them to form an authentic awareness of their different social issues and concerns. It also allows individuals to liberate themselves from the colonial power by which they are oppressed. This awareness is formed by enlightened intellectuals and by different institutions that undertake the radical role of helping to contribute to public awareness.

This process requires the dismantling of existing structures in order to reconsider them critically. We may agree that "there is no doubt that science is the religion of modern Man"<sup>13</sup> The methods used in most schools consider students as empty containers and teachers as the "knowledgeable" persons who possess the tools to educate. Teachers in this system are the last to see the curriculum, which is the result of so much debate and analysis. The curriculum presented to the student, whether in its physical form, narrative content, or assessment tools serves as a text. This curriculum mainly promotes memorizing by heart and retrieving from memory. It does not promote the idea that students can be partners in building knowledge so that it remains alive in their minds." To overcome the crisis of the curriculum, educators must call for the adoption of alternative concepts of the culture of memorization, and instead promote a culture of creativity."<sup>14</sup>

We cannot in this context ignore the writings of Paulo Freire on education and its relation to emancipation, since it is the tool available to the oppressed people to overcome their current reality and create an alternative awareness that reconstructs the relationship between people and their indigenous culture. Freire suggests dialogue about the issues of concern to them, and which they view as priority. Dialogue will allow them to create a future vision with an inclusive perspective that does not treat the regime as superior to the individual. Freire believes that colonized peoples possess the tools to emancipate themselves from within and that cultural rooting is the means with which to do it. Frantz Fanon noticed that when oppression reaches a state that the oppressed are not aware it exists, this causes worries, suffocation, passivity and submission (1968). However, when the individual becomes conscious of his or her state, this leads to a struggle against oppression. In this case the individual takes the appropriate action to alleviate the suffocation of oppression."<sup>15</sup>

Paulo Freire reiterates that "education is simply a cultural act for emancipation, and is therefore an act of cognition not retrieval; a mechanical theory cannot do the math of this act in its complex whole because a theory of this kind will not have a holistic vision of education"<sup>16</sup>. He therefore rejected the technical materialism adopted by some educators and called on them to use what is already available to them. A learner cannot assimilate and engage with a foreign culture and foreign language, even when knowledgeable of such culture or language because the learner can't take it into his or her life context. Familiar words have more resonance for learners and can transport them from the state of silence to a state of awareness and emancipation. In the different studies proposed by

13 Badran, Shibl. (2011). *Education and Emancipation: Readings in the Contemporary Educational Scene*. (in Arabic)Cairo: Aldar AIMisriyah Allubnaniyah.

14 Badran, Shibl, *ibid*.

15 *Ibid*

16 Freire, Paulo. (1995). *Cultural Act for Emancipation*. (Arabic by Ibrahim Al-Kurdi). Ramallah: Legal Research and Resource Centre for Human Rights

Paulo Freire based on his living conditions in Brazil, and in his essays about countries of the developing world, the state itself is incapable of confronting the colonialist and the capitalist. He says, "there is in another state a core dimension for these communities that resulted from its colonisation era; its culture was generated and remained as a culture of silence". We find here once again this dual pattern: externally, the whole community is alienated. It is a dominated society that is ignored by the other. The colonial power imposes its words forcing the community to remain silent. This dynamic filters down into the self-alienated society, and the masses succumb to the same type of silencing from the country's elites."<sup>17</sup>

Consequently, Freire condemns the state of education when it is fed to students without any understanding of the what it signifies. Sartre supports this position, and says, "to know is to eat; what a philosophy of eating." He claims that "genuine dialogue unites agencies in their definition of what they can share as learnable topic."<sup>18</sup> In his book, *Freedom as a Cultural Act* and his review of adult education and literacy programs, Freire reiterates the importance of treating learners as humans with a voice and not only as students. It is important that learners turn into active agents in the society and develop an awareness of reality so that they can influence it. They are an inseparable part of the act of transformation in which humans become creative agencies.

The core role of those committed to cultural awareness, is to inspire others to learn the truth about their reality<sup>19</sup>." In his essays about the necessity of teacher-learner cooperation, the teacher asks the learners, Do you believe we can? (Note he did not use you can). To Freire, this is the corner stone of emancipation in education.

In this brief paper, we cannot fully cover Freire's theories about colonised peoples and the reality of education. I will move now to another model that simulates Fanon's experience in a different educational context. This is from Rancière's review of Jacotot's model in his book *Ignorant Schoolmaster*. Rancière argues that "the book claims that teaching should be based on what we ignore; "we can teach what we ignore" and not what we know. This comes from Jacotot's crazy idea to teach a group of students who spoke a language he did not know (French) because he had an absolute belief that education stems from what we ignore and not what we know. Not only that, but also we can teach knowledge that we ignore; there is no need to teach what we know. Because "the main act of the schoolmaster is to explain, to highlight the simple basics of knowledge, and tailor it to fit the simplicity of young people's minds, teaching by itself becomes a delivery of knowledge to shape brains and enable them shift gradually from the simple to the more complex. In this process, the student is promoted to one who possesses knowledge<sup>20</sup>."

Since the road to freedom requires us to trust in the mental abilities of every human being, the real adventure of education is the partnership between the teacher and learner. In this model, the teacher does not always occupy the centre of power whether as a possessor of knowledge or the methods used to reach knowledge. Instead teachers act as

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17 Freire, Paulo, Ibid.

18 Idem.

19 Idem.

20 Ranciere, Jacques. (2014). *Ignorant Schoolmaster, Five Lessons on Mental Emancipation*. (Arabic translation by Ezedien Al-khitabi). Ramallah, Al-Qattan Foundation.

