From ethnic segregation to bilingual education: What can bilingual education do for the future of the Israeli Society?

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Preface

In May 2006, a group of experts in language education from Europe, Canada and Israel gathered to discuss and reflect in a conference entitled: *Into the Future – Towards Bilingual Education in Israel*. The conference, held at the University of Haifa, was initiated and organized by the Jewish-Arab Center and sponsored by the Zeit Stiftung from Germany. The participants were change agents in each of their respective countries and held a critical view of our changing world, in which the clash of cultures and religions – as represented by languages – calls for brave action via education.

Many language educators and researchers work for changing school structures and programs so that the schools can become less controlled by the dominant language and culture. They are guided by the ideology that it is necessary to enable suppressed cultures as well as languages that are sometimes almost lost, to have a voice and a place. This can be achieved only by genuine and sophisticated multi-language education within a context of multicultural recognition (Azaiza, 2006; Calderon & Slavin, 2001; Hill, 2001, 2005; Mor-Sommerfeld, 2005; Siegel & Abu Rabia, 2005).

Thinking, talking and acting to create bilingual schools in Israel, where Arab and Jewish children learn together and communities of teachers and parents act on the grounds of mutual respect and equality for the Hebrew and Arabic languages, cultures, and narratives, is indeed a revolutionary act within the Israeli educational system. The discussions in the conference motivated this paper.

This paper deals with the educational system in Israel from a critical socio-political perspective. It critically discusses its segregation and examines the option of shared-bilingual education as an alternative to the reality of separation. The first part of the paper generally presents some aspects concerning the historical perspective of the segregated educational system in Israel as a reflection of the make up of the state's society. The second section deals with the development of pedagogies throughout the years. The last part examines the new framework of bilingual education in Israel and its vision for becoming a model for the Israeli society as a whole.

A land of two nations: conflict and coexistence in Israel

Israel, Judea, and Palestine are names for one of the most ancient lands of the Mediterranean, whose people have survived many rulers, battles, and exiles. This land is of utmost importance to the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. At the end of the 19th century (1880), Jewish people, mainly from Europe, immigrated to the region, settling in small but growing numbers in the land then called Palestine, which was inhabited mostly by Palestinians and under Turkish rule. At the beginning of the 20th century, the conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Great Britain ended with victory for Great Britain that went on to rule Palestine from 1917 until 1948.

Major milestones on Israel's road to becoming an independent Jewish State began on November 2, 1917, with the Balfour Declaration, in which Britain pledged the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. On May 14, 1948, the British withdrew from Palestine, and on that same day, the Jewish provisional government declared the formation of the State of Israel. This was the first move leading to the first major war between the newly established State of Israel and its neighboring Arab countries that rejected the Partition Plan and accused the Zionist-Jews and the British of invading their land and bringing about colonialism. The 1948 war is called by the Arabs the '*Nakba*,' the war of the disaster and catastrophe; Israel calls the same war, 'the War of Independence'. Thus 1948 can be marked as the key point for understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Prior to 1948, Israel was inhabited by both Arabs and Jews. In the course of the 1948 War, most of the Arab inhabitants were exiled and became refugees (Morris 1987, Pappe 2004, Ghanem, 2001). Ever since this point in history, the state of Israel has been divided into national, social, ethnic, religious, class and political enclaves (White-Stephan, Hertz-Lazarowitz, Zelniker, & Stephan, 2004).

