

Education as a Response to the Challenges of the "Emerging New World"

Israel as a Case Study

Project proposal's summary

The world of our grand and great-grandchildren will by no means resemble today's realities. Driven by three profound processes, this world faces already an accelerating surge of challenges that have particularly been burdening democracies: The advanced technological revolution, the impact of novel demographic structures and the severe climate changes. These three processes have accelerating the epidemic expansion of global populism; an epidemic that has, among other things, triggered the re-institution of religion in shared public spaces, labeled in the literature as 're-sacralization'.

This project endeavors to confront the challenges to the future of democracy caused by the emerging new world, by proposing new principles for educational policy. These principles will guide the preparation of tomorrow members in democratic civil societies. It is assumed that in *today's* reality, the distance between *past* and *future* is growing at an increasing pace. At any given moment, *present time* students, the *future* members of any civil society, are being educated by teachers who have experienced political socialization processes in the reality of the *past*. Nowadays, the distance between the *past* – the cradle of socialization of *today's* teachers – and the *present* – the cradle of socialization of their students - and between this *present* and the *future* – the anticipated integration of the students as active partners in a civic society, is growing both in essence and significance. The realities in which political socialization of *present* time teachers were shaped by their *past*, is significantly different than those of *today*. On the teachers' timeline of today, the distance between their *past*, their *present* as students then, and their *future* as teachers is significantly shorter compared with the distance, on the timeline of their students'. The challenge before us, therefore, is to confront the fact that the distance that is constantly growing between the *past and the future* in our democracies burdens our schools with goals and challenges totally different than what yesterday democracies had experienced.

A research question: to what extent/how will it be possible to affect the fostering of attributes of identity that define behavioral patterns and how would these influence cultural foundations?

The exclusive interest of this project is the shaping of the modes of behavior of the future members of the civil society in a democracy and how the educational process impacts their identities. Our project will focus on the exploration of principles that guide educational policy. The project differentiates between the ideational-normative (values) on the one hand and the developing of skills on the other hand and has opted to focus on the former.

In this project, the designing of the virtues of *Paideia* - 'the educated person' and the means to achieve them will originate from two simultaneous efforts: In the first, relying on the centrality of the role of schooling in the process of political socialization, the project will propose guidelines for fostering democratic worldviews at the heart of political education. The second will stem from grappling with the guiding principles of world views that compete with those of democracy, particularly the sources of authority that challenge the principle of the sovereignty of the people,

i.e., *the issue of the role of religion in the shared public spheres in a democracy is central in this project.*

Israel as a Case Study

The “Israeli Case” developed in an inversely historical process. It had begun with the introduction of “the New Jew” amidst a metamorphosis in the course of Jewish history. Following the founding of the State, the initial innovative path has been terminated in a prolonged process of inconsistent severance between the course of pedagogical occurrences inside the various sub-school systems and the intensely dramatic events unfolding in the political-social-cultural arenas. Throughout a century long (or short) history, the Israeli educational system has evolved in three phases: During the first, the revolutionary phase of “State in the Making”, educators perceived themselves to be the carriers of the pioneering banner of building the foundations for a future political sovereignty for the Jewish Peoplehood. As a result, the tight nexus between the political and the pedagogical was remarkable. During the second phase, following the founding of the State in 1948, the various educational subsystems reflected the diminishing sense of a mission. While Israeli society grappled with the ramifications of four wars and dozens of terror atrocities, schools were either detached from the political echoes of those realities (in the general-secular sub-system) or exposed to unilateral conservative interpretations of them (in the national-religious sub-system). During the third phase, beginning at the turn of the twenty first century, the Israeli educational system mirrored more intensely the growing of internal divisiveness within Israeli society.

The Project’s Blueprint

Part One – The Conceptual Framework

The First Part of the project, its conceptual part, will begin with laying out the desired characteristics of the “Educated Personality” in democracies’ future civil society (the *paideia*). An expected utopian prototype of *paideia* may serve as the vision for offering the principles for a “new educational” policy as well as the detailed and thorough analysis of the Israeli educational system.

Against that background, the project will aim at clarifying a cluster of concepts and themes:

- Definitions of *political education*, including the characterization of the role of schooling in the political socialization and acculturation processes
- The details of the challenges presented by the presence of religion in the shared public spaces in general and in politics in particular

Part Two - The Case of Israel

- **Guiding themes**
 - o Without a constitution, in a reality in which the Halacha dominates pedagogical concepts in the religious educational sub-systems and a de-facto vacuum that persists in the secular one, a reality burdened with tensions between secular and religious education, what/how the Israeli educational system can contribute to advancing the foundation of a

consensual underpinning for a heterogynous, cleaved and divisive society?

- To what extent the structure of Israel's education system and its modes of functioning, has succeeded to realize the prime goal of reinforcing the principle of inclusivity in the Israeli multi-cultural society?
- **Ben Gurion's doctrine of Statehood – neutralizing the spectrum of diverse worldviews within the educational system.**
- **The Secular-General Educational Sub-system: from ideological education to meritocracy**
 - The ideological education in the pre-state era
 - Meritocracy as an alternative to democratic education during statehood
- **The Religious Sub-systems**
 - Religious Zionism: the hummer of modernity on the anvil of 'theocratization'
 - The characteristics of the ideological, religious-Zionist education in the pre-state era.
 - The grappling with latent and overt efforts to “theocratize” education, 1953-todate
 - The Ultraorthodox educational sub-system

Part Three - The Comparative Dimension: between liberalizing and illiberal reactionary processes [Specific educational systems are to be determined]