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facilitators who make space for this knowledge to develop in a natural, human context that respects the local environment and culture and in which learners are seen as equal. In traditional education, the teacher (schoolmaster) plays one role only, which is to explain. "Thus Jacotot attacked the idea of explication, which is inherent to educational systems, because the best assurance is intuition because the knowledge any of us develops is indeed linked to what we understand. For a human to understand, he/she must receive an explanation from the teacher; but the teacher should intercept this process and help the mind of the learner figure out the meaning of the text."<sup>21</sup>

This brings us back to square one and our permanent questions: What is the form of education we desire? What role will the teacher play? Do we speak of school education, or do we mean education as an eternal life act? This paper has attempted to provide a theoretical review of the concept based on essays on decolonisation. We cannot create emancipatory education in a space that does not support experimentation. We must then look deep inside us and find the ability to confront our status quo in order to nurture a new plant within. The solution, according to Al-Barghouthi, lies in the moment of reflection and in the many questions it brings. "The question is, why do students wait for the time to "flee" the classroom rather than the time to come to it?" Because they do not enjoy dead material; They prefer living, free, dynamic learning. The most dangerous thing is the robot inside us. When we bypass "the robot", we reach the life, deep and genuine in the other, and in everything we learn, touch or live. Einstein once said, "Man without the ability to be astonished is like a dead person." Education is not only what we say or write on the board; it is the art of life. If the student cannot sense this life in his or her teacher, he or she will only learn death from them.<sup>22</sup>

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21 Rancière, Jacques, idem.

22 Al-Barghouthi, Hussein (2016). *Mental Svelteness*. Tayf Magazine, issue 23

## **Annex (5)**

# **NajehShahin: Khalil Sakakini's Ideological and Pedagogic Principles**

### **Socio-Ideological Context**

Khalil Sakakini was born in 1878 to a Jerusalemite Orthodox family. It was quite natural that he enrolled in the Greek Orthodox School in Jerusalem. However, he quit this school very quickly when a teacher slapped him on the face for no reason.<sup>23</sup> Sakakini remained opposed to beating students and all other forms of punishment until the end of his days. The British opened a school they called "Al-Shabab – Youth" (it was later named Sahion – Zion). He enrolled in this school and was educated by Nakhla Zureiq before he travelled to Great Britain to study education.<sup>24</sup> He started working as a teacher in 1893. In 1907, he travelled to the United States of America. There he met Farah Anton, one of the most prominent scholars of the first half of the twentieth century. He was owner of the famous journal *Al-Jamiah*. However, Sakakini could not find a job. He endured poverty, alienation and hard living conditions. He returned to his homeland in 1908. At that time, he formed the Orthodox Association, which aimed to reform the religious community's affairs and lift the injustice against the Arab Orthodox community. After this effort, he became a political activist and joined the Union and Advancement Association, which he left because he didn't agree with its goals. He was enthusiastic about Hussein Bin Ali's revolution and wrote a poem, which started:

*O Great King*

*Grandfather of all Arabs*

*Your reign is the most glorious*

*It is the reign of your grandfather, the prophet<sup>25</sup>*

This poem became the song of the revolution against the Turks. Sakakini was imprisoned in Damascus by the Turkish government during World War I for some time and was released in 1918. The next year, he returned to Jerusalem, which had already been placed under the British Mandate. He said, "These days are the most important days in the history of Palestine. We must therefore seize the opportunity and violently shake our nation, hoping it will wake up. We must unite our word and opinions and rejuvenate our nation and revive its hopes."<sup>26</sup> To achieve this goal, Sakakini was an early supporter of the "Arab League."

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23 Saleh, Jehad Ahmad. (2010). *Jerusalem Pioneers: Khalil Sakakini*. Ramallah, General Union of Palestinian Writers.

24 Al-Asaad, Fawzi. (1994). *Khalil Sakakini*. Nablus: Scientific Association Library

25 *ibid*

26 *ibid*

He even claimed he was the first advocate of the idea. Later on, he became active in calling the youth to revolt. He moved to Egypt in 1920 to meet scholars like Mustapha Abdelrazik, Ahmad Zaki and Amin Al-Rehani. He lectured several times at the Egyptian University and the American University of Beirut. He worked as a supervisor of Arabic Language in a school in Palestine in 1926. During this period he wrote his *New Book in Arabic Language*,<sup>27</sup> which used phonemes and syllables to compose words, such as *ras*, *ros* or *dar*, *dor*. The book was used in schools for over fifty years. Some still insist that the method is the most efficient method of teaching Arabic, compared to other subsequent approaches.

The Academy of Arabic Language in Cairo named it the best book for teaching Arabic to young students in 1917,<sup>28</sup> half a century after the book was published and a quarter of a century after Sakakini had passed away.

In 1935, Sakakini became the director of Arabic broadcasting at Palestine Radio. He resigned shortly afterwards when he heard the newscaster speak about “the Land of Israel.” He was active in the revolution of 1936, which he had foreseen a few years earlier. In 1938, in his sixties, he established Al-Nahda school, which operated until 1948. He was in Cairo during the ethnic cleansing of Palestine when most of its population was displaced. He stayed in Cairo till his death in 1953.<sup>29</sup>

Khalil Sakakini lived from 1878 to 1953, an era wrongly referred to in modern Palestinian history as *Fikr Al-Nahdah*, or the Renaissance. This was a time of faith in progress and a genuine liberal ideology. It was around this time that the theory of Evolution and Darwinism began to sweep through the ideological space of the Orient, including Egypt and Syria and part of Iraq.

Sakakini approached this period with energy and faith in the potential, freedom and capacity of human beings to open up. He was also conscious of the principle of power, which does not essentially contradict the ideals progress and creativity, but is instead complementary. For those who believe in this relationship, they see the very purpose of existence to be to create a superior human. This philosophy was promoted by Nietzsche and H.G. Wells, and the socialist playwright and scholar Bernard Shaw. “The idea of a Superman was key in this landscape. Sakakini was part of this trend. Without a doubt, he absorbed the emancipatory and pragmatic ideas that prevailed in the US during this time, such as the ideas of John Dewey.

Sakakini was a free-spirited, far reaching man, who was inspired by the European model and its openness to science and liberation, which was propagating modern rationalism around the world. This rationalism led to some of the successful European socialist traditions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although these trends were not accessible to Sakakini because he lived in the Middle East.