> Despite the small size of its population, Israeli society is becoming increasingly diverse. Today, social scientists in Israel identify four major divisions in Israeli society. Three divisions are within the Jewish population and the fourth is between Arabs and Jews. Within the Jews there are divisions between Jews of Middle Eastern descent [Mizrahim ('Oriental' Jews), about 50%] and Jews of European and American descent (Ashkenazim), between orthodox, conservative-traditional and secular Jews, and between immigrants and non-immigrants (Bellin, 1992; Horowitz, 2003; Kalekin-Fishman, 2004). Within the Arab population there are divisions based on class, religion and religiosity: Muslim (85%), Christian (12%) and Druze (4%). Although there are conflicts within each national group, the most dramatic conflict is between Arabs and Jews. (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The force of the divisions and conflicts that arise among the different groups within Israeli society have varied in intensity for decades. In many ways, this obviously represents the major struggle of class and justice and cannot be separated from it.
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> The Jewish-Arab division within Israel has persisted since 1948, and resulted in conflicts on issues related to land, civic rights of citizenship, equality, identity, domination, discrimination and oppression (Yiftachel 1992, Ghanem, 2001; Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004; Rouhana, 1997). This inequality leads to increasing Arab dissatisfaction with the government and creates tension and bitterness within the Arab leadership, in general, and its educational leadership in particular (Al- Haj, 2004; Hofman, 1988; Smooha, 1992, 2005).
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> National and political tensions between Arabs and Jews in Israel have been influenced by the recurring wars between Israel and its neighboring Arab countries,

as well as by the peace agreements signed (Cleveland, 2004). In recent years, these tensions have also been affected by the increasing violence in the conflict between Israel and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The conflict intensified following the short-lived period of hope for peace in the wake of the Oslo Agreement, a deterioration which worsened following the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish extremist in 1995 (Abu-Nimer, 2004; White-Stephan *et al*., 2004). Since the *first Intifada* (uprising) in 1989, and even more so since the outbreak of the *second Intifada* in 2000, the concern from Arabs in Israel for their Palestinian compatriots in the West Bank and Gaza has become a vital issue in Israel. It fuels the Arabs' criticism of political and military actions taken by the Jewish majority government against the Palestinians. This political reality challenged both Arab and Jews and reflected on the educational system in Israel.

Israel's educational system – policy and structure

Generally, the school structure in Israel consists of three units: six years of elementary school, three years of junior high school, and three years of high school. In some districts, there are schools with units of six years plus six years. Some schools continue to maintain the system of eight years of elementary school followed by four years of high school, which used to be the general structure until the "reform of integration" was adopted in 1968. Kindergarten education in Israel is compulsory and free for five-year-old children, and there is a remarkably high preschool attendance, mainly among the secular Jewish population, as early as the age of two.

Schools in Israel are segregated dramatically by nationality but also by the degree of adherence to religious practices. There are separate schools for religious and secular Jewish children, and separate State and religious (Christian and Muslim) schools for Arab children (Al-Haj, 2002; Elboim-Dror, 1981; Mar'i, 1978). The language of study in Jewish schools is Hebrew and in Arab schools is Arabic. Hebrew is mandatory in Arab schools while Arabic is not obligatory in Jewish schools (Abu Rabia, 2005; Amara, Azaiza, Mor-Sommerfeld, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2007; Ben-Rafael, 1994; Mor-Sommerfeld, 2005). Due to the segregation and physical distance of residence, the likelihood of Jewish children meeting Arab children, or of religious Orthodox children meeting secular children, is very low (Zelniker & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2005). Principals and teachers are also segregated within the schools of their respective sectors.

The segregated structure of the educational system is centralized under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, which reflects the majority–minority division in Israel. Within the Ministry, most of the higher level administration is composed of Jews, with a few Arab advisors and specialists. The State is divided into six districts, each headed by a secular or religious Jew. Within each district, there is a Jewish superintendent for the Jewish secular and religious schools and an Arab superintendent for the State Arab schools. Principals and teachers operate under the authority of the superintendent and the head of the district. For many years, principals and teachers in Arab schools were selected by the Ministry of Education in Israel, by Jewish administrators based on their political approach or family's connections (Al-Haj, 2004; Elboim-Dror, 1981; Mar'i, 1978; Zuzovsky & Donitsa-Schmidt, 2005).