Nevertheless, Sakakini worked with Farah Anton, who was a prominent enlightenment scholar, who was known for his provocative dialogue with Mohammad Abdo on “Islam

27 *ibid*

28 *ibid*

29 *ibid*

and Christianity with Science and Civility.” The fallout from the dialogue forced Anton, a disciple of Averroes (Ibn Rushd) and Averroism, to leave Egypt and settle in Paris. This incident was the first outright defeat of enlightenment thought in the Middle East in the twentieth century. At any rate, Sakakini lived in the era during which Nasser, Baath and Wahhabism were becoming forces to be reckoned with and criticism of any of these powerful figures was taboo. In such a context, liberal, pluralist critical thinking was replaced by extreme dogmatic religiosity disguised as nationalism, socialism or something else.

## **His social and ideological positions**

Sakakini was an advocate of tolerance and equality. He viewed women as equal to men and henceforth adopted rigorous integration calling for equal treatment of the sexes. He thought that anything required of women should also be required of men. “Noble men, if you set a term to your women to be virtuous before and after marriage, equity states that you should be virtuous before and after marriage as well.”<sup>30</sup> He had clear-cut opinions about prison and prisoners as well, and he criticised the idea that prisons are the place to sanction wrongdoers. He believed that crimes stemmed from social problems that must be eradicated. He strongly believed in the idea that people are born good and it is the cruel society that corrupts them and makes them commit crimes. In this regard, he said, “jail is an out-dated system that must be stopped; psychologists no longer view offenders as criminals but rather as patients. Prisons must be abolished and replaced by a modern sciences-based system. Prisons do not reduce the level of crimes in the world, but rather increase them. Prisons do not reform prisoners; to the contrary, prisons corrupt criminals, especially if they are juvenile. Instead of focusing on the offense, we must focus on the reasons behind them and eradicate these reasons to put an end to criminality.”<sup>31</sup> While he was in Cairo, his house was robbed. He reacted by saying they would not have robbed the house had they not been in need and that he hoped they found what they needed there.<sup>32</sup> This tolerance of criminality has obvious similarities with what he wanted to give his students, which was a loving and tolerant environment.

Sakakini had a distinct position regarding the Orthodox church. Very early in his school years, he left the Orthodox school because the teachers humiliated and hit the students. Later in his life, he split with the whole religious institution and declared he was no longer an Orthodox.

In the Orthodox Society and Ecumenical Council, he struggled against Greece’s domination, which still exists today, over the Arab members of the sect. He explicitly advocated for “removal of Greek control since they do not have the right to preside over the church, at all religious, political and moral levels.”<sup>33</sup> Sakakini was very active in this regard when clashes between the Arab and Greek clergies intensified after the Greek Patriarch tried to compel the Arab clergy to pray in the churches. Under Turkish pressure in that period

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30 Ibid

31 Ibid

32 Ibid

33 Saleh, Jihad, Ibid

(1908-1913), the Arabs revoked their claims, which pushed Sakakini to announce, "I cannot belong to the Orthodox sect anymore; I cannot be under the patronage of corrupt degrading clergy nor under this ignoble sect. Now that I have made all efforts, I cut any relations I have with the Orthodox Church ... I will no longer be an Orthodox."<sup>34</sup> This strong statement is similar to the writings of Al-Razi on Prophecy Anthropomorphism (*Makhareeq Al-Anbiya*) or Voltaire's acute criticism of the Bible, mainly the Old Testament.

Sakakini's pragmatism led him to avoid any vain sectarian conflicts. Writing about his daughters, he said, "I walk with them, taking one in my hand and the other in the other hand on Qatmoun Road. When I cuddle them and they cuddle me, it is worth a thousand times more than being in Heaven with Jesus, St. Peter and the angels. Let those who seek heaven go there. To us, we like living on this earth and we shall turn it into our heaven."<sup>35</sup> Some texts report that Sakakini invited Christians to convert to Islam so that all Arabs would become Muslims and all foreigners become Christians or disciples of other faith. Coming from another scholar, this move would have raised eyebrows. However, if he truly held this position, this means that his detachment with the Orthodox faith was so extreme that he invited all Christians to abandon Christianity and adopt Islam.<sup>36</sup> This call may have stemmed from his anger about the Greek Cleric's practices, but it also could be attributed to his commitment to the Arab renaissance and independence of the Arab nation.

Politically, Sakakini was burdened by the worries of his nation, but he considered independence and self-reliance a good model for independence.<sup>37</sup> This was reflected in his ideas on education and his respect for the individuality of students.

## Sakakini's educational ideology

It is shocking to note that despite thousands of educational studies produced by our local universities, there hasn't been any rigorous empirical research on Sakakini's thinking in general or on his educational theories in particular. This gap must be investigated to understand why a man as important as Sakakini has not been studied by many scholars, especially when compared to relatively large amount of scholarship on poets and novelists. There are many reviews of the works of Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmoud Darwish, Abd El-raheem Mahmoud and even lesser known poets like Sakher Habash. But Sakakini has not been the subject of any in-depth academic studies.

Our understanding of his motivations is limited. Still, we know he familiarised himself with John Dewey's pragmatism, Bertrand Russel's epistemology and Rousseau and Pestalozzi's respect for the child and his freedom and happiness. All of this impacted Sakakini's positions. As he wrote, "education must focus on loving the child and converting the school into a loving family." Still, we do not know much about Sakakini's ideological positions. The reason, as stated before, is lack of any organized effort to read his writings, although his works are abundant. Thus, we attempt here to shed light on his ideas using the limited information available to us.

<sup>34</sup> Idem

<sup>35</sup> Haddad, Yousef Ayoub (1985), *Khalil Sakakini*, Nazareth, Al-Sawt Association

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

Most probably, the essence of his “theorisation” focused on the method rather than content. He looked at the process of thinking and the role of students in learning. Sakakini also focused on children’s growth, happiness and joy and advocated against exams and the terror they generate. What matters is to motivate students so that they grow into strong, ethical and internally coherent adults. This means complementarity rather than isolation.

In practice, he proposed at the beginning of the twentieth century that Arabic language must be used when teaching other subjects. What is needed is not to teach Arabic by itself, but rather the teachers of all the other subjects must be teachers of Arabic in the same time.<sup>38</sup>

The purpose here is to create an integrated mind. According to Sakakini the first objective of education is “to create a new type of humans who use their minds in all their matters.”<sup>39</sup> Sakakini advocated for encouraging students’ creativity. He wrote, “We do not teach history to our students so that they learn history but rather to become historians; we do not teach them literature to know about it, but to become authors. We do not teach them the language to know it, but to master it to the fullest. We teach them math to develop mathematical brains, etc..”<sup>40</sup> For this reason, Sakakini taught critical thinking and asked students to observe and interpret the world around them and to convey their experience into other fields of knowledge. An example of his teaching methods is the time when that read a verse of poetry to his students:

*Had children of men been any pain,  
you would be the fresh, cool, sweet and licit love*

He then said he did not like the word “cool” in this verse and asked them to think of a more beautiful synonym. A student replaced it with “gentle.”<sup>41</sup> This work is different from what teachers do nowadays. He encouraged students to innovate and helped them overcome their terror of the sanctity of the text. He helped them feel free from the text and not slaves to it who can only repeat “rich terms and strong phrases,” which is how education in our times, one century after Sakakini was teaching, is being conducted.

## **Sakakini’s Pedagogy and Ideology**

Based on his understanding of education and his openness to emancipatory learning, logic and creative thinking, Sakakini proposed a number of ideas.

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38 Hassan, Nawaf Abed (1987), *Khalil Sakakini: Loyalty and Memory*, Arab Heritage Revival Centre.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid

41 Haddad, Yousef, Idem.

In his writings, Sakakini advocated for the following:

1. He was a supporter of Cartesian methods. Sakakini said, "Our school does not abide by anybody's opinion and does not accept any opinion before examining it. It does not see science as a divine text and defends what is right ferociously."<sup>42</sup> It appears here that Sakakini was drawing from Descartes' "Discourse of Methods," in which he said, "we cannot accept any opinion before sufficient and thorough examination thereof."
2. He respected his students' individual differences, dignity, personality and freedom. He believed that students couldn't be free unless they lived their freedom in their schools.<sup>43</sup>
3. He believed that the school must foster the student's relationship with nature. He applied this teaching in his *Dusturiah* School. He saw internal "tourism" as necessary to knowing one's country. He thought it was important to visit nature, see the fields, and climb the mountains for this helps acquire healthy and active habits and "refills students with joy."
4. He focused on physical education. Sakakini intended to introduce boxing, wrestling and shooting to his school's educational programs. He believed education is not complete without a healthy, strong body. We need to recall here that there is only hour dedicated to physical education in contemporary Palestinian schools, and even this hour is often cancelled for some reason or another. In some senses, Sakakini's thinking may be similar to Plato's pedagogy, for he insisted that "a sound brain is found in a sound body." Plato encouraged sports of all types in which students of both genders participated nude. He believed they should participate in these sports until the age of 18 until they developed the necessary physical health and a "natural" sense of the female and male body without any illusions or shame. We should note here that Sakakini's school was mixed and did not discriminate on the basis of gender at all.
5. Sakakini gave students the full opportunity to develop their entire selves, not only their academic skills. This is consistent with the view that students are social beings and citizens and that they must be prepared to undertake their full role in the life and society. Sakakini says, "Since I became principal of the school, I never stopped disseminating my spirit to the students. I gave them full freedom and they grew into competent souls who raised their heads and held high hopes and strong cognition. I taught my students to rule themselves. I established for them a society for lecturing and reciting poems that held its meetings every Thursday afternoon. I also established a bi-weekly journal for them, entitled *Al-Jawza*, where students wrote their own articles. For them, I established a reform society to solve their problems in the school without any intervention of the

<sup>42</sup> Quotes of Khalil Sakakini in, *Educational Visions*, Ramallah, Al Qattan Centre, Issue 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*.

teachers.”<sup>44</sup> It is astonishing to see that he considered students to be full persons with the real ability to make and implement decisions, including managing and writing in a journal. His ideas were so ambitious that they extended to settling disputes, which usually consume a lot of the teachers’ and administrators’ time in our schools and which detract the performance of teachers or the entire school and educational system.

6. He advocated for compliance with empirical knowledge instead of reliance on religion. We need to recall here that in one of our national universities, a biology teacher volunteered to launch a campaign against teaching the theory of evolution or Darwin. He described it as a false theory devised to undermine religion and propagate atheism. This is almost a century after Sakakini said, “education must be stripped of any religious, sexual, nationalist or political influence and schools must be faithful to science. Religious teaching must teach students the pillars of their faith provided that it be by teachers with good ethics and that they are not left alone to teach mediocre superstitions that mislead the brains and ruin national faiths for they create dreadful fanaticism and propagate hatred of empirical doctrines.”<sup>45</sup>
7. The ultimate goal of education is to widen and enhance the mind rather than filling it with knowledge. This practice of banking knowledge, according to Sakakini, will fill the brain, but keep it “small.” He criticised memorising by heart since it transforms people into passive machines that learn facts and information without understanding them. Such a process does not form a thinking person, but instead a mobile recorder or CD or hard disk with bits and pieces of meaningless information.
8. The universal humanitarian model produced by the French Revolution captured Sakakini’s imagination. He believed that the school “does not belong to one sect or another or to one class or another. It is a place for all.” He mentioned explicitly that the schools in Europe were a model to follow.
9. He also said that education must be tasked to the “noble class in the nation, people with grace, faithful national belonging, pride and good ethics.” Arab and Palestinian contemporary citizens will laugh at reading this description when education has become a pathetic profession and teachers are those who could not find other jobs.
10. He took an amazingly daring position that the school should not be interested in diplomas but rather willing to accept students even when they’ve been fired from another school. His school did not consider the honours attributed to the students as belonging to the student, but instead as a flaw of the school itself. Thus, Sakakini reiterated the importance treating students with utmost respect.<sup>46</sup>