The departments of curricula and instructional methods within the Israeli Ministry of Education are responsible for developing textbooks and other learning materials for each sector. Each of the different sectors follows the curriculum assigned to it by the State. There are some limitations placed on the Arab sector that are manifested in the school curricula. While some programs are quite similar, others are absolutely different in content. The most

marked difference is in the cultural and historical approaches (Al-Haj, 2002, 2005; Benavot & Resh, 2003). Arab pupils are given in-depth courses in Judaism and Jewish and Israeli history, whereas studies of Palestinian history or culture barely exist in Arab schools in Israel. Asymmetry is also "reflected in the allocation of teaching hours in the two streams for world history, Arab history and Jewish history" (Al-Haj, 2002, p. 175). Likewise, while Arab pupils receive extensive education in Hebrew literature and tradition as part of their curriculum, Jewish pupils have no programs in Arabic literature or tradition in theirs, and they read Arabic literature only in translation (some books, edited for Hebrew L1 lessons, contain short stories written by Arab authors). When Arabic is learnt as an additional language, in most cases the approach is of "knowing the enemy".

The national curriculum of Israel is clearly a political creation and marginalizes other language groups and cultures. The hidden curriculum serves to reproduce educational, social, and economic inequalities. Particular concepts defined by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), such as 'cultural capital,' 'symbolic violence,' and 'cultural arbitrary' illuminate the mechanisms through which this dominance and subordination are reinforced (Hill, 2005). Bekerman and Shhadi (2003) note that: "For the last 50 years, Palestinian Israelis [an accepted term for what this paper labels as (Israeli) Arabs] have been at the losing end, a minority in an technocratic Jewish state." (p. 473).

A brief history of the development of pedagogies in Israeli schools

The development of pedagogies in Israeli schools can be divided into three distinct periods: induction and establishing the segregation, the *Reform* and the development of New Pedagogies, and awareness of multiculturalism. These three phases have come into expression in different ways and times in both Jewish and Arab sectors, being influenced by historical and political developments. Usually the Jewish sector commenced (or forced) each stage first, with the Arab schools following. The State's priorities were always addressed first to the Jewish schools while the Arab communities were left behind for years (Ackerman, 1999; Mar'i 1978).

The first period was from 1948 until the late 1960's. *"Induction and segregation"* was aimed at establishing central policies of two separate educational systems with structured inequalities in resources. Collective and controlled pedagogies were implemented to achieve the goals of creating the new Israeli-Jewish nation on the one hand and oppressing the Arab population on the other hand. By the end of this period, most of the Jewish educational goals had been accomplished, with teachers trained in short intensive courses and new schools built throughout the country.

The Arab educational system, which had been seriously impaired during the 1948 war, was also partially rebuilt by the State of Israel during this period to be adjusted with the Israeli mainstream policy. The Arab leaders strived to improve the level of education and literacy among their population. Initial curricula and books in Arabic were developed, teachers were trained, and schools were opened. However, the development of the Arab educational system took place under the supervision of a special Military Government, with curtailed civic rights and limited resources until 1966 (Mar'i, 1978; Rekhess, 1998). The State controlled not only the way teachers were trained but also who received permission to work as a teacher, principal or supervisor. Thus, through policies of control, segregation and unequal resources, Arab schools became fully subordinated to the Jewish State, and became an oppressive instrument used by the State against the Arab population.

The next period was from the mid 1970's until the mid 1990's. The *"Reform"* and the "*Development of New Pedagogies*" began as the Ministry of Education aimed to promote the vision of socio-economic integration and reduce academic gaps among Jewish ethnic groups (Shavit-Streifeler, 1983). Within this "reform", new pedagogies and new curricula were developed with the help of academia. Thus schools and teachers were trained to implement alternative pedagogies such as Cooperative Learning (CL) for the diverse population of students, instead of the controlled-collective methods of the previous stage.

In this period, numerous experimental and innovative CL programmes were conducted first and foremost in the Jewish schools (Amir *et al*, 1984; Sharan 1994), and since the early 1990's, in many Arab schools (Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1999, 2004). In both sectors, Cooperative Learning was showing positive gains of academic and social development over other pedagogies, similarly to international findings (Hertz-Lazarowitz & Miller, 1992; Hertz-Lazarowitz & Calderon, 1994; Sharan, 1994; Lazarowitz & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1998; Slavin & Madden, 2001).

Cooperative Learning opened within the Arab and Jewish schools a culture of cooperation on various levels. It was the first pedagogy that brought together Arab and Jewish teachers and principals to plan and carry out CL in their schools (Eden & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2002; Hertz-Lazarowitz & Schadael, 2003; Schadael,

Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Azaiza, 2007; Zelniker & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2005).

> The final stage, "*Awareness of Multiculturalism*," began in the mid 1990's and is still evident in Israel today. It began as a grassroots movement of writers, educators, social science scholars and philosophers, who challenged the concept of a "unified nation" and invoked the conception of Israel as a multicultural society (Esikovits, 2006), in which all the groups that had been voiceless should be recognized and have a voice (Freire, 1985). The earlier contribution of Navon (a former minister of education and a former president of Israel) was re-invented with demands for progressive curricula for democracy and co-existence, and for promoting Arabic as a valuable language in Jewish schools. Within the conflictual and pressing life in Israel and the occupied territories, which are consistently criticized, the Israeli educational system is practicing more critical pedagogies, such as the feminist, the multicultural and the peace and coexistence pedagogies, relating to a variety of micro-cultures within each group (Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2003, 2008; Oplatka & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2006; Zelniker, Hertz-Lazarowitz, Peretz, Azaiza, & Sharabany, in press; Salomon, 2004). However, it is crucial to remember that all of this remains within the discourse of the majority-minority, Jewish vs. Arab conflict; as the multicultural approach does not offer any radical perspective but accepting the reality of segregation.

The pedagogy of multiculturalism is strongly advocated in Israel by Arab-Israelis and by immigrants from the Former Soviet Union (FSU). These two groups, each comprising about a million citizens, account for approximately 40% of the Israeli population. The FSU community induced the political system to be more flexible in defining a Jew not only on the basis of religious laws (being born to a Jewish mother), but also in accord with civic policies (having served in the Israeli Army). Their success in bringing about change in Israeli society with respect to several significant issues such as acceptance of Russian language and culture and crediting them as part of school credits, has set an example for Arab citizens insofar as how to attain their goals in Israel (Al- Haj, 2004; Kalekin-Fishman, 2004).

Feminist pedagogy has left its mark on Arab and Jewish schools where teachers, most of them women, have been re-examining the dominant male values in the curricula. As a

result, textbooks are now more impartial and less gender biased. A special unit for "gender equality" has become a part of the central Office of Education, and the women-educators are becoming more influential (Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2001; Fine & Torre, 2004; Khattab & Ibrahim, 2006; Shapira, 2006).

This social and educational endeavor is a challenge and an important learning experience for the communities involved and, more generally, for Israeli society as a whole (Bekerman & Horenczyk, 2004; Mor-Sommerfeld, Azaiza, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2007). The origin of the transformation taking place in Israeli schools lies in the processes of empowerment that develop within the teachers and principals themselves. Trends of implementing various critical pedagogies are constantly evident in the Israeli-Jewish schools and, to a lesser degree, in the Israeli-Arab schools as well.