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44 Ibid, articulation by author

45 Ibid

46 Haddad, Yousef, points 7-10.

11. Sakakini took the position that his school would not keep attendance records; students should be free to come to school. The rule is to attract the student to school and that they develop a natural desire to attend. No doubt, this is an amazing ambition. It was a unique model that we should follow today. We have turned our schools into detention. Emancipating the psyche of the student so that he or she attends school out of love not out of fear, seems idealistic even now.
12. The “Sakakini School” was not only a place to study and have some ethical training (education and teaching), but also a place to build independent, free and ethical thinkers who could solve problems on their own.<sup>47</sup>
13. Sakakini proposed Khaldunism in teaching Arabic. It is a method based on observation and use of the language without memorizing rigid rules and grammar. In this context, Sakakini advocated using the teacher’s eloquence and the beauty of the text to encourage natural ability in language.<sup>48</sup>Memorizing rules temporarily allows students to answer questions on the exams but they then fade away. Sakakini reiterated that the most important aspect of teaching language is to make students love Arabic in the same manner that French and English are read with genuine desire and interest. On the other hand, he explained that fully overcoming language difficulties is absolutely an illusion. Language is difficult by nature. However, what matters is that how we can motivate students’ passion to confront language difficulties and surmount them.<sup>49</sup>
14. One of Sakakini’s strongest positions was probably his attitude toward the teaching profession. He was passionate about the profession and found it a source of happiness and joy. He said, “the teaching profession is the most beautiful of any industry man can do. Had I been reincarnated – god forbid – I would have chosen to be a teacher. I will choose to teach the youth, because educating youth is sublime passion.”<sup>50</sup>
15. Sakakini believed that students are capable of self-education. The role of the teacher is to help students rather than dictating what they should do. He said, “I thank God I was the first in this country to call for the emancipation of students. Since I started my job, I have been calling for emancipating students and educating them with respect not humiliation.”<sup>51</sup> It is quite obvious here that we have a “renaissance” thinker who was optimistic about man’s ability as a free, good and rational being.

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47 Ibid.

48 Saleh, Jihad, Idem.

49 Ibid

50 Al-Asaad, Fawzi, idem.

51 Hassan, Nawaf Abed, idem

## **Conclusion**

Sakakini spent his life preoccupied with building an educational system that fosters physical and social health and promotes cognitive ability to fully unleash students' potentials and help them become rational, brave, free, and competent. As such, they will positively contribute to the life of their nation and humanity. Sakakini did not fear risking the teacher's or school's "prestige" to build the personality of the learner to become the good, rational, intelligent and free person. It does not matter if rules are wiped out to achieve the more important goals of emancipation of the mind and soul so that individuals can develop their intelligence, thinking and ethics. Such a complete human is worth more the system of exams and classroom discipline and rules. Nothing is worth sacrificing the student's ability to think, freedom and ethics.

## **Annex (6)**

# **Mohammed Salamah: Emancipatory Education**

Based on the few readings about this topic and the three workshops in which I participated, which I believe were quite useful, interactive and fruitful (they were genuinely a mini emancipatory education environment), I developed a better understanding of emancipatory education. I cannot claim that I became fully knowledgeable with a full understanding of the term though, especially in regards to the mechanisms used to replace traditional education with emancipatory.

As regards the concept, I believe that emancipatory education is an on-going learner-based learning and teaching process that aims to emancipate the brain and promote the ability to engage in creative and critical thinking. This approach aims to help learners develop the skills of logic and empirical analysis of everything that surrounds them. It enhances the building of an independent and productive personality. It therefore improves the performance of the entire society through the promotion of a collective emancipatory mind-set. It also promotes a community awareness that rejects given assumptions and respects the democratic freedom of individuals and groups. Such an education would filter into cultural practices and attitudes and counter inherited traditionalism in all its forms. The outcome would be on-going continuous social renewal and change.

Thus, emancipatory education is one of the most important human tools for positive social change. It is a revolutionary concept in essence because it is based on non-stop confrontation between the individual and the inherited cultural assumptions that have been passed down from one generation to another.

Therefore, emancipatory education is a more comprehensive learning and teaching process than school education. It is a process and an approach that plays out in the theatre of life. Should we disseminate this concept in schools, it would become exceptionally influential? Consequently, promoting this type of education as an alternative to the traditional school curriculum would accelerate desired social change and evolution.

Speaking of the traditional educational system in our Palestinian society, I agree with the others that it is backward, as it is based on stuffing information in the heads of students. The teacher is the absolute authority and the content of textbooks is seen as infallible. In this sense, the student becomes a slave to the content and the knowledge he or she is being fed. As a result, the door to success and academic achievement is measured by the student's ability to memorize information and retrieve it when needed on the exam paper. This means that the student gradually absorbs the will of the ruling political regime, which is interested in creating submissive citizens. All of this has an adverse impact on the construction of an independent and productive personality.

Relentless long-term effort must be made by all those who wish to implement emancipatory education as an alternative approach in Palestinian society in order to break down the

highly fortified traditional colonial curriculum. It is important to break down this obsolete cultural value system that runs deep in the consciousness of the Palestinian, Arab, tribal and patriarchal society and in the minds of decision makers who find in the strengthening of such culture a source of protection for their positions and interests.

Therefore, the determining factor in any successful implementation of these ideas is the adoption of revolutionary but realistic goals that are ambitious but also achievable. Success should be achieved gradually and not as a knockout punch that reverses the traditional education system. It is also important to determine the mechanisms and tools and appropriate activities that would help to achieve this goal.