During this period, the Arabs, Palestinian citizens of Israel, have established new NGOs advocating greater civic equality and more equitable resource allocation. The NGOs have generated a powerful and meaningful expression of Arabs' rights and needs, and have managed to obtain government resources for implementing new pedagogies based on national identity. These have yielded significant changes in the educational system. Curricula changes approved by the government include teaching of the Israeli-Arab conflict from the Arabs' perspective and the history of Arab villages, those still existing and those destroyed by Israel during the war of 1948. State programmes also have been developed in order to advance Arab children and youth towards their completion of high school and their pursuit of university-level education. The State of Israel and many NGOs conduct extracurricular programs in an attempt to bring together Arab and Jewish schools, teachers, students, and parents for the purpose of implementing and maintaining programs of contact and interaction that promote coexistence (Bar-Tal, 2004; Hertz-Lazarowitz, Kupermintz, & Lang, 1999; Mor-Sommerfeld, 2005).

The highlight of the initiatives for erasing borders within the educational system seems to be the educational frameworks of bilingual and bi-national communities. To date, four successful bilingual schools operate in Israel, all of which define themselves as bilingual and bi-national. The first school was set up in 1984 at Neveh Shalom-Wahat al-Salaam (*Oasis of Peace*), a village located between Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem, founded jointly by Israeli Jews and Palestinians, in an attempt to prove that the two peoples can live together peacefully. In 1998 another school opened in the Galilee, and one year later the third school was opened in Jerusalem, both of them by the NGO "Hand in Hand." In 2004, the most recent school opened in Wadi Ara in cooperation with the NGOs "The Bridge across the Wadi Fellowship" and "Hand in Hand." At least three other enterprises are now under discussion (Mor-Sommerfeld, Azaiza, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2007). About eight bilingual kindergartens, some of them attached to the bilingual schools, operate throughout Israel. Can Arab-Jewish bilingual schools create a future of equality in the educational system in Israel? The next part of this paper deals with this issue.

PART TWO

Can Arab-Jewish bilingual schools create a future of equality in and for the educational system in Israel?

Recent document entitled "The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arab in Israel" published by *The National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel* calls for 'the right of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel (as indigenous people in their homeland) to self-administration of the educational system and to self-determination of its policy' (2006, p.

28). Dealing with education was just one aspect of the whole vision; other aspects such as economy, housing, culture are also discussed. The vision is based on two principles: the first considers the Palestinian Arab population of Israel as 'indigenous people in their homeland' and the second proposes self-administration and self governance in all areas. Formulating such a vision is a significant development for both Arabs and Jews. This document challenges the current legal status and power relationships of the two groups, and evokes debate and disagreement within and among the two sectors. On the one hand it expresses empowerment of the Palestinian leadership in Israel, while on the other hand its application means deepening the segregation and alienation between the two national groups. This vision was followed by three more "Future Vision" documents (An Equal Constitution for all? By the Mossawa Centre; The Democratic Constitution by Adalah, the Legal Centre for Arab Minority rights in Israel; and, and Haifa Declaration by Mada-al-Carmel, the Arab Centre for Applied Social research), wereall written and published by highly acclaimed NGOs and institutes. All four visions refer to issues of policy, citizenship and justice, and consider the occupation as the most crucial dimension of life for Israeli-Jews and Palestinians in Israel. Yet each vision addresses the continuum of separation and integration in Israel differently (Ozacky-Lazar & Kabha, (2008).

There is no doubt that Arab schools experience discrimination within Israeli society (ADVA, 2003). The critical questions yet to be addressed are whether a fundamental change within Israeli society can be effected in the near future and what structures need to be introduced into the system in order to effect such a change. Our perspective is that there is a driving need to bring justice, equality and recognition to the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel so as to ensure the survival of the Israeli society as a whole. Our call is for a transformation of the educational system, and our commitment is to make an impact in ways that the educational system will promote the option of integration.

The challenge of integration instead of separation between ethnic groups is crucial, politically and educationally, and is inline with the writings of the leading critical thinkers of education in this era (Lipman, 2004; Skutnabb-Kangas & Garcia, 1995). The ideologies of globalization and capitalism, with growing nationalism and fundamental religiosity within Israel, make it crucial to change the perception of the dominant groups in all socioeconomic classes. Similarly, the role of education is to empower the minority and to strengthen the advanced tendencies that call for integration (Mor-Sommerfeld & Adiv, 2007).

There are many people and positive forces in the educational system that can facilitate a change. Thus, the basic belief behind the initiative to develop bilingual Arabic–Hebrew education and to establish more bilingual schools and more shared programmes in Israel, is that this represents a transforming action towards creating equality and justice for both Arabs and Jews. The desired outcome of such schools and programmes is to inspire youth to acknowledge and respect one another and to build a new shared identity, while at the same time cultivating loyalty to their own cultural heritage.

Initial findings from a great number of high-quality bilingual and multilingual programmes indicate three main benefits: (1) a high level of multilingualism, (2) equal opportunity for academic achievement, (3) a strong, positive multilingual and multicultural identity, including positive attitudes towards self and others (Calderon & Slavin, 2001; Mor-Sommerfeld, 2005; Siegel & Abu Rabia, 2005). It is also claimed by many of the initiators of bilingualism in Israel that bilingual education can serve as empowerment pedagogy through the incorporation of language and culture into the schools and by increasing the self-esteem of minority students. The majority group will also gain greater intellectual enrichment and benefit from enhanced cultural integration and pluralism.

Bilingual education in Israel is still in its first stages. The first bilingual school was established in 1984 in Neveh Shalom-Wahat al-Salam (Oasis of Peace), a bi-national community, by the choice of its members. The community has also been developing a "School for Peace" for youth and adults, and is known for its training programs for peace and coexistence (Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004). These two schools represent a very unique initiative in the Israeli context[1].

As we mentioned in a previous section, there are a few additional bilingual integrated schools where Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian children study together and are taught by teachers of both nationalities. In these schools, educators strive to present course materials in ways that are meaningful and suitable for all children and that show profound respect for the different micro-cultures. This transformation is generated by a grassroots movement led by parents, teachers, and the municipal leadership in Jerusalem, Wadi Ara, and the Galilee. Interest has been expressed in expanding the bilingual schools to a few more sites in Israel.

It is important to emphasize that all the existing bilingual schools are recognized by the Israeli Ministry of Education and are part of its system, although they are the result of private and limited enterprises, and not an act of general policy. These schools have thus far adopted the universal model for cultural bilingualism (developed by Aura Mor-Sommerfeld, 2004; 2005) in their curricula. However, there is still a great need to develop appropriate curricula and written material for bilingual programmes.

Bilingual schools in Israel as a catalyst for shared community

In a recent article, Svirsky *et al* (2007) argue that bilingual education aims at challenging and changing the reality of segregation in Israel by creating a common ground where children and adults can meet and learn together. By proposing a shared curriculum based on the knowledge, experiences, languages and cultures of both communities, frameworks of bilingual education can help us to cross borders and build a shared discourse for new relationships. Considering the existing bilingual schools as growing, learning-communities, composed of students, their parents, teachers, principals, and other professional staff, it seems that bilingual education influences both the individual and the community.

Indeed, bilingualism and bilingual education are not just seen in terms of cognitive and linguistic abilities, but also as a source of broader viewpoints, humanistic values and universal beliefs. We believe that shared interests and frameworks of bilingual education develop mutual, positive attitudes towards others and their language, culture and history. However, it seems that a bilingual society, as Israel is, can never be fully democratic if it separates communities and their languages. The main questions are whether such shared frameworks can also influence the geographical society nearby, and is it possible to create such a change while the society outside of school is one of segregation and injustice[2].

Relying on Hegel and Marx, Kojev (1996) explains in his erudite composition that in the nascent state, a person is never simply a person; as s/he is "always, necessarily and essentially, either master or slave" (p. 8). Hence, historically, it is only by the dialectic of master and slave, that people could, by means of synthesis, to transcend their initial and particular position as either a master or a slave to become "a self-conscious man who recognizes another man and is recognized by him" (ibid, p. 8). According to Mor-Sommerfeld and Adiv, (2008), in a way, the Arab-Palestinians and the Israeli-Jews relationships can be politically analyzed in light of Kojev's concept. The question is whether the bilingual schools have reached the level of transcendence by political means, as a *sine qua non* for mutual recognition and reconciliation within the schools' community.