### **For objectives, I suggest;**

- Interested institutions and groups should focus their work on intervening in educational policy making in order to improve the quality of education and to respond to core issues including gender and equality in the curriculum and content of schools' textbooks, and increasing analytical skills and critical and creative thinking among students. Furthermore, education budget allocations in the PNA general budget must be increased to upgrade the educational environment, including buildings, classrooms, playgrounds, labs and to fairly compensate teachers on the other.
- The capacities of Palestinian teachers must be increased so that they acquire teaching skills, knowledge and methods that are in accord with our vision of the role of the teacher in the education process.
- We should help the youth acquire the awareness and knowledge of the concept of emancipatory education and critical and creative thinking via their extracurricular activities, i.e. outside of the context and curriculum officially taught at school.

### **For tools, I suggest;**

- Form a social and academic lobby of stakeholders, members of progressive institutions and unions, and political activists. The task force that participated in the four workshops on emancipatory education will be the nucleus of this group.
- Form youth, women and professional groups as broad grassroots tools to achieve more influence.

### **For mechanisms, I suggest;**

- Boost the publication of articles by stakeholders and specialists and organize press conferences and seminars.
- Organize broad public meetings.

- Disseminate successful models of emancipatory education at the largest scale possible.
- Organize training workshops for activists on the concepts of emancipatory education so that they master the skills of lobbying and public campaigns.
- Use the media and social media.
- Draft a programme for youth and students' summer camps to motivate their critical thinking and help them understand the concepts of emancipatory education and democratic rights. Generalize this practice and provide relevant training to camps supervisors and teams.
- Organize periodic stakeholders' meetings that will serve as 'mass lobbying' to assess the impact of the campaigns and renew the media and mass plan of action. In other words, institutionalise the activity to guarantee an accumulated outcome.

The goals, mechanisms and tools mentioned above are without a doubt individual suggestions that need more group discussions. They require recruitment of all competent activists and stakeholders to conceptualize them in a better way either by deleting, adding or improving items.

## **Annex (7)**

# **Abdel-Ghani Salamah: Emancipatory Education (1/3)**

I am quoting part of the famous article by Hussein Al Barghouthi on “Mind Svelteness.” In his article, Al Barghouthi argues that one of the reasons behind the failure of education in the Arab area is teachers’ desire or persuasion that they need change their students’ brains rather than discussing with them and attempting to discover and understand them. Al Barghouthi believes that this persuasion implies a hidden desire to control and guide, which relies on the repressive powers the system grants to the teacher. In softer words, the teacher attempts to subjugate the students to his opinions and transform the student into an extension of him or her. The natural reaction to this suppression is students’ boredom, complaining and carelessness. This reaction is a hidden form of resistance they unconsciously exercise. Usually, when the teacher fails to impose his ideas on students, he resorts to punishment, scolding, verbal violence, mockery and even beating when necessary, under the pretence of disciplining and educating for the interest of the student. As described by Al Barghouthi, the classroom in such an educational system becomes a centre of power relations. In this system, the balance of power tips fully on the side of the teacher, who has the right to silence the entire class.

In this system, the teacher instructs information to the students and pushes them to finish the curriculum within the given timeframe. The students, in their turn, memorize the information and, because they are well brought-up, they do not annoy the teacher with their movements, questions and activity. In the end, they pass their exams with good scores and complete the school year. For decades, students have been going through this type of educational system in the Arab world. Millions of students have graduated as doctors, engineers, etc.

It should be noted here that Arab students are admitted to universities based on their general certificate grades and not on their wishes or interests. They graduate only to get a job. The natural outcome of this traditional educational system (which exists in universities as well) is a lack of creativity in the areas of science, medicine or any other discipline. (I do not refer here to professional or career success and high income.) Arabs do not invent or explore anything. We do not win international sports matches nor do we receive awards in the arts, sports or cinema. Arabic literature has been backward for decades in comparison with world production. Arab cultural production is marginal and not mentioned internationally. Arab contributions to human culture are nil and had stopped hundreds of years ago. Even individual talents and capacities are next to in-existent. It is simply because creativity, talent and distinction need an environment of freedom while the Arab educational system is designed to suffocate students’ freedom and subjugate them.

The other flaw of this rigid educational system is that the teacher considers him or herself as a mere instructor. He or she is supposed to be the only retainer of information, wisdom

and interpretation in the class and his or her role is to stuff this into the students' brains. In other words, the teacher-student relation is a patriarchal, hegemonic one. As Barghouthi expressed it, "This relationship does not produce any friendships, but only hierarchical relations of power." Friendship is when a teacher is willing to equate him or herself with the students rather than being their superior. This means he or she shall treat them the way he or she treats him or herself. He or she becomes a teacher and a learner at the same time. This requires changing the very basis of classroom instruction to shift from narrating to interactive dialogue in an environment of democracy and genuine equity among all (students, teachers, and administration). Such an environment empowers students to think freely and to ask questions without fear. They can discuss and present their opinions and perceptions and be different from the others without any consequences or fear of punishment, failure or even tests.

Al Barghouthi explains that the idea is not to make all students athletes, artists, poets or economists. If we discover a student who is behind in a particular field and does not show any progress, we should abstain from considering him or her dumb and start searching for his or her intelligence in other fields. We need to discover his or her real talent, passion and interests and have a sense of his or her aspirations and feelings. In this way, we can help this student become successful and distinguished in the real sense of the term. If we do not do this, we should, at least, leave him or her alone and treat him or her like a friend rather than punishing and breaking him or her.

Al Barghouthi presents another model of the wrong understanding of the teaching profession. It is when the teacher believes that there is an answer to all questions and that every dialogue has an ending. In this regard, teachers see that the solution to any perplexity is a certain piece of information and a definite answer, absolute truth or final word with only one logical and correct explanation. This type of teaching moulds students' brains into identical copies without any individual differences, differentiation or ambitions. Consequently, they lose their imagination and creativity. This systematic error is also present in the society, which believes that its cultural legacy is the ultimate truth that cannot be discussed. When we enter into a dialogue, our object is to convince the opponent and change his or her positions rather than exchanging information and reaching a compromise. In this context, we are either winners or losers.

Al Barghouthi asks the teachers to learn mental dexterity and remove this serious barrier between them and their students. They should start with fun mental games and laughing. Rigid seriousness leads to heavy barriers and boredom in the classroom. It kills any enjoyment or any improvisation and innovation. Moreover, such rigidity suffocates curiosity and the love for learning. As evidence of this, according to Al Barghouthi, we see students wait for the moment to run away from the class rather than wishing to come to it because they do not enjoy it. The knowledge they receive is dead, dictated and routine. Al Barghouthi says the teacher must instead donate to his class the living and good part of his soul and add life to his words. He or she must explore new and different things in the subjects taught the school and aim for students' hearts and souls. He or she must realize that education is not what he utters or writes on the board, but rather encouraging students to wonder, use their curiosity and mobility and ask questions. The teacher must reach out to the deepest part of their brains. He concludes, "Humans who lose the ability to wonder are dead. Teaching is life and students who cannot sense this life with their teachers will only learn death from them."

## **Annex (8)**

# **Abdelghani Salamah: Emancipatory Education (2/3)**

## **Freire's and Sakakini's Experiences**

Simply said, emancipatory education is participatory education based on the participation of learners and teachers who access knowledge together without any exclusion or negation of one another. It is built on respect for learners as human-beings and on appreciating their life experience and diverse expertise. The Brazilian Paulo Freire (1921-1997) is one of the most prominent pioneers of emancipatory education. His work helped his country exit dire poverty and eradicate illiteracy. He put forth the scientific basis that transformed Brazil from a country controlled by gangsters and drug mafias into a first class country at the international level. His thoughts did not remain confined to his country and were adopted by many countries in the developed world.

Freire viewed education as “a means to revolt against injustice” and “a path toward freedom to empower the oppressed use their own agency.” On the other hand, he believed that education can be either “a tool of oppression” or “a potential for emancipation.” His thoughts revealed a destructive trend that education can take, especially when used by the state to enforce its authority and hegemony over its people. Freire called this type of (dangerous) education “banking education,” as opposed to “emancipatory education,” which he was advocating for.

In banking education, school acts the same way political parties and religious institutions do. It negates and marginalizes humans and treats them in a degrading way, since it views them as mere passive recipients that must comply without discussion. The problem with the ‘comply and do not discuss’ banking education is that the text becomes sacred and any deviation from it is rejected and may lead to failure. The teacher deposits the data from the predetermined schoolbooks into the brains of students. Their role is limited to absorbing this deposition. This type of education produces carbon-copy students who contribute to prolonging the existing situation, no matter how unjust it is.

In banking education, the teacher assumes that students have no experience or knowledge. Therefore, he or she has to convey knowledge to them through explanation. This means he or she will speak and explain and they must piously listen and absorb what he or she says. He or she deposits knowledge into their minds and they must store it. He or she asks, and they must answer. Education in this sense is a one-way authoritarian relationship. This is of course a mini-reproduction of socio-political relations in despotic regimes. What the school does is to reinforce and reproduce this pattern.

Banking education aims to whitewash reality and conceal or falsify its flaws. For this purpose, it uses myth and monopolises the interpretation of religious texts. Consequently, this educational pattern avoids dialogue. This is the exact opposite of emancipatory education, which rejects myths and explores reality as is; it therefore encouraging dialogue.

Banking education views students as creatures in need of help. It does not recognise their agency nor does it explore their talents. As a result, it frustrates them and suffocates their sense of imagination, challenge and creativity. They are required to adapt to reality and accept it as their fate and destiny. On the other hand, emancipatory education acknowledges their abilities and encourages them to think critically and abstain from accepting ready-made mottos. It convinces them of their ability to make change.

Freire's approach focuses on dialogue in which teachers and students switch roles. They learn from each other. The subject of the dialogue, which usually revolves around the everyday lives of oppressed students, is the entry point to education. Freire confirms that teachers should not be the sole source of knowledge and that knowledge must be a process of research, investigation and thinking, rather than rote learning. He argues that there is no absolute ignorance or absolute power and there is no ultimate truth. The world is in a continuous process of change and evolution. The status is not fixed.

Freire calls for confronting oppression and hegemony in the school through the development of a sense of independence among students. Students will learn to respect the knowledge they have. He says, the teacher who does not respect the curiosity of his students in his linguistic and metaphoric expressions and the teacher who mocks them violates ethical principles that are essential for the human condition.

While focusing on the importance of dialogue, Freire does not call for restricting the teacher's instructional role to the mere asking of questions in the name of freedom of expression. Instead he encourages teachers to develop a sense of research and curiosity. The need for dialogue does not undermine in any way the need to explain and present what the teacher understands and knows about the topic. The core issue in the process is that teachers and students must know that questioning is allowed and that talking, listening and discussion are based on mutual respect.

Although Freire has become world famous, Sakakini (1953-1878) presented progressive educational theses that match what Freire proposed decades before Freire did. Sakakini established his school based on respect for students, a ban on physical punishment and respect for the dignity and consciousness of students. In addition he encouraged them to read freely. He rejected rote curriculum, which he considered a tool to freeze and exhaust the brain. He called for dialogue and active interaction in the classroom.

Sakakini linked education to community and social issues. He personally was in the Palestinian national movement since its establishment. He was familiar with its desire to confront the dangers sweeping the country. He had strong political stances and ideological positions. He believed in the need to raise educated and conscious young people. He considered his students to be humans who are worthy of respect. The school must enhance their sense of dignity and enable them develop their free opinions without any pressure. He proposed a new open school curriculum as an alternative to the traditional rote curricula. For this purpose, he published two teachers' manuals on interactive

teaching. He authored a book on *The New Arabic Reading*, in which he included noble ideas to enrich students' minds and fine-tune their sense of beauty and refinement.

He explained that the goal of education is not to provide information, but rather to encourage students become writers and scientists. Instead of memorizing math formulae, he invited his students to derive the formula and disaggregate it. Instead of learning a poem by heart, he made them develop a taste for poetry. He was convinced that knowledge is interdisciplinary and the school must train students in how to live. He urged teachers to give their students the chance to express themselves freely without any fear. If they broke taboos and rejected exams as tools of assessment, and stopped focusing on attendance and grades, students would come to school to exercise their happiness and freedom.