Feminist studies approach in bilingual education: The role of women

One of the major sources for change is the increase in the level of education of the workforce within the Arab school system in general. More specifically, the growing number of educated women in leading roles in Arab schools has had a major impact, with educated women becoming a critical force for change (Aburabia-Queder, 2006; Addi-Raccah, 2006; Hertz-Lazarowitz & Shapira, 2005; Kahttab & Ibrahim, 2006; Oplatka & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2006). Female teachers and principals perceive themselves as powerful sources for change and many of them are actively engaged in transforming their schools. Their awareness of the total separation between the two school systems and of the discrimination accompanying these policies has given them new insights into the dynamics of injustice, as well as the energy to restructure their fatalistic consciousness into a critical consciousness (Freire, 1985). Bilingual education can thus be employed as the connecting thread between the feminist critical approaches and bilingual education.

It seems that bilingual education is a more democratic, tolerant and critical framework by its nature. In the bilingual school, the women teachers can implement these values, using their own narrative to promote the children both as individuals and as a part of the whole society. The daily meetings between the two populations enable the teachers to question traditional values and to pave moderate paths toward the creation of a women's role (Hertz-Lazarowitz & Oplatka 2006). By this they become leaders of their own society as well as the new community of the bilingual school.

Into the future: The role of the Jewish-Arab Centre in promoting bilingual schools – closing remarks

The movement to create bilingual schools in Israel is taking place at a unique meeting point of socio-educational-political forces, where academia and committed Arab-Jewish NGOs, such as "Hand in Hand," "The Bridge across the Wadi," "Hagar," "Ein Bustan" and other fellowships, are coming together with external funding sources to broaden the few successful attempts at building bilingual schools. The goal is now to make the net of bilingual schools larger and more diverse in their models, and in particular to create more models that will build bridges between the two national groups and the many religious groups in Israel.

In May 2005, the Jewish-Arab Center at the University of Haifa began implementing an initiative called *Into the future – Towards bilingual education in Israel*, funded by the ZEIT Foundation. The program operates in three main circles: developing knowledge, placing the discourse on bilingual education on the Israeli public agenda, and establishing worldwide connections. The initiative aims to challenge and change the current reality of segregation, inequality, and lack of common ground where children and adults can meet and learn together (Mor-Sommerfeld, Azaiza, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2007)[3].

The future bilingual programs are aimed to create a *variety of models* for bilingual education in Israel, to establish a *shared alternative curriculum* based on the knowledge, experience, language, and culture of both communities, to encourage and develop bilingual education in Israel and to provide *academic support* for it, to *research* the area of bilingual education, focusing on regions in conflict, to integrate the *various circles* within and around the school: pupils, teachers, parents, and other members of the community; to expand and establish *bilingual education as the visible educational system* in Israel, to gradually and ultimately

effect the construction of a *civil society* in Israel, with a particular impact on new relationships in the *mixed cities*, to place this issue on the *Israeli agenda*, and to establish a set of *worldwide relationships* with other institutions that study and promote the area of bilingual education.

"Into the future" is expected to develop especially in these hard times of war and fear that are currently affecting our region. Parts of this paper were written in the wake of the second Lebanon war in our region. Despite these events, the bilingual schools have opened their doors that year, just as they do every year in September. These schools and their communities bring hope to Israel and to the region by moving towards a more socially responsible and just civic society.

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[1] http://www.nswas.org/rubrique22.html
[2] Obviously, reference to *injustice*, also includes questions of social class; as well as issues of the ethnic-national division vs. class matters.
[3] http://jac.haifa.ac.il/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1