As Jalal Eddien Rumi said, "Somewhere beyond right and wrong, there is a garden. I will meet you there."

## **Annex (9)**

### **Abdelghani Salamah (3/3): Emancipatory Education: Inspiring Experiences**

Parents want their children to memorize the Koran and rhymes and to learn how to read and write in kindergarten. This approach habituates children to memorizing and weakens their ability to think critically. As such, they become prepared to enrol in the traditional (banking) educational system. They and their parents accept the system without any objection. This is the prevailing educational system in Palestine nowadays.

In a study on "Education in Palestine," Hanan Ramahi presented some of the failures of the existing educational system including, most of my students cannot prepare a research paper because they so accustomed to memorizing that they cannot think on their own. They lack self-confidence and the ability to think critically. Therefore, they cannot advance in life and contribute to their society. She added that the challenge we face is teachers themselves because they are the product of the society that needs to be changed. We do not know if there is a solution to this dilemma.

Education aims to prepare a good citizen, proud of his country, nation and religion, a citizen with good ethics and a sense of belonging to his or her country. This is what the state, religious institution and traditional forces want. To achieve this, the educational system requires teachers and students to adopt predetermined methods and abide to them to the letter like exams, supervisors' assessment, and finishing the textbook. This is called symbolic violence, which is considered a form of transparent control that undermines students' self-confidence and places them in a system of on-going self-devaluation.

Another objective to education is to qualify students to compete in the labour market. This requires subjection to a system of assessment and exams, which requires them to stuff information in the brain. As a result, students live in permanent fear and anxiety, which ultimately leads them to self-discipline themselves in order to succeed.

A final objective of education can be to produce a free, sensitive, self-confident and coherent human being, capable of enjoying art and beauty. This is a person who rebels against an oppressive reality, refuses to succumb to injustice, who believes in his or her ability to make change, and who always seeks to improve his or her local and international context. These three objectives are not in harmony with each other, they are rather contradictory because the mechanisms to achieve them are contradictory. The student grows in an environment of polarization. Most probably, the large majority of students become disciples of the first objective. As such the system succeeds in producing generations that are similar to their predecessors and who carry the same values and ideas to the extent that they would combat any attempt to modernize or make a change.

Opposite to this backwards, rigid type of education, comes emancipatory education, which aims to free the brain of negative values and dismantle inherited ideologies through

critical thinking, dialogue, participation and respect for students' humanity. This type of education respects students' brains and consequently their ability to lead and propagate a spirit of tolerance and respect for different viewpoints. Emancipatory education is not limited to school; it extends into the entire community. Although there isn't any state in the world that has fully adopted emancipatory education, some global models have shown great results and a radical shift in education. In Palestine, we have inspiring models with amazing results that we can build on and develop. These experiences include institutions like the Tamer Institute, the Teachers Creativity Centre, Afkar for Education and Cultural Development, Falastinyat, and Ashtar Theatre. They also include individuals like Munir Fashe, Ziad Khaddash, and Hanan Al-Hroub among others.

In a workshop organized by Rosa Luxemburg in Ramallah, Rula Shomar, principal of Masar School in Nazareth and Ibrahim Abu Al-Hija, a co-founder of the school, delivered a brief presentation of their unique experience in emancipatory education and how they overcame bureaucratic obstacles and interference from the Ministry of Education. They explained how they had addressed the fears of parents. They told them, our goal is to have a student who is happy at school. The indicator of our success is that our students want to stay in the school after school hours. Our dropout rates are nil. We do not have any violence in the school as we create a normal family life. All of our students have excelled in their respective universities. The number of students per classroom is only 25. We have two teachers per class. Our programme is flexible and adaptive. We provide students with room to learn without teachers. Sometimes we cancel the formal class in order to discuss a particular problem and think of solutions to it. We teach Arabic and English in grades one and two through songs. We start with text not the alphabet. We focus on social skills. We prepare food with the children and farm and breed animals with them. We do not use the term 'training,' which stems from a policy of "I know and the student does not know." We help students build their own character and be free of restraints to become ready and willing to make change. We teach all the creative subjects that do not exist in other schools, like arts, drama, dancing, music, games, sports, and theatre, and we dedicate long hours to these activities. Students choose how they want to enhance their role in the teaching process. We have abolished textbooks. We do not use the ministry textbooks until the students are studying for Tawjihi (general certificate). We give space to teachers to make their own decisions and take initiative. We introduced beautiful readings into the teaching of Arabic. Students in grade five, for instance, discuss *Letters of Rassael Ikhwan Al-Safa the Brethren of Purity*<sup>62</sup>. We teach natural sciences starting in grade three and above. Students learn these sciences through experimentation and use vocabulary from their lives. The empirical method is based on observation, suspicion and research, while asserting that there is no absolute truth, even in sciences.

Many years before Masar was established, we had the Dustoriah School, established by Khalil Sakakini in the early 1920s. This school was seen as a revolutionary shift for that era and even now. Sakakini abolished physical punishment, which he described as a barbarian practice from the Middle Ages. He replaced exams with self-evaluations conducted by students and teachers together. He asked teachers not to take attendance. Students enjoyed the freedom to leave school if they felt bored. The result was more committed

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52 Note from translator: The Brethren of Purity were a secret society of Muslim philosophers in Basra, Iraq, in the 8th or 10th century CE

and creative teachers who captured the attention of their students. The students started writing with a new accurate, modern and “elegant” language<sup>53</sup>.

A maxim says, “Men are born ignorant, not stupid; they are made stupid by education.” To take the first step toward changing and progressing, we need a revolution in the prevailing educational system. We need to include arts, sports, music, painting, theatre, lab work, and library time in the core of the educational process. These things alone can start the change because they represent the real revolution. Without such action, we will keep facing defeat and disappointment.

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53 Tamari, Salim (2005), *Mountain Against the Sea*, Ramallah, Muwatin, the Palestinian Institute for Democracy Studies.

